

The Gaze of the Listener:
Representations of domestic music-making
in English literature 1550-1918

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Introduction

The performing arts and music in particular sit astride the great Western divide between body and mind. While dance and drama have been much feared and maligned for privileging the body, could always be cerebral, esoteric and divine as well as perniciously human. Its semantic openness makes it potentially seductive in a way which has been a worry since Plato and St. Augustine; but for the same reason, it is also especially pure, 'heavenly' in the sense of a geometrical, Pythagorean order. The music of the spheres or of the Heavenly Host is divine because it is disembodied; but when music is performed, the usual separation of the physical and the cognitive, of mind from body, is scandalously suspended in 'a suspect and transgressive pleasure which implicitly privileges the body'.¹ While the enduring, abstract arts of theory and composition are connotated as masculine in the senses of both 'privileged' and 'normal', from antiquity through the Liberal Arts to the still impressive majority of men composers of art music today, the necessary involvement of the body, that desired, despised, feared and hated Other, aligns performance inevitably with inferior social groups, the alien exotic and, of course, women.

1. Performanceⁱ as feminine

From the sixteenth century to the First World War, English stereotypes about music were consistently contradictory. Music was theoretically exalted as divine, even as an instrument of redemption, the most sublime and expressive of arts, while many forms of musical practice were considered trivial, if not morally dangerous to performers and listeners. Performance unites all the negative or 'feminine' aspects of music, its 'dis-orderly energies ... that are constantly threatening to escape from patriarchal control, even as musical *signifiance* threatens to escape from signification, or the semiotic to erupt into the symbolic'.²

ⁱ The term 'performance' is used throughout this study with the straightforward meaning of 'singing or playing for one or more other person present', not in senses complicated by, for instance, performative notions of gender as developed in Queer and (post-Judith Butler) Gender Studies.

*Musicke is the princesse of delites
and the delite of princes.*
RICHARD MULCASTER

*The study of women and the ways
in which they are affected by their musical experiences
offers important insights on the uses and abuses of power within our species.*
CAROL E. ROBERTSON

English fiction and non-fiction testify to the erotic attractiveness of female musicians for the male listener / spectator, as well as to a deep mistrust of the emotional and sensual effects of music. Performance, constructed as fundamentally female, inspires fears of physicality, irrationality and uncontrollable emotion in men; but it is also highly desirable, and so a great deal of musical performing was recommended for and demanded from women, for male enjoyment and for the social function of furthering courtship. A woman's performance for a man is an exemplary enactment of gender relations in a patriarchal society in which 'pleasure in looking [and listening] has been split between active/male and passive/female'.ⁱⁱ Whether male listeners were constructed as gullible victims or unassailable controllers, concerns about the potentially negative sensuous effects of music performance, and the social status of those who would produce such seductive sounds resulted, from the sixteenth century onwards, in an increasing prescription of actual performance practice for women, and in increasing social limitations on this form of physical display for men.

While performing music defines the subject's 'discursive position as feminine',³ a female player also encroaches on the male prerogatives of physical presence and activity; her art cannot be detached from her physical, sexual and social self. Because of this audible, visible (and sometimes palpable) presence, the woman player cannot be overlooked and suppressed, nor constructed as deficient with regard to the male listener. She must inevitably be represented, but is usually enjoyed, devalued and denounced as an ambiguous *Other*, whose potentially overpowering attraction is contained but cannot be denied.

However, woman and music do not only signify sexuality and disorder. It is as true for women musicians as for other women that 'the psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating'.⁴ Just as music is always ambiguous, divine or sinfully seductive, so female players are represented not only as visual and acoustic objects of consumption but also as Saint Cecilia who can ennoble the male listener and draw him towards Heaven. Both fields of association may be present at

ⁱⁱ Mulvey 1989:19. Cf. also Austern 1998:637: '[F]rom early modernity forward, vision has been associated with the male hegemony of strong, silent power, and hearing with the integrative and relational elements that dominate culturally constructed femininity.'

once and contradictorily in the consciousness of the narrator or narrated listener. The ambivalence of music's affective power as the art which encourages both aspirations after the highest ideals and the most earthly passions, makes it emblematic of equivocal attitudes that regard woman's nature as simultaneously more and less moral than man's.⁵ The topoi of female musical performance are always double-minded.

*While fulfilling an ostensibly social function,
music is shown as essentially marginal,
not part of the mainstream of society.*

DIANA UNWIN

As an object of display, woman always loses value as a subject.

NANCY ARMSTRONG

Between the sixteenth century and the early years of the twentieth (when recording technology began to substitute many domestic musical activities), England knew a single socially respectable – if problematical – setting for female music in the service of male delight: courtship. While music theory and composition were clearly connotated as masculine, and the requisite knowledge incompatible with female educational curricula, musical 'accomplishments' in the form of singing and playing the virginals were just as essential to Elizabethan marriageableness as playing the piano was to Victorian eligibility. Thus instrumentalized for the vital social purpose of matchmaking, using and containing female sexuality, music was an indispensable part of female education and a popular literary topos, but remained a suspicious property within a regulated framework. Music could stabilize and harmonize anything from political order to bodily balance, but its subservience to ideology was never taken for granted; the discourse of musical accomplishment in courtship is the discourse of a contradiction, of the oxymoron which 'socially acceptable female performance' is. Not only did certain desirable 'wifely' qualities stand in contradiction to a willingness for physical display, but the display was paradoxically used to 'advertise' girls as future wives. Hence music should be adequately seductive to fulfil its function in the courting process, but not be impressive in its own right, to ensure proper wifely submissiveness. This double-bind enjoins all women on display in the service of men and social rituals; Theodor Adorno's statement that 'glorification of the female character implies the humiliation of all who bear it'⁶ could also run: 'Glorification of music implies the reification and humiliation of all who practice it.'

2. The piano

*The history of the pianoforte
and the history of the social status of women
can be interpreted in terms of one another.*
ARTHUR LOESSER

Keyboard music-making has been going on for all of modern Western history and has always been a setting for the enactment of social roles. Since the fifteenth century,⁷ stringed keyboard instruments (which I will indistinctly call 'pianos' as long as statements are valid for both harpsichord and the piano or pianoforte properⁱⁱⁱ) have been present in the lives of people who could afford leisure and desired culture. Music is a status symbol because of its nonmaterial, non-productive character; it is a signifier of power and the ability to afford leisure, a license to waste time,⁸ and the comparatively high price of keyboard instruments made them into particularly effective markers of such social distinctions. The poor could afford neither pianos nor the leisure necessary to master them, and the aristocracy had less time to cultivate such a truly private life; if anything, they kept musicians. But in the middle classes, where dynastic or existential constraints were less pressing than for the nobility or the 'nether world', the spectacle of a musically accomplished wife at the piano ideally reflects her husband's financial power to buy an instrument and tuition, and to keep the woman who has the leisure to practise and play. Female piano players, in Virginia Woolf's phrase, 'have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size'.⁹ The economic uselessness of women's performance at the piano, while contributing to their families' prosperous image and displaying the economic status of husbands, devalues their performance and subjectivity.

The piano is an ideal representative of this problematical sexualization of female musical performance because of certain practical characteristics. Playing the piano imparts a disruptive power over rapt and tickled listeners, but it also entails being dominated and disciplined in a very concrete and physical way: the body cannot move the instrument, but is immobilized by it, for better use by the listener and spectator. Such restraint confers respectability; although the piano could and did exist in bars, brothels and cinemas, it was never as suspicious as the more obviously sensual string, wind and percussion instruments. Its

ⁱⁱⁱ Virginal and harpsichord, despite their mechanical sound production which is practically insensitive to touch, share in the erotic connotations that are familiar from literary scenes involving their successor, the piano.

physical shape is not as threateningly mobile as that of a curvy violin^{iv} or a phallic flute; the physical immobility it imposes on the performer, rather classes it with furniture, reminiscent, at worst, of a coffin. Keyboards permit decorous body use (essentially only the fingers), while other instruments force performers into ungraceful or 'immodest' postures, such as the spreading of legs around a 'cello, the lifting of arms of violinists, or the facial distortion and emphatic oral activity required from wind players. To this day, female brass players or percussionists face reservations like the one expressed in the following remark from 1722:

The Harpsichord, Spinnet, Lute and Base Violin are Instruments most agreeable to the LADIES; There are some others that really are unbecoming to the Fair Sex; as the Flute, Violin and Hautboy; [85] the last of which is too Manlike, and would look indecent in a Woman's Mouth. ...¹⁰

When women perform as singers, their bodies are intimately involved and the sounds are unmistakably and distractingly gendered; but the piano, which involves neither breath nor voice nor legs, is wordless, almost a-physical voice. The pianist 'has the floor', as discourse analysis calls it, and is thus disturbing *per se* to a patriarchal society, but she has it speechlessly, charming by silent, truly feminine 'speech'. Whereas singing has long been associated with prostitution, the potentially so erotic and disturbing activity of piano playing could become domesticated and socially acceptable.

But the piano is not only restrictive. It is musically 'free-wheeling'; its neutral sound gives it the 'negative capability' to imitate or evoke almost all other instruments. The history of keyboard music^v abounds in examples of such miming, from Elizabethan 'hornpipes' and Scarlatti's guitar and castanet effects to Mozart's orchestral duet scoring, Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven symphonies and the tricks of movie pianists, all of these producing an illusion of a number of musicians. If the single amateur pianist can magic an orchestra into her parlour,^{vi} she is, on the other hand, excluded from many communal activities, for the piano with its 'insoluble' timbre¹¹ is not an orchestral instrument.^{vii} The ability to produce music for dancing single-handedly could make an evening's company depend completely on a pianist's goodwill,

^{iv} The ingenuity of the Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis, an avid Victorian amateur violinist, is remarkable in this respect. He confessed: 'There is something about the shape of a violin – its curves, its physiognomy, its smiling and genial *f*'s – which seems to invite and welcome *inspection and handling*.' [my italics] (*Haweis Musical Life* 4).

^v I have commented only on significant single instances of actual piano repertoire without analyzing systematically all those – infrequent – passages.

^{vi} Richard Steele, comparing musical instruments to 'different talents of discourse', categorizes 'Masters in every Kind of Conversation' as 'Harpsicords, a Kind of Musick which every one knows is a Consort by it self.' (*Tatler* No.153, 01-04-1710, pp. 361).

^{vii} This goes also for the harpsichord, which was not a normal part of every seventeenth- and eighteenth-century orchestra, but its indispensable backbone as basso continuo, which it could also provide on its own.

but prevented her from dancing, and she makes herself indispensable by accompanying singers, she is always reminded of her instrument's inability to sing. Like no other musician or singer, a pianist can be seductive and reticent, overwhelming and chaste, indispensable but completely subservient to the community.

3. 'The intuition of the artist'

*Victorian literature is largely of the middle class,
by the middle class, and for the middle class.*
WENDELL STACY JOHNSON

While the serviceability of the piano sits well with traditional assumptions about femininity, the musical autonomy which it guarantees threatens them, and this becomes most obvious in fiction. The same British middle classes that cultivated keyboard instruments so assiduously have also been predominantly the writers, consumers and protagonists of fiction, and the combination has produced enough literary traces to enable a narrative; piano playing was so much part of women's social identity that they could hardly be represented without it. While professional musicians are comparatively rare in 'ordinary' English fiction,^{viii} and other instruments were never in domestic vogue for longer than a century, the domestic keyboard instrument has a recognizable, representative and followable place in English literature generally, which shows the fascination of music as well as the anxious efforts to contain it. Whether piano-playing is described as individual solace, social practice or reprehensible seduction, literary texts always suppress as well as celebrate that music which women had been forced to make their own.

*The intuition of the artist
is sometimes more illuminating
than whole volumes of exposition.*
ESMÉ WINGFIELD-STRATFORD

The analysis of fictional representations yields particularly interesting insights into ideological constructions of music as a female social practice because of the particular ability of literature to embody the contradictions that are so rife in this field of discourse. This lends this study the 'confidence ... to take literary texts of all kinds seriously as historical source material',¹² and to aim at a structured contextualization of such diverse documents. The ways in which

^{viii} The literary imagination never latched on to the craftsmen in churches, military or town waits' bands, theatre orchestras, the King's Musick or the Chapel Royal. Professionals only became fiction-worthy as 'Great Artists' after the emergence of the 'Geniekult' around figures like Beethoven, Paganini or Liszt. But such *Künstlerromane* form a limited (and at times rather deplorable) sub-genre which represents the ambiguous status of music in the general English imagination with a biased agenda.

musical activities are used in fiction, described in magazines, recommended in conduct books or warned against in medical treatises is not simply added up to make a picture of a period, conflating 'the representation with that which is represented'.¹³ Only a study of the varied and oblique structural *relationships* between historical discourses and their enactments in fiction enables an adequate analysis of the particular contribution that literary texts can make to a history of ideas and discourses and fulfils Catherine Belsey's demand that 'if we are to learn from them, we should treat texts – almost all texts – with almost infinite respect'.¹⁴ A dialogic comparison of different genres enables a differentiated image of their specific involvement in the construction and mediation of ideologemes, showing relations like the one between 'Kargheit der elaborierten Einschätzungen und Bestimmungen des Weiblichen' and the 'üppigen Mannigfaltigkeit des imaginierten und projizierten Weiblichen, wie es die Kunstgattungen bevölkert'.¹⁵ In the dialogue of texts that respond to, address and use each other and the social realities and practices they depict, every genre has its very own needs which are satisfied by the use of elements from real life and other books.

When thou, my music, music play'st
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*Shakespeare could say pretty things about music,
but I have known many very unmusical people do that.*
SAMUEL BUTLER

Different genres represent music differently, and *use* it differently. In literary and non-fictional texts, alike, music is a favourite *metaphor* for all that is ordered, sacred and beautiful – 'harmonious' –, whereas actual *representations* of music-making – often women singing and playing the piano – more frequently exploit its earthy, sensual and sexual or quotidian, even commercial aspects, and reflect the fact that musical performance was considered demeaning for men. Texts about ideal Christian marriage and spiritual or bridal, as yet physically unconsummated, love are full of musical imagery, but hardly ever feature descriptions of actual performances. Such representations favour the physical, corruptible side of Love; adultery, fornication and ultimately any sexual activity at all, are associated with seductive sounds. These mainly negative examples indicate the anxiety which music caused, while the writer's command of musical terms is often insufficient to represent musical practice adequately. Especially musical metaphors are often factually incorrect, as Dr. Berkenhout observed in 1790:

Even the common words harmony and melody are perpetually misapplied by persons who know nothing of Music; nor is there in this, any just cause of surprise. ... That Colossus in literature, Dr. Johnson, explains the word *Melody* by *harmony* of sound.¹⁶

Harmonious love, sanctioned by Heaven, is connected to a dimension of music that is theoretical, contemplative, rational and, in the last resort, inaudible and impalpable. Equally, the woman evoked is a mere ideal, 'Woman' with a capital letter, and her instrument turns into a symbolic 'lyre' or 'harp', instruments from antiquity or a Christian Hereafter, but not from the parlour or drawing-room.

The metaphorical leanings of the English music discourse give additional significance to the piano as a focus for the analysis of larger issues through fiction, because stringed keyboards lack allegorical potential. Even the earliest representatives came too late to be defined by classical or medieval imagery (for instance, Boethius' analogies of body parts and instruments, his *musica humana*) and iconography. They are not implicated in Pythagorean systems (the monochord), classical mythology (lyre and reed pipe), biblical narrative (David's harp, Miriam's tambourines), Renaissance allegory (the lute), religious metaphor^{ix} or church traditions (the organ) and never served conspicuous courtly or military purposes like the trumpet and kettledrum. The piano is not a symbol, it represents by metonymy; thanks to its complex, improvable mechanism and to the alert manufacturers who initiated and promptly responded to changing sound ideals, keyboard instruments remained 'modern' for centuries. Mention of a piano inevitably lends a touch of realism and contemporariness to musical scenes, which bear significant witness to the perceptions of hands-on musical performance, and to the not very edifying contradictions which adhere to the social practice of women making music for men. Metaphors that eschew the reality of musical practice, on the other hand, usually become conspicuous, if not ridiculous, as soon as a piano is implicated, and can more easily be decoded as the attempts at evasion of a sensual reality which they so often are.

^{ix} Ignatius of Loyola perceiving the Trinity 'sous la forme d'un clavicorde à trois cordes' in one of his visions is a notable exception (cf. Brancour 1921:73).

4. The gaze of the listener

*A woman was playing,
A man looking on.
THOMAS HARDY*

*Women are there to feed an appetite,
not to have any of their own.
Men act and women appear. Men look at women.
JOHN BERGER*

The English literary history of the pianoforte (arguably, of music) is largely a history of the suppression of music, of the evasion of the inevitable. An often somewhat forced enjoyment co-exists with a troubled awareness of the sexuality music stands for. Paramount among the symptoms of unease is the privileging of visual perception. Women, who 'can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'¹⁷ are always on display visually even when producing *sounds* for their audience. Discussing musicians' portraits, Linda Phyllis Austern speaks of the 'control over the invasive, sense-bereaving [638] object of the ear'¹⁸ which the viewer is able to keep thanks to the visual medium. But also in literary texts, that is, non-visual artefacts, sound, which requires a woman player as subject or at least agent for its production, and which is the ostensible *raison d'être* of musical performance, is often outweighed as an attraction by sight. The power of musical sounds to affect a hearer is not just, as John Hollander puts it, 'as much a literary idea as an observed phenomenon',¹⁹ but often a mere literary figure which easily gives way to more pressing visual imagery.

A dantesque poem by George Barlow exemplifies the precariousness of musical metaphor and description: despite its title 'Marriage in Music', it exploits almost exclusively visual impressions for its symbolism:

When I hear music I am one with thee,
And one with some high heavenly life serene. ...
All sorrows vanish, – all the woes between;
Thy whiteness leads me like a white fair star
Rising with solemn purport from afar,
Silver above broad endless billows green.

The star of thy pure whiteness glittereth so,
Lighting life's tideway with sweet silver glow ...
Life's waters all were tinged with magic gold
When first the sun of first love rose in might.²⁰

That shift from musical aspiration to visual perception is typical of the unmusical or barely trained listeners that English musicians so often encountered: conditioned to find music

undignified but erotically attractive and instructed to look to it for edification, they slip with relief into observation of the player.

The shift into visual perception has at least two significant aspects. On the one hand, it reinforces the fact that men do not participate in performance (musical ignorance was nothing to be ashamed of, often the contrary) but control it by observation, like other social practices, 'as something external to them, something with [58] which they are not essentially engaged'.²¹ That keeps the listener comparatively safe from the undesirable ravishment that music might bring about, but keeps intact the erotic enjoyment that can be gained from watching. Secondly, the elision of sound contributes to the elision of the woman's subjectivity: it disregards the part of her performance which she, too, can enjoy, and for which she may have worked hard, while the point of view (an apt metaphor) of the text becomes doubly male, the account of a spectator's experience with a limited interest in music. The gaze of the listener as well as that of the narrator and the implied reader *is* the look which a man casts on the female object of his desire. Representations of solitary male players are extremely rare. It seems that 'the burden of sexual objectification' which is indissolubly connected with musical performance, even if it is only exposed to the gaze of the *reader*, is too much for men, reluctant as they are 'to gaze at [their] exhibitionist like'.²² That fact is neatly complemented by the characteristics of the few scenes of private *female* playing, which often include the absent male lover in the text as an object of nostalgia or desire. Such evocation ensures that the woman player remains a spectacle for him and for the reader instead of a completely autonomous subject or a powerfully dangerous temptress.

Mieke Bal describes Laura Mulvey's model of cinematic communication, from which I borrow the use of the term 'gaze',^x as positing a kind of voyeurism which

tends to reduce looking to power only, to an absolute subject-object relation, wherein the viewer/receiver has total power and the object of the look does not even participate in the communication. This model is in fact based on noncommunication.²³

That is intended as a critique of Mulvey's approach; but for musical scenes, it is truer than might be suspected. In English literature, the much-praised language of music is only rarely an effective means of communication. Players are paradoxically silenced as their performances are being watched instead of listened to. Rare and fleeting insights into the player's mind do

^x Mulvey has been criticized for mis-appropriating the term 'gaze', which is, in Lacan, a metaphor for a purely internalized instance, but it is her use of the term that is pertinent to my purposes: 'gaze' as biological vision and its culturally conditioned perception, the observation of an actually present and usually gendered listener which dominates the perspective of a cinematic or literary narrative.

not really complicate or re-position the scenario of the female spectacle or upset the textually controlling position of the listener / spectator. Luce Irigaray's comment on theories of the subject also applies to many literary representations of performance: 'Subjectivity denied to woman: indisputably this provides the ... backing for every irreducible constitution as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire.'²⁴ Such denial of subjectivity is one more factor that makes performing music incompatible with a masculine discursive position. Most 'piano texts' belong to a 'regime of representation' in which 'men are offered a position of dominant specularity as active bearers of the look while women are accorded a position of identification with images of themselves as passive objects.'²⁵

Such textual positing of the woman was necessary because the docile passivity of the musician on display is never certain. For centuries, English literature turned to the domestic keyboard, and most of those representations veer between sensuous enjoyment, theoretically posited respectful admiration and practical and moral suspicion. In Richard Leppert's words, they are 'simultaneously encoded with pleasure and anxiety'.²⁶ The near-ubiquitous piano in the home, in a centre where so many relationships were enacted, and which is crossed by so many important cultural fault-lines, is a touchstone for the dilemmata under which gender and music are constructed, prescribed and perceived; in literature it provides a focus of crystallization for ideologies and the ways in which they are negotiated, resisted or evaded.

Notes

A note on parameters of analysis

*The prospect widens as I advance.
I find music connected with
Religion, Philosophy, History, Poetry, Painting,
public exhibitions and private life.*
CHARLES BURNEY

I leave the systematic discussion of authors' gender to future enquiries since a further dimension of analysis would have made this unwieldy enough study simply unmanageable.

A note on periodization

Like most symbols the piano distorts the untidiness of history.
CYRIL EHRLICH

Every chapter of this book describes a historical moment the precise dating of which was defined only after sorting and sifting the evidence. Vague adjectives like 'Regency' and 'Elizabethan' are used for these 'periods' because inventing further synonyms and circumlocutions at every turn would have been tedious for both writer and readers – as would the continued use of inverted commas to demonstrate an awareness of their vagueness. As Paul Bové puts it: 'Key terms are finally more important for their function, for their place within intellectual practices, than they are for what they may be said to "mean" in the abstract.'²⁷ So in this study 'Elizabethan' functions as a common denominator for texts dating from 1534 to 1657 and 'The harpsichord' covers the years 1659-1781. The 'long nineteenth century' has three distinct phases as far as the piano in literature is concerned: 'Regency' goes from 1785 to 1837, 'Victorian' from 1838 to 1887 and 'Edwardian' from 1881 to 1922.

There are a few exceptions in almost every chapter, such as the post-1837 novels of Catherine Frances Gore and Thomas Love Peacock, which belong in spirit with the earlier work of these authors, or musician's memoirs from the early twentieth century that look back on the 1860s and 1870s and are therefore discussed as 'mid-Victorian' sources.

A note on citation forms

References to prose texts are given as Penicuik *Memoirs* 15.

References to prose texts divided into volumes, books, chapters, letters etc., are given as Eliot

Middlemarch I:i:2, Graves *Spiritual Quixote* III:xi:VII:275, or Thompson *Fair Quaker* I:[i]:2. This may appear somewhat tedious, but when trying to locate a passage from a voluminous eighteenth- or nineteenth-century novel in a modern edition, I have often wished my fellow researchers had followed this procedure.

References to longer verse narratives are given as Bloomfield 'Alfred and Jennet' 68 p. 45.

References to poems are given as Whaley 'To a Lady' 8, or Hill 'Bellaria' 5-12. The numbers indicate lines, page references being given in the bibliography of cited works.

References to Shakespeare plays are given as Shakespeare *Two Noble Kinsmen* III:iii:33f.; for less known texts the page reference is added after the line number: Marmion *Fine Companion* IV:i:164, fol. G2 r, adding.

References to prose plays with unnumbered lines are given as Pinero *Tanqueray* III p. 109f.

Immediately consecutive references to the same work omit author and title from the second mention onwards.

A note on notes

Bibliographical references are given as endnotes with Arabic numerals. The more substantial footnotes with Roman numerals are referred to as 'notes' in some cross-references.

I. Sex and the virginals:^{xi} gender and keyboards around 1600

*There is nothing more contagious and pestilent
than some kinds of harmony;
than some nothing more strong and potent unto good.*
RICHARD MULCASTER

*Among all the Elizabethan superlatives as to music
there is scarcely a word which can be designated aesthetic criticism.*
MORRIS COMEGYS BOYD

It is a particularly English tradition to privilege the discussion of desires and states of mind that music is able to call forth, judging it according to the behaviour and emotions it produces,²⁸ considering it as a psychological, moral or medical means rather than as an end. Many writers from what is, after all, called the Golden Age of English Music with some justification, were strikingly uninterested in an independent aesthetic evaluation of music and its pleasures,^{xii} even if they were fervid advocates of the art. Henry Peacham, listing suitable activities for the 'Compleat Gentleman', judges: 'If all Arts hold their esteem and value according to their Effects, account this goodly Science ... of such which are ... the fountaines of our lives good and happinesse'.²⁹ Peacham lists mostly psychologically curative uses against sadness, anger and the like,^{xiii} while other writers describe music also as a medical cure for ailments from stammering to the after-effects of Tarantula bite. But its most important effects are on the mind, for 'no Rhetoricke more perswadeth or hath greater power'.³⁰ Richard Hooker explains this power of music, 'a thing as seasonable in grief as in joy', by the affinity of musical motion to mental processes. Music has

an admirable facility ... to express and represent to the mind ... the very standing, rising and falling, the very steps and inflections every way, the turns and varieties of all passions whereunto the mind is subject For which cause there is nothing more contagious and pestilent than some kinds of harmony; than some nothing more strong and potent unto good.³¹

Other writers lay the responsibility for such widely differing effects not to different kinds of 'harmony' but to the use which performers and listeners make of it.

^{xi} The Elizabethan predecessors of the harpsichord are indifferently called virginal, virginals or pair of virginals, the two latter terms referring to the 'mother-and-child' models that sported a detachable second keyboard tuned one octave higher.

^{xii} In Thomas Lupton's morality *All for Money*, allegorical 'Pleasure' offers delights such as 'Dallying with faier women, with other kinde of sportes: All fine apparell that makes the heart ioye, / With musicall instruments, both with man and boye.' (Lupton *All for Money* [201-203] n.p.).

^{xiii} '[Music] heightens our devotion, it gives delight and ease to our travailes, it expelleth sadnesse and heavinesse of Spirit, preserveth people in concord and amity, allayeth fiercenesse, and anger; and lastly, is the best Phisicke for many melancholly diseases.' (Peacham *Gentleman* 104).

John Case argues for such a differentiation between works and practitioners, complaining about the fact that music 'is oftentimes blemished with the faults of them that professe to have some knowledge in her'.³² The educationalist Richard Mulcaster is refreshingly commonsensical about this:

[I]f abuse of a thing, which may be well used, and had her first being to be well used, be a sufficient condemnation to the thing that is abused, let glotonie forbid meat ... heresie religion, adulterie mariage, and why not, what not? ... neither cannest thou avide that blame, which is in thy person, by casting it on *Musick* which thou hast abused and not shee thee.³³

This spirited line of argument is fitting for such a great advocate of music in the education of children as Mulcaster. However, the concept that almost any music could be put to good or evil uses, is frequently also articulated by writers who basically condemn music, in order to demonstrate a balanced judgment. The writings of the Puritan William Prynne could well do with such tempering; he opines that 'That Musicke of it selfe is lawfull, usefull, and commendable; no man, no Christian dares denie'³⁴ only to affirm that 'lascivious, amorous, effeminate, voluptuous Musicke, (which I onely here incounter) ... there is none so audacious as to iustifie it'.^{xiv}

Such vacillation between pious praise and violent misgivings permeates most Elizabethan treatments of music; the difference between good and bad music is difficult to define, but even when music is ostensibly exalted, performance is always suspicious and contained by educational cautions for young men while female musicianship is prescribed and taken for granted in a domestic context. The vulgarities attending many allusions particularly in drama betray a consistent awareness of its sexualization. In this chapter, an exposition of this discursive field becomes the background for a closer analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 128, a text which has been slighted if not disregarded by many critics, but which is an exemplary enactment of the contradictions surrounding women's music-making in the early modern period.

1. The abuse of music: 'muche musike marreth mennes maners'

^{xiv} Prynne *HISTRIO-MASTIX* V:viii:268. Another Puritan, Philip Stubbes, describes music in his *Anatomie of Abuses* as having 'a certaine kind of nice, smoothe sweetnes in alluring the audiorie to nicenes, effeminacie, pusillanimitie and lothsomnes of life. So sweet Musick at first delighteth the eares, but afterwards corrupteth ande depraveth the minde, making it weak and queasie, and inclined to all licentiousness of lyfe whatsoever.' (Stubbes *Anatomie* 12).

Elizabethan recommendations for musical practice are dominated by the concept of moderation. Puritans like Prynne but also many less fanatical writers inevitably balance the possible spiritual and physical benefits of musical practice with serious objections, especially against male practice. Their basic arguments were to be repeated, with varying emphases, for centuries – which indicates that men continued to play, nevertheless,^{xv} but also that this activity continued to cause anxiety and to be considered incompatible with ideal masculinity. Queen Elizabeth's erstwhile tutor Roger Ascham, who considers instrumental skill 'not onelie cumlie and decent, but also verie necessarie, for a Courtlie lentleman to vse',³⁵ and allows it to scholars as 'pastime and recreation of their mindes',³⁶ nevertheless compares it to honey which goes down well but makes the stomach 'unfit to abyde any good stronge norishynge meate'³⁷ if taken in large quantities, and quotes Galen as saying that '[m]uche musike marreth mennes maners'.³⁸ The term 'marring' may refer to a specifically sexual worry connected with early modern concepts of sexual anatomy. The female was considered an incomplete, imperfect male, lacking only the heat that would transform her into the superior sex, the hot, dry male. If a man behaved in an inappropriately effeminate fashion (for instance, performing music for the pleasure of others), he might actually become physically effeminate by the reverse process.³⁹

On a less physical level, the Count in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtyer*, who is (in Thomas Hoby's translation) 'not pleased with ye Courtier, if he be not also a Musition, and ... have skil in like manner on sundry instruments',⁴⁰ insists on more substantial achievements, and Thomas Becon calls music 'a more vague and triefelinge science, than it becommeth a man borne & appoynted to matters of gravitie, to spende muche tyme aboute it'.⁴¹ The theologian James Melvill was thankful for 'the great mercie of my God that keipit me from ainie grait progress in singing and playing on instruments'.⁴²

In addition to the dangers of sexual arousal,^{xvi} effeminacy and distraction from more serious duties, Sir Thomas Elyot raises a class-related issue in his *Booke named the Governour*:

It were better, that no musyke were taught to a noble man, than by exacte knowledge thereof, he shulde have therin inordinate delyte: and by that be illected to wantonnes, abandonyng gravitie and the necessary cure and ofice in the publike weal to hym

^{xv} William Chappell quotes a late-sixteenth-century testimony: 'Sometimes I foot it in dancing; now with my gittern, and else with my cittern, then at the virginals (ye know nothing comes amiss to me): then carol I up a song withal; that by and by they come flocking about me like bees to honey; and ever they cry, "Another, good Laneham, another."' (Chappell 1961:60). Significantly, it is the female-connotated virginals that provoke the half-apologetic aside 'I play everything'.

^{xvi} For example: 'it stirreth up filthy lust, womanish y^e mind, ravisheth y^e heart, enflameth concupiscence and bringeth in uncleanes.' (Stubbes *Anatomie* 128).

commyted.⁴³

The abandoning of 'gravitie' is a matter of social status: playing in front of others not only requires an excessive amount of time for preparation but also signifies a loss of dignity. Simply playing too well implies undesirable excess. Henry Peacham, who considers music 'a skill [99] worthy the knowledge and exercise of the greatest prince', nevertheless says: 'I desire not that any Noble or Gentleman should (save at his leasureable houres) prove a Master in [music]'.⁴⁴ John Cleland points out in his *Instruction of a Young Nobleman* in 1607 that

playing upon instruments dothe disgrace [230] more a Nobleman then it can grace and honour him in good companie For hee shoulde rather take his pastime of others, then make pastime unto them.^{xvii}

Music for men had ranked higher a century earlier, when Henry VIII's exploits as a composer and instrumentalist were celebrated and Margaret Tudor's wooing by James IV of Scotland proceeded by music in 1503:

[T]he Kynge begonne before hyr to play of the clarycordes, and after of the lute, wiche pleasyd hy varey much [On another day they] drew them asyd for to commune, and after she playd upon the claricordys, and after of the lute, hee beinge upon his kne allwayes barrheded.⁴⁵

Around 1600, the male performer at the disposition of the company risks being viewed as an inferior:

[I]t were more meete for a Ciuile Citezen ... too bende their eares unto Musicians and syngers, thinkyng the harking unto them more conueniente, ... then thei them selues to [44] be harkened unto by idle and wanton folke.⁴⁶

The role of 'Musicion' is also unsuitable to a gentleman because it involved being paid: Thomas Whythorne claims that amateurs who use music 'for their own recreation; and do not otherwise seek to live ... thereby ... are to be esteemed and preferred ... above those who do learn [music] to live by'. Such players are those 'whom the book named *The Institution of a Gentleman*^{xviii} doth allow to learn music; and also ... *The Courtier*'.⁴⁷

In order to avoid turning himself into a professional servant and his listeners into wanton idlers, a gentleman should maintain a pretence of playing reluctantly: 'Let oure Courtier come to show his musicke as a thing to passe the time withall, and as he wer

^{xvii} Cleland *ΨΥΧΟ-ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ* 229f. This may be a paraphrase of a passage from James I.'s little book of advice to his young son, *ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΝ ΔΩΡΟΝ*: 'Delight not also to be in your owne person a player vpon Instrumentes, especially on such as men commonly win their liuing with; nor yet to be fine of any Moechanick craft; DV BARTAS saith, *leur esprit s'en fuit au bout des doigts.*' (James I. *ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΝ ΔΩΡΟΝ* 152).

^{xviii} A reference to Humfrey Braham's *The Institucion of a Gentleman* of 1555.

enforced to do it, and not in the presence of noble menne, nor of any great multitude.¹⁴⁸ Elyot illustrates this point of view with an anecdote about Philip of Macedon rebuking his son Alexander for his singing skills because 'the *open profession* of that craft [is] but of a base estimation' [my italics]. Philip then outlines the proper application of musical skill: it should be used 'secretelye, for the refreshynge of his wytte' or else 'to gyue iugement in the excellencie of [musicians'] counnynges.' It impairs a man's reputation if he plays or sings for an audience, 'the people forgettynge reuerence, whan they beholde him in symilitude of a comon seruant or mynstrel'.⁴⁹ The ideal musical performance involves the late-Renaissance gentleman only perfunctorily as player, but mostly as a superior listener, not busy but enjoying at aristocratic leisure, listening and watching, judging, savouring, while 'inferior' members of society were assigned the task of providing a pleasure that could not damage their standing.

The classic scenario of the inferiority of performers vis-à-vis their listeners is a woman playing for a man. The Elizabethan gentleman shied away from musical display not only as a busy, virtuous and dignified member of the gentry, but also as a male. The contrast between the consensus that 'for man's privat recreation, musick is very laudable'⁵⁰ because it 'would comfort man wonderfully, and moove his heart to serve God the better'⁵¹ and the striking dearth of literary representations of such solitary^{xix} or private^{xx} male music-making can be read as illustrating men's reluctance 'to gaze at [their] exhibitionist like' even in private surroundings, and their unwillingness to 'bear the burden of sexual objectification'.⁵² This resistance is so pronounced that even the reader's gaze at a player described as alone is avoided.

The few lyrical texts which describe, on the other hand, women's playing for 'privat recreation' neatly complement that lack by their narrative perspective which maintains the pattern of female display for male eyes and ears even when describing a solitary activity. The glimpses of the player's subjectivity cannot break the power of the male gaze, being limited, as they mostly are, to lamenting an absent lover or husband. Such evocation of the physically absent male ensures that the woman player remains foremost a spectacle rather than a thinking or feeling subject; it is her emotion that is represented, but it is for the absent lover

^{xix} Josuah Sylvester's translation of Guillaume Du Bartas' *Divine Week* contains a description of recreational use of lute or virginals to accompany, '[w]hen as my weary spirits som relaxation aske ... Some Psalme or holy Song, unto the heav'nly King.' (Sylvester *Divine Weekes* 320 ['A Paradox' 1137ff.]).

^{xx} Nicholas Breton prefaces his poem 'Amyd my ioyes' with a little narrative tag: 'The same man beeing desired the next day following, to singe some prety song to the Virginalles, by a Gentlewoman that he made no small account of: was faine, Extempore, to endite, and sing as followeth.'

and the onlooking reader. Edmund Spenser sends his 'unhappy verse' to a beloved whom he imagines

lying restlesse in heavy bedde, or else
 Sitting so cheerelesse at the cheerfull boorde, or else
 Playing alone careless on hir heavenlie Virginals.
 ... If at hir Virginals, tell hir, I can heare no mirth.
 Asked why? say: ...
 that lamenting Love marreth the Musically.⁵³

In a collection of versified anecdotes, Samuel Rowlands describes the plight of a debtor's wife, who has to lie low for fear of the bailiffs: 'And she doth on her Virginals complaine, / I waile in woe, my Knight doth plunge in paine.'⁵⁴ Fair Annie, in an old Scottish ballad, plays her virginals on the wedding-night of the man to whom she has borne seven illegitimate sons. He has abandoned her for a richer bride, and she is left to serve at the wedding banquet.

Whan dinner was past, and supper was by,
 And a' were boun for bed,
 Fair Annie and her seven sons
 In a puir bye-chamber war laid.
 Fair Annie took out her virginals,
 And sadly did she play.^{xxi}

Another example of sad and entirely private music-making (with only Emilia as audience) is Desdemona's 'Willow' song, which centres wholly on 'Oh, these men, these men!'⁵⁵

Admirable female reticence in the face of a real or imaginary male listener combines with manly dignity and aristocratic excellence in the exemplary musical practice that formed part of Queen Elizabeth's construction of herself. In 1550, Roger Ascham had reported on the young princess: 'Musica ut peritissima, sic ea non admodum delectata',⁵⁶ 'in music she is very skilful but does not greatly delight',^{xxii} and the famous episode in the memoirs of the Scottish ambassador James Melville confirms this early estimate. Elizabeth was curious about the musical skill of Mary, Queen of Scots ('She asked if she played well. I said, reasonably for a queen.'^{xxiii}), but in order to have Melville praise her own playing without 'abandonyng gravitie', Elizabeth staged being overheard without being seen:

^{xxi} Anon. 'Fair Annie' 127ff. The bride is reminded of her sister when she overhears this song, and although her husband tries to distract her, the women finally talk to each other and find out that they are indeed royal sisters; the bride decides to return home and leave six of her seven 'ships of gold' to Annie for the bringing-up of her children.

^{xxii} The translations given in Ascham's *Whole Works* ('She is as skilled in music as she is delighted by it') as well as *The Dictionary of National Biography* ('she delighted in music' in the entry for Roger Ascham) distort the meaning.

^{xxiii} Melville *Memoirs* 96. The original Scottish is quoted in Kenyon 1949:23f.: 'Sche sperit gene plaid weill. I said, reasonably for a Quen.' etc.

The same day ... my lord of Huntsdean drew me up to a quiet gallery ... where I might hear the Queen play upon the Virginals ... seeing her back was towards the door, I entered ... and stood a pretty space, hearing her play excellently well; but she left off immediately, so soon as she turned her about and saw me, and came forward, seeming to strike me with her hand alleging, she used not to play before men, but when she was solitary, to shun melancholy.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, of course, Melville 'felt obliged to give her the praise'. A Latin poem by Richard Mulcaster also exalts Elizabeth who is not satisfied to hear the result of others' hard work, but makes excellent vocal and instrumental music herself: 'Nec contenta graves aliorum audire labores / Ipsa etiam egregie voce manaque canit.'⁵⁸

As time passed, such implications were lost. A translation of 1766 introduces the anachronistic term 'artist': 'Nor hears she only other's labored lays, / But, artist-like herself both sings and plays.'⁵⁹ A historicizing poem from 1816 attributes the flirtatiousness of its own age to Melville, making him suggest his own punishment for eavesdropping:

If you would more than cruel be,
Deth must not be devis'd for me;
But take my ears' quick sense away,
When you, grate queene, shall singe and playe.⁶⁰

And finally, an early Victorian comment, which imagines an analogous contemporary scene with horror, illustrates how unladylike reprehensible musical seduction had again become:

Nay, the Virgin Queen herself did not conceive that an exhibition of some of the frightful difficulties pricked down for her in her 'Virginal boke' was a lure unworthy to be thrown out for an ambassador whose suffrage she wished to seduce! What would the English people now say, were they reduced to hear of their Sovereign Lady thundering [308] through Thalberg's fantasia on 'Mosé' or Weber's 'Concert Stuck' [sic], to extort from an 'extraordinary' the palm of surpassing any brother or sister monarch in octave passages, and melodies syllabically articulated with the thumb!⁶¹

The masculine position of head of state required both Elizabeth and Victoria to be a musical connoisseur rather than a performer, but on the other hand, their femininity is vindicated by the implication that they *could* perform well.

