THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES: MUSIC AND THE GENDERED MIND IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

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by
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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary study examines how nineteenth-century British ideas about music reflected and influenced the period's gendering of the mind. So far, studies of Victorian psychology have focused on the last half of the century only, and have tended to elide gender from the discussion. This study will contribute to a fuller picture of nineteenth-century psychology by demonstrating that the mind began to be increasingly gendered in the early part of the century but was largely de-gendered by century's end. In addition, because music was an art form in which gender norms were often subverted yet simultaneously upheld as conventional, this study will also contribute to a fuller understanding of the extent to which domestic ideology was considered descriptive or prescriptive.

This work makes use of but differs from previous studies of music in nineteenth-century British literature in both scope and argument. Drawing throughout on the work of contemporary music historians and feminist musicologists, as well as general and musical periodicals, newspapers, essays, and treatises from the long nineteenth century, this dissertation argues that music, as a field, was increasingly compartmentalized beginning early in the century, and then unified again by century's end. This division and re-unification reflected changing conceptions of the mind, and coincided with the waxing and waning of domestic ideology. Analyzing a range of literary texts, both canonical and non-canonical, in this context demonstrates that music was portrayed increasingly negatively over the century as it became harder and harder to contain the increasing threat

that music posed to traditional gender norms, a threat based in a view of music that began to imply mental equality between men and women. This implication was embraced by some, particularly homosexuals, and feared by others, who tried to rescue traditional norms by displacing gender ambiguity onto foreigners and Jews. Thus, the rise and fall of domestic ideology as well as end-of-century changes in the manifestation of xenophobia and anti-Semitism are related not only to industrialism and Evangelicalism and other historical events but also to changing ideas about the gender of the mind, reflected in and influenced by changing ideas about music.

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Last but not least, I have two other exceptional people to thank. My mother and friend, Rebecca Peak, taught me to read and to love reading. My husband, Andrew Dixon, not only asked thoughtful questions and helped me to think through this work, but encouraged me in every way; he has made me think better of myself as a person than I ever thought possible.

DEDICATION

To my dear husband.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION

> Plato calls music an imitation; and if it does not imitate the strong, it must the weaker propensities of our nature: and accordingly there are grave, religious, inspiring sounds which ennoble us; there are gay notes which make the spirit dance with exhilaration; but there are "softly soothing" Lydian measures which, laden with emotion, travel lightning-like to that undiscovered bourn where similar emotions can be awakened – to that *ultima thule* of the human microcosm where emotion and mind, the two irreconcilable powers, meet, and where emotion is strong enough to disturb the equilibrium of mind.
> ~ Edward John Tilt, *Elements of Health, and Principles of Female Hygiene*[1]

No one today will win any points for originality by calling music a universal language; the phrase is a commonplace. The usual narrative surrounding the origins and history of this phrase, when the phrase is remembered to have a history at all, is this: American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the first to call music "the universal language of mankind,"[2] and the phrase became a truism for the nineteenth century and the twentieth:

> [b]elief in universal traits of music was characteristic of nineteenth-century scholarship.... and even some teachers of music appreciation in North America as late as the 1980s might have been quite prone to consider music as a "universal language." In contrast to the languages of the world, which were mutually unintelligible, musics of all kinds were thought intelligible to anyone.[3]

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[1] Edward John Tilt, *Elements of Health, and Principles of Female Hygiene* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853), 215.

[2] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea*, rev. ed. (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1893), 197. This attribution of this phrase to Longfellow began early and has continued late. For an early ascription of this phrase to Longfellow, see Jehiel Keeler Hoyt, *The Cyclopedia of Practical Quotations*, rev. ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1896), 405; for a recent one, see pioneering ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts,* 2nd ed. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 42.

[3] Nettl, 42.

The first challenge to this universalization of Western musical standards came in the 1940s with the advent of ethnomusicology, continues the narrative, although that challenge faded in the late 1960s as musicologists began to argue that a new universal, or set of universals, could be constructed, along lines similar to Noam Chomsky's universal grammar or Claude Lévi-Strauss's universal mythology.[4]

In its characterization of the twentieth century, this narrative is accurate, but its picture of the nineteenth century does not fit the facts. Longfellow, for example, was far from the first to call music a universal language; descriptions of music as a universal language are scattered throughout the pages of nineteenth-century English periodicals. An article on music in *The Musical World* for 26 August 1841, for example, is headed "The Universal Language" and goes on to explain that musical sounds are "instinctive, from an impress which nature gives to them."[5] Such statements were common throughout the nineteenth century; a search on Google Books, for example, for the word "music" and the phrase "universal language" from 1750 to 1900 turns up hundreds of hits, clustered primarily in a 60-year period from the 1840s to the 1890s,[6] although the concept goes back at least as far as Emanuel Swedenborg, who called music "the language of the affections."[7]

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[4] Nettl, 43-44.

[5] "The Universal Language," *The Musical World* n.s. 191 (26 August 1841): 134.

[6] A little under 700 results come up, but of these about half are from American sources. ~Of course, I did not rely on Google's search result transcription of the dates of given works, as these are unreliable; rather, I clicked through each result to verify that a text listed as being published in, say, 1850, said so on the title page of the work itself and not just on the search results page, as well as verifying country of origin.

[7] U.S.E., *Emanuel Swedenborg: The Spiritual Columbus: A Sketch,* 2nd ed. (London: James Speirs, 1877), 87.

More interestingly, the nineteenth century was far from universally accepting the idea of music's universality. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the phrase was uncontroversial, if infrequently expressed;[8] the poet James Thomson, for example, speaks in passing of music as "the universal language of the heart."[9] Later, however, particularly in that period from the 1840s to the 1890s, the phrase was more commonly used in part because it became commonly debated. Opinion became divided,[10] with many subscribing to the idea that music is "the universal language of the heart," but with at least as many expressing considerable skepticism. As Berthold Seeman, chair of the Anthropological Society of London, put it, "[t]hat every feeling which agitates the human heart, good or bad, can be expressed in music … few will venture to dispute. But it is quite an open question whether it is a universal language, understood by all mankind alike."[11] Such doubts were not entirely new to the nineteenth century, but their extent was. By the very end of the century, however, the debate had died down, and Longfellow's espousal of the concept became the reference point for future assumptions about music on both sides of the Atlantic.

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[8] At least in England; many European commentators expressed the idea in the eighteenth century. See Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 13.

[9] *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson,* ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1908), 364.

[10] Only in Britain, interestingly; Google Books does not yet allow searching by country of publication, but by reading through the results, checking publishers, and verifying authors' nationalities through the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, it becomes clear that the debate over music's universality was a British debate. The Americans tended almost exclusively to write about music as a language of the heart, often using that exact phrase, and often suggesting that this makes music an ideal vehicle for the transmission of Christianity.

[11] Opening remarks at annual meeting, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 8 (1870), clv.

What sparked this concern over music and its universality, and what factors contributed to the sudden decrease, even disappearance, of this concern? One way to answer this question – the way that this project will take – is to consider the role of gender in this debate. At the beginning and end of the nineteenth century, music was largely assumed to be a universal language, and those are also the periods of the century when music was viewed with most suspicion. As a perceived nexus of mind and emotion, music was an art form fraught with disruptive possibilities. It threatened ideas about the power of reason by suggesting that a simple tune could overthrow rationality, and because emotion and reason had long been gendered feminine and masculine respectively, music therefore had the symbolic potential to suggest that femininity could exercise power over masculinity or (more troublingly) that the two might be inextricable and indivisible. If music were truly a universal language, it could therefore imply not only a connection between mind and emotion but suggest that men and women were mentally not that different. As we shall see in coming chapters, this possibility was seized upon eagerly by women authors, even as male figures expressed concern about music's power over the emotions, a concern that was really a fear that the feminine could influence the masculine. Music at the beginning and end of the nineteenth century is therefore sometimes seen, primarily by men, as a dangerous force.

As chapter one argues, however, the mid-nineteenth century (here defined as the period from roughly 1840 to 1890) managed music's disruptive, unifying powers by dividing music into forms considered more or less reasonable than others, and then

gendering the "reasonable" forms as both masculine and artistically superior. Such divisions were not new, but they differed markedly in extent from older genderings of music because they were tied to a division between performance and composition and of listening from both, a division that implied a compartmentalization and specialization of minds that underwrote gender and class divisions in music and which helped underpin, even as it was influenced by, domestic ideology at large. Maintaining these conceptual divisions in music was a juggling act, however, especially as these musical divisions interacted with gender and class ideology.

By the end of the century, there was increasing skepticism about these musical divisions; this skepticism is what made possible a resurrection of the idea that music was a universal language after all. This return to the concept of music's universality was not, of course, a simple replaying or rewinding of history; it sprang from a different historical context, as we shall see, and a different conception of music. Performance and composition were once again seen as complementary, rather than separate, skills, and the training of music in universities, for example, changed accordingly.[12] Medical discourse and educational theory alike began to insist that listening to music was not a passive skill but one tied both to other musical skills (composition, performance) and to other mental skills (such as speech), leading to the birth of both "music appreciation"[13] and music therapy.[14]

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[12] See Rosemary Golding, "Musical Chairs: The Construction of 'Music' in Nineteenth-Century British Universities," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 6 (2009): 19-37; Susan Wollenberg, *Music at Oxford in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[13] For the origins of music appreciation in education, see Bernarr Rainbow, "The Rise of Popular Music Education in Nineteenth-Century England," *Victorian Studies* 30 (Autumn 1986): 25-49; also Wollenberg.

As a result, gender divisions in music became harder to sustain as the musical divisions on which they were based themselves lost their force. These changes, of course, did not take place in isolation, but were part of many changes taking place at the fin de siècle, among which was a new sense of collectivity based on perceptions of the interconnectedness of mind, emotion, and body.[15] These changing ideas about the mind blurred gender distinctions in music as elsewhere, and likewise changing ideas about music helped blur gender distinctions in the culture at large because, as it will be one of this project's tasks to show, ideas about music were an important part of the culture at large. This gender destabilization explains the surge, well documented by Paula Gillett, in the numbers of women who participated publicly in musical activities at the end of the century, whether as performers, composers, or concert organizers,[16] as well as the increased suspicion with which music was viewed. Sadly, this discomfort with music's gender implications led to the construction of a new set of divisions, this time based on constructions of race; music was institutionalized and simultaneously masculinized in part by being constructed in opposition to feminized Others, particularly Jews.

The cultural history of nineteenth-century British music is therefore a significant part of the history of nineteenth-century Britain. In particular, this pattern of musical and gender unity, division, and transmogrified unity has an important bearing on the twin

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[14] This will be more fully discussed in chapter 5.

[15] See Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[16] Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

histories of domestic ideology and psychology, histories often considered in isolation. Discussions of the history of psychology prior to Freud – perhaps because there are so few of them – tend to assume that nineteenth-century psychological debates were about "the" mind, without taking gender into account and as often without considering the ways early psychologists (or philosophers of mind, as "psychologist" is an anachronistic term) themselves made assumptions about gender.[17] Even Rick Rylance's excellent *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* fails to take gender into account in his otherwise admirable work. Likewise, histories of domestic ideology, following Catherine Hall[18] and others, focus on the tremendous changes to institutions – particularly the rise of industrialism and Evangelical movements – that shaped the formation of domestic ideology. More recently, historians have begun to question the doctrine of the separate

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[17] Henri F. Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970) is the most comprehensive of the histories of pre-Freudian psychology, but Ellenberger's massive scope (both geographical and chronological) focuses more on naming early psychologists and detailing their theories and experiments; Ellenberger keeps commentary to a minimum. Katherine Arens's *Structures of Knowing: Psychologies of the Nineteenth Century* (Dordrecht and Boston: Klewer, 1989) focuses on the history of German psychology and its relation to philosophy; gender does not figure into her discussion. The collection *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth-Century Thought,* ed. by William R. Woodward and Mitchell Ashe (New York: Praeger, 1982) likewise focuses on prominent male European psychologists and their ideas, without questioning those figures' assumptions about gender. Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985) does take gender into account, but focuses on the history of hysteria and insanity, and – properly for the time – only discusses gender in terms of women. Christopher Lane's *The Burdens of Intimacy: Psychoanalysis and Victorian Masculinity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999) likewise takes gender into account, but not pre-Freudian psychology, instead reading Victorian works through the lens of modern psychoanalysis. Other works discussing gender and nineteenth-century psychology focus on those elements of psychological discourse that best fit their analysis of a particular author – see Michael Davis, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country* (Aldershot, Hants., England: Ashgate, 2006) and Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) – and even these tend to focus on gender in relation to the female author under discussion, rather than in the psychological discourse that they use as background.

[18] See Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

spheres; Amanda Vickery's work[19] has been particularly influential among historians for its argument that such doctrines did not inhibit women from participating in activities outside their sphere and that domestic ideology is more a current historical paradigm than a reflection of past reality. Literary critics such as John Tosh have followed in a similar vein, arguing, for example, that the doctrine of separate spheres did not keep the domestic sphere from being just as important to men as to women.[20] While these arguments have their validity, they do not explain why the doctrine of the separate spheres existed and held such a prominent place in written discourse. In other words, while women and men may indeed have routinely acted in ways that did not fit this discourse, they still often believed in it and certainly knew of it. A fuller understanding of domestic ideology, therefore, must look not only at the history of institutions and broad social changes (religion; industrialism; the home; etc.) but also at the history of ideas. Music, because it was in practice a highly gendered set of activities that were theorized in relation to their effects on the mind, provides an excellent area for investigating the intersections between the history of domestic ideology and the history of psychological thought, as it not only reflects those histories but is partly constitutive of them.

Avoiding anachronistic readings of nineteenth-century British literature depends on knowing as much as possible about these histories. Accordingly, this study is an interdisciplinary one that examines literature from the long nineteenth century in the

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[19] See particularly Vickery's widely-cited essay, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36 (June 1993): 383-414.

[20] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

context of music's cultural history. Such a study would not be possible without the pioneering work of feminist musicologists,[21] and particularly the work of scholars who have even more recently begun to explore the rich cultural history of nineteenth-century British music, most notably Derek Scott and Ruth Solie.[22] This is not the first study of music in nineteenth-century British literature, but it differs from previous studies of music in literature in focus, scope, and argument. Studies of music in nineteenth-century British literature have so far tended to focus on the female performer (the usual argument is that the female performer both transgressed and upheld traditional gender roles by putting herself on display but doing so to catch a husband).[23] Other studies focus on music in the work of a handful of specific authors, usually George Eliot or Thomas Hardy. Beryl Gray and Delia da Sousa Correa have written full-length studies of music in the works of George

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[21] The earliest work of feminist musicology is Sophie Drinker, *Music and Women: The Story of Women in Their Relation to Music* (1948. Repr., New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1995). The book fell out of print quickly, however, and was not reprinted until feminist musicology began to gather steam in the 1990s. Marcia J. Citron's *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) is one of the first, and most comprehensive, accounts of the construction of a gendered musical canon. Susan McClary's essay "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," presented to the American Musicological Assocation in 1990 (reprinted in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology,* rev. ed., New York: Routledge, 2006), raised hackles for her suggestion that Schubert's lesser reputation compared to composers such as Beethoven is due to sexism and homophobia regarding the perceived feminine/homosexual qualities of Schubert's music. McClary further explores the relationship between gender and the musical canon in her book *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). Susan C. Cook and Judy Tsou's early collection, *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), is another valuable early work, as is *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), edited by Ruth A. Solie.

[22] See especially Derek B. Scott, "The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics," *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 119 (1994): 91-114, reprinted in *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

[23] The first essay of this kind has served as a pattern for later ones: Mary Burgan's "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction," *Victorian Studies* 30 (Autumn 1986): 51-76.

Eliot; Mark Asquith has explored music in Thomas Hardy's novels. Alisa Clapp-Itnyre's *Angelic Airs, Subversive Songs* focuses on music in Gaskell, Eliot, and Hardy and argues that music was simply an instrument of patriarchy that upheld an angel/demon dichotomy. Phyllis Weliver's *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* and *The Musical Crowd in English Fiction, 1840-1910: Class, Culture and Nation* are the primary broader studies of music in Victorian fiction; Weliver is attentive to the role of ideas about the mind in literary representations of music and her work is both pioneering and insightful. I differ from her second work in my focus on gender and from her first in my basic argument. The central thesis of *Women Musicians* is that music was perceived negatively at the end of the century because of an increase in the number of women who participated in music publicly, as performers or concert organizers. However, as Gillett documents, women continued to increase their public participation in music well after music began to be discussed as dangerous, which reverses the cause and effect pattern that Weliver implies. Further, music was portrayed as dangerous to both women and men, and male musicians were also increasingly represented in negative terms. There is therefore more going on than a simple cause and effect relationship; rather, what spurred women to participate more publicly in musical activity was also what led to fear regarding music, namely, the belief that music was a meeting point for mind and emotion that could have a powerful effect on the body. Music thus again became a space where gendered values were blurred, thus making it easier for women to conceptualize themselves as composers or public performers while at the

same time leading to fear that music was contributing to the breakdown of traditional gender values.

Literature illuminates this process because literary texts[24] tend to explore imaginatively moments of fissure in the discourse at large. Some texts try to patch those fissures in order to maintain gender and class ideologies; others exploit them, but they tend to focus on the same issues and problems. Accordingly, this study looks at poems and short stories as well as novels, both canonical and non-canonical, in order to demonstrate that changes in the representation of music point to shifts in the gendering of the mind; when music as a field is most unified, arguing for gender and sexual equality is more possible because the unification of music implies a unity in and among minds.

Because this project traces the history of ideas about music and the mind alongside the history of domestic ideology, it focuses on the middle classes, for the doctrine of separate spheres was primarily a middle-class concept. The following chapters attempt to demonstrate this pattern of unification, division, and reunification by examining the ways that music was represented in literature over the course of the long nineteenth century in the context of the cultural and conceptual history of music. Chapter 1, "A Land of Music," provides a background history of nineteenth-century ideas about music and draws on a range of nineteenth-century periodicals, essays, articles, treatises, and novels in order to

[24] I am of course aware of the argument that all written work is literature, or that one cannot precisely define "literature" and therefore cannot categorize any particular type of text as "literature" (a classic example of the fallacy of the beard). However, as Wittgenstein long ago pointed out, precise definitions are always impossible; their boundaries will always be fuzzy, and yet we can still name categories. I take "literature" or "literary texts" to mean novels, short stories, poetry, and plays; I do not deal with plays in this project because music primarily shows up in Victorian drama as background music (often lost) rather than being represented in the plays themselves (although there are a few exceptions, such as the two contrasting scenes where Paula plays the piano in Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*).

show how performance, composition, and listening were compartmentalized and gendered during the early- and mid-Victorian eras. Chapter 2, "The Improvisatrice," examines poems about Sappho, Corinne, and the improvisatrice figure generally in order to show how the unification of performance and composition in this figure is first used by Romantic women poets to argue for female mental and artistic equality. Victorian men then re-cast the figure as primarily a performer in the domestic mold, thus removing a threat to male artistic superiority. By the end of the century, however, as musical divisions lose their force, the figure of the improvisatrice takes on a different significance and suggests that divisions between public and domestic, mind and emotion, are unsustainable. Chapter 3, "The Woman Listener," explores the significance of women's listening in the nineteenth century. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sensitive listening denoted a harmonious mind that united sense and sensibility; in such works as Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796), therefore, the ability to listen signals the androgyny of the well-regulated mind. By the Victorian era, however, women were encouraged to play music, but not to listen to it, a distinction made possible by nineteenth-century ideas about automaticity. As listening was increasingly seen in physical terms, however, it was also seen as something that women not only did not do, but should not do, as listening meant vibrating. Victorian portrayals of the woman listener therefore present the woman listener in sexualized terms, sometimes to argue for women's sexual freedom but sometimes to suggest that women's freedom is limited by their physical sensitivity and weakness. Fin de siècle portrayals of the woman listener, however, take advantage of the theoretical importance that listening

assumes at this period to argue that women's physical sensitivity to music augurs their sexual and creative potential. Chapter 4, "Music and Manliness," explores the changing ways masculinity was negotiated in relation to music as music became compartmentalized. Class and gender associations served to make music largely the province of middle- and upper-class women and lower- and professional-class men; gentlemen risked both their class and gender status by participating in music. The portrayal of gentleman musicians in literature, therefore, shows ways in which Victorian authors played with and modified contemporary definitions of middle-class masculinity. Finally, Chapter 5, "Music at the Fin de Siècle," looks at the changes in the conceptualization of music at the end of the century. Increasingly, music was defined as masculine on the ground that men were most capable of true emotion; the result was a blurring of the divisions between masculine and feminine in music. Music was seized upon by homosexual authors such as Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde as part of a larger discourse defining homosexuality as a spiritual orientation, rather than a physical act. Because music was also increasingly defined in terms of its effects upon the body, some feared that music could affect physical and sexual behavior. The end result was that music was increasingly seen as a fearful and negative force for both women and men, and this threat to gender and sexual categories was met in literature by the creation of such figures as Svengali, whose transgression of gender and sexual categories is vilified through anti-Semitism. By opposing themselves to the figure of the effeminate, foreign musician, the late Victorians constructed a new musical Other against which men could define themselves as masculine even in their most sensitive moments. Taken together,

these chapters show that the doctrine of separate spheres both created and reflected the doctrine of separate musical and mental spheres, and that the fin de siècle's new attitude toward gender was related, in part, to its changing ideas about music.

CHAPTER 1

A LAND OF MUSIC

> Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly....
> ~ Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman[1]

> With what a languid yawn have I seen an admirable poem thrown down that a man of true taste returns to again and again with rapture; and whilst melody has almost suspended respiration, a lady has asked me where I bought my gown.
> ~ Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman[2]

> Whether we shall ever attain to the wisdom of the old Greek philosophers, who recognised the great value of music in general education ... we cannot tell; but I believe if such should ever be the case ... that then we shall no longer be offended by the way in which music is too commonly referred to by professional novelists and others, who garnish their writings with allusions to music more or less wrong, and for the most part ridiculous.
> ~ Thomas Lea Southgate, "The Treatment of Music by Novelists"[3]

Music was both denigrated and lauded in the long nineteenth century, not infrequently by the same persons or for the same qualities. This often contradictory treatment of music has two root causes, one illogical and the other logical: the first was the need to force ideas about music into conformity with nineteenth-century ideas about gender, class, and race; the second was that ideas about music reflected and helped constitute nineteenth-century ideas about the nature of the mind. Understanding both these causes will shed fresh light on the authors examined in later chapters, whose literary

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[1] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792. Repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 154.

[2] Ibid., 291.

[3] Thomas Lea Southgate, "The Treatment of Music by Novelists," *Musical Association: Proceedings* 22 (1895/1896): 23-24.

portrayal of music is, as Mr. Southgate complained, not always strictly accurate, but instead a use of ideas about music and the mind.

The tension over music is similar, in some ways, to the tension over reading. Like music, reading was seen as both something to be encouraged and something to be controlled: "[a]ttempts to legislate about reading and its effects can be seen on the one hand as a means of gaining control over subjectivity, and, on the other, as a means of obtaining access to different types of knowledge, and through this, to different social expectations and standards."[4] Reading is dangerous because of its private effect on the emotions, but useful because of the knowledge that can be gained from it. While knowledge of the kind gainable by reading is not easily obtained from music, music nonetheless provided a training ground for the discipline of the emotions, and its effect on the emotions was, if anything, considered greater than reading's. As the Rev. H.R. Haweis, author of the widely-disseminated[5] and transatlantically popular work *Music and Morals*, put it firmly in an essay on music, "[t]he future mission of music for the millions is the DISCIPLINE OF EMOTION,"[6] and this goal was seen as important not just for "the millions" but for middle- and upper-class women and men as well, as we shall see. Like reading, then, music was a locus of tension and concern about how to manage subjectivity in relation to

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[4] Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 11.

[5] Haweis's book, itself a reworking of a series of essays published in the *Quarterly Review* (and already reproduced, sometimes in condensed form, in other British and American periodicals such as *Good Words* and *Appleton's Journal*), "went through 16 editions between its 1871 publication and the author's death in 1901" (Gillett, 4) and was frequently excerpted and cited in numerous books and journals.

[6] H.R. Haweis, "On Hearing Music," *Good Words* 16 (January 1875): 380. His emphasis, needless to say.

social duty. Unlike reading, however, music was an activity most encouraged in those who would have been supposed to be most vulnerable to its dangerous effects. Women might find or achieve time for reading; time for piano playing, however, was notorious for being forced upon them, talented or not, interested or not. What ideas of the mind make this possible?

Over the course of the long nineteenth century, a division was increasingly made between performance, listening, and composing, and a further division was made between music and poetry, long considered sister arts. The mind was held to do different things in each category. Examining these ideas helps to reconcile certain contradictions; for example, why music was considered a feminine and emotional art, and yet women were not considered suited to composing music.

Composing

Most discussions of music composition, in the nineteenth century and today, focus on the composition of art music. Occasionally (then as now), someone ventures to discuss "popular" music, that is, music that may or may not have actually been popular but which is considered to be not very good. The two are seldom considered together, except to point out that there is overlap between the two concepts. Examining both types of composition in the nineteenth century together is useful, however, precisely because it reveals that there was not a universal ideal of composition that art music conformed to and popular music fell short of. Instead, there were two ideals of composition; each ideal assumed a different audience and was aimed at affecting that audience in a particular way. Art music was

defined as such not exclusively because of its ostensible quality, but because of its audience and its putative effect on that audience; likewise, popular music was again not judged primarily on aesthetic grounds but defined in terms of its different effects on a largely (not entirely) different audience.

The eighteenth century and early nineteenth century focused less on the emotional discipline or manipulation of audiences and more on other issues, such as community and nationhood. Thus through the long eighteenth century one sees productions that, to a degree, intermingle high with low, art with the popular, in an attempt to create an art that taps into the power and authority of the spontaneous productions of a nation, whether the eminently socially acceptable productions of Felicia Hemans or the more dubious, off-color works of Thomas Moore.[7] Such attempts, however, by their very editing or imitation of indigenous productions, implicitly concede a distinction between high and low by the very act of trying to marry the two. Further, nationalistic songs and ballads were an essentially masculine genre whose ability to mingle high and low stemmed from a common root of these high and low genres in masculinized values (such as nationhood) and masculine authority (the voice of the bard, not bardess). The few women, like Hemans, who attempted this genre were women who wished to don the cloak of masculine authority, not challenge it.[8]

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[7] For a comprehensive discussion of these and similar works, as well as a more thorough explication of their functions, see Steve Newman, *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[8] Of course, Hemans is always a complicated poet to discuss, because her desires were so conflicted and her poems, to use Isobel Armstrong's phrase, so "doubled." Hemans's portrayal of the improvisatrice, a feminine analogue of sorts to the bard, is discussed in chapter 2; briefly, however, for Hemans, the

During the Victorian period, however, matters changed; increasingly, Victorian commentators voiced concern that England was producing no art music at all. As historians of nineteenth-century British music have pointed out, however, England was in fact a center of musical production and performance to which many composers and performers of other nations flocked, yet the English themselves did not view their nation as a musical one.[9] What lay behind this seeming contradiction was a shift in the conceptualization of high and low in music towards an emphasis on music's effects on listeners; art music was thought to effect listeners in a disciplinary fashion, low or popular music in manipulative one, and the English felt that their nation was primarily producing works that manipulated rather than disciplined the emotions. The common root of masculinity that had allowed high and low to rub shoulders throughout the eighteenth century was troubled at the end of that century as more and more women began to compose and perform music,[10] and the end result was a division or re-separation of high from low that served to separate the sexes into their own musical spheres.

Art music, of course, was the domain of Great Music by Great Men. This ideal aimed at modifying music's emotional power by intellectualizing it. An increasingly evolutionary (not necessarily Darwinian) view of music allowed for the idea that emotion in music could be subsumed to a large degree, just as brute passions could be controlled by

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improvisatrice dies because she has no audience – she is not a man speaking to men, but a woman speaking to no one. In part, then, the desire of Hemans's female artist figures, such as Sappho, Corinne, and Properzia Rossi, for a supportive lover and domestic setting is a desire for an audience.

[9] For a brief but comprehensive overview of England's musical activity in this period, see Ruth A. Solie, "No 'Land Without Music' After All," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32 (2004): 261-276.

[10] See Ritchie.

reason, and that music could move away from its emotive roots. This was to be accomplished by a new kind of musical composition, rather than by the older solution of marrying music to words of socially acceptable import.[11] This change in ideals also explains why music became, in some ways, less feared for its emotional power than it had long been, and was an attempt to remove a perceived feminine taint that had begun to cling to music as women were increasingly involved in music's consumption and production.

The Female Mentor of 1793 provides a summary of these fears – "The antients were of opinion, that nothing could be more pernicious to a well ordered republic than the introduction of an effeminate music, as it tended to enervate the mind, and render it too susceptible of voluptuous softness"[12] – before going on to argue that music's overly-softening power could be overcome by the addition of appropriate lyrics: "[m]usic when aided by poetry, if divested of every improper ornament, is capable of raising in the soul the most lively and sublime emotions of virtue!"[13] This was an old solution, dating back to the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer and the need for a style of singing in church that would be somehow differentiated from Roman Catholicism. John Merbeck's 1550 *The Book of Common Prayer Noted* featured a new psalter that eschewed despised "papistical" complexity[14] and instead made use of the one-syllable-one-note style of singing

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[11] This shift away from vocal music or music with lyrics towards purely instrumental music was not exclusive to England, but part of a larger European phenomenon. See Bonds, 4-13.

[12] "On Music. Conversation 26." *The Female Mentor* 2 (1793): 150-151.

[13] Ibid., 152.

[14] Morrison Comegys Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 26.

recommended by no less an authority than Thomas Cranmer in a letter to Henry VIII.[15] Centuries later, the same approach prevailed, in ideals if not in practice; the 18th number of *The Spectator* was devoted to a criticism of the popularity in England of the Italian opera, on the grounds that its lyrics and music did not match. Poor translations of Italian lyrics could result in an English singer singing of pity in music originally intended to express rage, and, perhaps worse, Italian music was filled with unnecessary trills that could have no one-on-one correspondence with a word's sense, and thus were doing something musically outside the rational control of language: "I have known the word 'and' pursued through the whole gamut, have been entertained with many a melodious 'the,' and have heard the most beautiful graces, quavers, and divisions bestowed upon 'then, for, and from;' to the eternal honour of our English particles."[16] Music and poetry should ideally be enmeshed, "lovely twin-sisters, the pride of the arts / … / Two utterances, yet the result of one soul," as composer Charles Dibdin's poem *The Harmonic Preceptor* put it.[17]

That was the old solution to managing music's power. But this long association between music and poetry largely ended in the nineteenth century, at least for art music, as the focus shifted towards an ideal of rationalized music that would not be so dependent upon the addition of words in order to mitigate music's affect but which would in itself combine emotion with reason. Increasingly, the highest form of music, under this first

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[15] E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 56.

[16] Joseph Addison, No. 18, *The Spectator* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1898), 1:96.

[17] Charles Dibdin, *The Harmonic Preceptor, A Didactic Poem, in Three Parts.* 1804. Literature Online.

ideal, was held to be some kind of absolute music, that is, music unmixed with any other art form (poetry and theater and so on). The term absolute music "is of German origin, first appearing in the writings of Romantic philosophers and critics such as J.L. Tieck, J.G. Herder, W.H. Wackenroder, Jean Paul (Richter) and E.T.A. Hoffmann,"[18] and most English commentators of the time did not use the term itself, nor did they subscribe to the idea, as did some proponents of absolute music, that music was meaningless. They were, on the contrary, deeply upset by the idea that music "is nothing more than a transient titillation of the acoustic nerves.... [with] no greater meaning or dignity than any product of the confectioner's art."[19] They did, however, describe the concept of absolute music and subscribe to the ideas that music need not be mixed with any other art and that music, at its best, was an art form whose power was capable of being managed independently of any other art form. Music and poetry were partly separated as a very practical response to the fact that the respected composers of the nineteenth century were not English; chafing under this humiliation, many English commentators broke poetry away from music in order to console themselves for being good at that, at any rate. There "is but one of the Fine Arts in which John Bull* can be said to have any instinctive sense of aesthetic excellence, and that is Poetry,"[20] and that was fine, because music is the outgrowth of inarticulate emotion and "poetry and oratory, the more independent efforts of the human

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[18] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding: Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture* (London: Methuen, 1983), 37.

[19] G.D. Haughton, "Atheism, Poetry, and Music," *Fraser's Magazine* o.s. 90 (July 1874): 50-51.

[20] "Are the English a Musical People?" *Fraser's Magazine* 43 (June 1851): 677.

mind."[21] Looking at the matter another way, "[i]t is a mistake to suppose that the music itself always gains by being associated with words, or definite ideas of any sort. The words often gain a good deal, but the music is just as good without them."[22]

Behind these authors' different attitudes towards English musical production is an agreement on the idea that music and language are separate art forms, even though they can be used together. Music had once been seen as much more closely tied to language, as having developed alongside language and from a common root, the vocal expression of the passions. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, for example,

> completely eliminates the sounds of the wind and of other animals from his origin of language and music. The presupposition of [his] Essai is that music and language are properly considered not as sounds that materially resemble other noises found in nature, but rather as artifacts relating to the history and development of culture.[23]

During the nineteenth century, however, music was increasingly seen, not as allied to language, but as having developed prior to language and as being fundamentally different from it, a view most influentially outlined in Herbert Spencer's 1857 essay, "The Origin and Function of Music." Spencer argues that "[a]ll music is originally vocal. All vocal sounds are produced by the agency of certain muscles. These muscles, in common with those of the body at large, are excited to contraction by pleasurable and painful feelings."[24]

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[21] Jonathan Peel, "Taste and Music in England [Part II]," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 53 (January 1843): 132.

[22] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 28.

[23] Downing A. Thomas, *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63.

[24] [Herbert Spencer,] "The Origin and Function of Music," *Fraser's Magazine* 56 (October 1857): 397.

Dogs bark; people grunt and sing. Music is thus for Spencer an expression of irrational, primitive emotions, while language is the expression of rationality.

One would think, then, that women and "savages" would be ideally suited to music composition, yet they were not. As pianist Anton Rubinstein put it, how was it that "music – the noblest, most beautiful, most refined, soulful, loving art that the mind of man has created, is so unattainable to woman [as composers and high-level performers], who is still a combination of all these qualities[?]"[25] The answer is that the very location of music's roots in the primitive implies an evolutionary schema where advanced music will have moved away from those roots. Somewhat strangely, music does not move away from those roots by the incorporation of its descendant, language, but by the honing of sounds into ever more complex structures that could not possibly arise spontaneously. It is for this reason that women and lower groups generally were not considered capable of this type of composition; their works would necessarily partake of the primitive and therefore function in different, less rational ways. Women were also considered incapable of art composition thanks to a method of argument widely popular among scholars today, Argument by Pun. As pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow wrote in 1880: "[W]e may allow that the fair sex possess *reproductive* genius, just as we unconditionally deny that they possess *productive* genius."[26]

The ideal art composition is therefore written by a productive man of genius for men of somewhat lesser (reproductive?) genius to perform and listen to. Music should forge order out of chaos, something most effectively, obviously, and even visually accomplished

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[25] Anton Rubinstein, quoted in Gillett, 27.

[26] Quoted in Gillett, 22.

by having a large group of various instruments play multiple harmonic lines without descending to cacophony; therefore, it is music written "for a full orchestra and divided into a series of well-worked out movements" that reveals "the man of genius."[27] This type of music should also be long. A piece need not be very long – in fact Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was originally considered too long[28] – but some length is necessary. "[V]elocity … is the … one art which music alone possesses,"[29] so it must be taken advantage of, and "[m]usical beauty is dependent upon the melodic and contrapuntal development of melodious phrases, which in themselves will have no character at all unless extended to a certain length."[30] Music should take a while to listen to, to maximize music's ability to take emotions and

> steadily put [them] through definite stages, just as definite and just as salutary to the realm of feeling, just as well calculated to bring it into discipline and obedience, as the athlete's progressive exercises are calculated to strengthen and discipline the muscles of the body.... The emotions are not allowed to run wild.... it is this power which raises music, through, but beyond, connection with the senses, into a moral agent.[31]

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[27] J[ohn] M[oore] Capes, "Roman, Anglican, and Protestant Sacred Music," *Fortnightly Review* os 8 (July 1867): 5.

[28] Solie, *Music in Other Words*, 10.

[29] Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 154.

[30] Capes, 35.

[31] H.R. Haweis, "Music: its Origin and Influence," *Quarterly Review* (July 1871): 156.

In this way, music could transcend its origins and become an art almost totally different from the organ-grinder's songs, the folk-songs of the Irish, the love-songs played by girls at their pianos, and the seldom-discussed but very popular "Negro Melodists."[32]

But music's low origins and associations were not always considered a deficit; in fact, they were sometimes a boon, and provided a way to control a different audience with a different type of music. When England was dubbed the "land ohne musik," the land without music, it was the first type of music, outlined above, that England was held to be without. This does not mean, however, what many critics have for too long assumed, that England's "popular" music was somehow either failing to be good music or bucking the establishment (retrospectively, anyway) by embodying a different aesthetic. On the contrary, low or popular music was extremely successful on its own terms; it was low because it was designed for a different audience (mainly women and the working-classes), was in fact made low for that audience, and was used both to justify the idea that this audience was in fact lower, and to control that audience through exploiting, rather than disciplining, the emotions.

Again, this trend begins with the inception of the Church of England. Congregations were suddenly required to sing in their own language rather than listening to a priest sing in Latin, and it very soon became clear that some general musical instruction was in order, the weekly discord having raised "the question of musical literacy

[32] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 507-508.

in an acute form."[33] New psalters took this need for instruction into account, the 1562 Whole Book of Psalms featuring a "'Short Introduction to the science of Musicke' in which it is taken for granted that men will want to sing psalms 'aswel in common places of prayer … as privately by themselves or at home in their houses.'"[34] The emphasis, however, was not so much on instruction as on writing simpler music so that less instruction would be needed – this is the original, practical reason behind the lofty denunciation of papistical complexity and trills in favor of one note per syllable.

Increasingly, however, music was also made low for secular purposes. Simple songs, it was recognized, made for more easily memorized lyrics[35] and thus were an ideal vehicle for indoctrination. Those who were considered most in need of such treatment were also, pleasingly, those considered most susceptible to it. This is another reason why art music increasingly distanced itself from songs with lyrics[36] – songs with lyrics increasingly had in mind a specific, low audience and the manipulation of that audience, whereas art music increasingly had in mind a specialized audience that did not consider itself in need of the moral improvement that songs strove to engineer.

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[33] Mackerness, 57.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ritchie, 80.

[36] Of course, there are famous exceptions, such as Schumann's lieder. But nineteenth-century music was *theoretically* more interested in longer, instrumental works, and the newly-invented form of the symphony. Also, Schumann was not English; English theorists and art composers were not interested in songs.