2. The use of music: Bartering brides

*Sweet was musig
sweeter is the layde.*
ANONYMOUS

Performance was indeed demanded from the overwhelming majority of Elizabeth's

prosperous female subjects as part of a syllabus that was to turn them into attractive prospective wives. In a quarrel over 'placed out' daughters in the 1550s, the guardians maintained that their pupils 'are broughte uppe in writinge, readinge, sewinge, both white worke and blacke worke, and playenge of the lute and virginals, as yonge gentlewomen and maydes of their ages are accustomed'.⁶² Margaret Cavendish's *Contract* tells the story of a carefully brought-up girl who is taken to additional lectures and lessons 'once or twice a day, after her exercise of Dancing and Musick was done',⁶³ and in *The Gull's Horn-book*, Thomas Dekker cites as the goals of female education 'to read and write; to play upon the virginals, lute and cittern; and to read prick-song ... [61] *at first sight*'.⁶⁴ Music was also an enduringly popular metaphor for matrimonial harmony.^{xxiv} Couples are compared to 'two musicall instruments rightly fitted, that doe make a most pleasant and sweet harmonie in a well tuned consort',⁶⁵ and love is called 'the marriage vertue, which singes Musicke to their whole life'.⁶⁶

But these are not descriptions of actual performances of spouses; what is represented regularly are preparations for courtship. A passage from William Browne's *Pastorals* describes the practising of a young girl:

As when a maid taught from her mother's wing
To tune her voyce unto a silver string,
When she should run, she rests; rests when should run,
And ends her lesson, having now begun;
Now misseth she her stop, then in her song,
And doing of her best still she is wrong;
Begins againe and yet againe strikes false
Then in a chafe forsakes her virginals;
And yet within an hour she tries a-new
That with her dayly paines (art's chiefest due)
She gaines that charming skill.

The hope is that 'a time will be / When merit shall be linkt with industry'.⁶⁷ Of course, genuine and lasting musical 'merit' was not expected. Robert Burton noted that

our young women and wives, they that being maids tooke so much paines to sing, play, and dance, with such cost and charge to their parents, to get those gracefull qualities, now being married will scarce touch an instrument, they care not for it.^{xxv}

Such falling-off, hinting at the highly temporary purpose of musical accomplishment, is a

^{xxiv} The attention afforded to contrary examples is also significant, as when Nicholas Wotton reporting on Anne of Cleves noted that German ladies thought it 'an occasion of lightnesse that great ladies ... should have enye knowledge of musike.' (q. Boyd 1940:18).

^{xxv} Burton *Melancholy* III:ii:III:i:187f. A survey of Tudor diaries mentions as female leisure activities needle-work, reading and visiting, but not music (Mendelsohn 1985:190).

topos that would recur for three centuries. The epilogue to Barten Holyday's allegory *Technogamia* also implies the incompatibility of musical ideals and real marriage. Meek and ingenuous 'Musica' is married off to 'Melancholico' because he needs her –

But I forget one message; Fate of life!
 Poor *Melancholico* has lost his wife.
 For whilst within, he on the Honours tended,
 Pure Musike with the Artes to Heau'n ascended.⁶⁸

As if in recognition of the elusive nature of such a celestial (though contaminated) thing as music, hardly any wives make music for or with their husbands in Elizabethan literature. Marriage, the ideal locus of musical metaphor, is not a setting of musical representation.

The keyboard skill of nubile girls, on the other hand, appears regularly in literary texts that describe the pull it exerts by straightforward erotic appeal and through its function as a signifier of an expensive education and hence family wealth. The latter could support or substitute the former, as in John Reynold's moral tales, where a young woman is described as ill-complexioned, dwarfish^{xxvi} and 'exceedingly crooke-back'd';

onely the endowments of her minde most richly recompenced ... for the defects of her body: for she had an actiue and nimble wit, a sweet and sugred tongue, a rich Memory, and a powerfull and happy Iudgement, and was indeed an excellent Dauncer, and Singer, and withall a most perfect and exquisite Musician.⁶⁹

In fact, this lavishly educated young lady is 'an exceeding rich match'. In Thomas Heywood's tragedy *A Woman Kilde with kinnesse*, the country squire John Frankford is congratulated on his wife's education that 'might become the Daughter of a Prince':

Her owne tongue speakes all tongues, and her owne hand
 Can teach all strings [of her viol] to speake in their best grace.
 From the shrill treble, to the hoarsest base.⁷⁰

An insufficient command of such skills denotes, inversely, poverty – or pretentious vulgarity attempting to mask a lack of means and culture. In Wye Saltonstall's reading primer *Picturae loquentes* this sounds as follows: 'If her father thrive on his farme, the poore neighbours put the mastership upon him, and if she learne to play on Virginalls, 'tis thought a Courtlike breeding.'⁷¹ Shackerley Marmion's comedy *A Fine Companion* derides the labours of a certain Lackwit who hopes to be thought a gentleman:

^{xxvi} Even female fairground freaks could boast of accomplishments. John Evelyn mentions a 28-year-old 'hairy maid' at a freak show, married and 'for the rest very well shaped, plaied well on the Harpsichord &c.' (Evelyn *Diary* III:198; 15-09-1657), and a comedy of 1639 describes, along with a 'hairy wench' and a camel, a marvel as 'She that washes / Threads needles, writes, dresses her children, playes / Oth' Virginalls with her feet.' (Mayne *Citye Match* III:i:21).

What! He may turne stinkard and live in the Country with rootes and bacon ... He may be stil'd a civill Gentleman, ten sphaeres below a foole: He may marry a Knights daughter, a creature out of fashion, that has ... no manner of courtship / but two or three dances as old as Mounsier, and can play a few Lessons on the Virginals that she has learnt of her Grandam; besides she is simple, and dull in her dalliance.⁷²

Thomas Middleton's *Chast mayd in Cheape-side* opens with a mother hectoring her daughter in front of their shop:

Maudline. Haue you playd ouer all your old Lessons o'the / Virginals?

Moll. Yes.

Maudl. Yes, you are a dull Mayd alate, / me thinkes you had need haue somewhat to / quicken your Greene Sicknesse, doe you weepe? A Husband. ... I hold my life you haue forgot your Dauncing: When / was the Dauncer with you? [2]

Moll. The last weeke.⁷³

This eager mother seems to have quite exhausted her monosyllabic girl with the occupations that should find her a husband. Virgins, in short, (though not the Virgin Queen) play the virginals^{xxvii} in order to get a husband.

Two Shakespearian characters exemplify mutually exclusive uses of female accomplishments. Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing* demands of a future wife, that she have money, be 'of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it pleases God'.⁷⁴ Othello, in a much more serious mood, lists more domestic duties:

Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damn'd tonight, for she shall not live.... Hang her, I do but say what she is. So delicate with her needle! an admirable musician! O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear.⁷⁵

The bachelor Benedick wants an equal: a verbal sparring partner and a brilliant performer, while Othello, already married, appreciates the soothing effects of music. Female skill should be displayed charmingly enough to advance courting, but not draw attention to itself: Castiglione demands that a lady should be 'a sight in letters, in musike, in drawinge or peintage, and skilfull in daunsinge and in devising sportes and pastimes',⁷⁶ but also admonishes her to avoid 'in ... playenge upon instrumentes those hard and often divisions^{xxviii} that declare more cunning then sweetenes', nor to perform 'too swift and violent trickes' 'in daunsynge'.⁷⁷

The dilemma between the opposite potentials of appropriate female 'sweetness', and

^{xxvii} Although the term probably derives from the Latin *virga* for 'stick' and not *virgo*, many dictionaries from John Minshen's *Ductor in Linguas* of 1617 onwards perpetrate the folk etymology that the virginal is, as Dr. Johnson's Dictionary has it, 'so called, because commonly used by young ladies.'

^{xxviii} Divisions are virtuosic sets of variations, a popular Elizabethan musical genre.

'cunning' proficiency is characteristic of the cultural practice of female performance. Great care was required to 'separate the recommendation that women practice the art of music from any implication that they should provoke untoward affections in their enchanted listeners',⁷⁸ – while they were attempting to provoke desirable affection in a single suitable listener. Thomas Salter, whose reservations about male performance have been cited above (cf. p. 21), wishes girls to refrain from music completely:

[M]usic ought so much the more to be regarded, by how much the danger is greater, and less apparent [... for] under the shadowe of vertue ... it beareth a swete baite, to a sure and sharpe euill.⁷⁹

Music is a sweet bait to matrimony as well as to illegitimate connections; the virgin who is displayed as an erotic bait is bound to lose her virginity, whether as bride or seducer's victim. The knowledge that the musical metaphors of the virtuous marriage discourse are bound to become flesh by the wedding night underpins almost all literary representations of young women's virginal playing, with their not only female, but unmistakably erotic, and often illicit connotations.^{xxix}

*She met him in an arbor:
What did she there, coz? play o' th' virginals?*
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

In Lewis Wager's morality *The life and repentaunce of Mary Magdalene*, the heroine (before repenting) plays virginals, recorder and regal (a portable reed organ) at the request of the allegorical characters 'Infidelitie' and 'Concupiscence'.⁸⁰ In John Gough's tragicomedy *Strange Discovery*, a secretly kept mistress is briefly characterized as 'one Arsinoe whom I think you know, she plays well on the virginals / with her he lies every night.'⁸¹ When asked 'will you teach me' a lesson on the virginals, Arsinoe refuses to be trifled with; 'playing the virginals' clearly was a recognized double-entendre.^{xxx} The jealous Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* coins a suggestive tactile verb for his wife and her suspected lover: 'But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers, / As now they are Still virginaling / Upon his palm?'⁸² In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the allusion is even coarser:

Palamon. She met him in an arbor:
What did she there, coz? play o' th' virginals?

^{xxix} Ben Jonson's joke on the fact that musical instruments formed part of barber's shops (to amuse the waiting clients) is not overtly sexual but does suggest availability: 'I can compare him to nothing more happily, then a Barbers virginals; vor every one may play vpon him.' (Jonson *Every Man in His Humor* II:iii:161).

^{xxx} Cf. Ernest Closson on the harpsichord: 'D'une fille qui menait secrètement une amourette, on disait qu'elle "jouait du manicorde".' (Closson 1944:20f.). Louis Pagnerre mentions sobriquets like 'clavecin sympathique, clavecin angélique, ... clavecin d'amour'. (Pagnerre *Mauvaise influence* 24).

Arcite. Something she did, sir. Made her groan a month for't
Or two, or three, or ten.⁸³

Still cruder puns play on the word for the sticks inside the instrument that carry the goose-quills plucking the strings. These bits of wood are called 'jacks', and their conspicuous bobbing added the denotation 'erect penis' and, metonymically, vulgar men, which became the basis of innumerable jokes along the lines of: 'This was her schoolmaister / and taught her to play upon the virginals, and still his jacks leapt^{xxxii} up, up⁸⁴ or: '[S]he's like a paire of virginalls, always with lackes at her taile.'^{xxxii} A similar pun in Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* has a city goldsmith shoing his daughter out of the way so that she shouldn't overhear a conversation between him and his servant 'Shortyard' (a sexual pun): 'O my sweet Shortyard! – Daughter, get you up to your virginals.'^{xxxiii} The contrast between the subservience of a well-educated daughter and the crude innuendo is striking; the 'princess of delight' and the 'delight of princes' now simply panders to the concrete pleasure of any Tom, Dick and – Jack and their yards.^{xxxiv}

All these passages evoke tactile pleasures rather than seductive *sounds*. What is exciting is the complicated tinkling, the touching, the clattering of the jacks (a common simile for chattering teeth, as in this conversation between a barber-dentist and his victim: 'Pet. Out rascall, what hast / thou done? all my nether teeth are loose, / and wag like the keyes of a paire of Virginals.'⁸⁵) and the tickly scurrying of white fingers over what used to be dark keys, the particular appeal that echoes in the Italian word for brilliant keyboard pieces: *toccata*.^{xxxv} If the frequent privileging of sight focuses attention on the erotic attractions of the objectified woman, mentioning touch subjects her even more directly and takes the attention of reader and inscribed listener even further away from sound, although it is not the touch of the lustful

^{xxxii} 'Leaping' was in itself a recognized indecency, cf. Prince Hal's term 'leaping-houses' for brothels in *Henry IV*, I:ii:8.

^{xxxiii} Dekker *Honest Whore II* Part II, I:i:2141 (fol. H4 r). Cf. also the following exchange about a lady of dubious virtue: 'Kni: Shees wondrous musicall too. / Fle: Verie true, she euerie day sings *lohn for the King*, and / at *Vp tails all*, shees perfect.' (Sharpham *Fleire* III:i:150).

Cf. also: 'Mi, Captaine, with all my heart; haue I tickled my / Ladies Fiddle well? / Bal. Oh but your sticke wants Rozen to make the strings / sound clearly: no, this double Virginall, being cunningly / touch'd, another manner of lacke leaps up then is now in / [175] mine eye.' (Dekker and Rowley *Noble Souldier* 174f.

^{xxxiii} Middleton *Michaelmas* [II:iii] p.102. Gail Kern Paster notes that virginals (with their detachable legs) could be played on the lap and adds: 'Sexual suggestiveness can rarely be ruled out in references to the virginals' (note 80 p. 102).

^{xxxiv} These associations give an extra edge to John Earle's satire of 'A Shee Precise Hypocrit', a Puritan lady who disapproves of instrumental music in church and therefore does not want her daughter 'to learne on the Virginalls because of their affinity with the Organs' (Earle *Microcosmographie* 30).

^{xxxv} Richard Mulcaster points out that instrumental music is useful 'in forme of exercise to get the use of our small ioyntes, before they be knitte, to have them the nimbler.' (Mulcaster *Positions* 39).

man, but the imagined contact between woman and instrument that excites him. Tactility is being watched and daydreamed about, maintaining the controlling distance which the sense of sight, the gaze of the listener, allows. The 'digital scramble', as Roland Barthes calls it,⁸⁶ is an erotic topos, but the focus on fingers allows texts to preserve a minimum (or pretence) of decorum and respect for the player while they represent the sensual pleasures of a listener to music. A male character in William Davenant's tragicomedy *Love and Honour* distances his wishes for a kiss (or more) into the text of a song the words of which will not even be heard:

But Vasco, her fingers, by this good day, I think they are smaller than thy point tags /
And she behaves them on the virginals so prettily, I'd wish no more from heaven, than
once to hear her play 'Fortune my Foe' or 'John kiss me now'.^{xxxvi}

The dedication of the first printed edition of virginal music also brings fingers respectfully into play. The *Parthenia, or the Maidenhead of the first musicke that ever was printed for the virginalls* is dedicated to a royal couple, the Elector Palatine of the Rhine Frederick and the English princess Elizabeth. Since Frederick and Elizabeth were only betrothed at the time, virginity and marriage are given carefully balanced praise^{xxxvii} and the preface offers 'the virgin PARTHENIA to your virgin Highnesses'. Naturally, it is the lady who will play the pieces, and she will play for her husband only, respecting the performance inhibitions incumbent on her class, gender and marital status:⁸⁷ 'If your Grace will vouchsafe to lend your white hands they will arrive with the more pleasure at the princely eares of your great Frederick.'⁸⁸

3. Sonnet 128

The hands which the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's sonnets lends to the virginals are admired with rather less restraint in Sonnet 128. The third sonnet in the 'Dark Lady' sequence displays, very succinctly and richly, certain topoi about women and musical performance that have been outlined above. Criticism, however, has been very dismissive of this poem so far, considering it just carefully enough to accuse it of conventionality^{xxxviii} or superficial cleverness, or disparage it as 'a bauble ... addressed to someone not likely to read it too

^{xxxvi} Davenant *Love and Honour* II:i:106. The decency is further undermined by the fact that the tune of 'Fortune, my Foe' was often used to march a man to the gallows.

^{xxxvii} 'Our lord Jesus who hath honored mariage with his dere presence and first miracle, extraordinarily done at the instance of his mayden mother, aeternally blesse you maydes and maryed.' (Byrd *Parthenia* unpaginated dedication).

^{xxxviii} Samuel Butler comments: 'The sonnet is conventional and does not suggest a writer whose ear was likely to be much confounded by either discord or concord, however wiry.' (Butler 1925:187). Philip Edwards calls 128 'dainty and affected' (Edwards 1968:31) – a derogation of stereotypically feminine qualities echoed by Kenneth Muir's friendlier description 'a tender playful compliment to the Dark Lady's skill as a musician' (Muir 1979:82).

closely'.⁸⁹ This refusal to do an actual close reading may have to do with the confusing fact that the effect of an erotically charged performance in the virginals is here described in a *poem*, a genre which tends to favour the metaphorical discourse of music. In fact, the doubling of 'music' in the first line neatly juxtaposes metaphorical music ('thou, my music') and actual performance ('music play'st'), although the latter, with its obscene and tactile field of associations, belongs predominantly to drama.^{xxxix} Such distracting juxtapositions and mixed metaphors are not due so much to authorial negligence (as has been repeatedly suggested) as to the recognition of the mixed motives and perceptions of male witnesses to female performance, which this dense and knowing text purposefully enacts.

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st
 The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
 Do I envy those jacks that nimbly leap
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand.
 To be so tickled they would change their state
 And situation with those dancing chips,
 O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
 Making dead wood more blessed than living lips:
 Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

A technical detail of harpsichord construction is emblematic of the meaning which confusion may carry in 'When thou, my music'. The erotically charged 'jacks' represent the popular motif of bobbing wooden sticks that 'nimbly leap' up inside the instrument to pluck the strings when the key is pressed down. But they also could be, incorrectly, the keys over which the player's fingers 'walk with gentle gait'.^{xl} The little crux has produced various deprecating comments such as Eric Blom's: 'Shakespeare himself is not free from the demon of inaccuracy that seems to pursue all literary men when they come to deal with musical matters; it is plain that he misuses the word ["jacks"] for "keys"'.⁹⁰ It is not so plain, though. Jacks must be meant since keys cannot leap but are depressed;⁹¹ the problem that fingers are usually on the keys is resolved by the hypothesis that the player is putting her hands inside the instrument, either to loosen jacks which have got stuck or to tune it. The warped sounds which tuning produces

^{xxxix} That is also where one of the rare 'realist' appearances of the lute can be found, Katherine breaking a lute over the pate of her music-master Hortensio. (Shakespeare *Shrew* II:i:142ff.).

^{xl} The rest of the dentist-patient conversation cited above (cf. p. 28) illustrates the difference: 'I cannot / tune these Virginall keys. / Pet. They were the lackes aboue, the / keyes beneath were easie.' (Lyly *Midas* III:ii fol. D).

would be a very elegant way to construe 'gently sway'st / The wiry concord'. But in tuning one hand turns the tuning-pegs which are inside the instrument but not near the jacks, while the other hand repeatedly strikes the key to check the pitch. Only if the 'saucy jacks' are interpreted as keys can the player's fingers walk over them when she is playing. The keys could even caress the player's palm, because sixteenth-century keyboard technique employed the four long fingers almost exclusively so that the palm of the hand did not need cupping to help the thumbs reach the keyboard. But even if keys may be in touch with the exciting 'tender inward' of the hand, they cannot really 'nimble leap', and Stephen Booth's reproach that Shakespeare is belabouring his conceit too hard and is moreover 'thwarted by the facts of harpsichord playing'⁹² seems to have some justification. However, the complexity of the – apparently carelessly handled – metaphorical^{xli} tangle between music, player's body and instrument can also be read as a significant display of fundamental ambiguities about female music-making, part of a double discourse of danger and benefit.

A first metaphorical skein could be termed *identification*: 'thou, my music'. In order to stake a claim on the desired woman, the wish to approach ('finger') her erotically is expressed by turning her into a metaphorical piece of music, to be consumed or produced, or into an instrument, to be manipulated.^{xlii} The idea that an instrument, i.e. a woman, is susceptible to such erotic manipulation runs contrary to such commodification, and so she is not allowed to speak herself of her enjoyment of such caresses. Touch and sight both contribute to the silencing and de-personalization of the woman player, since they are not the senses she intentionally gratifies. Yet, in a double-bind that continues for centuries, the passive 'woman instrument' is held co-responsible for whether the resulting music is 'pestilent' or 'potent unto good':

You are a viol, and your sense the strings;
 Who finger'd to make man his lawful music,
 Would draw heaven down, and all the gods to hearken;
 But being play'd upon before your time,
 Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime.⁹³

Woman holds the potential of heaven or hell in her music, but remains mute apart from it.

^{xli} They occur in conjunction with another typically female instrument in *Titus Andronicus*: 'O had the monster seen those lily hands / tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute / and made the silken strings delight to kiss them!' (II:iv:44-46).

^{xlii} Helen Vendler's term 'synecdoche' for this covers the concentration on body parts, but not the reduction of the woman to a piece of music, and she does not discuss the reverse trope of personification. In her interpretation synecdoche, 'the trope par excellence of reduction', offers in comic rather than tragic or satiric terms. ... a triumphant *jeu d'esprit* on the dangerous subject of sexual infidelity.' (Vendler 1997:454).

This is another revealing allusion to the dilemma of performance in the service of match-making: music is an enhancement of goods on the marriage market, but should not provoke *early* fulfilment of the promised sexual gratification; the woman, identified as an object of art, is to be bartered, but not to feel.

In Sonnet 128, after starting out with the familiar identification trope that relegates the player to a traditional passive role ('thou, my music'), Shakespeare immediately inverts the metaphor, and acknowledges that this woman is not just a passive recipient of someone else's 'fingering,' but may do some powerful fingering of her own. The identification conceit was so familiar that its inversion, to that of a woman 'fingering' a masculinized instrument, is a joke, as in Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*:

You see the subject of her sweet fingers, a viola da gamba, there? Oh, she tickles it so, that she makes it laugh most divinely. I'll tell you a good jest ...: I have wished myself to be that instrument, I think, a thousand times, and not so few, by heaven.⁹⁴

In both cases, however, while the woman gains some apparent power in becoming an active agent rather than a mere instrument of someone else's pleasure, she remains a voiceless provider of music.

Sonnet 128, too, imagines a male instrument being handled by a sensual female, but only a part of the lover (the lips) would like to turn into a part of the instrument, and they would not like to be passively depressed keys, but actively leaping, decidedly virile jacks. The instrument enjoys the caresses of the performer but it is active while being used, and so the supposedly technical jack-key confusion begins to be meaningful. Dead wood vivaciously leaps to meet living fingers, and is envied for that by living lips,^{xliii} dancing chips being tickled by living fingers want to kiss actively, and being dead wood is a more blessed state than being living but frustrated flesh. Even living organisms among themselves get mixed: fingers 'walk' and 'reap harvest', lips 'blush' and 'stand'. All would 'like to change their state^{xliv} and situation',^{xlv} a symbol of the upheavals that unruly passion can bring about. The relatively complex mechanism of a keyboard instrument makes it more apt to be thought of as an active creature, and it does not invite anatomical identification as readily as a string or wind instrument. Still, a virginal *is* a passive object, a machine, and hence ideal as a mixed

^{xliii} Cf. Alexander Brome's 'On a pair of Virginals': 'Death, that ties up the tongues of Man and Beast, ... Gives me a tongue' (1-3). The far more artificial conceit is that a mute tree now sings, having been made into an instrument.

^{xliv} Cf. the acquiescence expressed in the conclusion of Sonnet 39: 'For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings / that then I scorn to change my state with kings.'

^{xlv} I.e. 'location' in space, closer to the erotically charged palm of the woman.

metaphor for the confusion of gender roles which are inherent in the situation of a female performer before a male listener: he is being seduced by her, or is tempted to seduce her; the woman is dangerous and victimized, man-eater and sweetmeat. The very opening of the sonnet doubles the word 'music' in this way: 'thou my music' is woman as man's pleasure and object; but she is, grammatically, the subject of the clause and has her own object 'music' which she plays, that is, uses.

Joel Fineman's magisterial study of the sonnets, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, mentions sonnet 128 only briefly, but provides a helpful framework for dealing with its confusions. Fineman contrasts the crackling, concrete complications of hands-on heterosexual attraction, a highly modern 'desire for what is not admired',⁹⁵ as worked out in Sonnet 128 and the other Dark Lady sonnets, with the idealizing 'specular homogeneity' of the Young Man sonnets, which looks back to the orthodox Renaissance sonnet and further to a world where 'language, like the desire it mirrors, is "fair", "kind" and "true" ... as though this kind of eroticized sameness linking idealizing lover to idealized beloved were the homosexual truth subtending the poetics of admiration from Dante's Beatrice onward.'⁹⁶

The musical companion piece to 128 among the Young Man sonnets, Sonnet 8, bears out this distinction and illuminates 128 in juxtaposition.

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
 Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
 Why lovs't thou that which receiv'st not gladly,
 Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
 If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.
 Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,
 Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,
 Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
 Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee: 'Thou single wilt prove none.'

Although the lexical doubling provides an opening which is superficially similar, the effect of the identification trope is utterly different; here the pervasive imagery of 'unity, sameness, likeness' which, in Joel Fineman's analysis, is typical of the Young Man sonnets,⁹⁷ smothers all the contradictions that trouble 128.

The essential difference is that the addressee of the poem is male and a listener, not a

performer.^{xlvi} The performer is completely elided and thus the poem avoids the disturbing presences of a living woman who is not just a de-eroticized 'happy mother', or a male performer who cannot be a real gentleman. Furthermore, the unspecified instrument (commonly assumed to be a lute) belongs, in sharp contrast with the worldly virginals, firmly to the allegorical discourse as a symbol of cosmic harmony. The cloying insistence on such harmony^{xlvii} is very different from the chaos which female playing triggers in Sonnet 128, 'the uniformly homosexual, the oddly homogeneous and purely patriarchal, composition of a family where "one string is sweet husband to another"'⁹⁸ turning almost claustrophobic, with the 'all-in-one' of father, child and mother evoking the Trinity as well as the Holy Family.

Such comparisons are characteristic of the discourse of ideal married love that permeates the 'Young Man' sonnets: every musical term that is mentioned turns out to be metaphorical. As in Puritan marriage tracts, music is purged of its real, flesh-and-blood (or flesh-and-wire) dangers. 'Concord' is not a physically realistic term for the sound of harpsichord tuning (as it is in No. 128, the only instance of literal use of this term in Shakespeare's work), but a rather hackneyed metaphor,^{xlviii} 'a truism of *musica speculativa*'.⁹⁹ In the same idealistic-allegoric vein, strings are being plucked neither by fingers nor by jacks, but 'sing', transmitting a moral message, and they are finally grouped into a family picture fit for a Victorian photographer or a yoghurt commercial: 'sire, child and happy mother'. The contrast to the single members and harpsichord parts that are cavorting about in a near-surrealist way in Sonnet 128 could hardly be greater. There Fineman's claim that 'Shakespeare in his sonnets invents the poetics of heterosexuality' is borne out by the 'insufficiency' and 'unkindness' by which 'the lady introduces a fundamental heterogeneity into the tradition of erotic homogeneity. She intrudes upon and interrupts the poet's homosexual ideal.'^{xlix}

^{xlvi} The traditional gender assignation in the Sonnets has been questioned. One of the more radical voices is Heather Dubrow, who spots 'most unsettling possibilities' in the hypothesis that 128 is addressed to the youth, which would make the poem 'more openly erotic than those that practitioners of gay and lesbian criticism and queer theory have sedulously examined'. (Dubrow 1999:126). However, Dubrow's 'intriguing revisionist reading[s]' (126) remain largely conjectural, with the mere negative evidence of the missing gendered pronouns and the absence of allusions to darkness. The background evidence discussed here renders the idea of Sonnet 128 being a highly explicit homosexual poem rather improbable – unless, of course, it is taken to make Shakespeare's use of conventional female connotations to write about homosexuality even more outrageously (and admirably) transgressive. Dubrow, however, does not argue in this way, but attempts to support her argument by reference to sources that confirm contemporary male practice: 'Though women often played the virginal, sixteenth-century allusions to that instrument testify that men did so as well.' (126).

^{xlvii} Cf. also the phonetic echoes (sweets-sweets-sweetly-sweet, joy-joy, sing-song-sings-single).

^{xlviii} Cf., for instance, Cecropia's memories of a happy marriage in *Arcadia*: '[I]s a solitary life as good as this? then can one string make as good musicke as a consort: then can one colour set forth a beautie.' (Sidney *Arcadia* III:333).

^{xlix} Fineman 1986:18. For a discussion of Elizabethan lute symbolism cf. Wells 1994:81-166.

The happy family of lute strings is an example of a rhetorical figure that complements what I have called identification: *personification* turns music, musical instruments or their parts into metaphorical persons.

Personification contributes to the excessive unity of Sonnet 8 as well as to the complexity of the tangles of heterosexual desire in Sonnet 128. There the erotic scenario of music-making has not just two lovers enjoying music and each other, but three partners who alternate roles. The emotions of the male protagonist spill over onto the virginal which expresses, but also blushes at, his contradictory and indiscreet desires: he would like to jump at her, or have his 'jack' leap for her, but also let her tickle him, and 'walk all over him' like the boots of the lady in the Country song. Man and woman seduce and are seduced, and the personified, enamoured instrument is the man's adoring and aggressive accomplice as well as the luckier rival (s) in the form of the 'saucy' jacks behind whose impertinent eagerness the speaker can hide.ⁱ The structure of the virginals makes the personification of instrument as a lover somewhat difficult, but Shakespeare uses the complexity of the virginal 'machine' very effectively to obscure the difference between passive keys and active jacks; in line 10 he uses the indeterminate 'chips' (a nonce-use in the canon) for the little males.ⁱⁱ

The poem is a peculiar example of the love triangles Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes in *Between Men*:¹⁰⁰ two males wooing the same woman develop a bond that is stronger than the one with the object of their desire, and one rival (here the speaker) may exploit the other (the jacks) in order to gain access to the desired woman. The *personified* 'dancing chips' are fortunate enough for the speaker to wish to become them ('change place and station with') in a rather strange singular-to-plural *identification*, and in the final couplet the lover and his wooden rivals even come to a kind of truce: 'give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss', proposing to share the woman out between the lads!ⁱⁱⁱ The final tableau has her in a posture of almost masochistic erotic disponibility and helplessness: the hands, fixed to the keyboard, are being 'tickled' from below by the 'jacks',ⁱⁱⁱⁱ and the mouth is being kissed, probably from

ⁱ Stephen Booth in discussing Sonnet 128 also blames a personified 'instrument physically uncooperative with [Shakespeare's] conceit' (Booth 1977/1978:438). William Cornish, a courtier of Henry VIII, had advised against this in 1568: 'Any Instrumet mystunyd shall hurt a trew soğ / Yet blame not the claricord the wrester doth wroğ.' (Cornish 'Treatise' n.p.).

ⁱⁱ This is not, which may hint at complexity, the only nonce-occurrence in the canon. *Wiry* is another, as are the plural *unions*, the figurative use of *my music* and the literal use of *concord*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Helen Vendler's different account: 'The distribution of benefits is announced ... with a happiness which is delighted that all concerned can be satisfied at once.' (Vendler 1997:456).

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The line could also be construed as asking for manual stimulation of the penis (es): 'Give (i.e. devote to) them thy fingers; give me thy lips to kiss.'

above, by the man who no longer needs to envy them.^{liv} The siren's disruptively attractive instrument has turned against her, immobilizing her, for erotic consumption, and her singing is stopped by a kiss, so that she may turn into what Coriolanus called his wife: 'my gracious silence'. The musician, the purveyor of sound, has no voice; her subjectivity is elided from an account of her listener's perceptions and fantasies.

Having come this far, I think it is fair to say that the crisscross of metaphorical relations, the strange interactions of real and metaphorical body parts, the technical fuzziness and the active-passive confusion in Sonnet 128 reflect more than 'un-Shakespearian' muddled thinking. They all relate to fundamental ambiguities about female sexuality which are here encoded in the image of keyboard music-making.^{lv} A further perspective on real-life musical performance is, however, not made explicit in Sonnet 128:

When physical passion and not transcendent spirituality becomes the lover's goal, music ... leads ... to the deceptive harmony of death or the discord of complete spiritual destruction... . Physically sounding music, ... like the physical aspect of earthly love, sang vainly and emptily of a substantive reward that remained forever out of reach.¹⁰¹

Sonnet 128 illustrates only the pleasant (if confusing) aspects of carnal passion fired by music; spiritual references are absent except for the flippant 'blessed' in line 2 and 12, and the musical instrument upon the mechanism of which the whole poem turns, is a recognized code for crudity. The profundity of the following sonnet, 'Th'expense of Spirit', which is eloquent and explicit on the vanity of earthly love ('before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream') has been used as a reproof to its more light-heartedly erotic, 'superficial' neighbour.^{lvi} However, since Sonnet 129 expounds the spiritual dangers of passion that stays at the surface, Sonnet 128 has a place close to it because it demonstrates what this passion can look and feel like at its apparently harmless outset.^{lvii} 'When thou, my music' represents the

^{liv} A. L. Rowse is unsuspecting: 'What a pretty picture this conjures up of the poet standing politely, but hopefully, beside the lady at the virginals'. (Rowse 1977:267).

^{lv} Joel Fineman is the only critic to have hinted at such horizons: 'The poems to the lady characteristically display a poetics of silent, visual similitude with a poetics of verbal disjunction (for example, sonnet 128, usually much maligned for 'mixing its metaphors', where the 'wiry concord' of music – which, as in 'my mistress' eyes', is the auditory opposite of speech – is disjunctively collated with the poet's 'poor lips'). (Fineman 1986:183).

^{lvi} Philip Edwards attributes what little worth he recognizes in 128 to the vicinity of 129: '[Number 128] seems to me the very necessary introduction of the purely conventional wooing-poem. The humble lover watches his mistress at her music, envies the keys which touch her hand and pleads for the gratification of a kiss. To explode this world of sighing poetry-love, there follows the great sonnet of lust [... which] gains extra depth from its position, rudely canceling out the proposition of a weak preceding sonnet.' (Edwards 1968:22 and 27).

^{lvii} Katharine Wilson considers 129 as evidence for the obscene significance of the jacks: '[A]ny doubt ... should be resolved by the sonnet that follows Sonnet 128 already hints at the looseness of the lady's morality in preparation for 129.' (Wilson 1974:93).

confused pleasure of people who are not aware of the darker side of love that music could lead to, while its 'contagious and pestilent' effects are depicted in 129 which bemoans those who do not 'know well / To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell'.¹⁰²

II. 'Musick in the House, Musick in the Heart, and Musick also in Heaven': The harpsichord

Once the virginal had been superseded by the larger wing-shaped harpsichords with their more varied and brilliant sonoric possibilities, its sex appeal quickly faded: in 1710 Richard Steele called it 'that ancient serious Matron-like instrument'!^{lviii} A woman defends another's virtue in Thomas Southerne's comedy *The Maid's Last Prayer* by saying: 'I believe her as Virtuous as my self; but then she Sings, and Plays upon the Virginals so sweetly, and [200] Dances Country Dances.' The doubtful rejoinder 'Nay, doubtless she has all her motions to a miracle'¹⁰³ reveals that playing the virginals had become, within seventy years, a 'motion', genuine or not, that could also signify domestic virtue. Playing the currently fashionable keyboard instrument continued to be an essential female accomplishment^{lix} and an ever more indispensable attribute of literary heroines, but the cultural and emotional connotations loosen significantly. A wide range of preoccupations and associations that surround the basic musical concerns of gender, education and seduction is documented by comparatively few texts; the harpsichord did not haunt the contemporary imagination as obsessively as the pianoforte was to do, and less predictably than the virginal did. Domestic music (though not the now outmoded virginal) retains its sensual potential (though less crudely expressed), but is also integrated into the newly available literary topics of sentimental love, matrimonial and familial affection – or social tedium, witness Samuel Pepys' diary: 'Mr. Temple's wife after dinner fell to play on the harpsicon, till she tired everybody, that I left the house without taking leave, and no creature left standing by her to hear her.'^{lx}

^{lviii} Steele *Tatler* II:clvii:380, 11-04-1710. In a comedy of 1691, two young sisters complain about their inadequate education from an 'ignorant, illiterate hopping Puppy' of a dancing-master, an old and hoarse singing teacher, and a music-master who comes 'to teach one to twinkle out *Lilly burlero* upon an old pair of Virginals, that sound worse than a Tinkers'. (Shadwell *Scowrers* II:i:10).

^{lix} Lady Ann Fanshawe's 1670 memoir, for instance describes her own education 'with all the advantages that time afforded, both for working all sorts of fine works with my needle, and learning French, singing, lute, the virginals and dancing.' (Fanshawe *Memoirs* 110); cf. also Flecknoe *Enigmatical Characters*.

^{lx} Pepys *Diary* VII:364, 09-11-1666. Cf. also IV:242, 23-07-1663: '[I met] a short, ugly, red-haired slut that plays upon the virginals and sings, but after such a country manner, I was weary of it but could not but commend it.'

1. 'Musick not worth a gentleman's labor'

*Music is not the labour, principal attention,
or great business of a people.*
THE LONDON MAGAZINE

The way in which (gentle-) manhood was constructed in matters musical is typical of the comparatively loose seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century discourse: a few tendencies are discernible, but a wide variety of attitudes and practices are described. One of the former is the growing disapproval of instrumental practice for men. Around 1650, music was no longer taken for granted as a school subject¹⁰⁴ and by the end of the century, '[p]roud disavowal of musical aptitude by the aristocratic male [became] pronounced'.¹⁰⁵ In 1749 that notorious music-hater, the Earl of Chesterfield, wrote to his son:

Few things would mortify me more, than to see you bearing a part in a concert [... since playing an instrument] puts a gentleman in a very frivolous, contemptible light; brings him into a great deal of bad company; and takes up a great deal of time, which might be much better employed.^{lxi}

That passage summarizes the preoccupations with loss of 'gravitie' and time, which had remained central beyond the mid-seventeenth century. Obadiah Walker's 300-page *On Education* of 1673 dismisses music in two sentences, adding the traditional caution about social status:

Musick I think not worth a Gentlemans labor, requiring much industry and time to learn, and little to lose, it. It is used chiefly to please others, who may receive the same *gusto* from a mercenary (to the perfection of which few Gentlemen arrive) at a very easy rate.¹⁰⁶

The Scottish music lover Sir John Clerk of Penicuik 'bestowed a great deal of pains on the Harpsecord',¹⁰⁷ studied music in Leyden on his Grand Tour and had daily lessons from Pasquini and Corelli in Rome. Time was obviously no consideration, but he worried that he had made 'perhaps, more advance [in music] than became an [English] gentleman'.¹⁰⁸ Hearing the Hapsburg Emperor play the harpsichord in public in 1697 so shocked him 'that it had like to have spoiled all my inclination to performing my self'.¹⁰⁹

Samuel Richardson, in one of his *Familiar Letters* entitled 'Against too great a Love of Singing and Music', mentions dangers of mental enervation and superficiality, and defines the class issue now completely in financial terms:

^{lxi} Chesterfield *Letters* I:170, 19-04-1749. John Locke speaks of 'odd company' and mentions that he has never heard 'Excellency in *Musick*' commended in any man (Locke 'Thoughts' 311).

[T]hese pleasures of *sound* may take you off from the more desirable ones of *sense*, and make your delights stop at the *ear*, which should go deeper, and be placed in the *understanding*. ... what glory is it to a gentleman, if he were even a fine performer, that he can strike a string, touch a key, or sing a song, with the grace and command of a *hired musician*?¹¹⁰

All that protesting shows of course that men did continue to devote time to music, albeit often guardedly and guiltily. Advice literature throughout the period voices reservations about male music-making, but cannot get away from the topic. The mid-eighteenth century saw a large-scale diffusion of musical knowledge¹¹¹ and a veritable music craze in Scotland,¹¹² and many men testify to a love for music that they tried to keep within bounds, curtailing the time they devoted to it, playing only in the most intimate situations or concentrating on theory instead. It was 'rather a Taste than a Skill in these Amusements, that becomes a Prince or a Man of Quality',^{lxii} and even the Earl of Chesterfield conceded to his son's inclinations: 'If you love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play to you; but I must insist upon you neither piping nor fiddling yourself.'¹¹³ Thomas Sheridan, while arguing that a gentleman 'can not possibly derive any benefit from [music], but may find very ill consequences by being a performer',¹¹⁴ concedes that 'such as have a genius' for musical *theory* might benefit from practising an easy instrument which could be learnt in a short time.