One such type of song was the magdalen song, taught to girls and women in homes for fallen women. The world was gifted with a whole sub-genre of these edifying songs, which typically featured lyrics like these:

> O God of Mercy, hear my Pray'r,
> Thy weak, thy sinful Creature save;
> Thy Voice can raise me from Despair,
> Raise me triumphant from the Grave.[37]

Such songs were meant to be sung partly in chorus and partly as a series of solos,[38] presumably to enforce the ideas that the women were collectively a sinful group and that this collective guilt did not at all abate their individual sin. Somewhat surprisingly, such songs were also given to schoolgirls to sing, partly because they were written for large groups of female voices (as opposed to most songs, which were solos), and partly as warnings.[39]

Another low song sub-genre was what might be called the Pity-the-Poor song. These songs featured pathetic, low protagonists, frequently female, such as madwomen and beggar girls. In fact, the "beggar girl image was so pervasive and acceptable a lyrical subject that even a child could write a song on this theme, and two did."[40] Such works were intended, in theory, to harness music's ability to over-ride rationality in the service of right-mindedness, and could therefore be used to manipulate a middle- or upper-class audience as well as a working-class one. Such songs' ability to effect members of different classes did

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[37] Quoted in Ritchie, 94.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 95-96.

[40] Ibid., 101.

not, however, mean that they were equally directed at all classes; the middle- and upper-classes might be manipulated through such songs occasionally, by one of their own (certainly not by working-class productions), but in general these compositions were designed to take advantage of the pleasures of music to instruct those who enjoy music but are not capable of the "emotions of sedate pleasure resulting from the fullness, gravity and expression of sacred musick,"[41] such as oratorios (quite a change from the eighteenth century, during which Charles Dibdin could brag, probably not completely truthfully, that common people up and down the country knew and could sing their voice's part to the Messiah). Even love songs served this auto-suggestive function, by encouraging girls to think about their only true road to happiness.[42]

Music was also recognized as an outlet for emotions that might otherwise find more dangerous outlets. This is another reason for the different treatment of reading and music when it comes to women: reading, it was feared, might stir up emotions; music, it was hoped, would evaporate them. The Rev. H.R. Haweis, speaking of music's cathartic function in his very popular work *Music and Morals*, argues that

> [a]s a woman's life is often a life of feeling rather than of action, and if society, whilst it limits her sphere of action, frequently calls upon her to repress her feelings, we should not deny her the high, the recreative, the healthy outlet for emotion which music supplies.... A good play on the piano has not unfrequently taken the place of a good cry up-stairs, and a cloud of ill-temper has often been dispersed by a timely practice.[43]

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[41] Anselm Bayly, quoted in Ritchie, 101.

[42] Ritchie, 85.

[43] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 516.

Women themselves often valued music for this very reason, as entries in commonplace books, for example, attest. One woman's poem on music begins, "Blest Harmony how oft Thy chearfull Strain / has rais'd my Sad, desponding Heart, when thoughts / of Sullen discontent, had sunk it down."[44]

Composing such "low" music as short, relatively simple songs with lyrics was not, therefore, something wholly despised. Low music served several useful ends. It took the "primitive," unthinking side of music and made that a plus rather than a minus. Music was recognized as having an ability to unconsciously increase a person's memory of a text and to release pent-up emotion. It was seen as a useful aid in inculcating religious doctrine and in changing personal behaviour to be both more self-monitored, penitent, and decorous, and also more charitable and thoughtful toward others – and was considered the more effective in these aims, the less intellectual the music was. Low music aimed at heightening music's affect and simultaneously directing messages towards the unconscious mind.

That these kinds of songs were so widely circulated and highly regarded explains why there were so many women composers. Contrary to most music textbooks, whose general attitude towards nineteenth-century English music is charitable silence, there were very many composers in England during the long nineteenth century, and many of them were women. Women who attempted to compose art music usually failed to get it published,[45] but music publishers opened their doors wide to women who composed low

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[44] Quoted in Ritchie, 34.

[45] Gillett, 29.

music. In the late eighteenth century, most women composers gave their names rather than registering their works as by "'A Lady' or 'A Woman of Quality,'"[46] and this trend continued throughout the nineteenth century; one late nineteenth-century music scholar compiled a partial list of 300 women composers' names just to show how easy it was to find them.[47] Women were frequent composers of hymns, for example – Cecil Frances Alexander's "All Things Bright and Beautiful" is only the most famous of many hymns written by women – and perhaps particularly of hymns for children; one of the most popular children's hymnals of the nineteenth century was Anne and Jane Taylor's Hymns for Infant Minds.[48] Women were also heavily, publicly, and acceptably involved in arranging and performing benefit concerts of these types of works.[49]

If it had proved possible to keep low music entirely separate from art music, and likewise the audiences for each, all would have been well. But such was not the case. With constant dismay, commentators note transgression of these careful boundaries: women attempting to compose serious music or who do not seem to feel sufficient pity or guilt or other demure emotions when singing songs, but instead enjoy putting themselves on display and don't pay attention to the lyrics at all; men who seem content to enjoy low music in music-halls instead of using their masculine brains to create a national music that

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[46] Ritchie, 72.

[47] Gillett, 24.

[48] Susan S. Tamke, *Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord: Hymns as a Reflection of Victorian Social Attitudes* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978), 83.

[49] Ritchie, 123-126.

does not "[vibrate] between 'When other lips' and 'Champagne Charley,'"[50] and who seem not only content, but downright incapable of enjoying any other kind of music. Low music was made low to serve various ends, but also to justify them; for example, music that was more and more written simply to save the trouble of instructing women in music's complexities[51] was taken as proof that women were incapable of understanding music's complexities. The transgression of these musical boundaries therefore harmed low music's ability to justify social stratification, and called into question the underlying concepts of the mental and emotional differences between men and women, rich and poor, white and non-white.

The problem of nineteenth-century music was thus how it was to be capable of all the things people wanted it to be capable of, without any cross-contamination. Men's intellects should be stimulated, women's emotions soothed or cathartically erased, by the self-same medium; rich people should be moved to think of others and perhaps try not to criticize those others too much, poor people to think of themselves and take up the slack left by the rich by being extra self-critical. How was music to do so many different things without any mix-ups? The nineteenth century sought an answer to this problem, and had two, which often went together. One, which is not really an answer, of course, was not to examine these contradictions or transgressions too closely; in fact, many contemporary writers seem not to notice any problems, so close were they to the gender, class, and race

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[50] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 493.

[51] Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (1954. Repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 73-76.

ideologies that help make the contradictions possible. The other was to assume that different types of minds must react differently to the same stimuli. But the fears of cross-contamination remained, showing an underlying fear that minds are all the same and that subjectivity does not mediate the perception of objects as much as, in this case, the nineteenth century would have liked.

Performance

Performance was highly valued as a creative endeavor in Western music before the nineteenth century. Medieval chants were sometimes improvised in whole or in part; certain genres included improvisation as part of the genre, such as the ricercare in the sixteenth century,[52] and in general the performer of a work was often called on to contribute to the work. This practice did not die out in the nineteenth century, but it became less and less common as performance and composition became more separated. No longer were the great composers necessarily also great performers, as, for instance, Bach and Mozart had been (Bach in fact having been much more famous as a performer than as a composer); instead, performers were "relegated in the Romantic model of musical artistry to reproduction, rather than co-creation."[53]

At the same time, the role of the performer gained a new importance in that he or she was supposed to take an intellectual art composition and infuse it with emotion, a role previously ascribed to the composer, who was supposed in the eighteenth century to

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[52] Stephen Blum, "Recognizing Improvisation," in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation,* ed. by Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 38.

[53] Ritchie, 12.

suffuse a work with emotion by writing it in a suitably emotional state: "Mattheson, in the eighteenth-century treatise on composition entitled Vollkommene Capellmeister, 'even recommended that composers "sink themselves" into various passions, taking on emotional roles in order to invent melodic expressions for them.'"[54] In the nineteenth century, however, the task of infusing works with emotion shifted to the performer (although certainly the composer was supposed still to have some role, in that performers were not expected to interpret works in any way they pleased but rather in a way appropriate to the nature of the work itself), while the composer was increasingly expected to treat composition as a mathematical endeavor, for it is the "connexion between sound and numbers . . . [that] invests music with the highest dignity."[55] Before this shift, men sang and played without shame; as this distinction becomes more clearly drawn in the nineteenth century, men might still play, but they needed more and more to justify themselves.[56] Women, however, were considered ideally suited to emotive reproduction.

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[54] James Winn, quoted in Sara K. Schneider, *Concert Song as Seen: Kinesthetic Aspects of Musical Interpretation* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1994), 14.

[55] [Eastlake,] "Music," 483.

[56] This discomfort with male musical performance in fact began in the eighteenth century, as discussed by Richard Leppert in his chapter "The Male at Music" in *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology, and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). As we shall see in chapter 4, "Music and Manliness," this discomfort only increased during the nineteenth century and particularly in the Victorian era. Men who wished to play therefore justified themselves in various ways, also discussed in chapter 4, but one way was to form professional music societies, unions, and periodicals. These periodicals were filled with demands for respect, and most of them were formed in the nineteenth century. Cyril Ehrlich's *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) and Deborah Rohr's *The Careers of British Musicians, 1750-1850: A Profession of Artisans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) detail many of these efforts, albeit without suggesting, as I do, that part of the impetus behind this rush of institutionalization and formalization was unease with being both men and musicians.

Performance was forced upon middle- and upper-class women as a necessity, but, given the new ideas about its nature and the focus on performance as an activity perfectly suited to the domestic female, performance was not respected as it had been when it was a more creative, masculine endeavor. In fact, many people were irritated by performance, as it was inextricably bound up with the need for practice, with the result that all over the kingdom girls could be heard thumping out chords or practicing songs. One essayist asks plaintively, "reader, have you ever lived next door to a family of orthodox ladies who every afternoon sing a selection of Hymns Ancient and Modern, artfully so contrived that there is at least one note in each tune half a tone beyond the compass of the performer's voice?"[57] The budding pianist, painfully plunking out ditties, does not escape condemnation, either: "[w]ould not the composer of Home, Sweet Home, whoever he may be, turn in his grave if he knew that his innocent composition was daily torturing the most Christian souls into mingled thoughts of hatred and revenge?"[58] Despairingly, some people went so far as to suggest that England submit to learn a lesson from French and German towns "where practicing is prohibited by law except at certain stated hours."[59] Women's practicing and performances contributed largely to a new phenomenon of noise pollution that the nineteenth century viewed with alarm.[60] Yet no one seems to have thought of the obvious: stop forcing girls to practice and perform.

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[57] L[ionel] T[ennyson], "Plea for Musicians," *Cornhill* 41 (1880): 549.

[58] Ibid., 548.

[59] Florence A. Marshall, "Music for the Masses," *The Nineteenth Century* (July 1892): 72.

[60] John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

Why was it so important to the nineteenth century that girls practice and perform music? They knew not only that practice was capable of endlessly irritating listeners, but that performance had its dangers. Thomas Doubleday's 1824 essay "Music, a Satire" quotes a poem that sums up some of those dangers:

> Sense, poetry, and feeling – what are they?
> Your true musician's key-note is display.
> Hear Madame, in the intervals of song,
> Lug in cadenzas, twenty minutes long;
> See Signor, gaping in an endless swell,
> To show us that his lungs are like a bell....[61]

Part of the fear expressed in this little poem is that women will display their bodies, and that is how nineteenth-century fears of women's performances are generally read; but the poem seems more concerned with the man's display of his body. The poem's more immediate concern when it comes to Madame is not with the display of her body, but with those cadenzas. Cadenzas are a form of improvisation, so one of the fears that this poem expresses is that uppity Madames will start to think that they can produce work – lengthy work at that – rather than sedately reproducing others' compositions.

However, these dangers were obviously not considered insurmountable. The risk that women would "lug in cadenzas" was seriously lowered by reducing women's musical knowledge; traditionally, performers were able to improvise at will by drawing on their knowledge of various musical rules and forms. Without this technical knowledge, improvisation was more difficult, and women were less and less taught those rules while the music available for them (or any amateur performers) to buy was increasingly

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[61] [Thomas Doubleday,] "Music: A Satire," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 16 (August 1824): 186.

simplified,[62] so that there was little chance that a woman might pick up technical knowledge on her own.

The problem of women putting themselves on display was also largely surmountable. Women were simply encouraged to think of such behaviour as despicable and low: high-class women feel it a "keen" trial to "perpetually [feel] their better selves overlooked in the homage paid to an adventitious gift.... [This is] an unfailing humiliation to a delicate mind."[63] By mid-century, "an unwholesome craving for individual display" could also be counteracted by the encouragement of "[p]art-singing and part-playing" as a member of a group, which could even, in the service of such a worthy cause, include men: "[i]t is a great gain that . . . boys are permitted to be taught the art; and that it is now generally held to be a rational and humanizing occupation for men of all conditions."[64]

Display, however, was only a problem in need of correction when women risked thinking too well of themselves or their talents. Display of the body, however unmentionable, was not necessarily a problem. Few English sources acknowledge this,[65] that is, except for novels. There the situation is made clear. Performance is necessary

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[62] Loesser, 75-79.

[63] [Elizabeth Eastlake,] "Music," *Quarterly Review* (September 1848): 490. That this quotation comes from one of the few essays on music in a nineteenth-century periodical written by a woman is telling in its demonstration of internalized values, and Eastlake received her reward for her views. Her essay, in addition to being reprinted, was highly-regarded and cited decades after its publication, and she was "among the first to be invited, two decades later, to charter membership in the newly formed Musical Association" (Gillett 146).

[64] [Hamilton Aidé,] "Amateur Music," *Cornhill* 8 (1863): 98.

[65] Solie, *Music in Other Words,* 115-116.

because it is a tool to help a woman catch a husband. The goal once met, the means can – often thankfully – be dropped, as Jane Austen sardonically indicates in *Sense and Sensibility:*

> The instrument was unlocked, every body prepared to be charmed, and Marianne, who sang very well, at their request went through the chief of the songs which Lady Middleton had brought into the family on her marriage, and which perhaps had lain ever since in the same position on the pianoforté, for her ladyship had celebrated that event by giving up music, although by her mother's account she had played extremely well, and by her own was very fond of it.[66]

The usually unspoken importance of music as a means to marriage could be humiliating to the young women forced to practice it and forced therefore into consciousness of themselves as commodities with a short shelf-life. Edith Skewton Granger in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* plays the harp and piano at the request of her hated suitor, Mr. Dombey, and shortly afterwards he and her mother arrange for her to marry him. The night before Mr. Dombey is supposed to call to acquaint Edith formally of their marriage, Edith turns angrily on her mother, speaking with scorn of her musical accomplishments:

> "I was a woman – artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men – before I knew myself, you, or even understood the base and wretched aim of every new display that I learnt. You gave birth to a woman. Look upon her. She is in her pride tonight.... Is it not so? ... Have I [not] been hawked and vended here and there, until the last grain of self-respect is dead within me, and I loathe myself? ... He sees me at the auction, and he thinks it well to buy me. Let him! When he came to view me – perhaps to bid – he required to see the roll of my accomplishments. I gave it to him.... I will do no more....[67]

Edith's self-loathing does not remove the fact that her musical accomplishments are practical. However mortifying it might be to a young woman to hawk herself, a

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[66] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811. Repr., Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2004), 27.
[67] Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (1846-1848. Repr., Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1982), 333.

conscientious parent who could afford a piano or music lessons would do well to provide them to a daughter who, unallowed to mix with the world and expected not to talk too much or put herself forward, would otherwise be in danger of silently making her way towards servant status within the family, if lucky, or hard labor, prostitution, or starvation, if not.

Performance's dangers were thus outweighed by its gains; its dangers were also contained by being largely, especially in theory, confined to the domestic sphere. Granted, there were a number of women performers who attained great popularity and critical acclaim, such as Jenny Lind, Clara Schumann, and Lady Hallé, formerly Wilma Norman-Neruda, while

> [t]he personal lives and finances of Adelina Patti, Christine Nilsson, and their colleagues and rivals received close scrutiny in the press; newspapers and journals featured gossip about and interviews with these fascinating women, whose magnificent musicianship evoked extravagant adulation, even when their power to command enormous fees was deplored.[68]

Such stars, however popular in England, were, however, not English. Further, women performers attained such status only by the end of the century (and even then only to have their money-making power "deplored"), and, further, almost all famous women performers were either pianists or singers. In keeping to the two most approved musical outlets for women, these performers helped make themselves more acceptable and were able to evoke the domestic sphere even while performing in public.

In the nineteenth century, musical instruments were not created equal – at least as far as women were concerned. Women were encouraged either to sing or to play certain

[68] Gillett, 1.

instruments, and were outright forbidden from others – the cello, flute, and violin in particular. The cello and flute were both considered too sexually suggestive:

> When a woman plays the flute, she must purse her lips; and she must do so likewise when she blows a horn, besides also giving evidences of visceral support for her tone. What encouragement might that not give the lewd-minded among her beholders? When she plays a cello, she must spread her legs: perish the thought! 'In thousands of people it calls up pictures that it ought not to call up,' primly said the anonymous *Musikalischer Almanach für 1784*.[69]

Bear in mind that the modern transverse flute, which is held sideways, was not designed until 1847; before then, and to some extent after, the flute was played by blowing into one end,[70] as the recorder still is. Even after the introduction of the more decorous transverse flute, however, the flute was still strongly frowned upon, along with wind instruments generally, because they were considered to require too much stamina and playing them might injure delicate female organs.[71] The violin was verboten for less clear reasons; in fact, nineteenth century commentators themselves did not give or even, sometimes, seem to know a reason.[72] Nonetheless, the violin was considered a highly transgressive instrument for a woman to play. One late-nineteenth century commentator wrote, "'I have … known girls of whom it was darkly hinted that they played the violin, as it might be said that they smoked big cigars, or enjoyed the sport of rat-catching.'"[73] The reasons are probably a

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[69] Loesser, 65.

[70] Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music,* 4th ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 320.

[71] Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 54.

[72] Gillett, 81.

[73] Quoted in Gillett, 81-82.

combination of the following: the violin was strongly associated with art music; the strings were often metaphorically treated as female and the bow as male – therefore the bow-wielding controller of the strings should be male;[74] and the violin is a member of the same family as the cello and allowing access to the one would make it harder to keep women from playing the other. These various limitations on what instruments women could becomingly play help to explain why women composed the type of music they did – and that in turn helps explain why they were limited in their access to instruments. Music instructors at institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music were fully aware that a good composer of art music must know something of the various instruments he will be composing for; it was only prudent therefore, not only to deny women access to composition classes, but to allow them only to study voice, piano, and harp,[75] effectively almost erasing the chance that any women could become the next Beethoven.

There were other reasons for pushing the piano besides eliminating the ability to compose art music. "The instrument was a house furnishing, and [women] were mostly at home;"[76] of course, women could quite easily have kept a violin at home. But a violin can be easily moved outside the home, whereas pianos are big and heavy and, to all intents and purposes, immobile. A girl who plays the piano is guaranteed to be in her sphere. Usefully,

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[74] Ibid., 85.

[75] Ibid., 80. The harp was not necessarily the large instrument seen in orchestras today, but was available in a smaller model that could be placed decorously upon the lap.

[76] Loesser, 64.

a piano could also double, in many popular early models, as a sewing or tea-table, or as a writing-desk.[77]

The piano was also by its very name considered ideally suited to women. Pianoforté means soft-loud; the great technical innovations of the piano were that it allowed much greater range of sound volume and that a note could be made to linger. It was associated from the beginning with fine, emotional feeling, and from fine, emotional feeling to women was less than a step. Furthermore, the piano did "not present the perpetually acute problem of the stringed or wind instruments – namely, that of making the true pitch. A key marks it ready-made, and any infant can press down a light lever"[78] – if commentators hated to hear piano- or singing-practice, at least those two were better than the screech of an untamed violin or a piercing flute. And, as mentioned earlier, music publishers increasingly published easier and easier sheet-music, almost all of it for piano; the relative easiness of this music then served as a further reason why women were considered better off playing the piano – it would not be too intellectually taxing.

The piano had even more advantages. It "makes a girl sit upright and pay attention to details."[79] While practicing, a girl "could not be out on the town spending money or engaging in flirtations. Her behavior could be aurally supervised without the physical presence of a guardian."[80] As one German commentator put it, forthrightly, piano-playing

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[77] Ibid., 245.

[78] Ibid., 73.

[79] Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 515.

[80] Ritchie, 36.

should be encouraged in young women because it "will keep the student at home"[81] – pianos, after all, are not easily moved. Piano practice could in fact keep a girl or young woman at home for a significant portion of her life. Hannah More outlined what she considered a fairly typical, if not generous, schedule:

> Suppose your pupil to begin at six years of age, and to continue at the average of four hours a-day only, Sunday excepted, and thirteen days allowed for travelling annually, till she is eighteen, the state stands thus; 300 days multiplied by four, the number of hours amount to 1200; that number multiplied by twelve, which is the number of years, amounts to 14,400 hours!"[82]

Maria Edgeworth suggested that the figure could be nearer eight hours a day for fifteen years.[83] Most of the girls compelled to undergo this labor were not, of course, particularly talented, as was fully recognized: "'How frequently in the present state of narrow feeling do we witness the sad spectacle of a girl, entirely devoid of all musical ability, compelled to drudge away for hours daily at the piano because forsooth, every young lady ought to be able to play.'"[84]

The discipline of talentlessness and constant practice largely vitiated music's emotional power in many individual cases – thumping scales and playing the same piece over and over again (with good posture) are not conducive to emotional wallowing – as

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[81] "Suggestions on Female Education. German Authorities," *The American Journal of Education* 13 n.s. (New York: F.C. Brownell; Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.; Boston: E.P. Dutton; London: Trübner and Company, 1863), 502.

[82] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799. Repr., Salem: Samuel West, 1809), 1:49.

[83] Maria Edgeworth, *Essays on Practical Education* (1798. Repr., London: R. Hunter, 1822), 2:373.

[84] M.A.E.L., quoted in Solie, 88.

working off emotion through music was not necessarily considered dangerous but could be seen as safe outlet for the release of pent-up frustration, as the Rev. Haweis recognized in the passage quoted earlier. In such cases, the piano fulfilled much the same theoretical function as the vibrator did later – the acknowledgement and attempted dissipation of instincts and feelings otherwise repressed. What made music a safe valve for women was its ability to channel those emotions, discipline them, and cathartically dissipate them. This was another reason why performance was removed from creative composition – the women who were increasingly performing were not meant to come up with their own musical expressions of frustration, but only to follow in the path trod by a more intellectual male composer.

Further, music could also deaden emotion, rather than channel its release. Music was in many cases treated as an activity that did not need to involve feeling or even, after a certain point, thought. Through practice, the nineteenth century recognized that playing would become automatic and some unconscious part of the brain would take over: "Music-making as representative of automotive processes was a significant and recurring example in scientific studies which led to an understanding that there can be multiple levels of consciousness coexisting within one person."[85]

The conception of musical performance as mechanical may also have been influenced by the invention of musical automata. While musical automata of a sort have a history that goes back to Ancient Greece, such automata could only whistle, and only as

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[85] Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 8-9. See also Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970).

long as a pump or other device forced air through a hole in the figure or statue.[86] Not until the eighteenth century did it become possible to construct automata that could be programmed to play sheet music.[87] The first of these musical automata were created by Jacques de Vaucanson early in the eighteenth century. Vaucanson's first automaton was a flute player, which he exhibited in Paris in either 1737[88] or 1738;[89] the figure was life-sized, with leather lips, and could play eleven different melodies on the German flute (notorious for its difficulty).[90] Vaucanson could even vary such features as the flute-player's "pitch, speed, timing, echo, and crescendo," and later constructed an automaton that could play the drums and tabor simultaneously.[91] The next musical automaton seems to have been created by Johann Maetzel, friend of Beethoven and probable inventor of the metronome,[92] who exhibited a life-size automaton trumpeter in Vienna in 1809 whose performance was said to be "fuller and richer than could have been got from human lips."[93] A mechanical woman built at the turn of the century was able to play eighteen

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[86] Anthony Baines, *The Oxford Companion to Musical Instruments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 206.

[87] Baines, 206.

[88] Margaret A. Boden, *Mind as Machine: A History of Cognitive Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1:84.

[89] James Burnley, *The Romance of Invention: Vignettes from the Annals of Industry and Science* (London: Cassell and Company, 1886), 212-213.

[90] Boden, 83.

[91] Boden, 83.

[92] Burnley, 215.

[93] Burnley, 216.

different tunes on a piano and could play for an hour at a time when once wound up. The lady was described in the following terms: "all her movements were elegant, graceful, and almost lifelike; before beginning a tune, she made a gentle inclination with her head to the auditors; her bosom heaved, and her eyes followed the motion of her fingers."[94] These and other musical automata were "very popular from the middle of the eighteenth century until the early nineteenth,"[95] at which point, not coincidentally, the growing affordability and middle-class prestige of the piano meant that women could be trained to memorize and regurgitate music just like automata, as commentators occasionally consciously recognized. Young Jane, in Anna Bache's didactic novelette *Clara's Amusements* (1853), for instance, is recommended by her mother not to study music, and she agrees:

> "'Mother,' said she, slowly, 'you are right, I know. It would not do for me to give up reading, and sewing, and other things. I should grow up ignorant and useless, like the lady father called a *musical automaton.* I don't want to be a musical automaton." (73)

The novel's concern is that music, divorced from mental activity, will not be sufficiently morally improving to be worth a young girl's time. In general, however, automatic musical activity in women was encouraged; it placed women in the position of machines whose winding was commandable by men, at lesser expense that a real automaton and with the additional side benefits of keeping women at home and vitiating any dangerous effects of listening to music by making performance into an automatic activity through which emotion could be expressed and thus cathartically removed but whose ability to redound

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[94] "Oddities in Music," *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* 11 (January-June 1859): 312.

[95] Baines, 206.

upon the emotions or mind and thus effect them was at the same vitiated by making domestic female performance into an automatic and sometimes expressive activity rather than one that involved active listening.

Listening

Listening was primarily the domain of men. Women played, men listened. Women were expected to play not only for the reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, but because in so doing they gave pleasure and healing to men. The playing of music was portrayed a moral duty, a gift that could help carry the listener "beyond the somewhat prosaic routine of their daily lives" and open up to them "some vista of awe, wonder, and peace,"[96] and was therefore one of the ways in which an Angel might help to control and influence her more savage male counterpart. Emily Melville, in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, uses music in just such a way. Her intractable guardian having refused to listen even for a moment to the idea that Emily not be forced to marry a boy she has hardly met, Emily is advised by the housekeeper to try music's softening influence. Accordingly,

> [o]ne morning immediately after breakfast, she went to her harpsichord, and played one after another several of those airs that were most the favourites of Mr Tyrrel.... [Mr Tyrrel's] mind was untuned, and he did not take the pleasure he had been accustomed to take in the musical performances of Emily. But her finger was now more tasteful than common. ... It was easy to trace the progress of his emotions. The furrows into which his countenance was contracted were gradually relaxed; his features were brightened into a smile; the kindness with which he had upon former occasions contemplated Emily seemed to revive in his heart.[97]

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[96] Octavia Hill, "Colour, Space, and Music for the People," *The Nineteenth Century* 15 (May 1884): 745.

[97] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (1794. Repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 55.

Of course, what this passage also illustrates is that music was not only a means for influencing a man's moral character, but a means for women to manipulate themselves into some power over their otherwise largely powerless situations. One unspoken reason, therefore, why so many girls were forced to spend so much time practicing their music by their mothers was that their mothers hoped thereby to give their daughters a measure of control over their situations. Behind the pious talk about woman's moral duty to influence her mate may often have been a desire to influence that mate into listening to her, in a broader sense. More grimly, the regimen at the piano may have been enforced by mothers in the hope that it might spare their daughters a future beating.

Men's listening therefore had many important ramifications for women; one of them was encouraging men to come home – a desire that reflected an, again, usually unspoken economic fear (men who don't come home are squandering the food money as well as endangering their souls). As such, the duty to learn music and play well could be highly daunting. The diary of one Lizzie Mason, who was sixteen at the time of this entry written in 1850, expresses how daunting this responsibility could be:

> I feel that, situated as I am, an only daughter, with a mother often sick and depressed, never gay, it rests upon one, to make our home bright, cheerful and attractive to the boys, and comfortable to Father. When I think how much boys are exposed to, how much a happy home may keep them from, and how much depends on me for making it happy, *I feel almost discouraged by my own responsibility*.[98]

Music was a diversion with a very serious point. It could keep men from exposure to the temptations of the public sphere, and its "sobering influence [so to speak] … was …

[98] Quoted in Solie, *Music in Other Words,* 106. Italics in original.

espoused by temperance workers since the participation in music-making by large numbers of the working-class population was thought to provide a social event that would replace other, less virtuous forms of entertainment."[99] Women obviously had a vested economic interest, therefore, in learning to play music and participating in a system that encouraged men's listening.

Listening was also considered important for the working classes, whose different frustrations and savageries were seen as equally in need of a musical check. As one commentator put it, "Many a childish passion has been quelled by the tones of a street organ, and many a bad feeling has been checked by the unscientific tones of a street minstrel."[100] Music (it was hoped) could therefore function as an opiate for working-class grievances. On the other hand, those who argued for the equality of the classes also pointed to music, suggesting that the masses were capable of enjoying not only low music of the type that would manage frustrations, but also could enjoy and respond seriously to art music. Social reformers John Malcolm Forbes Ludlow and Lloyd Jones, for example, pointed to working men's ability to appreciate art music as a sign of their moral progress: in a class on music at Anderson's University, Glasgow, they write, the working men "were listening intently to a fugue of Bach's, watching the treatment of subject and counter-subject, and showing by their eager looks during the performance, and their strong

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[99] Catherine Dale, *Music Analysis in Britain in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Aldershot, Hants., England: Ashgate, 2003), 11.

[100] "On the Cultivation of Music by the Working Classes," *The Magazine of Domestic Economy* 7 (1841): 193.

applause afterwards, that they fully understood the points to which I had drawn their attention, and thoroughly enjoyed the old Leipzig organist."[101]

In general, however, the listening of the lower classes was viewed with suspicion precisely because for most commentators that listening was unintellectual and capable of unconscious influencing the listener's morals. The music-halls were a focus of concern. The music-hall was problematic because it was filled with men listening to low music – the objection was not to women who played low music at home – and low music with lyrics that were not edifying: "One man 'likes' music because of the thoughts of the dance 'with merry maids amid the tedded hay' which it evokes; another because of the ballad or other poetry with which it is connected; another for the sake of his 'dear Anne' and other home associations."[102] Even less intellectually, commentators were well aware that the music-hall goer was not always interested in the music, for in the music-halls "smoking and drinking season the pleasure afforded by song"[103] – as did the young women who worked at the halls.

Some responded to this problem by suggesting that the male listener and the music-hall were really more intelligent than they seemed (they were men, after all). The music-hall, one commentator even hopefully suggested, was actually analogous to the morality play. Like the morality play, the music-hall replaced older, more serious performances, and in time would come to seem as a worthy form, just as the morality play became such despite

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[101] John Malcom Forbes Ludlow and Lloyd Jones, *Progress of the Working-Class, 1832-1867* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867), 193.

[102] "Are the English a Musical People?," 676-677.

[103] [John Oxenford,] "Popular Music of the Olden Times," *Quarterly Review* 106 (July 1859): 82.

replacing solemn mystery and miracle plays with "jests as rare as those of the 'very peculiar American comedian,' with buffoonery as wild as the pranks of the Blondin donkey, [and] . . . with gymnastics as startling as the acrobatic death of Paul Martinetti."[104] Furthermore, even the "humblest connoisseur who frequents music-halls . . . would not be content unless some specimen of a higher class of composition varied the ordinary Irish air."[105] Blood will tell. By the end of the century, however, music-halls became less controversial as they began to serve a more upper-class clientele made up of both men and women.[106]

Towards the end of the century, listening in general became more intellectualized; philosophers of mind such as Alexander Bain included listening in their theories about the mind, suggesting that listening skill demonstrated an ability to perceive "the more Intellectual sensations of sound,"[107] as opposed to sound's affect. This change took place as instruction in listening became increasingly common. Such instruction was seen as necessary, despite the possible dangers, in order to improve the state of musical instruction in the country generally and therefore increase the likelihood of producing a great composer. For most of the century, teachers of music who focused on training lower-class

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[104] Elizabeth Robins Pennell, "The Pedigree of the Music-Hall," *Contemporary Review* 63 (1893): 577.

[105] [Oxenford,] "Popular Music," 82-83.

[106] Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62, 68. Though there were music halls during the early and mid-Victorian periods that catered to both genders and a more upper-class crowd, they were not financially successful, and did not become so until the 1890s (Kift 63, 68).

[107] Alexander Bain, *Mental Science; A Compendium of Psychology, and the History of Philosophy* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884), 54.

students to sing had done so without instructing them in technical matters, such as how to read music; the sol-fa (or doe-ray-me) system, introduced in the 1870s, was an outgrowth of these efforts, and began to affect the teaching of music to all classes. The system was introduced by D. Sower and John Hullah (the latter having picked up the idea from observing instructors in France), developed by Sarah Ann Glover, and later modified by John Curwen, and covered both major and minor scales.[108] In addition to modifying and popularizing Glover's tonic sol-fa system, Curwen also began to stress that learning music's technical side was not as important as learning to appreciate music, an idea new to England but being practiced in the United States.[109] The idea of teaching music appreciation continued a trend begun by publishers of less and less technically demanding music and continued by the proponents of tonic sol-fa, and "[b]y the end of the nineteenth century the focus of music was beginning to shift from the acquisition of technical proficiency on an instrument or the voice to the cultivation of an appreciative, aesthetic understanding of music."[110] By the end of the century, the middle- and upper-classes received instruction in listening in the hope that those who could understand art music aurally would be better able to compose it. Students of music composition at Oxford now faced exams that would test their listening knowledge as well as their ability to compose mathematically-structured works.[111]

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[108] Bernarr Rainbow, "Tonic Sol-Fa." Grove Music Online.

[109] Dale, *Music Analysis*, 26.

[110] Ibid., 25.

[111] Wollenberg, 102.

Nonetheless, listening continued to be dangerous, because it was still held to exercise power over the body and to have the ability to over-ride the mind's rational processes. As listening was encouraged in both men and women, then, much anxiety surrounded listening in some quarters as music's affect became aligned with mesmerism, as Phyllis Weliver argues in *The Musical Crowd in English Fiction*. If, like mesmerism, music was able to reach an unconscious part of the mind, how could it be controlled at all, when control implies consciousness on someone's part?

On this question, as well as other musical matters, poets and novelists weighed in. We have already seen one such instance – the way that novelists made explicit the socially-sanctioned display of the female body for purposes of husband-hunting – and there are many more instances of literature drawing upon this body of ideas about music, and often in the process revealing or commenting upon its contradictions. Whether, in the end, they uphold conventional or unconventional views, literary texts tend to focus on music's disruptive potential. Nineteenth-century discourse about music was full of implications for other issues, such as authority, sexuality, and the intersection of gender and class roles. The common thread was mind – as music was defined so largely in terms of its effects, almost every definition of music implied a view of the mind that then opened up other questions. The ability of emotion to influence the mind opened up worrying symbolic, yet practical, questions about whether femininity (emotion) could have authority over masculinity (intellect), and if not, how one could prevent femininity from having authority over masculinity while still arguing that music's affect was powerful enough to over-ride the

intellect. Music's ability to influence the body opened up other worrying issues, as it suggested that music could influence or prompt sexual behavior, leading to worries about women's listening and, later, men's. Further, music's gender and class associations made it difficult to solve such difficulties by assuming that music would be controlled by gentlemen, and yet control of music's affect by gentleman was the surest route to safety. While the broader discourse focused on one element or another of music's nature, literary texts focused on the difficulties created by the intersections of those separate discussions, teasing out the wider implications of these ideas about music.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPROVISATRICE

> Or again, if we should declare that the poetic or the prophetic art is not one art when practised by men and another when practised by women, but the same, and if we should put the poems of Sappho side by side with those of Anacreon, or the oracles of the Sibyls with those of Bacis, will anybody have the power justly to impugn the demonstration because these lead the hearer, joyous and delighted, to have belief in it?
> ~ Plutarch, *Moralia*[1]

When Letitia Elizabeth Landon published *The Improvisatrice* in 1824, she sparked the interest not only of her fans but of a century. For decades afterwards, poems on the figure of the improvisatrice continued to be written and published. Many of these poems took Sappho as the type of the improvisatrice, as Landon had done; others focused on the figure of Corinne, following Madame de Staël's novel; a few wrote about nameless improvisatrices. These poems were written by a number of authors, from Felicia Hemans and Matthew Arnold to Richard Monckton Milnes, Baron Houghton, and Michael Field; some poets, such as Landon, even wrote multiple poems about the figure of the improvisatrice.

Why was this figure so fascinating to nineteenth-century poets? A few critics have attempted to answer this question, and the answer that they have given is that women poets used the figure of the improvisatrice to explore the conflict they themselves experienced between womanhood and art. In this view, the poems are "gloomy [analyses] of what it meant to be a Romantic hero trapped in a woman's body," for whom "art and love

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[1] *Plutarch's Moralia,* trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, Massachusetts: W. Heinemann, 1976): 3:243B.

were mutually exclusive"[2] because art was the domain of the masculine, a view that dovetails with a more general critical sense that "passivity and [a] sense of enclosure, exclusion, frustration and impotence … debilitated so much of the work of the nineteenth-century women poets."[3] The poems that focus on Sappho, in particular, are so associated with this paradigm about female frustration that "it is hard to imagine an article or book about nineteenth century women's poetry that would deny that 'Sappho belonged peculiarly to women and to "the feminine."'"[4] Going even further, the Sappho narrative has been called "the master narrative of nineteenth-century women's poetry."[5]

The figure of the improvisatrice in general, and Sappho as improvisatrice in particular, certainly held great resonance for women poets, and previous critics, in discussing the contradictions of being both a woman and an artist, have certainly hit upon an important reason for that fascination. However, these poems were also written by men, who are unlikely to have the same concerns. Something more is going on here, and that something more has to do with music. No previous commentator has pointed out that,

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[2] Margaret Reynolds, "'I Lived for Art, I Lived for Love': The Woman Poet Sings Sappho's Last Song," in *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Angela Leighton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 278.

[3] Dorothy Mermin, "The Damsel, the Knight, and the Victorian Woman Poet," in *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Angela Leighton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 211.

[4] Linda H. Peterson, "A Sappho History [review]," *CLIO: A journal of literature, history, and the philosophy of history* 34 (Fall 2004): 138.

[5] Adriana Craciun, "Romantic Satanism and the Rise of Nineteenth-Century Woman's Poetry," *New Literary History* 34 (Autumn 2003): 708.

while the historical Sappho was a poet and musician,[6] the nineteenth-century poems about Sappho emphasise the latter, often to the exclusion of the former. Indeed, the function of music in these improvisatrice poems has not really been discussed at all.[7]

Why does music matter? Because music was gendered differently from other arts. When previous critics have argued that these improvisatrice poems portray a conflict between being a woman and being an artist, what they mean, either explicitly or implicitly, is that the poems portray a conflict between being a woman and being a poet. But the improvisatrice is not exclusively a poet; she is also a singer or musician of some kind. Poetry has long been an art associated, somehow, with every feminine quality (sensitivity, emotion, etc.) and yet also with masculine abilities (genius, intellect, and so on). Music, however, was an art that was, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, very much associated with women, both in terms of music's nature itself (likewise emotional) and in actual practice: in 1824, when Landon published *The Improvisatrice*, people in England who heard music generally heard it coming from the throat or hands of a woman.