*Is any man allow'd common Sense
that is not ravish'd with Musick?
COLLEY CIBBER*

A connoisseur's discrimination in musical matters, if not exaggerated into enthusiasm, could even be a status symbol, particularly convenient to certain circles because cheaper to acquire or easier to feign than skill in other fields. When dancing, fencing and riding prove too expensive, a social upstart in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* decides to focus on music: 'I imagined I could easily acquire the Reputation of it; for I had some of my School-fellows pretend to Knowledge in Operas, without being able to sing or play on the Fiddle'.¹¹⁵ Joseph Andrews himself, on first coming to London, lives fashionably: 'He applied most of his leisure Hours to Music, in which he greatly improved himself; and became so perfect a Connoisseur in that Art, that he led the Opinion of all the other Footmen at the Opera.'¹¹⁶

^{lxii} Ramsay *Plan* 15. Historicizing romances dispense with such caution, making their heroes courtiers in the old style: '*Fortunatus* ... caused [his twin sons] to be brought up in Learning, providing for them the ablest Tutors he could get; as likewise to Fence, lust, play upon Musick, and all other Arts and Sciences that belonged to a compleat Gentleman' (Anon. *Fortunatus* XIX:[54], 51, sig. H2). Cf. also Brathwait *Panthalia* 127: '*Lamachus* ... was ... addicted from his youth to all generous Exercises; as Horsmanship, Artillery, Musick and the like'

Such admissions, negotiations and concessions had become possible and plausible also because of the more commonsensical nature of objections against music. Religious misgivings and the fear of musical influence on the sexual susceptibility of men were no longer pressing. John Erskine Mar, one of many fathers to warn a son away from playing an instrument, considers that there couldn't be 'a more agreeable, innocent amusement'¹¹⁷ and his term 'bewitching' is a mere metaphor which does not refer to demonic properties. Eliza Haywood's *Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* furnishes a typical example of such lightly borne musical ravishment. Young Jemmy is on emotional trial before marrying his Jenny, and has to resist various temptations, among them the handsome (if too short), witty and assured Miss Chit, who always performs without prevarication: 'her harpsichord is never out of tune, nor her voice disconcerted with a cold'.¹¹⁸ Her voice 'seem'd the very soul of harmony, and when accompanied by her harpsichord, which she finely touch'd, the mellifluous sounds had power to calm the most raging passions of the mind'.¹¹⁹ Jemmy appropriately

languished, – he died, – his soul seem'd all absorb'd, – dissolv'd in extacy; – and he not only spoke, but look'd in such a manner as ... might well make her believe she had other charms for him besides those of her voice and skill in music ...¹²⁰

However, this is mere codified behaviour. The morning after, Jemmy comments: 'to deal sincerely, I like miss Chit as a musician, but shall never think of her as a woman'.¹²¹

*Nothing is more dangerous than music,
and nothing incapacitates a Man more for Business.*
ANDREW RAMSAY

Music was no longer a potential guide to hell, but rather a business impediment, as when Samuel Pepys worried about 'being too much taken by musique, for fear of returning to my old dotage thereon and so neglect my business',¹²² or a pardonable youthful folly. Daniel Defoe could half-proudly confess in his project outline for an English music academy: 'I have been a Lover of the Science from my Infancy, and in my younger Days was accounted no despicable Performer on the Viol and Lute, then much in Vogue'.¹²³

Just as objections were omnipresent, but no longer existential, secondary considerations in favour of music as a hobby were much in fashion. Defoe praises its relaxing and soothing powers 'when the more necessary parts of Education are finish'd', and calculates that music 'saves a great deal of Drinking and Debauchery in our Sex. [17...] Our Quality, Gentry, and better sort of Traders must have Diversions; and if those that are commendable be denied, they will take to worse'.¹²⁴ William Darrell's 1704 instructions to

'The Gentleman' adduce similar reasons for music and dancing, which 'embellish Quality, ... give a pretty turn to Breeding', and are apt to save embarrassing conversation gaps or 'relieve a drooping Discourse'.^{lxiii} But they are not 'first-rate Qualifications', for

in Reality they only fit you up for a modish address, and a Female Entertainment. ... Those Embellishments are more *noble* and *rich* that lie in the Brain, than those that sink into the Feet, or *perch* on the Finger's End.¹²⁵

Femininity (as evoked by finger pads), remained associated with music, but could, within limits, even be considered attractive in men, as in the charming actor described in the anonymous prose narrative *Player's Tragedy* of 1693:

[T]here never was a Man better made for success with [the ladies]; for he was Handsom, cou'd Sing, Dance, and Play on the Musick, had a Manly presence, and yet a soft Effeminacy in his face, that cou'd not but render him agreeable¹²⁶

Such descriptions clearly indicate that physical and irretrievable feminization was no longer feared from music.

A further trace of the more pragmatic turn that objections to music had taken is the topos of the ridiculous music-lover. In Charles Shadwell's comedy *The Fair Quaker*, the 'sea-fop' Captain Mizen, 'only fit to seduce [his] brother officers' wives',¹²⁷ boasts of his elegant cabin, which sports carpets and wall-linings, candle-lit mirrors 'and the best pictures of Venus and Adonis; and a forte piano also; on which, and the guittar, I pass my hours at sea'. Another character comments: 'A guittar! ye divinities! I begin to agree ... that the service is in danger, when sea captains thrum the guittar.'¹²⁸ George Sewell uses cheap over-played piano music as a metaphor for the debased emotions of an audience that needs to rediscover, through 'the Power of *Nature*' as exemplified in Addison's tragedy *Cato*, real passion, after it 'us'd most indolent to move / To *Sing-song, Ballad, and Sonata Love*'.¹²⁹ 'Sonata', i.e. the pianoforte, here stands for all that is emotionally shallow and artificial.

Music-mad women were also a popular subject for caricature. George Colman's farce *The Musical Lady* ends with the marriage of honest English (and un-musical) George Mask to music-mad Sophy, an union which is only possible because he pretends to be Italian and as music-crazy as she, who rants: 'Oh – the people here are all downright Goths. ... O ravishing Italy!'¹³⁰ George woos her as 'Masquali': 'I won't shock your ear with the English sound of

^{lxiii} Darrell *Gentleman* 156. It is possibly for such a purpose that Lemuel Gulliver consents to show off his youthful musical skill to the royalty of Brobdingnag: 'A Fancy came into my Head, that I would entertain the King and Queen with an *English Tune* upon [the queen's] Instrument. But this appeared extremely difficult: For, the Spinnet was near sixty Foot long.' (Swift *Gulliver* II:vi:126).

Husband – Take [me] for your *sposo!* – your *caro sposo*.¹³¹ His motivation for courting Sophy despite her annoying fixation amusingly perverts a hackneyed poetical metaphor: 'mistress's lyre is strung with gold'.¹³² After the wedding, she is enlightened and the groom concludes: 'And now, Sophy, do but cheerfully resign this one foible, we shall be the happiest couple in Britain. Now for the moral! Ye, that love to roam / For taste abroad, learn common-sense at home!'¹³³ George trusts in Sophy's ability to relinquish music because most wives give up playing after marriage anyway: '[T]his passion for music is but one of her irregular appetites of virginity: You hardly ever knew a lady so devoted to her harpsichord, but she suffered it to go out of tune after matrimony.'¹³⁴

2. Female accomplishment in life and letters

Accomplishment:
Embellishment, elegance, ornament of mind or body.
SAMUEL JOHNSON

*The declining prestige of music as a masculine pastime
is more than matched by the
rise of music as an accomplishment for women.*
HOWARD IRVING

Music-mad Sophy faces a predicament which did not trouble male enthusiasts: while it was ridiculous for both sexes to care too much about music, and understood that wives wouldn't, girls *had* to play.^{lxiv} The purpose of achieving matrimony was rarely stated but implied by George Mask's (and many others') constatement that playing regularly stopped after marriage. To enjoin girls' cooperation in a pursuit that was potentially embarrassing to men and usefully to girls only for a brief, if vital period of their lives, it is described, for the benefit of women, as everything that is desirable:

[A]s *Musick* has so natural a Tendency to the Passions, the Ladies, as they eminently excel in the Mind, are certainly the best able to distinguish the Beauty of Harmony; and therefore, much admire the so universal Esteem which they have of *Musick*: which, by their constant Pursuits, though it serves them but for Pleasure and Recreation; yet, as it was to that charming Sex [i.e. the Muses] we owe the Invention of so noble and delightful a Science, to them I'll give the Preference; and may they be as much honour'd and revrenc'd by our Sex for their exquisite and refined Knowledge in *Musick*, as constantly admired and adored for their Beauty.¹³⁵

This sounds as if men were simply too crude for music, whereas the ideological truth is that a

^{lxiv} They continued to be limited to the harmonically self-supporting keyboards and plucked string instruments (cittern, gamba), while men played wind and bowed string instruments (cf. Johnson 1972:23).

trivial and demeaning occupation was loaded off on a less privileged social group for the entertainment of the ruling gender. The comparison with beauty confirms that purpose, but this is never admitted; the reasons that are given for the necessity of universal female music-making range from the edifying twaddle quoted above to patronizing pragmatism in the vein of Defoe ('[Music] helps the Ladies off with many an idle Hour, which sometimes might probably be worse employ'd otherwise'¹³⁶) or Henry Home ('[T]he harpsichord ... serves indeed to fill a gap in time, which some parents are at a loss how otherwise to employ'¹³⁷). John Essex proffers a pious variation on that theme, calling music 'an Entertainment without other Views, that preserves them from the Rust of Idleness, that most pernicious Enemy to Virtue'.¹³⁸ Hester Chapone, addressing girls directly and sympathetically in her *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, states that playing 'more for yourself than others' is the most important use of music, since only an inordinate degree of training would make a girl's playing interesting beyond the immediate family circle: 'but with regard to yourself, it is of great consequence to have the power of filling up agreeably those intervals of time, which too often hang heavily on the hands of a woman, if her lot be cast in a retired situation.'^{lxv}

The lack of positive and convincingly stated reasons for female musical practice is paralleled, as with men, by the slightness of the apprehended dangers. The hope expressed in Mary Astell's *Proposal*, which aims at educating 'pious and prudent Ladies', 'that Women may no longer pass for those little useless and impertinent Animals, which the ill conduct of too many has caus'd them to be mistaken for'¹³⁹ like a warning of the display and commodification which musical performance helps to foster, but Astell, too, particularly recommends music as a 'harmless and ingenious' diversion, 'and such as may refresh the Body without enervating the Mind'.¹⁴⁰

Such discussions usually refer to women by an indifferent plural (unless they are voiced in motherly letters of advice), whereas 'The Gentleman' with his musical inclinations is often addressed or mentioned in the more individualized singular. A single item in the *Tatler* seems to raise the issue of talent and individual aptitude in girls as well as boys:

We are Man and Wife, and have a Boy and a Girl: The Lad Seventeen, the Maid Sixteen. We are quarrelling about some Parts of their Education. I Ralph cannot bear

^{lxv} Chapone *Improvement* II:viii:118. Chapone is also one of the few writers who discuss personal talent in girls: 'As to music and drawing, I would only wish you to follow as genius leads: ... I should be sorry to see you neglect [your] talent.' (Chapone *Improvement* II:viii:117). The other is Lady Sarah Pennington: 'Music and Drawing are Accomplishments well worth the trouble of attaining, if your Inclination and Genius lead to either; if not, do not attempt them, for it will be only much Time and great Labour unprofitably thrown away ... if a good Ear, and a native Genius are wanting.' (Pennington *Unfortunate Mother* 25).

that I must pay for the Girl's Learning on the Spinnet, when I know she has no Ear. ... Pray, Sir, inform us, Is it absolutely necessary that ... all in Petticoats [must learn] to touch an Instrument?¹⁴¹

However, this father's letter goes unanswered; the only other passage that addresses the issue occurs four months before:

[It is] thought among the politer Part of Mankind an Imperfection to want a Relish of any of those Things which refine our Lives. This is the Foundation of the Acceptance which Eloquence, Musick, and Poetry make in the World.¹⁴²

Daniel Defoe also gestures towards concern with female individuals, suggesting that women 'should be taught all sorts of Breeding suitable to both their Genius and their Quality'. But while 'Genius' does mean individual talent, 'Quality' is a general social category, and Defoe goes on to remark that a curriculum should comprise 'in particular, Musick and Dancing, which it would be cruelty to bar the Sex of because they are their Darlings',¹⁴³ implying exactly the generic preconception that father Ralph's letter questions. Conduct literature does not regularly address the issue of personal interest or aptitude for music before the 1780s: 'In this country, it is common to teach girls the harpsichord, which shows a pretty hand and a nimble finger, without ever thinking whether they have a genius for music, or even an ear',¹⁴⁴ and truly individual differentiations of musical talent in fiction only appear in the late nineteenth century.

The effort to become musically accomplished continued to determine girls' lives regardless of talent, and its success is always also a yardstick of the attractiveness of literary heroines. Predictable accomplishment lists accompany the entrance of every female protagonist as a shorthand for her general desirability: while financial and family situation may vary within a certain range (or turn out to be better than first expected by some later twist in the plot), the personal attractions of beauty and accomplishments are highly standardized. Katherine Sobba Green, borrowing a term from Julia Kristeva,¹⁴⁵ has described these passages as

a combination of taxonomy and monetary exchange to which I will apply the term blazon, borrowed from French heraldic usage. The blazon ... describes a man or a woman in terms of a normative taxonomy – beauty, fortune, family, education and character. ... Much as women have internalized a male scopoc perspective, so female novelists internalized this form of tropic commodification.¹⁴⁶

John Buncler, who marries and loses seven virtuous and learned wives in the course of Thomas Amory's eccentric novel of the same name, furnishes multiple examples of musically

furthered courtship in diverse circumstances. 'Miss Turner' is

good-humoured, sensible, and discreet ... and was well acquainted with the three noblest branches of polite learning, antiquity, history, and geography. ... She likewise understood musick, and sung, and played well on the small harpsichord ... ¹⁴⁷

Another bride, Eusebia, lives at first in a 'religious house of protestant recluses'^{lxvi} but they, too, practise 'musick and painting for their diversion, and unbend their minds in these delightful arts, for a few hours every day'.^{lxvii}

The normative power of the blazon convention is particularly evident from a detail in *Clarissa*. A silly poem 'To The Author', which is inserted into the third edition, allows the readers to 'view / Thy matchless Maid her godlike tasks pursue' (i.e. visiting the poor or conversing with Dr. Lewen), and continues:

Then to her Ivy-Bow'r she pleas'd retires,
And with light touch the trembling keys inspires;
While wakeful Philomel no more complains,
But, raptur'd, listens to her sweeter strains.¹⁴⁸

That stereotyped image clashes with the text it introduces in several respects. Clarissa does retire regularly 'either to my music or to my closet',¹⁴⁹ but usually not 'pleas'd' but upset after fruitless family arguments on Lovelace. Also on the single occasion when Richardson actually shows her playing, she is trying 'to compose my angry passions at my Harpsichord', and the bird that inspires her is not the nightingale but the owl – suitably, since she is playing her own setting of an 'Ode to Wisdom'.¹⁵⁰ Clarissa never plays for Lovelace at all of course no instrument is available after her abduction), and the retrospective blazon that Anna Howe raises after her death downplays music significantly. Anna particularly praises Clarissa's needlework, and describes her as excelling in all domestic qualifications, in reading French and Italian and many other things. While the list of principal characters at the beginning calls Clarissa 'a young lady of great delicacy, mistress of all the accomplishments',¹⁵¹ Anna Howe's

^{lxvi} Sarah Robinson Scott's 'Millenium Hall' (cf. p. 47) similarly welcomes needy women and provides everything for 'rational amusement': 'musical instruments, of whatever sort they shall chuse, books, tents for work, and in short conveniences for every kind of employment. [... 68] they form into different parties of amusement as best suit their inclinations [and taste], and sometimes when we go to spend the afternoon there, we shall find ... in a separate chamber a set joining in a little concert, though none of them are great proficients in music'. (Scott, *Sarah Millenium Hall* [II]:66ff.).

^{lxvii} Amory *Buncle* I:lxv:388. A third prospective wife is interested in his flute: 'You play, Sir, I suppose, on that instrument, this lady said, and as of all sorts of musick this pleases me most, I request you will oblige me with any thing you please. In a moment I answered, and taking from my pocket book the following lines, I reached them to her, and told her I had the day before set them to one of Lulli's airs, and instantly began to breathe the softest harmony I could make' (Amory *Buncle* I:xiii:71). The girl's father is 'very greatly pleased', asks for 'another piece of your musick' – and two months later, the eccentric enthusiast Buncle is married once more.

eulogy concludes: 'I say nothing of her skill in music, and of her charming voice when it accompanied her fingers, though very extraordinary, because she had her equals in both.'¹⁵² Five hours a day being allotted to 'her needle, drawings, music'¹⁵³ as well as 'assistance and inspection' of servants' work and the 'conversation visits' of Dr. Lewen, Clarissa cannot have practised all that much. She also leaves 'my harpsichord, my chamber-organ and all my music-books'¹⁵⁴ not to her 'sister of my heart'^{lxviii} Anna Howe, but to a cousin she is palpably more indifferent to. That slight but noticeable bias in Clarissa's repertoire of accomplishments may point away from showiness and stress her uprooted loneliness in the family circle that should foster and welcome her talents.

The inevitable musical element in the accomplishment lists is downplayed also in mid-eighteenth-century novels which focus instead on intellectual and moral qualifications. A character in Penelope Aubin's *Charlotta* is brought up highly accomplished but has to rely on her own resources for character, because her mother

kept me very fine, carried me to the Park, the Plays, and had me taught to Dance, Sing, and Play on the Spinnet: in fine, she took Pains to make me agreeable, but none to Instruct me in Virtue and Goodness; yet ... I often wept for her Sins in Secret ...¹⁵⁵

Miss Allin, the future wife of Sarah Scott's model hero Sir George Ellison is 'elegantly formed, and extremely genteel'.¹⁵⁶ Her physique is described in great detail, but she is also credited with 'great sweetness of temper, and exceeding good sense; [... and] all advantage of education'¹⁵⁷ as well as intellectual qualities like reading French and Italian and having studied Latin for three years. However, her musical skill is clearly circumscribed: she 'played on the harpsichord, not perhaps with the perfection of a person who made it the business of her life, but with an elegance and facility well calculated to assist one of the finest voices that ever was heard'.¹⁵⁸ In that context, 'business' is not competing with music for the subject's time, but connotes the musical professionalism that is a sign of social inferiority.

Thus presence and quality of women's ornamental accomplishments function as class signifiers that are recommended for women 'of fortune and polite education' while others are supposed to 'hardly find time to apply to it'.¹⁵⁹ For the middle class, that is most literary heroines, a way between these two had to be negotiated. Music and other skills meant

^{lxviii} Anna Howe uses music more aggressively than her retiring friend: 'I am so much accustomed, for my own part, to Hickman's whining, creeping, submissive [171] courtship, ... that I am frequently forced to go to my harpsichord, to keep me awake, and to silence his humdrum.' (Richardson *Clarissa* CXXVIII:466). Clarissa's sister vents her anger after an argument musically, as Clarissa relates: 'And how do you think Bella employed herself while I was writing? – Why, playing gently upon my harpsichord: And *humming* to it, to shew her unconcernedness.' (XLII:197).

parental affluence, but it had also to be taken into account that a middle-class woman

was deficient in female qualities, if she, like the aristocratic woman, spent her time in idle amusements. As the conduct books represent them, such activities always aimed at putting the body on display, a carry-over from the Renaissance display of aristocratic power.¹⁶⁰

So exaggerated musical skill that distorted class order and excited undesirable erotic attention could be risky.

Masters indeed are procured, external accomplishment sometimes are cultivated, and the young ladies may unfortunately excel in a minuet, on the harpsichord, or with a pencil; this I call unfortunate, because it only served to lay them open to flatterers.¹⁶¹

Certain boarding school were striving for nothing but such dangerous applause, acquitting their charges with little more 'than a little bad French, a smattering of music, a tolerable minuet, a great deal of low pride, much pertness, intolerable vanity, and some falsehood'.¹⁶²

Consequently, a conscientious father in Henry Brooke's novel *The Fool of Quality* decides to make his daughter 'rather ... happy than great', by completing her education in the family circle:

my daughter is now drawing to woman's estate, and should learn something more substantial than needle-work, and dancing, and harpsichords, and Frenchified phrases. I therefore propose to take her home, where, by the help of our cook and housekeeper, she may be taught how to make a Sunday's pudding and to superintend a family.¹⁶³

Such straightforward domestic abilities also grace Don Quixote's niece in Edward Ward's translation of Cervantes' novel into 'Hudibrastick' verse:

A freckly kind familiar Lass,
Just Rotten Ripe for Man's Embrace,
Could Dance a *Minuet* or a *Bory*,^{lxix}
Sing an old Song or tell a Story,
Upon her Spinnet chime the Tune,
Of *Happy Groves*, or *Bobbing Joan*;
And make a Pudding [that delights her uncle].¹⁶⁴

In this historicizing genre-scene a perfect middle-of-the-road dream is achieved.

Lower-class girls could not hope for such easy harmony between the ornamental and the practical. In Sarah Robinson Scott's utopian *Millenium Hall*, girls of 'middling station' are forbidden music

as taking up too much time ..., and as a proficiency in it would prove only a dangerous

^{lxix} I.e. Bourrée, a lively 2/4 dance measure.

excellence; for it might induce a young woman of small fortune to endeavour at mending her circumstances,^{lxx} by performing in public or at best introduce her unto company of a far superior rank, who would think her sufficiently rewarded for the pleasure she gave them by the honour of their acquaintance though the experiences attending it must ruin her fortune; and as soon as her distresses should be known, her music would lose its charms, and neglect or insult become all her portion.¹⁶⁵

Music is considered downright dangerous when it stands in contradiction to a simple girl's lot in life. In their case of an actually ruined fortune, the Vicar of Wakefield's daughters have to seek employment as ladies' companions and are glad to be able to read, writ and 'cast accompts'; in addition they know several needlework techniques and parlour tricks and merely 'know something' of music.¹⁶⁶

Reverse surprises bring out the importance of this social code most tellingly. In the inserted tale of 'the fortunate Isabella' (a re-working of the Book of Ruth) in Richard Graves' *Spiritual Quixote*, a young squire notices Isabella gleaning in his fields, because she puts on her simple clothes 'so cleverly, that every thing became her' and because of her 'genteel shape and elegant motions'.¹⁶⁷ These contrast with her humble occupation, but even greater is the clash when he follows Isabella to her simple home and is

surprized to see an handsome harpsichord, which took up half the room, and some music-books lying about, with other books proper for young Ladies to read. ... his curiosity would not suffer him to rest till he had made some enquiries about her; as there was something in her manner, that convinced him she must have had a different education from what usually falls to the lot [211] of young women in that humble sphere of life.¹⁶⁸

Mother and daughter turn out to be gentlewomen reduced by misfortune, and Isabella 'after a decent parley, with gratitude surrender[s] her charms to so generous a lover',¹⁶⁹ and retrieves her former station – partly thanks to a harpsichord as a marker of gentility.

A harpsichord marks not only financial class, but enables finer distinctions of taste; if it is acquired for mere 'new' money, inferior or limited performance skill will betray the vulgarity of the nouveaux riches. In Thomas Shadwell's *Epsom-Wells* the 'silly affected Whore' Mistress Jilt, who hates London, refuses to admit that the country could not provide 'Breeding':

[C]ould I not play, *I am the Duke of Norfolk, Green Sleeves*, and the fourth Psalm upon the Virginals; and did I not learn, and could play six Lessons upon the Viol *de Gambo*

^{lxx} Cf. Tom Jones' description of a potential bride as 'in herself a fortune' because, although not rich enough to satisfy the greedy future father-in-law, she is 'so beautiful, so genteel, so sweet-tempered, and so well educated, ... sings admirably well, and hath a most delicate hand at the harpsichord' (Fielding *Tom Jones* XIV:viii:684).

before I went to that nasty, stinking, wicked Town ...?¹⁷⁰

Smollett's Launcelot Greaves avoids rich yeomen's daughters who 'assume the dress and manners of the gentry' but can only ape it.

[T]heir raw red fingers, gross as the pipes of a chamber-organ, which had been employed in milking the cows [... 23] being adorned with diamonds, were taught to thrum the pandola, and even to touch the keys of the harpsichord¹⁷¹

Conversely, performance skills in a girl who couldn't ever own a harpsichord give her an air of gentility over people who have tried merely to buy class by music. Sir Jacob Swynfort, an acquaintance of the B. family in *Pamela*, has exactly the unrefined sort of fingers ridiculed by Greaves, but refuses to see the ex-servant whom his nephew, Mr. B. has married. He is tricked into meeting and admiring Pamela by being told she is a young lady, and when the truth comes out, he penitently assumes that such a paragon must know music as well as his daughters: 'Will you let a body have a Tune or so? My Mab can play pretty well, and so can Dolly: – I'm a Judge of Musick, and would fain hear you.' Pamela complies and gets applause:

Od's my Life, said he, you do it purely! – But I see where it is – My Girls have got *my* Fingers! And then he held both Hands out, and a fine [390] Pair of Paws shew'd he! – Plague on't, they touch two Keys at once; but those slender and nimble Fingers, how they sweep along! My Eye can't follow 'em – Whew – whistled he – They are here and there, and every-where at once!¹⁷²

The conclusion is inevitable: 'Why, Nephew, I believe you've put another Trick upon me. My Niece is certainly of Quality!' The importance as well as the limitations of financial aspect of 'quality' become evident from Sir Jacob's final comment: '[Y]ou know not the Money they have cost me to qualify them;^{lxxi} and here is a mere Baby to them, outdoes 'em by a Bar's Length, without any Expencc at all bestow'd upon her.'¹⁷³

3. 'Musick in the House and Musick also in Heaven': Family scenes

Swynfort's almost fatherly familiarity is nothing exceptional; from the later seventeenth century onwards, records and prescriptions tell of marital and familial musical activities that

^{lxxi} Maybe the practising efforts of the misses Swynfort had not been quite in proportion to their father's expense. Literary accounts of female practice habit vary. While 'Sarah Oldfashion' in Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator* remembers an industrious childhood ('[A]fter having paid my Devotions to Heaven, wash'd, dress'd and eat my Breakfast, the remaining Hours till Noon were chiefly taken up with those who instructed me in Working, Dancing, Musick, Writing and those other necessary Accomplishments of my Sex' (Haywood *Female Spectator* I:v:215)), Francis Coventry's *Life and Adventures of A Lap-Dog* describes two young ladies who have 'just finished their Breakfast by Twelve o' Clock' after travelling; Aurora was then sitting down to her Harpsichord, and reading the Play-bills for the Evening'. (Coventry *Pompey* II:iv:159).

are equally unconnected with courtship or illegitimate lust. Lawrence Stone mentions a young man in a paternity suit who, while admitting regular visits to the family in question, claims that they were made to the pregnant girl's brother, 'who plays upon the harpsichord, which I also play upon'.¹⁷⁴ This may have been an excuse, but it was obviously considered plausible. In an anecdote that the lutenist Thomas Mace tells in his primer *Musick's Monument*, the metaphor of marital harmony is made flesh with rare unaffected simplicity:

[O]ne Rainy Morning I stay'd within; and in My Chamber, My Wife and I were all alone; She intent upon Her Needle-Works, and I Playing upon my Lute, at the Table by Her; She sat very Still, and Quiet, Listning to All I Play'd, without a Word a Long Time, till at last I hapned to Play This Lesson; which so soon as I had once Play'd, She Earnestly desired Me to Play It again; For, said She, That shall be Called, My Lesson. From which Words ... It perfectly came into my Remembrance, the Time when, and the Oc- [123] casion of Its being produced, and returned Her This Answer, viz. That It may very properly be call'd your Lesson; For when I Compos'd It, You were wholly in my Fancy, and the Chief Object, and Ruler of My Thoughts ...: And Therefore, ever after, I Thus Call'd It, My Mistress; (And most of My Scholars since, call It, Mrs. Mace, to This Day).¹⁷⁵

A less pleasant example of marital musical sharing is the unpleasantly patronizing husband Thomas Bullford, jolly but 'of moderate intellects',¹⁷⁶ in *Humphry Clinker*:

After tea we were entertained with a sonata on the harpsichord by lady Bullford, who [168] sung and played to admiration; but sir Thomas seemed to be a little asinine in the article of ears, though he affected to be in raptures; and begged his wife to favour us with an *arietta* of her own composing. – This *arietta*, however, she no sooner began to perform, than he ... fell asleep; but the moment she ceased playing, the knight waked snorting, and exclaimed, '*O cara!* what d'ye think, gentlemen? Will you talk any more of your Pargolesi and your Corelli?' – At the same time, he thrust his tongue in one cheek, and leered ... – He concluded the pantomime with a loud laugh ...¹⁷⁷

Such intimate family scenes are typical of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century fiction, but very rare afterwards.

Another aspect of musical family life which now emerges into fiction is childhood. Heroine's blazons are affixed to very young girls; before Penelope Aubin's Charlotta was ten years old, 'she cou'd play upon the Lute and Harpsichord, danc'd finely, spoke *French* and *Latin* perfectly, sung ravishingly ... and writ delicately'.¹⁷⁸ Lady Lucy, born as an 'only one fair darling Daughter' and educated with great care¹⁷⁹ is another perfect Aubin heroine. At thirteen, she is 'a perfect beauty' and everything one could hope otherwise; she, too, speaks French and Latin perfectly, 'danced and sung exceeding well, played on the Lute and Harpsicord, and used her Needle with ... great Dexterity'. and is credited with virtue, prudence

and 'solid Sense'.¹⁸⁰ Isabella, the orphaned protagonist of Aphra Behn's *Nun*, is educated in a convent in languages, manners and music by the nuns: 'if one could Dance, another Sing, another play on this Instrument, another on that'. When she is eight, '[s]trangers came daily to hear her talk, and sing, and play',¹⁸¹ but the little girl's music, notwithstanding the numerous audience, retains a pious dignity which Elizabethan writers allowed only to solitary players.

The topoi of sinful music and heavenly harmony no longer belong to one of the mutually exclusive domains of representation or metaphor, but can both be represented contiguously in fiction. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Mrs. Light-Mind, Mrs. Love-the-flesh, Mr. Lechery, Mrs. Filth, and some others meet for 'Musick and Dancing, and what else was meet to fill up the pleasure',¹⁸² but also the pilgrims make music to celebrate spiritual victories or refresh themselves. Christiana herself plays the viol and her daughter Mercy and Prudence the lute and virginals, respectively, and their welcome at the restful 'House Called Beautiful' includes music:

Mercie. Hark, don't you hear a Noise? Christiana. Yes, 'tis as I believe a Noise of Musick, for Joy that we are here. Mer. Wonderful! Musick in the House, Musick in the Heart, and Musick also in Heaven, for joy that we are here.¹⁸³

The virginal here is neither old-fashioned or dubiously tactile nor a status symbol, but simply an instrument to praise God with. Prudence turns her own spiritual advice into music: finding 'a pair of Excellent Virginals ... she played upon them, and turned what she had shewed them into this excellent song'.¹⁸⁴

In Nathaniel Lee's reworking of *The Princess of Cleve*, that newly possible juxtaposition of two fields of representation is used for provocative contrast in a scene where some depraved French nobles meet the 'finish'd Fool' Monsieur Poltrot. He has been to England to improve his breeding (i.e. study adultery), and proposes to sing some 'catches and tunes' that he has picked up:

I'll present your Grace with some words of my own, that I
made on my Wife before I married her, as she sat singing one
day in a low Parlour and playing on the Virginals.

Nem. For Heavens sake oblige us dear pleasant Creature –

Pol. I'll swear I'm so ticklish you'll put me out my Lord ... –

Vid. Dear soft delicate Rogue sing. [9]

Pol. Nay, I protest my Lord, I vow and swear, but you'll make me run to a Whore – Lord
Sir, what do you
mean?

Nem. Come then begin –¹⁸⁵

The combination of two discourses as different as that of marital domesticity and explicit homosexual desire lends a particular piquancy to this passage.

The fact that different fields of association are now both available to representation of musical activities also means that lewd associations are no longer automatic, and that women's performances can be celebrated *without* innuendo. The daughter of the diarist John Evelyn and the young Londoner Susanna Perwich who is remembered in the verse obituary *The Virgins Pattern* are described with such respect for both their instrumental prowess and their modesty that their virtue contains the dangerous aspects of outstanding performance.

Susanna Perwich was pupil and later assistant at her mother's school, which had an orchestra and a staff of teachers that comprised many noted professionals. Susanna 'gave no ordinary hopes of proving a *very rare* Musician',¹⁸⁶ sang, danced and composed, and was so proficient on treble viol, lyra viol and lute,^{lxxii} that well-known musicians listened to her in raptures:

What curious strains! What rare divisions!
Are we not 'mong Celestial visions!
This is no humane hand.¹⁸⁷

Susanna's virtue is described as equally celestial, her 'holiness' being 'more *sweet* than all the *Musicks* in the world'.^{lxxiii}

Susanna's subordination of music to holiness, not because it would endanger it but because it is trivial in comparison, pervades the whole panegyric on her performance. Susanna practices far less than is usual 'for indeed She made better use of her time, at other sorts of higher Musick'¹⁸⁸ – which, incidentally, removed any danger of her being considered a professional. After the death of her fiancé, she decided to remain a virgin, and talking of Heaven was so sweet to her that

she woud often say, her *Musick* was a *burden* to her, in comparison; and that were it not in *conscience* to her duty of being useful by it in so *Publick* a Family, she would spend *much less* time in that ... yet ... it helped to raise her own heart towards the *highest* Musick of all, and for *that reason* practised it more than otherwise she would have done.¹⁸⁹

^{lxxii} Susanna Perwich also had some harpsichord lessons that enabled her to play 'one *set* of the choisest Lessons' (Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* 6) as well as her master, but possibly cultivated the keyboard less because of its worldly associations. Despite being 'compassed about with all manner of *delights* and *entertainments*, that a *carnal* mind could desire ... yet what *dead* things were they to her, and *she* to them!' (Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* [Epistle Dedicatory] fol. A 3 verso).

^{lxxiii} [Epistle Dedicatory] fol. A 3 verso. This is one of the few instance where such a metaphor is perfectly meaningful, given the context of Susanna's musicality.

Susanna Perwich in this description resolves the quandary of female musicianship: she is performing 'as if she were not',^{lxxiv} displaying herself to the auditors that later describe her playing, but completely without personal vanity or ulterior motives. This relaxes her body and makes the performance, paradoxically, more impressive: 'She sat so steady, and free from any the least unhandsom motion in her body, so modestly careless, and as it were thoughtless of what She was about, as if She had not been concerned at all'.^{lxxv} Such deportment conforms to injunctions like those of John Essex, who in his chapter 'Of Modesty and Chastity ... as to the point of Behaviour in the Exercises of Dancing, Musick, and other diversions' advocates physical modesty without 'the leering Look, the Flirt of the Fan, and the disagreeable Motion of the Hips'.¹⁹⁰

A similarly model girl was Mary, John Evelyn's daughter, who died in 1685 of the smallpox, nineteen years old. Her practised only occasionally but had some theoretical knowledge of music and was interested enough to report repeatedly on professional after-dinner performances at his friends' houses. His diary reports the excellent (and probably expensive) teaching Mary received: 'My Daughter *Mary* [at fifteen] now first began to learne Musick of Signor Bartholomeo, & Dauncing of Monsieur Isaac; both reputed the best Masters &c.'¹⁹¹ However, Evelyn mentions her obviously brilliant progress only once in the following three years, before her prowess comes into its own in the extended description of this wonder among girls which her father's 'unspeakable sorrow and Affliction'¹⁹² prompt after her death. Languages, amateur theatricals, verse writing, history, learning, beauty and piety are all extolled, and her musical achievements have great prominence:

She had to all this an incomparable sweete Voice, to which she play's a through-base on the Harpsichord, in both which she ariv'd to that perfection, that of all the Schollars of those Two famous Masters, Signor Pietro and Bartolomeo; she was esteem'd the best.¹⁹³

Mary Evelyn, too, sang and played 'without any constraint and concerne, that whe she sung, it was as charming to the Eye, as to the Eare'¹⁹⁴; and her father notes carefully that the last occasion of many 'noble and judicious persons' to ask for her playing was

^{lxxiv} Cf. 1 Corinthians 7, 29f.: '[T]he time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; [30] And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoyce, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not'.

^{lxxv} Cf. Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* 4. The poetic version runs: No antick gestures or bold face / No wrigling motions her disgrace – / While she's at play nor eye nor head / Hither or thither wanderd / Nor nods nor heaves in any part / As taken with her own rare Art... / With body she ne're sat ascue / Or mouth awry as others do. (Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* 53).

at my Lord Arundels of Wardours, where was a solemn Meeting of about twenty person of quality, some of them great judges & Masters of Musique; where she sung with the famous Mr. Pordage, Siognor Joh: Battist touching the Harpsichord &c: with exceeding applause ...¹⁹⁵

However, Mary preferred staying at home with her parents to accepting one of four highly suitable suitors:

[B]ut for decency, more than inclination, & that You judge it expedient for me, I would not change my Condition, but rather add the fortune you designe me to ym Sisters, & keepe up the reputation of our family.¹⁹⁶

Nor did she want to stay in 'that glittering scene'¹⁹⁷ of a noble friend's house in London, although she is offered a chance to become Maid of honour to the Queen, and all in all, the grieving father states that he, '(all partiality of relation laid asyde) ... never [429] saw, or knew, her equal'.¹⁹⁸

*So unqualified a panegyric
might do for a tomb-stone.*
CATHERINE SINCLAIR

In the constructions of perfect unrivalled womanhood – one intensely private, one preachingly public – that are erected about Susanna Perwich and Mary Evelyn, famous masters, spectacular skill and pious modesty co-exist, exceptionally. However, these are obituaries. Evelyn concludes:

This is the little History, & Imperfect Character of my deare Child, whose Piety, Virtue, & incomparable Endowments, deserve a Monument more durable than Brasse & Marble: ... Never can I say enough, ô deare, my deare Child whose memory is so precious to me.¹⁹⁹

As long as Mary was alive, Evelyn had very little to say about her; it is death that liberates and inspires the pious historian. In Susanna Perwich's obituary, a long, ridiculously detailed enumerative description of her beauty laments and praises veins, nails and even the 'marble Mount' of her nose are lamented, and also her

*Lilly Hands, long woodbine fingers,
Hang ever quivering, never lingers,
In trembling strokes, which always she,
Tunes into sweetest Harmony.*²⁰⁰

Such eloquence (that might seem prurient) is made decently possible by the distancing safeguard of death.

4. 'Musick in the Heart': New Sensibilities

Another emotional field that became available to keyboard scenes only after 1700 is that of sentiment, which can be at play between relatives like father and daughter or between couples of lovers or spouses where it prevails over sexualized sensations. In *Pamela*, for instance, a novel which has been criticized for its 'pious' titillation, the performances of the heroine do not enhance her sexual attraction for Mr. B., let alone enforce the blind infatuation which is described in many poems of the period as an effect of music. Instead, music represents the perceptive sensibility of both partners, and his true affection for her. When jealousy of another lady player spoils Pamela's performance ('I wanted to find some Faults, some great Faults in her: But Oh! Madam! she has too many outward Excellencies! Pity she wants a good Heart!²⁰¹), the women listeners are marked as hypocritical or ignorant by their compliments, while Mr. B.'s comment exempts him from these charges, congruent as it is with Pamela's own feeling: 'neither my Heart to play, nor my Fingers in playing, deserv'd their Praises. Mr. B. said indeed, You play better sometimes, my Dear!²⁰²

Sophia Western, after having been saved by Tom Jones in a hunting accident, lightens his convalescence by 'kindly condescend[ing], for Hours together, to charm him with the most delicious Music'.²⁰³ In these scenes, Sophia's 'eyes, her blushes, and many little involuntary actions'²⁰⁴ betray the love she will not speak, and when she tries to relieve an embarrassing conversational moment,

she played so intolerably ill, that ... Jones [who ...] was not without an Ear any more than without Eyes, made some Observations; which ... gave him pretty strong Assurances, when he came to reflect on the whole, that all was not well in the tender Bosom of Sophia.²⁰⁵

Again, the heroine's playing is not so much an erotic attraction to male eyes and ears as an involuntary signal of affection picked up by a sensitive listener.

The daughters that repeatedly play to their fathers in mid-eighteenth-century novels belong to the same emotional climate. Sophia's habit of playing to her father became something of a literary cliché^{lxxvi} that stuck in the memory of following generations far more faithfully than her playing for Tom. In Eliza Haywood's *Fortunate Foundlings* the motif is varied by the perverted machinations of an evil baron who forcibly detains the heroine

under a shew of liberty; pretending to her ... that he was not well enough to go abroad, he would stay at home whole days together, and oblige her to read, or play to

^{lxxvi} Cf. allusions like those mentioned in note lxxvii, p.66 and note cxxxi, p.101.

him on the spinnet, which frequently she did with an aking heart.²⁰⁶

The context of an established motif of familial affection around the keyboard enhances the villainy of the baron. In Henry Mackenzie's sentimental classic *The Man of Feeling* the father of an eloped daughter who has ended up in a brothel remembers his discovery of her flight:

'Something at last arose in my mind, which we call Hope, without knowing what it is. I wished myself deluded by it; but it could not prevail over my re-[144] turning fears. I rose and walked through he room. My Emily's spinet stood at the end of it, open, with a book of music folded down at some of my favourite lessons. I touched the keys; there was a vibration in the sound that froze my blood; I looked around, and methought the family-pictures on the walls gazed on me with compassion in their faces. I sat down again with more composure; I started at every creaking of the door, and my ears rung with imaginary noises!²⁰⁷

The instrument here stands metonymically for the musical services of a daughter who is remembered with more self-pity than sympathy; the father seems to be more moved by the ghostly evocation of what his daughter did for him than by her present plight or possible death. As in *The Fortunate Foundlings*, the deviation from a recognized topos heightens the poignancy of the modified version.

Scenes which do not so much describe seduction as display sensibility in both sexes are especially significant between married couples because they confirm the seriousness of a devotion to music which (and possibly to each other) which does not, as usual, end with the wedding. Richardson's Sir Grandison and his eventual wife share such a love for music, which serves, similar to the scene from *Pamela* described above, to play off the delicacy of his compliments against two obnoxious other suitors. When Harriet is urged to play after other, impressive, lady performers, Sir Charles says: 'Fear nothing, Miss Byron, said Sir Charles: Your obligingness, as well as your observation, intitle you to all allowances.'²⁰⁸ She takes heart at that and while 'a deal of silly stuff was said to me, by way of compliment' by the other two, she 'cannot ... pass over' one special compliment from Grandison: 'How could Sir Hargrave Pollexfen have the heart to endeavour to stop such a mouth as that!²⁰⁹ Newly-married, Harriet ecstatically describes the music-parlour her husband has set up for her, and is overwhelmed to discover that he has also has invited neighbouring gentlemen performers to play with her regularly.