The improvisatrice is thus a more complicated figure than she has been made out to be. She is a woman and a poet and a musician, and each term fights with the other:

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[6] Poetry does not seem to have existed separately from music in Ancient Greece. In fact, scholars of ancient Greek poetry sometimes refer to the "Sappho lyre" and the "Sappho scale" in discussing the type of instrument and musical accompaniment Sappho may have used, as inferred from her surviving fragments of poetry. See, for example, George Thomas Carruthers, *The Ancient Use of the Greek Accents in Reading and Chanting* (1897. Repr., [Charleston, SC:] BiblioBazaar, 2008), 28. See also John G. Landels, *Music in Ancient Greece and Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[7] The nearest approach is Angela Esterhammer's *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); in her introduction, Esterhammer discusses the importance of improvisation in pre-nineteenth-century music going back to Johann Sebastian Bach (3, 5). However, Esterhammer only mentions music to argue for improvisation's wider importance and prestige; music does not figure in her later discussion of the improvisatrice figure in British poetry.

"woman" and "poet" do not sit comfortably together in a society which makes the phrase "woman poet" both possible and oxymoronic; poetry, a masculinized art, and music, a feminine one, give different answers to the question of woman's proper relationship to art; and while women and music were considered a fine and laudable combination in the domestic sphere, the improvisatrice operates in the public sphere. Any portrayal of this figure, then, has important implications for questions about the relation of art to gender and for questions about the proper relation of art to audience.

The portrayal of the improvisatrice changes significantly over the century, indicating a changing conception of the nature of and audience for art, as well as changes in the conception of gender. First, a group of women writing in the first third of the century employs the figure of the improvisatrice in ways that revalue femininity by giving it authority, that simultaneously critique the contradictory construction of femininity in the culture at large, and that point to the gendered nature of the implicitly universalized artist figure. Second, a group of men writing primarily in the mid-nineteenth century portray the improvisatrice in ways that seem similar on the surface but which must be understood in the context of a changing discourse about music that serves to redefine the improvisatrice into a feminized figure without authority or autonomy. Finally, by the end of the century, the discourse about music has shifted again in such as a way as to again revalue the improvisatrice and argue for a view of the woman artist as both commanding authority and an audience.

The Authoritative Improvisatrice

The improvisatrice was in many ways the opposite of the nineteenth-century female performer. Performance was an exercise in discipline; as we saw in chapter 1, four to eight hours a day of practice was not uncommon. The result was a frequent mechanization of music: throughout the century, "every young lady [learned] to play and sing, by a certain mechanical process, similar to that by which she acquires dexterity in Berlin-wool work or crochet-knitting."[8] The young woman at the piano was often considered a "musical automaton"[9] whose playing served almost any purpose except that of producing art and whose time at the heavy, unmoveable piano served to ensure that she was at home readying herself for the marriage market. The improvisatrice was the opposite of this obedient figure.

This is not to say that the improvisatrice does not conform to certain conventional gender expectations. The improvisatrice's spontaneous poetic/musical productions are frequently aligned with the breath of nature in these poems, making the figure of the improvisatrice into a kind of human Aeolian harp. The improvisatrice's productions are portrayed, usually, as the result of her close ties to nature, to her status as nature's vessel, and to her ability to feel strongly. In these respects, the improvisatrice is a passive and conventionally feminized figure. Yet her very location out-of-doors, as opposed to sitting for hours in a drawing room, and her ability to stop or start her song at any time (rather than

[8] Frances Hullah, quoted in Sarah McNeely, "Beyond the Drawing Room: The Musical Lives of Victorian Women," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 5 (Summer 2009), paragraph 11.

[9] Bache, *Clara's Amusements*, 73.

following a prescribed schedule) complicate her gender role by going against the historical model of the period.

As Isobel Armstrong has argued of Romantic women's poetry in general,[10] these early improvisatrice poems by women are double poems – they conform to conventional gender expectations only to undermine them. Landon's 1824 poem "Sappho's Song," for example, continually points to the contradictory nature of constructed femininity. Written as a dramatic monologue, the poem assumes the reader's knowledge of the story first told by Ovid, that Sappho fell hopelessly in love with a man named Phaon and threw herself over a cliff in despair when he did not return her love. The poem is set in the moment before Sappho kills herself and gives Sappho's farewell to her lute. At first, conventionally enough, Sappho seems to blame her lute for her current state of unrequited love: "Poison has been upon thy sigh / And fever has breathed in thy words" (3-4). But quickly Sappho avoids imputing the lute's "poison" to the detrimental influence of art. Being an artist has not poisoned her life; "I should have been the wretch I am, / Had every chord of thine been mute" (7-8). Having rejected a conventional explanation, Sappho tries a new explanation and blames fate:

> It was my evil star above,
> Not my sweet lute, that wrought me wrong;
> It was not song that taught me love,
> But it was love that taught me song. (9-12)

The line, "It was not song that taught me love" seems puzzling. The poem began with Sappho giving a conventional account of her misery and then rejecting it; in this line, she

[10] Isobel Armstrong, "'A Music of Thine Own': Women's Poetry – an Expressive Tradition?" In *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Angela Leighton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

seems to be following the same pattern of setting up a conventional explanation in order to replace it with another in the next line, one that avoids blaming herself for being unfeminine. But the first explanation does not seem quite conventional, this time. A nineteenth-century commentator would have been ready enough to blame a woman's being an artist for her troubles in love, but no one would have suggested that artistry *teaches* a woman love. This is one of Landon's first tricks in the poem; having set up a pattern of conventional account / revised account, she encourages the reader to take this second "conventional" account at face value, but here the conventional account is phrased in such a way as to undercut itself. Even before the next line, which makes the point more strongly, this line suggests that song is not, in fact, the problem here, because the only way song even could have been a problem is by leading Sappho to her real problem, love. Thus the poem suggests both that it is impossible to be a woman and an artist, and (because the art in question is a feminized one) that is impossible for a woman *not* to be an artist. Caught in the nexus of these impossibilities, Sappho cannot but die. The grave is "glorious" (19) because only there can Sappho – in all sides of her femininity – sleep "calm" (20).

Likewise, Felicia Heman's 1834 poem "The Last Song of Sappho" portrays Sappho as both unable to be an artist, because a woman, and unable not to be an artist, for the same reason. Before killing herself, Sappho laments the waste of her talents, and orders the sea to

> Give to that crown, that burning crown,
> Place in thy darkest hold!
> Bury my anguish, my renown,
> With hidden wrecks, lost gems, and wasted gold. (29-32)

At this moment, the poem is clear; Sappho is a Christ-figure, with her burning crown and her anguish, and her artistic gifts are like gems and gold whose only "fault" is having been, not unrecognized, but hidden and wasted by others. Yet Sappho also has a "winged nature" (37) and watches with envy a bird that, by implication, lives the life that Sappho wants for herself: "Thou sea-bird on the billow's crest, / *Thou* hast thy love, thy home" (33-34). The ideal of conventional domestic femininity has been denied Sappho, but she envies domesticity nonetheless. She seeks death, in the end, as a way of obtaining domesticity: just as the sea-bird has offspring that "wait thee in the quiet nest, / … I, th'unsought, unwatch'd-for – I too come" (35-36). With that, she leaps from the cliff to her "nest" in the final line of the poem: "*Alone* I come – oh! give me peace, dark sea!" (40). Yet Sappho's suicidal achievement of domestic peace equates conventional femininity with death. As in Landon's poem, the underlying problem is the impossible but real tie between femininity and art: Sappho, in this poem, reflects that her lyre is broken because "The heart whose music made them [the strings] sweet, / Hath pour'd on desert sands its wealth away" (23-24). The feelings of the heart are described as being music in themselves, and they lead to the production of an audible music which is both inevitable and feminine and yet, because it is a form of art, simultaneously inappropriate for a woman.

Women's improvisatrice poems do not only point out the contradictions of female involvement in a feminized art form; they also take advantage of that oxymoronic association of "feminine" and "art" to revalue femininity by giving it an intrinsic artistic authority (albeit one unrecognized by society at large, represented by the indifferent

beloved, Phaon). The popular choice of Sappho as the type of the improvisatrice lent to the woman artist the authority of the ancient Greeks, who considered Sappho perhaps the greatest poet – male or female – of all time.[11] (Perhaps it was also a secret satisfaction that the language Sappho could manipulate so fluently was Greek, the language deemed too hard for nineteenth-century women and their ovaries.) Similarly, the poems that took Corinne for their model of the improvisatrice tapped into nineteenth-century fascination with, and respect for, ancient Italy and Rome. In Felicia Hemans's 1830 poem "Corinne at the Capitol," the Capitol is Rome, which crowns this "Daughter of th' Italian heaven" (1) with laurel. The poem, as is usual with Hemans, attempts to undercut this masculinization of Corinne by telling readers that

> Happier, happier far than thou,
> With the laurel on thy brow,
> She that makes the humblest hearth
> Lovely but to one on earth! (45-48)

but at the same time the poem has revised what "femininity" means: instead of a simple opposition between masculine and feminine women, with only the feminine ones truly happy, the poem blurs male / female distinctions by placing Corinne in the position, not only of artist, but of triumphant military hero and ruler. Corinne is repeatedly likened to a fire, something bright and destructive; her car traces the path "Where the conqueror's pass'd of old" (4) and she walks the road where "Freedom's foot so proudly trode" (10). She is surrounded by the "tombs of heroes" (11) and is, by implication, the living hero, the successor to ancient warriors and emperors. At the same time, however, Corinne is

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[11] For a discussion of Sappho's ancient reputation, see *Greek Lyric I: Sappho and Alcæus*, ed. by D. A. Campbell (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

contrasted with these heroes, as well as being compared to them: the earth of the heroes' tombs has given forth flowers, which Corinne wears upon her head like "a soft and rosy rain" (15). While Corinne is saluted with "victorious notes" (21), her own voice, responding, has a "low and lovely tone" (27), and she is a musician whose

> lyre's deep silvery string,
> Touch'd as by a breeze's wing,
> Murmurs tremblingly at first,
> Ere the tide of rapture burst. (29-32)

All of this serves to make clear that Corinne is both a worthy successor to the great heroes of old *and* that she is a proper lady, nonetheless, whose musical talent is expressed fully only after some feminine diffidence. Thus, as Glennis Stephenson has argued,[12] when the last verse of the poem tries to imply that Corinne is unhappy because she is too masculine, the moral rings hollow because the poem has already both argued that Corinne is feminine and has blurred the distinctions between masculine and feminine, warrior and peacemaker, hero and housewife. The poem, in short, tries to grant Corinne authority as a woman artist by muddling both terms – femininity and masculinity are blurred just as the artist is compared to a warrior as well as a musician – but the same muddling that makes female authority possible also undercuts it.

The improvisatrice's freedom from the discipline of a schedule performs a similar function in both granting the improvisatrice authority and autonomy and taking it away at

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[12] Glennis Stephenson, "Poet Construction: Mrs Hemans, L.E.L., and the Image of the Nineteenth-Century Woman Poet," in *ReImagining Women: Representations of Women in Culture,* ed. by Shirley Neuman and Glennis Stephenson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 63. Stephenson backs away from this point, however, arguing that Hemans ultimately is a conventional poet who conforms to conventional expectations.

the same moment. In "Corinne at the Capitol," Corinne's playing of the lyre is likened to the movement of a breeze along the strings, placing Corinne's music in the position of Aeolian harp, moved from without by forces more powerful than Corinne herself. At the same time, however, Corinne's hand is likened to the breeze, aligning Corinne with those powerful forces of nature and turning her instrument into the obedient vessel of her own gift. This comparison of the woman artist to a natural force clearly works two ways: it undermines the authority of the woman artist by making her art something primitive, emotional, inarticulate, and (in sum) "feminine." At the same time, this comparison to nature comes at a historical moment when such comparisons are being made regarding men and an implicitly male vision of Art. To receive Nature's imprimatur is to receive an irreducible authority. Caroline Norton's 1840 poem "The Picture of Sappho" employs the figure of the Aeolian harp to imply that the creation of art is not only natural to women, but necessary to the world. In this poem, Sappho is described as sitting alone, at sunset, looking at the fading sky with her "harp neglected by thee idly lying" (15). The wind then

> with low rustling wings,
> Among the quivering strings
> The murmuring breeze faint melody was making,
> As though it wooed thy hand
> To strike with new command,
> Or mourn'd with thee.... (19-24)

This descriptive scene allows the poem to suggest that nature itself desires Sappho to make music, thus making human opinions (even Sappho's own) irrelevant. Nature even seems to suggest that Sappho should perform publicly, by giving her permission to "strike with new command" – those who can command need not obey, and therefore need not be confined

to the domestic sphere. If Sappho does not "strike with new command," then nature mourns. The poem also suggests that public performance is natural by conflating Sappho's touch on the harp with nature's. The association between women and nature is an old one, but by drawing on it here the poem suggests that a woman's performance may or even should be similar to nature's, and nature does not confine itself to drawing rooms. As a final touch, the poem's first mention of romance comes in line 22, "[a]s though it wooed thy hand." Like Landon, Norton suggests that romance itself provides the inspiration for public musical performance. Art is therefore not only natural to women, but so is performance – even public performance. As prolific and popular composers of published songs, Norton[13] and Hemans[14] had both experienced the double bind of being a woman whose performance of music was encouraged and yet discouraged – women were supposed to perform for others, just not very many others – and these poems respond to this bind by making nature, rather than the size or location of the audience, the criterion for whether a performance is proper or not.

Many of these poems use the presence or lack of an audience to question, ultimately, what it means to be an artist at all. In so doing, these poems point to an awareness of the ways that art and artistry are implicitly gendered as male and ponder what such male definitions mean for the female artist. There has been much debate recently over the Romantic conception of the artist, as modern critics point out that the Romantic artist

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[13] Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 65.

[14] Steve Newman, *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 183.

was not necessarily conceived of as a lone individual expressing himself, but also as a social individual whose art depended upon communication as much or more than on self-expression. The poet of the time, as typified by such figures as William Wordsworth and William Blake, has thus often seemed a contradictory figure, "both an isolated consciousness, and … a socially orientated poetic radical."[15] At times, critics have tried to resolve this seeming contradiction by describing an individual poet as evolving away from an isolated self towards a communitarian one, or vice versa, depending largely on the critic's personal preference for one type of self over the other. Some critics have argued that the solitary self (to use Anne Janowitz's terms) is really a male self and the communitarian self, a female one: Anne Mellor, for instance, argues that the concept of selfhood most common in women's poems of the nineteenth century is of a "self that is interactive, absorptive, constantly changing, and domestic. … a self that is *embodied*. … a self that does not name itself as a self"[16] but instead is other-directed and defined in relation to others, in contrast to the disembodied, static, ego-ridden self of men's poems. Taking the opposite tack, Kari Lokke has argued that a discourse of solitary transcendence pervades Romantic women's writing, a discourse which should be understood as a response to and rejection of the community of patriarchy by positing the possibility that women can free themselves of patriarchal restrictions through art.[17] Yet other critics have argued that many Romantic

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[15] Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

[16] Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 156, emphasis in original.

[17] Kari Lokke, *Tracing Women's Romanticism: Gender, History, and Transcendence* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

writers exhibit both types of selfhood simultaneously and that "the dialectic of romanticism in its formation, and in its life through the nineteenth century, is linked to individualism and communitarianism as integrally related – neither fully opposed nor chronologically successive – models."[18] Each argument depends, of course, to some extent on the texts it examines: Mellor compares men's poetry to women's novels; Lokke analyses women's novels from three different countries; Janowitz examines men's poetry only.[19] Clearly, the answer to this question about the early nineteenth-century conception of the artist depends in part on the combination of genres and countries under examination.

The improvisatrice poems of this period provide a way to examine this question by seeing how women themselves portrayed the female artist's role through the medium of poetry, a traditionally male genre. In all these poems, the improvisatrice's relation to an audience is important; in many, what is important is the lack of an audience. Sappho, for example, in most of these poems, performs for herself alone before killing herself. This lack of audience makes the improvisatrice a solitary, expressive figure. This solitude, however, should not be seen simply as an expression of sadness and depression,[20] but (to borrow Lokke's terms) as a transcendence of a historical condition – in this case, the demand that women put themselves on display and practice and perform music for others rather than for themselves. At the same time, these poems imply that community, and community

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[18] Ibid., 11-12.

[19] Female literary figures such as Joanna Baillie and Anna Barbauld rate only brief mentions in Janowitz's book, being generally dealt with in a few sentences or the occasional paragraph. Extended discussion and analysis is reserved for men's writings.

[20] As, for example, Margaret Reynolds argues.

response, are necessary for full artistry. The difficulty for the improvisatrice is that the community whose response she desires is really a male community. In Landon's 1835 poem "Sappho," Sappho becomes more solitary the more she wants love, for

> a soul
> So gifted and so passionate as her's
> Will seek companionship in vain, and find
> Its feelings solitary. (66-69)

There is no community for someone like Sappho, because community is male (signified here by Phaon), and men see women as existing only in relation to men, as being only a "young bird, whose early flight he trained" (31). The bind here is that respectful community response requires recognition of legitimate autonomy, and yet the improvisatrice's autonomous expression is itself grounded in love, which implies the insufficiency of autonomy and the need for acceptance by others.

The improvisatrice is a lady minstrel; as a minstrel, she should have an authoritative ability to use art, or rather the allied arts of music and poetry, to speak to the community. Various critics have argued persuasively that this kind of community role accounts for the popularity of the figure of the minstrel in Romantic poetry and for the frequency with which "canonical" poetry borrows from ballads.[21] The lady minstrel, however, is a different breed altogether; the modifier "lady" means that the minstrel is no longer a man speaking to men, but a woman speaking to men who aren't listening. There can be no community

[21] For further discussion, see Maureen N. McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Newman, *Ballad Collection*; and Erik Simpson, *Literary Minstrelsy, 1770-1830: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish, and American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

under such circumstances, and yet solitude is not able to sustain its ability to transcend patriarchal deafness; the result is death.

Despite all these contradictions, there is one way in which the improvisatrice is an unambiguous figure: her status as improvisatrice means that she is both performer and composer, and in most of these poems the improvisatrice also listens to her own songs. Her complete and unfragmented musical ability signals a valuable harmony of mind. If music is "undoubtedly the most intellectual of all the pleasures to which the senses serve as avenues,"[22] the improvisatrice is a figure who unites intellect and emotion, mind and body, in a combination whose threat to binaries results in a death that symbolizes the ultimate erasure of all binaries as much as the unforgiving nature of patriarchy. In the words of Yopie Prins, "the success of Victorian women's verse depends on the repetition of a loss or failure that is the very means of its literary transmission.... If all such poems are doomed to fail, then nothing succeeds like failure."[23]

The Commandable Improvisatrice

By mid-century, as we saw in Chapter Two, the discourse about music shifted considerably as music was fragmented into the separated disciplines of performance, composition, and listening. A number of men write poems about the improvisatrice at this point, and they too portray the improvisatrice as a musician. Because the discourse about music has changed, however, their portrayal of the improvisatrice carries a very different

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[22] J.W.T., "On the Amusements of the Studious," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 7 (January 1823): 52.

[23] Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 244-245.

resonance. In these men's poems, the improvisatrice's voice is a soft, quiet voice whose existence is usually dependent in some way upon either a male auditor or a male recorder. This both reflects and reinforces the relegation, or re-relegation, of women and their productions to the domestic sphere; music becomes more tied to the body and thus women's voices are portrayed as lovely, but too weak to be widely heard and thus literally incapable of participation in the public sphere. Women's songs can only reach a wide or public audience through being heard, recorded, and disseminated (pun intended) by men. Further, as music was increasingly seen as a primitive, semi-articulate art that preceded and was therefore inferior to language and poetry, defining the woman artist as a musician served to relegate her to a safely feminine place and thus largely vitiate the threat that figures such as Sappho posed to a patriarchy whose admiration for the Greeks and their opinions was only increasing.

In David Moir's 1852 poem "The Improvisatrice,"[24] for example, the nameless improvisatrice is portrayed as an "enchantress" (206) with a face that looks "fair and feminine" (207) but which hides a "fathomless abyss of passion" (207) – qualities implicitly contradictory. This improvisatrice sings with "syren witchery" (206) her songs about battles and deeds of long ago. The improvisatrice's blurring of male/female boundaries in her choice of subject matter is thus explained, after a fashion, by making the improvisatrice a creature not quite human and definitely a little dangerous. This element of danger

[24] David Macbeth Moir, "The Improvisatrice. Illustrative of a Picture by Bone, Engraved by Romney," in *The Poetical Works of David Macbeth Moir,* ed. by Thomas Aird (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1860). All references are to page numbers, rather than line numbers (not given in this edition).

disappears, however, when the poem reveals that this vision of the improvisatrice is really the creation of a male artist's trompe l'oeil painting. The "syren's shape" is now "in Memory's love enshrined" (208) because now not a real woman, but rather a "brilliant dream" created by "the power of Genius" (207) – the man who paints the improvisatrice. The gender uncertainty of the figure is now explained; the improvisatrice is not a woman with manly qualities or a figure who blurs the boundaries between masculine and feminine, but rather a inevitably masculinized vision of woman by a man whose intractable masculinity is proved thereby.

Other men's poems likewise make the improvisatrice's existence or reputation in some way dependent on men. Charles Christopher Bowen's 1861 poem "Sappho's Last Elegy" emphasizes the importance of men in allowing Sappho to be remembered at all. This poem begins as the historic Sappho, about to kill herself because Phaon will not love her, speaks some last words. She begins by trying to console herself with the thought of her future fame:

> The future's glory
> Shines around me here to-day;
> And I hear them sing my story
> In the ages far away. (9-12)

This future fame will be dependent on others, however:

> Bards of foreign aspect telling
> Of my hapless love to thee;
> And the Sapphic numbers swelling
> In a tongue unknown to me. (17-20)

Bowen, of course, is one of those "bards of foreign aspect." Subtly, Bowen grants himself legitimacy here; he manages the problem of Sappho's ancient reputation by becoming the voice of Sappho, and by pointing out that her voice is dependent on others such as himself. He is able both to be Sappho, and to be superior to her. Of course, in a sense Bowen is too clever by half here; he needs to assume Sappho's legitimacy in order for it to mean anything that he can both imitate and be superior to her (there is no merit in imitating or transcending slop), but he undercuts Sappho's legitimacy by pointing out that her song only exists because of those after her retelling it – and thus neatly undercuts the platform he was building to stand on. In this circular poetic reasoning, there is no very firm base. Critics such as Yopie Prins have argued that this problem is characteristic of women's Sappho poems, that to "claim authorship on the model of Sappho is to predict one's own death,"[25] but clearly this particular problem applies to Bowen's poem as well and is thus not gender-specific.

The poem continues by imagining the role of the poet as Sappho imagines a future where

> Down the paths of human story
> Hand in hand, we wander on;
> The Poet-god unites our glory,
> Bids our poet-souls be one. (29-32)

The "Poet-god" may, modestly, not mean Bowen, but the Poet as Concept, who rolls through the ages "uniting" comparatively little (uncapitalized), individual "poet-souls" like Sappho's. Or the "Poet-god" may in fact mean Bowen. Or, in yet another possibility, the

[25] Prins, 179.

"Poet-god" may mean Sappho's beloved (who, in this poem, is named Alcæus, not Phaon), since Sappho's reflection about Poet-gods is brought on by listening to Alcæus:

> Hark! Alcæus' strains, ascending,
> Mingle on the same sweet lyre,
> Like a mighty furnace blending
> With my trembling love-lit fire.
>
> Bolder words to bolder numbers –
> Numbers tuned to victory.
> Gently waking Lesbian slumbers.... (21-27)

Sappho's song is "trembling," a product of her love, and ultimately ineffectual – it does not stir Alcæus and is only preserved by other men – , in contrast to the bolder words and numbers of Alcæus, which nevertheless are capable of blending with Sappho's strains even as they surpass them, "ascending." In all cases, however, the Poet-god is masculine.

Similarly, in "A Dream of Sappho" (1876), by Richard Monckton Milnes, Baron Houghton, Sappho's voice is only heard because a man is there to hear it. The poem begins with a sailor gazing at the moon. His comrades are either asleep or dozing, and all is so pleasantly quiet that the sailor

> prayed that not a soul might wake,–
> To be left utterly alone,–
> That not the faintest human tone,
> The silence of that time might break. . . . (13-16)

Yet, beginning to listen to the sounds around him, he "began, in that light breeze, / Glancing along those noted seas, / To trace a harmony distinct" (25-27). The sound grows clearer, becoming "Two murmurs beautifully blent, / As of a voice and instrument,– / A hand laid lightly on low chords" (37-39). The voice is Sappho's. She recounts her story, but

this time with a new aftermath: after throwing herself off the cliff, she sought entrance into Heaven. Some underlings are willing to let her in because of her beautiful songs, but the "queenly form and stern" (110) of the gatekeeper, Themis, stops her and asks if Phaon "[w]as clear forgot" (124). Sappho admits that she still loves him and belongs to him: "For I was Sappho, – Phaon's Sappho still" (132). Themis is highly displeased, but Sappho cries out that "'Heaven was not Heaven, if Phaon was not there'" (136). Themis, unmoved, refuses Sappho a place in heaven, not for blasphemy or placing Phaon above God, but because

> 'Thou hast defiled the Gods' most choicest dower,
> Poesy, which in *chaste* repose abides,
> As in its atmosphere;–that placid flower
> Thou hast exposed to passion's fiery tides. . . . (141-144, my emphasis)

Sappho is instead condemned to wander, and so she does, relating this story in order provide context for her eventual question, "Dear Stranger, tell me where is Phaon now?" (152). Having related her story and asked her question, Sappho the Voice suddenly is heard no more, and the sailor "started to my feet;–the tall white Rock / Walled the far waste of silent sea, the morn / Light-lined the East, on grey-white wings upborne" (156-158).

The poem establishes male control over Sappho in a number of ways. Sappho is only heard through a male listener, and her words are reported through him. The very title of the poem, "A Dream of Sappho," in tandem with the poem's plot, emphasises that this is not a dream made by Sappho but a dream about her: Sappho is the male speaker's creation. Although the poem suggests at one point that the voice of Sappho came out of

nowhere, in fact it is the speaker's finely discerning ear that precedes there being anything to hear and thus his hearing that allows Sappho's voice to come into being, drawing it into existence, just

> as of old the alien maids,
> Who sanctified Dodona's shades,
> Drew out the tale of human fate,
> From sounds of things inanimate. . . . (17-20)

The sailor-speaker is thus compared to the oracular priestesses of Dodona who made predictions and recommended actions based on the rustling of tree leaves. To paraphrase the quotation from Plutarch at the head of this chapter, the oracles of the Sybils may not be placed side by side with those of Bacis, for the power of a Sybil may be matched by even a humble sailor.

Further, Sappho's very voice, her ability to sing, is an ability made possible by a male listener and a male creator, and is limited to a natural, emotional song that is compared to a "blossom" (33) and to a flowing stream (47, 58-60). After death she becomes part of another stream, "whose æthereal flow / Came to my senses like a perfumed sigh, / From the rich flowers that shed their light below" (93-95), but she is later excluded from the "tide of sound" (97) when she is cursed. Music is natural to Sappho, to the extent that her song is narrowly feminine, but access to this part of her own nature is constantly mediated by others. Sappho's involvement in music is also largely passive; she is more likely to be a disembodied spirit floating in the "tide of sound" than a woman actually creating music. In fact, when Themis first begins to question Sappho about Phaon, Sappho regains consciousness: "Then I into my conscious self returned" (116). The fact that she was

unconscious before helps to characterize Sappho and her music as so much more emotional than analytical as to be entirely unthinking and unconscious. Music is thus an outgrowth of femininity (unthinking and unconscious as it is), and yet Sappho can be divorced from the "tide of sound" and therefore part of herself at any time, because her self is not fully her own at any time.

Sappho is only a voice in this poem, which might seem to tie her identity more strongly to music. But she uses that voice only to speak to a man in order to ask about another man. And limits are placed on her song; her song is only acceptable when it "in chaste repose abides" (142), thus making clear the covert rationale for the insistence that women make music only in domestic settings. It may seem odd that Sappho's song is condemned for an unchastity of feeling that has "defiled the Gods' most choicest dower" (141) and yet no criticism is implied of her ceaseless search for Phaon, the man who inspired the "fiery tides" (144) that "defiled" her music, but making Sappho's song and voice only tools in her search for Phaon makes her song both Low and domestic and therefore avoids having it be Art. In short, Sappho's song should be limited while her self should be male-focused – two goals that, here, would ideally work hand in hand to restrict Sappho's self and her self-expression to a domestic sphere where she is dependent on men.

Part of the reason the improvisatrice is dependent on men, not just emotionally but as an artist, is because the nature of her art is feminine. With the doctrine of the separate spheres now firmly in place in a way it had not been for the women Romantic poets who took the improvisatrice as their theme, making the improvisatrice's song feminine implies

that it belongs to the domestic sphere. Its presence in the public sphere must therefore be explained as a result of men's hearing, men's written records, or men's memories – all of which can take place in the public sphere.

Making the improvisatrice dependent on men for entry into the public sphere not only explains away the improvisatrice's blurring of gender boundaries; it also ensures that the improvisatrice's art will be of a more specifically feminine and therefore lesser kind. In Henry Ellison's two Petrarchan sonnets "Sappho" and "Sappho Antique," both published in 1875, Sappho's music is "rainbow-hued" but "of less circumference" ("Sappho" 10) than men's. The music of Sappho, and women generally, is "pure, primitive, direct, intense" and – perhaps most importantly – "Innocent as the flowers" ("Sappho Antique" 6-7). This purity and delicacy, combined with "subtleties of brains / And hearts more finely strung with fancies rare" ("Sappho" 7-8), is the justification for Sappho's singing:

> It were a loss unto the Muses, were
> A void in life; a chord that mute remains,
> With subtle-sweet vibrations, joys and pains,
> Were Woman Museless. ("Sappho" 1-4)

The woman is given license to sing by men, because her song is of a limited, female nature that does not overlap or compete with men's, and which may benefit men by teaching those who "little care / To know, nor could he, many things which are / In Woman's heart and being" ("Sappho" 4-5). More importantly, however, men will not so much learn about women as learn about *themselves*; the sestet of "Sappho" makes this clear in the first line: "Our life is from a different standpoint seen" (9). With such laudable goals to achieve, this Sappho has no need to commit suicide.

After reiterating the limited nature of women's music ("Its center, Love, supreme in soul and sense" [12]), the poem concludes by kindly giving Sappho and women permission to "Take then thy lyre" (13), as long, that is, as they are chaste: "Love be, as it hath been, / Thy prompter, in its strength and *innocence*" (13-14, emphasis in original). Low music, as we have seen, is music with a practical purpose that will inculcate good morals, in contrast to High music, which (while it should not be immoral) is above such earth-bound considerations. The women's Sappho poems we have so far seen do not limit Sappho's music in this way; in their poems, Sappho's music is inspired by love, but that does not de-value her music. Love has been the muse of many a man, and in portraying Sappho's music as springing from love the women poets subtly undercut traditional femininity one last time by making Sappho like every other male artist even as they emphasise her femininity. Ellison, in contrast, has no wish whatever to undercut or expose problems with traditional femininity; in order to avoid doing so, he must define Sappho's music more narrowly.

Ultimately, the improvisatrice's art is limited by the weakness of her voice, which simply cannot carry far enough to be heard without manly aid. In Bowen's poem, for example, Sappho's "trembling love-lit" music only gains auditory strength when joined by Alcaeus's "bolder numbers." Matthew Arnold's 1849 poem "A Modern Sappho" similarly portrays the female voice as effective only when deepened into masculinity. The poem is not about Sappho *per se*, but about a modern nineteenth-century woman who shares a similarity with Sappho in that she is suffering from unrequited love, and is, in a sense, gender-neutral: the poem seems too gloomy in its outlook to establish anyone's superiority

over anything. The Modern Sappho's best hope is that her beloved will love her once he is crushed by life and becomes as miserable as she. Optimistically, in a way, she seems confident that, eventually, life in this "gloom-buried world" (24) will deal him its "full measure" (33) and that "[a]s he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and dejection, / [he will] be brought, thou poor heart, how much nearer to thee!" (19-20). However, this modern Sappho is a "Sappho" purely by virtue of her unrequited love: she is lovelorn like the original Sappho, but lacks altogether that Sappho's musical or artistic ability. The Modern Sappho *has* no song; instead, she listens to "what notes down the wind, hark! are driving" (29) and tells herself, "Let me pause, let me strive, in myself make some order, / Ere their boat music sound" (7-8) – the boat music[26] of her male (non)lover and his friends or, perhaps, of him and his new lover. If a woman is involved in this boat music, however, it is only by virtue of being connected to the male. Lacking this connection to another, specifically, a male, this Sappho has not lost the ability to create, as in the women's poems, but is wholly passive and altogether outside artistic creation. As a result, while she has a voice in that she is the speaker of the poem, the modern Sappho is not a self to the extent that she is merely a voice:

> Through that gloom he will see but a shadow appearing,
> Perceive but a voice as I come to his side–
> But deeper their voice grows, and nobler their bearing,
> Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died. (25-28)

[26] Handel's Water Music is the most famous example of boat music, but hardly the only one. The tradition of music written and performed by men for the casual – if elaborate and expensive – entertainments of other men, including boating excursions, is surprisingly sizeable.

Implicitly, the poem argues that femininity is inferior to masculinity, because Sappho's best hope for self-improvement is that, as she suffers, "deeper [her] voice grows" (27). A deeper-voiced, more masculine self is a better self. Nor does this line seem to suggest that Sappho will "find her voice," in modern terms; rather, she already is a voice, just one that could, and should, become more masculine. Significantly, for all the gloom and doom of the poem, there is no suggestion that Sappho will die; conventional femininity need not implode when a woman has the hope of transcending herself by becoming more like a man.

In different ways, then, these men's poems revalue the figure of the improvisatrice by revaluing femininity. The improvisatrice, in effect, is no longer an improvisatrice in the sense that she does not sing freely, but in ways that are controlled by men. No longer the combination poet / musician, performer / composer, she is reduced to a musical performer only, whose performance and aims (love) are made to mirror the domestic performances of young girls whose talents, scanty though they might have been, were put in the service of the marriage market.

Re-authorizing the Improvisatrice

Turning the semi-Bardic improvisatrice into an analogue for the female domestic performer served not only to remove the threat that Sappho's ancient reputation, in particular, posed to a patriarchy that increasingly valued the opinions of the ancients; it also implied that women's domestic position and lesser, feminized artistic abilities were a historical, rather than simply current, fact, and worked to give women's place in the domestic sphere the imprimatur of the ancient Greeks. The destabilization of Hellenism,

however, together with further changes in the conceptualization of music and gender, changed yet again how the improvisatrice would be viewed.

Part of this change in the conceptualization of music had to do with mesmerism. Though mesmerism had been discussed periodically throughout the century, it gained its greatest prominence in discussion during the last half of the nineteenth century. Long associated with music, this association became even stronger as the symphony became a more prominent form, thus leading to a change in the conception of musical conducting. No longer a fellow performer with an optional conducting function, the conductor now took on the role of musical god. Despite resistance, the conductor's baton became standard in the 1840s, when conductor Michael Costa "refused to join the London Philharmonic without 'sole and undivided control.'"[27] Increasingly, the baton was described in mesmeric terms: the "'necromantic baton' was … said to contain a 'mysterious virtue,' like mesmerism's 'secret influence.'"[28] Wielded by men, this mesmeric musical power could influence all subjects:

> the sleeper is invariably much more strongly affected by music than when in his ordinary state. … Thus, a reel or quadrille will set them dancing…. A solemn strain, again, will readily cause them to kneel and pray…. All this will take place, more or less, in persons who have in their ordinary state, no love for music, or care, at all events, little for it.[29]

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[27] Winter, 311.

[28] Ibid.

[29] William Gregory, *Animal Magnetism; or, Mesmerism and Its Phenomena*, 3rd ed. (London: The Psychological Press Association, 1884), 15.

Though men and women were described as reacting differently, both sexes were seen as susceptible:

> To the sounds of music, sometimes soft, sometimes animated, but generally melancholy, Mesmer walked about, dispersing the magnetic fluid from right to left with a glass or iron wand. The men seemed to feel little or nothing at the time, yet many went away cured; but nearly all the women slept, some tranquilly, others in convulsions.[30]

In Michael Field's poem number 34 from their 1889 collection *Long Ago*, Sappho's status as an inspired improvisatrice is described in terms that give to the improvisatrice the kind of mesmeric power conductors were often thought to wield over audiences as well as performers. Control over the audience is important for this Sappho:

> There is a gift the crowd can bring,
> A rapture, a content;
> Pierian roses scarcely fling
> So ravishing a scent
> As that with which the air is stirred
> When hearts of heavenly things have heard.... (9-14)

When, however, Sappho is inspired to sing a new song, her audience initially fails to respond appropriately, something Sappho had not anticipated: "I knew not there were men who jeer; / Nor dreamed I there were mortals born / To make the poet's heart forlorn" (6-8). Sappho continues her song nonetheless, but is surprised to notice that

> now no subtle incense rose;
> I heard a hostile sound
> And looked – oh, scornfuller than those
> 'Mong men I ne'er have found. (17-20)

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[30] "A History of the Marvellous," *The Church of England Magazine* 76 (7 February 1874): 86. As an official organ of the Church of England, the article, after lingering on many "marvellous" events, is careful to note quickly at the end that "[t]here appears on every page of this part of the history of the human mind, weakness, inconsistency, and error" (86). Nonetheless, the picture of mesmerism given in the article is meant to reflect both actual behavior at mesmeric events as well as common, insufficiently Christian people's beliefs.

Despite their greater numbers, the crowd is ultimately unable to affect Sappho's mood or perception of herself because they do not possess the power of music, as she does. Instead, Sappho simply

> paused: the whistling air was stilled;
> Then through my chords the godhead thrilled,
> And the quelled creatures knew their kind
> Ephemeral through foolish mind. (21-24)

Sappho can control the crowd through a process of "thrilling" them, rather than through brute force or through intellectual or emotional appeals. Rather, a mysterious force emanates from her chords, one to which the crowd obediently responds even though it is not aligned with their conscious reactions. Though Sappho, as the speaker of the poem, courteously implies that "the godhead" is responsible for her power, the syntax of the line suggests that even the godhead is dependent on her chords; "through" has the force of "by means of."

The close association between men's music and mesmerism, coming at a time when women still were more likely to be taught music than men, blurs the gendering of musical authority and allows the poem to grant the improvisatrice authority by exploiting the fact that music in itself was held to possess a mesmeric force. The Sappho of this poem takes a hermaphroditic role: she is analogous both to male conductors and female performers, to both the bard and the woman in the drawing room. As such, the improvisatrice figure unsettles gender categories, but only by being located at the intersection of an already existing contradiction.

Adding to the destabilization of gender categories here is the association between music and the body; while entranced, subjects were supposed to react physically as well as emotionally to the music they heard, pointing to a connection between the unconscious mind and the body. Though men and women could react differently to the same stimuli, all were susceptible, and all were physically affected; further, groups of people, no matter their socio-economic or educational background, were thought to react in much the same way to mesmeric stimuli, functioning as "an assembled collectivity."[31] Thus, through mesmerism in general and music's mesmeric qualities in particular, ordinary differences and categories could be temporarily erased.

One such difference was sexual orientation. Though not openly much discussed, homosexuality was beginning to be named and defined, and defined in terms of qualities of mind rather than simply physical behavior. Michael Field, of course, wrote the poems of *Long Ago* in the wake of the first correct English translation of the historical Sappho's poems, a translation that finally used the pronoun "she" to describe Sappho's beloveds. *Long Ago* number 34 is different from previous women's Sappho poems, not just in its origins or subject matter, but because this Sappho is able to avoid the destructive conflict of earlier women's poems. That destructive conflict, in all previous women's poems, is caused and revealed by Sappho's love for Phaon and thus the love that inspires Sappho's creative gift also destroys it. But this Sappho is not concerned about Phaon (he does not even make the book); she is, as other poems in the collection make explicit, homosexual. The Sappho of previous women's poems is in the dismal position of wanting and needing

[31] Winter, 312.

the approval of men, who wish her to be other than what she is. This version of Sappho solves the problem by simply not caring what men think. More than that, however; as an improvisatrice, the reason she need not care is because her gift – now under her control, not men's, and thus truly improvisatory – gives her power over minds and bodies, a power that has its source partly in its revelation that there is little difference between those minds and bodies.

CHAPTER 3

THE LISTENING ANGEL

> The sound of Charlotte's really beautiful voice powerfully affected Grace, and it was only by a strong effort she controlled herself; but she did; and it never seemed to occur to any one that it might be trying to her to listen to music.
> ~ Georgiana Dalrymple, *The Livingstones*[1]

The woman listener is a contradiction. Where the Angel serves, the woman listener is served. While listening to men's speech is seen as proper and necessary for women, listening to men's music is often seen as decadent and dangerous. Yet the woman listener is not simply a transgressive figure, even though her listening is unusual and considered dangerous. She reverses traditional gender roles because, instead of playing music to please a man, she is pleased, almost invariably by men, yet in her largely passive recipience of men's feelings and thoughts, expressed and transferred through music, she is obedient and controllable. As such, the figure of the woman listener, like the figure of the woman reader, has important implications for how the nineteenth century gendered the mind.

For much of the century, the listening woman is a comparatively rare figure. Performing women litter the pages of nineteenth-century fiction and poetry, but they were not thought, by and large, to be listening to their own works; listening and playing were considered, not without reason, as separate mental activities. The strain of performance, for example, was often distracting; Molly in *Wives and Daughters* is a conscientious and accurate pianist who, when forced to play for company, first begs others to talk through her

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[1] [Georgiana Anne Dalrymple,] *The Livingstones: A Story of Real Life* (London: Colburn and Company, 1851), 1:69-70.

playing so that no-one can hear it and then, when refused, "went through her performance heavily, [hating] her handiwork more than anyone" in the pain of self-consciousness.[2] Women who listened to other women perform were often caught up in evaluating their competition rather than truly listening, as Jane evaluates Blanche Ingram's looks and demeanor in *Jane Eyre.* Performance was in general considered an automatic skill, and as girls were more and more encouraged to play the piano and select other instruments their involvement with music became more automatic and thus less noticed by themselves. At the beginning and end of the century, however, as we have seen, listening held more theoretical importance. During the Romantic era, listening to music was often associated with a laudable sensibility. During the fin de siècle, listening began to be considered an active and even intellectual activity, not a passive and emotional one. The listening woman is portrayed more frequently during these periods because listening holds more importance during these periods, and specifically holds an equalizing potential. When the ability to listen to music (as opposed to simply hearing it, a distinction made frequently by the late-Victorians) denotes an active, intelligent mind, a woman's ability to listen can signal not only her equality to men but the similarity of her mind to what a man's mind is supposed to be. Likewise, when the ability to listen to music denotes sensibility and when sensibility is simultaneously valorized in men by men, a woman's ability to listen can signal a similar equality to men in the sense of sameness to them. Various authors at both the beginning and end of the century use the figure of the woman listener in order to argue for equality

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[2] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* (1865. Repr., London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1897), 243-244.

between the sexes, although the contradictory nature of the woman listener undercuts those attempts to some extent. Mid-century representations of the woman listener, though few, do exist; unlike earlier and later representations, however, these depictions of the woman listener do not treat the male and female minds as the same, but rather assume a difference between men and women that goes beyond the physical. Thus, over the century, the listening mind is first ungendered, then gendered, then degendered.

The Romantic Era: Equality Through Sensibility

Musicologists and other critics have recently begun to discuss the nature of listening in the nineteenth century. In general, scholars of nineteenth-century listening practices argue that "listening practices changed radically during the Romantic period, and Romantic narratives of listening really emerged in Europe only with the cult of Beethoven."[3] During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe, audiences were not expected to listen attentively to the music being played, whether at the opera-house or in private homes, but rather were expected to chatter, flirt, and wander in and out[4] – when Evelina in Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778), for instance, attempts to actually listen to the opera she is attending with her relatives, she finds that she is "the object of general diversion to the whole party."[5] The general lack of attentiveness at musical performances was not greeted with enthusiasm by either composers or performers, but it

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[3] Gillen D'Arcy Wood, e-mail message to author, 16 April 2010.

[4] Peter Gay, *The Naked Heart: The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 14-15.

[5] Fanny Burney, *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778. Repr., New York: Oxford World's Classics, 1982), 93.

was accepted with resignation – so much so that composer Gioacchino Rossini, in his 1812 opera *Ciro in Babylonia*, included an "aria del sorbetto," a sherbet aria, designed "to give the audience time and opportunity to converse and spoon ices."[6] Yet at some point behavioral standards, and actual behavior, started to change: writing of France in particular, musicologist James Johnson argues that during the period from 1750 to 1850 audiences became silent as physical conditions in concert halls became less distracting – as, for instance, lavatory facilities became less liable to spontaneous overflowing, lighting was made safer, and general social unrest died down.[7] Others argue that the idea that audiences should silently listen to music owed more to a change in conceptions of music and the self as music became associated with a new emphasis on the self's interiority[8] and the act of listening to music became a badge of sensibility and thoughtfulness, and for some "the most privileged form of introspection."[9]

At the same time that listening assumed a new importance, women's involvement in music increased. The Romantic era in music saw a dramatic increase in the mass-production of instruments and sheet music. The result was a shift in the primary physical

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[6] Gay, 16.

[7] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), esp. 3-4.

[8] See Michael P. Steinberg, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[9] Gay, 18. See also Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

location of music from concert-halls or aristocratic settings to the domestic sphere.[10] This shift meant that men, long in control of music's composition and performance, now had to follow music into the domestic sphere. At the same time, music's shift to domestic settings made possible the tremendous surge of women who began both to play and compose. Thus, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, women and men shared the same musical sphere, the home, already and increasingly associated with women. As a result, gendered distinctions between men and women were difficult to make when it came to music.

In tandem with this change in setting and erasure of gender roles came an increased emphasis on music as an inward art that was less communicative than expressive.[11] This does not mean, of course, as Carl Dahlhaus points out, that Romantic music ceased to require "detachment, analysis, and calculation"[12] for its creation; rather, the description of Romantic music as expressive refers, paradoxically, to its "mode of perception,"[13] to how such music was heard and perceived by listeners. Listening to music was seen as requiring intense, emotional attention, and music was increasingly thought capable of enforcing such attention from auditors. Indeed, certain types of music, especially

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[10] See Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63; William Weber, "Wagner, Wagnerism, and Musical Idealism," in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. by David C. Large and William Weber in collaboration with Anne Dzamba Sessa (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 31-32.

[11] Taruskin, 63-65.

[12] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 16.

[13] Dahlhaus, 16.

when played on the right instrument, were associated with the creation of trance-like states; Mesmer, for example, used the armonica, a glass harmonica, to aid in inducing trances, and "[i]n many late eighteenth-century 'magic operas' and early romantic operas beginning with Mozart's *Magic Flute* (1791), the armonica was used to accompany scenes of spell-casting or entrancement."[14] This emphasis on music's connection to the innermost self tended to obscure physical differences: "all early researchers into hypnotism believed … that it proved the existence of a level of reality that transcended the world of the senses. That level was where the true self lay."[15] Music provided an ungendered aural and theoretical space where men and women, minds and emotions, could meet. Likewise, the conception of music as a unified field in which performance and composition[16] or listening and performance were considered allied skills meant that music was an art form in which there was, if briefly, space for gender equality: listening to music was not yet something men did while women played, but something that all minds could do, participating in an experience that required both intellect and sensitivity. As a result, the portrayal of the woman listener in literature of this period tends to argue, not only for women's mental equality with men, but for a lack of gender differentiation (there may of course be *individual* mental differences, but not so much *gendered* ones).

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[14] Taruskin, 73.

[15] Taruskin, 73.

[16] Paula Gillett points this out, but not the tie between listening and either composition or performance.

Not everyone, of course, believed in such equality in practice. The woman listener is rarely portrayed in works by Romantic men; rather, the many works addressed to a female auditor or in which women are in the presence of music assume that women will or can listen, but do not portray them actually doing so. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp"[17] (1795, 1796), for instance, the speaker opens by addressing "My pensive Sara!" whose "soft cheek [is] reclined / Thus on mine arm" (1-2). After describing the scene before them, the speaker turns his attention to

> that simplest lute,
> Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
> How by the desultory breeze caressed,
> Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
> It pours such sweet upbraiding.... (12-16)

Though Sara is also in the presence of the Eolian harp's music, she does not seem to be listening to it. The Eolian harp is feminized, and even its silence is described as that of "Music slumbering on her instrument" (32). Sound is thus portrayed as feminine, listening by extension masculine, an implication reinforced by the fact that the introspections into which the speaker is led by the Eolian harp are not shared by Sara, whose reproving glance reminds the speaker not only that his thoughts may be dangerous ones but also that they are the products of a listening process into which Sara has not entered. Similarly, when Shelley addresses Jane Williams in "With a Guitar, to Jane"[18] (1819), he assumes that Jane

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[17] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* 8th edition, ed. by Jack Stillinger and Deidre Shauna Lynch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). All citations in parentheses are to line numbers in this edition.

[18] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Works of P.B. Shelley* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1994). All citations in parentheses are to line numbers in this edition.

will be listening, but at the same time what she will be listening to is his association of sound with femininity; the language of the guitar is "language gentle as thine own" (61), and the poem, written as from Ariel to Miranda, asks the woman to become a teacher of music whose smiles and songs will, by virtue of their connection to that gentle womanhood, influence the rougher male into "all harmonious thought" (44). In a sense, this poem gives to women control of harmonious thought, but the woman's role here is that of Angel, serving men through a natural talent that is aligned with "The clearest echoes of the hills, / The softest notes of falling rills, / The melodies of bird, and bees" (69-71) rather than indicative of conscious power – indeed, its unconsciousness is implied by the fact that Ariel must inform Miranda of the effect her unconscious womanhood has on men. Though, again, the address of this poem to a woman implies a female ability to listen, the poem itself has trouble imagining female interiority and is therefore unable to portray a woman's listening because unable to imagine women's listening as anything other than a passive, obedient act, even as the poem uses that passive obedience to inform women that they can and should exercise a degree of control over men.

Works by women tend to portray the woman listener more directly, and in so doing to present listening as an intelligent and imaginative act. Mary Robinson's 1800 poem "To the Poet Coleridge,"[19] for example, gives an imaginative response to Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." The speaker imagines herself wandering "Where the blue, wavy, lucid stream, / 'Mid forest glooms, shall slow meander" (3-4) and listening "to the minstrel's lay,

[19] Mary Robinson, "To the Poet Coleridge," in *British Women Poets of the 19th Century,* ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet (New York: Penguin, 1996). All citations in parentheses are to line numbers in this edition.

/ Hymning the gradual close of day" (29-30). As she wanders through the sunny dome and caves of ice, she finally comes across the Abyssinian maid, who

> with lofty tones inviting,
> ... her dulcimer swift smiting,
> Shall wake me in ecstatic measures!
> Far, far removed from mortal pleasures!
> ...
> She sings of thee, O favored child
> *Of minstrelsy*, sublimely wild!
> Of thee, whose soul can feel the tone
> Which gives to airy dreams a *magic* all thy own! (59-72)

The speaker's listening is part of her ability, not merely to read, but to imaginatively construct the world of Kubla Khan and create again what Coleridge has previously created; her imaginary listening is not a passive act but part of her ability to create the Abyssinian maid's music and reproduce not only the world of Kubla Khan but Coleridge's own poem.[20] Indeed, in one way she goes Coleridge one better: Coleridge's speaker believes that

> Could I revive within me
> Her symphony and song
> To such deep delight 'twould win me
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air.... (42-46)

Robinson's speaker, on the other hand, *has* in her mind built that dome in air with her own song, giving herself the power of the damsel and the minstrel, and, like the improvisatrices we saw in chapter 2, combining masculine and feminine gender roles through the imaginative space of mental music. The final lines of Robinson's poem might equally describe her own poem; though in a sense she is only listening to and reproducing

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[20] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed., ed. by Jack Stillinger and Deidre Shauna Lynch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

Coleridge, her manner of so doing implies her imaginative creativity and equality with Coleridge, the original poem's powerful potentate, and the Muse-figure of the Abyssinian maid.

Listening can not only denote creative ability, but internal harmony, a combination of sense and sensibility. Mary, in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), for example, is an embarrassing performer because oblivious to the sounds she produces, while her sister Elizabeth not only plays with more skill but is capable of listening to others' playing (specifically, Miss Darcy's) with understanding and appreciation.[21] The ladies in Susan Ferrier's 1818 novel *Marriage*[22] are characterized in part by their ability or inability to listen to music. Lady Juliana's lack of discipline shows early when she interrupts a song, "scarcely waiting till the first stanza was ended" (80), to ask if the singer can play the harp. A few pages later she is frightened by hearing for the first time the sound of bagpipes (82), a dire signal that the English Lady Juliana finds her husband's native land of Scotland to be incomprehensible because not conducive to her flightiness. Her faults are the "sad fruits of

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[21] Examples like this imply that women, in order to perform well, were expected to listen to their own performances somewhat, but Mary is hardly the only character who is represented as playing without listening: the excerpt from *Sense and Sensibility* quoted in chapter 1 is another example; the contrast between Laura and Miss Goldthorp in Charlotte Smith's 1798 novel *The Young Philosopher* is another; and in general women performers are usually represented as listening to other sounds than their own playing (Amelia, in *Vanity Fair,* for example, in one scene plays while listening, not to her music, but for George's footsteps) or listening is simply not mentioned at all, sometimes to make a point: Rosamund Vincy in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, for example, plays with such seeming feeling that Lydgate assumes that Rosamund must feel and respond to her music as he does, but after their marriage he realizes that Rosamund's playing is a purely mechanical skill. There is a difference, further, between listening and merely hearing; for the explicit distinction, see "French Comic Actors," *New Monthly Magazine* 6 (July-December 1823): 341, for an early example, and G.E. Johnson, "Contribution to the Psychology and Pedagogy of Feeble-Minded Children," *Pedagogical Seminary* 3 (1894): 260, for a late-century example.

[22] Susan Ferrier, *Marriage* (1818. Repr., Boston: Little, Brown, 1893). All citations in parentheses are to page numbers in this edition.

a fashionable education" (161), as are her daughter Adelaide's, who likewise prefers Italian music to Scottish (78, 306).[23] Like her mother, Adelaide plays only because of the opportunities for display that playing affords (343) and continues playing "as if nothing had happened" even when her sister Mary faints from illness (289). Mary, in contrast (who has been raised by a sensible, Scottish female relative and only visits her mother and sister for the first time as a teenager), is a sensitive performer who "sings in a style full of simplicity and feeling" (224) rather than simply learning notes by rote as her aunts wish her to (225), and who has an ability to listen to music, as well as people, appreciatively and with understanding. Mary's favorite music, unsubtly, is church music – "The music consisted of an organ, simply but well played, and to Mary … it seemed the music of the spheres" (321) – because her ability to listen is part of her disciplined and moral character.

Other women authors go even further, portraying the ability to listen not only as the sign of internal harmony and self-control in contrast to a love of outward display, but more explicitly as a sign of mental equality with men. Ann Radcliffe's 1796 novel *The Italian* is a case in point. Like her attitude towards religion and class relations, Radcliffe's gender ideology has been the subject of much debate, if, that is, a comparatively little-studied Romantic author can be said to have sparked "much" debate about anything; many critics have argued that Radcliffe strives to rework the rough and sensational Gothic novel into something proper, dignified, and delicate, de-sexualizing the female body and inculcating traditional gender values as a way to make her use of the Gothic more

[23] As we saw in chapter 1, Italian music was frequently associated with irrationality in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

acceptable.[24] Others, however, have argued that Radcliffe, while paying lip-service to some traditional values, in fact undermines patriarchy in her novels. Anne K. Mellor, for example, argues that

> [t]he vulnerability of the Edenic home to the 'snake' of patriarchal power is underlined in *The Italian* where the 'father' is a priest as well as the murderer of his brother, the rapist of his brother's wife, and the man who both encourages and almost carries out the desire of the Marchioness di Vivaldi to murder her putative daughter-in-law.[25] (94)

Following Susan Greenfield, Claudia L. Johnson has argued that Radcliffe rejects heteronormativity altogether: "Caught up in the disfiguring exacerbations of gender that followed in the wake of the political upheaval of the 1790s, Radcliffe's fiction … increasingly turns to the alternative of homo-erotic relations."[26] All of these arguments have an element of truth to them. An examination of the way that Radcliffe represents her characters in relation to music in *The Italian* shows that Radcliffe is doing more with gender than marketing herself as a proper lady while critiquing patriarchy. Music serves many functions in *The Italian*, but one of those functions is to demonstrate, not only that men and women can be equal, but that men and women can be, and ought to be, much the same.

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[24] See, for example, the various studies comparing Radcliffe's *The Italian* to Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. Among them are Vartan P. Messier, "The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*," *Atenea* 25 (December 2005): 37-48, and Yael Shapira, "Where the Bodies are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe's 'Delicate' Gothic," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18 (Summer 2006): 453-476.

[25] Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, 94.

[26] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 136.

The heroine of *The Italian*, Ellena di Rosalba, is strongly identified with music, so much so that music is her alter ego. She is first described, not as beautiful, but as having a beautiful voice; when the hero, Vincentio di Vivaldi,[27] first meets her, the "sweetness and fine expression of her voice attracted his attention to her figure, … but her face was concealed" (9).[28] When Vivaldi later goes to call on her, Ellena is not physically present, but her music is: "He trembled as he took up the lute she had been accustomed to touch, and, when he awakened the chords, her own voice seemed to speak" (31). In one sense, the replacement of Ellena's body with representations of sound provides Radcliffe with a way to describe sexual desire without being explicit or unladylike; on the other hand, this elision of Ellena's body by sound replaces a gendered body with genderless sound. Moreover, Ellena's musical, androgynous self is both more literally attractive and more profoundly affecting than her gendered body.

Ellena not only embodies music, she is a sensitive and constant listener. During her frequent and varied trials, the only thing possibly more affecting to her than a rugged landscape is music, or, even better, gazing upon a rugged landscape while listening to music:

> The silence and deep repose of the landscape served to impress this character [of melancholy] more awfully on the heart, and while Ellena sat wrapt in the thoughtfulness it promoted, the vesper-service of the monks, breathing softly from the cathedral above, came to her ear; it was a music

[27] Radcliffe's biography is so sketchy it is difficult to say anything about her, let alone whether she would have known of the composer Antonio Vivaldi, and thus whether Vincentio di Vivaldi is meant to evoke the Italian composer. Vivaldi does not appear to be mentioned in any English-language publications from the eighteenth century, although he is mentioned in a number of French and Italian ones. Whether Radcliffe knew either language is unclear; her husband's brief account of her life, the primary source for Radcliffe's biography, does not say ("Mrs. Radcliffe," *The Annual Biography and Obituary, for the Year 1824*).

[28] All quotations taken from Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian, or The Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1796. Repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

> which might be said to win on silence, and was in perfect unison with her feelings; solemn, deep, and full, it swelled in holy peals, and rolled away in murmurs, which attention pursued to the last faint note.... (78)

Vivaldi is also a constant listener. One of music's functions in the novel is to provide a sort of running soundtrack of grim foreboding; in scene after scene, far-off monks can be heard chanting ominously or a mysterious, sad song plays in the distance. Such written sound effects, however, are primarily heard by Ellena and Vivaldi, because only they are attentive listeners who *expect* to hear music:

> The solemnity of the scene accorded with the temper of [Vivaldi's] mind, and he listened in deep attention for the returning sounds, which broke upon the ear like distant thunder muttering imperfectly from the clouds. The pauses of silence, that succeeded each groan of the mountain, when expectation listened for the rising sound, affected the imagination of Vivaldi at this time with particular awe.... (15)

Indeed, the only music that is not listened to in the novel is the serenade Vivaldi and his comic-relief friend Bonarmo give to Ellena; Vivaldi and Bonarmo play their best, but there is no hint that Ellena hears them. Radcliffe wisely here implies that her heroine is much too proper even to notice such a sexualized overture, but in implying that Ellena's interest in music is not sexual the novel further rejects a traditional gendering of its protagonists. The serenade is an activity divided upon very simple gender lines; Vivaldi, encouraged by his brasher friend, attempts to play (in more than one sense) the man and expects that Ellena will listen as a woman. Ellena does not, and Vivaldi abandons the attempt. For the rest of the novel, both characters listen and play in a way that is not divided along gendered lines.

Besides Bonarmo, Ellena and Vivaldi are the only two characters in the novel who play instruments; Ellena's sensitive character implies that she plays the lute with skill and feeling, although we do not actually hear her play, and Vivaldi has "a fine tenor, and the same susceptibility, which made him passionately fond of music, taught him to modulate its cadence with exquisite delicacy, and to give his emphasis with the most simple, pathetic expression" (22). Their love for music, the sweetness of their voices, their ability to listen sensitively, all serve not only to make clear that Ellena and Vivaldi are meant for each other but that they have similar minds; the fact that music signifies this similarity also indicates that the similarity of their minds is due to the way they both unite emotional and intellectual qualities. Vivaldi and Ellena are sensible in every way – sensibly rational in their avoidance of the passionately evil deeds of Schedoni and the Marchesa (Vivaldi's mother) and their ability to withstand the threats and temptations of superstition; emotional sensible in their susceptibility to every sight and sound. Only the novel's villains are gendered: the Marchesa is a jealous and conniving wife and mother who, though she fancies she has the strength of a man, is too weak to carry out her own villainy, while Schedoni's murders and rapes (both attempted and accomplished) all associate virility and violence. Ellena and Vivaldi's musical androgyny is thus presented as morally superior to either traditional femininity or masculinity.

The importance of listening in relation to the interiority of the self combined with women's increasing involvement in music provided, then, an opportunity for women authors in the early nineteenth century to use the figure of the listening woman as a

symbol of women's mental abilities by portraying the woman not merely as an obedient figure, physically present and attentive, but as a being with an inner self that is introspective and creative. The listening woman, when directly portrayed, is a figure with a selfhood that is made visible and portrayed as active, thoughtful, disciplined, and sensitive in ways that are aligned either implicitly or explicitly with men's highest ideals for themselves.

The Victorians: Music and the Body

Like so many of the most important historical changes, no precise date can be assigned, but as the Romantic era gave way to the Victorian listening was no longer considered part and parcel of the total musical experience. Rather, it was seen as a separate activity that did not coincide with either performance or composition, and was considered in some ways positively antithetical to those activities (and vice-versa). As we've seen, this division was not motivated entirely by pure, exalted theory, but largely by a practical, if unspoken or unconscious, desire to preserve and to an extent re-create differences between the sexes as changes to modern life and to women's level of education made older differences seem in danger of obsolescence. One motivation for, and consequence of, treating listening as a separate mental activity was to provide a new way of thinking of women as physically and mentally weak. This new way of thinking about music and listening not only reflected current scientific thinking about women's bodies and minds, but also helped to bolster and add to that thinking.

Beginning in the 1830s, music began to be defined more and more frequently in terms of its physical effects.[29] Music was defined as a series of rhythmic vibrations that caused other objects, including people's bodies, to vibrate rhythmically in turn[30] and was distinguished from mere noise by considering only certain types of vibrations, separated from each other at regularly-spaced intervals, to be musical vibrations.[31] Those instruments previously most associated with their effect on the mind were now associated primarily with their effect on the body: the armonica, for example, previously associated with mental trances, was now especially associated with these physical vibrations.[32] Some even posited the existence of a "sonorous fluid," analogous to the "electric fluid, the luminous fluid, and

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[29] Scholars usually see this change happening in the late nineteenth century, rather than at the beginning of the Victorian era, as I do; see Dale, *Music Analysis*, 4, and Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143-144. According to Dames and Dale, physiological musicology "gathered force only after Hermann von Helmholtz's 1863 *Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen* was translated into English as *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* in 1875" (Dames, 143-144). Dames acknowledges that the trend actually began at least as early as the 1860s (144); I argue that it begins at least as early as Herbert Spencer's widely-disseminated essay "The Origin and Function of Music" (1857) in which Spencer argues that music arose from involuntary muscular contractions of the vocal chords produced by strong emotion, and Spencer himself was not the first to define music as a physiological phenomenon; see, for example, George Moore, *The Use of the Body in Relation to the Mind* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman's, 1846), esp. 173. Discussions of acoustics in particular assume a physiological musicology as early as the 1830s, and discussions of Mesmer and his use of musical magnetism treat music as a physiological as well as mental phenomenon even earlier than that. See also the sources cited below.

[30] See, for example, "Acoustics," *The Penny Cyclopedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (London: Charles Knight, 1833): 1:89-90; John Weeks Moore, *Complete Encyclopædia of Music, Elementary, Technical, Historical, Biographical, Vocal, and Instrumental* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1854): 889; T., "On Musical Glasses," *The Magazine of Popular Science, and Journal of the Useful Arts* 6 (1837): 352-359, esp. 356.

[31] Hermann L.F. Helmholtz, "A Course of Two Lectures on Musical Acoustics, and on the Physiological and Psychological Causes of Musical Harmony and Discord. Lecture I," *The Chemical News: and Journal of Physical Science* 3 (4 May 1861): 279.

[32] T., "On Musical Glasses," 352.

the caloric fluid," through which, by a species of "musical magnetism," vibrations were transferred.[33]

This emphasis on physics and the body in relation to music allowed gender divisions to come back into the equation, and women's physical weakness was held to make listening dangerous as their weaker bodies were more susceptible to vibration. Edward John Tilt, the physician who championed the use of speculum in Britain and a founding fellow of the Obstetrical Society of London,[34] warned his readership that listening to music could be as deleterious in its effects on the delicate female nervous system as novel-reading and could even accelerate the onset of puberty.[35] Certain chords could have an especially injurious effect:

> We read that some great virtuoso of olden time was banished [from] the Spartan territory for attempting to corrupt the morals of youth – he had but added one string to the Doric lyre, which till then had only echoed that
>
> 'Harmony which breathes
> Heroic ardour to adventurous deeds.'
>
> That addition must have been the chord whose vibrations have been considered injurious to young and sensitive girls; but as we are not musical, we cannot note it down.[36]

Tilt is here thinking of Timotheus, who was legendarily banished from Sparta for adding an additional string to his instrument;[37] the addition was frowned upon for introducing

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[33] "Phenomena of Music," *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* 9 (January 1869):371. Reprinted from *All the Year Round.*

[34] D'A. Power [sic], "Tilt, Edward John," rev. Susan Snoxall, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

[35] Tilt, *Elements of Health,* 179.

[36] Tilt, 215.

chromaticism and for making music too soft and delicate.[38] Tilt thus associates this chord with women but revises its significance so that, rather than effeminizing men, it sexualizes women. An article on frivolous widows in an American periodical, *Current Literature*, likewise speaks in passing of "[that] minor chord in a piece of music that sets the [woman's] pulses throbbing"[39] – women and girls are uniquely susceptible to musical vibrations because of their more fragile physical constitution. At the same time, of course, *playing* music was not considered dangerous for girls – quite the contrary – while playing was considered problematic for men and boys: as one commentator notes with puzzlement, "we have no corresponding case in which any particular study is seriously considered to be highly beneficial to female intellect and yet worthless or injurious to men."[40] The seeming contradiction here points to the fact that women were not considered capable of producing harmful vibrations themselves, only that they were capable of being strongly affected by them – the strong, powerful, and likely sexual vibrations were only produceable by men, who should, however, not thus take advantage of women's weakness in this regard. Women were also protected, when playing, from the vibrations they produced not only by the weakness of those vibrations (another reason for gendering the organ as male, the piano as female), but also by the various distractions of performance. The playing of music was encouraged for numerous reasons, as we've seen, but perhaps foremost among them

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[37] Warren Anderson and Thomas J. Mathieson, "Timotheus," Grove Music Online.

[38] Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, trans. and ed. by Claude V. Palisca (1581 or 1582. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 253-254.

[39] "The Fascinating Widow," *Current Literature: A Magazine of Record and Review* 2 (June 1889): 483.

[40] Leonora Schmitz, "On the Study of Music," *The Fortnightly Review* 4 (March 1866): 222.

was the hope and belief that playing was precisely a way to *keep* women from listening, at least to keep women from listening to men's vibrations with their bodies.

As a result, women are rarely portrayed as listening to music in Victorian literature, partly because women were encouraged to perform and are usually therefore portrayed as performers, but also because the new emphasis on the body in relation to listening meant that authors were chary of portraying women as listeners because they were reluctant to deal with the sexual implications of physical rhythms. Those texts that do portray women as listeners, accordingly, often use the figure of the woman listener to suggest something about women's sexual desires and rights.

Robert Browning's little-studied 1849 poem "The Flight of the Duchess" is a case in point. Usually considered both a rather inept prelude to "My Last Duchess" and a (highly) poeticized account of the poet's romance with Elizabeth Barrett,[41] the poem uses the figure of the woman listener to argue that traditionalism and propriety are in fact unnatural and that female sexuality is natural and its repression deadly. The poem's plot concerns a self-centered Duke who marries a shy young woman from a convent. Their marriage, predictably, is miserable for the Duchess and irritating to the Duke; as in "My Last Duchess," the Duchess treats servants with friendliness and courtesy while the Duke wishes

[41] The criticism is decidedly uncopious, but see, for example, Claude de L. Ryals, *Becoming Browning: The Poems and Plays of Robert Browning, 1833-1846* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983), 218 ff., and Fred Manning Smith, "Elizabeth Barrett and Browning's 'The Flight of the Duchess,'" *Studies in Philology* 39 (January 1942): 102-117.

her to maintain her, and his, social position. When a band of Gypsies[42] appears on the scene, the Duke seizes what he sees as a marvelous opportunity by asking an ancient Gypsy woman to find the Duchess and frighten her into her wits. The Gypsy woman seemingly agrees, but when servants observe the meeting between the Gypsy and Duchess, the Gypsy is singing a mysterious song with words that can only periodically be understood. The Duchess is entranced, and shortly after the song ends, physically and psychologically transformed, she rides off from the castle, and the poem ends.

The poem suggests that the Duchess's flight is away from moralistic standards of propriety, symbolized by the Duke. The Duke's only concern is for appearances:

> 'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
> Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
> He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
> The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out.... (114-117)

The Duke's favorite word is "proper;" he lives in a castle with "proper towers" (109), considers that "We must revert to the proper channels" (232), and even encourages his dogs with "the properest chirrup" (237). He has revived customs which are ostensibly medieval ("The Mid-Age was the Heroic Time" [106]) but which bear a suspicious resemblance to nineteenth-century British life: the Duke is fond of hunting and lives on a country estate funded by his workers, miners who live in a Dickensian world of smut and grime. The Duke's concern for medieval propriety is likewise a stand-in for Victorian propriety (what Browning means by this, as will become clearer, is the Victorian double

[42] Following Deborah Epstein Nord, I am using the term Gypsy for the sake of simplicity, rather than one of various other terms such as Romany, Romanichal, Rom, Roma, etc. See Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 18-19.

standard of sexual propriety), and an unsubtle hint that readers should regard Victorian propriety as retrograde rather than progressive.

The Duke's marriage is an extension of his problematic concern for propriety. He has married because he considers it the right thing to do, and he views his wife as a possession:

> And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
> To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
> Now outside the hall, now in it,
> To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
> At the proper place in the proper minute,
> And die away the life between. (186-191)

Of course, the Duke's attitude implies that the Duchess is being stifled by patriarchy, but it also implies that the Duke is uncertain what to do with a wife – first he stands her here, then there, then sends her off. The poem suggests the Duke has no idea of the sexual side of marriage by repeatedly implying the Duke is at a loss to discover what the Duchess is *for*. When he plans a large hunting party, for example, someone suggests that the Duchess should perhaps be included; the Duke agrees, but is deeply puzzled. At last,

> And, after much laying of heads together,
> Somebody's cap got a notable feather
> By the announcement with proper unction
> That he had discovered the lady's function.... (258-261)

This discovery is the suggestion that, according to certain "ancient authors,"

> When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
> "Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
> "And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
> "In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
> "Let her preside at the disemboweling." (263-267)

The Duke's befuddlement as to the question of his wife's "function" is thus solved by looking her up in an old book; the Duke's sexual ignorance is contrasted with the faux-medieval language of this "ancient" text, with its suggestion that the lady of the castle ought to "prick forth on her jennet," further emphasizing the Duke's ignorance of sexual matters and reliance instead on literal interpretations of authority.

The Duchess's reaction to her marriage is thus explained: she enters it a creature who is "active, stirring, all fire – / Could not rest, could not tire" (174-175), and quickly becomes "silent and thin / Paling and ever paling" (208-209). The physical change is directly attributable to the Duke's lack of love for his lady, as implied in the passage quoted above; the Duchess's life with her husband consists only of a public life – "To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen, / At the proper place in the proper minute" (189-190) – not a private one. Listening to the Gypsy woman's music, however, completely transforms the Duchess, physically as well as psychologically. When the servant-narrator enters the room where the Gypsy has been singing, he is startled to observe the change in the Duchess:

> more than mortal
> Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
> All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
> The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
> She was so different, happy and beautiful,
> ....
> I saw the glory of her eye,
> And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
> And I was hers to live or to die. (714-725)

The Duchess's physical transformation and re-discovered energy are the result of the physical changes that come upon her as she listens to the Gypsy's music. The Gypsy music explicitly gives the Duchess life, a life that is implicitly sexual:

> For it was life her eyes were drinking
> From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
> – Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
> Into the heart and breast whose heaving
> Told you no single drop they were leaving,
> – Life, that filling her, passed redundant
> Into her very hair, back swerving
> Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
> As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving;
> And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
> Moving to the mystic measure,
> Bounding as the bosom bounded.
> I stopped short, more and more confounded,
> As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
> As she listened and she listened.... (540-554)

The music, as Edward John Tilt had feared, is a rhythm that causes the female listener to move with its "mystic measure" in a clearly pleasurable series of vibrations. Unlike Tilt, however, the poem does not condemn these vibrations. Instead, the Duchess's sexualized experience of listening to music enables her to take her "flight," a metaphor that implies something less neutral than simple escape: while living with the Duke, the Duchess is compared to a cooped-up hawk with "cut ... claws, and sealed ... eyes, / And clipped ... wings, and tied ... beak" (273-274), is able not only to escape but to fly after listening to this bird-like (691) music. The association of the Duchess and music with birds also implies that her sexual power is natural and part of a more fruitful view of the world than the Duke's. The Duke lives in

> one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
> Branched through and through with many a vein
> Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
> Look right, look left, look straight before,—
> Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
> Copper-ore and iron-ore,
> And forge and furnace mould and melt,
> And so on, more and ever more,
> Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
> Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
> —And the whole is our Duke's country. (21-31)

The Duke's country, then, is a country in which the physical world is a source of ore to be mined, and nothing more; a dirty world of utilitarian use. There is no room in this description for birds or nature, or, by implication, female sexuality. The Gypsies, on the other hand, use earth in a different fashion:

> But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
> And nowhere else, I take it, are found
> With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned:
> Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
> The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
> For the earth – not a use to which they don't turn it,
> The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
> Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
> They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it.... (356-364)

Rather than mining the earth, the Gypsies come from it, making the earth fruitful of more than iron and metal. The metaphors are softer – the mountain has a womb, pits are compared to honeycomb – in keeping with a different attitude towards the use of the physical world: earth is transformed rather than mined; baked, a domestic image, rather than smelted, a masculine one. The Duchess's flight mirrors her shift from the Duke's

artificial, masculine, sterile world to the natural and fruitfully sexual world of the Gypsies; indeed, the old woman sings to her that the Duchess has now become a Gypsy:

> I trace them the vein and the other vein
> That meet on thy brow and part again,
> Making our rapid mystic mark;
> And I bid my people prove and probe
> Each eye's profound and glorious globe
> Till they detect the kindred spark.... (574-579)

The Duchess's honorary Gypsyhood serves to reinforce the sexual overtones of listening to the Gypsy woman's music. In part, the poem makes this explicit by having the Gypsy woman, in a moment where the words of the song are distinguishable, sing about the goal she has in mind for the Duchess:

> Wilt thou fall at the very last
> Breathless, half in trance
> With the thrill of the great deliverance,
> Into our arms for evermore;
> And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
> About thee, what we knew before,
> How love is the only good in the world. (610-615)

The fact that the Duchess listens not just to music, but Gypsy music, is also important in that Gypsy music in general was frequently credited with the ability to galvanize its listeners into sexualized dance, with the strong possibility that sexual excitement would continue after the dancing and music had ended. This view further demonstrates a change in the way the Victorians viewed music and listening, a change that tied the body and the unconscious mind together.

The fear that Gypsy music had the power to force the body into sexual movement had its basis in two considerations. First, was the nature of the music itself. Unlike "real"

music, Gypsy music employed a larger scale of notes, and thus employed a greater number of vibrations than the twelve-tone scale; Gypsy music was thus seen as adding notes whose sound was strange, whose purpose was mysterious, and whose effect was unclear and for that reason feared. While European and Russian composers showed interest in Gypsy tunes, partly to tap into nationalistic roots and partly to save the trouble of composing tunes themselves, British commentators tended to be less kind in their attitude towards Gypsy compositions, some going so far as to call the music flatly "unintelligible and barbarous."[43] More specifically, the extra notes in the Gypsy scale of music were often described, not as musical, but as evocative of talking, recitative, or incantation; one commentator describes the sounds as:

> monotonous, quaint, and full of minute inflections, almost too subtle to be distinguished except by a practiced ear; at times exciting and passionate, yet generally more like an incantation than pure honest music, and there can be no doubt profoundly corrupt in its mystic significance.[44]

Gypsy music was frequently described as wild, frenzied, and electrifying.[45] Nearly always, descriptions of Gypsy music describe Gypsies dancing to their own music in terms that suggest that the dance is a reflection or creation of the music, leading to the second reason for fearing Gypsy music: its vibrations were thought to have the ability to galvanize the body of the listener, even the non-Gypsy listener, and both the vibrations emanating from

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[43] John Pentland Mahaffy, *Twelve Lectures on Primitive Civilizations and Their Physical Conditions* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1869), 283.

[44] "A Gipsy Concert in Moscow," *All the Year Round* (26 March 1864): 160.