'May I ask you, Harriet?' pointing to the harpsichord, I instantly sat down to it. It is a fine instrument. Lord G. took up a violin; Lord L. a German flute; Mr. Deane a bass-viol; and we had a little concert of about half an hour.²¹⁰

Sir Charles, in deference to the contemporary reservations about male performance, does not, as the hero, join in the instrumental concert.^{lxxvii} However, he proceeds to sing (excellently, of course) an admiring song that is supposed to convey 'The fullness of my heart, / Pour'd out on tuneful ecstasies / By this celestial art' and concludes with a look to Heaven: 'The Fair that renders earth so sweet / Prepares me for the skies!'^{lxxviii} Harriet is overcome: 'Tears of joy ran down my cheeks. Every one's eyes congratulated me.'^{l211}

*But when the tuneful Keys you press,
And Musick's inmost Pow'rs express,
What melting Strains extatic rise,
How ev'ry raptur'd Hearer dies.*
HENRY JONES

In their vague religious 'rapture', Sir Charles Grandison's verses are typical of the genre 'harpsichord love poem', although most other specimens are not addressed to wives, but to girls that are in full seductive spate at the keyboard though – as yet – unwilling to respond. However, the language of such verses is usually utterly remote from the experience of actual playing. A general metaphorical harmoniousness prevails, and all too often 'musical epithets degenerate[d] into the emptiest sort of allusion' and 'the mechanically neo-classical phrase',²¹² practically obliterating the keyboard performances that are ostensibly being celebrated. In sharp contrast with the pragmatic tactility of some Elizabethan references, none of these texts goes beyond an occasional reference to a finger or a string^{lxxix} or picturing the girl as sitting '[b]efore your Jacks and Wire at Home'.²¹³ Instead of evoking real players and admirers, harpsichord poems employ a disconcertingly mixed range of mythological and religious personnel. Apollo turns mortal to join a 'Young Lady' in a duet, or Diana herself sits at the harpsichord,²¹⁴ seraphs and cherubs bend to listen in 'hush't nature' when 'Musidora ... strikes the sounding Strings',²¹⁵ and personified cardinal sins or virtues and Time himself sit in or comment on the performances of Aaron Hill's 'Bellaria'²¹⁶ or Mary Leapor's 'Cloe'. The latter lady is particularly involved in daring hypotheses: the stones that Amphion moved by his singing 'O had they charming *Cloe* heard, / They'd surely not have stir'd for him', and

^{lxxvii} *Millenium Hall* displays stronger social reservations: the neighbours who join the ladies of the Hall for their chamber music on lute, harpsichord, organ and 'six-stringed bass' all fall distinctly short of hale gentlemanhood: '[T]he shepherd who had charmed us in the field was there with his German flute; a venerable looking man, who is their steward, played on the violincello, a lame youth on the French horn, another, who seemed very near blind, on the bassoon, and two on the fiddle.' (Scott, *Millenium Hall* 1:10).

^{lxxviii} Richardson *Grandison* VII:v:274. Cf. chapter V for a more extended comment on the Hereafter in musical poems.

^{lxxix} Cf. Smith 'To a Young Lady' 23f.: 'When nimbly o're the pratling Strings / Her flying Fingers bound'.

Orpheus 'Had brought *Eurydice* back – alas! / But *Cloe* was not there.'²¹⁷

The craziest, almost blasphemous, mixture is created by Elizabeth Tollet's addition of Christian allusions to the conventionally hyperbolic praise of 'Mrs. Elizabeth Blackler, playing on the Harpsichord'. The address 'maid' for the player adds Christian virginity to her poly-religious virtues:

What sudden Harmony of Sound!
 Descending Heav'n is all around! ...
 No mortal Touch
 Can with such Rapture strike the Mind:
 Such heav'nly Awe with Pleasure join'd. ...
 What Praise is thine, harmonious Maid?
 What Thanks for all thy Wonders shall be pay'd? ...
 ... See! the Musicians of the Sky
 Descending fill the shining Air;
 And see! they hover o'er the Fair²¹⁸

The Fair herself is quite lost in this angelic flutter. As Laurence Lipking comments: 'Music had lost its relation with the divine, and it had not yet found writers who could make good sense of it as something human.'²¹⁹ The topical, real harpsichord frequently appears only in the titles or opening lines sketching the occasion, and then turns into a metaphorical 'harp' or 'lyre' in the body of the poem:

Smiling, her Harpsicord She Strung:
 As soon as She began to play,
 Away his Harp poor Phebus flung;
 It was no Time for Him to stay.
 Yet hold; before your Godship go
 Nor less thy Sunshine by her Eyes.^{lxxx}

The flippant addressing of Apollo as a petulant aristocratic musical amateur is a further sign of the jadedness of all these metaphorical conceits. John Hollander contextualizes this:

Seventeenth-century English poets take immediately to the newer notions of affective music, while yet clinging to the imagery of Christian speculative music, notably that of the heavenly harmony, the singing of the angel-spheres, etc. ... the promiscuous use of this imagery tends to trivialize all but its decorative import from about 1640 on.²²⁰

The reproach that has been levelled at Sonnet 128 of being an unmusical 'genre-piece' had far better be addressed to these profuse but highly generic texts.

In John Langhorne's 'To MISS. – In return for a Set of Reading-Ribbands', domestic

^{lxxx} Thompson 'The Conquest' 5-12. Cf. also John Whaley's 'To a Lady who Plays finely on the Harpsichord', where it is the Muses that seem envious.

coziness brings the muses closer to home. Mnemosyne makes her daughters design thank-you presents for this gift 'for Mem'ry's Aid'. Polyhymnia suggests:

'Mamma, I'll tune her Harpsichord:
For Her these fav'rite Airs I'll pack,
And send Them on a Zephyr's Back.'²²¹

Euterpe mocks that her sister, 'lavish of her Favours, / Wou'd send a Zephyr-Load of Quavers'.²²² This style descends to jarring cuteness when the Elizabethan metaphor of concord is belaboured ('As in no single String is found / A Correspondency of Sound; / So we small Musick make, or none, / In either Sex, when we're alone'²²³) – only to be reduced to the simple desire of a vain girl, the 'jilting mistress', for an appreciative audience:

There can be no great Pleasure in it,
Whether you sing, or thump your Spinnet;
If no Admirers round you stand,
T' applaud the Touches of your Hand.²²⁴

Here as in Langhorne, the domestic keyboard instrument is mentioned inside the body of the poem to (involuntary?) comic effect. Musicians hardly come alive in these texts, which do not elucidate social practices or ideologies as much as poetic conventions. The power of the keyboard instrument to evoke a realistic picture is submerged by an overdetermined poetic discourse.

A single exception worth mentioning are certain passages in the poems of Aaron Hill, who parades the usual mythological baggage, but also has a true eye and ear for the physical symptoms of the emotional journey of performing. His 'Bellaria' could well be Sophia Western or Pamela:

Sweetly confus'd, with scarce consenting will,
Thoughtless of charms, and diffident of skill;
See! with what blushful bend, the doubting fair
Props the rais'd *lid* – then *sits*, with sparkling air,
Tries the touch'd notes – and, hast'ning light along,
Calls out a short complaint, that speaks their wrong.
Now backn'ning, awful, nerv'd, erect, serene,
Asserted *musick* swells her heighten'd *mien*.
Fearless, with face oblique, her formful hand
Flies o'er the ivory plain, with stretch'd command;
Plunges, with bold neglect, amidst the keys,
And sweeps the sounding range, with magic ease.²²⁵

The following sixty lines regrettably return to meaningless classical parading: Pity, Love, Candour and Truth come to attend the performance, and the pious conclusion goes: 'Such,

and, *perhaps*, more sweet, those sounds shall rise, / Which wake rewarded *saints*, when nature *dies* ...²²⁶ 'Celinda, complaining that her Harpsichord was out of Tune' is a true little picture throughout.

While, with well-acted anger, you *complain*,
Still you attempt your charming task again;
And still, with lovely *petulance*, complain,
That still you strike the trembling *strings*, in vain.
Still you complain! and still my wond'ring soul
Is wildly beckon'd, by the wanton sound:
Thro' my rais'd fancy circling *phantoms* roll,
My *thoughts*, in fairy mazes, dance around!²²⁷

Here, too, the clichés come in soon afterwards; the speaker feels himself 'already die, / E'en while your *strings* you do but *try*'.²²⁸

One element of the resurrected imagery which Hill can at least intermittently do without is the lute, which retains a metaphorical value long after – and maybe *because* – it had passed out of practical use before 1700, and after its cosmic symbolism was no longer taken seriously. While the 'lyre' was not a practicable entity, the lute figures in historicizing texts when such sentimental solitude is relieved by music. In Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* a lovesick girl plays the lute: 'Ah! how affectingly did [it] answer to her voice, while she gently turned her sighs to the soft and melancholy cadences.' Although this novel from 1768 is set in the seventeenth century, the sensibility²²⁹ is quite contemporary, and the harpsichord does appear in the more humdrum and narrowly 'topical' context of female education (cf. p. 47). Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* differentiates similarly: At the outset, the heroine is trying to forget her soul-mate Savillon after their 'story of sentiment' ended because they mistakenly believed each other married. In these moments of reminiscence, the instrument is not specified: 'Must I forget the scenes of our early days, the opinions we formed, the authors we read, the music we played together?'²³⁰ Savillon, meanwhile, reports to a friend how cold the conventional use of the harpsichord in society leaves him: 'I was again set next Mademoiselle Dorville, and had the honour of accompanying some of the songs she sung to us. A vain fellow, in my circumstances, might imagine that girl liked him.'²³¹ With similar indifference, Julia accepts the proposal of one Montauban who saved her father from debtor's prison, but her sighing mention of Savillon's name in her sleep and her tears on a music-book make her husband suspicious. The instrument that accompanies her regrets is, appropriately, the lute.

lxxxii Mackenzie introduces a third instrument for Julia's end. When Montauban intercepts her letter of acceptance to a chaperoned meeting with Savillon, who has returned unmarried from abroad, he decides to poison her. The melodramatic conclusion of her deathbed apology and his suicide is prepared by a scene in which Julia, already poisoned, plays the *organ* in a trance full of foreboding:

[S]ounds of more than terrestrial melody stole on my ear ... [a] music so exquisite, that my ravished sense was stretched too far for delusion, and I awoke in the midst of the intrancement! I rose, with the memory of the sounds full upon my mind; ... sat down to the organ, and, with that small soft stop you used to call seraphic, endeavoured to imitate their beauty. And never before did your Julia play an air so heavenly, or feel such extasy in the power of sound! When I had caught the solemn chord that last arose in my dream, my fingers dwelt involuntarily on the keys, and methought [179] I saw the guardian spirits around me, listening with a rapture like mine!²³²

Montauban witnesses this scene:

'[H]ow like an angel she looked! ... she sat at the organ, her fingers pressing on the keys, and her look up-raised with enthusiastic rapture! – the solemn sounds still ring in my ear! such as angels might play, when the sainted soul ascends to Heaven!'ⁱ

The almost Victorian saintliness of this scene represents an emotional extreme of keyboard music which neither virginal nor harpsichord could ever have hoped to reach; but the vibrant eroticism that was associated with the older instrument can still awaken around the harpsichord.

5. Familiar warnings I

*However, Music and women
I cannot but give way to.*
SAMUEL PEPYS

Literary texts as well as other documents chart the continuing association of the harpsichord with sexual arousal. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu records an impressive anecdote of its aphrodisiac powers in a letter. A certain Miss Leigh goes to see a friend who is not pleased to see this '[t]all, musical, silly, ugly thing' because she has an intimate visitor, but then asks Miss Leigh to play for them.

Miss Leigh very willingly sat to the Harpsicord, upon which her Audience decamp'd to the Bed Chamber, and left her to play over 3 or 4 lessons to herself. They return'd and

^{lxxxii} Cf. Finney 1953:116f.: 'Dryden compared the soul to a lyre [... but was 117] "pleased with the image without being cozened by the fiction."' Richard Allestree's influential conduct book *The Ladies Calling* explains that '[a] womans tongue should indeed be like the *imaginary* [my emphasis] music of the spheres, sweet and charming but not to be heard at a distance' (Allestree *Calling* 7).

made what excuses they could, but said very frankly they had not heard her performance and begg'd her to begin again, which she comply'd with, and gave them the opportunity of a second retirement.ⁱ

Miss Leigh is so offended by this second abandonment ('she did not understand playing to an empty room') that she disregards the request for a further tune and leaves to spread the tale all over London, whereupon the lover keeps hearing 'complements about his third Tune, which is reckon'd very handsome in a Lover past forty'.ⁱ

Picaresque narratives furnish similarly blunt testimonials to the seductive power of music, which functions both as a token of a genteel and / or sexually rewarding life that the heroines dream of, and a pernicious accomplice in their downfall. In these episodes it is always the player herself who attracts the male listener, but the siren topos is varied in that her skill backfires on her: unaware of the desire she excites, she becomes the victim of aroused seducers. In Richard Head's picaresque collection *The English Rogue*, an old murderess recounts her childhood in her parents' 'House of good fellowship' in Portsmouth, where, at age eleven, she was made 'to sit in the Barr, and keep the scores':

[M]y Father thinking it would advance his trading, bought for me a pair of Virginals; and hired a man to teach me: I giving my mind to it, soon learnt some tunes, which I played to the merry Saylers, whilst they pull'd off their shoes, and danc'd Lustick; and sometimes I gaining a Teaster, or Groat for my Musick, was so encouraged, that I quickly took all the instructions my Master was able to give me; ... in little time I was well furnished with [bawdy] Songsⁱ

This enjoyment leads to early corruption, although the little girl does not understand these songs:

[W]hen my Auditors laugh'd, and sometimes hug'd and kiss'd me, I had some kind of notions that were very pleasing to me; and ... I resolved, that if it were long ere I were Married, yet it should not be so before I tried what it was to lye with a Man.ⁱ

The heroine's apparent musical talent is instrumental to her sensual awakening and sets off her course to ruin.

During Moll Flanders' adolescence, musical accomplishments afford a tantalizing glimpse of a life that might have been hers. When she lives with a noble family as a teenager, she profits from their daughters' education: 'I learn'd by Imitation and Enquiry, all that they learn'd by Instruction and Direction.' Even progress on the harpsichord is possible because Moll's attempts on the instrument in the young ladies' practice intervals are so impressive that a second instrument is finally provided 'and then they Taught me themselves. By this

means I had ... all the Advantages of Education that I could have had, if I had been as much Gentlewoman as they were.ⁱ These advantages improve Moll's natural attractions of beauty and a good voice, and 'that which I was too vain of was my ruin'²³³ – her foster brothers both seduce the attractive girl and she is ignominiously dismissed.

The unfortunate Miss Mathews who tempts the weak husband of Henry Fielding's Amelia in prison also 'fell' first through music. Hebbers, her seducer, is an extremely attractive and polished friend of the family, and 'what chiefly recommended him to my Father was his Skill in music, of which ... that dear man was a most violent Lover'ⁱ

Young Miss Mathews, who has made only 'a very slender Progress'²³⁴ in her unavoidable harpsichord lessons, dislikes him because she is always asked to play for him, and Hebbers manipulates the fact that her sister is thought 'the best Performer in the whole Country' to push Miss Mathews into jealousy and spiteful ambition:

He took great Pains to persuade me that I had much greater Abilities of the musical Kind ... and that I might, with the greatest Ease, if I pleased, excel her; offering me, at the same time, his assistance, if I would resolve to undertake it. ... To my Harpsichord then I applied myself Night and Day, with such Industry and attention, that I soon began to perform in a tolerable manner. [... and began] to love *Hebbers* for the Preference which he gave to [my skill].ⁱ

When Miss Mathews finally has fallen in love, Hebbers claims an unhappy previous engagement, and then 'undoes' her at her sister's wedding. 'Music, Dancing, Wine, and the most luscious Conversation'ⁱ so confuse and arouse the girl that 'I lost my former Bed-fellow, my Sister and – ... the Villain found Means to steal to my Chamber, and I was undone.'ⁱ

Smollett's Ferdinand Fathom uses his violin to a similar purpose: after playing and singing to the daughter of a rich host, 'he had upon divers occasions, gently squeezed her fair hand, on pretence of tuning her harpsichord' and is 'favoured with returns of the same cordial pressure',ⁱ until she gives in to him 'before her passion could obtain a legal gratification'.²³⁵

Episodes of elopements with music masters re-enact the same emotional pattern. In Jeremy Collier's *Musical Travels*, the young pair make it to Scotland,ⁱ but in her *Female Spectator*, Eliza Haywood presents an example of the failure of such a relationship. Young Celemena is so violently in love with 'Mr. Quaver' that her parents decide to let her marry him to save her health.

As it could not be supposed but that the musician would receive an offer of this nature with an excess of humility and joy, he was sent for, and told by the Parents of *Celemena*, that as, notwithstanding the disparity between them the young lady had thought him worthy, they too dearly [52] prized her to thwart her inclinations, and

would bestow her on him in case he had no previous engagement.ⁱ

He is not enthusiastic about the offered dowry, however: 'Sir, I live very well as I am on my business, and will not sell my liberty for twice the sum.'ⁱ When the offer is doubled to 10'000 pounds, he asks for 15'00, otherwise 'I am your humble servant.'²³⁶ Celemena, who has overheard this interview, is disgusted and cured, and Quaver goes away 'justly mortified, and ready to hang himself for what he had lost by his egregious folly'.²³⁷ The story is told as an example of ingratitude. Music similarly beguiles Frances Sheridan's Sidney Bidulph into an error of judgment; she marries, after refusing her great love, a man who plays the harpsichord 'ravishingly' enough to make her envious:

I had taken a sort of dislike to him when he first came in, I cannot tell you why or wherefore; but this accomplishment has reconciled me so to him, that I am half in love with him. I hope we shall see him often; he is really excellent on this instrument, and you know how fond I am of musick.ⁱ

Sidney's instincts are eventually vindicated when her husband betrays her, a further instance of the sensual and emotional confusion music can produce. Although seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fiction frequently represents the emotional pitfalls of music, conduct literature for either gender no longer mentions sexual seduction as one of its dangers. The dominant topic in the few warnings addressed to women is the class preoccupations with musical excellence. The anonymous *The Whole Duty of a Woman* echoes Hoby^{lxxxii} and other older sources with its reminder that 'the end of your [dancing lessons] was, That you might the better know how to move Gracefully [for] when it goeth beyond it, one may call it *Excelling in Musick*, which is no great Commendation'.²³⁸ For playing,

the easiest and safest [!] Method is to do it in Private Company amongst Particular Friends, and then Carelessly, like a Diversion, and not with Study and Solemnity, as if it was a Business, or yourself overmuch affected with it.²³⁹

So even within a comparatively relaxed ideological framework that admitted of many different literary scenarios, suppression of too-conspicuous musical skill is present.

After 1750 a new concern begins to emerge: the deprecation of musical accomplishment.

Charles Allen explains in his *Polite Lady*:

I do not mean that you should apply to your music so as to neglect the other parts of your education; nor do I expect, that you would arrive at the highest degree of perfection It is no shame to a young lady to be outdone [22 by a professional].

^{lxxxii} 'Let oure Courtier come to show his musicke as a thing to passe the time withall, and as he wer enforced to doe it, and not in the presence of noble menne, nor of any great multitude.' (Hoby *Courtyer* 100); cf. p. 20).

Perhaps, on the contrary, it would be a shame for her to be equal to any of these in their respective arts^{lxxxiii} [because it implies neglect of] all the other parts of a *complete education*.ⁱ

Here, music is finally mentioned as potentially detrimental to intellectual and moral development of women. The profusion of concessive markers in Allen's discussion of the two or three daily hours that should be set aside for 'revising all the different parts of your education'ⁱ

betray an underlying ambiguity about how these parts should be balanced:

Now, *tho'* I would *by no means* have you to neglect [music and dancing], *but on the contrary* to be daily improving in them; *yet* I think you ought to apply your *chief* attention to [useful accomplishments] [my emphases].ⁱ

John Fordyce's *Sermons* warn that music can be 'degraded into an idle amusement, devoid of dignity, devoid of meaning, absolutely devoid of any one ingredient that can inspire delightful ideas, or engage unaffected applause'.²⁴⁰ Hester Chapone argues inversely:

While you labour to enrich your mind with the essential virtues of Christianity ... I would not have my dear child neglect to pursue those graces and acquirements, which may set her virtue in the most advantageous light, adorn her manners, and enlarge her understanding [94 ...] in the innocent and laudable view of rendering herself more useful and pleasing to her fellow-creatures, and, consequently, more acceptable to God.²⁴¹

Fiction from the mid-eighteenth century onwards usually reflects this uneasy balance of useful and ornamental skills^{lxxxiv} by acknowledging spiritual or intellectual qualities at the expense of music, favouring Fordyce's view rather than Chapone's. John Bunce's 'good-humoured, sensible, and discreet', learned and accomplished bride Miss Turner (cf. p. 45) 'understood musick, and sung, and played well on the small harpsichord: *but* [my emphasis] her moral character was what shed the brightest lustre on her soul.'²⁴² Charlotte Lennox' *Female Quixote* evidences the superior intelligence of some characters by their *not* listening to silly tinkling. The city lady Miss Glanville is disconcerted to find the heroine Arabella 'perfectly elegant and genteel' although she is 'bred up in the Country'.ⁱ Her own conversation, on the other hand, reveals such profound ignorance that her brother feels the need to intervene:

Mr. *Glanville*, fearing his Sister would make some absurd Answer ... took up the

^{lxxxiii} Cf. Home *Loose Hints* 244f.: 'I find no reason for degrading young women of condition, to be musi-[245] cians more than painters. Such laborious occupations ... are proper for those only who purpose to live by them.'
^{lxxxiv} The sets are not always clearly defined, but music is always considered ornamental rather than useful.

Discourse: And, turning it upon the Grecian History, engrossed [Arabella's] Conversation, for two Hours, wholly to himself; while Miss *Glanville* (to whom all they said was quite unintelligible) diverted herself with humming a Tune, and tinkling her Cousin's Harpsichord ...ⁱ

What is anticipated in Clarissa's relatively modest musical achievement and is more directly implied here in the opposition of 'tinkling' and rational conversation was to become a dominant topic in the discussion about female education that was so intense around the following turn of the century.

III. 'Accomplishments, Accomplishments, Accomplishments': The piano-forté

*The piano's incapability of sustaining a note
has led, as the only means of producing effect,
to those infinitesimal subdivisions of sound,
in which all sentiment and expression
are twittered and frittered into nothingness.*

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

*Female accomplishments have increased,
are increasing and ought to be diminished.*

THOMAS LISTER

The critique of musical accomplishments that began to be voiced from the 1760s became virulent towards the end of the century, and the pianoforte, once the hammer mechanism had reached practicability around 1770, had a central part in that development. In its various shapes from modest square to concert grand, the new instrument combined the advantages of the brilliant harpsichord, the economical spinet and the expressive but almost inaudible clavichord, achieving an increased potential to delight as well as to annoy. Like the virginal before them, spinet and the 'quilly' and 'tinkling' harpsichord²⁴³ were now disparaged as old-fashioned and became a literary code for poverty,^{lxxxv} unsophisticated domesticity^{lxxxvi} or rural backwardness.^{lxxxvii} The piano's 'real and useful difficulties of taste, expression and light and shade'²⁴⁴ enabled performers 'to vary and accommodate the expression to all those delicacies, energies and striking lights and shadows which so greatly characterise the more refined compositions of the present day'.²⁴⁵

The new 'energies' and striking sonoric contrasts, often exploited for vulgarly noisy sound effects in the first generations of pianoforte music, offered opportunities for impressive display which helped to fuel the 'phrenzy of accomplishment' that was involving

^{lxxxv} Cf. Austen *Emma* XXVI:225: '[P]oor Jane Fairfax, who is mistress of music, has not any thing of the nature of an instrument, not even the pitifullest old spinnet in the world, to amuse herself with.'

^{lxxxvi} A young rake rebuffs his sister's reproaches by recommending domestic modesty: 'Prithee, my good girl, jingle the keys of your harpsichord, and be quiet. ... Satisfy your longing desire to be good, by making jellies, conserves and caraway cakes.' (Holcroft *St. Ives* II:xxv:85). A beautiful but 'entirely uncultivated' young lady is put in her place by an allusion to *Tom Jones* (fifty years older, and not fashionable): 'She had read authors, whose works she did not comprehend; prattled a foreign jargon ...; and learnt, by ear, a few old lessons on the harpsichord, so little graced by science and so methodically dull, that they would scarcely have served as an opiate to a country [231] 'squire, after the voluntary toil of a foxchase.' (Robinson *Walsingham* I:xv:230f.).

^{lxxxvii} The spinet often completes scenarios of Scottish provinciality, as when girls from comfortable families are admired for being able to play 'seven tunes and a march on the spinet' (Galt *Entail* II:xiv:170) or for having mastered sewing, reading and writing 'in the worst manner; occasionally *wearing a collar* [a corset for improving posture] and learning the notes upon the spinnet' (Ferrier *Marriage* II:i:160). A squire in the same novel comments: 'Edication! ... If a woman can nurse her [69] bairns, mak their claes, and manage her hooss, what mair need she do? If she can play a tune on the spinnet, and dance a reel, and play a rubber at whist – nae doot these are accomplishments, but they're soon learnt.' (I:xiii:68f.).

England's young women 'with increasing violence'.²⁴⁶ The middle classes were particularly industrious, while the gentry were less and less ready for such exertion, it being 'almost a maxim amongst most of the [higher classes] never to do anything "like an artist". Thus they seldom do any thing well.'^{lxxxviii} The pianoforte remained typical of the middle classes, who 'endeavour to approach as nearly as their opportunities will permit to professional excellence. They omit no occasion of study'.²⁴⁷ It was claimed that such 'British Female Dilettanti' were 'universally acknowledged ... to have surpassed, in their exquisite execution upon keyed Instruments, all their competitors'.^{lxxxix} With its 'delicacies' the instrument accommodated private and intimate uses better than ever, but although those expressive possibilities of the newly achieved differentiation between loud and soft tones would seem to have been more compatible with the rational and affectionate companionship between spouses in what Lawrence Stone calls the 'closed domesticated nuclear family',²⁴⁸ it was the shallow spectacularly effects that became an essential currency on the marriage market. Various aspects of domestic music become more visible and textually significant in literature, but it is as the almost industrial rattle of 'accomplishment' that the pianoforte resounds through most Regency fiction, and particularly through the didactic novels and poems which intervened in the debate around female education.

^{lxxxviii} *QMMR* 7 (1825):296. Upper-class girls in contrast 'sit listlessly down to an instrument, execute so carelessly, or sing so wretchedly, as to afford no other gratification to the hearers than that of ridiculing the unfortunate Miss, whom not even the consciousness of what she is exposed to can rouse from the indifference to which she is trained.' (296f.). A striking literary example is 'Countess Thérèse Anacharsis de la Vrillière' in Frances Gore's *Cecil*, who is terribly bored because she cannot play and has all other accomplishments done *for* her: 'Her embroideries were bought ready stitched, her camellias ready grafted.' (Gore *Cecil* 191).

^{lxxxix} *Burgh Anecdotes* vii. The French, 'madly aping the British (who were considered the trend setters of Europe), in fact snapped up "*les pianos anglais*".' (Swan 1981:51). The French singer Albanèse addressed the instrument pathetically: 'Quoi cher ami, tu me viens de l'Angleterre? Hélas! comment peut-on lui déclarer la guerre?' (*L'Avant-coureur* 1771 q. Closson 1944:96). More ironically, the Chevalier de Piis equated the English character with the heavier sound of the piano: 'Fier de ses sons moelleux qu'il enfante sans peine, Avec un flegme anglais le piano se traîne' (q. Brancour 1921:93).

1. 'Accomplishments, Accomplishments, Accomplishments'

1.1. 'Rattling' and 'Piano-forting'

*A crashing, thundering sonata,
of the high-pressure instrumental school just then,
for the curse of pianofortes and society,
began to bring heaven and earth
and the two extremities of the instrument together!*
FRANCES GORE

While Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Weber were exploring new instrumental possibilities to splendid artistic account, the staple fare of popular concert pianists and assiduous amateurs were not their sonatas and concertos, but operatic fantasies, variations and inane programme pieces^{xc} of mechanical and noisy brilliance. Technically spectacular and cheap and easy music were equally shallow, enabling the untalented and lazy to seem accomplished,^{xci} and more industrious young women to exhibit the much-sought-after '[f]loridity of style' and '[d]exterity of execution'.²⁴⁹ The most frequent descriptive word for keyboard facility was no longer the demure 'tinkle' but the busy and unnerving 'rattle', which belongs to the new literary stereotype of the excitable, voluble young lady: 'I am never tired of pleasure. With my aunt Robsey, I was so accustomed to rattling about! Lady Arabella Quin used often to say at Paris, that she saw I was a rake at heart.'²⁵⁰ Hannah More's most frenetically over-accomplished character is called 'Miss Rattle' outright (cf. p. 87).

In a significant number of scenes, the piano is indeed nothing but a noise – 'that general extinguisher of light – "a little music!"²⁵¹ – and used as such. In *Pride and Prejudice*, a young lady gets bored with the bantering between Elizabeth and Darcy and asks for 'a little music': '[T]he piano forte was opened, and Darcy ... was not sorry for it. He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention.'^{xcii} In Mary Shelley's *Falkner* there is also 'but one resource':

'[Y]ou must sit down to the piano. Sir Boyvill is too polite not to entreat you to play on, and too weary not to fall asleep ... I hear him coming. Do play something of Herz. The noise will drown every other sound, and even astonish my father-in-law.'²⁵²

^{xc} Foremost was Frantisek Koczwara's 'Battle of Prague', first published in 1788 and proverbial throughout the nineteenth century. This inexplicably popular piece of trashy programme music became a byword of musical cheapness (cf. Burgan 1989:48-50). 'To hear the battle of Prague most unmercifully crucified by one of these expert daughters of Euterpe, who is not only devoid of *taste* but *ears*, hath frequently been the lot of the writer, whose feelings can only be conceived by those that have suffered a similar torture.' (Henry *Stultifera Navis*, note to XXI:4 p. 87).

^{xci} The pianist and composer Joseph Wölfl describes the conditions of his success in London in 1805: 'I must write in a very easy, and sometimes very vulgar, style [... and] bring forth ... shallow compositions, which do a terrific business here.' (q. Loesser 1954:251).

^{xcii} Austen *Pride* XI:103. For similar scenes cf. Austen *Sense* XII:51 and XIV:123, Austen *Pride* XVI:119 and Austen *Emma* XXVIII:249.

The many rushing semiquavers inspired metaphors from the emerging industrial field:

[Fashion] has converted the pianoforte into a velocipede,^{xciii} and reckons her success by the number of miles which she can traverse in an hour, not regarding the awkwardness or ungracefulness of her method of travelling.²⁵³

One of the unspoken maxims of the age was 'Quantity over quality'.

To enable such speedy journeying, correspondingly mechanical practice methods were developed: Czerny, Cramer, Clementi and many others wrote (literally) hundreds of etudes each, monotonous scales instead of figured bass exercises now formed the bulk of any practice session²⁵⁴ and the metronome was patented in 1815. Hannah More calculated that starting at the age of four and practising four hours daily^{xciv} except Sundays and thirteen travelling days a year, a girl would total 14'400 hours of piano practice, and eager, unwilling or frustrated piano pupils, teachers and listeners became a literary topic. Frances Gore satirizes the retreat of a fashionable family after 'their disastrous London campaign. ... The elder girls, like the coach-horses, looked worn to their last legs; the younger ones had been backboarded, metronomed, and mazurk'd into a most cadaverous complexion.'²⁵⁵

Fanny Burney's *Wanderer*, the story of persecuted young Juliet Ellis, who is forced to earn her living as a music teacher,^{xcv} efficiently characterizes a wide range of people by their behaviour as music students. One familiar stereotype concerns the girl with 'a real genius for music' and a 'haughty indifference [238] about learning [stemming] from a firm self-opinion, that she excelled already'.²⁵⁶ Though hardly able to read music and incapable of going through a complete piece, she dismisses her teacher's model performances as 'a mere mechanical part of the art, which, as a professor [her teacher] had been forced to study; and which she herself, therefore, rather held cheap than respected'.²⁵⁷ The hyperactive music enthusiast Miss Arbe on the other hand is full of 'ready envy, and ... unwilling admiration' because she thinks 'superior merit in a *diletante* [sic] a species of personal affront'.²⁵⁸ She finally shifts her vanity from performance to patronage, and makes her teacher pay by continuously cadged free instruction:

[L]ate in the evening, Miss Arbe, full dressed, and holding her watch in her hand, ran up stairs. 'I have but a quarter of an hour,' she cried, 'to stay, so don't let us lose a

^{xciii} Cf. another travelling metaphor from nature: 'Miss Lavington was *galloping* over a concerto to Sir James' (Hanway *Ellinor* I:ix:115).

^{xciv} Many sources cite similar figures of four to eight hours daily; cf. Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:8, Vetus 'To the Editor' 423, Cockle *Important Studies* 241f., More *Coelebs* XXIII:111.

^{xcv} As Dr. Burney's daughter, Fanny had of course an insider's knowledge of this livelihood.

moment. I am just come from dining at Lady Kendover's, and I am going to an assembly at the Sycamore's. But I thought I would just steal a few minutes for our dear little lyre. ... Come, quick, my dear Miss Ellis! – 'Tis such a delight to try our music together!¹²⁵⁹

Juliet has no choice but to comply, as with the stingy Lady Arramede who continuously tries to obtain musical information outside her daughter's lessons, arrives early for lessons, asks to be played to etc.²⁶⁰ The wealthy grocer Mr. Tedman orders lessons for his only daughter (who is even more vulgar than he): 'Well, then, my dear, come to my darter, and give her as much of your tudeling as will come to [five guineas]. And I think, by then, she'll be able to twiddle over them wires by herself.'²⁶¹ Finally, a 'travelled fine gentleman', self-styled connoisseur and admirer of the arts and Italy, declares 'with a look of melancholy recollection, that The Ellis was more divine than any thing that he had [231] yet met with on this side the Alps',²⁶² and forces his sisters to take lessons. However, these two extremely ill-mannered, rude and lazy girls suffer from 'that weariness, that a dearth of all rational employment nurses up for the listless and uncultured',²⁶³ and although one demands that 'The Ellis shall make me The Crawley. Come, what's to be done, The Ellis? Begin, begin!', her sister echoes 'And finish, finish! ... I can't bear to be long about any thing: there's nothing so fogrum.'²⁶⁴

*Lorsque le pouvoir veut faire taire,
la musique est reproduite, normalisée, répétition.*
JACQUES ATTALI

Being 'long about' the piano had become unavoidable, and wearied not only the practitioners. Like Shakespeare before him, Coleridge coined a keyboard verb, in order to complain about 'Piano-forting, which meets one now with Jack-o-lantern ubiquity in every first and second story in every street'.²⁶⁵ Frances Gore's witty 'Désennuyée' complains of noisy lodgings that she had hoped would be quiet:

I was roused from my dream of bliss ... within four-and-twenty hours of the [new neighbours' arrival], a piano was rattling in the back dining-room, – a harp twanging in the front drawing-room; the footman played the fiddle in the pantry, and [there were] three children and a teething infant Decidedly, the party-wall of a London house ought, by act of parliament, to be two bricks thicker.²⁶⁶

Thomas Hood implores female amateur musicians in his 'Ode for St Cecilia's Day':

Pray, never, ere each tuneful doing,

Take a prodigious deal of wooing;^{xcvi}
 And then sit down to thrum the strain,
 As if you'd never rise again – [383]
 The least Cecilia-like of things;
 Remember that the Saint has wings.²⁶⁷

William Pinnock's claim that a piano-playing girl could 'bear her share towards contributing to the amusement of a party, or diffuse harmony and enjoyment of the most intellectual kind to her own beloved family' nevertheless concludes with an exhortation that smacks of irritation with her practising: 'While learning music, a young lady should ever bear in mind, that its object is rather to gratify the auditors than the performer.'²⁶⁸ Repetitive practice, not gratifying at all, in fact contributed to the continuing silencing and deprecation of musical women.

An obsession with quantity over quality was noticeable not only in the profusion of semiquavers and practice hours, but also in a tendency to practice several instruments: 'A young lady now requires, not a master, but an orchestra ... to worship [8] the idol which fashion has set up.'²⁶⁹ A handbook for governesses lists 'piano-forte, harp, guitar, harmonica, harp-lute, castanets and tambourine',^{xcvii} and complains:

Many a girl is obliged to touch (I can hardly say practise) three, four, and five [of these], with what advantage to her domestic character as a daughter, a female, a member of Society, a friend to the poor; or to her character as a human being and a Christian, it is impossible for me to conceive.²⁷⁰

A silly lady in *The Diary of a Désennuyée* practises even less dignified instruments on an admirer:

[She] will not allow Penrhyn to call his soul his own; – writes him sentimental billets, keeps him listening to her guitar, or flageolet, or Jew's-harp or accordion, or some such trash, merely that his cabriolet may be seen waiting at her door.²⁷¹

Trashiness extended also to pianos: the results of new mass-production techniques were decorated with stamped and nailed-on brass ornaments to imitate the look of costlier pieces. Audiences, instruments and saleable repertoire alike, whether childishly simple or emptily virtuosic, demonstrate a widespread musical practice and a general lowering of musical standards in Britain after 1780.²⁷²

^{xcvi} Cf. William Henry: 'Request to hear some specimen of ... their performance on the piano forte, and you may then set it down for granted, that all the powers of affectation will be called forth, in order to plead a silly excuse.' (Henry *Stultifera Navis*, note to XXI:4 p. 86).

^{xcvii} Wind instruments were still considered unsuitable for women, and so were stringed ones, now that the viol was no longer in use.

The pretence that necessarily results from a combination of fashionable enthusiasm and superficial or insufficient training is often ridiculed in literature. Mary Ann Hanway relates with great gusto how the wife of the villain Campley in *Ellinor, or the World as it is*, mortifies her husband's better taste when called upon to perform at a garden party:

Fully confident of her own powers of pleasing [... she] sat down to the piano-forte, and without feeling one *pang* of remorse, most barbarously murdered Krumpholtz's divine concerto, and with equal coolness and intrepidity, *executed* the '*dove sei*' of Handel, in the strains of a raven in an ague fit; while the mortified Campley was writhing in excess of torture at this specimen of his wife's musical abilities.²⁷³

The ugly and ostensibly pious, but vain Eliza Ellis in *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor*, who is considered a musical amateur 'of the first note',

could make the jacks of her harpsichord dance so fast that no understanding ear could keep pace with them; and her master, Signor Gridarini, affirmed ... that, among all the dilettanti in Europe, there was not so great a singer as herself.²⁷⁴

The narrator provides the 'understanding ear' for debunking Miss Ellis. She is 'in raptures' to hear that he will accompany her in a piano concerto, and so they start *allegro con strepito* as ordered by the composer and continue 'with might and main' until the first solo section.

She then with all the dignity of a *maestro di capella* directed two intersecting rays full at [her meek father at the 'cello], and called aloud, *piano!* After which casting a gracious smile to me, as much to say I did not mean you, Sir; she heaved up an attitude with her elbows, gave a short cough to encourage herself, and proceeded.²⁷⁵

Miss Ellis' ignorant pretence becomes obvious at the first difficult passage, when '[t]ime, tune, and recollection were all lost'. Hugh stops playing, but is rebuked: 'Lord, Sir! I declare, there is no keeping with you!',²⁷⁶ and so the muddle continues until they are lucky enough

to find one another out at the last bar, and g[i]ve a loud stroke to conclude with; which was followed by still louder applause. It was vastly fine! *excessive* charming! Miss was a ravishing performer, and every soul in the room was distractingly fond of music!²⁷⁷

The enthusiastic audience (which includes Eliza's mamma) has of course been chattering loudly during the whole performance.^{xcviii} Such passages certainly reflect the contemporary opinion that badly used music could 'damage the individual's moral fibre' and that 'modern

^{xcviii} The 'little Durands' in *Persuasion* seem to be more genuinely enthusiastic about music, attending as they are 'with their mouths open to catch the music; like unfledged sparrows ready to be fed. They never miss a concert.' (Austen *Persuasion* II:viii:184).

music ... mirrored life's tumults and meaningless activity'.^{xcix} An article in the *Westminster Review* blames the popular piano repertoire:

[T]he wide circulation of all this music, *ad captandum*, cannot but exercise a depreciating influence upon taste, and perpetuate the reign of what is tawdry and false and fashionable among these, whom other nurture might have rendered capable of relishing thoughts as well as sounds, and expression yet more than finger-gymnastics.²⁷⁸

Indisputable but too 'tumultuous' virtuosity can be almost equally off-putting; the tedium of Mary Bennett's exhibitions is almost proverbial. Frances Gore's *Cecil*, a 'coxcomb' travelling in Germany, asks the lovely Wilhelmina for Mozart when, to his horror,

*die Unbegreifliche*²⁷⁹ suddenly burst into a crashing, thundering sonata, of the high-[322] pressure instrumental school ... [with] astounding rattling of keys and chaotic confusion of sharps, flats and naturals.²⁸⁰

Feeling hot and having overeaten, Cecil dreams of murdering a fellow listener who is beating time in ecstasy, and but 'for Wilhelmina's azure eyes and floating ringlets, methinks I could have found it in my soul to include *her* in the massacre!²⁸¹ After her 'extraordinary exertions',²⁸² Wilhelmina goes smilingly to the sofa, and the reader is asked to do Cecil 'the justice to conclude that I assumed a place by her side'.²⁸³ But this is mere politeness.