[45] See, for example, George Borrow, *The Zincali: or, An Account of the Gypsies of Spain,* 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1843), 1:12; Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 127; Henry Ecroyd, "From Vienna to Pesth," *Temple Bar* 19 (March 1867): 328.

the music and the vibrations created in the body of the dancer/listener were considered sexual in a completely and disturbingly unfettered way (unlike, say, the waltz, which, although some considered it too sexual a dance,[46] was seen as a series of conscious movements which could be managed, rather than something unconsciously induced).

Descriptions of Gypsy dance make clear that the cause for concern is the link between certain dances and the music, a link forged by the music's ability to control unconscious physical and muscular processes. French diplomat Jean-François de Bourgoing's description of the Spanish fandango, written in the late eighteenth-century, was seized upon by multiple nineteenth-century commentators as being perfectly descriptive of Gypsy dance:[47]

> A male and female dancer spring onto the stage from different directions, both in Andalusian costume, typical of the dance; they fly to their encounter *as if driven to it*. The man extends his amorous arms towards the woman, who proceeds to abandon herself in his embraces; but suddenly she swirls and escapes him. In turn, the dancer, as if incensed, retaliates by withdrawing. The orchestra pauses, the couple stops as if undecided, *the music soon renews their movements*.
>
> Next the man expresses his desires with force and vivacity. The woman appears more eager to respond. A more voluptuous languidness is painted in her eyes, her breast heaves more violently, and her arms extend towards the object that beckons.... The sounds of the orchestra rise persistently; the music soars to keep pace with their steps. Filled with desire, the male dancer thrusts himself again in front of the woman. The same feeling draws her to him.... She is once more weakly held back by a semblance of modesty.... *The musical fracas accelerates, and with it the vivacity of their movements*. A sort of vertigo, a drunken voluptuousness, seems to lock them together: all their muscles summon and express their pleasure;

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[46] For a discussion of nineteenth-century view of the waltz and its sexual overtones (men held their partners close), see Cheryl A. Wilson, *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Jane Austen to the New Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chapter five.

[47] Charnon-Deutsch, 49.

> their gaze is confounded. Suddenly *the music stops, the dancers relax* in a languorous swoon: the curtain falls and the spectators revive.[48]

Such a description confounds what it means to listen to music; in this description, clearly, listening is as much a matter of physical, muscular tension as of hearing. Rather than fading, such descriptions of Gypsy music gained currency over the century; Franz Liszt's 1859 *Des Bohémiens et de leur Musique en Hongrie*, for example, which was translated into both English (as *The Gipsy in Music*) and German and is referred to or quoted in many Victorian discussions of Gypsy music, echoes de Bourgoing in its assumption that listening to Gypsy music necessitates moving to Gypsy music: in a section headed "Description of an orgy," Liszt describes Gypsy dancing as a response to "rhythms [that] become more pressing" and which affect even (non-Gypsy) listener / onlookers with a desire for "voluptuous sensation."[49] Whether dancing or watching, the music not only mirrors physical movement but helps to create it, almost without conscious volition.

This is why Fedalma, in George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868),[50] is spurred by Gypsy music into dancing. It is not just a matter of Gypsy blood calling to Gypsy blood, although that is certainly part of it, as Bernard Semmel has argued;[51] all the listeners are physically affected by listening to the music in some degree as "[v]ibrations sympathetic stir all limbs" (48). Fedalma, as a more sensitive instrument, is simply affected more strongly

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[48] Quoted in Charnon-Deutsch, 49-50; my emphasis.

[49] Liszt, *The Gipsy in Music*, vol. 1, 153.

[50] George Eliot, *The Spanish Gypsy* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868). All parenthetical references are to page numbers, rather than line numbers (not given), in this edition.

[51] Bernard Semmel, *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 109.

that the rest. Listening and moving are one for her because in her "[f]eeling and action [flow] into one" (49), a sign of her "harmoniously bodied soul" (49). The poem refuses to make a mind/body distinction for Fedalma because such a distinction would imply that no necessary connection exists between perception and action. The poem also refuses to make traditional distinctions between sensuality and purity; Fedalma also unites these qualities: "Ardently modest, sensuously pure / With young delight that wonders at itself / And throbs as innocent as opening flowers" (49). Gypsy music and its related dances were often considered not only galvanizing but lascivious, even incestuous;[52] Fedalma's combination of sensuality and purity revises this view, not by describing the listening movement as something free from sensuality and thus pure by Victorian standards, but by redefining sensuality so as it to make sensuality itself both pure and natural, "as innocent as opening flowers."

While the Gypsy association reinforces the link between listening and the body, it does not create it; Gypsy music was particularly associated with physical and sexual effects, but a sensitive woman listener could be physically at the mercy of a range of music. In Thomas Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* (1871),[53] for example, Cytherea Graye is caught in a thunderstorm and forced to stay briefly at the manor-house where her employer's new steward, Aeneus Manston, is living. Manston insists on improving the shining hour with a little organ music. Amid thunder and lightning, Manston, who has already made his

[52] Charnon-Deutsch, 50, 67-70.

[53] Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies* (1871. Repr., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905). All references in parentheses are to this edition.

attraction towards Cytherea clear, begins "extemporizing a harmony which meandered through every variety of expression of which the instrument is capable" (160). He then searches for a particular piece of music, and, finding it, directs Cytherea to "look at me – look in my face – now" (161). Cytherea "seemed compelled to do as she was bidden, and looked in the too-delicately beautiful face" (161) as lightning flashes near them. Following this, Manston "now played more powerfully" (161) and Cytherea, primed by the lightning and Manston's mesmeric gaze, is powerfully affected:

> Cytherea had never heard music in the completeness of full orchestral power, and the tones of the organ, which reverberated with considerable effect in the comparatively small space of the room, heightened by the elemental strife of light and sound outside, moved her to a degree out of proportion to the actual power of the mere notes, practiced as was the hand that produced them. The varying strains – now loud, now soft; simple, complicated, weird, touching, grand, boisterous, subdued; each phase distinct, yet modulating the next with a graceful and easy flow – shook and bent her to themselves, as a gushing brook shakes and bends a shadow cast across its surface. The power of the music did not show itself so much by attracting her attention to the subject of the piece, as by taking up and developing as its libretto the poem of her own life and soul, shifting her deeds and intentions from the hands of her judgment and holding them in its own. (161-162)

As Mark Asquith notes, the scene "does not signal the happy reunion of lovers mutually attracted, but rather it explores Cytherea's overmastering attraction to a man whom she regards in normal circumstances as unpleasant."[54] More is going on here, however, than Hardy's usual interest in the voyeuristic spectacle of an aroused woman. The scene suggests that listening is, for the woman, a physical activity; the "mere notes," that is, the aural sounds, are less important to the listening experience than the physical reverberations of

[54] Mark Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics, and Music* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 22.

the organ, which are transferred to Cytherea's body and "shook and bent her." The effect is further heightened by the storm, whose electricity has also transferred itself to Cytherea's and Manston's bodies. The result is that Cytherea moves towards Manston without conscious volition, and for a moment they are about to kiss:

> [Cytherea] was swayed … new impulses of thought came with new harmonies, and entered into her with a gnawing thrill. A dreadful flash of lightning then, and the thunder close upon it. She found herself involuntarily shrinking up beside him, and looking with parted lips at his face. (162)

When Manston stops playing, however, Cytherea's attraction to him ends (not coincidentally, so does the storm); although Manston endeavors to show Cytherea how impressed he is with her, she becomes embarrassed that she had been "excited by a stranger," but "[h]is influence over her had vanished with the musical chords, and she turned her back upon him" (163).

This association between listening and the body reinforces and is influenced by an emphasis on gender difference. Romantic authors were able to use music as a trope for mental equality, even sameness, between the sexes because their view of music focused on music's effect on the mind and emotions, not the body. The Victorians' interest in links between mind and body served to reconstitute gender difference, however those differences were valued. In "The Flight of the Duchess," for example, masculinity is associated with barrenness and femininity with fruitfulness and productivity; although the Gypsy hints that the Duchess will someday fall into someone's (presumably a man's, although it is not clear) arms, men are not necessary, symbolically, to fruitfulness. Rather, the bond created

between the two as the Duchess sits "coiled at [the Gypsy's] feet" (524) strengthens and renews the Duchess, while interactions between men in the poem are ineffective and bemused, as they ponder questions to which they have no answers and can only look to the past for suggestions. Cytherea in *Desperate Remedies* is susceptible to Manston's music in part because she is physically, mentally, and emotionally weak; the novel suggests that in this Cytherea is like all women, ostensibly placing this weakness on a pedestal: "Perhaps the moral compensation for all a woman's petty cleverness under thriving conditions is the real nobility that lies in her extreme foolishness at these other times … her exercise of an illogical power entirely denied to men in general" (251). Manston's power over her stems from his manhood; his instrument, for instance, is the manly organ, not the piano. As Manston tells Cytherea, "You would soon acquire the touch for an organ, though it would spoil your touch for the piano. Not that that matters a great deal. The piano isn't much as an instrument" (159). By implication, the organ requires a more forceful touch, and it is capable of producing reverberations the piano cannot match. This is, of course, yet another reason why the piano could be safe for women to play and sit near, and another reason why men were in control of the organ and the vibrations it could produce in the listening bodies of women.

There are, of course, contradictions in the discourse surrounding the listening woman. The listening body of a woman is more susceptible, for example, to the vibrations of music because it is weaker than a man's body, yet the listening woman is in a position of power as normal roles are reversed and men, in effect, audition for the listening woman's

approval. While to some extent this is just another form of wooing that supposedly puts the weaker sex on a pedestal immediately before signing the contract of ownership, in another respect the performing man is placed in the position of an Edith Dombey or the countless real young women who played or sang for male attention, approval, and marriage.

In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), George Eliot explores these gender complications surrounding the figure of the listening woman in order to comment on the sociological and biological ways gender is constructed. The novel's copious use of musical metaphors and motifs has been often noted, specifically the way Eliot foreshadows the plot by references to Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, but not the gender implications thereof.[55] When not focused on Eliot's use of Handel, discussions of music in *The Mill on the Floss* focus on Eliot's use of evolutionary discourse and assume that Eliot more or less uncritically adopts that evolutionary discourse. The common critical picture of music's function in the novel, accordingly, focuses on music as a primitive mode of communication[56] whose power is greater than that of society in that it taps impulses that precede civilization.[57] Maggie's

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[55] See, for example, Gillian Beer, "*The Mill on the Floss:* 'More Instruments Playing Together,'" in *Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture,* ed. by Penny Gay, Judith Johnston, and Catherine Waters (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). Beer focuses on how knowing the libretto to Handel's *Acis and Galatea* reinforces the sexual desire between Maggie and Stephen as well as suggesting the unhappy end to which it will come, as does Delia da Sousa Correa in both *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2003) and "'The Music Vibrating in Her Still': Music and Memory in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda*," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 21 (2000): 541-63 and Beryl Gray in *George Eliot and Music* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989).

[56] Jodi Lustig, "The Piano's Progress: The Piano in Play in the Victorian Novel," in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff (Aldershot, Hants., England: Ashgate, 2004), 96; Sousa Correa, "'The Music Vibrating,'" 548.

[57] Sousa Correa, "'The Music Vibrating,'" 544; Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 184.

responsiveness to music thus indicates that she is a sport with a level of mute emotion[58] and primitivity that make her out-of-place in society.[59] While true, none of these observations really depends for its existence on an examination of music in the novel; what critical attention to music in the novel has accomplished is not so much insight into the novel's themes as to show how far-reaching and consistent Eliot's intellectual achievement is even in this early novel, in which every musical allusion is rich in cultural references and literary foreshadowing. The focus on Eliot's use of evolutionary discourse, while useful, has in this case tended to obscure the ways that Eliot uses music to question and expand upon, rather than simply parrot, evolutionary discourse. Critics who discuss the use of music in *The Mill on the Floss* have so far tended to discuss the evolutionary discourse surrounding music as if gender were not part of that discourse. They therefore treat Eliot's use of musical evolutionary discourse in a universalizing fashion; Delia da Sousa Correa, for example, whose otherwise insightful work on music in Eliot has many virtues, points out that Eliot is aware of the physiological discourse that linked mind and body through music[60] without considering the ways that said discourse drew on assumptions of gender difference in both body and mind. As a result, discussions of Eliot's use of music, particularly in *The Mill on the Floss*, have tended both to universalize and de-gender the Victorian discourse surrounding music, and to assume that Eliot does the same. In fact, however, neither the Victorians nor Eliot considered music in a universalizing or

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[58] William J. Sullivan, "Music and Musical Allusion in *The Mill on the Floss*," *Criticism* 16 (1974): 232.

[59] Sousa Correa, "'The Music Vibrating,'" 106-107; Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 184.

[60] Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 108.

androgynous fashion; Eliot uses music in *The Mill on the Floss* precisely, in part, to comment on the convolutions and contradictions of Victorian ideas about music, evolution, and gender through her portrayal of Maggie's listening mind and body.

The novel begins its examination of evolution and gender by insistently reversing gender roles when it comes to music: whereas women most commonly played, at least in domestic settings, while men listened, in *The Mill on the Floss* men play while Maggie listens. Sousa Correa argues that this role reversal is Eliot's literary embodiment of Darwinian sexual selection;[61] although Darwin does not discuss the role of music in sexual selection at length until *The Descent of Man* (1871), he does argue briefly in *The Origin of Species* (1859) that music originated from the need of males to attract mates.[62] However, attributing this unusual role reversal solely to Darwinian sexual selection focuses on the motives of the male characters to the exclusion of the gendered implications of the listening act. Eliot, instead, draws readers' attention to the ways that male control over sexual selection affects women. Further, listening, in *The Mill on the Floss*, is portrayed a physical act, in keeping with both her and George Henry Lewes's views on the tie between mind and body,[63] and this physical side to listening indicates a tie between mind and body which is not universal, but which differs for men and women, further exacerbating women's vulnerability to male control over sexual selection.

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[61] Sousa Correa, "'The Music Vibrating,'" 549.

[62] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species,* 6th ed. (London: John Murray, 1891), 1:253.

[63] For a discussion of Eliot's and Lewes's views on the connection between body and mind, see Michael Davis, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country* (Aldershot, Hants., England: Ashgate, 2006), 12-18, and Rylance, chapter seven.

Listening is physical for Maggie; she responds to music by vibrating. When she lacks access to music, what she misses is the physical sensation it creates: "There was no music for her any more – no piano, no harmonized voices, no delicious stringed instruments, with their passionate cries of imprisoned spirits sending a strange vibration through her frame" (286). Maggie responds to music in this way because she is like an instrument; she "had little more power of concealing the impressions made upon her than if she had been constructed of musical strings" (410). Maggie's vibrating response to music has obvious sexual implications, not only because vibrations "are only spoken of in terms of Maggie's relationship with her lovers"[64] but because of the cultural discourse surrounding women's response to music. Maggie's physical, inarticulate response to music is also of a piece with her portrayal as a primitive[65] (she often, for instance, reads or plays from books of music exercises rather than sheet music "that she might taste more keenly by abstraction the more primitive sensation of intervals" [410]), but her physical reaction to music coupled with the fact that men control the production of vibration in the novel implies that women's bodily weakness is inextricably bound up with women's societal disadvantages. While Stephen is susceptible also ("Stephen had a fibre of nobleness in him that vibrated to her appeal" [450]), what he responds to is not so much music's vibrations (which, after all, come from him in the novel, not from Maggie, who does not perform) but rather to the response he has engendered in Maggie. In other words, the vibration between

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[64] Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 194. As the above quotations from the novel indicate, however, Maggie's vibrations are not exclusively spoken of in the context of her lovers, as Weliver argues.

[65] For a discussion of Eliot's use of ideas about the primitive, see Peter M. Logan, *Victorian Fetishism: Intellectuals and Primitives* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 67-87.

Maggie and Stephen does not originate in a shared point but rather originates in Stephen, who sets off a reaction in Maggie that redounds back upon him. But Stephen is still the originating point, the striker of the tuning fork, as it were; women in the novel do not have this level of control.

Instead, men control music throughout the novel.[66] Mr Pullet, for example, whose name is indicative of an avian level of intelligence and sensitivity, possesses a music box whose operation he carefully controls. Only good little girls get to listen to the music box, which is why Maggie realizes that she had better get Lucy to ask Mr Pullet to wind it up, and even then the music is only obtained by recourse to the child version of feminine wiles: "Lucy, who always did what she was desired to do, went up quietly to her uncle's knee, and, blushing all over her neck while she fingered her necklace, said, 'Will you please play us a tune, uncle?'" (93). By extension, men have control over women's responses as well; the Pullet music-box is part of a snuff-box, and as soon as Maggie reacts to the music with happiness, she and her feelings are quickly snuffed. On a literal level, she makes the mistake of trying to share her happiness with her brother and spills his wine in the process, leading him to be angry with her; on a symbolic level, however, Mr Pullet's musical snuff-box gives the ability to stimulate women's reactions, both physical and emotional, to men, makes the privilege of reaction dependent upon participation in gender norms, and then punishes that same reaction. Likewise, music is also associated with Thomas à Kempis and

[66] Alisa Clapp-Itnyre argues that the novel portrays a conflict between the "idyllic pastoral musician" symbolized by Maggie and the "middle-class, music-making community bent on reducing women to the objects of male gazes" (Clapp-Itnyre, 129), but this view ignores the fact that Maggie is not a musician. Rather, the consistent dynamic in the novel is that men play and women listen, regardless of male gazes, class status, or type of music.

the church; reading à Kempis makes Maggie feel "as if she had been wakened in the night by a strain of solemn music" (289) and when she is without other music she still has "the organ at church" (305). Both of these sources of music, either literal or figurative, are associated with masculine or patriarchal entities, and both are problematic. The church and religious writings fail to adequately address Maggie's needs and lead her into a renunciatory state that is saved from being deadly only by its being impossible for Maggie to keep up.

Part of what leads Maggie out of this dull, renunciatory state is also music, and this fact has led various critics to see the novel's portrayal of music as inconsistent or ambiguous.[67] What underlies the seeming contradiction here is the relationship between mind and body. The music associated with à Kempis and the church is a music that is divorced from the senses and the body; Stephen's music, which rouses and arouses Maggie, is too closely allied to the body. In neither case is there unity between mind and body and in both cases this disunity is bound up with music, men's control of music, and thus with men's power over the mind/body relationship.

The only woman who performs in the novel is Lucy, but her singing is given a negligible role. Usually she plays accompaniment for Stephen, in every sense, and is not a prime mover. The girlish Philip plays and sings, but his very girlishness and physical weakness vitiate his music's ability to move Maggie; she does not vibrate to his music as she

[67] See Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture,* 110.

does to the deep-voiced Stephen's.[68] Stephen's more masculine voice allows him to produce, not simply music, but vibrations, and this is the physiological reason why the sensitively receptive instrument that is Maggie is so immediately responsive to Stephen. Moreover, Stephen is aware that his voice gives him the ability to make Maggie react:

> One other thing Stephen seemed now and then to care for, and that was, to sing: it was a way of speaking to Maggie. Perhaps he was not distinctly conscious that he was impelled to it by a secret longing – running counter to all his self-confessed resolves – to deepen the hold he had on her. (459)

The narrator later tells readers that Stephen is not a hypocrite, although critics have sometimes disagreed,[69] and he is not; Stephen's problem is that his mind and body are connected enough that he cannot keep himself from responding physically to the vibrations he has stirred up in Maggie, but not enough that he feels a completely consistent approval of that response. Maggie, to a degree, has the same problem, with the difference that while Stephen can create initial vibrations, Maggie can only vibrate in response. The repeated association of effective musical performance and creation with men and strength rather than women or weakness indicates that this inequality is not peculiar to Maggie and Stephen, but is a result of the physical nature of music: only men – manly men – have

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[68] Phyllis Weliver argues that Maggie does vibrate in response to Philip because that afore-quoted statement in the novel that Maggie is as if "constructed of musical strings" occurs "when she first encounters Philip as an adult" (*Women Musicians*, 195). However, this statement occurs, in my edition of the novel, on page 410, whereas she meets Philip when they are both adults on page 299. Further, Maggie is compared to a musical instrument in part to indicate that she is upset that Philip, rather than Stephen, has come to see her. Weliver also points to the conversation between Maggie and Philip after they have begun to spend time together as adults in which "Philip's words … set [Maggie's] own discontent vibrating again as it used to do" (327). In general, the closest Philip can come to evoking a response in Maggie is to remind her that she wants something that he cannot produce in her.

[69] See, for example, David Carroll, *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 128.

voices deep enough to produce vibration, and while men are still affected by their bodies they are not as helpless because not as receptive; Stephen's feeling for Maggie is less intense than hers for him because he is not a stringed instrument. In the end, Maggie's suicide is a way for her to end the control that others have over her physical being by destroying that being. Her suicide does not signify a refusal on Eliot's part to provide readers with successful women characters who can serve as role models;[70] rather, it is Maggie's way of exerting strength in a system where physical weakness is directly tied to physical, emotional, and intellectual vulnerability. While Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes argued for a connection between body and mind that treated the body as a single entity, Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* adds a consideration of gender to the body that argues, if depressingly, that woman's position in society is due to her physical weakness.

The association of women's listening with physical weakness and sexuality continues through to the end of the century. As listening begins to assume greater theoretical importance, however, the danger of women's listening is portrayed as coming, not from the act of listening itself, but from what one is listening to.

Listening at Century's End

In a speech given in 1879 at Anderson's University, Glasgow, on the establishment of the first "popular music" courses (what we would now call music appreciation classes), J. Spencer Curwen spoke of the importance of beginning to teach music, not through teaching performance or composition, but listening. One of his arguments for emphasizing

[70] For an overview of critical responses regarding George Eliot and gender, see Kate Flint, "George Eliot and Gender," *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot,* ed. by George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

the teaching of listening is that it is necessary in order to encourage compositional ability, and this leads him to say a few words about women composers of art music and why there are so few of them:

> I have often wondered why it is that women – who as musical executants hold their own with men in all departments – have never come to the front rank as composers. Here is an explanation of the fact which I offer with some diffidence, and which, if true, shows the truth of my position [that listening is the primary musical skill which will lead to skill in other musical areas]. All our great composers have held appointments as conductors of orchestras, and have lived and breathed in an atmosphere of sound. Their genius has been trained and fed by constant listening and judging. Women have never had the opportunity of becoming thus intimate with orchestral effects, and hence they have had no chance of measuring their powers with men.[71]

Curwen is not alone in the importance he ascribes to listening: as we shall see in chapter 5, music appreciation classes do not peter out but increase in frequency and importance; music therapy begins at this time; and university musical curricula change to require listening knowledge and comprehension as well as compositional or performative ability. In relating the importance of listening to the ability to create, Curwen is at the vanguard of an idea that will only gain prominence. At the same time, the idea that women are uniquely sensitive listeners to music because of their physical and sexual constitution continued unabated. Writing as late as 1905, Havelock Ellis takes women's physical and sexual susceptibility to music to be an obvious truth:

> So far as my own inquiries go, only a small proportion of men would appear to experience definite sexual feelings on listening to music. And the fact that in woman the voice is so slightly differentiated from that of the

[71] J. Spencer Curwen, "On Method in Musical Study," *The Musical Standard: A Newspaper for Musicians, Professional and Amateur* 17 (third series) (November 1879): 278.

> child ... sufficiently account for the small part played by the voice and by music as a sexual allurement working on men.
>
> It is otherwise with women.... The change in the voice at puberty makes a deeper masculine voice a characteristic secondary sexual attribute of man, while the fact that among mammals generally it is the male that is most vocal ... renders it antecedently likely that among mammals generally, including the human species, there is in the female an actual or latent susceptibility to the sexual significance of the human voice, a susceptibility which, under the conditions of civilization, may be transferred to music generally.[72]

Ellis goes on to cite Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and to refer to women's enthusiasm for popular singers; his statements are significant not because they are new – they are in line with the views we earlier saw expressed by Darwin and Tilt as well as Eliot and Hardy, for example – but because they show the continuity of the idea of women's peculiar susceptibility to music through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In conjunction with the new emphasis on the foundational importance of listening to creativity, this concept of women's unique ability to listen takes on a new significance – even as women as portrayed as being vulnerable to music's affect, that very vulnerability speaks to the potential in woman for creativity, artistic ability, and even superiority to men.

In Mona Caird's 1894 New Woman novel *The Daughters of Danaus,*[73] for example, music at first appears to be portrayed in a contradictory fashion. The heroine, Hadria, struggles to become a composer, but is hampered on all sides by her family's disapproval, society's hostility, and the difficulties caused by motherhood and poverty. The novel's

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[72] Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Selection in Man: Touch, Smell, Hearing, Vision* (1905. Repr., Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1920), 128-130.

[73] Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894. Repr., New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989). All citations in parentheses are to this edition.

condemnation of a society that thwarts the woman composer thus assumes that composing music is good. Yet *listening* to music, in the novel, is very bad. In part one, Hadria is pursued by the callous and conventional Temperley, who has tried unsuccessfully to win her hand. Hadria holds out until the night of a party at which one Mrs. McPherson plays "strange old tune[s]" (136). The music has a powerful effect: "A new and wilder spirit began to possess the whole party" (136), but particularly Hadria, who becomes almost a different person. She dances passionately: "Hadria's reels were celebrated, not without reason. Some mad spirit seemed to possess her. It would appear almost as if she had passed into a different phase of character. She lost caution and care and the sense of external events" (136). Temperley seizes the opportune moment created by the music, and presses his suit once more. Hadria tries to resist, but she can only speak "in a dreamy tone" (137). Temperley sees that Hadria "might almost [accept] him in sheer absence of mind" while Hadria feels that she is "in the thrall of some dream" due to the "bizarre old music" (137). She rouses enough to tell Temperley plainly that she does not view believe in conventional marriage and does not view marriage as binding (142). Temperley eagerly brushes this aside and tells Hadria that he loves her nonetheless (142-143); Hadria considers, and at this moment music becomes again audible: "Mrs. Gordon was now playing a sentimental waltz, with considerable poetic license as to time. As everyone said: Mrs. Gordon played with so much expression" (143). Hadria's siblings take worried note, particularly her sister Algitha, who "knew Hadria's emotional susceptibility" (143). Part one ends, and part two begins with Hadria now Mrs. Temperley, a wan and repressed woman whose "face bore signs of

suffering, and … a look of baffled and restless longing" (147). Hadria's susceptibility to music is thus portrayed as having led her to make an unfortunate, stifling marriage.

Like Maggie, Hadria's susceptibility is compared to a quivering instrument: "Every wind that blows uses you as an Aeolian harp," her friend Miss Du Prel tells her at one point (61). Hadria's vulnerability is tied to a physical and sexual vulnerability; her intense physical reaction to music leads not only to "mad" dancing but to marriage, implying that sexual desire has overtaken her intellect. At the same time, the music that she composes has a salutary effect on its listeners, in particular her friend and mentor Professor Fortescue. As he is dying, he asks for Hadria's music over and over again, telling her at one point, "'I can't tell you what pleasure and comfort your music is to me.… It has been so ever since I knew you" (484). The novel thus suggests that composition and listening are still two very different activities, as far as Hadria is concerned, with composition being safe because it is intellectual and rational and listening dangerous for women because their bodies and their sexuality are vulnerable to music's rhythms. However, the novel also suggests that what makes music dangerous is its participation in a patriarchal system in which women play but do not create (Temperley and his sister early on suggest that Hadria channel her musical interest into playing, as a more appropriate activity for a woman [119]). Music created by a woman and listened to by a man has no deleterious effects. In one sense, this seems to fit the paradigm of the Angel soothing savage breasts, but Hadria's compositions are "bizarre" and full of "daring innovation" and jar upon her conventional husband (166). The intellectuality of her compositions is what makes them superior to sentimental folk music

with its primitive influences.[74] At the same time, Hadria is still susceptible herself, through her body, to those primitive influences. In a way, the novel undercuts itself, arguing both that women should be equal and that they are weaker than men. Yet Hadria's very susceptibility unfits her for Angelhood, as do her keen intellect and unconventional beliefs. Further, her susceptibility is what fits her to be a composer; her family members and acquaintances lack her genius for composition in part because they lack her quivering sensitivity to music. When Miss Du Prel compares Hadria to an Aeolian harp and suggests to Hadria that she try to control her susceptibility, Hadria responds that "One would run the risk of many things rather than let one's strings lie dumb" (62). Hadria's quivering strings, to her, are not simply at the mercy of every wind that blows, but capable of being played by herself. Lacking those strings, she would also lack the ability to create.

Likewise, in George Egerton's 1893 short story "A Cross Line,"[75] the unnamed heroine is highly susceptible to music. Playing in her mind "an uncouth rhythmical jingle with a feverish beat; a song to the untamed spirit that dwells in her" (19), she imagines herself on the stage of an ancient theatre, dancing with "parted lips and panting, rounded breasts, and a dancing devil in each glowing eye, [swaying] voluptuously to the wild music" (20). Music is thus associated with the heroine's primitive, sexual side, with "the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman" and which is "the

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[74] For more on the way the novel juxtaposes the modern and the primitive, see Lisa Surridge, "Narrative Time, History, and Feminism in Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*," *Women's Writing* 12 (2005): 127-141.

[75] George Egerton [Mary Chavelita Dunne], *Keynotes & Discords*, with an introduction by Martha Vicinus (1893 and 1894. Repr., London: Virago Press, 1983). All citations in parentheses are to this edition.

keynote of woman's witchcraft and woman's strength" (20). Music and sound also play an important part in the plot and symbolic meaning of the story. At the beginning of the story, the heroine meets a man (unnamed, as are all the characters) to whom she is attracted and who is even more attracted to her. On the other hand, the heroine is married, and feels genuine affection for her husband, who is devoted to her. In the end, the heroine chooses to send the new man away and stay with her husband and their coming child. Her decision, however, is not meant to imply any subscription to conventional morality. Rather, the woman's decision is based in part on the replacement of her interest in the new man with a stronger interest in her coming child; the maternal instinct is stronger than the sexual one. Her feeling for her husband is likewise strongly maternal; his "eyes are fine, in colour and shape[,] with the luminous clearness of a child's" (13) and "[t]here is a singular soft monotony in his voice; the organ with which she replies is capable of more varied expression" (11). That monotony signals his lack of sexual interest for her, while his child-like physiognomy explains her platonic affection for him and her choice to continue with him. The new man, in contrast, is introduced singing; she hears him before she sees him, and the description of his song takes up the first paragraph of the story:

> 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. (1)

This man's ability to sing, as opposed to the husband's vocal monotony, is part of his capacity to sexually attract the heroine. On the other hand, his tune is still flat; only the

heroine is associated with a music that is varied and wild and fully sexual. As a result, she has no proper mate; neither man is her sexual equal, and this is why her maternal side is particularly important and valuable: it provides the only fulfilling way for the woman to relate to men and children. The strength of the maternal instinct and woman's control over reproduction is, for Egerton, the basis of woman's superiority.[76] Music is part of that superiority, partly because it is a symbol of the strong sexuality that leads to motherhood; the music the heroine hears in her brain is music such as has never been composed by a man, but a "strain of that old-time music that she has never heard in this life of hers, save as an inner accompaniment to the memory of hidden things, born with her" (21), and birthed by her. Her inner music thus marks her creativity and her superiority – not as a sport like Maggie or a racial Other like Fedalma, but as nameless Everywoman – to men. The association of listening with equality that women authors made in the early part of the century is back again, but refigured; women are equals of (or superiors to) men, but not necessarily the same as them. The mid-Victorian focus on the body introduced division into listening and made women's listening different from men's; the late-Victorian belief in the connection between mind and body makes women still different from men, but because bodily sensitivity is now connected to creative potential women can now be portrayed as being, as a sex, just as capable of being lovers and geniuses.

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[76] Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 38. See also Vicinus's introduction to *Keynotes & Discords.*

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC AND MANLINESS

> All musicians are effeminate.
> ~ "A Famous First Night," *The Musical Times*[1]

> [M]anliness was a virtue in which one had to be laboriously instructed. Like so many other virtues, it did not seem to correspond with the natural instincts of the human being. I came to the conclusion that 'manliness' was a very complicated ideal.... Why were music and painting held to be effeminate when all the greatest painters and composers had been men?
> ~ Lord Berners, *First Childhood*[2]

Because music has long been considered an emotional art form, it has long had a fraught relationship with masculinity. As long as performance, listening, and composition were considered allied skills, however, music could be considered an art form that required both emotional and intellectual abilities of various kinds. Through the idea that music harmonized passion and reason, music could therefore be a means of creating harmonious beings and a harmonious society,[3] thus associating music with power and by extension with masculinity. With the Victorian division of performance, listening, and composition from each other came a new set of problems and concerns. Listening and composition, as we saw in chapter 1, were appropriate for men as the one soothed their savage instincts and the other exercised their intellects. Performance, however, was trickier. The increasing number of professional societies served on the one hand to emphasize that male musical

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[1] "A Famous First Night," *The Musical Times* 32 (March 1891): 141-144. The article does not espouse this statement, but rather sums up a common view.

[2] Quoted in Byron Adams, "The 'Dark Saying' of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox," *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 225.

[3] Ritchie, 3.

performance was part of the public sphere; on the other hand, the professionalization of male performance carried class implications that worked to exclude gentleman from performance. Among middle- and upper-classes, music could be performed by middle-class amateurs, but doing so risked aligning men's music-making with that of middle- and upper-class women in the domestic sphere. As a result, when middle-class men are depicted playing music in the Victorian period, their masculinity is in some peril, whereas the opposite is true for early nineteenth-century texts. However, not everyone found this to be a problem; instead, some authors take advantage of the disassociation between middle-class men and performance to argue for a modified vision of manhood.

Harmony

In 1597, composer Thomas Morley warned in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* of the embarrassment that could result to any young man who did not study music. Morley pictures for the reader a dinner party, at which,

> supper being ended, and musicke bookes (according to the custome) being brought to the table, the mistresse of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing. But when, after many excuses I protested unfainedly that I could not: every one began to wonder. Yea, some whispered to others, demaunding how I was brought up.[4]

Morley, of course, relates this tale in order to convince readers of the value of his book, and some critics have argued that the passage is "more likely to be in the nature of a 'puff' for his book than a strictly accurate record of the prevailing … state of affairs."[5] Morley, however, is unlikely to have been exaggerating much; his "puff," after all, would have been

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[4] Quoted in Edmund H. Fellowes, *The English Madrigal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), 19.

[5] Mackerness, 53.

unsuccessful if readers had felt his scenario to be unlikely. Further, Morley was not the only person at the time to assume that men should be musically knowledgeable: Henry Peacham wrote in *The Compleat Gentleman* in 1622 that every gentleman should be able "to sing your part sure, and at the first sight, withal, to play the same upon your viol, or the exercise of the lute."[6] Both men advocated skill in performance in part because both felt such skill was necessary to musical composition, and both saw composition as an art in which the English could and did excel,[7] to the credit of the nation.

Because of these nationalistic implications, music was for the Elizabethans a manly and a gentlemanly art.[8] Not every man lived up to these ideals preached by Morley and others, one can safely assume, but still the ideals (and the books) existed, and were aimed at men. Associated as it was with the sacred and the bawdy, music had much in common with the masculine, a situation that continued throughout the eighteenth century. During that timeframe, no shame need accrue to the man who studied music or played an instrument as music continued to be associated with nationhood and with social harmony.

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[6] Quoted in Dorothy E. Mason, *Music in Elizabethan England* (New York: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1958), 4.

[7] For further discussion of this first English musical renaissance, see Boyd; James Day, *'Englishness' in Music from Elizabethan Times to Elgar, Tippett and Britten* (London: Thames Publishing, 1999); Fellowes; Mason.

[8] There were, of course, those who disagreed, namely, the Puritans. The Puritan objection to music was less biblical than political; as one Puritan put it, "If you would have your sonne softe, wommanishe, uncleane, smothe mouthed … if you would have hym, as it were transnatured into a Woman … sett hym … to learne Musicke, and then shall you not faile your purpose" (quoted in Linda Phyllis Austern, "'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises': The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine," *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. by Jonathan Bellman [Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998], 41). The Puritans, however, were in the minority; music was generally conceptualized in ways that made it masculine, and some even pointed to the Bible for impeccably masculine authority that music was manly: "They [the Puritans] doe abhorre, as devilles doe all, / The pleasant noyse of musique's sound / Although kinge David and st Paule / Did much commend that art profound" (quoted in Norman Hyde, *Music Hath Charms: Some aspects of the music of the British Isles* [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956], 72).

Music could foster "the *Sociable and happy Passions*,"[9] for "there is no science or faculty whatever the more improves the tempers of men, rendering them grave, discreet, mild, and placid."[10] Listening, performance, and composition itself could compose the mind and the emotions, making it an endeavor associated with power over self and others and therefore one seen as particularly appropriate for men.

During the eighteenth century, however, commentators increasingly voiced concerns that music's masculinity was being breached, mostly by a horde of poncing Italians and Frenchmen.[11] Music itself was still considered capable of being a noble art; as Addison put it, "that kind of music, which would have its foundation in reason, … would … improve our virtue in proportion as it raises our delight."[12] Implicit in this conception of good music, however, was a gendered value system in which rational music was gendered masculine and irrational music as feminine; behind the critique of irrational Italian operas and emotional French ones, therefore, was a sense that music was being tainted with femininity. Edmund Burke, reviewing John Brown's *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, quotes with melancholy approbation Brown's summation of the current musical situation:

> No wonder, if these leading characters of false delicacy influence our other entertainments, and be attended with a low and unmanly taste in *music*. That divine art, capable of inspiring every thing that is great or excellent, of

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[9] Charles Avison, quoted in Ritchie, 3.

[10] Sir John Hawkins, quoted in Ritchie, 3.

[11] See Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 66, for a brief discussion of this trend.

[12] Joseph Addison, No. 405, *The Spectator* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1898), 6:48.

> rousing every nobler passion of the soul, is at length dwindled into a woman's or an eunuch's effeminate trill.[13]

As long as music was associated with rationality, however, it could still be salvaged for manliness. One way of making music rational was to carefully match (English) words to music, such that short words were carried by short notes, and so on, as we saw in Chapter Two. Another was to emphasise the importance of harmony. Through harmony, "[m]usic … aligned the body in motion with the harmonious movement of the universe as it had been set in motion by the Creator";[14] music was therefore an emblem of God's will and methods, an association which automatically served to masculinize music. Harmony was also closely associated with reason, another masculinizing factor.

Thomas Holcroft's 1797 Jacobin novel *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor*[15] provides an example of how musical discourse was gendered in masculine terms through the portrayal of harmony, or, in this case, discord. When the young hero, Hugh, is invited to the home of the Rev. Enoch Ellis, he meets the reverend's daughter Eliza. Eliza, like Fanny Squeers after her, is a plain young woman with an exaggerated sense of her beauty and accomplishments, and, again like Fanny Squeers, she seizes relentlessly upon the first attractive young man she sees and tries to ensnare him. To do this, she decides to impress him with her musical prowess, demanding that Hugh and her father should accompany her

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[13] Quoted in Edmund Burke, *The Annual Register … for the Year 1758*, 9th ed. (London: J. Dodsley, 1795), 446.

[14] Thomas Alan King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: The English Phallus* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 146.

[15] All quotations taken from Thomas Holcroft, *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1797. Repr., [South Carolina:] BiblioBazaar, 2006).

on violin and bass, respectively, while she plays the piano and sings. Eliza believes herself to be quite a musician, for her master, Signor Gridarini, has told her himself that "among all the dilettanti in Europe, there was not so great a singer as herself" (136-137). Hugh is impressed by this account, and happily agrees to play. Eliza's confidence erodes somewhat after they begin, however, and Hugh soon realizes that his initial faith in Eliza's opinion of herself

> could not have been more mistaken. The very first difficult passage she came to shewed me she was an ignorant pretender. Time, tune, and recollection were all lost. I was obliged to be silent in the accompaniment, for I knew as little what was to become of her as she herself did. Enoch [her father] knew no more than either of us, but he kept strumming on. He was used to it, and his ears were not easily offended. (138)

Eliza, disconcerted and annoyed by Hugh's silence, stops the concert to rebuke him, and her father for good measure (he has thrown her off with his bad playing, she says). Hugh realizes that the quickest, and only, way to get through the piece is to play the violin, no matter how discordant the results: "My ears were never more completely flayed! But what could be done? Miss panted for fame, and the company wanted music!" (138). The piece over, Eliza then insists that she, her father, and Hugh sing an Italian trio, with similar results; meanwhile, the ladies of the company "had frequently in full gabble joined the *con strepito*[16] chorus, and quite completed that kind of harmony in which our concert excelled" (139).

Hugh's more sensitive ear and greater musical talent are contrasted, not only with Eliza's lack of skill, but with the irrationality of her entire family and circle of friends.

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[16] Noisy, forceful.

Eliza's opinion of herself shows vanity and the inability to discern the difference between a genuine compliment and an employee's flattery. Her grammar is poor (137), and she looks forward to card parties because at each and every one she works off the same lone witticism ("I declare … that old Tabby is never contented but when she is at her honors and her tricks! But let her alone! … She has more tricks than honors!" [139]). The reverend Enoch, as Hugh later discovers, prostrates himself before political figures, eager to please them and do their bidding, and his wife, Mrs Ellis, is a pretender to culture who speaks French and Italian with equal lack of skill (136). The family's insensitivity to music, both as players and as listeners, as well as their interest in French and Italian language and music, is then a symptom of their general irrationality; the discordant sounds of the concert symbolize the discordance of the passions when not subsumed into harmony by reason.

Although women increasingly positioned themselves as morally required and mentally able to harness music's power to effect individual and social harmony,[17] the perceived power of music's affect meant that it was more often considered best managed by men. As a Jacobin novel written by a friend of William Godwin, Holcroft's *Hugh Trevor* does not explicitly argue that men are best suited to making music because the novel ostensibly favors sexual equality; Holcroft's elevation of reason, however, fits easily into a worldview in which reason is masculinized and superior to the feminine, just as Hugh is musically superior to Eliza even more than to the equally inept Rev. Enoch.

[17] Ritchie, 87-132.

Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796),[18] as a Gothic novel, deploys the same dichotomy of reason vs. emotion in a different way. Lacking any Jacobinite interest in sexual equality, the novel explicitly genders these values, portraying music as dangerous and evil when associated with women, yet safe and soothing in the hands of a man. When Matilda wishes to seduce Ambrosio, she begins by playing music. The music has an immediate effect: "Ambrosio, while he listened, felt his uneasiness subside, and a pleasing melancholy spread itself into his bosom" (68). While he is in this susceptible state, Matilda pulls back a sleeve to reveal an arm "formed in the most perfect symmetry" (69), and the monk is inflamed with the desire that leads to his downfall, as Matilda (and Satan) had planned. Later, when Matilda summons a demon, he appears to the sound of "a full strain of melodious music" (237). Matilda demands something of the demon, which he does not wish to give; Matilda, however, threatens him in an unknown language and the demon at last reluctantly gives her the myrtle that will allow Ambrosio to rape Antonia, an act which, as Matilda knows, will cement his doom. As the demon complies with Matilda's demands, "the music was again heard" (237), signifying Matilda's triumph of evil over the conscience of a demon. Music is therefore associated with female will, the demonic, and male downfall. Contrariwise, the novel portrays men's music as lovely and pure. When Theodore visits a convent, he plays a song for the nuns, who applaud the beauty of his song. Likewise, when Lorenzo serenades Antonia, she listens with pleasure before going peacefully to bed, her

[18] All quotations taken from Matthew Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (1795. Repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

purity so undisturbed that she does not even realize Lorenzo is trying to woo her. Evidently, only strong, manly hands can tame a dangerous art form.

Division

With the division of performance, composition, and listening from each other came a set of class and gender distinctions that served important functions even as they could be difficult to maintain. Listening, for example, became increasingly associated with the domestic sphere as the domestic sphere was more and more seen as a place where men would be served and soothed by women; music's ability to compose the mind and emotions was thus seen as especially necessary to men. This idea was not entirely new – Sophia, for example, soothes Mr. Western with music in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* – but it gained importance as the home gained status as a haven from the public sphere. Young women needed to know some music so that they might be able to fully carry out their duty of providing a restful and refreshing home; when Mr. Brooke tells Dorothea that it would really better if she could play, he is thinking of this function:

> Ah, there you are behind Celia, my dear. Celia, now, plays very prettily, and is always ready to play. However, since Casaubon does not like it, you are all right. But it's a pity you should not have little recreations of that sort, Casaubon: the bow always strung – that kind of thing, you know – will not do.[19]

In his typically muddled fashion, Mr. Brooke wishes to advocate music because a wife who plays can soothe a scholarly husband's fevered brain even as he does not wish to advocate music because in this case the husband has no interest in it; nonetheless, Mr. Brooke is worried that Casaubon, lacking music, will be too high-strung.

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[19] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, in *Works of George Eliot* (New York: The Century Company, 1910), 6:91.

At the same time, listening to music was not exclusively associated with the domestic sphere, for men. Both men and women attended concerts, but only men were generally credited with either the sense or the ability to listen properly (women were too distracted, it was claimed, by looking at other women's clothes).[20] Listening to music was also, less intellectually, associated with the institution of the music hall and thus a system where men bought the right, not only to listen, but to watch a pretty woman perform for them. Although some music halls catered to a more upper-class market and therefore strove to be what is now called "family-friendly," most music halls, for most of the century, were places patronized primarily by men, and primarily lower- and working-class men.[21] Listening's associations with physical vibration also reinforced not simply the masculinity of listening to music-hall tunes, but also the lower-class nature of the music hall.

Musical composition was a very different matter. Although the often bawdy works that found their way into music halls were presumably composed by men, composition was conceived of as an intellectual act, and was thus strongly associated with masculinity – arguably more so than any other art form, as there are fewer women composers of Art music than there are women painters or poets. As women were encouraged to perform in order to soothe men's savage breasts, men "were provided scant encouragement to study music as a performed practice; instead they were invited to approach it cognitively."[22] By implication, then, composition was conceptualized in such a way as really only to include

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[20] See, for example, "Winter Music," 188.

[21] Kift, 62-63, 68.

[22] Leppert, *The Sight of Sound,* 64.

the composition of art music. Musical composition was constructed as a scientific endeavor, and through the combination of science and genius music composition continued the older association between music and the order of heaven represented on earth by men. In Elizabeth Sheppard's popular and widely-reprinted 1853 novel *Charles Auchester*, for example, composition is characterized as a solemn duty:

> Be assured that in all works that have endured there is something of the nature of truth; therefore acquaint thyself with all, ever reserving the right to honor with peculiar investigation those works in which the author by *scientific hold upon forceful imagination* intimates that he wrote with the direct intention to illustrate his art, not alone for the love of it, but in the fear of its service. Thus apply thyself to the compositions of Palestrina, of Purcell, of Alessandro Scarlatti, and the indefatigable Corelli; thus lend thyself to the masterpieces of Pergolesi, of Mozart, and Handel; thus lean with thine entire soul upon the might and majesty of John Sebastian Bach. All others in order, but these in chief; and this last generalissimo, until thou hast learnt to govern thyself.[23]

This power over the self that musical composition, or the study of it, was supposed to give, and its association with divine service and by extension the divine, served to make composition not only a manly but an upper-class endeavor. Composition of art music was an activity that required a high degree of specialized education, thus excluding women (very intentionally), and leisure, thus excluding the lower classes. Although late in the century composition was constructed as a form of arduous physical labor (as we shall see in the last chapter), for most of the century composition was not considered to involve physical labor at all, cementing its status as an upper-class activity.

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[23] Elizabeth Sheppard, *Charles Auchester: A Memorial* (1853. Repr., Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1891), 1:254, my emphasis.

The figure of the bard complicates the upper-class associations of art music in ways that have been more fully explored elsewhere,[24] but, despite the attempts of some women poets to take on the bardic role (Felicia Hemans, for example, with such poems as "The Rock of Cader Idris"), the figure of the bard remained intractably masculine. This was because the bard was increasingly associated with what Katie Trumpener has called "bardic nationalism." The compositions of the bard figure were useful precisely because they were not art music (in which other countries now excelled), that is, artificial products of education, but were rather associated with the natural productions of national character and served, among other things, to provide a more masculine alternative to an art music that some feared was "slip[ping] into effeminacy."[25] In part, what complicates the bard's role is the fact that he is not simply a composer, but a performer – a problem because performance was associated not only with middle- and upper-class women, in the domestic sphere, but, in the public sphere, with lower-class men.

Male performers in Victorian England were generally professionals or members of the working class; even then, the masculinity of their musical activity had to be reinforced in some fashion. The crew of the *Agra* in Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*[26] (1863), for instance, sings, but their masculinity is secure: they are sailors, first of all, whose song aids their work on deck; they sing about rum and brandy (the reader is even treated to the sheet music, so

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[24] See Newman, *Ballad Collection*.

[25] Newman, *Ballad Collection*, 11, 68.

[26] Charles Reade, *Hard Cash: A Matter-of-Fact Romance* (1863. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1876). All citations in parentheses refer to this edition.

that he can sing along); and they sing in a manly fashion, "with true nautical power" and "lusty harmony … [that] made the air ring" (61). This strategy was hardly original to Reade: the massive trend towards military imagery in Victorian hymns was likewise a way to safeguard men's masculinity in the musical forum they could least easily escape or ignore.[27] Brass bands, such as those of the Salvation Army, likewise carried military associations[28] but also were associated with the lower classes.[29] As William Booth, the Army's founder, put it, "I found that ordinary working men in their corduroys and bowler hats could command attention from their own class which was refused point-blank to me with my theological terms and superior knowledge;"[30] the choice of brass bands therefore was consciously a choice to perform music that was both masculine and lower-class and which lower-class men already knew how to play and could be readily found to play.[31] Orchestras, too, although a step up on the social scale, were filled with professionals and not with gentlemen. The swell of interest in professional music societies may indicate, however, that professional men were not fully at their ease with a profession that was associated with lower-class men on one hand and with middle- and upper-class women on the other.

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[27] Tamke outlines this trend without discussing gender; J.R. Watson's "Soldiers and Saints: the Fighting Man and the Christian Life," in *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture,* ed. by Andrew Bradstock, Sean Gill, Anne Hogan, and Sue Morgan (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) does discuss gender.

[28] Trevor Herbert, "God's Perfect Minstrels: The Bands of the Salvation Army," in *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History,* ed. by Trevor Herbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 192.

[29] Herbert, 193.

[30] Quoted in Herbert, 193.

[31] Herbert, 191-192.

The great difficulty came with the performance of music by gentlemen. It was done; but it was fraught with pitfalls to the performer's masculinity and class status. Some men dealt with this difficulty in creative fashion; a great many nineteenth-century pianos, for instance, were painted with hunting scenes, guns, and the bodies of dead animals,[32] an indication that men did in fact sometimes play the feminine instrument, and were uncomfortable about their desire to do so. More often, perhaps, performance by gentlemen (or would-be gentlemen) was avoided altogether; numerous commentators took for granted, even if they deplored, the fact that men generally avoided performing music and in fact often prided themselves on their ignorance.[33] The threat to masculinity was strong. In Lord Leighton's painting *Music*, for instance, the young man in the picture illustrates, not so much How Not to Do It, as Why Not to Do It. As Richard Leppert points out, the young man is consistently feminized in "his body, his pose, his gesture, and his expression" and in his conspicuous (indeed, central) lack of a penis; the handle of the mandolin is unrealistically elongated, "not to compensate for lack, but to confirm it."[34] His femininity serves to mark the limit of masculinity; even a masculinized music, a phallic instrument, will un-man the performer.

William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* provides a similar object lesson in the incompatibility of music and masculinity. In this painting, the young woman's

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[32] Leppert, *The Sight of Sound,* 119 ff.

[33] John Antes Latrobe, *The Music of the Church Considered in Its Various Branches* (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1831), 403, 406.

[34] Leppert, *The Sight of Sound,* 225.

awakened conscience leads her to turn, enraptured, away from a sinful past. She has seen the light, quite literally, a light visible in the painting through the mirror behind her. The sinful past is represented in the figure of a young man at the piano. Previous critics have argued that the painting ambiguously represents music as dangerous and sinful and yet also as the moral influence that leads the young woman to reject her sinful life,[35] but there is no indication in the painting itself that the music has led to the young woman's transformation; rather, it is the light, in contrast to the music, that awakens the young woman's conscience. What makes the music appropriate to sin is not only music's ability to sound sensuous and awaken physical vibrations in the (female) listener. Further, the piano, as the instrument most associated with women, was notoriously "shunned by almost every one, who desires to preserve his character [from] a charge of effeminacy,"[36] yet the young man's comfortable demeanor indicates he is quite at home in front of the piano. Nor is this some passing fancy or joke; the blue bag lying on the floor is filled with sheet music, indicating that the man has brought additional music with him, either to ensure that there will be plenty of music or that his favorites will be played, or both. Even in dallying with his mistress he has gravitated towards music rather than (or perhaps as a prelude to) sex, and the glove that lies on the floor has been removed, not on the way to the bedroom, but to the piano. His very effeminacy backfires, however; in responding to the music, the woman in the painting turns away from the effeminate man whose clueless hand is still on

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[35] See Asquith, 21; Kate Flint, "Reading *The Awakening Conscience* Rightly" in *Pre-Raphaelites Re-Viewed,* ed. by Marcia Pointon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 59.

[36] Latrobe, 403.

the keys. The woman's conscience is thus awakened, not just to a born-again state of sexual purity, but to a rejection of blurred gender roles and a recognition of her (and his) proper sphere. Further, sin is not even exciting; the man's place at the piano represents a lack of virility equally unattractive to heterosexual male and female viewers. The picture is thus moral, not only in its portrayal of a woman turning from sin, but in its method of doing so.[37] Gender roles are at once transgressed and reinforced, as the transgression of gender roles is portrayed as leading to male effeminacy and subsequent female rejection of the male.

Lord Byron snarkily informed a piano-playing Leigh Hunt that "all lovers of music were effeminate,"[38] and while he may not actually have believed this, most Englishmen throughout the century did think that "musicians are as a class wanting in the manlier qualities."[39] To ask a gentleman if he played an instrument was considered an insult,[40] and school music masters found it difficult to persuade talented boys to study music at all because, as one Harrovian put it, "A Harrow boy who went in for the study of music in those days would have been looked upon as a veritable milksop."[41] A few, of course,

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[37] Hunt's very moral refusal to portray a paramour as virile may, in fact, account in part for the puzzlement with which the painting was originally viewed; for a discussion of contemporary reactions, see Flint.

[38] Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Carey, 1828), 70.

[39] "Manliness in Music," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 30 (August 1889), 460.

[40] Derek B. Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38.

[41] Walter Macfarren (brother of the composer George Macfarren), quoted in Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic,* 39. Macfarren is one of the few defenders of music's manliness.

defended music's manliness against the charge that it was "a very soft and effeminate study,"[42] but, again, the very need for a defense shows how widespread was the belief among the middle- and upper-classes that musical performance was not manly.

Redefinition

Nonetheless, gentlemen still played music. Their playing could be masculinized in part, as we saw in Chapter Two, by the careful selection of the appropriately masculinized instrument, but the gentleman performer's theoretical distance from commercialism placed his musical masculinity in a limbo uncomfortably near the domestic sphere. This state of limbo, however, provided a space where the definition of masculinity could be played with and modified. Because of the tension between class and gender inherent in the figure of the gentleman performer, literary portrayals of this figure often, intentionally or not, function in such a way as to take advantage of the figure's ambiguous status to redefine masculinity itself.

The figure of the church musician worked particularly well for this purpose because it was another locus of tensions regarding definitions of masculinity: on the one hand, God, priests, and other churchly servants were defined as masculine, and hymnal imagery espoused an ideal of violent Christianity, yet, on the other, God's earthly representatives were also often seen in feminized terms as gentle, kind, and nurturing. Mr. Harding in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855),[43] for example, is a gentle man whose love of music

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[42] Joseph Proudman, *Musical Jottings, Useful and Humorous* (London: W.M. Hutchings, 1872), 34.

[43] All quotations taken from Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* (1855. Repr., Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001).

emphasizes his difference from the more forcible, virile men around him: while John Bold bustles about talking with lawyers, Mr. Harding plays a concert for the bedesmen; when Archdeacon Grantly harangues him, Mr. Harding plays his imaginary violoncello. His love of music is, moreover, impractical; he has spent an unspecifiedly large number of guineas on printing his beloved *Harding's Church Music*. Male musicality is associated with a "kind and sweet" (96) and largely passive, impractical nature which is continually contrasted with the bossy and decidedly male figures of John Bold and Archdeacon Grantly. Yet Mr. Harding is not thereby made an entirely feminine character; he is, after all, a church musician and a priest, male functions, and his instrument of choice is the manly cello, forbidden to women (his daughter, of course, plays the piano). Even his extravagant *Harding's Church Music*, with its emphasis on a pretty appearance and careful attention to "all possible additions of vellum, typography, and gilding" (42), is an entrance into the public sphere theoretically more proper for the male of the species. As precentor, Mr. Harding directs the choir, giving him a masculine level of control over the feminine art. Yet, in turn, Mr. Harding thinks of his musical endeavors as part of the "worship of St. Cecilia" (56), and thus casts even the church and worship in feminine terms at the same time that the church is portrayed as a male enclave. The inherent androgyny of the church musician makes that profession an appropriate choice for a character who models a modified, more feminized form of masculinity.[44]

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[44] For an extended discussion of Mr. Harding's androgynous characteristics, see Jim McDermott, "New Womanly Man: Feminized Heroism and the Politics of Compromise in *The Warden*," *VIJ: Victorians Institute Journal* 27 (1999): 71-90. McDermott includes Mr. Harding's cello in his discussion, but without noting the ways that the cello helps to masculinize Mr. Harding's love of music.

The church organist Tom Pinch in Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-1844)[45] seems a less likely candidate for the espousal of a revised, more androgynous view of manhood; Dickens's views on gender have often been called to account for sexism. In part, this is because discussions of Dickens's views on gender have focused on his portrayal of women, and the consensus for many years has been that "[Dickens] shows a strong emotional response towards certain female stereotypes but is, for the most part, not concerned to explore through his imagination female nature as a whole."[46] Other critics, such as Sylvia Jarmuth, have argued that Dickens's portrayal of women, while initially lacking psychological depth, progresses over the course of the novelist's career as "[Dickens] manifests greater moral intensity and begins to examine from a feminine perspective the destructiveness of moral indifference in *Bleak House, Hard Times,* and *Little Dorrit*."[47] More recently, critics have begun to argue that Dickens's portrayal of women even in the earlier novels is disruptive of conventional gender roles: "Dickens' women are anything but stereotypical. They cause disruptions in the text that make their reality ever so accurate, their silences ever so telling."[48] Still more recently, critics have begun to examine Dickens's

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[45] All quotations taken from Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-1844. Repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[46] Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (London: J.M. Dent, 1983), 240.

[47] Matthew J. McGuire, *The Role of Women in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (London: Minerva Press, 1995), 10. McGuire is summing Jarmuth's views.

[48] Brenda Ayres, *Dissenting Women in Dickens' Novels* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 7. See also the chapter on deviant women in Juliet John's *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

portrayal of gender by examining his portrayal of male characters; Holly Furneaux's *Queer Dickens*, for example, argues that

> Dickens's portrayals of nurturing masculinity and his concern with touch and affect between men challenge what we have been used to thinking about Victorian ideals of maleness. At the same time, tender male touching calls into question current understandings of the sexual, suggesting the difficulty of fully demarcating the erotic."[49]

David Rosen and others have argued that Dickens found problematic an "idea of progress [that] seemed to Dickens to split men and women apart and to split human beings down the middle."[50] Rosen cites *Hard Times* as an example; like most critics, he finds Dickens's more mature novels to be the ones in which Dickens questions conventional gender roles. However, through the portrayal of the church organist, Tom Pinch, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens redefines masculinity even in one of his early novels.

Tom Pinch is feminized in two ways: through his occupation of church organist and through the contrast between his behavior and that of the more virile Pecksniff and young Martin Chuzzlewit. Unlike Pecksniff and young Martin, Tom is gentle and considerate of others at all times; he is a "mild figure" (715) who believes, falsely, that he owes everything he has in life to the kind offices of Pecksniff. Tom believes he is and ought to be dependent on Pecksniff, and sees his own role in life as that of a ministering angel who performs little offices of affection and gratitude for the man who supports him and who defends Pecksniff from all criticisms and accusations of hypocrisy with the loyalty of a

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[49] Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

[50] David Rosen, *The Changing Fictions of Masculinity* (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 1993), 146.

wife. All this makes Tom feminine; yet he is still contrasted favorably and repeatedly with the self-confident, faux-humble Mentor-to-the-World Pecksniff. Tom's femininity is not made the object of ridicule, but rather serves to highlight his innocence and Pecksniff's selfishness. Likewise, when Tom first meets Martin Chuzzlewit in a tavern, Martin is swaggeringly bossy and self-absorbed; he sits in front of the fire, blocking a shivering Tom from heat while toasting himself, and guzzles wine with his meat while Tom picks at a much humbler meal. Later, when they are both installed in Pecksniff's household, Tom humbly serves Martin a meal and then, when Martin takes over the bench before the fire (again blocking the heat) and begins to snore, Tom sits quietly, hardly moving a muscle for fear of waking the sprawled figure before him. Again, however, Tom's silent, humble ministrations serve not only to feminize him, but to emphasize the contrast between his unselfishness and Martin's selfishness – values that Dickens finds it difficult to personify except in gendered terms: feminine, Angel, unselfish; man, beast, selfish. Indeed, Tom is contrasted indirectly but favorably with nearly every other character in *Martin Chuzzlewit*; in the novel which Dickens intended to be a study in selfishness and its variations, only Pecksniff's ward Mary, Tom's sister Ruth, and the Angelic Tom himself are presented as unselfish people.[51]

Tom is a more important character than either Mary or Ruth, however, a fact due to his role in the novel as a model, not simply of unselfishness, but of unselfish, idealized manhood; Dickens, like many of his readers, expects unselfishness from women; the

[51] For a general discussion of Tom's centrality to the novel's theme of selfishness, see Jerry Beasley, "The Role of Tom Pinch in *Martin Chuzzlewit*," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 5 (1974): 77-89. See also Sylvère Monod, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 125, 128.

achievement of feminine unselfishness by a man is a deviation the normal run of manhood, as portrayed in the novel, and thus of great importance. To succeed as a model of both unselfishness *and* manhood, therefore, Tom needs to embody a feminized manhood that is nonetheless recognizably differentiated from the femininity of women. Tom's role as a church organist serves to continue his characterization as feminine while simultaneously introducing elements that help to emphasize his manhood. Tom plays the church organ for free, which he imagines to be a great privilege granted him by the benevolent Pecksniff but which in reality is a task Pecksniff is supposed to pay someone to do; the fact that Tom gladly plays the organ for free makes him more of a Christian and a gentleman than the money-minded Pecksniff while it also allies him with the horde of women amateur musicians. Like them, or rather like the idealized version of them, Tom plays sensitively, with "great expression and tenderness" (419); his music is not rationalized in any fashion, but is rather the outpouring of a simple heart (715). At the same time, however, he plays an instrument that was the domain of men[52] in a setting that was also the domain of men. The church setting masculinizes Tom's sensitive performances by associating this mild, gentle figure with the highest kind of male authority. In short, Dickens imagines unselfishness as feminine and therefore needs Tom to be feminine in order to portray him as unselfish; the music reinforces this femininity, yet Dickens also wants to imagine this central, unselfish figure as masculine, and he therefore associates Tom with the church and justifies Tom's femininity by making him a mild, Christ-like figure who is used by selfish

[52] There were a few exceptions. For a discussion of the female church organist in nineteenth-century England, see Judith Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling and the Musical Life of Female Organists in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, Hants., England: Ashgate, 2007).

men. Indeed, the end of the novel emphasizes the Christ parallel heavily, focusing on Tom as a figure close to Heaven who is simply marking time on earth; the last few paragraphs of the novel describe Tom the nurse who cares for the sick and needy, Tom the lover of flowers who values God's creation, Tom the lover of children – all parallels to Christ and all parallels to women. Pinch is a character meant to be reverenced, as indeed Dickens reverenced him.[53]

Perhaps sensing that this association with the church undercuts Tom's masculinity as much as it creates it (for in justifying Tom's femininity as Christ-like Dickens must also define Christ and the church as feminine), Dickens also uses Tom's music and the church setting to clarify Tom's heterosexuality. Tom's tender music (it is difficult to imagine organ music being tender; but no matter, that is how Dickens describes it) speaks particularly to the feminine soul of Pecksniff's ward Mary, who comes to the church whenever Tom is practicing and listens, entranced, to his playing. Their mutual love of music leads to friendship and is part of a general similarity in their characters (Mary is a typically gentle Dickens heroine, primarily different from Tom in that she has chubby cheeks and ringlets and he does not); because of their similarities, this relationship in part further feminizes Tom, but it also masculinizes him, for he falls in love with Mary. Tom's feelings for Mary in fact lead him to adulthood, figuratively speaking, for through those feelings he finally realizes that Pecksniff is a hypocrite. The scene in which this happens is in fact the pivotal moment in the novel, coming at almost exactly the half-way point in the text. Pecksniff, out for a stroll, hears Tom practicing the organ and listens with a degree of contempt: he "had

[53] Monod, 125.

no objection to music.... He considered it a vagabond kind of trifling, in general, just suited to Tom's capacity" (419). What respect Pecksniff has for music is based on its soporific abilities: "he had not what may be called a fine ear for music, but he knew when it had a tranquillising influence on his soul; and that was the case now, for it sounded to him like a melodious snore" (419). Pecksniff's insensitivity to music is of a piece with his insensitivity in general; it is also a sort of insensitivity that many men, as we have seen, prided themselves upon as part of their masculinity, and Pecksniff's masculinity in this scene is reinforced by the sense of control and ownership that he feels as he enters the church. Unobserved in the dimness, he prepares for a nap, when Mary enters and, after some hesitation, tells Tom that Pecksniff has been sexually harassing her. No other accusation leveled at Pecksniff has ever before carried any weight with Tom, but this one he believes instantly. Ostensibly, Tom believes Mary because of her ineffable air of truth; on another level, however, he believes her because his masculinity is at stake – not perhaps to him, but to the novel. Only by believing Mary can Tom take on a chivalrous role; his immediate acceptance of her statement also reflects his sexual feelings for her and his anger that another man also feels sexual interest. The moment is Tom's apotheosis of manhood; he becomes more perceptive as he becomes more clearly heterosexual, and his role as confidante in a church setting gives him a priestly role as well as a chivalrous one. At the same time, however, the priestly role is gentle, and Tom's chivalry manifests itself in quiet, steady behavior when he meets Pecksniff later, rather than in, say, a physical fight. Nor does Tom ever reveal his own feelings towards Mary; Pecksniff is more obviously and

openly heterosexual than Tom. Herein lies the problem; Tom's masculinity comes through two associations, his association with the church and Christ on the one hand, and his association with heterosexuality on the other. Yet his sexuality cannot be emphasized without endangering his Christ-like status, a status which is necessary to the overall moral that unselfish (and therefore feminine) men are good and should be emulated. Further, by drawing parallels to Christ that emphasize Christ's kindness and love of children, Christ and the church are effectively feminized, thus castrating their ability to masculinize Tom. The figure of the church organist represents Dickens's attempt to work out an insoluble problem: how to revise manhood towards the model of a mild Christ by incorporating and glorifying a feminine sensitivity, while avoiding over-feminization by portraying (hetero)sexuality, a sexuality which in turn cannot be emphasized without endangering ideal manhood's kinship with the divine, which is itself feminized. In short, Tom Pinch the church organist represents an attempt to feminize manhood without emasculating it, an attempt that runs into continual difficulties because the gendered discourses with which Dickens is playing are themselves so tangled and confused. The result is an oddly androgynous figure who is presented as a role model, yet for whom the novel must constantly make excuses. J. Hillis Miller once remarked that Tom Pinch exemplifies "the impasse to which total unselfishness leads;"[54] the reason unselfishness is an impasse, for Tom, is that Dickens can only associate it with a feminine sensitivity that he both lauds and with which he is somewhat uncomfortable.

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[54] J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 121.

More of a gentleman that Tom Pinch is Guy Morville in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe.*[55] Guy's musical talent, associated exclusively with the domestic sphere and therefore aligned almost exclusively with women's musical activity, serves to undercut the novel's otherwise conventional approach to gender roles. Throughout the novel, Guy and his cousin Philip are contrasted in terms of their aptitude for and attitude towards music. Philip dislikes, despises, and fears music; Guy loves music and has a natural talent for playing and singing (the two types of performance most associated with women and femininity). The end result is to masculinize Philip and feminize Guy; Guy's struggle against himself throughout the novel is a masculine struggle, as various critics have argued,[56] but the self that Guy is manfully striving to achieve is a feminine one. His victory in the end, when he sacrifices himself as Philip's nurse, is a victory over manhood and a culmination of the novel's feminization of the character. While Yonge undoubtedly intended to espouse domestic ideology, and does so explicitly at various moments in the novel, the portrayal of men in relation to music throughout the novel undercuts this project, arguing for a world where men have rightful superiority over women only when they are like women.[57]

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[55] All quotations taken from Charlotte Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853. Repr., New York: BiblioBazaar, 2008).

[56] See, for example, Catherine Wells-Cole, "Angry Yonge Men: Anger and Masculinity in the Novels of Charlotte M. Yonge" in *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture,* ed. by Andrew Bradstock, *et al* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

[57] June Sturrock, in *"Heaven and Home": Charlotte M. Yonge's Domestic Fiction and the Victorian Debate over Women* (Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 1995), argues that Yonge often portrays ideal manhood as domesticated and the patriarchal male as "in need … of conversion" (107); she does not, however, discuss *The Heir of Redclyffe*, except to mention it in passing.

Music is specifically constructed as feminine in the novel, for it is seen as part of an Angel's duties. Guy himself gives voice to this idea: "there were higher ends for music, which made it come under Mrs. Edmonstone's rule, of a thing to be used guardedly, not disused" (107). Yet, though explicitly associated with women and the domestic, music shows up for most of the novel in relation to Guy. Music is in part the cause of the cloud of suspicion that surrounds Guy when he comes to live with the Edmonstones after his grandfather's death; the family is wary partly because of fears about the famous Morville temper, but partly also because Guy is the son of a violinist, or, as old Sir Guy had put it, a fiddler[58] (12). Guy seems to inherit this talent for music; when Laura and Amy begin to play and sing for the first time since Guy's arrival, "his look of delighted attention struck everyone" (30). When Guy at last ventures to join in the singing, it is with "so full and melodious a voice" (30) that Laura is incredulous when Guy tells her he knows nothing of music. The young women are "charmed and surprised" (30) at his native talent, and instantly bond with him. The women in the family, far from finding that Guy's musical talent confirms his low origins, see it instead as a gift. The travelling violinist is suspicious because part of the public sphere; with this first demonstration of his musical ability, Guy's talent is firmly domesticized and feminized. Rather abruptly, the paragraph in which this incident is related ends by pointing out how kind Guy is to his crippled cousin Charles, and how sad he is for the death of his grandfather (31). This abrupt ending serves to emphasize and valorize Guy's emotional nature and his tenderness, reinforcing the

[58] Already long a term of contempt. See Brenda Neece, "The Cello in Britain: A Technical and Social History," *The Galpin Society Journal* 56 (June 2003): 77-115, 199-214, for a discussion of the nineteenth-century implications of various musical terms.

feminine sensibilities of which his musical talent is part, as those around him recognize: "'He is sensitive,' said Laura. 'I don't mean only in temper, but in everything. I wonder if it is part of his musical temperament to be as keenly alive to all around, as his ear is to every note'" (74). Because of these feminine sensibilities, Guy is immediately close to Amy, Laura, and Mrs. Edmonstone, in a way he is not with Mr. Edmonstone, Philip, or Charles.

Guy often relies on music to soothe himself away from fits of temper. As we saw in Chapter One, music was often used as an emotional outlet by women who could not otherwise express their feelings, and was indeed encouraged partly for that purpose. Likewise, Guy uses music to work off frustrations, as Mrs. Edmonstone advises him to do: "'She treated him as an old fairy might, and advised him in a grave, mysterious way, always to go and play the "Harmonious Blacksmith," whenever he found himself getting into "a taking"'" (90). In one way, Guy's choice of music is suitably masculine; the Harmonious Blacksmith,[59] as the title indicates, is a piece that allows those who wish to pound the piano to fulfill themselves. Handel was also, though not British, England's closest thing to a national composer of international renown, and was thus often associated with Englishness and (since also associated with greatness) masculinity.[60] Yet this choice of a piece of music that could be seen as masculine is made, not to encourage Guy's masculinity,

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[59] The nickname for the final movement of Handel's Keyboard Suite No. 5 in E Major, HWV 430.

[60] Alexander Pope was one of the first to construct Handel in these terms; in a footnote to the *Dunciad* (in which Handel figures prominently as one of the few non-Dunces) he suggests that Handel's move to Ireland was due to an effeminate society's inability to appreciate true manliness in music: "Mr. *Handel* had introduced a great number of Hands, and more variety of Instruments into the Orchestra, and employed even Drums and Cannon to make a fuller Chorus; which prov'd so much too manly for the fine Gentlemen of his age, that he was obliged to remove his Music into *Ireland*" (*The Dunciad: in four books*, ed. by Valerie Rumbold [New York: Longman, 1999], 282, n. 54).

but to control and disperse it, in a manner generally advocated for young women. Further, to assume that Guy's choice of a relatively lively and loud piece masculinizes his activity is to assume that women usually expressed their feelings through soft, flowing, delicate pieces of music; in fact, young ladies might crash and bang their way through the more emotional (and loud) works of the composers, just as Lucy Honeychurch (much later) expresses herself through Beethoven in E.M. Forster's *A Room With a View*. Like many a young woman, then, Guy controls, channels, and lessens his feelings of impatience and frustration through the instrument most associated with womanhood, and, as we have seen, most avoided by men.

Guy is often at his happiest when absorbed by music; when a concert is to be given nearby, he can think of little else for weeks (170). At the concert, Guy is delighted to discover a relative whom he has never met, a violinist named Sebastian Bach Dixon; his absorption is thus rewarded by the discovery of a congenial relative who makes Guy feel that he has familial ties still, despite his grandfather's death. In a novel that ordinarily condemns being absorbed by any one activity and preaches self-discipline and self-abnegation, it is significant that Guy's absorption in music in not condemned, except through the irritation of Philip, whose behavior and feelings the novel criticizes with increasing openness. Philip's concerns are enhancing and displaying his learning and tending to business matters; Guy struggles with the classics and is uninterested in business, a contrast which genders the two characters very differently and allows the novel to critique an intellectual manhood of the public sphere, representing as the ideal instead a manhood

that is domestic, happy, and largely unable to express itself[61] except through music. Guy's tendency to use music to express or soothe his emotions is tied explicitly to the feminine when Sebastian Bach Dixon tells Guy that Guy has inherited, not his father's musicality, but his "dear mother's talent and taste" (173). This inheritance is the exact opposite of the curse Guy fears he has inherited from his male relatives; music has the power to save souls and dispel evil. When Guy is in one of his darkest moments, he is roused from sinful despair by the sound of carolers, in whose song he joins; afterwards, though he still feels somewhat depressed, "the anguish of feeling, the sense of being in the power of evil, had insensibly left him" (314) through music's agency.

Music, then, is portrayed in the novel in terms that associate it with both women and goodness. Likewise, Philip's disapproval of music demonstrates not only flaws in Philip's character; it is tied to his masculinity as well. Philip is clear from the very beginning of the novel that he disapproves of music; when Amy and Laura praise Guy's ability (an ability which, with their feminine training, they are able to appreciate as Philip cannot) and discuss his talent, Philip responds: "'Ah! inherited, poor fellow'" (30). When Amy, amused, questions whether Philip can actually pity musical talent, Philip responds, "'Do you forget? … I would not advise you to make too much of this talent in public; it is too much a badge of descent'" (30). Philip holds fiddling men in contempt, and therefore pities the

[61] Guy of course talks in the novel, but he struggles constantly with so doing. Countless are the moments when Guy bites his lip till it bleeds or runs upstairs and locks himself in his room, unable to express the ideas and feelings behind his anger without simply exploding; even when he *is* able to explain what about the behavior of Philip (surely the most irritatingly superior character in all fiction) has particularly hurt him, he finds difficulty in doing so to anyone but Mrs. Edmonstone, and even then he often speaks with hesitation. Guy does not intellectualize his feelings, nor does the novel expect him to; instead, he must learn to replace feelings of anger and violence with gentle, loving feelings – a project in which music is, in every sense, instrumental.

son of a fiddler. In a time period when travelling violinists were very often the objects of contempt for their effeminacy, poverty, and their obvious profit-motive, Philip's concern, although not spelled out, is clear: Guy's background is unmanly, not only because it involves money-grubbing but because it is effeminate money-grubbing. Because Philip genuinely pities this background, he makes an effort to masculinize Guy shortly after this incident by talking to Guy seriously about the need to study the classics rather than hanging out at the piano with (other) young ladies – a sub-text that explains Guy's burst of anger. The reader, however, is not told to sympathize with Philip's beliefs; rather, Philip's disapproval of music is undercut when he admits, after compassionating Guy, that he himself has no talent for music (30). His disapproval is thus portrayed as impure because grounded largely in envy, an envy which becomes more explicit when Philip reflects that Guy's musical talent has led to Laura's admiration for Guy and the quick closeness that Laura and Guy have forged at the piano (121); these reflections lead Philip into what is, in the novel's terms, the novel's great sinful moment, that of Philip's premature and secretive declaration of his feelings to Laura. Philip is not presented as wrong in thinking of music as a feminine activity, for the novel feminizes music as well; but he is presented as wrong and self-interested in therefore condemning music and musicians. Further, his disapproval of music is grounded in sexual jealousy; he feels inferior in manhood to Guy because Guy has captured so much of Laura's attention; in his greatest moment of jealousy, Philip therefore emphasizes Guy's musical ability repeatedly and contemptuously: "'How conceited they have made that boy about his fine ear.... I wonder he is not ashamed to

parade his music, considering whence it is derived'" (130). When Philip feels inferior in manhood to Guy, he vents his feelings by casting Guy in feminized terms. Philip himself is a paragon of manly virtues, so much so that Charlotte Yonge wondered if readers would think he was supposed to be the novel's role model,[62] but his more conventional manliness (classically learned, absorbed in business, continually dispensing advice to Guy and other women) is not necessarily as attractive as Guy's more feminine character (emotional, music-loving, domestic). The novel continually critiques what Catherine Wells-Cole calls Philip's "authoritative manhood;"[63] as Wells-Cole points out, part of the reason that Philip and Laura's secret relationship is portrayed so negatively is that, once their relationship ceases to be aboveboard, Philip is able to be "at his most securely masculine,"[64] controlling Laura without check.