Jane Austen reserves some of her most cutting and subtle irony for the musical pretence of *listener*. Lady Catherine De Burgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, after exploring the truism that 'no excellence in music is to be acquired, without constant practice', listens 'to half a song, and then talked, as before'.²⁸⁴ Mrs. Elton in *Emma* is whose rhapsodising is typical in its throwaway patronage of ladies that she has heard playing (such as Emma and Jane Fairfax), stereotyped coyness and hectic suggestions of weekly musical parties 'as an inducement to keep me in practice'.²⁸⁵ A whole assembly of similar people is described in *Sense and Sensibility*:

The party, like other musical parties, comprehended a great many people who had a real taste for the performance, and a great many more who had none at all; and the performers themselves were, as usual, in their own estimation and that of their immediate friends, the first private performers in England.²⁸⁶

Against such surroundings, Colonel Brandon is distinguished very early on as the only listener to hear Marianne play 'without being in raptures'. The simple and sincerer 'compliment of

^{xcix} McVeigh 1993:66. Cf. the description of an old-fashioned parlour 'to which the present daughters of the house were gradually giving the proper air of confusion by a grand pianoforte and a harp, flower-stands and little tables placed in every direction.' (Austen *Persuasion* V:42).

attention' which he pays her music inspires her with a respect 'which the others had reasonably forfeited by their shameless want of taste'.²⁸⁷

1.2. 'Accomplishments have taken virtue's place'

*Demosthenes being asked,
what was the grand essential of eloquence,
replied, 'action, action, action'.
And thousands of parents,
with regard to the education of their daughter, would say,
'accomplishments, accomplishments, accomplishments'.
THOMAS BROADHURST*

*In the present mode of educating females, the useful is entirely neglected,
for the more ornamental and superficial accomplishments.
SUSANNA ROWSON*

Priorities in the traditional canon of female accomplishments shifted with middle-class women's increasing withdrawal from practical work and economical production. In 1799, Hannah More compared the former prevalence of 'what was merely useful' to the present, where 'a preference almost equally exclusive is ... assigned to what is merely ornamental'.²⁸⁸ Since instrumental performance consists 'in an exhibition of the person',²⁸⁹ it was classed with dancing and drawing as an 'external' skill and became virtually synonymous with 'accomplishment', more attractive to behold than drawing but potentially more decorous than dancing.^c Curricula were adapted accordingly, but with a striking lack of positive arguments for the educational role of music. Its necessity as a thing of fashion was taken for granted somewhat haplessly, assuming that it was 'unreasonable' to expect

that young [ix] ladies should deem the acquisition of knowledge a matter of primary importance ... Whenever [accomplishments] are made the object of pursuit, let it be done with a proper degree of ardour, and with the wish to arrive at excellence²⁹⁰

The writer merely pleads in the end: 'Only let the mind, in its turns, have a fair chance for improvement.'²⁹¹

So mental improvement was not expected from music, which 'in female studies simply means the theory and performance upon the piano forte, (of late years) upon the pedal harp; and finally, the culture of melody in the voice'.^{ci} Those pursuits are never recommended for their intrinsic emotional, intellectual or physical benefits. The preface to Allatson Burgh's

^c One rare work, Jane West's *Letters to a Young Lady*, does not mention music under 'Female Employments and Studies', but she has an argument for pursuing needlework that is worth recording: 'I think the goddesses all excelled in the arts of female industry, except the hoyden Diana; and you know she *always* continued a *spinster*.' (West *Letters* 417).

^{ci} Appleton *Private Education* 162. For a use of 'the music' for 'piano' cited cf. p. 93.

collection of musical anecdotes for young ladies advertises music as harmless and 'if properly directed, capable of being eminently beneficial' mainly because it prevents girls from reading too many novels 'which are hourly sapping the foundations of every moral and religious principle'.²⁹² Fordyce in his *Sermons* had recommended music 'with more discrimination than the rest',²⁹³ and this 'discrimination' often turned into explicit disapproval from critics who looked beyond fashion.

*Accomplishments have taken virtue's place,
And wisdom falls before exterior grace.*

WILLIAM COWPER

*Under the head of 'exterior' may be ranked all those accomplishments
which merely render the person attractive;
and those half-learnt ones which do not improve the mind.*

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Around 1800 a complex front against the exaggerated weight of decorative accomplishments in female education had formed, and the piano comes in for a fair share of disparagement from people as diverse as the unconventional Mary Wollstonecraft, the spinster novelist Maria Edgeworth, the pious educationalist Hannah More who had vowed never to read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* or James Fordyce, whose conservative *Sermons* were a principal target of *A Vindication*. With women it is not 'business' (of which they had all too little) that is feared to suffer, but their intellectual education, music being 'such a gulph of time, as really to leave little room for solid acquisition'.²⁹⁴ Erasmus Darwin warns in his *Plan for the Conduct of Young Women*:

It is perhaps more desirable, that young ladies should play, sing and dance, only so well as to amuse themselves and their friends, than to practise those arts in so eminent a degree as to astonish the public; because a great apparent attention to trivial accomplishments is liable to give a suspicion, that more valuable acquisitions have been neglected.²⁹⁵

In *Ellinor*, the Amazonian, but good-hearted Lady John Dareall exclaims against the ridiculous diversity and superficiality of a modish education:

'They are to totter a minuet, rattle the keys of a piano-forte, twang the strings of a harp, [307] scream an Italian song, daub a work-basket, or make a fillagree tea-caddie; they are just able to decypher a letter of intrigue, and scrawl an answer; have French enough to enable them to read by the help of a dictionary, *La Nouvelle Heloise* ... Of the authors of their country, of its history, ... of its laws or policy, they know as little as a native of Kamtschatka.'²⁹⁶

George Croly ridicules the 'beauty of the Easter ball' returning from a French finishing-school

very cleverly with a rhyme that implies her outrageous ignorance of Italian (while the speaker's own pronunciation, two lines above, is quite adequate):

A half De Stael, half Eloise,
 To trample the piano's keys –
 To blot black beetles upon paper –
 To light the 'Muse's midnight taper';
 ... To dream of 'Marquis Romanzini',
 (You'd buy the scoundrel for a guinea;)
 To heave the breast, and roll the eye,
 And lisp, 'Di tanti palpiti!'²⁹⁷

The historian Catherine Graham Macaulay insists on seeing women 'in a higher light than as the mere objects of sense'. It is characteristic of her very rational *Letters on Female Education* to comment on a girl's brilliant musical performance with the anecdote about Alexander the Great which Sir Thomas Elyot adduced in 1534 (cf. p. 21f.):

I cannot help reflecting on the many hours which must have been daily devoted to the frivolous task of modulating air into sound. [... it inspires] sentiments of the same nature with which Alexander's dancing inspired Philip of Macedon ...²⁹⁸

The word 'frivolous' indicates a concern both with triviality of music and the vanity it can stimulate in performers who are always put on display.

*There was an exceeding good concert,
 but too much talking to hear it well.
 Though every body seems to admire,
 hardly any body listens.*
 FANNY BURNEY

Thomas Gisborne analyses very astutely the perniciously effectiveness of a *hidden* agenda of accomplishment in girls' education:

Not that the pupil ... is expressly instructed that to acquire and to display ornamental attainments is the first business of life. Quite the contrary. [... She is taught 78] not by express precept, yet by daily and hourly admonitions, which could [79] convey no other meaning, that dancing is for display, that music is for display, that drawing and French and Italian are for display; can it be a matter of astonishment, that during the rest of her life she should be incessantly on the watch to shine and to be admired?²⁹⁹

Maria Edgeworth approvingly quotes a passage from the prison autobiography of the 'celebrated Madame Roland', where she wishes for her daughter's skill to

neither excite the admiration of others, not inspire her with vanity ... I would not make my daughter a performer. I remember that my mother was afraid that I should become a great musician ...: she wished, that I should, above all other things, love the duties of my sex. ... I wish [her] to be able to accompany her voice agreeably on the

harp. I wish that she may play agreeably on the piano-forte ...¹³⁰⁰

Unobtrusive *agreeableness* is a desideratum of female musical performance that can be traced back to Elizabethan warnings against 'hard and often divisions', against virtuosity; but Hannah More, genuinely concerned with exploitation, points out that it is not always musical excellence that impresses:

The outward accomplishments have the dangerous advantage of addressing themselves more immediately to the senses, and of course, meet every where with those who can in some measure appreciate as well as admire them; for all can see [!] and hear, but all cannot scrutinize and discriminate.³⁰¹

The verb sequence in Catherine Sinclair's description of an unhappy society hostess, whose 'conversation, her music, her dress, and her smiles, were all put on, like her diamonds, for public display'³⁰² implies the same disregard for music. Especially in high society, musical parties often featured inferior performances and listless audiences: 'The music, the ostensible cause of the assembly, is wearisome to the last possible degree to the spectators, for auditors they cannot be called'.^{cii}

[M]usic seems of late to be addressed to the eye as well as to the ear.^{ciii} Dexterity of execution, the wonderfully expeditious motion of the fingers, the hand and the arm, cause an equal share of applause with the tones of the instrument.³⁰³

'Equal' was probably optimistic; sound was more likely the last priority.^{civ}

Such visual considerations boosted the vogue which the harp enjoyed around 1800 as 'one of the most elegant objects to the eye',³⁰⁴ whose shape was calculated 'in every respect, to show a fine figure to advantage' while the piano 'is not so happily adapted to grace'.³⁰⁵ In literature, the harp has a role which is practical identical to that of the piano; because of its visual advantages, it is often an attribute of showy and seductive characters like the spoilt Lady Juliana in Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* or Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, while Fanny Price, characteristically, has never heard a harp before coming to live with her rich

^{cii} *QMMR* 7 (1825):297. Cf. Wollstonecraft *Vindication* XII:261f.: 'With what a languid yawn have I seen an admirable poem thrown down, [... 262] and whilst melody has almost suspended respiration, a lady has asked me where I bought my gown.'

^{ciii} Emma Woodhouse, interestingly enough, repudiates the idea that music should be a woman's prime attraction when male infatuation is cited to her as evidence of a girl's musical ability: 'Proof, indeed!... I could not excuse a man's having more music than love – more ear than eye – a more acute sensibility to fine sounds than to my feelings ...'. (Austen *Emma* XXIV:213). Such preference for sensibility to feelings over those to sounds and the favouring of eyes over ears may be read in different ways: Emma is not worldly-wise enough to understand the implications of being watched more than listened to, or she, being a mediocre performer, is being arch.

^{civ} Only a music-lover of firm opinions like Thomas Love Peacock would have put sound first in his critique of accomplishments: 'The only points practically enforced in female education are sound, colour and form: music, dress, drawing, and dancing.' (Peacock *Melincourt* 150).

relatives.³⁰⁶ or. A harp student in Fanny Burney's *Wanderer* concentrates on nothing but her looks:

her whole mind was directed to imitating Miss Ellis in her manner of holding the harp; in the air of [230] her head as she turned from it to look at the musical notes; in her way of curving, straightening, or elegantly spreading her fingers upon the strings; and in the general bend of her person, upon which depended the graceful effect of the whole³⁰⁷

and another only takes lessons because her aristocratic target male maintains that 'nothing added so much grace to beauty as playing upon the harp'.³⁰⁸

It is amusing to see how even an educationalist like Darwin slips into voyeuristic considerations while warning girls of vanity: '[Music is] liable to be attended with vanity, and to extinguish the blush of youthful timidity; which is in young ladies the most powerful of their exterior charms.'³⁰⁹ Susanna Rowson describes an alluring mix of visual and acoustic appeals:

Behold Miss *Tasty* every nymph excel,
A fine, accomplished, fashionable belle.
Plac'd at the harpsichord, see with what ease
Her snowy fingers run along the keys; [110]
Now quite in alt, to th'highest notes she'll go;
Now running down the bass, she falls as low; ...³¹⁰

On William Henry's 'Ship of Fools' those fools 'who superintend the education of children' see to it that

Next, to ensure the brilliant sortie,
Miss strikes the grand piano forté;
Knows lessons, airs, duets, in plenty,
And plays the octave of Clementi.

And, as the body's decoration
Employs one half of this great nation,
Miss to that
science is inducted,
And in each petty art instructed.³¹¹

The body's decoration is aligned with Clementi's difficult octave passages because they are also visually exciting. When the heroine of Edgeworth's last novel *Helen* has put her skill unselfishly and invisibly at the disposal of the company by playing for everybody's dancing for hours, the spiteful ugly Lady Katrine (somewhat older but not yet married) grudges her the cordial thanks. Lord Estridge, whom she had hoped for as a partner, spends the evening

standing at the piano, admiring Helen, and Lady Katrine grudgingly disparages Helen's achievement by allusion to the visual charm of her performance and by a commercial metaphor: 'Our musician has been well paid by Lord Estridge's admiration of her white hands.'^{CV}

Robert Colvill's 'Extempore at a Concert' betrays visual preoccupations in mythological guise: the Latin motto 'Virtute a ingenio in forma, admodum venusta, Nihil amabilius' celebrates beauty, and almost all metaphors are visual:

O form divine! Which Venus self might wear!
That Elegance of mind her best Compeer!
That Syren Harmony inshrined! to grace the tuneful sphere.³¹²

Although 'elegance of mind' makes a token appearance, the main point is that siren harmony be 'inshrined' in an attractive body. In the same author's 'To the Elegant Seraphina', the speaker hopes to

entranc'd behold
Thy silver flying fingers, deck'd with gold,
Roll back the tides of chastest Harmony.³¹³

Even furniture could enter into these considerations, as when an elegant room displays 'most ostentatiously'

the pride, pomp, and circumstance of fashionable acquirements; a grand piano-forte, the most difficult music of the greatest masters, scattered upon it in *studied* confusion; recesses of books filled with the best authors.³¹⁴

The lady who lives in that room, though gifted, also resorts to visual tricks when playing because she is gifted, but lazy:

[W]hen playing in concert [178] one of Haydn's or Pleyel's divine sonatas, she left out many notes in the most brilliant passages, and performed the andantes and adagios so much *con spirito*, that the musicians, who had the difficult task of accompanying, were obliged to skip and wait, and to exert their utmost skill to cover the defects of her performance. She had also learned from some lady players of her acquaintance, when she had put them all at *fault*, to frown, shake her head, and attempt to mark the time, ... making her audience believe, that they misled her, instead of she them, in this musical *chase*.³¹⁵

At least certain authors, thanks to the unavoidable piano-craze of the age, had enough technical knowledge of piano playing to deconstruct such ploys precisely instead of just generally lamenting the moral evils of constant performing.

^{CV} Edgeworth *Helen* 174. Helen, who is not interested in Lord Estridge, avoids such insults the next evening: '[She] did not play, but joined the dance, and with a boy partner, whom nobody could envy her.' (II:vi:174).

2. 'She would be a match for any man, who has any taste for music!'

The musical industriousness incited by the pianoforte was increased by the extremely high value that accomplishments were attaining on the marriage market. An ambitious mother imagined in Maria Edgeworth's *Practical Education* considers turning her daughter into an 'automaton',³¹⁶ eight hours a day for fifteen years:

'For one [private] concert ... I think it would be too high a price. Yet I would give anything to have my daughter play better than any one in England. What a distinction! ... She would be a match for any man, who has any taste for music!'³¹⁷

Such impersonal ambitions were harboured in a period that knew also, as social historians like Lawrence Stone tell us, increased freedom of choice in marriage and an ideal of marriage based on mutual affection, emotional and erotic components. The flourishing genre of the courtship novel focuses specifically on the (very limited) opportunity for autonomy that young women enjoyed before they married and which should be used to choose a husband wisely: 'The overriding message ... is that a woman, in considering a suitor, should be looking for qualities that make for a good husband, and not for those that make a beguiling lover.'³¹⁸ The question was of course also which qualities in a girl would attract a desirable mate, and intensifies the current debate about female education. The pianoforte moves further towards the centre of the literary stage, appearing in a range of predominantly pre-nuptial scenes which are longer and emotionally more elaborate. Most of these passages implicitly mock the contradiction between the aim of a harmonious, fulfilling companionship and the ridiculously hectic music-making that seemed necessary for the clinching of any middle-class marital union, while the damaging role which this instrumentalization of musical performance played in the education and socialization of young girls was openly criticized in educational tracts and satirical narratives.

*The ladies at the harp, piano,
The gent the violin.*
RICHARD COBBOLD

The intense focus on matchmaking further stabilized the feminization of music^{cvi} and especially the pianoforte, which had made female musicianship so much more prominent. A letter from the keen amateur violinist Dr. Berkenhout to his son illustrates this further shift

^{cvi} An article in the *Quarterly Musical Review* defensively blames 'that courtly pandar to vice and effeminacy, LORD CHESTERFIELD', (QMMR (1820) 7) for the notion of instrumental performance as effeminate.

beautifully:

As to the harpsichord^{cvii} – I once sat playing upon that instrument, in a room next the square when I then lived. As two gentlemen were passing the window, I heard one of them exclaim: 'I hate to see a man at the harpsichord!' I had never before annexed the idea of effeminacy to that instrument, but from that moment, I began to be of that gentleman's opinion.³¹⁹

For other musical activities, careful balancing was still recommended:

No one doubts that a good scholar may be also a good musician ...; the only question with the public is, which is the business, and which the recreation; and, if each be kept in its proper place, the union is applauded and desired.³²⁰

Dr. Berkenhout reminds his son that 'a man of science should have some knowledge of music theory ('science'), but be wary of performance which is 'delightful' and therefore 'very improper for those who have no time to spare'.³²¹ Music is a relaxation which provides neither fresh air nor exercise, and the 'relief which was at first admitted as a handmaid to Study, [may threaten to become] her mistress: nay, the baggage has sometimes been so insolent as to turn her mistress out of doors'.^{cviii} The metaphor marginalizes music-making as feminine and socially inferior, if not illegitimate. Patronizing music titles like *A Pleasant Variety of Little Sonatinas set very easy for the Piano Forte on purpose to encourage the young ladies to play this fashionable instrument* with their multiple diminutives and undignified adjectives clearly demarcate piano playing unmanly. A large repertoire of 'accompanied' piano pieces with an optional and easier-to-perform violin or flute part for the gentleman satisfied the demand for 'an opportunity to perform in a manner consistent with established roles of the sexes'³²² without too much undue effort for the men and without their having to condescend to four-hand playing.

In fiction, the rareness of male performers outside sentimental courtship scenes reflects those attitudes. The one musical husband who is praised by his wife is Lord Delacour in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* – and although he does play the flute (cf. p. 98), Lady Delacour focuses on his connoisseurship:

^{cvii} The word 'harpsichord' as a default term for 'keyboard instrument' occurs as late as 1804, and occasionally the terms 'piano' and 'harpsichord' occur in the same texts with no perceptible difference in association. This reflects the 'long transition' of their peaceful coexistence (cf. Schott 1985:29); amateur musicians who could not afford a piano continued to use their harpsichords and spinets for music such as *The Ladies Companion, or a complete tutor for the Forte, Piano Forte or harpsichord*.

^{cviii} Berkenhout *Letters* XIX:185. This is said with regard to mastering the violin which would require eight hours of practice a day in order to 'excel ... as a *gentleman performer*' (XIX:165). Gentlemen were advised to learn thorough-bass, the cello or the 'tenor' (viola) because they are suitable for performances of 'ancient' (i.e. baroque) music which had intellectual prestige, and because they required 'good judgement of the player, though not his great execution.' (cf. Irving 1990:137).

I can tell you he has really a very pretty taste for music, and knows fifty times more of the matter than half the dilettanti who squeeze the human face divine into all manner of ridiculous shapes by way of [295] persuading you they are in ecstasy!³²³

Other musicians tend to be eccentric^{cix} or emotionally unreliable. Lord Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham, the only dedicated male pianist I have come across, relies on 'a piano-forte in my room, and a private billiard-room'³²⁴ as his only resources from the beer-swilling vulgarity of his fellow students at Cambridge; he was described by Tennyson as a 'rouged and padded fop' and by Fraser's Magazine as a 'silver fork polisher'.³²⁵ In *Modern Accomplishments*, the rich arts enthusiast Sir Philip Barnard is 'killing time in the mornings at the gallery, and murdering his music master at home',³²⁶ and a young aristocrat's education which includes music is described as 'more brilliant than solid' in *Ellinor*:

[H]e did not think it necessary to be a profound scholar, he rode, fenced, and danced à la merveille, spoke French and Italian fluently, could draw prettily, accompany a song with his violin decently, and get through his part in a quartet party with tolerable precision.³²⁷

This young man is, though attractive, not worthy of marrying the heroine.^{cx} The female perspective of courtship novels implies a vital interest in the worthiness of potential partners which also extended to men's social use of music; however, it was women's command of it that remained central for the marriage market.

2.1. 'The net of courtship and the cage of matrimony'

The few literary examples of the smooth music-into-marriage plot do not stress female accomplishment as a one-way attraction, but present music-making as a shared activity which is taken seriously in sentimental plots and at least not ridiculed in others. Commercial convention solidifies at the piano in Thomas Love Peacock's *Melincourt*. 'Mr Derrydown tête-à-tête at the piano with Miss Celandina, with whom he was singing a duet'³²⁸ confirms suspicions that he has indeed given up on the heroine, Anthelia Melincourt, and 'thrown himself at the feet' of Miss Celandina Paperstamp, and since the match is financially suitable, the wedding is already arranged when the two are making music. In Ann Radcliffe's *Sicilian*

^{cix} A real-life aficionado was the shotgun expert and amateur pianist Peter Hawker, who regularly recorded his musical activities in a diary: 'I this day entered my new abode, hired a piano, &c. ... Got delightfully settled ..., and had my first lesson in music with Mr. Jerome Bertini, after having lost above six months' practice, owing to the accident to my finger.' (Hawker *Diary* I:211). 'Went over ... to Itchen, and spent a delightful evening at the pianoforte with the Apollo of the place, Mr. William Griesbach.' (II:115).

^{cx} Cf. also Mr. Arnold in *Sidney Bidulph*, p. 63.

Romance, music nourishes a nascent passion: Julia encounters Count Hippolitus de Vereza in the very first chapter, and becomes so restless with incipient love that her 'lute and favourite airs lost half their power to please'.³²⁹ As so often, the lute is a code for romantic solitude, and not a historical detail, for later that day, Julia plays with her brother Ferdinand (suitably a 'cellist) at 'a concert, which was chiefly performed by the nobility',³³⁰ and on this social occasion she performs on the piano, quite regardless of the fact that the book is set 'towards the close of the sixteenth century'.^{cxii} After her display of 'delicacy and execution that engaged every auditor',³³¹ Ferdinand asks Vereza to accompany his sister in a duet, and her 'pride of conscious excellence' helps her to play her best.

The air was simple and pathetic, and she gave it those charms of expression so peculiarly her own. She struck the chords of her piano forte in beautiful accompaniment, and towards the close of the second stanza, her voice resting on one note, swelled into a tone so exquisite, and from thence descended to a few simple notes, which she touched with such impassioned tenderness that every eye wept to the sounds. The breath of the flute trembled, and Hippolitus entranced, forgot to play. [51 ...] Amid the general applause, Hippolitus was silent. Julia observed his behaviour, and gently raising her eyes to his, there read the sentiments which she had inspired.³³²

This harmonious chamber music, a rare instance of purely musical communication between lovers, prefigures the marital harmony which the pair attain after the proper gothic plot convolutions.

Thirdly, Robert Bloomfield's *May-Day With The Muses*, the account of a village story-telling contest, enacts the same basic scene in an idyllic rural setting. An old man relates how his youngest daughter Jennet, 'all that Heaven could send'³³³ at thirteen, found her husband in Alfred, the son of the neighbouring squire. This youth 'of noble mind'³³⁴ and '[a]ll that could please still courted heart and hand, / Music, joy, peace, and wealth, at his command',³³⁵ plays the piano. While Count de Vereza's excuse for musicality is the fact that he exists in *Romance*, Alfred is unusual because he is blind. While their acquaintance progresses through country rambles and music-making, Jennet keeps,

scarce knowing why,
One powerful charm reserved, and still was shy. [184]
When Alfred from his grand-piano drew
Those heavenly sounds that seem'd for ever new,
She sat as if to sing would be a crime,
And only gazed with joy, and nodded time.³³⁶

Finally, Alfred finds out that she can sing and asks her to. After some palpitation, she sings

^{cxii} I:i:5. For a similar anachronism in *The Fool of Quality* cf. p. 60.

'[w]ith such a voluble and magic sound',³³⁷ that it brings tears to her own eyes, while Alfred trembles 'to his fingers' ends',³³⁸ but goes on playing until he cannot contain his rapture any longer:

Up sprung the youth, 'O Jennet, where's your hand?
There's not another girl in all the land,
If she could bring me empires, bring me sight,
Could give me such unspeakable delight'³³⁹

The happy ending is inevitable; here, too, the empathy expressed by shared music-making promises happiness for a shared life.

Another form of musical co-operation that might lead to marriage was page-turning, which enabled gentlemen of minimal musical literacy to enjoy the warming proximity that music-making offers without exposing themselves and their possible limitations as performers. Again, the works of the music-loving Thomas Love Peacock furnish examples. In *Crotchet Castle*, two young ladies are at music at harp and piano:

Lord Bossnowl was turning over the leaves for Miss Crotchet; the captain was performing the same office for Lady Clarinda, but with so much more attention to the lady than the book, that he often made sad work with the harmony, by turning over two leaves together.³⁴⁰

Miss Crotchet duly becomes Lady Bossnowl and also Captain Fitzchrome and Lady Clarinda get married.^{cxii} In *Nightmare Abbey*, Scythrop becomes jealous of Marionetta^{cxiii} to the point of 'biting his lips and fingers' when he observes her at the harp, where the Honourable Mr. Listless (whom she'll marry in the end), 'sat by her and turned over her music ... The Reverend Mr. Larynx relieved him occasionally in this delightful labour'. Marionetta, who cannot 'debar herself from the pleasure of tormenting her lover', oscillates between chilling indifference and unqualified affection, expressing her caprices also by music:

Sometimes she would sit by the piano, and listen with becoming attention to Scythrop's pathetic remonstrances; but in the most impassioned part of his oratory, she would convert all his ideas into a chaos, by striking up some Rondo Allegro, and saying, 'Is it not pretty?' Scythrop would begin to storm; and she would answer him with 'Zitti, zitti, piano, piano, Non facciamo confusione,' or some other similar *facezia*, till he would start away from her, and enclose himself in his tower, in an agony of agitation³⁴¹

^{cxii} In *Nightmare Abbey* skilled page-turning is just another further game for the Reverend Mr. Larynx, 'a goodnatured accommodating divine' who likes all games and entertainment: 'When at Nightmare Abbey, he would ... drink Madeira, ... crack jokes, ... hand Mrs. Hilary to the piano, take charge of her fan and gloves, and turn over her music with surprising dexterity.' (Peacock *Nightmare Abbey* I:361).

^{cxiii} The characters are modelled on Shelley and his first wife Harriet Westbrook.

In Thomas Lister's *Granby*, the technicalities of page-turning also sustain a scene of intrigue, which is however not orchestrated by a seductive woman player, but by a clever man who does not himself condescend to performing. The cynical society lion Trebeck charms Caroline with his entertaining conversation, but makes her uneasy by the tacit understanding he imposes on her by repeatedly fobbing off a less astute rival (whom she does not care for). Trebeck casts Caroline as the musician and the infatuated Lord Chesterton as her assistant when is preparing to play a piece from memory although an open music book is lying on the piano. Trebeck pretends to leave the office of page-turning to Lord Chesterton with regretful courtesy,

and coming round, leaned upon the piano-forte opposite to Caroline, fixing his eyes upon her with a look of [180] peculiar meaning, which at first she did not comprehend. Somewhat abashed at being so gazed at, she cast down her eyes, and Lord Chesterton thinking that she had got to the bottom of the page, took the hint, and turned over the leaf. Caroline looked up for the purpose of undeceiving him, but in doing her eye met the quick, penetrative glance of Trebeck, ... and looking own again, went on mechanically with her air; and presently another leaf was turned over. Caroline ... again looked up, that she might release the young Lord from his superfluous office; but she was once more met by Trebeck's forbidding eye, ... and was again persuaded ... to suffer his Lordship to depart, in the persuasion that he had gracefully rendered an acceptable [181] service. Unluckily, at this moment, she heard Lady Jermyn's voice behind her. 'Caroline! ... – how can you let him turn over those leaves for you? You are not playing out of that book you know. She is so absent! Thank you my Lord, pray don't trouble yourself; it is only an air from memory.' Lord Chesterton drew up and coloured; the Miss Cliftons could not restrain a laugh; Caroline was going to apologize, when Trebeck prevented her, by saying promptly, 'All my fault, I assure you, Lady Jermyn – Chesterton you saw through it all, I'm sure, and only shammed ignorance, to humbug me in my turn.' Lord Chesterton was weak enough to fall into this trap, and admit that, in fact, he 'did entertain a considerable suspicion, almost amounting to certainty, of the little stratagem which was intended to be practised.'³⁴²

Caroline is angry with Trebeck, but also 'angry with herself for yielding'³⁴³ to this enforced complicity; it goes without saying that as a perfect heroine, she will marry neither the too-forward Trebeck nor the inept Lord Chesterton.

2.2. 'For sale in the great toy-shop of society'

*In the education of females
an advantageous settlement in marriage is the universal prize,
for which parents of all classes enter their daughters.*
PRISCILLA WAKEFIELD

Women are treated only as pretty dolls

and dressed in all the fripperies of irrational education.
THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

Helpless suitors enslaved by calculated piano performance, are, however, a staple of Regency fiction, which is, on the whole, singularly explicit and unsentimental about the basically economical motivations of match-making. In William Combe's 'Dance of Death', the miser Gripus spends money readily for his daughter's education. 'To give her beauty consequence',³⁴⁴ he has her tutored in piano, harp and singing, hoping that

her charming face,
Heighten'd by each acquir'd grace,
Would, by the aid of Cupid's dart,
Seize on some wealthy Damon's heart,
Who, without asking for a Dower,
Would lead her to the Nuptial Bower.³⁴⁵

Far cruder allusions to the 'sale' of girls are frequent. A lady finds 'the market ... overstocked with accomplished young ladies';³⁴⁶ a father calls young girls victims of 'their artificial education, which studiously models them into mere musical dolls, to be set out for sale in the great toy-shop of society',³⁴⁷ and a beautiful girl is described as being 'constantly exhibited at all the elegant amusements in London ..., evidently to be disposed of to the highest *bidder*'.³⁴⁸ Robert Bage was only one writer to use the expressive term '40'000 pounder' for a girl with this amount of fortune.³⁴⁹ Money was central, as Bage's reflection on a newly impoverished heiress illustrates: 'When I have enumerated her accomplishments, who would believe, that a diminution of a single cypher in her fortune – a simple taking away of 0 from 5000 l. – should change the hearts of men.' Besides being beautiful and well-read, the girl is

no small proficient in music; and could actually perform several songs upon the piano forte, very much to the envy of her less accomplished companions. And must money be added to all this? Heavens! what things are men.³⁵⁰

This clearly shows the limitations of accomplishments on the market; Jane Austen implies that the ignorant and vulgarly pushy Augusta Hawkins, the future Mrs. Elton, is considered to possess 'all the usual advantages of perfect beauty and merit' *because* she is 'in possession of an independent fortune, of so many thousands as would always be called ten'.³⁵¹ If, however, financially similarly endowed girls were competing, music was an essential means to snatching prizes in the 'matrimonial lottery'.³⁵²

Upon 'coming out', the multitude of subjects, skills, and employments which 'dancing-masters, music-masters and all the tribe'³⁵³ taught, were reduced to the most immediately

erotically attractive ones. The busy Miss Rattle, one of the unsuitable candidates which the protagonist of Hannah More's inverted courtship novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* discards, concludes the enormous list of her masters and studies:^{cxiv} 'I shan't have a great while to work so hard, for as soon as I come out, I shall give it all up, except music and dancing.'³⁵⁴ Coelebs' eventual father-in-law calls this 'a Mahometan'^{cxv} education. It consists entirely in making woman an object of attraction',³⁵⁵ and Mary Wollstonecraft uses the same comparison: 'Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio!'³⁵⁶

*We have heard Miss That or This, or Lady T'other,
Show off – to please their company or mother*
LORD BYRON

*Sometimes, 'tis the mother; whose dear only child,
Out of love, is infallibly ruined and spoiled.*
CHARLES DIBDIN

What is not very 'Mahometan' about the Regency marriage market as represented in fiction is the dominant role of mothers or aunts who take on the task of preparing their daughters 'for sale'. Neglect or wrong educational priorities are frequently shown to have disastrous consequences in a daughter's life. Sometimes practising the piano is a mere excuse to get rid of a young daughter: 'As soon as they got home, Lady Delacour sent her daughter to practise a new lesson upon the pianoforte'³⁵⁷ to attend to a more interesting interlocutor. Jane Austen's evil Lady Susan shunts her fifteen-year-old daughter aside to enjoy an affair; the girl is in a small room with a piano for most of the day 'practising as it is called; but I seldom hear any noise ...; what she does with [46] herself there I do not know.' The room overlooks a garden where Frederica can 'see her mother walking for an hour together in earnest conversation with Reginald. ... Is it not inexcusable to give such an example to a daughter?'³⁵⁸ Most literary mothers, however, are in deadly earnest about rearing an accomplished

^{cxiv} 'I have gone on with my French and Italian of course, and I am beginning German. Then comes my drawing master; he teaches me to paint flowers and shells, and to draw ruins and buildings, and to take views. He is a good soul, and is finishing a set of pictures, and half a dozen fire-screens which I began for mamma. ... I learn varnishing, and gilding, and japanning ... modelling, and etching, and engraving in mezzotinto and aquatinta, for Lady Di. Dash learns etching, and mamma says, as I shall have a better fortune than Lady Di, she vows I shall learn every thing she does.' There are masters for piano, harp, singing and dancing ('I can stand longer on one leg already than Lady Di') and 'odd minutes' are spared for history, geography, astronomy, grammar, botany, chemistry, and experimental philosophy. (More *Coelebs* XXIII:108).

^{cxv} Mary Wollstonecraft uses that term to reproach Milton for his description of Eve which seems intended 'to deprive us of souls, and [90] insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation.' (Wollstonecraft *Vindication* II:89f.).

daughter.

In her novel *Patronage*, Maria Edgeworth gives a richly detailed account of such stratagems. Mrs. Falconer invests in dresses and cooking and sees to it that there is 'no party without the Miss Falconers! – Miss Falconers must sing – Miss Falconers must play – ... No piano, no harp could draw such crowds as the Miss Falconers.'³⁵⁹ After describing some performances in fashionable enthusiasts' jargon, the narrator proceeds to 'destroy all the stage effect and illusion', by describing the scheming that enables certain performances. First, we see Miss Georgiana Falconer presiding over the assembled young ladies consulting about music for the evening 'in various tones of ecstasy and of execration' and deprecating any absent girls' lack of taste or 'voices like cracked bells'.³⁶⁰ Georgiana's main difficulty, however, are the Miss La Grandes, in whose presence she absolutely refuses to play.

'Why, my dear love,' said Mrs. Falconer, 'surely you don't pretend to be afraid of the Miss La Grandes.' 'You!' – cried one of the chorus of flatterers ... '[S]till, somehow, I can never bring out my voice before those girls – If I have any voice at all, it is in the lower part, and Miss La Grande always chooses the lower part – Besides, Ma'am, you know she regularly takes 'O Giove Omnipotente' from me – But I should not mind that even, if she would not attempt poor 'Quanto Oh quanto è amor possente' – There's no standing that! Now, really, to hear that so spoiled by Miss La Grande.'³⁶¹

Immediately after, the Misses La Grande arrive and 'after the first forced compliments, silence and reserve spread among the young ladies'.³⁶² When the concert begins, 'who can describe the anxiety of the rival mothers, each in agonies to have their daughters brought forward and exhibited to the best advantage.'³⁶³

Now Mrs. Falconer steps in with masterly strategy, 'superior in ease inimitable'.³⁶⁴ She makes all the other girls sing and play at great length until particularly the Miss La Grandes have 'exhausted the admiration and complaisance of the auditors. Then she relieve[s] attention with some slight things from [Georgiana's younger sister], such as could excite no sensation or envy.'³⁶⁵ Finally, in the presence of the target Count, Georgiana herself is made to play and even gets to perform her favourite warhorse:

'[I] could not ask Miss Crotch to play any more, till she had rested [and so] Georgiana! for want of something better, do try what you can give us – she will appear to great disadvantage of course – My dear, I think we have not had O Giove Omnipotente.' 'I am not equal to that, Ma'am,' said Georgiana, drawing back, 'you should call upon Miss La Grande.' 'True, my love, but Miss La Grande has been so very obliging, I could not ask. ... Try it, my love – I am not surprised you should be diffident after what we have heard ... but the Count, I am sure, will make allowances.'³⁶⁶

The Count is predictably enchanted, but to no ultimate avail: 'Though every where seen, and

every where admired, no proposals had yet been made adequate to [the Misses La Grande's] expectations.³⁶⁷

The quiet glee which announces the failure of such scheming is typical for the profoundly critical stance narrators take of such failure in the vital task of morally educating a daughter, although many texts are far more explicit, repeatedly visiting the failings or absence of the mother on the girls by dealing out major disaster. In Elizabeth Inchbald's bestseller *A Simple Story*, Lady Matilda's mother carefully instructs her in ornamental arts, but dies young, unable to bear being cast off for adultery by her husband. First, Matilda's education continues at a finishing school:

Her little heart [5] employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishment, had left her mind without one ornament, except those which nature gave, and even they were not wholly preserved from the ravages made by its rival, *Art*.³⁶⁸

When a tutor takes her in hand, Matilda becomes at last an improvement upon her mother:

She was fond of walking and riding – was accomplished in the arts of music and drawing, by the most careful instructions of her mother – and as a scholar she excelled most of her sex, from the great pains [her tutor] had taken with that part of her education ... In devoting certain hours of the day to study with him, others to music, riding, and such recreations, Matilda's time never appeared tedious ...³⁶⁹

While Matilda is 'saved' by later instruction, the narrator marvels at 'what may not be hoped from [338 ...] A PROPER EDUCATION'³⁷⁰ while the reader is invited to consider, in a secondary character, 'the pernicious effects of an improper education in the destiny which attended the unthinking Miss Milner'.³⁷¹

The heroine of Mary Wollstonecraft's early novel *Mary* is a gentle, impressionable girl who is careful about 'the shews of things' and has no opinions of her own:

She was educated with the expectation of a large fortune, and of course became a mere machine: [2] the homage of her attendants made a great part of her puerile amusements, and she never imagined there were any relative duties for her to fulfil: ... the years of youth [were] spent in acquiring a few superficial accomplishments, without having any taste for them.³⁷²

She readily marries the man her father proposes, promising 'to love, honour, and obey, (a vicious fool,) as in duty bound.'³⁷³ Too much novel reading and the perusal of sentimental pictures, though not musical performance, enhance the character weakness which leads to neglect of her daughter. Reconciled with her, she nevertheless dies of something lingering. In Susanna Rowson's collection *Mentoria*, the early-orphaned volatile Celia is left with her mind 'entirely uncultivated' at the expense of decorative accomplishments: 'There had been no

pains taken to instil into her mind a true knowledge of what religion meant; she had not been taught that to keep her passions under the controul of reason'.³⁷⁴ The results are disastrous when her father decides to remarry (in her interest, as it were): 'She gave vent to her passion in the most unbecoming terms, called her father cruel, unjust and unfeeling, and vowed she would die sooner than call Miss Nelson mother.'³⁷⁵ Miss Nelson, though a paragon of virtue, is unable to reach Celia and dies of grief when the girl elopes with an unsuitable husband. Although the young couple are reconciled to the father, a happy ending is denied: 'Neglected, nay despised, by her husband, [Celia] launched into every species of dissipation, and was in a few years reduced to a state of absolute penury [and remorse].'³⁷⁶

Modern Accomplishments punishes a mother, the unhealthily music-crazy Lady Fitz-Patrick, through the callousness of her daughter Eleanor who takes after her. The girl is dragged everywhere to show off her proficiency on harp and piano, but does not (no longer?) care for music herself, and has no appreciation for good music:^{cxvi}

Sir Richard, who was passionately fond of music, seldom heard the most distant sound of her instrument, which she always closed hastily at his approach, because his favourite composers were Handel and Corelli, whom she had long condemned to oblivion as antediluvians³⁷⁷

When the mother is sick (hastening her own death by foolishly attending a concert), she reaps the reward of her failure as a parent in Eleanor's callousness, who refuses even to read aloud to her:

'Excuse me, mamma! It is really impossible! I have never practised my part on the harp for that duet ... tomorrow ...' 'My dear, I must not suffer you to touch the harp at present; if it were piano-forte I should not care, but there is no escape from the sound of a harp, and every chord will go through my brain like knife.'³⁷⁸

Not only disappointment but outright death may be the consequence of a deficient education; and pains are always taken to mention that accomplishments played a decisive part in undervaluing ethics.

The most spectacular consequences of excessive parental ambition occur in Hector Macneil's verse narrative *Bygone times*, where a whole family is ruined by the 'vain vaunter' of a father, who is holding 'himsel up aboon his station, / Wi' brag, and shew, and affectation'.³⁷⁹ His wife is an accomplice in the (musical) class transgression that will undo them all:

^{cxvi} Cf. the chattering music enthusiasts in *Patronage* who deprecate 'old-fashioned' music: 'Handel, Corelli, and Pergolese, horrid!' (Edgeworth *Patronage* II:xxiii:336).