In the end, however, Philip's masculinity largely disappears;[65] his illness weakens his bossy tendencies and removes him from the public sphere. While in the domestic sphere, tenderly nursed by Guy, Philip learns the value of Guy's more womanly masculinity. After his illness, Philip learns to treat Laura differently; rather than being lordly and treating Laura like his "slave and automaton" (472), he becomes gentle with her, treating her as an

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[62] Christabel Rose Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 175.

[63] Wells-Cole, 77.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Jeanette Shumaker, in "Illness as a Crucible in Novels by George Meredith, Frances Trollope, and Charlotte Yonge," *Nassau Review: The Journal of Nassau Community College Devoted to Arts, Letters, and Sciences* 8 (2001): 16-26, has argued that Philip is portrayed as a feminine character because he becomes ill; Shumaker does not, however, discuss how Philip was gendered before or after his illness, nor does she suggest that anything, other than simple illness, changes about his character or situation.

equal and, as Wells-Cole points out, encouraging Laura to study math and strengthen her mind rather than look to himself for all guidance.[66] The novel ends by discussing Philip's kindness to children, particularly Guy's daughter, and thus casts Philip in more womanly terms to prove that he has learned a lesson about what manhood should truly be.

Likewise, Guy achieves a victory over manhood, the culmination of a masculinity that, throughout the novel, has been cast in feminized terms. Catherine Wells-Cole rightly argues that Guy's manliness is defined in terms of anger[67] and hidden, seething strength – "It seemed as if it was the perception that so much was kept back by strong force, that made Guy's least token of displeasure so formidable" (89) – and for Wells-Cole, this is enough to masculinize Guy in conventional terms. However, anger is not the full measure of manhood for Yonge – certainly not of ideal manhood. Even Guy's anger is feminized because it is employed for compassionate ends, such as defending animals from teasing (89). While compassion can certainly be a masculine trait in nineteenth-century terms, the fact that Guy's seething anger boils over, not into fights or quarrels, but demonstrations of love and affection for little creatures helps to feminize even his anger. Further, as the novel proceeds, Guy learns not to feel anger, but only gentleness; to the extent that his anger defines his masculinity, then, he progressively loses his masculinity as he loses his anger.

Like an Angelic woman, Guy is a moral influence on those around him; men find that they cannot curse before Guy any more than before a lady: "had it not been for a sort of involuntary respect to the gentle compassion of the softened hazel eyes regarding him so

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[66] Wells-Cole, 77.

[67] Ibid., 74.

kindly, he would have used the violent expletive that trembled on his lip" (99). Guy's eventual death, through nursing his cousin Philip back to health, is the culmination of this feminization. Silent, self-sacrificing, performing the services of an Angel, moving constantly in the domestic sphere rather than the public one, Guy's death is his apotheosis as a feminized and simultaneously valorized man. The novel does not similarly valorize its female characters, because Yonge's own prejudices will not allow her consciously to do so, but the male person of Guy serves to justify the feminine virtues and portray them as superior to those of conventional masculinity.

The Heir of Redclyffe struck a deep chord with readers.[68] Women whose lives felt stifled could sympathize with Guy's attempts to subdue his own frustrations,[69] but even more, they could see Guy as a figure like themselves (ignorant of classical learning, unable to express strong feelings, loving music and using it as an emotional outlet, tending silently to the needs of others) whose femininity is championed. Why, however, did men, too, take so much to the novel? Some men had read the novel so many times that one sailor was able to write out a missing page from his ship's copy from memory[70] – why did male readers evidently respond so passionately to the feminized figure of Guy Morville? The answer is, at least in part, because nineteenth-century constructions of masculinity had more relation to theory than fact. The fact that women were supposed to be more emotional does not mean,

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[68] For an account of the novel's massive popularity, particularly with male readers, see Alethea Hayter, *Charlotte Yonge* (Plymouth, England: Northcote House, 1996), 1-2.

[69] Wells-Cole, 74.

[70] Hayter, 1-2.

of course, that they were; part of the reason for *The Heir of Redclyffe*'s popularity may be that, in portraying the emotional and Angelic Guy, the novel portrayed manhood much more as men actually felt it, and much more as they wished it to be, than did many other novels with more conventionally masculine heroes.

The feminization, or effeminization, of musical performance was therefore not something that was deplored by all. On the contrary, authors such as Yonge, Dickens, and Trollope take advantage of this process to question contemporary definitions of manhood, and the popularity of all three novelists may have something to do with their willingness to redefine masculinity at a period when class and gender distinctions could work to take away traditionally male activities from men; these authors not only suggest that men can be more like women, but also that men can re-claim their ancient provinces. This trend would only continue.

CHAPTER 5

MUSIC AT THE FIN DE SIÈCLE

> [T]he musician has not been rendered nervous by his music, but he owes his nervousness (as also, it may be added, his disposition to homosexuality) to the same disposition to which he owes his musical aptitude.
> ~ Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*[1]

By the end of the nineteenth century, music began to be redefined as it was increasingly included in curricula, at varying educational levels. As music was institutionalized and formalized as a field of study, it was also, utterly unsurprisingly, masculinized – or at least, attempts were made to redefine music's previously "feminine" characteristics as in fact masculine. This attempt, however, was doomed by its own nature, for in attempting to redefine, for example, music's affect as masculine on the grounds that men were the only ones capable of true emotion[2] had the undesired and unforeseen result of destabilizing gender categories. This in turn destabilized sexual categories, and music became associated with (male) homosexuality; works by homosexual or bisexual authors began to seize upon musical imagery and motifs as part of the construction of an argument in favor of homosexuality that argued for the spirituality of that orientation. As with most progressive moments, however, there was a backlash, and the association of music with homosexuality and destabilized gender roles led to an increasingly negative perception of music, the more so as music was increasingly seen as a force that affected both mind and

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[1] Quoted in Adams, 224.

[2] See, for example, Edith Brower, "Is the Musical Idea Masculine?", *The Atlantic Monthly* 73 (March 1894): 332-339. Although Brower was an American and her essay was published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, it was widely reprinted both in whole and in part in a number of British as well as American journals and anthologies.

body. Music could bypass the rational part of the mind, access hidden depths, and simultaneously exert control over the body; thus, listening to music could, it was feared, lead not only to problematic or dangerous emotions but to socially taboo behavior as well – just as some parents and theorists of the twentieth century feared that rock music, because of its sound as much as or more than its lyrics, would lead to loose or deviant sexual behavior.[3]

This unstable situation was dealt with in various ways. One way was to accept the redefining of music as masculine. Another was to embrace music as a symbol of sexual equality, both between men and women and between those of varying sexual orientations. The final, and perhaps most successful strategy, was to find a new musical Other to take the place of women, against which men could define themselves as masculine anew.

The Reunification and Institutionalization of Music

For much of the century, listening to, composing, and performing music had been considered separate mental skills. By the end of the century, however, this began to change, partly due to medical research. Those who studied cases of aphasia, for example, in which a

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[3] See, for example, Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 68-81. Bloom "argues" that what "youths" (it is unclear whether Bloom includes women in this designation) respond to in music is not the lyrics so much as the "beat" (70). Listeners to rock music find their minds and bodies taken over as their bodies "[throb] with orgasmic rhythms [as their] feelings are made articulate in hymns to the joys of onanism" (75). While Bloom does briefly refer to lyrics, he cannot make them the linchpin of his argument, as too many of the rock songs Bloom knows (not very many) have lyrics that consist of social critique. These Bloom dismisses as promulgations of "a smarmy, hypocritical version of brotherly love" (74) whose real problem, Bloom reveals, is its interest in a vision of a "classless, prejudice-free, conflictless, universal society" (74), a vision Bloom abhors. Bloom's real concern with rock music is shown by his repeated association of it with the creation of what he calls "polymorphous attractions" (74) and "strange young males" (76) whose masculinity Bloom deeply questions. Likewise, many fundamentalist debates over the music of Christian pop singer Amy Grant (prior to her divorce, at least) focused on the sound of her music, music whose beat was feared even though the lyrics were generally considered by the same commentators as praiseworthy or at least harmless.

patient's ability to speak or process language was impaired, noticed that "[o]ccasionally the musical faculty, which seems to reside in the left first temporal convolution, is lost or sensibly impaired," leading to speculation that aphasia and "amusia, or musical aphasia" might be two manifestations of the same underlying problem.[4] Thus, while for much of the century the idea that music was a more primitive communicative skill than language had held sway,[5] now the medical community began to argue that in fact music and language were connected skills.

This kind of research into the ties between music and other mental abilities led to the beginnings of what is now known as music therapy. Increasingly, medical journals suggested that music's ability to affect both body and mind could be made part of medical treatment. C. Theodore Williams, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, for instance, recommended that consumptives listen to music,[6] while others went even further. James T.R. Davison, writing in *The Lancet*, suggested that music be made part of the treatment of all sick persons as harmonic sounds could diminish both the perception of sickness and physically affect the body in such as a way as to harmonize the body's rhythms and thus help heal physical problems.[7] Davison, like any good British intellectual, grounds his argument with reference to the ancient Greeks, who "discriminated several forms of music

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[4] P. Blaikie Smith, "Auditory Aphasia with Amusia," *British Medical Journal* (April 1897): 842.

[5] Largely due to Herbert Spencer's essay on "The Origin and Function of Music," although many other writers expressed the same idea.

[6] C. Theodore Williams, "Remarks on the Open-Air Cure or Hygienic Treatment of Consumption," *British Medical Journal* (April 1899): 833, 834.

[7] James T.R. Davison, "Music in Medicine," *The Lancet* (October 1899): 1159-1162.

according to their influence on the body, under the names of Phrygian, Lydian, Æolian, and Doric styles."[8] He then goes on to cite case histories where music was able to excite patients into the manifestation of latent symptoms and then calm the now-visible symptoms, citing victims of dancing diseases such as St. Vitus's dance and tarantulism as among those most susceptible to musical cures.[9] Likewise citing ancient authority, this time the Hebrew Bible, W.M. Dale, also writing for *The Lancet*, suggests that doctors return to the example of King David, who soothed Saul with his harp, and realize that "music might be made more serviceable in treatment, provided it were judiciously employed and kept from assuming the garb of quackery or mystery"[10] because music's soothing qualities will calm nerves, eliminate distractions, and thus enable patients and doctors to concentrate on the healing process.[11] Others suggested that listening to music might help developmentally-delayed children to progress mentally[12] and that music could be used to treat fever, melancholia, and depression.[13]

All of this discussion points to a change in the conception of music. No longer could music be considered a compartmentalized skill set separate from other mental and

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[8] Davison, "Music in Medicine," 1159.

[9] Davison, "Music in Medicine," 1160.

[10] W.M. Dale, "Psycho-therapeutics," *The Lancet* (August 1892): 419.

[11] Dale, "Psycho-therapeutics," 420.

[12] Fletcher Beach, "The Treatment of Feeble-Minded Children," *The Lancet* (July 1893): 191-192.

[13] Edwin Goodall, "Music as a Therapeutic Agency," *British Medical Journal* (October 1891): 920; Frederick K. Harford, "Effects of Music upon the Circulation and Nervous System," *British Medical Journal* (November 1891): 1068; J. Ewing Hunter, "Is Soft Music a Calmative in Cases of Fever?", *British Medical Journal* (October 1892): 923; Henry Rayner, "A Discussion on the Treatment of Melancholia," *British Medical Journal* (September 1895): 760-766.

physical abilities. In keeping with the medical world's changing conception of music, musical theorists and commentators also began to discuss music in terms that argued for the removal of the definitional divisions between composition, listening, and performance and thus for a more unified conception of music as a field. In particular, commentators began to suggest that listening was a primary skill without which one could never achieve the highest level of composition or performance: "By the sole agency of hearing music can the highest musical culture be attained."[14] Those who wished to make this claim for the inter-relatedness of musical skills, however, felt the novelty of their claim and knew that they faced resistance from concert-goers and professional musicians alike:

> [This idea] may be doubted by such martyrs to fashion as, having sat through ten seasons of grand opera and symphony concerts, of solo recitals by world-famous artists and unnumbered classic musicales, without appreciation or pleasure, have risen from the last with ears stunned and distracted and with faculties harassed and stupefied. While the proposition will be disputed [also] by many professional musicians who, though devoted to so-called music study, the major part of their lives, though they are of the Brahmin caste in the art world (disdainfully rejecting all things common, thanking God every day they are not as other men), are yet unable to comprehend music in its higher forms well enough to enjoy it....[15]

The response to this skepticism was to redefine listening in such a way that it was not a merely passive activity, but one involving numerous mental skills. John Stainer,[16] for example, an early proponent of the connection between listening, composition, and

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[14] Richard Welton, "Hearing Music," *Music: A Monthly Magazine* 11 (February 1897): 388.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Founding member and president of the Musical Association. Stainer, in addition to writing a number of hymns and serving as choir director and professor of music at Magdalen College, Oxford, wrote a number of treatises on music theory. For more on his life and career, see Jeremy Dibble, *John Stainer: A Life in Music* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Boydell Press, 2007).

performance, argued that listening to music is a skill comprising four elements: "(1) Sensation, (2) Intellect, (3) Sentiment of the Beautiful, (4) Emotion."[17] Thus, listening and composition or listening and performance could no longer be considered separate skills because mind and body were linked.

One reason for the revaluing of music and listening was a renewed desire to extend music's moral influence to the masses by exposing the masses to good singing in churches[18] – singing that unfortunately was provided by the masses themselves, and which was often uninspiring at best. As Thomas Wyse had put it to the House of Commons earlier in the century, "[t]he people roar and scream, because they have heard nothing but roaring and screaming … from their childhood."[19] Listening therefore was increasingly considered a necessary precursor to good, or at least decent, performance. England's continued failure to produce a composer of international renown provided a motive for seeing listening and composition as related skills; proponents of the importance of listening argued that a nation of trained, intelligent listeners would spur composers to compose better works.[20]

As a result, the teaching of music began to change, at all levels. At more elementary levels, the teaching of listening skills, which had been taught only sporadically throughout the century, began to assume the status of orthodox pedagogy (culminating in the

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[17] Charles W. Pearce, "On Listening to Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 19th session (1892-1893): 53.

[18] Rainbow, "The Rise of Popular Music Education," 31.

[19] Quoted in Rainbow, "The Rise of Popular Music Education," 25.

[20] Pearce, 63.

twentieth century's many Music Appreciation classes).[21] At the university level, musical study became more rigorous and generalized. For much of the century, one could receive a bachelor's or doctoral degree in music for simply writing a composition and giving a public performance; music students at Oxford were not even required to spend any time at their degree-granting college:

> Last Friday a small harvest of new Doctors and Bachelors of Music was announced.... There is one true story of the new recipients which should not be passed over. Last Thursday we discovered a pathetic figure wandering vaguely in the vicinity of Broad Street.... He explained that he was a Mus. Bac. of New College, and was anxious, before ascending to the Doctor's degree, to see the college to which he was a credit, but that he could not find it anywhere, as he had never yet entered its precincts.[22]

By the end of the century, a residency requirement had been introduced, and students at all levels were required, for the music degree, not only to be able to perform and to write a composition but to pass a series of examinations in music theory, music history, and knowledge of individual works – not just as compositions on paper, but as performances with sound.[23] The skills of performance and composition, which had been treated as separate, were now constructed as related through a historical and theoretical framework that included listening to and understanding other works.

These changes were made in part to make the degree more difficult and therefore more respectable, an endeavor which seems to have succeeded; they were also part and parcel of a growing interest throughout Europe, towards the end of the century, in the idea

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[21] Rainbow, "The Rise of Popular Music Education," 48.

[22] *Oxford Magazine* 15 (11 November 1896), 57, quoted in Wollenberg, 109.

[23] Wollenberg, 102.

that the arts are all related. Wagner's music of the future posited a fusion of instrumental and vocal music with poetry and drama; composers such as Liszt, Mahler, Respighi and others were increasingly interested in representative music, music that would not be pure sound but which could through its form evoke specific locales, stories, or moments in history and therefore take on many of the signifying functions more commonly associated with poetry, prose, and the visual arts.

In keeping with this renewed interest in music as a form of art, commentators began redefining even those aspects of music that had previously been considered feminine as masculine,[24] and in general treating music as an art form for which gentlemen were best suited – in contrast to the situation we saw earlier in the century in chapter 4. Much of this redefinition was done through practical means – girls' schools did not often teach music and boys' schools increasingly did, a fact which caused Clara Macirone, headmistress of Aske's School for Girls and the Church of England's London girls' high school, to lament that girls were in danger of being excluded from music as a field.[25] At stake was the

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[24] Defenses of music at the end of the century tended, still, to argue that music was "not altogether a feminine pursuit" ("Carafa," *The Musical World* 50 [Sept. 1872], 577). Articles and essays were written on both sides of the pond, deploring the feminization of music. Americans seem to have been particularly fearful – numerous articles appeared in U.S. journals with such pointed titles as "The Feminization of Music," "Is Music an Effeminate Art?" and "Why Do Not More Men Take Up Music?" (cited in Gavin Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004], 147, n. 11; Catherine Smith, "'A Distinguishing Virility': Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. by Susan C. Cook and Judy Tsou [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994], 94).

[25] Macirone, "A Plea for Music," quoted in Sarah McNeely, "Beyond the Drawing Room: The Musical Lives of Victorian Women," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 5 (Summer 2009), paragraph 6. McNeely argues that Macirone's concern was equality of education between boys and girls; I agree, but add that Macirone's language suggests that she still holds the view made popular by the Rev. Haweis, that music is a moral and disciplinary agent, and that her concern is that women's moral authority is being undermined by the giving over of musical authority to men.

question of moral authority; if music was, as Macirone and many others argued, a "good physician, a tender friend, [that] comes to the aid of all classes, a gentle minister of consolation.... [that] draws the bonds of social family life more closely together,"[26] then the shift of music away from the domestic sphere to the world of boys' schools and men's colleges signaled a removal of a large portion of what moral and cultural authority women had gained due to the doctrine of the separate spheres to the hands of middle- and upper-class men.[27]

Nonetheless (or perhaps "therefore"), the institutionalization and at least attempted masculinization of music proceeded apace, due in part to the tie between music and the body begun earlier in the century. Much of this sort of argument took place through the strategic use of adjectives: listening, for instance, was no longer an activity, but a "strenuous activity"[28] that could exhaust the mind[29] and that required strength and sinew of both mind and body. Strong, large hands, always useful to the piano-player, were now

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[26] Macirone, "A Plea for Music," quoted in McNeely, "Beyond the Drawing Room," paragraph 6.

[27] The fin de siècle did see an increase in women's participation in music, but that increase was in women's *public* participation, indicating both that women were entering men's turf and that the turf had shifted. For a discussion of how women could try to enter music as a field (implying that music was seen now a primarily masculine and public endeavor), see, for example, "Music as a Profession," *Work and Leisure: A Magazine Devoted to the Interests of Women* 5 (1884): 186-188. The field was still dominated by men, however, more so in England than in Europe; see, for example, Margaret Myers, "Searching for Data about European Ladies' Orchestras, 1870-1950," in *Music and Gender*, ed. by Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

[28] Mary L. Regal, "An Undeveloped Field for the Music Teacher," *Public Opinion: A Weekly Journal* 22 (May 1897): 598.

[29] Douglas Galton, "The Teaching of Defective Children," in *Progress in Women's Education in the British Empire*, ed. by the Countess of Warwick (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1897), 64.

emphasized as such, as piano-playing was constructed as an activity best suited to men.[30] Science was called in to explain:

> Dr. Neitzel, struck, as many of us cannot fail to have been struck, by the prodigious power displayed by many of our latter-day [male] pianists, has devoted his leisure to an exhaustive investigation of the subject. He has based his calculations on the minimum weight necessary to depress completely one of the keys of the pianoforte so as to produce a *pianissimo* sound. Having settled this, and all the other degrees of expression up to *fortissimo*, Dr. Neitzel advances to the consideration of particular works. For example, he takes a passage from the funeral march of Chopin, the prevailing *nuance* of which is *pianissimo*, and discovers that if faithfully executed – for Dr. Neitzel is a musician as well as a man of science – it will demand from the executant the expenditure of a force equal to about seven and a half cwt. Etude 12 (Opus 25), by the same composer, contains a passage the performance of which lasts two minutes five seconds, and which, so to speak, weighs upward of two tons.[31]

The sledgehammer at the piano is thus designated a "musical athlete."[32]

Others argued that composition, far from being a cerebral activity, was in fact a physically rigorous one. Previous decades had argued for a connection between the mind and the body for women, in that women's intellectual activity was often seen as sapping their physical and reproductive resources; men's intellectual activity, however, had not been constructed as similarly draining on the body. Now, however, the mental activity of composing music was discussed as one that could only be done well by men of tremendous physical stamina: musicians must be "robust," as were the great composers; Beethoven, for

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[30] An article by W.S.B.M. on "Sherwood An American Master of Piano [*sic*]," published in *Music: A Monthly Magazine* 11 (February 1897): 339-347, for example, stresses how the master has overcome the handicap of relatively small hands and has strengthened them through years of manful toil; the article is littered with photos of what the captions describe, with almost fetishistic admiration, as "The Sherwood Hands."

[31] "A Famous First Night," 144.

[32] Ibid.

example, "did not lack virility" and "Handel was made of sturdy stuff, capable of volcanic explosions of fury."[33] Music was now defined as requiring tremendous physical strength;[34] even copying out a previously-worked-out composition is "manual labour," and the actual activity of composition (when done well) generally takes place while striding about in invigorating open air – not surprisingly, as any good musician is probably also a "keen [sportsman]."[35] Importantly, the manly physique not only makes music possible but is more important than music: "Berlioz mentions Staudigl's eager devotion to the chase, and the apparently reckless way in which he exposed his throat in the pursuit of his favourite recreation."[36] In short, "the manlier an artist has proved himself to be, the better musician, *ex ipso facto*, has he generally been,"[37] while at the same time the manly man is superior to music, thus ensuring that any woman who achieves musical greatness will have achieved in a field to which men are superior and will have done so by virtue of being, not just mentally or spiritually, but physically masculine.[38]

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[33] "Manliness in Music," 461.

[34] Stratton, 127; Stratton cites a common view to which he dissents.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] "Manliness in Music," 460.

[38] The many mocking drawings and descriptions of New Women as mustachioed, portly cigar-puffers were not simply an angry response to the New Woman herself; the anger took the form it did as part and parcel of the move away from emphasizing mental difference between the sexes (since that argument was now less sustainable) and towards emphasizing physical difference. The New Woman is portrayed as erasing physical differences between the sexes rather than mental ones as the most effective way to argue that the erasure of difference more generally is both unnatural and fatally unattractive.

This association of music with patriarchal, middle- and upper-class masculinity explains why transgressive women in fin de siècle stories are sometimes punished for their transgressions by being forced to listen to music. In Thomas Hardy's 1893 short story "The Fiddler of the Reels," for instance, Car'line Aspent is forced to dance by her former lover, Mop Ollamoor, till she collapses with exhaustion. This denouement is Car'line's punishment for her various transgressions against domesticity, sexual purity, and class boundaries. Car'line first rejects her "manly and simple wooer" (170) Ned Hipcroft for the "woman's man" (166), Mop Ollamoor, ostensibly because Mop's music has such a powerful, implicitly sexual effect on her that she cannot help but experience a "galvanic shock" when she so much as hears his footstep (169). The attraction is not simply sexual, however; Car'line also feels no interest in becoming the wife of the simple Ned, whose simpleness designates not only his intellect and character but also his class status. Though Mop Ollamoor is a horse-doctor and Ned a much more financially-stable mechanic (170), Ollamoor is only a "nominal" horse-doctor (170), implying that he is really of better stock that his public profession implies. Car'line eventually sleeps with Ollamoor and gives birth to a daughter, after rejecting Ned's proposal of marriage. Abandoned by Ollamoor, however, after a few years she reconsiders her rejection of Ned and writes to him, asking him to take her back (without mentioning the child). Ned has not exactly been pining for Car'line – "his was a nature not greatly dependent upon the ministrations of the other sex for its comforts" (171) – but he agrees to marry her as long as she will make up for her past transgressions by coming to him (rather than being fetched by him), admitting her faults

and begging his pardon in person (in addition to the letter), and promising to be a good little wife. All this Car'line promises, and the two are married, although not without a slight hesitation on Ned's part when he sees the child. Car'line's motives for marrying Ned at this juncture are mixed; in part, she hopes to see Mop Ollamoor again, although she "always stoutly denied that her readiness to go and meet Ned in town arose from any rumor that Mop had also gone thither" (177). More importantly, she now sees Ned as the likelier financial prospect, and after their marriage she looks forward to a return to the country as "a smiling London wife with a distinct London accent … a triumph which the world did not witness every day" (178). Her pretensions are dashed when Ned lingers behind to make some business inquiries and Car'line, with the child, continues on to the symbolically-named Quiet Woman, "a certain half-way house widely known as an inn" (178). There Car'line is reduced to silence and humility when Mop Ollamoor appears and begins playing his fiddle. Car'line feels compelled to dance, although the impetus comes partly from her own sense of guilt: "A terrified embarrassment as to what she could say to him if she were to leave off, had its unrecognized share in keeping her going" (182). She is stripped of the sense that she is "mistress of herself in the dignity her London life had given her" (179) and though she attempts to smile while dancing in "as a feint to signify that it was still her own pleasure which led her on," in fact she is dancing "slavishly and abjectly, subject to every wave of the melody, and probed by the gimlet-like gaze of her fascinator's open eye" (182). Finally Car'line collapses, having been taught a lesson about her class pretensions and her sexual past, both of which stemmed from what she is forced

to learn was a false sense of personal autonomy. This lesson seems superfluous, in that Car'line has already begged pardon from Ned and has in fact been making him a good wife, but an autonomous apology is not enough: a punishment must be imposed upon her from without by a male force.[39]

Disruptions: Masculinity and Sexuality

Ollamoor's musical power over Car'line is one instance of the way that music was aligned with mesmerism at the end of the century, and his power over her fits the pattern of male mesmerist and female patient that has been described by Elaine Showalter and others.[40] This pattern reflects real-life mesmeric practices, and the alignment of music with mesmerism at the end of the century is made possible in part by the increasing masculinization of music in that the mesmerist (male) could now be seen as analog to the musician (also male). Although music could, of course, affect men just as mesmerism could, the locus of anxiety in both cases was women. Again, this comes as no surprise. Middle-class Victorians feared mesmerism's and music's power over the female because they were most anxious about controlling women's bodies and subjectivity and because they saw women's bodies and subjectivity as particularly vulnerable to men's superior mental and physical strength. In other words, what could have been a symbolic criticism of patriarchy

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[39] Michael Benazon argues that Car'line has not sexually transgressed in any reprehensible sense, but rather that "sexual attraction is [a] demonic force that disrupts perfectly sound and rational matrimonial arrangements" (77). However, though Car'line is impelled by music to sleep with Ollamoor, she is nevertheless punished for her actions. The story is, in short, in one sense but another variation on Hardy's usual theme that "dicing Time for gladness casts a moan" ("Hap" 12).

[40] See Michael Donnelly, *Managing the Mind: A Study of Medical Psychology in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983); Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980,* 2nd ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

actually functioned in the opposite way, by suggesting that women's purity could be attacked by outsiders. Mop Ollamoor, for example, is not exercising the power of a middle-class gentleman, but that of an outsider – a man of dubious origins and class status, and even dubious masculinity – his name is derived from his mop of long ringlets. What complicates the picture, however, is the fact that this paradigm of male mesmerist / female patient (or victim) is one that assumes heteronormativity.

However, masculinity in music as elsewhere became more and more associated with a less heteronormative model, with consequent disruption of traditional gender roles. The new unity of listening, composition, and performance, and of music with other arts meant that music, specifically composition, became increasingly difficult to construct as exclusively cerebral. Previously, a man could compose music and in so doing construct composition as a highly intellectual activity, divorced from the affect of listening and very different from, say, his sister's emotion-laden performances; now it much more difficult to separate men's musical activity from sensitive emotional expression. Further, this new (or rather, return to) musical unity meant that men were less and less able to construct their musical activities in contrast to women's; the gendering of the division between composition and performance, for example, was only possible as long as there *was* a division between composition and performance.

A further problem for the project of masculinizing music as a field (rather than the previous masculinization of divisions of music) was the long-vexing problem of musical nationalism. Numerous essays, throughout the century, pondered whether or not the

English were a musical people;[41] implicit in such essays was the dismissal of the ubiquity of music among women of the middle- and upper-classes and a desire or hope for England to produce a great male composer of art music. Any attempt to essentialize music as a masculine field, therefore, posed a significant problem for British masculinity as long as Britain failed to produce such a composer, or even a great male performer such as Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein. One result of this instability and uncertainty was that women began to perform publicly with increasing frequency, and to write and publish art compositions, which were even occasionally performed.[42] This, of course, coupled with the number of women entering music colleges, posed a further problem for the masculinizing of music.

Adding to all this was the increasing prominence of Hellenism. As the Greeks were more venerated, their opinions of music were likewise; this had uncomfortable results, for the British had spent most of the century constructing vocal music as feminine and instrumental music as masculine, only to be reminded that

> the answer from the Greek point of view is conclusive against us. Though much stress was laid upon the noble words which were sung, the music was known to have the principal effect. Plato in a celebrated passage even

[41] For examples, see "Are the English a Musical People?", 675-681; composer George Alexander's Macfarren's "The English are not a Musical People," *Cornhill* 18 (1868): 344-363; Marshall, "Music and the People," 921-932.

[42] Phyllis Weliver, in *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900*, points out, as does Paula Gillett, the sudden increase in the numbers of women who participated in music's public sphere at century's end. Neither, however, argues that this increase was part of a breakdown in the stability of domestic ideology, as I do.

> inveighs bitterly against the gross immorality and luxuriousness of all mere instrumental music.[43]

The male musician was therefore posed with a problem: one could not simultaneously be seen as masculine by both Victorian and Hellenistic standards. Further, Hellenism was by century's end more and more associated with homosexuality, as Linda Dowling has demonstrated;[44] homosexual authors and critics such as John Addington Symonds took advantage of the untouchability of Hellenism to point out that the Greeks admired homosexuality and thought of it as spiritual, not merely physical, suggesting that those who agreed with the Greeks (regarding the problem of effeminacy, for example) should logically also agree with the Greek ideal of masculinity (which included a homosexuality that was decidedly not part of the usual Victorian vision of manliness). Homosexuality began to be more openly discussed, and was routinely defined in terms of mental attributes rather than physical activity.[45] This was another reason straight male music lovers and closeted homosexual ones shied away from discussing their musical activities in mental terms, preferring to emphasise the physical; homosexual musicans and composers such as Edward Elgar,[46] for example, relentlessly "affected the role of the tweed-clad sportsman" and

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[43] John Pentland Mahaffy, *Old Greek Education* (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 70. Mahaffy ultimately disagrees with Plato, but others were not so quick to dismiss the great one. See, for example, Karl Julius Belling, "Plato's Position with Reference to Art, and in Particular to Music," *Music: A monthly magazine* (January 1892):197-203.

[44] See Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[45] See, for example, John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics: Being an inquiry into the phenomenon of sexual inversion, addressed especially to medical psychologists and jurists* ([N.p.,] 1896).

[46] For the argument that Elgar was homosexual, see Adams.

"demonstrated the requisite fascination with golf, billiards, and fishing, as well as hearty bicycling and robust tramping over the Malvern hills."[47] This focus on the physical was an attempt to move away from discussions of musical men that, in focusing on qualities of mind associated with artistic ability, increasingly conceded that "[s]ome of the finest work in art and literature, indeed, has been produced by men who could not, from any standpoint, be pronounced normal."[48] Indeed, as the headnote to this chapter indicates, some had begun to suspect that musical ability and homosexuality were but two facets of one sort of mind.

Music's mesmeric power, then, could be used to redefine masculinity by disrupting heteronormativity, and a number of homosexual authors turned to music as a trope for gender and sexual uncertainty. In Vernon Lee's "A Wicked Voice" (1890),[49] for instance, a woman is killed and a man haunted by the sound of the castrato Zaffirino's wicked voice. In this story, however, there is no transgression for which music could be the punishment, as in Hardy's "The Fiddler of the Reels." Rather, music is a form of torture that "est donc d'autant plus étrange et inquiétante qu'elle leur est infligée par leur propre voix, aliénée, devenue autre, méconnaissable, et qui les aliène" (is all the more strange and disturbing in that it is inflicted on [these characters] by an unrecognizable and alienated version of their

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[47] Adams, 225.

[48] Ernest Newman, *A Study of Wagner* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 385.

[49] All quotations taken from Vernon Lee, "A Wicked Voice," in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006). Lee originally published the story in French under the title "Voix maudite," but soon after translated it herself with the title "A Wicked Voice." All references therefore are to Lee's own translation.

own voice).[50] As Catherine Maxwell has pointed out, what the narrator, Magnus, is haunted by in Zaffirino's voice is its sexual attractiveness, a homoeroticism that reflects not only the male homoeroticism found in texts by such friends of Lee as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, but also functions as a stand-in for Lee's own lesbianism.[51] The choice of music as a vehicle for homoeroticism is less accidental than previous critics have implied, however; in this case, vehicle and tenor are very closely tied. While previous critics have attempted to understand the story's negative attitude towards Zaffirino's voice in terms of Lee's ambivalence about her own lesbianism,[52] they have largely treated the story's musical themes and sexual undertones as separate[53] when in fact the descriptions of music are part of the story's sexual theme.

Zaffirino is a castrato, a fact to which the story only delicately alludes; he is also frequently compared a woman in both looks and voice. His face is variously described as "sensual, effeminate" (162) and as a "wicked woman's face" (163), a face that fulfills Magnus's "boyish romantic dreams" (162), and his voice is "a man's voice which had much of a woman's" (170) and that is called by audiences "all sorts of names …; people went to so

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[50] Sophie Geoffroy-Menoux, "Les Voix maudites de Vernon Lee: Du Bel canto à la mal'aria dans 'Winthrop Adventure' (1881), 'La voix maudite' (1887), 'The Virgin of the Seven Daggers' (1909)," *Alizés: Revue Angliciste de la Réunion* 22 (June 2002): paragraph 19. My translation.

[51] Catherine Maxwell, "Sappho, Mary Wakefield, and Vernon Lee's 'A Wicked Voice,'" *Modern Language Review* 102 (October 2007): 960.

[52] See Carlo Caballero, "'A Wicked Voice': On Vernon Lee, Wagner, and the Effects of Music," *Victorian Studies: A Journal of the Humanities, Arts, and Sciences* 35 (Summer 1992): 385-386.

[53] For a discussion of the lesbian undertones to the story, see Maxwell. For a discussion of the story's treatment of singers, opera, and Wagner, see Cabellero; Grace Kehler, "Occult Charm and Social Ills: Vernon Lee's 'A Wicked Voice' and George du Maurier's Castrated Texts," *Romanticism on the Net* 34-35 (May 2004); and Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 65-68.

far as to dispute whether the voice belonged to a man or to a woman" (170). The homoerotic implications of Magnus's attraction to Zaffirino are clear in this casting of Zaffirino as a feminine figure. However, Zaffirino's voice is also described frequently in phallic terms: Zaffirino never simply sings, but gives forth a "long note [that] swelled slowly by insensible degrees" (165), "a thread of sound … which expanded slowly, insensibly, taking volume and body, taking flesh … full, passionate" (167). The constant association of this hermaphroditic voice with wickedness and danger reflects Magnus's own discomfort with his sexuality – Zaffirino's melodies "sickened but intoxicated my soul" (163) – but also reflects the resurrection of a cultural anxiety about blurred and destabilized gender and sex roles that took music as its focus.

The Italianate eighteenth-century music that Zaffirino sings was music that Lee herself loved and admired[54] and which was in its time condemned as overly effeminate, as discussed in chapters 1 and 4. In opposition to this music is the Wagnerian-style opera that Magnus wishes to compose. Critics such as Carlo Caballero and Emma Sutton have argued that in fact these two types of music are not in opposition, that the eighteenth-century music of Zaffirino is described in Wagnerian terms and that the portrayal of this music as dangerous is Lee's way of arguing against a decadence she is secretly fascinated with, but overtly condemns. However, if musical distinctions are collapsed in order to associate all music with a mentally, emotionally, and sexually invasive experience,[55] it is unclear why the story's narrator insists so vociferously and frequently on a difference between Zaffirino's

[54] Caballero, 386.

[55] Caballero, 393-394.

music and his own. The answer is that, for all Lee's fears of Wagner's musical emotionalism, as detailed in her essays on music, Wagner's music offers, potentially, a way out of the musical and sexual magnetism of music in its attempts to wed music to poetry and visual art. Poetry, for Lee, was different from and superior to music in that "poetry, even while rousing emotion, brings into play what is most different to emotion, … reason,"[56] a quality which, for Lee, could separate and thus tame the emotions, the unconscious mind, and the body. Zaffirino's music is problematic because it is vocal rather than instrumental, "begotten of the body" (156) and yet capable of influencing the mind as well as controlling the body. The Duchess whom Zaffirino killed with his voice and Magnus, whose mind is overtaken by thoughts of Zaffirino as well as with a sexualized obsession, are not separate victims except in terms of the literal plot; rather, they are twin aspects of music's power. For Lee, music differs from all the other arts in its revelation, however dangerous or disturbing, that body and mind cannot be separated. Further, there are not two sets of bodies and therefore two sets of minds, as there had been for most Victorian writers earlier in the century, but only a body / mind equally vulnerable in men and women and which thus makes impossible traditional gender distinctions as well as heteronormativity.

[56] Vernon Lee, "Beauty and Sanity," *Laurus Nobilis: Chapters on Art and Life* (London: John Lane, 1909), 138.

For similar reasons, music is the motif perhaps most frequently associated with homoeroticism in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).[57] As Joe Law points out, Dorian is introduced by Lady Brandon as a musician, and at key points in the novel Lord Henry's temptations are voiced in a "low, musical voice" (29; also 222).[58] Law argues that Dorian thus takes the feminized position in the paradigm of male musical mesmerist / female victim,[59] and yet such paradigms do not quite fit because neither character is traditionally gendered. Lord Henry's aestheticism and interest in Dorian and other men over women obviously do not fit conventional masculine paradigms even as his power over others cements that masculinity. Dorian likewise is portrayed as simultaneously homosexual and yet very much masculine; the tie between the two is indicated through his association with music. For instance, when Lady Brandon introduces Dorian to Basil Hallward, she cannot remember what instrument he plays: "Quite forget what he does – afraid he – doesn't do anything – oh, yes, plays the piano – or is it the violin, dear Mr Gray?" (17). The question is answered at the beginning of next chapter: "He was seated at the piano" (26). Through musical imagery and engagement with the cultural associations of the two instruments in question, a question about Dorian's sexuality has been asked and answered. At the same time,the very name Dorian evokes ancient Greece and its intellectual, spiritual, and sexual associations. The Dorian or Doric was a mode of music in

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[57] All quotations taken from Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891. Repr., New York: Barnes and Noble Collector's Library, 2003).