... vogie o' her dochter's beauty,
 A thoughtless Mither tint her duty,
 And sent her bairn to thae sam schools
 Whar nought is seen but fashion'd fools; [23]
 Gat Maisters in, albeit she saw na
 The use o' French or the Piana.³⁸⁰

Together with 'flaring' finery, French and 'piana' are the girl's ruin; the foolish mother gives evening parties and private balls and '– at last nae doubt / To mak things sure, she gae a

*Rout!*³⁸¹ Without further details, we are finally informed that 'sweet Myzie ... pined wi' sorrow and vexation, / Mourning a blasted reputation',³⁸² and died shortly, pulling her family into ruin with her; they are left '[w]ithout a hame, or friendly shelter!'³⁸³

The element of seduction which is inherent in what is basically a story about class transgression is quite rare; most other instances either rework the lascivious (foreign) music-master topic as farce^{cxvii} or edifying tale of elopement.^{cxviii} Such extremes had no future as a plot element. On the other hand, the more muted negative outcomes of matchmaking failure (as in the case of Mrs. Falconer above) or unhappy resulting marriage foreshadows a Victorian agenda: deceptive and superficial accomplishments are denounced as such by appearing as perniciously effective for bad matches rather than instrumental for successful ones. The same Miss Falconers help to rope in an unattractive aristocratic suitor for girl who is depressed after a fascinating but unsuitable young man has been shipped off to the West Indies:

In the course of a fortnight Miss Falconer ... flattering, pitying, and humoring her, contrived to recover the young Lady from this fit of despondency, and produced her again at musical parties. She was passionately fond of music; the Miss Falconers played on [88] the forte piano and sung, their brother John accompanied exquisitely on the flute, and the Marquis of Twickenham, who was dull as 'the fat weed that grows on Lethe's brink,' stood by, – admiring.³⁸⁴

The result is, inevitably, that Miss Hauton lets herself 'be led, in fashionable style, to the hymeneal altar by the Marquis of Twickenham.'³⁸⁵ That is a multiple debunking of accomplishments: only dull men can be caught, and by a merely imagined shared fondness for somebody else's music – Miss Hauton's own playing is never described. Once again the erotic excitement of music turns out to be very much a culturally conditioned reflex: '[M]usic

^{cxvii} Monsieur Gentil in Theodore Hook's *Music-Mad* hates 'de music, – de scrape, and de scratch' because his wife ran away with one (Hook *Music-Mad* 9).

^{cxviii} '[W]hat has she to blame but her own infatuation? This Italian was the associate of all her pleasures; the constant theme of her admiration. He was admitted when her friends were excluded. The girl was continually hearing that music was the best gift, and that Signor Squallini was the best gifted.' (More *Coelebs* XXIII:113). In *Anna St. Ives*, the daughter of a noble and wealthy family plans to elope with 'a man of uncommon learning, science, and genius, but a musician'. (Holcroft *St. Ives* II:xl:124). The story helps Anna to fix her 'half-staggering resolution' to marry the suitor her parents have chosen.

is universally admired even by those who have the misfortune to have no taste for it'.³⁸⁶ Once marriage is achieved, the conditioning ceases to be effective.

The individual is now married to a man who dislikes music!
HANNAH MORE

*After young women are settled in life,
their taste for drawing and music generally declines.*
MARIA EDGEWORTH

The absurdity of training girls to an art that was so briefly necessary was often satirized. A vulgar matchmaking aunt in Edgeworth's *Belinda* complains about her ungrateful niece:

There's your cousin Joddrell refused me a hundred guineas last week, though the piano forte and harp I bought for her before she was married stood me in double that [127] sum, and are now useless lumber on my hands; and she never could have Joddrell without them, as she knows as well as I do.³⁸⁷

If music was needed to get Joddrell, it was not necessary for keeping him; very probably he does not like music. The zealous governess Miss Marabout in *Modern Accomplishments*, who oversees Eleanor Fitz-Patrick's crazy accomplishment gathering and causes her near-ruin, obviously distorts the facts when she complains that her best pupil gave up music after marrying.

'It was a sad mortification to me, and must disappoint her husband extremely, as he is distracted about music; but we might have expected it, as really no young ladies ever keep up accomplishments after they marry.'³⁸⁸

Jane Austen also has such laments, always patently insincere. The indolent Lady Middleton 'celebrated [marriage] by giving up music, although by her mother's account she had played extremely well, and by her own was very fond of it',³⁸⁹ and Mrs. Elton numbers music among the things she had to give up for her 'caro sposo': '[Married women], you know – there is a sad story against them. They are but too apt to give up music.'³⁹⁰

All that alludes to the fact that music was a mere trap. The worldly-wise young Lady Honoria in Fanny Burney's novel *Cecilia* knows that

'[N]ot a creature thinks of our principles, till they find them out by our conduct: and nobody can possibly do that till we are married, for they give us no power beforehand. The men know nothing of us in the world while we are single, but how we can dance a minuet, or play a lesson upon the harpsichord.'³⁹¹

A disappointed husband in *Nightmare Abbey* testifies to this:

'[T]he effect [of accomplishments] is certainly this: that one is pretty nearly as good as another, as far as any judgment can be formed of them before marriage. It is only

after marriage that they shew their true qualities, as I know by bitter experience.¹³⁹²

More's *Coelebs* states outright that

'[T]he excellence of musical performance is a decorated screen, behind which all defects in domestic knowledge, in taste, judgment, and literature, and the talents which make an elegant companion, are creditably concealed.'¹³⁹³

2.3. Familiar warnings II

*Miss to piano proudly will attend,
Jabber bad French, but Stockings blush to mend*
ANONYMOUS 1822

Susanna Rowson rhymed: 'A girl that is once thought a beauty, / Scarce ever hears of virtue, sense or duty.'¹³⁹⁴ The relative weight of these three endangered values, translatable as morals, intelligence and good housekeeping, depended largely on class. The country squire's wife in one of Henry Francis Lyte's verse tales is 'accomplished, mannered, lady-like and fair', a model of her kind, lacking only the useless or obnoxious mannerism of a real lady, including the piano:

She read few novels, seldom screamed, or fainted,
Dangled no reticule, was flounced nor painted;
And thought her hands were made for something more
Than nursing up in kid, or running o'er
Piano keys. She could both mend and make,
Wash and get up small linen, boil and bake;
And her made-wines, her puddings, and preserves,
What tongue can speak of them as each deserves?¹³⁹⁵

An excellent equilibrium is also sketched by a respectable farmer's son in Thomas Love Peacock's *Gryll Grange*, who says: '[I]f I had a nice wife, that would be a good housekeeper for [my father ...], and play and sing to him of an evening [... 803] and make a plum pudding ... we should be as happy as three crickets.'¹³⁹⁶ When vanity leads to a refusal of the housekeeping duties that surround and contain the piano in Peacock's phrase, or if class boundaries are violated by balancing them badly, music usually shares the blame. The 'musical mania' infected 'all but the humblest rank of persons'¹³⁹⁷ and lower-middle-class girls were frequently warned not to pursue accomplishments above their station: '[T]o cultivate tastes of which the enjoyment is precluded by circumstance may often become dangerous, by opening the avenues of temptation, or at least by inducing a dislike, of not a culpable neglect of necessary duties'.¹³⁹⁸ Music and French epitomized everything that a simple honest girl and wife would

not need to fill her station in life. Priscilla Wakefield reasons that

it cannot be supposed that a butcher's wife will serve her husband's customers, or a moderate farmer's daughter manage the dairy or the poultry-yard with more adroitness, for knowing how to walk a minuet, or to play upon the harpsichord.^{cxix}

Hannah More warned against the display aspect of music:

A woman, whose whole education has been rehearsal [theatrical metaphor], will always be dull, except she lives on the stage, constantly displaying what she has been sedulously acquiring [while ...] well chosen books, do not lead to exhibition. The knowledge a woman acquires in private, desires no witnesses; the possession is the pleasure. It improves herself, it embellishes her family society, it entertains her husband, it informs her children. The gratification is cheap, is safe, is always to be had at home.³⁹⁹

The term 'safe' hints at dangers, and not only for ensnared males. Erasmus Darwin suspected that 'great eminence in almost anything is sometimes injurious to a young lady',⁴⁰⁰ and a manual called *The New Female Instructor* states unequivocally: 'If people will step out of their sphere, and act in a character foreign to that for which they were designed ... many ... become the victims of their own ... conduct.'⁴⁰¹

*Hapless woman!
Crushed by the iron hand of barbarous despotism,
pampered into weakness,
and trained the slave of meretricious folly!*
MARY HAYS

Didactic fiction paints many more warning pictures of those dangers, 'punishment by plot' providing some spectacular storylines.^{cxx} Hannah More's *The Two Wealthy Farmers* dramatizes fatal consequences for the carelessly brought-up daughters of one Farmer Bragwell. They are not interested in household tasks; when their mother requests their assistance in making pastry for a great dinner, they ask disdainfully

'whether she had sent them to Boarding school to learn to cook; and added that they supposed she would expect them next to make puddings for the hay-makers.' So saying they coolly marched off to their music. [... The] Mother found her girls were too

^{cxix} Wakefield *Reflections* 62. Wakefield considers that tradesmen's and mechanics' daughters should not even 'be placed at a school where [ornamental] arts are taught' for fear that they might get a taste for beautiful things incompatible with their 'future allotment'. (58).

^{cxx} William Cox Bennett's 'Tale of Today' of 1862 is a late example. A miller's only daughter is seduced by a 'titled slip of lordly blood, / A few weeks' lounge at the Hall' (Bennett 'Tale' 31f.) and commits suicide. She first appears in a 'cottage parlour, neatly gay, / With little comforts brightened round, / Where simple ornaments, that speak / Of more than country taste, abound, / Where bookcase and piano well / Of more than village polish tell.' (13ff.). This more-than-suitable polish speaks of the exaggerated social ambition that may have ruined the girl. The authorial indignation at 'the suicide's seducer' is a remarkable example of sympathy for a 'fallen' woman.

polite to be of any use They spent the morning in bed, the noon in dressing, the Evening at the Spinnet and the night in reading Novels.⁴⁰²

In another story from *Mentoria* the evil begins with the fact that 'an industrious tradesman can afford to give his daughter, five hundred pounds'. Mamma then decides 'that Miss must be genteelly educated', which leads to many useless and badly taught accomplishments, including 'the very fashionable one of jingling the keys of the harpsichord, with great velocity, though perhaps out of time and out of tune'.⁴⁰³ The girl, idolised by her proud parents, does manage to secure a husband, but makes a 'wretched figure' as the mistress of her family, is derided and blamed and has to expect 'even the censure of her husband, for paying no more attention to matters which so nearly concern his interest'.⁴⁰⁴ He starts drinking, ruin ensues, and in the end the accomplished young lady cannot even feed her children. Charles Dibdin's didactic poem *The Harmonic Preceptor* features sisters who study things such as chemistry, geography and drawing, while another

fags at MUSIC through all its career;
Polyhymnia becomes, without taste or an ear;
 And over the
 keys of the harpsichord flirts,
 With those fingers that ought to mend stockings and shirts⁴⁰⁵

The conclusion is brief: middle-class girls should '[l]eave to fine ladies the Italian shake,^{cxxi} / And learn – *their husbands' shirts to mend and make!*⁴⁰⁶

In the higher classes decorative accomplishments had an assured place because shirts were made and mended by other hands. For such young ladies, even needlework was as uselessly wasteful as piano-playing:

[The young ladies] sang, played, drew, rode, read occasionally, spoiled much muslin, manufactured purses, handscreens, and reticules for a repository, and transcribed a considerable quantity of music, out of large fair print into diminutive manuscript.⁴⁰⁷

Susanna Rowson, an eloquent critic of mindless accomplishments, nevertheless considers that to 'a certain class of women ... these accomplishments are absolutely necessary, to their filling their respective characters with propriety'.⁴⁰⁸ But also for them, they 'should be regarded as amusements,^{cxxii} rather than as occupations, and be restrained within a proper subordination to those pursuits, which are superior in their nature⁵ and consequence'.⁴⁰⁹

^{cxxi} 'Shake' means trill; 'Italian' refers to operatic or other arias.

^{cxxii} The male 'Rich and Noble' in Malcolm's *Anecdotes* 'set forward on their morning equestrian ride' while the women 'read, work with their needle, or play the Piano; nay, little childish games sometimes engage their attention till the hour for Visiting and Shopping arrives.' (Malcolm *Anecdotes* 488).

Apart from mental stultification, more solid attainments might serve in the extreme case of a girl coming down in the world.^{cxixiii} Rowson describes a twenty-year-old destitute orphan as 'a fine young girl to be sure, but she had been brought up in idleness. She could embroider, draw, dance, sing, and play upon the spinnet; but that would not keep her.'⁴¹⁰

In *Mansfield Park*, Mrs. Norris considers that little Fanny's unwillingness to learn music or drawing 'shows a great want of genius and emulation', but tells her more fortunate nieces Julia and Maria Bertram:

'I don't know whether it is not as well that it should be so, for, though you know (owing to me) your papa and mamma are so good as to bring her up with you, it is not at all necessary that she should be as accomplished as you are; – on the contrary, it is much more desirable that there should be a difference.'⁴¹¹

When Jane Fairfax considers selling herself in the 'governess-trade', Mrs. Elton's patronizing advice echoes her difficulties:

'[With your superior talents, you have a right to move in the first circle. Your musical knowledge alone would entitle you to name your own terms, have as many rooms as you like, and mix in the family as much as you chose; – that is – I do not know – if you knew the harp, you might do all that, I am very sure; but you sing as well as play; – yes, I really believe you might even without the harp, stipulate for what you chose'⁴¹²

The tricky social predicament of Fanny Burney's 'Wanderer' perfectly illustrates this. Despite her reluctant (but often successful) efforts to keep herself by teaching music, she depends for a large part of the novel on snobbish or mean hostesses, who are indignant about her accomplishments because they read them as a class marker unsuitable for such a stranded creature: 'And pray where might such a body as you learn these things? – And what use can such a body want them for?'^{cxixiv} On the other hand, her proficiency makes it improbable that she is a princess in disguise (the upper classes being famously unwilling to excel as performers), and people feel free to humiliate her by ordering her to play at parties, until the crude but warm-hearted Mr. Giles remonstrates: 'Tell a human being that she must only move to and fro, like a machine? Only say what she is bid, like a parrot? Employ her talents, exact her services, yet not let her make any use of her understanding?'⁴¹³ The only person to connect accomplishment and social standing favourably is the man who will eventually marry

^{cxixiii} In 1810, Lady Ailesbury complained about the kind of 'modern' education which makes girls 'artists and nothing else, which, if they were to earn their bread, might make them useful. The mind and morals are never thought about, the head is cramful of rubbish.' (Q. Wingfield-Stratford 1930:II:18).

^{cxixiv} Burney *Wanderer* I:I:VIII:75f. In *Mansfield Park*, too, Fanny Price's old Portsmouth acquaintances are indignant at what they perceive as her airs 'airs' when it becomes clear that 'she neither played on the pianoforte nor wore fine pelisses'. (Austen *Mansfield* LX:388).

Juliet. He shares her musical sensibility and is soon in love, musing: 'why, thus evidently accustomed to grace society, why art thou thus strangely alone ...?'⁴¹⁴

*How wretched, how deplorable his fate,
Who gets this fluttering insect for a mate.*

SUSANNA ROWSON

The Wanderer juxtaposes two typical narrative fields with the clear exposition of the social position of music just described. The 'sentimentalist' scenes, where soul-mates (platonic or not) meet over a keyboard or understand each other through overheard playing, concern Juliet and her eventual husband; the 'realist' discourse, which satirizes the marriage-market and the accomplishment hysteria, is reserved for her students. At the centre of the emerging 'closed domesticated nuclear family' (cf. p. 68) stands the new ideal of companionate marriage, and in this context, the primary goal for upper- and middle-class wives is to be an entertaining but rational *companion* to one's husband. The *QMMR* put it as follows: '[O]ur pleasures have ... become more domestic and more dependent upon the choice of such employments as are alike interesting to both sexes'.⁴¹⁵ The ideal marriage was 'based on "the marriage of true minds", the affectionate and companionate union of two freely choosing and equal individuals who are psychological helpmates to each other'.^{cxv} To achieve this, the wife must be educated enough to 'comfort and counsel' her husband:

[T]hough the arts which merely embellish life must claim admiration; yet when a man of sense comes to marry, it is a companion he wants, and not an artist ...not merely a creature who can paint, and play, and dress, and dance⁴¹⁶

The conditional verb forms in Susanna Rowson's didactic poem 'Women as they are' leave no doubt that this is a Utopian scenario:

But would you treat us, scorning custom's rules,
As reasonable beings, not as fools,
... Teach us to scorn those fools, whose only joys
Are plac'd in trifling, idleness and noise;
Teach us to prize the power of intellect;
And whilst inspiring love, to keep respect;
You'd meet the sweet reward of all your care;
Find in us friends, your purest joys to share.⁴¹⁷

More worked out this topic extensively in *Coelebs*, complaining that the current educational patterns are 'not very favourable to domestic happiness' and demanding an education which

^{cxv} Rossini, unpublished manuscript 22. I am grateful to Manuela Rossini for allowing me to quote from her unpublished study *From House to Home: Meanings of the family in early modern English drama and culture*.

could 'form a friend, a companion, and a wife'.⁴¹⁸ In fiction, music is often blamed for the want of such companionableness, and rarely shown as supporting it:

[L]adies spoil their natural gifts by loading them with artificial ones. Those who have many accomplishments, are seldom so pleasant as those who have few. They trust too much to what they can do, and too little [123] to what they can say. I wish the thousand shining qualities, which of course no lady can ever be without, to appear at her tongue's end, and not at her finger's.⁴¹⁹

One rare example of marital friendship cemented by music occurs in *Belinda*. The reconciliation between a completely estranged couple, the oafish Lord Delacour and his witty, desperate and only superficially wicked wife, is initiated by making Lord Delacour use his musical and social talents. And it works:

[H]is lordship got through the evening much to his own satisfaction. He played on the flute, he told the story [... 296] The perception that his talents were *called out*, and that he appeared to unusual advantage, made him excellent *company*: he found that the spirits can be raised by self-complacency even more agreeably than by burgundy.⁴²⁰

However, it is Lady Delacour's young friend Belinda who plays to be accompanied by Lord Delacour on the flute;^{cxxvi} her beneficial role is exerted through music-making, but we do not see music at work between spouses. Even in *Coelebs*, musical companionship is not mentioned amongst the blessings of the perfectly suited protagonists. A positive example of wedded happiness between secondary characters pointedly exists without music:

'I am fond of [music] myself, and Lady Belfield plays admirably; but with the cares inseparable from the conscientious discharge of her duty with so many children, how little time has she to play, or I to listen! But there is no day, no hour, no meal in which I do not enjoy in her the ever ready pleasure of an elegant and interesting companion. A man of sense, when all goes smoothly, wants to be entertained; under vexation to be soothed; in difficulties to be counselled; in sorrow to be comforted. In a mere artist can he reasonably look for these resources?'⁴²¹

The implication is that an 'artist' would have needed so much time to develop her skill that 'virtue, sense or duty' would have suffered. The hero of John Moore's *Mordaunt* would 'willingly relinquish' half the fortune of certain accomplished ladies, were he to marry one of them, 'on [102] condition that she would renounce her painting, and never attempt to speak French, nor to play on the piano-forté, in my hearing'.⁴²² Although few people, fictional or real, are so outspoken, it was acknowledged that men didn't like music – and that it was

^{cxxvi} Also Sir Thomas Bertram has to rely on his daughters for the music which his indolent wife couldn't be expected to produce, cf. Austen *Mansfield* XX:207.

indispensable to courtship. In fiction, strong conventions protect music: blazons listing accomplishments continued to be obligatory for novel heroines, but severe criticism of ornamental skills of course complicated the use of this standard device.

3. Heroine standards

3.1. Irony and subversion

*Accomplishments are the only criterion
by which a girl's education is ever appreciated.*

CATHERINE SINCLAIR

Accomplishment lists introducing literary heroines continue to be standardized and are never internally differentiated individually; no girl is ever described, for instance, as excelling at music while being a totally untalented draughtswoman and a conscientious but mediocre needle-worker. It is the general level and style of the block entity that characterizes a girl as superficial, intelligent, lazy, industrious or perfect. Occasionally, groups of characters are differentiated in little tableaux that emblematised the figures by their activities at a certain moment, such as this scene in Mary Ann Hanway's *Ellinor*:

Ellinor [was] embroidering a waistcoat for Sir James, Augusta practising a sonata of Haydn's; while Lady Fanny Flutter was lolling on a *duchesse*, playing with an Italian greyhound, ennuied to death to know how to dispose of [her] time.⁴²³

The heroine (a poor relation) embroiders usefully and with family feeling; the more light-weight (but redeemable) daughter plays the superficial piano (but music of superior quality); and the aptly named Lady Flutter has none of these resources. In William Godwin's *Fleetwood* the hero meets three sisters, of whom he eventually marries the youngest:

The eldest applied to the art of design ... The second daughter had chosen music for her favourite pursuit; and her execution, both on the piano forte and in singing, was not inferior to that which her elder sister had attained on canvass. The youngest was a gardener and botanist.⁴²⁴

These assorted girls seem to represent the model female collectively.

Two silly girls 'meaning to be the most stylish girls in the place' are deprecated in *Sanditon* by a similar complementary treatment. Forced to move to a small place 'though naturally preferring any thing to smallness and retirement', because of financial straits,

with the hire of a harp for one, and the purchase of some Drawing paper for the other and all the finery they could already command, they meant to be very economical, very elegant and very secluded; with the hope on Miss Beaufort's side, of praise and

celebrity from all who walked within the sound of her instrument, and on Miss Letitia's, of curiosity and rapture in all who came near her while she sketched ...⁴²⁵

However, the proper heroine does everything herself.

In Susanna Rowson's *Fille de Chambre*, Rebecca's 'great taste for music, and a dawning of genius for drawing' endear her to the similarly accomplished Lady Mary, who has

received an education befitting her rank ... she made herself mistress of the fine arts, music and painting, and to the most delicate and judicious choice of the works of fancy, she added an extensive knowledge of history and natural philosophy.⁴²⁶

A third lady is described as 'fond of reading, drawing, music, and fancy works'.⁴²⁷ In the *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* '[t]he feast of reason, and the flow of souls' originate indiscriminately in 'music, in drawing, in conversation, in reading the *belles lettres* – in –'⁴²⁸ – the list is standardized despite the ellipsis that suggests endless abundance. If anything, it is stressed that intellect has not suffered from ornament; but they both have to be of the first class:

[T]he real good he had done for his niece remained in full force, and to the honour of his memory: the excellent education he had given her – it was excellent not merely in the worldly meaning of the word, as regards accomplishments and elegance of manners, but excellent in having given her a firm sense of duty.⁴²⁹

Even if it is her lover who describes the lady, the blazon does not become more individual:

She performed on the harpsichord with great taste and execution, had a soft melodious voice, and sung with judgment. Her mind had been carefully cultivated, which rendered her a well informed rational companion.⁴³⁰

The text supposedly celebrates 'innumerable charms', but they are strictly numbered and limited.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Musgrove comments on this uniformity, after the absent Georgiana Darcy has been praised for her 'exquisite' piano performance: '[A]ll of them [are accomplished], I think. ... I scarcely know any who cannot do all this, and I am sure I never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished.'⁴³¹ The praises of the Pemberley housekeeper at least imply that Georgiana's inclination for music is genuine: 'She plays and sings all day long. In the next room is an instrument just come down for her – a present from my master'.⁴³² Jane Austen also delivers a smart kick to the shin of the women of Charles' family who are actually determined by this discourse: '[T]he [Musgrove] females were fully occupied in all the ... common subjects of house-keeping, neighbours, dress, dancing, and music.'⁴³³ The sharp, worldly Mary Crawford

in *Mansfield Park* ridicules such stereotypes:

'[I]t is very foolish to ask questions ... any three sisters just grown up; for one knows, without being told, exactly what they are – all very accomplished and pleasing, and one very [293] pretty. ... It is a regular thing. Two play on the piano-forte and one on the harp – and all sing'⁴³⁴

Austen herself differentiates accomplishments mainly for her central characters. Of the five Bennett sisters only Elizabeth and the obnoxious Mary are shown as making music,⁴³⁵ and we hear nothing about any of the girls drawing. Elinor and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* are artist and musician respectively,^{cxvii} and Emma's attempt at portraiture⁴³⁶ is symbolic of her wish (and its limited possibility of fulfilment) to impose her own viewpoint on the world. But none of them has a standardized list of educational achievements tagged on.

In fact, heroines' blazons had been in use on for so long that they began to be the object – or vehicle – of ironic subversion, analogous to a development in medieval French novels which Julia Kristeva describes: 'The blazon ... lost its univocity and became ambiguous; praise and blame at the same time, ... the nondisjunctive figure par excellence.'⁴³⁷ After 1800, blazons begin to operate subversively,

deploying the languages of male hegemony, of landed interest and incipient capitalism, for feminist purposes. In other words, this trope ... gestures towards a feminist concern with the prerogative of choosing a marriage partner.⁴³⁸

An example is the gesture of resistance in the opening of Jane West's *Advantages of Education* (which speaks, of course, of a morally successful upbringing):

Consulting a sensible friend upon my intended work, I read to her ... the character of my heroine. ... 'You say nothing,' said Mentoria, 'about her beauty and accomplishments. ... You may put your manuscript in the fire, ... not a soul will read it; who do you think will be interested in the fate of a girl, whom they do not know to be handsome and elegant?'⁴³⁹

By 1813, Eaton Stannard Barrett's spoof *The Heroine* was recognizable as such by its very title, and its novel-crazed protagonist Cherry Wilkinson (self-styled Lady Cherubina de Willoughby^{cxviii}) is aware enough of blazons to despise musical accomplishments as far too domestic. To a critique of novel heroines for their irresponsibility, she retorts that it is better

'than remain a domesticated rosy little Miss, who romps with the squire, plays an old

^{cxvii} Cf. Austen *Sense* VI:24. They each turn to their art in trouble; Elinor sits at her drawing-table all day when Edward Ferrars is at his most mysterious, but characteristically more for others than herself: 'if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account.' (XIX:88).

^{cxviii} Possibly in reference to the character in *Sense and Sensibility*, published three years before.

tune upon an old piano,^{cxxix} and reads prayers for the good family – servants and all. At last ... she degenerates into a dangler of keys and whipper of children; trots up and down stairs, educates the poultry, and superintends the architecture of pies.⁴⁴⁰

Cherry is dismissive of old-fashioned domestic playing (the text may be alluding to Sophia Western once again); the sort of playing she does herself and would probably admire is the fashionable virtuosic kind. In the novel, her only encounter with a piano occurs in the dead of night when she goes exploring a mansion where she is a houseguest and finds a room full of instruments. Although she fancies herself pursued by murderers, her first thought is the stereotypical gesture of an introductory 'rattle':

Intending to run my fingers [177] over the keys of a piano, I walked towards it, till a low rustling made me pause. But what was my confusion, when I heard the mysterious machine on a sudden begin to sound ... as if all its chords were agitated at once, by the hand of some invisible spirit.⁴⁴¹

Cherry screams, is discovered and ridiculed – the piano harboured no Romantic spirit but a very domestic mouse.

Jane Austen, who probably took account of *The Heroine* when revising *Northanger Abbey* for publication in 1818, begins her first chapter with a famous debunking of blazons. Catherine Morland starts out as the quintessential anti-heroine in looks (too bad), mental and physical health (too good) and femininity (lacking). While her French, drawing, reading and account keeping are 'not remarkable'⁴⁴² she is simply hopeless at music:

At eight years old, she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it; – and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life.⁴⁴³

Such strong language is prompted by Austen's intention to protect her heroine from objectification. Catherine is a listener, a recipient of accomplishments, and exempted from ridicule or commodification by her creator. By casting her in the listener's role, she becomes a masculine-encoded, 'stronger' figure.

[I]n many ... points she came on exceedingly well; for though he could not write sonnets, she brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte, of her own composition, she could listen to other people's performance with very little fatigue.⁴⁴⁴

This presages a Victorian tendency to 'exempt' strong, virtuous women characters from

^{cxxix} Possibly another reference to *Tom Jones*.

music.^{cxxx} Catherine is also special because Austen differentiates her shortcomings (music vs. drawing). In her later novels, the project of safeguarding her heroines' dignity is achieved by more subtle means (cf. p. 117f.).

Resistance against the normative power of accomplishment lists is also discernible in John Keats's first description of Fanny Brawne, which ticks off – possibly ironically – several pertinent items:

Shall I give you Miss Brawn [sic]? She is about my height – with a fine style of countenance of the lengthen'd sort – ... her Arms are good her hands badish – her feet tolerable – she is not seventeen – but she is ignorant – monstrous in her behaviour flying out in all direction, calling people such names that I was forced lately to make use of the term Minx – this is I think not from any innate vice but from a penchant she has for acting stylishly. I am however tired of such style and shall decline any more of it – ⁴⁴⁵

Particularly tiring, it seems, was Fanny's rattling: '... she plays the Music [i.e. the piano] without one sensation but the feel of the ivory at her fingers – she is a downright Miss without one set off ... –'⁴⁴⁶ The more conventional praise of a bystander, however, shakes the lover out of his paradigm of verbal 'rattling' for cheap jokes: 'Miss B – thinks her a paragon of fashion, and says she is the only woman she would change persons with – What [14] a Stupe She is superior as a Rose to a Dandelion –'⁴⁴⁷

3.2. Moral variations

*Chaste, correct, and emphatic Performance
is not at all times practised.
ANONYMOUS 1796*

Resistance to the commodification and categorization of girls according to fashionable standards of accomplishment appears also in the guise of a musical taste for simplicity. The celerity of the fashionable style was blamed:

The great power of contrast, the all but impossibilities, which characterize the present style, have absolutely rendered the existing admirers of art incapable of being satisfied with that quiet enjoyment which so fully gratified our predecessors. There is a craving after pungent means of excitement.⁴⁴⁸

In her early *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is not as sweepingly critical of accomplishments as in *A Vindication*. She does raise the problem of

^{cxxx} The Mary Wollstonecraft character in Amelia Opie's roman à clef *Adelina Mowbray* reads history, biography, poetry and novels with her live-in-lover (whom she refuses to marry out of principle) and improves her French and Italian; but nothing is mentioned of accomplishments, art or music.

performance quality and depth of musical knowledge,^{cxxxi} but is basically piously thankful for the blessings of music:

Music and painting, and many other ingenious arts, are now brought to great perfection, and afford the most rational and delicate pleasure. It is easy to find out if a young person has a taste for them. If they have, do not suffer it to lay dormant. Heaven kindly bestowed it, and a great blessing it is; but, like all other blessings, may be perverted: yet the intrinsic value is no lessened by the perversion. Should nature have been a niggard to them in this respect, persuade [43] them to be silent, and not feign raptures they do not feel; for nothing can be more ridiculous.⁴⁴⁹

Wollstonecraft professes to prefer 'expression to execution' and notes that 'the sublime harmony of some of Handel's compositions'^{cxxxii} requires 'sense, taste, and sensibility, to render their music intere-[44] resting. The nimble dance of the fingers may raise wonder, but not delight.'⁴⁵⁰ Such musical detail was below the notice of the more radical feminism of *A Vindication*, but here simple music clearly is a symbol for emotional and moral health.^{cxxxiii} An anonymous author criticizes the prevalent criteria of musical success:

Chaste, correct, and emphatic Performance is not, at all times, duly practised even by Professors of Music; and it is indeed '*Caviar* to the Multitude', with whom Celerity, Noise, Shakes in abundance, and manual efforts of various kinds, pass as proofs of excellence.⁴⁵¹

The term 'chaste' illustrates Sarah Gore's claim that in the eighteenth century music was considered the natural language of the emotions, so that late-eighteenth-century novels distinguish 'truthful, virtuous characters from their false counterparts, by their sensitivity to music'.⁴⁵² With regard to the piano in fiction, Gore's statement can be further qualified: by the end of the century, virtuous characters are, on the one hand, responsive to *simple* and critical of showy performances, but are also, on the other hand, frequently disinclined or downright *unable* to play more difficult music. True musicality, a correlate of moral strength, is opposed to fashionable manual dexterity.

Walter Scott uses unassuming musicality not only as a code for rural Scottish backwardness, but as a touchstone for naturalness, intelligence (which is free to be used for

^{cxxxi} 'Girls learn something of music, drawing and geography; but they do not know enough to engage their attention, and render it an employment of the mind. If they can play over a few [26] tunes to their acquaintance ... they imagine themselves artists for the rest of their lives.' (Wollstonecraft *Thoughts* 25f.).

^{cxxxii} Probably some church aria transcribed for the keyboard, not one of his virtuosic harpsichord suites or sets of variations.

^{cxxxiii} In a not very simple situation (cf. p. 115) Wollstonecraft nevertheless uses the word 'nature' for music: '[I] went to the piano forte, and began to play [73] a favourite air to restore myself, as it were, to nature, and drive the sophisticated sentiments I had just been obliged to listen to, out of my soul' (Wollstonecraft *Wrongs* II:xii:73)

better things) or piety. Miss Rose in *Waverley*, the daughter of the Baron of Bradwardine, exemplifies all of these.

[S]he had made no [musical] proficiency farther than to be able to accompany her voice with the harpsichord; ... To make amends, she sung with great taste and feeling, and with a respect to the sense of what she uttered that might be proposed in example to ladies of much superior musical talent. ... It was perhaps owing to [her] sensibility to poetry ... that her singing gave more pleasure to all the unlearned in music, and even to many of the learned, than could have been communicated by a much finer voice and more brilliant execution, unguided by the same delicacy of feeling.⁴⁵³

Lucy Bertram in *Guy Mannering*, who 'sings her native melodies very sweetly' is liked 'more than for the accomplishments she wants, than for the knowledge she possesses' when she receives harpsichord lessons from a more sophisticated young lady 'with great gratitude'.⁴⁵⁴ In Mary Hays' *Victim of Prejudice*, the description of the playing of a country curate's wife as being done 'with more feeling than skill' may seem ironical, but it is real praise for a family that is everything it should be for taste, modesty and matrimonial and familial affection. Mrs. Neville's voice ('sweet, but without compass') and repertoire suit her pianistic style, singing as she does 'simple canzonets, impassioned airs, or plaintive ballads'.⁴⁵⁵ Conversely, Thomas Love Peacock describes a governess as

[p]erfectly cold-hearted, and perfectly obsequious ... a very scientific musician, without any soul in her performance, a most skilful copier of landscapes, without the least taste for the beauties of nature.⁴⁵⁶

That lady is, aptly, employed by the soulless Dross family, who are composed of 'arrogance, ignorance, and the pride of money'.⁴⁵⁷

Frances Gore uses musical fads to characterize the fashionably silly (if warm-hearted) Marion Armytage in contrast with her more serious and virtuous sister-in-law Sophia Armytage.

'I doat upon music! I think Arthur told me that you play yourself?' 'I sing a little; – I am no great performer,' replied Sophy. 'I suppose you can have had no advantage of masters down here; and I understand you never go to town?' 'Very rarely.'^{cxxxiv} 'Poor thing! – What a pity!'⁴⁵⁸

While Sophy favours the classical English maker Broadwood, who had once furnished Beethoven with a complimentary and much-appreciated instrument, Marian enthuses about fashionable 'toy' instruments:

^{cxxxiv}. Sophy has had lessons from Giuditta Pasta, no less; but Marion immediately tops this: 'Oh! Pasta's style is quite gone by, now. No one thinks any thing of Pasta at Paris. Grisi is twice as popular.' (I: XVI: 237).

'Oh! Don't expect me to like [a Broadwood]. I can't bear any instrument but Herz's or Petzold's! – Petzold's last, with the organ stop and [101] flageolet, and drums for military symphonies,^{cxxxv} are the most perfect in the world.'⁴⁵⁹

Marion Armytage is an accomplished pianist, but although he recognizes the effort that has gone into it, her husband can't stand her playing. The narrator endorses his point of view praise by insisting on the artificiality of her skill:

Mrs. Arthur Armytage was, not by nature, but by art – strictly by art – a brilliant musician. Very few professional performers exceeded her in execution on the piano; and though Arthur would have been content to lay Herz and Hummel and their works at the bottom of the Rhine or the Red Sea, he felt it his duty to commend a proficiency which must have cost his wife so much time and diligence to acquire. He only wished in his heart that her performance had not so much resembled the gabbling of a parrot.⁴⁶⁰

While Arthur recognizes much in Marian that is 'honest and endearing', their tastes are not congenial and her vulgar family is a great embarrassment. Marian's positive characteristics are ultimately vindicated,^{cxxxvi} but as long her obvious deficiencies of taste and refinement need to be represented for the plot, they are borne out by her musical tastes.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, a similar contrast is worked out between the beautiful Countess Lacleur, who loves music, is 'a scientific performer'⁴⁶¹ and organizes concerts at her house. She has 'passed the spring of youth', but her wit prolonged the triumph of its reign' – a wit which the pious narratorial voice is at pains to qualify as 'brilliant, rather than just'. In fact, every positive aspect of the countess' personality is balanced by a reproach, not least of which seems to be – implicitly – her advanced playing. Valancourt, the hero, is impressed, but always remembers 'with a sigh the eloquent simplicity of Emily's songs and the natural expression of her manner, which waited not to be approved by the judgment, but found their way at once to the heart'.⁴⁶² This is the girl who will finally be united to him.

The fact that simple music is not subject to 'judgment' also signifies the advantage of reduced practice requirements:

[A] comparatively moderate dexterity is sufficient to effect all the great purposes of music, those of moving the passions in the cause of virtue, and of exciting sentiments of manly pleasure. ... To attain the stupendous excellence of rapid execution, requires

^{cxxxv} Such military pieces often imitated Ottoman regiments; the craze for all things Turkish was reflected in the tambourine stops of pianos that may have been intended for pieces like Mozart's Rondo 'Alla Turca'. Marion also mentions a 'new man's 'Dance of Death' symphonies, 'with accompaniments of pick-axes and spades. Never was any thing so amusing!' (Gore Armytage I: XVI: 237).

^{cxxxvi} The overbearing temperament of Mrs. Armytage (the 'female domination' of the novel's subtitle) drives her daughter to an early grave and is only just redeemed by penitence at the end, much of it enabled by Marian's finally revealed forgiving warmheartedness.

the unremitting labor of a life; while a much less degree of application would enable a performer to ravish and captivate the heart, if the natural feelings were not superseded by acquired taste.⁴⁶³

While such 'unremitting labor' could only be expended with 'a degree of leisure which belongs exclusively to affluence',⁴⁶⁴ it also smacked of lowly professionalism. The mother of Fanny Burney's Cecilia is asked: 'Your ladyship surely would not have her degrade herself by studying like an artist or a professor?'⁴⁶⁵ Lord Byron, who groaned at 'long evenings of duets and trios!',⁴⁶⁶ complained that the female dilettanti's activity became a 'sort of half profession / when too oft displayed'.⁴⁶⁷ The somewhat self-righteous heroine of *Anna St. Ives* claims: 'I should laugh at all the world were it to tell me it is more difficult to prevent the beginning, growth, and excess [99] of any passion, than it is to learn to play excellently on the piano forte.'⁴⁶⁸ Her simultaneous dismissal of passion and hard-won musical proficiency betrays emotional immaturity and a certain anxiety to dispel the notion that she might be a soulless rattler. The satirical John Mordaunt, who has been cited as hoping to forbid music to an accomplished potential wife, is glad to have a lady love with modest musical pretensions, not because he likes simple music but because he

rejoice[s] in the conviction ... that miss Clifford has spent her time to better purpose. She attempts nothing more than simple airs on the harp or piano-forte, which she accompanies with her own delightful voice.⁴⁶⁹

Such delightful and soulful performance, quite at odds with the rattle of accomplishments, is the second great topic of literary piano scenes around 1800.

4. Sentiment at the piano

Accomplishments are the feature of the Regency piano discourse that absolutely dominates educational treatises. Fictional texts describe a larger array of practices; although musical abilities are not often part of a differentiated individual characterization, musical scenes are highly varied. Scenes of erotic attraction at the keyboard outside the classical matchmaking plot are frequent and the proceedings vary as well as the outcomes, which range from hopeless passion, friendship or marriage to attempted rape. Certain uses of music such as passing the time that hangs so heavily on middle-class ladies' hands (cf. p. 115), are recommended in conduct literature, while other popular narrative elements such as emotional release for a woman's pent-up feelings or the edification of male relatives were explicitly recommended only later.