[58] Joe Law, "The 'perniciously homosexual art': Music and homoerotic desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and other *fin de siècle* fiction," in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), 175-176.

[59] Law, 182.

the ancient Greek system, equivalent to today's concept of keys (A minor and so on). The Dorian mode was associated in particular with masculinity;[60] Plato contrasts it with such feminine modes as the Lydian and Phrygian and argues that the Dorian is not only most masculine but also most suited to war-like tempers,[61] a judgement with which much later commentators agreed.[62] The name "Dorian" is thus closely tied to a Greek ideal of masculinity that combines the warrior with the homosexual, and therefore disrupts Victorian gender categories by suggesting that the sensitive Dorian is nonetheless a firmly masculine, albeit homosexual, figure. The mesmeric power of Lord Henry's musical voice thus no longer suggests a powerful male figure corrupting a vulnerable female one, but rather becomes a symbol for the disruption of such gender dichotomies altogether.

Music's Hellenistic associations and the unity of performance, listening, and composition that implied that men, to be superior at music, must be superiorly emotional and sensitive, all served to undercut the masculinization of music. Such disruptive possibilities were not, of course, greeted with enthusiasm by all. The association of music with foreign, lower-class male figures, though not new, could now perform two functions: associating musical power with these male figures meant that power over music's affect was kept symbolically out of women's hands at a cultural moment when that power, because of its association with mesmerism and its perceived ability to over-ride rational and conscious

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[60] Jennifer Nevile, *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2008), 275-276.

[61] *The Republic of Plato,* trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 1:398E.

[62] See, for example, Thomas Busby, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Times to the Present* (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1819), 1:192.

processes, was seen as particularly great; associating musical power with foreign, low-born figures meant that anything "unmanly" could be ascribed the effeminacy of foreigners rather than posing a threat to white British masculinity. In this sense, the problems that the masculinization of music posed for definitions of masculinity were managed, as we shall see in a minute, by constructing a new musical Other against which middle-class British masculinity could be defined. This method of managing music's disruptive possibilities took place within a wider discourse of the feminization of foreigners, particularly Jews. As Marjorie Garber puts in it in her book *Vested Interests,* "the desire to resolve category crises by displacing blame onto a minority group from which one can distance oneself, seems to have operated with uncanny effectiveness in the recoding of the Jew as a 'woman,' the ostensible opposite of the 'manly' Aryan."[63] One reason, in fact, for the universalism of Freud's theories is his desire "not to be categorized and stigmatized as a feminized Jew,"[64] a desire that also drove his interest in the phallus as a marker of maleness for *all* males in a world where the circumcised penis was routinely compared to a clitoris.[65] The feminization of the Other in general and Jews in particular thus contributes to a late-century psychology that treats the body/mind as one entity for both men and women, with only a few sexual differences.

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[63] Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety, Part 13* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 228.

[64] Marjorie Garber, "Category Crises: The Way of the Cross and the Jewish Star," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question,* ed. by Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 32.

[65] See, for example, Jay Geller, *On Freud's Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); Sander L. Gillman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

George du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*[66] is therefore an interesting case study. In some ways it seems an obvious novel about male musical and mesmeric power exercised over a female patient / victim. However, despite his masculine power, Svengali is portrayed in ways that feminize him and his femininity is specifically tied to his Jewishness. In turn, Trilby is portrayed in ways that masculinize her, and her masculine qualities are tied to her Britishness. In some ways, therefore, *Trilby* not only reacts but contributes to the feminization of the Other that served to bolster disrupted gender categories at the fin de siècle by displacing that disruption onto the Other. In other ways, however, *Trilby* suggests that mind and body, masculine and feminine, are inextricably intertwined; music is the symbol of that intertwining.

Svengali is both a musician and a mesmerist with a power over women that aligns him with other male mesmerists in the paradigm described by Elaine Showalter and Alison Winter, among others. In other ways, however, he is feminized through the detraction of his particular type of musical ability.[67] Svengali plays short pieces for the most part,

> [l]ittle fragmentary things, sometimes consisting of but a few bars, but these bars of *such* beauty and meaning! Scraps, snatches, short melodies, meant to

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[66] George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (1894. Repr., London: Everyman Library, 1992). All quotations in parentheses are taken from this edition.

[67] Jonathan Freedman argues that in fact Svengali's musical and artistic powers are lauded by the novel, because Svengali is given credit for musical ability at a time when Jews were in general considered musical geniuses; see *The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 105-111. While Freedman is right insofar as the novel is fascinated with that which it condemns, he overlooks the ways that Svengali is condemned, not only as a villain but as a musician. Further, Freedman assumes that the association between Jews and musical ability was an association between Jews and High, art music – which it was not. Rather, and predictably, Jews were associated with music of limited artistic value but great power – an anti-Semitic application and extension of the ideas about low music discussed in chapter 1. The association between Jews and music becomes more fraught as ideas about high and low music change at the end of the century and boundaries are blurred; I will discuss these issues further in the coda.

> fetch, to charm immediately, or to melt or sadden or madden just for a moment, and that knew just when to leave off – czardas, gypsy dances, Hungarian love-plaints, things little known out of Eastern Europe in the fifties of this century, till the Laird and Taffy were almost as wild in their enthusiasm as Little Billee.... (14)

As we saw in chapter 1, short pieces were associated primarily with low and feminine music, whereas length was a pre-requisite for the art music of men. Svengali's feminine musical preferences are implicitly tied to his Jewishness by contrast with "British provincial home-made music" (13). Svengali also prefers works by such Romantic composers as Chopin. Although Svengali was "the best pianist of his time at the Conservatory in Leipsic, ... [and] was able to lend a quite peculiar individual charm of his own to any music he played," he cannot do so to

> the highest and best of all, in which he conspicuously failed. He had to draw the line just above Chopin, where he reached his highest level. It will not do to lend your own quite peculiar individual charm to Handel and Bach and Beethoven; and Chopin is not bad as a *pis-aller.* (47)

Chopin, though considered great, was also considered one of the most feminine of composers.[68] Svengali's music is thus powerful, feminine, and Jewish, and would have been read in the context of a general turn-of-the-century discourse which linked "the concept of 'the Jew's' biological essence to broader notions of a destructive femininity afloat in European culture."[69]

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[68] See, for example, Henry Theophilus Finck, *Chopin, and Other Musical Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894); Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin, as a Man and Musician* (London and New York: Novello, Ewer, and Company, 1890); Ernst Pauer, "Characteristics of the Great Composers and Their Works," *Atalanta* 6 (April 1893): 513-516.

[69] Neil R. Davison, "'The Jew' as Homme/Femme-Fatale: Jewish (Art)ifice, *Trilby*, and Dreyfus," *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (Winter-Spring 2002): 77.

In contrast, Trilby, although technically a woman, is portrayed in ways that masculinize her and that associate masculinity with white, non-gentile Britishness. Indeed, the first fictional character named Trilby appears to be the eponymous male hero of Charles Nodier's *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argeil* (1822), a sprite who loves a human maiden, although it is not known if Du Maurier was familiar with this work.[70] Du Maurier's Trilby is, however, immediately introduced as a creature who "would have made a singularly handsome boy," with "a voice so rich and deep and full as almost to suggest an incipient *tenore robusto*; and one felt instinctively that it was a real pity she wasn't a boy, she would have made such a jolly one" (16). In fact, as Dennis Denisoff points out, "[t]o many of Du Maurier's readers, Trilby, who herself spends a period of time disguised as a man … would have suggested a contralto performing *en travesti*,"[71] that is, as a male. Amid the Trilbymania sparked by Du Maurier's work was a parodic play entitled *Twillbe* in which the title role, as prescribed by the play, was played by a man.[72]

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[70] The work had attained some notoriety in that it was the basis for the Taglioni ballet *La Sylphide* and a later ballet, *Trilby*, by Marius Petipa, staged a few years before Du Maurier's *Trilby* appeared; in *La Sylphide*, as the name indicates, the sylph is made female. I have not yet been able to find much information about Petipa's ballet. Books on ballet give Petipa only brief mention, if any, although he seems to have been both popular and successful, and periodicals of the time do not seem to mention the work either. However, in her serialized memoirs, ballerina Yekaterina Vazem mentions Petipa's *Trilby* thus: "Popular with the public was *Trilby*, in which the marriage of a Swiss maiden is nearly disrupted by a fantastic being who loves her" (Vazem 28), which seems to imply that Petipa's version followed Nodier's original story more closely than Taglioni's in having Trilby the sprite be male. I have found no record of Du Maurier's certain familiarity with any of these previous Trilbys; however, the unusual name and the French setting of Du Maurier's tale hint strongly that he was through one medium or another at least passingly familiar with Nodier's cont de fée.

[71] Dennis Denisoff, "'Men of My Own Sex': Genius, Sexuality, and George du Maurier's Artists," in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. by Richard Dellamora (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 160.

[72] Denisoff, 160.

Trilby is further masculinized through the portrayal of her entire body as well as her voice and face. She enters dressed in military uniform and men's slippers, and, as Nina Auerbach points out, she is always drawn as imposingly tall, even giant, when compared to most of the male characters.[73] Trilby, who would have made a handsome boy, towers in every picture over the cowering Svengali. In such visual depictions, the power relations in the text are reversed: Svengali is placed in the feminine position, thin and delicate, looking up at the square jaw and broad frame of the tall Trilby.

Svengali's power over Trilby is thus not a simple matter of masculine mind triumphing over weak feminine body, and the pair do not therefore quite fit the mold of male mesmerist and female patient described in non-literary texts of the time. What has happened here is that a literary text has seized upon a point of fissure in the discourse at large – how can masculine power be trusted when masculinity itself is taking on or taking over previously feminine characteristics and activities? The wedding of intellect and emotion that music now more forcibly symbolized called traditional masculinity into question, and therefore masculine power into question. A novel like *Trilby* helps make possible the masculinization of music at a time when music is being institutionalized as a field by displacing femininity onto the Other. It is not the only, or even the first, text to portray the male musician as an effeminate or racially inferior foreigner – the music of the half-savage Margrave in Bulwer-Lytton's 1861 *A Strange Story*, for example, has the power to

[73] Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 17-21.

turn a drawing-room gathering into a dancing orgy likened to a "witch's sabbat,"[74] and the dishonest Italian Castellani uses music to gain and hold the fascinated love of Pamela in Mary Braddon's 1888 novel *The Fatal Three.* What was different about *Trilby* was the way it insistently conflates femininity with a construction of race, and the response it received, a response that suggests that it struck a deep chord with readers in the 1890s in a way that the figure did not resonate with readers of earlier decades.

The figure of La Svengali – Trilby when under Svengali's influence – reflects a fear about the union of body and mind, masculinity and femininity. Phyllis Weliver argues that when Trilby is under Svengali's hypnotic control she does not so much become "La Svengali" as both Trilby and Svengali become a fused, interdependent entity; "[i]n 'La Svengali,' … a superior being to either mesmerizer or subject is created, and it is one whose identity depends upon her female voice."[75] Trilby's voice, however, as we have seen, is hardly unambiguously female, nor does La Svengali depend on Trilby's voice any more than it does on Svengali's control of that voice. Rather, La Svengali is a blend of masculine and feminine – the feminized man Svengali and the masculinized woman Trilby, dissolved together. La Svengali also unites of body with brain: Trilby's voice is a product, not of thought or feeling, but of a capacious mouth and chest and strong lungs – Svengali compares her body to a sounding-board (58) – while Svengali, who ardently wishes to be a singer, can in fact only *think* about singing (47). When mind and body are fused, La

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[74] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *A Strange Story* (1861. Repr., Boston: Dana Estes and Company, 1898), 127.

[75] Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 266.

Svengali is able to sing thanks to Trilby's voice-box, and what it sings is a mixture of Chopin and other Romantics with ballads such as "Ben Bolt;" the style, however, is Svengali's, full of improvisational turns to notes and phrases. In a sense, what happens to Trilby is not that her brain is taken over, but that the feminine Svengali becomes *the* brain within her boyish body. When her "brain" is removed with Svengali's sudden death, Trilby, quite naturally, dies.

Throughout the novel there is an emphasis on Trilby as a body and Svengali as a brain. In a novel written and illustrated by an artist, it is not surprising that the characters are described in great visual detail, with an accompanying drawing. Little Billee, Taffy, the Laird, and Trilby are all, upon their introduction to the reader, described at length and shown to the reader through a drawing. Svengali, however, is not. Although the novel features some striking visual images of Svengali (including a drawing of him in the center of a web, with hairy spider legs), Svengali is not shown in a picture until some pages after his introduction, and even then he is not the focus of the picture: he is in the background, Trilby is in the foreground. The physical description of him, too, while it manages to pack in a thorough catalogue of anti-Semitic stereotypes, is short compared with the description of the other main characters. Instead, the focus is on Svengali as a mind and a controller of minds, as a musician and a magician ("There was nothing so humble, so base even, but what his magic could transform it into the rarest beauty without altering a note" [47]), and, underneath that, there is an assumption that Svengali is merely a trader in and conduit for physical commodities without significant physical reality of his own except what is twisted

or borrowed. Svengali is characterized in terms of a mysterious (unexplained because unexplainable) essence of Jewishness of which his greasy physical appearance is portrayed as but a symptom; he poses little physical threat (the burly and hairy Taffy and equally burly and hairy Laird can, and do, overpower him effortlessly), but a great mental one. In the text, Svengali eventually, by implication, takes possession of Trilby's body, in which he has a sexual interest; because the pictures portray a small, long-haired Svengali and a tall, imposing, short-haired Trilby, another reason becomes possible for Svengali's interest in Trilby's body: envy, desire on the part of the feminine for the masculine. Svengali is also fascinated by the whiteness of Trilby's body:

> one fine day you shall lie asleep on one of those slabs – you, Drilpy, who would not listen to Svengali, and therefore lost him! … And over the middle of you will be a little leather apron, and over your head a little brass tap, and all day long and all night the water shall trickle, trickle, trickle, all the way down your beautiful white body to your beautiful white feet till they turn green…. (86)

In this fantasy of death, Svengali imagines with pleasure the removal of Trilby's whiteness at the same time that he is drawn to that whiteness. Again, the fascination is not only sexual; Trilby's whiteness is insisted upon repeatedly in the text, even down to the whiteness of her teeth. By the end of the text, as Sarah Gracombe argues, Trilby's Irish ancestry has been erased as Trilby is "converted" to a true Woman of Britain; in the process (although Gracombe makes no special comment on the apotheosizing of Trilby's whiteness), Trilby's big white teeth "get even whiter" and her white bosom "is now properly

'English.'"[76] Svengali's interest in Trilby's whiteness, then, is also a racialized, spiteful envy of (Jewish, feminine) mind for (British, masculine) body.

The fact that La Svengali unifies all these qualities – mind and body, masculine and feminine, British and Other – in unifying Svengali and Trilby means that novel in some ways undercuts itself. It displaces anxiety about changing gender roles and especially a changing definition of masculinity by ascribing male "femininity" to race; at the same time, the novel does this by portraying the union of masculinity and femininity in one blended body/mind that suggests that the mind influences the body just as Svengali influences Trilby, rather than the body determining the sex of the mind, and therefore opening up the possibility of a universalized body / mind. *Trilby* thus is able to appeal to a wide audience of contradictory beliefs. The novel stands at a crossroads. On one hand it takes part in and is made possible by a fundamental change to psychology, the sense of universal laws that apply across genders and nationalities.[77] On the other, it provides a way to redraw boundaries around masculinity by displacing femininity onto a racialized Other. Thus music at the fin de siècle is not simply portrayed as negative or dangerous, as Phyllis Weliver has argued; rather, the discourse of music's danger is used to argue that middle-class gentile masculinity can most appropriately wield musical power.

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[76] Sarah Gracombe, "Converting Trilby: Du Maurier on Englishness, Jewishness, and Culture," *Ninteenth-Century Literature* 58 (June 2003), 85.

[77] This is true more of Freudian psychology than of Jungian – see, for example, Samuel Slipp, *The Freudian Mystique: Freud, Women, and Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 153 – but it is a trend in fin de siècle generally.

Trilby is only one example of a broader phenomenon. Anxiety over gender and music, which had waxed and waned for centuries, and which the Victorians thought that they could manage in part through the idea of separate spheres, musical and otherwise, finally became unmanageable except through a growing emphasis on race, the urgency of which indicates how deep was the need to preserve a discourse of difference and how difficult the discourse of gender difference had become. Despite the more-than-unfortunate success of both strategies, their ultimate success in preserving a place for normative masculinity in music is perhaps indicated by the effective death of classical music in the early twentieth century, as composers struggled to differentiate themselves from their "weak, trite, and effeminate"[78] predecessors by composing ever more brash, jarring works.

[78] Charles Ives, quoted in Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 184.

CODA

All the others translate: the painter sketches
A visible world to love or reject;
Rummaging into his living, the poet fetches
The images out that hurt and connect,

From Life to Art by painstaking adaption,
Relying on us to cover the rift;
Only your notes are pure contraption,
Only your song is an absolute gift.

Pour out your presence, a delight cascading
The falls of the knee and the weirs of the spine
Our climate of silence and doubt invading;

You alone, alone, imaginary song,
Are unable to say an existence is wrong,
And pour out your forgiveness like a wine.
~ "The Composer," W.H. Auden (1939)[1]

Auden's poem provides a way to think about the way music was defined going into the twentieth century. "The Composer" assumes a view of music as a wordless, experiential art form that is not culturally dependent and can therefore be that universal language that nineteenth century had doubted it could be. Debate on the subject dies down; music's universality is less discussed, but more assumed.[2] John Stainer, for example, writing in *The Musical Times* in 1900, accepts in passing that music is a "language of the emotions" which are "much the same all the world over" and then questions whether it is possible to extend that universality "to employ music as a universal language of the intellect as well as of the

[1] W.H. Auden, *Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

[2] Another search on Google Books for the word "music" and the phrase "universal language" for the period 1900-1940 (that being chosen as the cut-off point because of the emergence of ethnomusicology in the 1940s) turns up over 700 hits; these, however, are almost all from American sources. Interestingly, in a reversal of the situation earlier in the century, the Americans are now very much debating whether music can be a universal language, while the British are assuming that it is.

emotions[.]"[3] With very few exceptions, almost all incidences of the phrase use it without disagreement or criticism but instead regard it as axiomatic, only debating whether music is a universal language of the emotions, of the intellect, of both, or of "mankind" more vaguely. What led to this shift?

Part of the answer lies in a change in music criticism. At the forefront of this change was George Bernard Shaw, who served as music critic for *The Star* from 1888 to 1890 and then for *The World* from 1890 to 1894. In an acerbic essay on a performance of Bach, Shaw outlines some of the duties of a music critic:

> When I last had occasion to criticize [the Bach choir's] singing, I gathered that my remarks struck the more sensitive members as being in the last degree ungentlemanlike. This was due to a misunderstanding of the way in which a musical critic sets about his business when he has a choral performance on hand. He does not on such occasions prime himself with Spitta's biography of Bach, and, opening his mouth and shutting his ears, sit palpitating with reverent interest, culminating in a gasp of contrapuntal enthusiasm at each entry and answer of the fugue subject.
>
> On the contrary, the first thing he does is put Bach and Spitta and counterpoint and musical history out of the question, and simply listen to the body of sound that is being produced.[4]

Shaw is here arguing that considerations of cultural or historical context allow too much reverence for tradition and take focus away from the skill (or lack thereof) of the performers. Music criticism followed his lead, although not necessarily from the same motives; although Shaw's reviews were published in relatively unprestigious periodicals (*The Star,* for example, was a ha'penny Labour newspaper), they attracted considerable notice and influenced the course of music criticism. Auden, in fact, was later to call him

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[3] J[ohn] F.R. Stainer, "Speech in Song," *The Musical Times* 41 (March 1900): 170.

[4] *Shaw on Music,* ed. by Eric Bentley (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 38.

"probably the best music critic who ever lived,"[5] and Shaw's work is still taken as a benchmark for the judgement of music's aesthetic qualities.[6] In his insistence that one should "simply listen" and not pay attention to cultural and historical context, Shaw is credited with shifting music criticism towards a pure consideration of sound and artistic quality because "[he raised] the most important question of all: what is musical greatness?"[7] In effect, this shift in musical criticism served to reinforce the idea that music is an art form uniquely independent of cultural and historical context, a shift that was to serve effectively to write women out of musical history (though such would never have been Shaw's intention).

This change in the focus of music criticism took place in the context of wider changes in thinking about art in general and music in particular. Walter Pater's *The Renaissance*[8] was influential on both counts. In *The Renaissance*, Pater writes that in listening to music one should note "the musical charm, that essential music, which presents no words, no matter of sentiment or thought, separable from the special form in which it is conveyed to us" (83). Any verbal message attached to music is not truly part of the music itself; there can be no wedding between the two because no art is on a level with music.

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[5] Auden, quoted in Bentley, iv.

[6] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, for example, lists Shaw as the first and one of the three greatest British music critics, alongside Ernest Newman and Neville Cardus. See Willi Apel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 554.

[7] Louis Crompton, Introduction, *The Great Composers: Reviews and Bombardments* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), xxiv.

[8] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (1873. Repr. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1986). All citations in parentheses are to this edition.

Rather, Pater argues that "*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*" (86, his italics) because "while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form … yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate [this distinction]" (86). Music is the art "which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form.… In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art" (88). This is important for Pater because "[e]xperience … is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us.… Every one of those impressions in the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" (151). Therefore, Pater concludes, "[n]ot the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end" (152). Music is the ideal art form because it does not seek to transfer impressions or beliefs or ideas, but merely provides a pure experience. Of course, as Linda Dowling argues in *Hellenism and Homosexuality at Oxford*, Pater's elevation of experience is not simply an abstract idea but served to elevate homosexual experience, as his contemporaries recognized,[9] within a framework in which experiences cannot be wrong.[10]

Pater's views were influential as part of the rise of modernism and modernism's interest in music, and his definition of music as an experience in itself was taken up by many others as modernism became increasingly interested in music for its temporal nature

[9] Dowling, 99.

[10] Auden's interest in music's formal side springs from a similar interest in his sexuality, although Auden is more torn, given his interest in and eventual conversion to Christianity.

and formal possibilities.[11] As an evanescent art form that must constantly be recreated, music took on great importance for modernists.[12] Because, following Pater, music was thought of as the art form that expressed itself through form alone, composers began experimenting much more with form, with the result that

> [t]he overlay of incomprehensible counterpoints, the juxtaposition of bizarrely mismatched material, the flaunting of forbidden notes, the creating of undreamed-of notes in the interstices of the scale – these were once fringe phenomena of the art of music; but from 1890 on, they became a central line of development.[13]

This focus on music as pure form free of and transcending cultural factors could have meant that women were more welcome in the world of art music, and to some extent this was the case in Europe and the United States, as women like Germaine Tailleferre, Lili Boulanger, Cécile Chaminade, Marion Bauer, and Amy Beach gained some fame for their compositions. In England, the relative success of Dame Ethel Smyth was more exceptional.[14] For all these women, what success they attained was quickly forgotten; their reputations, for the most part, died with them because their music could not be understood within the standards for canonization being developed at the turn of the century.

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[11] David Albright, Introduction, *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1. See also Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[12] Albright, 1.

[13] Albright, 9-10.

[14] Unlike the other women listed, Smyth did not submit her compositions for publication under her own name but under the initials E.M. (Gillett 226) and was subject to such demands as that her *Mass in D* would only be published at the publisher's expense if its first performance was attended by the Queen (Gillett 226).

Instead, the increased interest in music as a universal language of pure form coincided with a new-found confidence that music was the domain not only of men but of gentlemen. Although certain composers had always been considered better than others (not, of course, always the same composers), such judgements became more frequent and, importantly, more codified at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. This codification was a response to the changes in musical curricula we saw in chapter 5 – music appreciation classes, now that they existed, needed of course to teach appreciation of the best music, and students of composition, now that they were expected to learn from listening to others' works, should of course study the best works. These decisions were made simply enough; critics decided which were the feminine qualities in music and which the masculine, and made judgements accordingly. Arguments over Chopin's worth as a composer, for example, focus on deciding whether his works are masculine or feminine, his defenders arguing that Chopin's music ought to be given its due because it is really more masculine than it seems:

> Karasowski and Klescynski rightly remonstrate with that class of foreigners who love to dwell on the delicate constitution, the ultimate illness and the alleged morbidity of Chopin, emphasizing the feminine and ignoring the masculine characteristics of the composer.... This writer believes that Chopin's poetry and sweet melancholy have injured him in the estimation of musicians outside of Poland, and begs us to recall the robust nature that shows forth in the earlier compositions....[15]

[15] Edgar Stillman Kelley, *Chopin the Composer: His Structural Art and its Influence on Contemporaneous Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1913), 57-58.

Ultimately, however, the music of such composers as Chopin and Schumann was deemed insufficiently masculine to be really first-tier.[16]

Margaret Tilly, a concert pianist in Britain in the twenties whose playing was perceived as insufficiently vigorous[17] and who later legitimized her involvement in music by focusing on teaching rather than public performance (she was one of the first music therapists and is most famous for having convinced Carl Jung that music could provide a form of psychological therapy),[18] laid out this approach to music in the following chart:

Masculine Qualities	Neurotic Feminine Qualities (As found in the man)
Form	Mood
Impersonality	Personal approach
Direct approach	Indirection
Drive	Sentimentality
Rhythmic power	Rhythm subservient to and harmony
Sustained thought and melody	
Sustained thought and emotion	Quickly shifting emotions
Superior thinking	Love of decoration, per se
Greater output of large works	Small output, with short works predominating[19]

As composers of art music – already defined partly by considerations of length, as we saw in chapter 1 – were male, the qualities in the right-hand column are therefore inevitably

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[16] For a detailed discussion of the construction of Schumann's reputation, see Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[17] "Music in the Provinces," *The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular* 61 (January 1920): 53.

[18] Leslie Bunt, *Music Therapy: An Art Beyond Words* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 36.

[19] Tilly, quoted in Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 256.

neurotic and of lesser artistic value. Thus such composers as Chopin, Tchaikovsky, and Liszt are defined as feminine and Bach, Handel, and Beethoven as masculine,[20] and valued accordingly as second-tier or first-tier composers. The concept of music as a universal language becomes less controversial, then, at the turning point of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the musical canon was formed and as great music was defined as masculine in its essence. Only when music was associated with women and working- and professional-class men was the idea of its universal power worrisome; once great music, written, performed, or listened to, was more commonly seen as a province of gentlemen,[21] the idea of its universal power was no longer as troubling.

This masculinization of music was made possible in part by the displacement of perceived feminine musical qualities onto foreigners as music was increasingly seen in racialized terms. We saw part of this process in chapter 5, but only a part. At first glance, it would seem that a belief in racial difference would preclude a belief in music's universality, but racism is hardly known for the keenness of its logic. Instead, the discourse of music's universality worked to define other nations and cultures as inferior by arguing that their music was not really music. Westerners' first horrified, baffled reactions to Beijing opera,

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[20] Merriam, 256.

[21] One need only look at the titles of England's prominent composers of the late nineteenth century – Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Arthur Sullivan, even perhaps Sir George Macfarren, who, though composing earlier in the century, becomes a more established figure and a professor of music in the late nineteenth century. The association of music with gentlemen, not coincidentally, is part of what musicologists have long called England's late-nineteenth-century musical renaissance.

for example,[22] show, not that they did not believe in music's universality, but that they could only conceive of Chinese music as meaningless noise. Such noise was not feminized, but other music, perceived as foreign, was. In particular, Jewish and Gypsy music was increasingly seen as similar in its primitive effeminacy, an effeminacy that was explicitly racialized. Both groups were seen as having a natural affinity for music, but music that was not very evolved and therefore a primitive expression of emotion which makes it effeminate.[23] This association the primitive and the effeminate with race served, of course, to denigrate the groups in question, but constructing these qualities as racial simultaneously undermined itself, for it also served to imply that racially inferior groups were superior musically at a time when music's formerly feminized qualities, including its affect, were being masculinized and canonized. The distinction between High or art music on the one hand and low music on the other – in the Victorian sense of music that spoke to the intellect versus music that spoke to the heart – grew blurry at the end of the century with the re-unification of music as a field; music's affect bled into High, art music,

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[22] For an account of the opinions of George Bernard Shaw and other Western music critics regarding the first Western viewings and hearings of Beijing (or Peking) opera, see Kay Li, "Globalization versus Nationalism: Shaw's Trip to Shanghai," in *Shaw: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, ed. by Gale K. Larson and MaryAnn K. Crawford (University Park: Penn State Press, 2002), esp. 22:165. Contemporary Chinese critic Tsao Ju-ren responded to Shaw's criticisms (that Beijing opera was not music but chaotic, cacophonous noise in which audiences participated) by arguing that "Shaw appreciated art from a capitalistic urban angle" in which audiences pay to be served rather than to participate, "while Chinese drama is the art of agrarian society performed in open fields" and thus noisy because intermingled with the sounds of work and nature (Li, 165). In other words, though Shaw did not understand Beijing opera, he judged it according to a universalized Western standard rather than realizing that his own lack of understanding revealed the cultural dependency of that standard.

[23] See Jonathan Freedman, *The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107-111; Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11; Richard Wallaschek, *Primitive Music: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races* (London: Longman, Greens, and Company, 1893), 61-63.

necessitating the masculinization of music's previously feminized qualities and making music more powerful, unified, and universal. Therefore, linking the Other to music became threatening, as it implied the power of the Other over the whole mind, and, through mind, body. This fear was tied also to the increase of Jewish involvement in British musical life at the end of the nineteenth century;[24] *Trilby*'s feminization of and ascription of tremendous power to Svengali was a perfectly-timed expression of a more general growth in anti-Semitism that not only expressed itself through musical examples but which changes in ideas about music influenced.

Feminizing the Other was not exactly a logical response. However, it served to displace personal discomforts over the equally problematic process of masculinizing music's affect while providing a way to denigrate that which was feared. Though not British, Richard Wagner provides a good case study for this process because of the influence of his music and ideas in England and the way that that influence coincided with changes in musical and psychological thinking in England at the time. Though Wagner had of course been composing for some time, and had been written about in England at least as far back as 1855 when George Eliot published her essay on "Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar," in general Wagner did not receive much attention in England, being regarded as "a kind of impracticable musical madman."[25] In the 1890s, however, interest in Wagner surged.[26]

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[24] Sutton, 110-111.

[25] [H. Heathcote Statham,] "Wagner, and the Modern Theory of Music," *Edinburgh Review* 143 (January 1876): 143.

In part, Wagner became of interest because his person and his music were perceived as effeminate; fin de siècle aesthetes such as Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde seized upon Wagner's music and use it in their writing for this reason (the music that Dorian listens to in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, for example, is Wagner's). The Germans had made this connection first; cartoons and newspapers mocked Wagner for having played women on stage, for his fastidious taste in textiles, for his letters to young men, and for the affect of his music.[27] So established was the association of Wagner with effeminacy and homosexuality in fin de siècle England that the question "Are you especially fond of Wagner?" could be used to determine a person's sexual orientation.[28]

The intense emotionalism – or what was perceived as the intense emotionalism – of Wagner's music contributed to this perception. That affect, of course, was not universally celebrated, in part because of its associations with effeminacy, the feminine, and the savage. Influential music critic Ernest Newman, for example, in his *A Study of Wagner*, damns Wagner with faint praise by calling him a mediocre man of even more mediocre abilities in all fields save music, where he has a true gift; Newman makes the praise even fainter when he then goes on to argue that a gift for music is not something to be particularly proud of. Newman argues that because of

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[26] See John Louis DiGaetani, *Richard Wagner and the Modern British Novel* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978), 15-16; Anne Dzamba Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979).

[27] See Mitchell Morris, "Tristan's Wounds: On Homosexual Wagnerians at the Fin de Siècle," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity,* ed. by Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 275-278.

[28] Sutton, 86.

> the great effect of music upon the savage mind, ... the susceptibility of animals to its influence, ... [and] the existence of musical prodigies, who, at an age when Shakespeare or Shelley would be perfectly unintelligible to them, can play Mozart and Beethoven, and even compose for themselves ... music is really the least intellectual of all the arts.[29]

Instead, music, particularly Wagner's music, is emotional. As we saw in chapter 1, however, emotional, Low music had not been seen as a problem for most of the century; what is different at the end of the century is the blurring of the boundaries between the emotionalism of Low music and the elite status of High, art music; in short, the application of music's affect to a more elite audience which is in danger of being controlled instead of doing the controlling. Newman expresses further concern that the emotional power of Wagner's music is undeniable and worrisome because "the undisputed hypnosis of the musician"[30] can reduce a civilized audience to a primitive state. Newman was not alone; the emotional "affectivity of Wagner's music was depicted by numerous commentators, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, as coercive, even invasive.... Wagnerism was ... perceived as a feminizing, or effeminate, experience"[31] and celebrated or viewed with suspicion accordingly.

What made this affect particularly dangerous was not only its more elite audience (for upper-class men had been previously included as an important part of the audience for Low music, because of their manly savagery, as well as the lower classes), but its blurring of mental difference. Wagner's whole project was the unification, not only of various art

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[29] Ernest Newman, *A Study of Wagner* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 371.

[30] Newman, *A Study of Wagner,* 372.

[31] Sutton, 86.

forms into his brand of music-drama, but also the unification of different sides of the mind. This attempt at a unified and unifying art was described by one commentator as requiring "the subtle sublimation of that wonderful alembic, the 'single mind,' to insure a compound."[32] That "single mind" is of course Wagner's, but the quotation marks indicate that it is also a wider concept and that listeners to Wagner's music will have to adopt that "single mind" as well – a mind that unifies multitudinous faculties rather than only possessing certain gendered ones. The mind of the composer must be in a certain state to compose such music, and having done so the composer, the hypnotic musician, thus forces the listener into a similar mental state.[33] Add to this the belief that "Music can forcibly suggest the state of mind out of which an act springs,"[34] and the effeminacy of Wagner's music could be a cause for serious concern.

Wagner himself had already anticipated this, and his vitriol towards Jews is explained in part, to the extent that it is explainable at all, by his discomfort with the perceived effeminacy of his music. Wagner was especially concerned about the fact that his music was not exclusively instrumental, but sought to be blend music and words according to an older ideal of art music. This ideal now held a different resonance, thanks to the feminization of vocal music in the nineteenth century, in Germany as in England. Vocal

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[32] Wilbur Fiske Stone, junior, *Richard Wagner and the Style of the Music-Drama* (London: William Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1897), 1:3.

[33] Stone, 18, 104.

[34] Stone, 121.

music was also increasingly associated with "primitive" groups, among them Jews.[35] Wagner had therefore sought to displace the perceived effeminacy of his music and its power to disrupt gender boundaries in others by displacing all the criticisms of his effeminacy and dangerous power onto Jews. [36] The surge of interest in Wagner in fin de siècle England coincides with an increase in the reputation and number of prominent and successful Jewish composers and musicians in England.[37] Anne Dzamba Sessa has argued that the English only evinced interest in Wagner's music and "tended to ignore [his] racism,"[38] but the general silence is telling; Wagner's views were not obscure. Instead, English commentators debated whether the Wagnerian project of the unification of the mind through music, and consequent gender disruption, was a good project or not. Some, like the aesthetes, embraced the project because it legitimated their existence; more conservative figures such as Ernest Newman rejected it because of the threat it posed to gender divisions. Still others, however, wished on the one hand to enjoy Wagner's music and their own reactions to it without feeling uncomfortable about gender or sexuality. Embracing Wagner as an Aryan provided a way to do this; though no British commentator openly applauded Wagner's diatribe on Judaism in music, Wagner's characterization of such composers as Felix Mendelssohn and Giacomo Meyerbeer (active and popular in England) begins to color British discussions of those composers. Mendelssohn, for example,

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[35] See Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 253; Sutton, 112.

[36] For a summary of Wagner's "views," see Henry Theophilus Finck, *Wagner and His Work* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 1:324.

[37] Sutton, 110.

[38] Sessa, 11.

once a British darling, was increasingly referred to as a Hebrew and denigrated for "tone-hebraism"[39] and for his effeminate, "sickly sweet *lamentabile*,"[40] and his reputation diminished accordingly, as did Meyerbeer's, who is now almost forgotten. The project of masculinizing music discussed earlier was thus also an attempted Aryanization of music, and was part of a more general trend towards a new, more dehumanizing version of anti-Semitism that commentators such as Emil Reich perceived to be on the rise in England by the end of the nineteenth century. The discourse of racial difference, common throughout the nineteenth century, becomes more difficult when an important and widely-discussed art form is assumed to be universal and therefore implies that all minds are pretty much alike; prejudice can only survive, under those circumstances, by moving from a discourse of inferiority and difference to a discourse of inhumanity.

Not everyone, of course, made this leap, which had as one of its roots a fear of gender disruption, because not everyone clung to conventional ideas about either gender or sexuality. Though Wagner was fascinating to the English, he was not universally admired; Mendelssohn had his detractors but also his eager defenders; women composers were being written out of the canon, but they were also composing and having their works performed in public and prestigious venues. None of the shifts that this project traces should be taken to indicate monolithic consensus at any point in time. People always disagree; but we can nonetheless trace shifts in points of contention.

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[39] Emil Reich, "The Jew-baiting on the Continent," *The Nineteenth Century* 40 (September 1896): 426.

[40] Wallaschek, 62.

The cultural history of nineteenth-century British music and its representation in literature of the time points to important shifts in the conception and gendering of the mind. The unification, division, and re-unification of musical spheres coincides with an ungendering, re-gendering, and de-gendering of the mind. The first and third phases are not identical, as we have seen, nor was any phase uncontentious; nonetheless, a pattern emerges in which ideas about music are closely tied to, influenced by, and constitutive of, ideas about the mind. It would be a mistake to dismiss music as a peripheral reflection of the culture at large, or to insist that music be proven the origin of ideas about the mind in order for it to have had any influence. No such separation of cause and effect can properly be made, because music was integrally bound up with the construction of ideas about the mind, gender, and, by the end of the century especially, race. Research into the medical effects of listening, by leading to the formation of music therapy as a field, was part of a change in the way the medical profession viewed patients, as not just bodies but body/minds. Lack of proper musical training made it difficult or impossible for women to compose art music, leading not only to personal anguish and frustration and providing a way to argue for women's mental and physical inferiority that seemed (unlike painting or writing) to admit of no exceptions and thus to be unanswerable. The mid-century divide between High and Low music made it possible to dismiss the musical gains women had made in the early nineteenth century, and the consequent implications of gender equality. The emphasis on the physical side of composition and listening likewise dashed the idea of mental equality by making the body dependent on the mind. Ideas about the origins and

functions of music were an important part of early evolutionary theory, and the association of music with primitivity and femininity in conjunction with a belief in music's universality had a direct bearing on constructions of race. Thinking of music as separate from culture, and thus able to influence it or be influenced by it as a separate entity, is an idea that itself arose in the late nineteenth century, and has always performed some function, from personal ones (Auden) to larger, cultural ones, while simultaneously serving to mask that function. Those functions have largely been exclusionary, but, precisely because there was never complete consensus but only shifting points of contention, they have also been equalizing, and that past fact points to the possibility of a more hopeful future.

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