4.1. Sighing songs

As in the passages just quoted, musical sentiment is preferably called forth by *songs*, and particular songs as love tokens or symbols are a recurring motif. However, the precise significance of the composition or even commission of songs between lovers is not predetermined: music may be effective, deceptive, dangerous – or meaningless. Frederic Delamere in Charlotte Turner Smith's *Emmeline* anxiously tries to read the heroine's partiality from her handwriting:

Her music lay open on a *piano forte* in the breakfast parlour. [115] A song which he had a few days before desired her to learn, ... seemed to have been just copied into it, and he fancied the notes and the writing were executed with more than her usual elegance.⁴⁷⁰

Delamere feels reassured when he finds his portrait under the music; Emmeline, however, breaks her engagement to this high-spirited young man in a striking break with contemporary fictional conventions. Her eventual husband, missing her, 'soothed yet increased his melancholy by poetry and music', and enlists his sister's voice, which he likes 'to employ in singing the verses he made; and he would sit hours by her *piano fort e* to hear repeated one of the many sonnets he had written on her who occupied all his thoughts.'⁴⁷¹ In *The Advantages of Education*, the eminently unsuitable Henry Neville alias Mr. Stanley woos the semi-orphan Maria cleverly with a song which informs 'Queen Nature' that Love has led him back to her, blending 'with thine Maria's name'.⁴⁷² He accompanies himself 'in a masterly manner' at the harpsichord, and is rewarded with a silent smile. The narrator comments: 'Attentions of this delicate kind were, to a young woman of Maria's sentimental way of thinking, infinitely more dangerous than the most passionate address.'⁴⁷³

A love complaint – scribbled by him, and set and sung by her!
– I caught them at it!
THOMAS HOLCROFT

Thomas Holcroft centres an important episode his epistolary novel *Anna St. Ives* on such a delicate – and ambiguous – occasion. Anna is restless because thoughts of Frank Henley have been growing on her. He is the most deserving man she has ever known, but she is hesitating to unite herself to him because her father's financial considerations, which filial obedience push her to accept, favour the rakish Coke Clifton. And although she keeps her feelings in check, she has 'escapes'. One such lapse consists in adapting a melody to an intensely

admiring poem which Frank has left on her music desk, and repeatedly singing it to her own accompaniment. Frank has overheard her:

His whole soul seemed absorbed; but not, as I have sometimes seen it, in melancholy. Satisfaction, pleasure, I know not whether rapture would be too strong a word for the expressions which were discoverable in his countenance. ... Have I not thoughtlessly betrayed him into a belief that I mean to favour a passion which I should think it criminal to encourage?⁴⁷⁴

Holcroft uses the multiple-perspective epistolary form to excellent effect to communicate the views of every part of the triangle, as related to a confidant(e). Frank claims to have left his verses 'very inadvertently' and also to have heard Anna singing her setting of them only by accident:

[S]he had been setting my verses! ... She had collected all her feelings, all her invention, had composed a most beautiful air, and sung it with an effect that must have been heard to be supposed possible. ... This indeed was heaven, Oliver! But a heaven that ominously vanished, at the entrance of Clifton. ... It was impossible she should have sung as she did, had not the ideas affected her more than I could have hoped, nay as much as they did myself. She knew the writing. ... – She sung as if she admired! – The world shall not persuade me that her looks were not the true expressions of her heart; and she looked – ! ... *She could love me if I would let her!*⁴⁷⁵

Later, Anna relates how Franks asked her 'with a tenderness in his voice that was indeed honourable to his heart ... not to be alarmed' and at last requested '[h]is song! – Again, Louisa, he almost struck me to the heart!⁴⁷⁶

He laid the song upon the music desk, and looked – No no – I will not attempt to tell you how! Words were needless; they could not petition with such eloquence – A barbarian could not have refused. I rambled over the keys, hemmed, and endeavoured to collect myself. ... I began to sing⁴⁷⁷

Anna feels guilty, of course:

Do you now foresee ... what happened? – Your brother came in! – To have stopped, to have used evasion, to have had recourse to falsehood would have turned an act of virtue into contemptible vice. I continued. Clifton came and looked over my shoulder. The music was on one sheet of paper, the words were on another, in the writing of Frank. Your brother knew the hand.⁴⁷⁸

Frank leaves, and Anna has to confront Clifton who is speechless with rage.

I knew not how safely to begin. At length, a consciousness of not having done or at least intended to do wrong gave me courage. ... I asked him how he liked the song. Oh! Exceedingly! – It was very fine! – Very fine! The words are Mr. Henley's. I imagined as much, madam. I thought them expressive, and amused myself with putting a tune to them. ... How did you like the subject? What subject, madam? Of the words. I really don't know – I have forgotten – Nay, you said you thought them very fine! [253] Oh!

Yes! – True! – Very fine! – All about love – I recollect. Well, and having so much faith in love, you do not think them the worse for that. Oh, by no means! – But I thought you had. Love in a song may be pardonable. Especially, madam, if the song be written by Mr. Henley.⁴⁷⁹

After a pious disquisition on the need to trust one's future wife, Clifton leaves, but Anna's mind is 'so affected ... that I do not yet know whether ... I have entirely acted as I ought.'⁴⁸⁰ The violent effect of her action on Clifton confirms this suspicion. He expresses intense jealousy and rage; the repeated simple idea 'I came upon them' shows the strength of the associations of a song passing between lovers:

So barefaced! – So fearless! – So unblushingly braved! – Fairfax, I came upon them! – By surprise! – ... My knock at the door was counterfeit. I strode up stairs to the drawing-room, three steps at a time – Swiftly and suddenly – I opened the door – There they sat! – Alone! – She singing a miserable ditty, a bead-roll of lamentable rhymes, strung together by this Quidam! – This Henley! – Nay! – Oh! – Damnation! – ... Set by her! – Ay! – A ballad – A love complaint – ... scribbled by him, and set and sung by her! – By her! – For his comfort, his solace, his pleasure, his diversion! – I caught [255] them at it!⁴⁸¹

After a thousand more words of raving, Clifton decides to rape Anna in revenge, but the book concludes with his pious conversion through Anna and Frank, who get married.

Apart from this highly charged moment, *Anna St. Ives* also contains an example of a far more routine poem: a highly conventional metaphorical poem on Anna by Coke Clifton has no emotional effect at all, but simply continues the tradition of silly poems on ladies at the keyboard. Other such elaborations^{cxxxvii} jar with the pianoforte as much as older ones did with the harpsichord (cf. p. 56f.). Robert Colvill's 'To the elegant Seraphina' addresses the player as 'Sweet Harmonist' and 'Virgin Seraph' and evokes saints, Apollo, angelic choirs and throngs, the muses ('The sweet Nine'), Orpheus, minstrels, 'warbling Philomel', St. Cecilia and Handel, the 'Prime Son of Orpheus'. After a few lines, the piano sonata which prompted such ecstasy turns predictably into 'dulcet strains which charming flow / From thy sweet *harp*'.⁴⁸² In certain pieces such as John Thelwall's 'On a Dog laying his Head in the Lap of a Lady, while she was playing on an Harpsichord, and singing', the cliché is possibly used with irony:

When harmony and beauty join,
What can resist the potent spell?

^{cxxxvii} Such clichés occasionally spill over into prose; Mary Cockle in her *Important Studies for the Female* uses the usual mix of Christian, classical, and fashionable adjectives to describe music and its '(almost celestial) attractions of this delightful accomplishment, having frequently felt its magic spell charming the troubled spirit to repose; and whilst owning its power, have ceased to wonder at the fabled influence of the Syrens' (Cockle *Important Studies* 241).

E'en brutal Instinct must resign;
E'en Reason ceases to rebel.⁴⁸³

Orpheus' art of charming wild beasts is rivalled by 'Melissa's' sovereignty over her pug.

George Dyer wrote several keyboard poems with an odd strain of family sentiment. His ode on 'Two amiable young women playing successively on the harpsichord' does not paint an alluring picture of erotic rivalry, but compliments the girls on the '[s]implicity of virgin hue, / Freedom, and truth, and honour true'⁴⁸⁴ expressed in their playing. The speaker prefers this to more sensuous 'Arabian delights', and in conclusion looks forward to their marriages in a fatherly way:

But oh! how blest the swain,
When each sweet girl becomes the tender wife,
Who such musicians hear, who such may love thro' life!⁴⁸⁵

In 'The Charm of Music' again two ladies play by turns, this time 'to sooth their friend in pain, the author going to pay a last visit to an esteemed friend before her death'; and again eroticism is not doubled but muted and purified by a painful context:

I must go where music could not please,
Unless I sometimes steal
To where Echo, to conceal
Herself, may love; ...⁴⁸⁶

Echo is envisaged as sending '[o]ne note of yours', and so that the speaker 'will cease to sigh, and think awhile of you', sending his own 'meek ey'd sympathy ... to share your feelings'.⁴⁸⁷ Rivalry between the players, as to 'who most shall please' only occurs at the sickbed 'when at still of eve you sooth your friend, / Striking by turns the keys'.⁴⁸⁸

Susanna Rowson favoured a very different outcome from the tender atmosphere which nostalgic female music-making can create: a girl is reminiscently singing a song that accompanied her first encounter with her beloved ('The music soothed and composed the perturbation of her spirits'), and gets a rude surprise.

When [Rebecca] had got nearly through, the remembrance of that scene – the striking contrast of her situation then and now, struck so forcibly on her imagination that she was unable to proceed. She paused, and tears involuntarily stole down her cheeks; her amusement was ended; she rose from her seat, and was shutting the book, when [Lord Ossiter] laid hold of her, ... clasped her rudely in his arms and snatched a kiss.⁴⁸⁹

The rakish lord goes on to add insult to injury by offering Rebecca to 'furnish you a house, keep you a chariot, and settle five hundred a year'.⁴⁹⁰ In an almost identical episode in *Trials*

of *the Human Heart*, the heroine conveniently finds an moonlit organ in a romantic summerhouse and is then kissed against her will.⁴⁹¹ The situation of involuntary (because only overheard) female performance obviously corresponds to attempted rape.

4.2. Family and friends

Dyer's poems are not the only texts which enact situations other than frenzied accomplishment or lovemaking at the keyboard; highly emotional but ultimately platonic music-making between friends and relatives occurs in many prose texts. The narrator of Robert Bage's *Hermsprong*, for instance, falls in love when very young with a lady in financial straits, 'but I was a child, and wholly incapable of giving her the consolation she wanted. At length, indeed, I was permitted to seek crow-quills for her piano-forte,^{cxxxviii} when her grief was softened by time.'⁴⁹² Later, he becomes infatuated with sweet young Miss Campinet, who will eventually be the wife of his friend Hermsprong, and again music is an important illustration of the relationship:

I loved her! – yes, [17] I loved her! But if there be a spiritual affection, such was mine. I thought of her, as of an angel ... With my violin, I have been permitted to accompany her at the piano forte. She has condescended to accept the loan of my books and music. I have been honoured with hers. But ... there was about her a dignified reserve, – a guarded propriety in her most engaging sweetness⁴⁹³

In Fanny Burney's *Wanderer*, the Lord Melbury and Lady Aurora are 'enraptured' and 'almost dissolved with tender pleasure',⁴⁹⁴ respectively, with the heroine's music – and turn out to be her brother and sister in the end! In Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary* music is similarly ineffective in the long run. A friend of Mary's is staying with a benevolent clergyman, and during this stay

a young gentleman, son of a man of property in the neighbourhood, took particular notice of her. It is true, he never talked of love; but then they played and sung in concert; drew landscapes together, and while she worked he read to her, cultivated her taste, and stole imperceptibly her heart.⁴⁹⁵

He leaves and forgets, though, and since she can only resort to, 'by way of relaxation, to play the tunes her lover admired'.⁴⁹⁶

Playing in the family circle, and particularly charming a father with ulterior motives (even if not always with the success of Sophia Western), is another recurrent topos, which is also evident from the disdain which Cherry in *The Heroine* has for it:

Such an insipid routine, always, always, always the same. Rising with no better

^{cxxxviii} Crow-quills would actually have been needed to repair a harpsichord, not a pianoforte.

prospect than to make breakfast for papa. ... At dinner, nobody but a farmer or the parson; and nothing talked but politics and turnips. After tea I am made sing some fal la la of a ditty, and am sent to bed with a 'Good night, pretty miss,' or 'sweet dear.' The Clowns!⁴⁹⁷

When the Scottish rector keeping the *Annals of the Parish* is 'troubled with low spirits', his daughter's music helps him:

But what confirmed my cure, was the coming home of my daughter Janet from the Ayr boarding school, here she had learnt to play on the spinet,^{cxxxix} and was become a conversible lassie ... so that when her mother was busy with the wearyful booming wheel, she entertained me sometimes with a tune, and sometimes with her tongue, which made the winter nights fly cantily by.⁴⁹⁸

The fair Serena in William Hayley's didactic poem *The Triumphs of Temper* is desperate because she has been forbidden to visit a masked ball. Resignation to domestic pleasures prevails, at first, expressed by harmonious playing and a smilingly improvised hymn to wisdom:

'Let others drive to Pleasure's distant dome!
Be mine the dearer joy to please at home!
Scarce had she spoke, when she with sportive ease
Prest her Piano-forte's fav'rite keys,
O'er softest notes her rapid fingers ran,
Sweet prelude to the Air she thus began!⁴⁹⁹

Without intending to, this singing innocently reaches its ulterior aim, for the Squire becomes more lenient so that Serena, now 'conscious of her power', continues her strains 'To his fixt hour of supper and of sleep' when he blesses his daughter and 'with unusual exultation prest / His lovely Child to his parental breast'⁵⁰⁰ – and allows her to go to the ball.

An interesting variant of this plot element occurs in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* between the orphaned Emily Melville and her guardian and cousin, the squire Tyrrell.

Habit had rendered her in a manner necessary to him [although ... n]earness of kindred and Emily's want of personal beauty prevented him from ever looking on her with the eyes of desire. Her accomplishments were chiefly of the customary and superficial kind, dancing and music. [48] Her musical talents were frequently employed for his amusement. She had the honour occasionally of playing him to sleep after the fatigues of the chace; and soothe him by their means from the perturbations of which his gloomy disposition was so eminently a slave.⁵⁰¹

Although Tyrrell sees Emily only as a sort of favourite housemaid, he is enraged when she falls in love with his aristocratic neighbour Falkland who saved her life in a fire, and tries to force

^{cxxxix} Another example of Scottish backwardness, cf. note lxxxviii p. 163.

her to marry the uncouth Grimes. When Emily is advised to plead with Tyrrell 'pathetically', she uses music:

[Emily] played one after another several of those airs that were most the favourites of Mr Tyrrel. [... His] 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. ... Mr Tyrrel was unable to leave the apartment. Sometimes he traversed it [58] with impatient step; then he hung over the poor innocent whose powers were exerted to please him; at length he threw himself in a chair opposite, with his eyes turned towards Emily. ... 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. Emily watched her opportunity. As soon as she had finished one of her pieces, she rose and went to Mr Tyrrel.⁵⁰²

The stratagem ('Now have not I done it nicely? ... Formerly you said you loved me. ... You would not make me miserable, would you?') does not work, however; Tyrrell continues to exert pressure to the point of having her sent to prison where she falls ill and dies.

4.3. 'Most impassioned when alone'

*I have thought that she is most impassioned when alone,
and perhaps all musicians are so.*
THOMAS HOLCROFT

Women's private playing is recommended in conduct literature as a 'resource[s] against ennui', because 'women are pecu-[523] liarly restrained in their situation, and in their employments, by the customs of society: to diminish [their] number ... would be cruel.'⁵⁰³ The piano-mad mother which Maria Edgeworth invented for *Practical Education* (cf. p. 80) comments pragmatically that accomplishments 'keep [girls] out of harm's way, they make a vast deal of their idle time pass so pleasantly to themselves and others!'⁵⁰⁴ Novels do not usually take this condescending stance but feature music as rational pastime among a stereotyped list of elegant and rational recreations. Fanny Burney's Cecilia

amused herself with walking and reading, she commissioned Mr. Monckton to send her a Piano Forte of Merlin's, she was fond of fine work, and she found in the conversation of Mrs. Delvile a never-failing resource against languor and sadness.⁵⁰⁵

Two lady friends in *The Fille de Chambre* enjoy similarly canonical pastimes:

Mrs. Barton kept but little company; she was fond of reading, drawing, music, and fancy works; in these she discovered Rebecca's taste and knowledge, and many was the heavy hour she beguiled in joining the labours of her lady, improving her judgment, and with the sweetest diffidence and humility correcting her errors.⁵⁰⁶

The heroines of Ann Radcliffe's *Sicilian Romance* (cf. p. 83) are '[e]ngaged in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the attainment of elegant accom- [32] plishments ... the flight of time was marked only by improvement.'⁵⁰⁷

In Fanny Burney's *Camilla*, various accomplishments are unsuccessfully called upon to calm the heroine, who has watched Edgar, whom she loves, but who is as yet linked with the unworthy Indiana, ride away.

Frightened at her own tenderness ... [s] he took up a book; but she could not read ... She went to her piano forte; she could [157] not play: 'Too – too amiable Edgar!' broke forth in defiance of all struggle. Alarmed and ashamed, even to herself, she resolved to dissipate her ideas by a long walk ...⁵⁰⁸

In a more romantic text, solitary music works as a remedy or distraction for violent emotions which are not dreamt of in educational treatises. The heroine of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman* is about to leave her violent husband, a striking scene ensues. After a night on the sofa, she improvises on the pianoforte, while her husband is reading the mail and discussing business.

My spirits were all in arms, and I played a kind of extemporary prelude. The cadence was probably wild, and impassioned, while, lost in thought I [74] made the sounds a kind of echo to my thinking. Pausing for a moment, I met Mr. Venables' eyes. He was observing me with an air of conceited satisfaction, as much as to say – 'My last insinuation has done the business – she begins to know her own interest.' Then gathering up his letters he said, 'That he hoped he should hear no more romantic stuff, well enough in a miss just come from boarding school;' and went ... to the counting-house. I still continued playing; and, turning to a sprightly lesson, I executed it with uncommon vivacity. I heard footsteps approach the door, and was soon convinced that Mr. Venables was listening; the consciousness only gave more animation to my fingers.⁵⁰⁹

Maria's distraught playing, apart from venting her emotions, also serves the purpose of drowning out unwelcome conversation and defying her husband emotionally – a situation that was to re-emerge in fiction only a hundred years later.

Wollstonecraft's daughter Mary Shelley described a heroine who finds the piano not potent enough for her anguish. The virtuous, serene Emily Fitzhenry in *Lodore* is pining for her departed lover: 'To cheat the lagging hours of the morrow, she occupied herself with her painting and music, tasking herself to give so many hours to her employments, thus to add speed to the dilatory walk of time.' When, after a few days, she begins to realize that he may have been heroically serious in his vow never to see her again because he is too poor to

marry, her music-making takes on a different colour:

[T]o seek solitude, to listen to each sound that might be his horse, and to feel her heart sicken at the still renewed disappointment, became, in spite of herself, all her occupation: she might bend over her drawing, or escape from her aunt's conversation to the piano;^{cxl} but these were no longer employments, but rather means adopted to deliver herself up more entirely to her reveries.⁵¹⁰

Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* makes the same egocentric use of music. At an evening party, she declines invitations to play cards 'with her usual inattention to the forms of general civility'⁵¹¹ in order to go and play the piano where she, 'wrapt up in her own music and her own thoughts' has soon forgotten 'that anybody was in the room but herself',⁵¹² and when Willoughby turns traitor, she mopes at the piano like Emily Fitzhenry, with the difference that Jane Austen's art expresses with memorable pith: 'nourishment of grief'.⁵¹³

Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, staying with her sister Mary, is a wonderful example of the genuine loneliness of playing for an insensitive audience.

She played a great deal better than either of the Miss Musgroves, but having no voice, no knowledge of the harp,^{cxli} and no fond parents, to sit by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well aware. She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation. Excepting one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world ...⁵¹⁴

Anne in fact prefers the 'office of musician',⁵¹⁵ that is, an unnoticed provider of dance music, to actually displaying herself in performance proper.

5. Jane Austen in context

Jane Austen's concise judgment on Marianne's musical self-therapy, a familiar motif conveyed and coloured with singular economy, is emblematic of her position in the musical dis-course of Regency fiction. Austen's novels share its most striking characteristic, the impressive variety of possible situations and characters which exist around the central topos and topic of accomplishments. Both 'flat' and 'round' characters (in E. M. Forster's terminology) in Austen play well or badly, sentimentally or ostentatiously, or comment on music in characteristic

^{cxl} Cf. the description of an evening passed 'in spiritless conversation, or in listening to the pianoforte, upon which Indiana [who 'has not indeed [Camilla's warmth of heart], with the utmost difficulty, played some very easy lessons.' (Burney *Camilla* II:iii:ll:38).

^{cxli} The harp is also thought more 'amusing' than a piano when Mrs. Musgrove needs to be distracted from her worries about her 'poor Richard' at sea (Austen *Persuasion* I:vi:51).

fashion. The period's narrative vocabulary, so to speak, contains many nonce-formations, and the range of musical scenes and allusions in Austen's work almost matches all the other writers mentioned in this chapter together, as can be seen from the regularity with which references recur throughout. As the multitude of musical motifs are concerned, Austen is a typical representative of her generation of writers, while the outstanding quality of her writing distinguishes these scenes as much as her work in general.

Musical quirks and qualities, never stereotyped or forced, are integrated as essential parts of character representation in narratives that are never obtrusive or programmatic. Every heroine's musicality is elaborated upon at greater length and interest than in contemporary writers, and made memorable by its inevitable individuality. Every reader remembers Mary Crawford's harp and the difficulties of transporting the seductive instrument to the Mansfield parsonage, Mary Bennett's tedious earnestness,⁵¹⁶ the disparity between Emma's talent and her lack of application,⁵¹⁷ Jane Fairfax's uncanny proficiency and the mystery surrounding Frank Churchill's distressing gift of a beautiful square piano or, finally, Marianne Dashwood's 'handsome pianoforte' that remains in the family despite penury,⁵¹⁸ her musical romancing with Willoughby^{cxlii} and the way she 'nourishes' her sorrow at the instrument after his betrayal.⁵¹⁹ But also the musical abilities and experiences of minor characters are sketched in more frequently than in other novels, and popular motifs such as the stereotyped accomplishments expected from and read into girls, pushy mothers, obnoxious rattling or sentimental solace inevitably find their best and most extensive treatment in a Jane Austen text.

Jane Austen's frequent musical scenes do not, however, add up to a picture of a particular enthusiasm for the art. Her courtship plots, for instance, rarely prosper because of music. The attraction of female musical performance is acknowledged, but it is mostly secondary figures that play well, and their musicality is rarely shown as an effective amorous asset. Mary Bennett and Mary Crawford are the prime examples, but also the shadowy subdued Georgiana Darcy, conventionally reported to be highly accomplished (cf. p. 100), remains single for the duration of *Pride and Prejudice*. Elinor Dashwood is bespoke early on although she is not musical, while the highly 'artistic' romance between her sister Marianne and the handsome, sensitive rake Willoughby ends in disaster.

^{cxlii} Cf. Austen *Sense* X:38-40 and also the prefiguration in Marianne's disparagement of Edward Ferrars, Elinor's fiancé, 'has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him'; to be satisfy Marianne, there must be shared artistic appreciation in love: 'the same books, the same music must charm us both.' (Austen *Sense* III:13).

The 'exemption' of Austen's heroines from music is strikingly predictable. In *Mansfield Park*, as Jan Fergus has remarked, '[g]oodness and charm are conceived as opposites',⁵²⁰ and charm proceeds on the one hand from amateur theatricals and on the other from worldly Mary Crawford's harp. Fanny Price's inability to play is of course due to her parents' straitened circumstances, but it is also hard to imagine that this retiring girl should have caught up with Julia and Maria Bertram in this branch of education as she must have done in others: 'Fanny, a reader not a musician, uses the language of music to repudiate its claims to touch the soul in the way that poetry and nature can.'⁵²¹ Elinor Dashwood, the representative of Sense, is 'neither musical nor affecting to be so'.⁵²² Drawing, the distanced working out of a point of view, is her art, and she uses music more than once simply as a screen for a private conversation.^{cxliii} Catherine Morland is far more unmusical than would be strictly necessary even for an anti-heroine; and Emma is too lazy to practice and abhors the musical busy-ness of enthusiasts like Mrs. Elton. Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, a diligent and unselfish player, attends a concert in various states of mind, none of which have anything to do with music. During the first half she is happy in the new certainty that Captain Wentworth still loves her:

Anne's mind was in a most favourable state for the entertainment of the evening: it was just occupation enough: she had feelings for the tender, spirits for the gay, attention for the scientific, had patience for the wearisome; and had never liked a concert better, at least during the first act.⁵²³

During the interval, Anne explains Italian song lyrics to her flirtatious cousin Mr. Elliot, and Wentworth's silent reaction to her conversation with this scoundrel is enough to ruin the second half for Anne: '[A]nother hour of pleasure or penance was to be set out, another hour if music was to give delight or the gapes, as real or affected taste for it prevailed. To Anne it chiefly wore the prospect of an hour of agitation.'⁵²⁴ It is a positive characteristic that Wentworth is 'very fond of music',⁵²⁵ but this pleasure is absolutely secondary for both him and Anne. In fact, it can be read as significant of the importance of music in Regency society that a writer who seems to have a personal dislike for music and who certainly was aware of its social traps writes so frequently about it.

A passage from *Pride and Prejudice* seems to indicate that the limited importance of music which Austen allows her protagonists stem from an acute awareness of the pitfalls of performance. Both main characters enjoy the linguistic display of repartee to each other, but

^{cxliii} Cf. 'the powerful protection of a very magnificent concerto' (Austen *Sense* XIV:123) which Marianne unintentionally gives to her sister Elinor's whispered contest with her unpleasant rival Lucy Steele.

despise the objectification entailed in musical command performance. While Elizabeth is playing for Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr. Darcy 'station[s] himself so as to command a full view of the fair performer's countenance',⁵²⁶ and Elizabeth immediately addresses him with an arch smile, stepping out of her position as doubly observed player to a third person into that of a *speaker*:

'You mean to frighten me, Mr. Darcy, by coming in all this state to hear me? But I will not be alarmed though your sister does play so well. There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me.'⁵²⁷

After some banter, Elizabeth returns her attention to the other man: 'Well, [209] Colonel Fitzwilliam, what do I play next? My fingers wait your orders.' Fitzwilliam comments that Darcy will simply 'not give himself the trouble'. Darcy refutes this, claiming to lack talent, and Elizabeth tries to refute this by attributing his conversational awkwardness, like her own limited playing skill, to laziness.

'My fingers ... do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault – because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe my fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution.'⁵²⁸

In fact, the moment when Darcy is said to have 'never been so bewitched by any woman'⁵²⁹ and when Elizabeth is puzzled by feeling like 'an object of adoration' to a man she believes to dislike her, it is not when she plays but when he is looking at her after an argument which is silenced by 'the indulgence of some music' from a third party. Since neither Darcy nor Elizabeth do perform, they are free – in the long run – to unite in a moment of solidarity that is highly typical of the best moments of Regency fiction (and unthinkable a few decades on): 'You are perfectly right. You have employed your time much better. No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you, can think any thing wanting. We neither of us perform to strangers.'⁵³⁰

IV. 'Glorious disability': The piano and the mid-Victorians

Music is more and more extensively cultivated.
GEORGE HOGARTH 1838

Music was in the ascendant from the first years of Victoria's reign; the social standing of musicians improved, people flocked to hear (mostly foreign) virtuosos, and amateur music-making throughout the century spread with slowly rising standards. But music remained the least respected and most suspicious of the arts, occupying the last and shortest chapter in Thomas Ward's *Survey of Fifty Years of Progress* for the 1887 Jubilee.^{cxliv} Ward found it difficult to enthuse wholeheartedly about musical progress; concessive elements and circumlocutions determine both his description of the 1840s ('Notwithstanding these signs of vigorous musical life, it cannot be said that music was flourishing in this country'⁵³¹), and of the late eighties: 'Musicians can at least feel secure that their art is no longer regarded by thinking men merely as the most expensive of noises, or as a means of obtaining pleasurable sensations.'⁵³² The noise had in fact become so much less expensive that pianos, that coveted status symbol, came within reach of wider and wider circles until even colliers and farmers could afford them.⁵³³

However, a certain unease in most literary representations of pianos in such habitats seems to hint at an unwillingness of the middle classes to have their musical territory encroached upon. Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd* uses the superior elegance of the piano to make his wooing more persuasive: 'I can make you happy,' said he to the back of her head, across the bush. 'You shall have a piano in a year or two – farmers' wives are getting to have pianos now – and I'll practise up the flute right well to play with you in the evenings.'⁵³⁴ It works, even if 'Bathsheba's new piano ... was an old one in other annals',⁵³⁵ but the villagers mistrust the contraption:

'I wonder what a farmer-woman can want with a harpsichord, dulcimer, pianner, or whatever 'tis they d'call it,' said the maltster. ... 'Got a pianner?' 'Ay. Seems her old uncle's things were not good enough for her. She've bought all but everything new' 'Looking-glasses for the pretty.' 'Lying books for the wicked.'⁵³⁶

In *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, a farmer describes his thirteen-year-old niece as 'a lady, as good as the best of 'em. ... And she's good for the pianer, too! She strums to me of evenin's'.⁵³⁷ However, 'Miss Lucy did not seem happy at the farm'.⁵³⁸

^{cxliv} 'Music' occupies 27 pages (while Literature has 69, Art 47, and 'The Drama' 32), and is by one of only four contributors out of 28 with no academic or aristocratic title.

Other characters are misled into various errors by a social ambition which is aptly symbolized by a piano. Tom Tulliver's tutor Walter Stelling in *The Mill on the Floss* goes into debt for some 'handsome furniture, together with a stock of wine, a grand piano, and the laying-out of a superior flower-garden'.⁵³⁹ Grace Melbury in Thomas Hardy's *Woodlanders*, so fatally alienated from her origins that she refuses the honest farmer Giles Winterbourne to marry a philandering doctor, dreams herself back into her finishing school 'in the fashionable suburb of a fast city' where tastefully dressed girls play on the lawn with 'notes of piano and harp trembling in the air from the open windows adjoining'.⁵⁴⁰ The attractive upper-class widow with whom a young minister in Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* is secretly and impossibly infatuated needs no piano to exert her attractions:

Lucy Wodehouse was at the piano; her sister sat at table with a pattern-book before her ...; and Lady Western again sat languid and lovely by the fire, with her beautiful hands in her lap, relieved from the dark background of the billowy blue dress by the delicate cambric and lace of her handkerchief. She was not doing anything, or looking as if she could do anything. [... 148] She ... smiled those sweet welcoming smiles ...which made his heart thrill and beat.⁵⁴¹

Music remains middle-class – and female. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem 'During Music', takes it completely for granted that such a scene should include a woman at the keyboard and a male listener. The metonymic evocation of 'small fingers' floating over 'keys' is enough to set the scene without even a title like 'To X at the pianoforte', and the gender of the listener is equally obvious from his mystified inability to read music:

... I lean o'er thee to scan
The written music cramped and stiff;
– 'Tis dark to me, as hieroglyph
On those weird bulks Egyptian.⁵⁴²

To men, music female, that is alien, fascinatingly illegible, hardly to be contained by writing, mysterious but, like woman, inferior and to be mastered.

*Men misapprehend women, both for good and evil.
Their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel;
their bad woman almost always a fiend.*
CHARLOTTE BRONTË

*Music is, in her health, the teacher of perfect order
and the voice of the obedience of angels;
and in her depravity she is also the teacher
of perfect disorder and disobedience,*

and the Gloria in Excelsis becomes the Marseillaise.

JOHN RUSKIN

The intensity that ideological contradictions about women had reached in the mid-nineteenth century is proverbial, witness countless monograph titles like *Woman and the Demon*, *Restless Angels*, *Breaking the Angelic Image*, *From Slave to Siren*, *Nobody's Angel*, *Fallen Angel*, *No Angels in the House*.⁵⁴³ Even a fictional academic, Robyn Penrose in David Lodge's *Nice Work*, is working on a book called *Domestic Angels and Unfortunate Females*.⁵⁴⁴ Titles and headings like *Angelic Airs / Subversive Songs*⁵⁴⁵ or 'minister of domestic concord and the most sensuous of accomplishments'⁵⁴⁶ indicate the similarly uneasy attitudes to music, which were shared even by professionals. In an address 'On music', Arthur Sullivan echoes Richard Hooker's statement about the emotional versatility of music (cf. p. 18), stating that its 'countless moods and richly varied forms suit [music] to any organization', but then suggests a highly characteristic exception:

[I]t can convey every meaning except one – an impure one. Music can suggest no improper thought, and herein may be claimed its superiority over painting and sculpture, both of which may, and indeed, do at times, suggest impurity. ... Let us thank God that we have one elevating and ennobling influence in the world which can never, never lose its purity and beauty.⁵⁴⁷

According to the critic T. L. Southgate, this is so because music cannot convey meaning at all; the responsibility rests with the listener, whose 'mind colours the musical impressions made on it with *his own* thoughts and feelings. Neither material images, nor any definite thoughts *can* be presented by ... music.'⁵⁴⁸ However, while criticizing the ridiculous technical blunders in 'Rita's' novel *Countess Daphne*, Southgate quotes the following pious passage with approval:

Music is the one pure beautiful thing in a world of sin and vileness. A painter's art may degenerate into sensual bondage ... A poet may lead others into ignorant worship of something his passionate praise and glowing verse have immortalized, even in its unworthiness; but music alone commits none of these errors. From God it comes direct, to God its highest raptures alone return.⁵⁴⁹

This could just as well be a description of an ideal woman. A passage from *Eliza Cook's Journal*, a magazine which professes a genuine fondness for music, makes this association even clearer, claiming that music is 'pure to all' because it is

only by a marriage with words that *she* [my italics] can become a minister of evil. An instrument which is music, and music alone, enjoys the *glorious disability* [my italics]

of expressing a single vicious idea, or inspiring a single corrupt thought.⁵⁵⁰

The female pronoun for music as well as the wonderful term 'glorious disability' (which perfectly defines ideal Victorian womanhood), express the feminization of music which was at its most extreme in the period. Music, like Woman, was feared and exalted, mythologized and suppressed as never before.

In the shape of the piano, the disturbing 'Other' of music had its place in every middle-class Victorian home, right at the heart of this separate world of the patriarchal family; the instrument was not only the 'family orchestra'⁵⁵¹ but an 'altar'^{cxlv} or even the 'household god'. Gender roles diverged more sharply than before: men were not expected to participate in such a domestic exercise; whereas the family, that 'idealized refuge, a world all its own, with a higher moral value than the public realm',⁵⁵² contained both woman and music.

1. Gender in life and literature

1. 1. Men shouldn't play

*Frenchmen may learn to play the piano,
but men in this country have something else to do.*
WILLIAM BLACK

After the comparatively indifferent attitude of the turn of the century, musical gender norms turned extremely rigid. In 1839, 'the present unequal diffusion of music among the sexes' had proceeded far enough to be considered, 'in itself, an evidence of [music's] degradation':

[W]hile every English girl has been tormented into an aimless knowledge of the practical difficulties of the pianoforte, any one of her brothers who ... addicted himself to any musical instrument whatsoever, or showed the smallest zeal for the art [... risks being] laughed at as an effeminate 'milk-sop' ... !⁵⁵³

Music 'hardly [came] within the scope of a boy's education, at least in this country'⁵⁵⁴ and was 'virtually forbidden to boys of "good family" particularly if they betrayed signs of talent or serious interest'.⁵⁵⁵ Arthur Sullivan noted 'a curious affectation of [musical] ignorance on the part of many men of position':

At any great meeting on the subject of music, archbishops, judges, politicians, financiers – each one who rises to speak will deprecate any knowledge of music with a

^{cxlv} 'In every house there is an altar devoted to saint Cecilia, and all are taught to serve her to the best of their ability', (*Chamber's Journal* 1881 q. Pearsall 1973:74).

smug satisfaction like a man disowning poor relations.^{cxlvi}

George Grossmith, the comic recitalist and Savoy Opera star born in 1874, remembers: 'When I played, ladies used to say, "How odd it seems to see a boy playing." It was thought effeminate!'^{cxlvii} Neither pragmatic nor religious arguments are needed any longer; the feminization of musical performance is complete and its unworthiness as a male pursuit therefore taken for granted.

The strict feminization of music resonates in fiction in its social marginalization; biologically male music lovers and amateur players throughout the period are made to deviate from a standard of British masculinity by foreign nationality, effeminate, childish,^{cxlviii} or, more rarely, morally reprehensible traits.^{cxlix} Foreigners may be likeable, if eccentric, such as Julius Klesmer^{cl} in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Will Ladislaw's Polish grandfather in *Middlemarch*,^{cli} or the Belgian M. Joseph Emanuel, brother of Lucy Snowe's school director in Charlotte Brontë's last novel *Villette*.^{clii} John Jasper, the opium-addicted cathedral choir master in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, is tall, dark and handsome and has a voice that is repeatedly described as beautiful;⁵⁵⁶ but his brutally possessive, overmastering love for his pupil Rosa Bud is not only sinister in itself, but has possibly driven him to murder a suspected rival.⁵⁵⁷ Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* is evil, but also comic, a quality shared by many harmless caricatures, such as Monsieur Quatremaisons and Signor Twankeydillo in *The Newcomes* and Alcide Mirabolant in *Pendennis*.^{cliii} Mildly threatening as such non-

^{cxlvi} Sullivan 'On Music' 273. Cf. also Hueffer *Half a Century 2*: 'At the meeting convened for the discussion of the Royal College of Music ... the speakers ... almost without exception prefaced their remarks upon music by [3] saying that they knew nothing about music.'

^{cxlvii} Grossmith *Society Clown* 36. Cf. *A Daughter of Heth* where Coquette (cf. p. 122) asks her boisterous Scottish cousins to play for her. 'A loud guffaw ran down the line of them – the notion of a boy being able to play on the piano was irresistibly ludicrous. [... 82] 'We dinna learn music at the schule, ye gowk,' (Black *Heth* I:v:6).

^{cxlviii} The numerous child-women in Dickens' novels are paralleled by the *childish* non-masculinity of musicians or music-lovers like Tom Pinch or Harold Skimpole.

^{cxlix} The widowed Lord Seaford in George MacDonald's drama *Within And Without*, who falls in love with his daughter's married piano teacher, is seen 'alternately writing at a table and composing at his pianoforte' (Macdonald *Within* III:v p. 84) a song about his love, as well as interrupting one of his daughter's lessons to play 'a low, half-melancholy, half-defiant prelude' (III:xi p.105).

^{cl} This memorable character is an unusual combination of being happily married, professionally successful and a devoted musician of the most serious kind; George Eliot's one concession to stereotype is to make him German-Jewish.

^{cli} '[A] patriot – a bright fellow – could speak many languages – musical – got his bread by teaching all sorts of things' (Eliot *Middlemarch* IV:xxvii:401).

^{clii} 'What a master-touch ...! In what grand, grateful tones the instrument acknowledged the hand of the true artist!' (Brontë *Villette* XXVIII:400).

^{cliii} He is introduced as 'a foreign gentleman, adorned with many ringlets and chains [... whose] library, pictures, and piano, had arrived previously He always sat down and played the piano for some time before

Britishness may be, it is a deficiency if only assumed: the dilettante composer Mr. Trillo in Peacock's *Crotchet Castle*, who 'plays well on the violoncello, and better on the piano' is derided because it is suspected that 'his name was O'Trill, and he has taken the O from the beginning, and put it at the end'.⁵⁵⁸

Representatives of the effeminacy trope are characters like Julian Westbrook in Charles Aïdé's *The Marstons* (cf. p. 129f.), the languid dilettante Frederick Fairlie in *The Woman in White* or Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*, 'half feminine in sensitiveness',⁵⁵⁹ who describes himself as

cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and effective faculty in none. I care for painting and music; care for classic literature, and mediaeval literature, and modern literature; I flutter all ways, and fly in none.⁵⁶⁰

Philip is further undermined in his masculinity by a being a cripple. In other characters the opposite of masculinity is diminutive immaturity, as with the sixteen-year-old boy soprano Henry Arkell in Mrs. Henry Wood's *Mildred Arkell*^{cliv} or 'little De Lisle' who, after 'having weakly admitted that he can play a little dance music', hammers away at waltzes when a group of young people in Rhoda Broughton's *Belinda* want to pass a wet afternoon dancing. Fulfilling the hope that 'some one can play, or even whistle a tune, or set the musical-box tinkling'⁵⁶¹ he turns into a musical toy, while the unhappily married heroine is enjoying an exciting dance with another man: 'It is so long since I danced,' she says, lifting one white hand to her giddy eyes; 'so long! so long! not since –' She breaks off. 'Not since your – [marriage].'⁵⁶² Only when somebody stumbles over a dog, De Lisle is remembered: 'it is not fair upon that poor boy ... he is getting cross, though he tries not to show it'.⁵⁶³ Thackeray furnishes an unusual example of a beefy, not entirely refined or likeable, but certainly not effeminate, musician,^{clv} Captain Ned Strong. His music makes a 'the lonely house very gay with his good humour and ceaseless flow of talk':⁵⁶⁴

[composing a menu]. If interrupted, he remonstrated patheti-[212] cally with his little maid. Every great artist, he said, had need of solitude to perfectionate his works.' (Thackeray *Pendennis* XXII:211f.).

^{cliv} We see him berated by the pretty girl he is in love with, while he continues 'the soft sweet playing, as she desired. ...' 'You are stupid, Henry. Play a little louder. How I wished I played with half your taste. ... Do you think I'd have Fred St. John? No, not though he were worth his weight in gold.' Oh, false words! ... 'Henry! how exquisitely you play!' Mr. St. John was coming towards them with the remark, and the spell was broken. Henry rose from the piano, laughing carelessly [but with a] flush of emotion in his cheek.' (Wood *Arkell* 274).

^{clv} The avid pianist Julius Delamayn in Wilkie Collins' *Man and Wife* is quite a manly figure, but he exists mainly as a counterfoil to his villainous brother Geoffrey, the idiotic sportsman who carries the anti-athletic message of the novel. Beefy English prejudice is satirized in the description of the 'disciplined and equable' Julian: 'This degenerate Briton could digest books – and couldn't digest beer. ... Practised the foreign vice of perfecting himself in the art of playing a musical instrument' but doesn't know horses, hunting, dogs or betting. (Collins *Man and Wife* I:iii:XVI:180).

He could sing scores of songs, in half-a-dozen languages, and would sit down to the piano and troll them off in a rich manly voice. Both the ladies pronounced him to be delightful – and so he was. ... 'Good fellow, Strong – ain't he, Miss Bell?' Sir Francis would say to her. 'Plays at écarté with Lady Clavering – plays anything, pitch and toss, pianoforty, cwibbage if you like.'⁵⁶⁵

If Strong is neither effeminate nor physically weak, his bachelorhood, his propensity for games and his approval by such a weakling as Sir Francis give him an air of boyhood which somehow tempers his masculinity.

In George Meredith's novel *Beauchamp's Career* the sociable dilettante Blackburn Tuckham, a man far inferior to the doomed idealist Nevil Beauchamp, is introduced with all his little arts:

This gentleman betrayed his accomplishments one by one. He sketched, and was no artist; he planted, and was no gardener; he touched the piano neatly, and was no musician; he sang, and he had no voice. Apparently [313] he tried his hand at anything, for the privilege of speaking decisively upon all things.⁵⁶⁶

Tuckham not only 'betrays' the mere conversational knowledge of music that other men disdained, but is further disparaged for having had a practical go at these 'accomplishments'. The superficiality which that plural denotes, is not a saving grace, signifying an desirable weakness of attachment for music, but adds an aspect of fluttering femininity. In his courtship of Cecilia Halkett, Tuckham relies on her conventional attitudes and on the staple activities of engaged couples:^{clvi}

He was never intrusive, never pressing. He did not vex, because he absolutely trusted to the noble loyalty which made her admit to herself that she belonged irrevocably to him, while her thoughts were upon Beauchamp. ... They sketched in company; she played music to him, he read poetry to her, and read it well.⁵⁶⁷

When Cecilia Halkett marries this man instead of Beauchamp, the narrator calls this an 'incomprehensible espousal'.⁵⁶⁸

*Women and the Clergy are of the same Footing.
The long-robbed Gentry
are exempted from the Laws of Honour.
HENRY FIELDING*

^{clvi} In Trollope's *Small House at Allington*, an 'accepted lover' is told that he 'will be allowed to do anything, – whip the creams, and tune the piano, if you know how.' (Trollope *Small House* 1:ix:74).

Apart from gender, nationality, class and maturity,^{clvii} religion provides a further dimension to social assignments of musicality and non-masculinity: clergymen are comparatively often represented as musical, reflecting the fact that '[in England] music is scarcely recognised as an important element in the accomplishments of young men of condition, and its encouragement is dependent chiefly on the female sex and the clergy'.⁵⁶⁹ Most musical clergymen share in one or more of the qualities listed above: Mr. Crisparkle in *Edwin Drood* is 'musical, classical, ... contented and boy-like',⁵⁷⁰ Mr. Honeyman in *The Newcomes* repulsively sweet and Mr. Cartwright in Frances Trollope's *The Vicar of Wrexhill* an out-and-out villain. The best-known clerical musician, the eponymous hero of Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, is also depicted as 'a less than adequate human being'.⁵⁷¹ This enthusiastic 'cellist with the nickname 'catgut'⁵⁷² and the trick of miming 'cello-playing gestures during difficult conversations, combines an admirable moral force of renunciation^{clviii} with some minor weaknesses which are all feminine, and so the ambitious young minister in Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* has to defend his superiority by warding off intimations that he might perform:

'Oh, mamma,' said [Phoebe Tozer], too bashful to address himself directly, 'I wonder if Mr Vincent plays or sings? There are some such nice singers here. Perhaps we might have some music, if Mr Vincent –' 'I don't perform at all,' said that victim, –'not in any way; but I am an exemplary listener. Let me take you to the piano.'⁵⁷³

Only the stern Scottish minister in William Black's *Daughter of Heth* escapes censure; he does not play but is surprised into deep appreciation of music on the singular occasion when Coquette, his French-raised orphan niece, wants to make up for her unwitting musical violation of Sabbath laws by playing sacred tunes to the family on the following day. The pious man is surprised 'to find that this carnal invention of music had awoke such profound emotion within him': 'It is wonderfu', wonderfu', ... the power o' a dumb instrument to speak such strange things.'⁵⁷⁴

Against such a background it is obviously difficult to create a musical man good and strong enough to carry a novel, and in fact *The Way of All Flesh* and Charlotte Yonge's *Heir of Redclyffe* work out a precarious compromise of manhood and a not-too-despicable femininity. Sir Guy Redclyffe's vita would do admirably for a Victorian heroine: an impetuous,

^{clvii} Thackeray's facetious *Ticketoby Lectures* feature Richard I. in prison in Austria, where he 'had the command of a piano, and was in the habit of playing upon the guitar' and seems to have played 'Home, Sweet Home' (Thackeray *Ticketoby* VII:36f.). Here the mitigating circumstance seems to be historical remoteness.

^{clviii} He renounces a comfortable living out of fine moral scruples.

physically weak but morally hard-fighting young person sacrifices health and ultimately life nursing a grudging opponent. Guy's talent stems from a romantic (Italian) misalliance of his father's, and makes his more conventionally masculine and efficient cousin Philip Morville wonder that he 'is not ashamed to parade his music'.⁵⁷⁵ The women in the novel like the gentle, highly-strung young man and seem less concerned about this foreign streak; only Philip's domineering older sister implicitly criticizes Guy's femininity: he is 'clever, but superficial; and with his mania for music, he can hardly fail to be merely an accomplished man'.⁵⁷⁶ 'Merely accomplished' is of course an impossible phrase for describing a young woman, since for her, accomplishment was all that mattered. But music is far more than an accomplishment for Guy; the symbol of his death is that life has gone out of his piano. 'All was as usual. Only the piano was closed, and an accumulation of books on the hinge told how long it had been so.'⁵⁷⁷

Unlike the Tractarian Charlotte Yonge, Samuel Butler was writing against convention, for 'the next generation rather than his own'.⁵⁷⁸ But the piano-passion of Ernest Pontifex ('There was no boy in the school as fond of music as he was'⁵⁷⁹) belongs to his Victorian childhood and Butler's critique of that period. Ernest's music subverts many stereotypes; in the holidays, he gets up early to

play the piano before breakfast without disturbing his papa and mamma – or rather, perhaps, without being disturbed by them. Ellen would generally be there sweeping the drawing-room floor and dusting while he was playing, and the boy, who was ready to make friends with most people, soon became very fond of her.⁵⁸⁰

Music is hidden from the parents and protected against them, and in Ernest's playing for a servant, class and gender norms are equally violated. Musical opportunities are the only thing he is sorry to leave with school, going 'to have a farewell practice upon the organ [... 194] after which he felt more composed and happier; then, tearing himself away from the instrument he loved so well, he hurried to the station.'⁵⁸¹ His father (who has himself been lured into marriage by music, cf. p. 138f.) worries that Ernest 'might be thrown with low associates later on if he were to be encouraged in his taste for music – a taste which [Theobald] had always disliked'.^{clix}

^{clix} Butler *Flesh* XXXIV:144. In a novel of 1906 piano music triggers memories of a such a stonily repressed Victorian childhood in a grown-up man: 'I had found the key of the drawingroom piano in the lock [and] had picked out the tune of "Dundee." Just when I was about to repeat this – to me – extremely beautiful performance, my father came in. [219] "Father!" I said, "I want to learn to play." The look of utter astonishment on my father's face alarmed me even more than he frown that I had looked instinctively to see.' (Coleridge *Drawingroom* 218f.). The first page of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* shows the far more relaxed Irish attitude: 'His

But as with Guy Redclyffe, the taste stays with Ernest for life. When Mary Burgan describes the importance of the piano for women in Victorian fiction and the hardship it meant to lose one in financially difficult situations,^{clx} she does of course not mention Ernest's despair at the same prospect. But Butler expresses it in far more dramatic terms than any novelist writing about a woman:

The winter had been a trying one. Ernest had only paid his way by selling his piano. With it he seemed to cut away the last link that connected him with his earlier life, and to sink once for all into the small shopkeeper. It seemed to him that however low he might sink his pain could not last much longer for he would simply die if it did.⁵⁸²

A hero romantically ready to die for the loss of his piano is certainly a rebellion against Victorian notions! In one significant respect Ernest's music-making deviates radically from female practice: he rarely performs (except for the little maid). His music is completely introverted, and so it makes little difference whether he plays the religious organ or the potentially ambiguous piano.^{clxi} But Ernest trips up his author – for he also confirms Victorian ideology. For all his musical passion (stronger than any fictional woman is allowed to show), this pianist is not, even less than Guy Redclyffe, a 'real man'. He fails dramatically to become a pater familias, and confirms his father's fears of 'lower associates' by marrying an incurable drunkard. In order to free Ernest for his final fulfilling dilettante life, Butler engineers her implausibly convenient death and has the children farmed off to the countryside. Peter Coveney writes about this unsatisfactory ending: '*The Way of All Flesh* is ... a novel with a negative thesis, and this is brilliantly enough dramatized. The failure lies in its definition of positive virtue.⁵⁸³ Such positive, manly virtue is irreconcilable with a passion for music, for the iconoclast Samuel Butler just as much as for the pious Charlotte Yonge.

In view of these strict unwritten laws, the comments of the writer and musician Charles Hamilton Aidé sound like wishful thinking:

[W]e has ... left behind us the gloomy days ... when our grandfathers despised the accomplishment as one unfit for men. ... The quiet firesides of thousands in our middle

mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance. He danced: *Tralal lala, Tralala tralaladdy, Tralala lala, Tralala lala*. Uncle Charles and Dante clapped.' (Joyce *Portrait* 7).

^{clx} Cf. Burgan 1979:42. Two examples which Burgan does not mention are the poor Quiverful family in *Barchester Towers*, ('the [old piano] they had in the vicarage was so weather-beaten ... as to be no longer worthy of the name' (Trollope *Barchester Towers* II:xlili:176)) and Mrs. Nickleby's tearful 'detailed account of the dimensions of a rosewood cabinet piano they had possessed in their days of affluence.' (Dickens *Nickleby* X:97; cf. also XLVI:485).

^{clxi} Cf. also Butler's notes about Ernest's repertoire: 'It cost me a great deal to make Ernest ... play [modern virtuoso composers such as] Beethoven and Mendelssohn – I did it simply *ad captandum*, as a matter of fact he played none but early Italian, old English music and Handel – but Handel most of all.' (Butler *Notebooks* 110).

classes, when, evening after evening, husbands, sons or brothers sit down, after the day's work is done, to conquer the difficulties of some instrument, to make the stiff fingers pliant, the unsteady voice sure without a thought of ever shining beyond the limits of that narrow circle: this fact alone would sufficiently refute any objectors to the rapid development of a musical taste among us.⁵⁸⁴

Like the Regency writer who disparaged Lord Chesterfield (cf. note cxiv p. 76), Aïdé projects the current feminization of music onto the recent past to bolster an optimistic estimate of the contemporary standing of music, but his own fiction paints a different picture. In *The Marstons*, the heroine observes an attractive womanizer playing his French horn at a party:

Julian had been playing his *cornet*, with more than usual spasm of eyebrow; and while [86] murmurs of 'So sweet!', 'So very soft!' arose round her, Olivia thought, with amazement, of the time when this performance had moved her pleurably, when she was ... penetrated with a belief in the player's true and passionate feeling. It was intolerable to her now.⁵⁸⁵

For all her former infatuation, Olivia can only think of Julian's efforts now as 'all those windy spasms of agony';⁵⁸⁶ she herself plays only in private, and no other male music-making occurs in *The Marstons* at all.

In striking contrast to the worries of many medical tracts and educational pamphlets,^{clxii} music does not dangerously excite Olivia's sensibilities. In fact, female vulnerability to sensual excitement is quite rarely represented in fiction, as Delia Da Sousa Correa re-marks:

Many of the musical seductions in nineteenth-century fiction ... question the notion of woman's peculiar or exclusive emotional susceptibility by showing musical accomplishment as predominantly a mode by which men are seduced, thus making it an emblem of *their* sexual susceptibility.⁵⁸⁷

The fact that men could be conditioned to be erotically susceptible to music had determined the matchmaking function of accomplishments for centuries; now, as concepts of gender and sexuality tightened, its ideological justification and fictional representations were complicated increasingly.

1.2. Women must play

*Men can't help it on a music-stool,
poor dears!*

^{clxii} Cf. Tilt *Preservation*, Laycock *Treatise* and Da Sousa Correa 2003:86-88. A sample of Laycock: 'The anxiety to render a young lady accomplished, at all hazards, has originated a system of forced mental training, which greatly increases the irritability of the brain [through] three or four hours of severe application' (Laycock *Treatise* II:ii:140).

GEORGE MEREDITH

*How sweetly a piano
A tenor and soprano
will sound together*

WILLIAM SCHWENCK GILBERT

*Une demoiselle qui est musicienne,
cela se marie tout seul.
Un piano qui vous aurait coûté 1400 francs
vous aurait peut-être économisé une dot.*

EUGÈNE SCRIBE

Piano music continued to be used as a vehicle for legitimate erotic display which musical and unmusical men alike were conditioned to react to,^{clxiii} but the tensions that the fault-line of courtship shows up in 'piano scenes' were increasing. Before marriage a girl had to be 'innocent', as ignorant of sex and her own body as possible, and afterwards she should forget her erotic potential and turn not into a fulfilled woman, but into a sexless angel, in order to ensure, as Catherine Belsey put it, 'the continuity of perfect concord'. This meant that '[c]ompanionate marriage becomes in effect a renunciation of desire'.⁵⁸⁸ But for the transition between girlhood and wifehood ('the little interval between coming into [59] life and settling in it'⁵⁸⁹) some pandering to desire was necessary, to bring a match about. The society which 'condemns sexualised femininity' nevertheless needed a woman to have 'sufficient charms to attract a mate in first place' and 'defined her in terms of her capacity for sexual reproduction'.⁵⁹⁰ If this attraction is fostered by music, the anxiety is doubled and leads to evasions. The barrister and 'singer-songwriter' Frederic Weatherly only mentions music in his description of a first love long gone:

She had brown laughing eyes, but it was her music that captivated me. To sit in the firelight and listen to her playing and not to have to turn over the leaves for her! for she played from memory. I don't know whether she knew I loved her. I never told her.⁵⁹¹

Music creates love, that love must not speak, however pure. That is the contradiction which informs most literary representations of musical courtship.

The piano appears in every Victorian courtship plot (and hence in that majority of Victorian novels that achieve narrative closure by marriage). In Disraeli's penultimate novel *Lothair*, the hero proposes two days after witnessing the following scene:

^{clxiii} In Meredith's *The Egoist* a beginning love is confirmed by the decisive observation that 'he's fond of your singing and playing on the piano, and watches you'. (Meredith *Egoist* XXV:300).

['The Duchess'] sat surrounded by her daughters, all occupied with various works. One knitted a purse, another adorned a slipper, a third emblazoned a page ... while two fair sisters more remote occasionally burst into melody, as they tried the passage of a new air, which had been communicated to them in the manuscript of some devoted friend.⁵⁹²

A father in Trollope's *Last Chronicle of Barsest* reasons:

'With twelve of 'em ...they are not all going to have castles and parks of their own, unless they can get 'em off their own bats. But I pay upwards of a hundred a year each for my eldest three boys' schooling, and I've been paying eighty for the girls. ... Educate, educate, educate; that's my word. [...281] I don't think there's a girl in Tavistock Square that can beat Polly, – she's the eldest ... – that can beat her at the piano.⁵⁹³

It is clear that castles 'off one's own bat' must come from an education that enables the boys to earn a living and the girls to marry.

The centuries-old observation that married women give up playing ('an allurements which served its purpose and is put away [after marriage], now no longer needed'⁵⁹⁴) is still valid and confirms the specific use of music:

[n]o mother – no woman, who has passed over the first few years of life, sings, or dances, or draws, or plays musical instruments. These are merely means for displaying the grace and vivacity of youth, which every woman gives up as she gives up the dress and the manners of eighteen⁵⁹⁵

That was so much understood that pretty Rosamond Vincy and the ambitious young doctor Tertius Lydgate in *Middlemarch* are recognizable as virtually engaged thanks to the piano:

[Rosamond] too was spinning industriously at the mutual web. All this went on in the corner of the drawing-room where the piano stood, and subtle as it was, the light made it a sort of rainbow visible to many observers besides Mr Farebrother. The certainty that Miss Vincy and Mr Lydgate were engaged became general in Middlemarch without the aid of formal announcement.⁵⁹⁶

A comic poem spells that inevitable progression out as a recipe from 'Cupid's Cookery Book': the young and tender lad, at table, should be well soaked with wine and plied with hints about 'Miss'. When red 'in the gills'

Set him down by the lady, though shy he may be,
And sop them both equally well with green tea –
Lead them to the piano – the handiest of things –
And blow up the flame till the young lady sings –
But the first sigh you hear the young gentleman puff,
Take them off, for they then will be warm enough.⁵⁹⁷

After careful simmering in a quiet corner and two or three repetitions of the whole

procedure, '[t]hey'll be ready for marriage whenever you want'.⁵⁹⁸ This is all very straightforward and inevitable; but even this flippantly cocksure little text incorporates a warning to get not more than adequately 'warm', and an ambiguous sigh which may denote love or satiety with the music once it has fulfilled its purpose. Most narratives attempt to contain – and weaken – the erotic power of music in some way.

Tertius Lydgate falls for Rosamond Vincy – decidedly the wrong woman – because edifying musical clichés blind him to her reality: a woman 'ought to produce the effect of exquisite music. ... Rosamond seemed to have the true melodic charm'.⁵⁹⁹ He sees Rosamond as

an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home ... with still magic, yet kept her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment.⁶⁰⁰

The outcome is, of course, not romance but a desperately unhappy marriage which can be guessed at early from the way in which Lydgate clumsily conflates – like many second-rate poets – metaphorical lute and actual piano.^{clxiv}

The gap between imagery and reality is depicted in a lighter vein in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* experiences

Miss Billing sat down before [his heart] with her piano, and as the Colonel was a practitioner on the flute, hoped to make all life one harmonious duet with him; but she played her most brilliant sonatas and variations in vain.⁶⁰¹

Marriage becomes possible only when Miss Billing pragmatically recognizes the piano as an unerotic, but expensive piece of *furniture* instead of the representative of metaphorical harmony. She 'subsequently carried her grand piano to Lieutenant and Adjutant Hogdkin's house, whose name she now bears'.⁶⁰² A similar comic effect is achieved in Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*, by the sudden turn from a mother's rapture about her daughter's singing to more pragmatic considerations. Mrs. Dodd watches 'that living radiance and incarnate melody in a sort of stupor; it seemed hardly possible to her that a provincial banker could refuse an alliance with a creature so peerless as that'.⁶⁰³

^{clxiv} Maggie Tulliver, on the other hand, tells Philip Wakem that she wouldn't want to be a tenth Muse as he suggested because carrying a harp around 'in this climate' would necessitate 'a green baize cover' (Eliot *Mill* V:iv:353). Maggie also decodes the blond-dark constellation astutely: 'I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness.' (V:iv:353) Walter Praed's historicizing poem 'Lidian's Love' ironizes its sixteen-year-old hero's dreams of 'Houris of the heart's creation', romantic irreal figures '[w]ho never thrummed upon the virginals, / Nor tripped by rule, nor fortunately fainted, / Nor practised paying compliments and calls, / Looking satirical, or looking sainted (Praed 'Lidian's Love' VIII:56ff.).

The Lydgates' musical experience is emblematic of the way most Victorian 'serious' fiction handles the piano. In the exceptionally frank language of Thackeray, Rosey might have been described as follows.

If there's a beauty in a well-regulated ... family, they fatten her; they feed her with the best *Racahout des Arabes*. They give her silk robes and perfumed baths; have her taught to play on the dulcimer, and dance and sing; and when she is quite perfect, send her down to Constantinople for the Sultan's inspection.⁶⁰⁴

Dickens does portray such a 'fattened' beauty in *Dombey and Son*, but by making her fate impressively melodramatic, he turns the lament of Edith Dombey into an individual drama rather than a critique of society:

'I am a woman ... who, from her very childhood, has been ... offered and rejected, put up and appraised, until my very soul has sickened. I have not had an accomplishment or a grace that might have been a resource to me, but it has been paraded and vended to enhance my value, as if the common crier had called it through the streets.'⁶⁰⁵

Thackeray, on the other hand, is blunt: 'What causes [girls] to labour at piano-forte sonatas, and to learn four songs from a fashionable master at a guinea a lesson ... but that they may bring down some "desirable" young man with those killing bows and arrows [58] of theirs?'⁶⁰⁶ Few Victorian narratives speak with this pragmatic cynicism (which mostly went out with the Regency novelists), but instead hedge the social practice of music around with evasions and other indirect means.

2. Handel with Care: Narrative strategies

*Sex is not a thing which stubbornly shows itself,
but one which always hides,
the insidious presence that speaks in a voice so muted,
and often disguised that one risks remaining deaf to it.*
MICHEL FOUCAULT

Certain passages from the introduction to Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* make perfect sense in a Victorian context if they are rewritten substituting the word 'music' for 'sex'.

[Music] gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us.⁶⁰⁷

Like sex, music was a delicate topic that had to be handled indirectly because of the anxieties

it raised, but was impossible to get away from:

Those who believe that [music] was more rigorously elided in the nineteenth century than ever before, through a formidable mechanism of blockage and a deficiency of discourse, can say what they please. There was not a deficiency, but rather an excess, a redoubling, too much rather than not enough discourse.⁶⁰⁸

In the discourse of music and gender, this discursive excess resides in the harmonious metaphors and pious injunctions in conduct literature, while musical harmony 'in action' is conspicuously absent from literary representations. The old irrepressible uneasiness that can no longer be made fully explicit undermines representations of musical performances even while they are driving plots. Whether occasions of performance and enjoyment of domestic music-making are blameable or not according to contemporary rules of conduct, their descriptions are regularly determined by evasive or repressive narrative strategies which turn piano narratives almost into a collective text. The rapture of music is never fully shared with both the male listener in the text and the reader; even in its most bourgeois, most socially contained and approved form, at the drawing-room piano, sirenic attraction was restrained by selective and biased representation, but was always inevitably represented.

2.1. Disapproving: Deprecation and denunciation

*I asked too much; I yielded to the spell of the siren
and was angry because I missed the white wings of the angel.*
MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON

Denunciation, the most immediately striking of the literary strategies for containing music, employs the two plot elements that are most widely remembered today: adultery (or its preludes and adumbrations) at the piano, and artful husband-trapping through piano performance. They may not have been dominating real life and were not considered in conduct literature of the period, but they are the most conspicuous and analysed literary scenarios. Stratagems such as those of Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* or attempts at seduction by the likes of Annabella Wilmot in Anne Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, who stings the eponymous heroine into jealousy of her despicable husband by singing and playing to him⁶⁰⁹ were recognized motifs in their own time: even the saintly Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, overhearing Rosamund Lydgate and Will Ladislaw at music, finds herself 'thinking with some wonder, that Will Ladislaw was passing his time with Mrs. Lydgate in her husband's

absence'.⁶¹⁰ She can only be quite sure that Will's attachment to Mrs. Lydgate is purely musical after he has confessed his love for herself, and then she has

a quick, sad, excusing vision of the charm there might be in his constant opportunities of companionship with that fair creature, who most likely shared his other tastes as she evidently did his delight in music.⁶¹¹

Dr. Lydgate himself, coming home to find Will and Rosamond making music, has no such visions:

[H]e heard the piano and singing. ... Lydgate had no objection in general to Ladislav's coming, but just now he was annoyed that he could not find his hearth free. When he opened the door the two singers went on towards the key-note, raising their eyes and looking at him indeed, but not regarding his entrance as an interruption. To a man galled with his harness as poor Lydgate was, it is not soothing to see two people warbling at him, as he comes in with the sense that the painful day has still pain in store. ... [H]e walked across the room and flung himself into a chair. The singers feeling themselves excused by the fact that they had had only three bars to sing, now turned round.⁶¹²

The greetings are curt, and Will leaves immediately, being 'too quick to need more'. Although Rosamond does not 'technically' betray her husband, her alienation from him is powerfully expressed in this scene.

Musical intimacy between partners that are not or will not be married to each other is a recognized pattern of transgressive behaviour,^{clxv} and its unsatisfactory results are part of the familiar convention that adulterers never come to good in nineteenth-century novels. Such scenes can, however, also be read as just one of several strategies of containing music and its erotic potential. This becomes particularly evident from a study of other recurrent musical scenarios. The outcomes of disingenuous musical scheming, for instance, a rather minor transgression compared to adultery, are always failure to make the desired match or unhappiness of the ensuing marriage. To achieve the ultimate aim of containing or suppressing the subversive, disturbing potential of music, texts must first of all suppress its positive results: English fiction knows no successful marriages that begin with musical fascination.

^{clxv} A less familiar seduction scene in George Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* begins with dinner and drinks for two and is then intensified by music. Bella Mount is seducing young Richard at the instigation of Lord Mountfalcon, who hopes to win Richard's lover Lucy for himself. Secure of his sentimental attachment ('O Bella! Let me save you.' (Meredith *Feverel* XXXVIII:454), she pulls the musical stop: "'You don't know all my accomplishments yet, Richard. ... You saw the piano – why didn't you ask me to sing before? I can sing Italian. I had a master – who made love to me.'" [...456] He was in the mood when imagination intensely vivifies everything. Mere suggestions of music sufficed.' (XXXVIII:455). At the end she 'swam wave-like to the sofa. She was at his feet. ... Not a word of love between them! Was ever hero in this fashion won?' (XXXVIII:458).

A particularly tragic union announces itself in *The Newcomes* in the relentless training for the marriage market which the shallow, spoilt Rosey Mackenzie is being put through by her scheming mother:

Rosey was eternally strumming upon an instrument which had been taken upstairs for her special practice. ... If Rosey played incorrectly, mamma flew at her with prodigious vehemence of language, and sometimes with a slap on poor Rosey's back. She must make Rosey wear tight boots, and stamped on her little feet if they refused to enter into the slipper.⁶¹³

The reader is not expected to admire the performances that will help to bring about a disastrous marriage; the narrator comments on their quality in a tellingly oblique way: 'To her mother's excellent accompaniment Rosey sang her favourite songs (by the way her stock was very small – five, I think, was the number).'^{clxvi} Rosey has no opinions about her own repertoire, preferring to have her ideas

dealt out to her like her frocks, bonnets, handkerchiefs, her shoes and gloves, and the order thereof; the lumps of sugar for her tea, the proper quantity of raspberry jam for breakfast; who trusts for all supplies corporeal and spiritual to her mother. For her own part, Rosey is pleased with everything in nature. Does she love music? O, yes. Bellini and Donizetti? O, yes.⁶¹⁴

The sensitive, thoughtful artist Clive Newcome is duly trapped, with depressing results: at the end of the novel, even after Rosey's death in childbirth, the narrator can only imagine Clive's marriage to his true love Ethel in 'Fable-land'.

Mrs. Gaskell describes the comeuppance of such a mother with a certain relish in her magazine story 'Uncle Peter'. Sitting as a guest in the house of her rich cousin, Mrs. Howard has reached 'the end of her long-drawn hopes' and asks her daughter to play 'with that especial benignity of manner which had characterized her since her admission thus to Hursleigh'.⁶¹⁵ Uncle Peter resigns himself to listening, but then Mrs. Howard overreaches herself:

'A moment, my dear; you have not asked your dear uncle what he would like. What style of music do you prefer, sir? my daughter sings all – French, German, Italian, Scotch, Irish, or English; which shall it be?'⁶¹⁶

She trusts in him to choose an English ballad, but is disappointed: 'he said, shortly, "German, then, if you please"', and Julia demurs.

'Not got a German song!' said Mrs. Howard, with the slightest approach to acrimony in

^{clxvi} Thackeray *Newcomes* XXIII:231. Two years after marrying, Rosey has given up music, although she has 'the most magnificent piano' (LXIII:658) in her fine new house.

her benignant tones. 'Where are all your German songs?' 'I never had but one, you know, mamma ... the one, you know, that I learned from my singing master.' 'Surprising! ... Sing whatever you have, then, my dear,' she said. Miss Howard commenced 'Annie Laurie,' which she sang throughout a semitone too low. Mr Peter Merton rose at the conclusion; he had letters to write, and was going to his study.⁶¹⁷

Mr. Merton's musical discernment (here introduced as positive quality in order to thwart the unpleasant mother) saves him. While it is exaggerated to say that such strategies constitute an 'aesthetic rebellion',⁶¹⁸ it is true that they subvert a womanly skill for personal purposes; and although these purposes are enforced by the system and the means offered by it, fiction betrays the inherent disapproval for those who use them by the frequency with which they obtain disappointing or catastrophic results. This is also true when no mother is around, which is more frequently the case in Victorian than in Regency novels.

In Margaret Oliphant's *Miss Marjoribanks*, the social climber Barbara Lake impresses a dinner party with her Italian-looking black hair and her beautiful contralto to win only a very dubious admirer.⁶¹⁹ Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, on the other hand, describes the coming-about of an infelicitous union. The numerous and desperate Allaby sisters play at cards for Theobald, their father's latest curate, and Christina wins, 'the second unmarried daughter, then just twenty-seven years old and therefore four years older than Theobald'.⁶²⁰ Theobald is an easy victim ('He told a college friend that he knew he was in love now; he really was, for he liked Miss Allaby's society much better than that of his sisters.'⁶²¹). Butler's description of Christina's actual strategies gains an extra edge from his precise (and very un-Victorian) technical knowledge of music:

Over and above the recommendations already enumerated, [Christina] had ... what was supposed to be a very beautiful contralto voice. ... What [it] wanted in range and power was made up in the feeling with which she sang. She had transposed 'Angels ever bright and fair' into a lower key, so as to make it suit her voice, thus proving, as her mamma said, that she had a thorough knowledge of the laws of harmony; not only did she do this, but at every pause added an embellishment of arpeggios from one end to the other of the keyboard ...; she thus added life and interest to an air which everyone – so she said – 'must feel to be rather heavy in the form in which Handel left it.'^{clxvii}

The narrator adds: 'Nevertheless, it was some time before Theobald could bring his courage to the sticking point of actually proposing.'⁶²² Empathy with the helplessly fascinated male is

^{clxvii} Butler *All Flesh* XI:45. Butler's personal admiration for Handel's music (cf. note clxii p. 124) adds a particular bitterness to his satire.

not intended, but blocked, to make the denunciation more effective.^{clxviii}

The blazons that announce the marketability of girls no longer direct subversive irony at a heroine, but may be openly derogatory of the characters they describe, and usually course concern secondary figures. Catherine Sinclair, whose anti-accomplishment agenda had been obvious since her 1837 *Modern Accomplishments* (cf. pp. 74, 78, 85 and 88), makes the heroine of a later novel comment critically on her sisters' skills:

Much as my sisters improved in external graces ... their acquirements were all, as my father mournfully remarked, mere Palais Royal jewellery, of no intrinsic worth. ... Caroline excelled in every sort of employment which requires no mind or exertion. ... Elizabeth was a brilliant musician of the new school. Singing the most astonishing bravuras, and performing long [piano] pieces full of chromatic difficulties and wonderful effects, with frequent changes in the key. ... To the generality of visitors, such frantic pieces [78] were an unknown tongue.⁶²³

This is fairly unsophisticated campaigning; but also novels with a less palpable educational agenda contain soured descriptions. In Trollope's *Eustace Diamonds*, Lizzie Greystock, the future Lady Eustace, is introduced with a volley of faint praise from a narrator who does not pretend that 'we' truly admire her:

Lizzie's eyes were not tender, – neither were they true. But they were surmounted by the most wonderfully pencilled eyebrows ... We must add that she had in truth studied much. She spoke French, understood Italian, and read German. She played well on the harp,^{clxix} and moderately well on the piano. She sang, at least in good taste and in tune. ... She forgot nothing, listened to everything, understood quickly, and was desirous to shine not only as a beauty but as a wit.⁶²⁴

Such assumptions colour the reactions to the behaviour of Daisy Miller in Henry James' novella of that title. Her mother arrives at a party in Rome, explaining that Daisy is still at home, unable to stop 'going' at the pianoforte with Mr. Giovanelli, her attractive Italian acquaintance. The hostess is horrified, and Daisy unconcerned:

'I wanted to make Mr. Giovanelli practice some things before he came; you know he sings beautifully, and I want you to ask him to sing. This is Mr. Giovanelli; you know I introduced him to you; he's got the most lovely voice, and he knows the most charming set of songs. I made him go over them this evening on purpose; we had the greatest time at the hotel.'⁶²⁵

To this shocking admission of the sins of familiarity and 'going native' is added the pernicious charm of music. Such horrors are not to be dispelled by Mr. Giovanelli's 'gallant' behaviour;⁶²⁶

^{clxviii} A historicizing perspective further distances the reader from Rosamond Vincy, whose accomplishments make her 'the irresistible woman for the doomed man of *that date* [my italics].' (Eliot *Middlemarch* III:xxvii:262).

^{clxix} The harp may still have a worldly overtone here.

even Daisy's sympathetic observer Lord Winterbourne is 'bewildered'.⁶²⁷

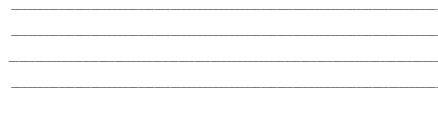
[Giovannelli] sang very prettily half a dozen songs, though Mrs. Walker afterward declared that she had been quite unable to find out who asked him. It was apparently not Daisy who had given him his orders. Daisy sat at a distance from the piano, [62] and though she had publicly, as it were, professed a high admiration for his singing, talked, not inaudibly, while it was going on.⁶²⁸

Later on they retire to a window's embrasure for the remainder of the evening, ignoring somebody else's 'interesting performance at the piano'.⁶²⁹ The hostess' conclusion is simple: 'She never enters my drawing room again.'⁶³⁰ She does not of course, but dies soon after.

From Gaskell to James, narratives invite readerly disapproval of music rather than identification by the representation of actual or potential misdemeanours of its practitioners. The implicitly expressed suspicion of an art which is supposedly incapable of expressing an 'impure thought' parallels the contradictions inherent in the 'myth of the pure woman' which Isobel Armstrong has described:

[A]n impossible female docility can only be given ultimate credence when it seen as the product of artfulness or [271] duplicity. Hence ... the pure woman is contemplated with an odd mixture of adulation and anger [because ...] a coercive model of womanhood as pure and weak leads to an equally coercive notion of woman as cunning and artful.⁶³¹

This double concept is perfectly expressed by a musical rebus: 'MATERNAL ADVICE Addressed to a young English lady on her début into fashionable life'⁶³² in musical notation:



The injunction 'See [i.e. look] natural, be sharp' commends exactly the (musical) tactics that are denounced in fiction and admits that such sharpness works best when covered by a 'natural', innocent, appearance. The irony is that C natural and B sharp sound exactly the same: the discourse of pureness must be one of weakness and cunning. This corresponds to a second set of recurring literary strategies: those of belittling the impression and influence of women's music, while – on the surface – praising and endorsing it.

2.2. Devaluing: Disinfection and trivialization

As women, then, the first thing of importance is

to be content to be inferior to men.

SARAH STICKNEY ELLIS

*The trivialization of women's activities
was essential to maintaining a status quo
based on gender hierarchies.*

RICHARD LEPPERT

Devaluation of powerful musicianship, deflation of musical excitement, is effected in two ways. It can exalt music to metaphorical skies, away from concrete performance, or it can damper the strong emotions that such performances provoke by providing chastening contexts. Both strategies belittle the performer. A prayer for brides on the eve of the wedding, suggested in *Ideals for Girls* by that prolific writer on music, the Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis, illustrates this:

To give or keep, to live and learn to be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind,
Till at the last you set yourself to move
like perfect music unto noble words.⁶³³

'At the last' may mean a consummated mature marriage, but has also a hint of death about it, and, as nearly three centuries earlier ('thou, my music'), the woman becomes an abstract commodity, here even secondary to the words which are a masculine prerogative. The vague negative 'all that not harms' and the exhortation to retain childlike traits are also typical of the Victorian difficulty to define fully adult and conscious womanhood. This the background against which sanctification of music and de-eroticisation of musical emotion can be read as devaluating both music and women.

*Music is the one pure beautiful thing
in a world of sin and vileness.*

RITA

*It is only in England
that musicianship has been really seriously hampered
by the unmusical seekers after edification.*

ERNEST WALKER

In *Oliver Twist*, Rose Maylie plays for the convalescent Oliver on summer evenings:

[Rose] would ... play some pleasant air, or sing, in a low and gentle voice, some old

song which it pleased her aunt to hear. There would be no candles lighted at such times as these; and Oliver would sit by one of the windows, listening to the sweet music, in a perfect rapture.⁶³⁴

This rapture is soon 'disinfected' by the revelation that Rose is Oliver's aunt, and when she next plays, it is the prelude to a serious illness of hers:

[A]fter running abstractedly over the keys for a few minutes, she fell into a low and very solemn air, and as she played it they heard her sob, as if she were weeping. 'Rose, my dear!' said the elder lady. Rose made no reply, but played a little quicker, as though the words had roused her from some painful thoughts. ... 'I don't know what it is; I can't describe it; but I feel –' ... The young lady, making [213] an effort to recover her cheerfulness, strove to play some livelier tune; her fingers dropped powerless on the keys: and covering her face with her hands, she sank upon a sofa '... I fear I am ill, aunt.'⁶³⁵

Before music can overpower, a stronger force sets in. In *The Newcomes* it is spinsterhood instead of 'aunthood' that hedges the powerful musical experiences nurturing Clive Newcome's budding artistry:

Old and weazened as that piano is, feeble and cracked her voice, it is wonderful what a pleasant concert she can give in that parlour of a Saturday evening She plays old music of Handel and Haydn, and the little chamber anon swells into a cathedral, and he who listens beholds altars lighted, priests ministering, fair children swinging censers ... and avenues of twilight marble. As she plays Don Juan, Zerlina comes tripping over the meadows, and Masetto after her, with a crowd of peasants and maidens ... [123]. All those beautiful sounds and thoughts which Miss Cann conveys to him out of her charmed piano, the young artist straightway translates into forms.⁶³⁶

Another bounded pupil-teacher relationship is 'sanitized' by death in an exemplary tale illustrating *Ideals for Girls*. The dedicatedly musical Emily is lucky to have lessons from a great musician: 'Happy the girl who has had such a master, and caught from such a gifted and pure genius her earliest musical aspirations.'⁶³⁷ When the master dies of consumption, Emily at nineteen never forgets 'to hang [her] wreath of fresh flowers upon a certain marble cross', and the narrator fully approves: 'You are quite right, my dear, I honour you for it; for you owe to him who lies beneath the deepest art impulses of your life.'⁶³⁸ The thankfulness that a professional development of these impulses has been so neatly curtailed is palpable.

Death contains music in many other episodes. In Wilkie Collins' *No Name*, minutes before Mr. Vanstone dies in a railway crash, his wife (as yet ignorant of his fate) finds her old music-book among his things and is moved: 'How good he is to me! He remembers my poor old music-book, and keeps it for my sake.' For half an hour, she sits with the book on her lap, 'dreaming happily over the old songs; thinking gratefully of the golden days when his hand

turned the pages for her, when his voice had whispered the words which no woman's memory ever forgets'.⁶³⁹ When daughter Norah has to leave her childhood home forever after her father's death, she takes the music-book with her: 'My mother's name written in it. And some verses to my father on the next page.'⁶⁴⁰ In *Vanity Fair*, death, silence and limited skill contain Amelia Osborne's mourning for her husband, 'touching, to the best of her simple art, melancholy harmonies [692] on the keys, and weeping over them in silence',⁶⁴¹ and Florence Dombey's memories of her little brother Paul that emerge as she is going over 'the old air to which he had so often listened', 'so softly played and sung, that it was more like the mournful recollection ... than the reality repeated'.⁶⁴² In *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, a young woman refuses the hero's suit, pleading duties to her ageing father, only to die shortly after him. Rutherford discovers his love for her when she is singing: 'Mary pleaded that as they had no piano, Mr Rutherford would not care for her poor voice without accompaniment. But I, too, protested that she should, and she got out the "Messiah".'⁶⁴³ Mary's voice, perfectly feminine, 'was not powerful, but it was [116] pure'⁶⁴⁴ and in 'He was despised' it 'wound itself into the very centre of my existence'.⁶⁴⁵ Such powerful emotion can only be expressed here because the musician and the relationship are doomed, anyway, as in for instance in Frederic Weatherly's memoir (cf. p. 131); and further safeguards are the eminently chastening choice of music^{clxx} and the avoidance of the piano.

In Coventry Patmore's verse narrative *The Angel in The House*, the suspicious instrument is similarly mentioned and kept at bay, so that death is not allowed (or indeed needed) to spoil love and eventual marriage. The piano only appears at the very beginning, when the prospective lover and husband is approaching the house where he will discover unexpectedly that the little Honoria he used to know has grown nubile in the six years since his last visit. Here the piano could come in triumphantly into its (or her) own. But again, disinfection sets in:

Geranium, lychnis, rose array'd
The windows, all wide open thrown;
And some one in the Study play'd
The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn.⁶⁴⁶

This is all. The bride-to-be (if it is she) remains invisible, and instead of a bewitching draw-ing-

^{clxx} The text of this contralto aria is taken from Isaiah 53:3-5, a description of the suffering Redeemer which opens the narrative of the passion in Handel's oratorio.

room piece, it is the apotheosis of Victorian musical respectability^{clxxi} and (royal) approval which provides a decisive perspective on the goal of the whole poem before the partners even meet. The musical side of courtship is adroitly skipped, and none of the many later encounters between the pair feature a piano. Even when the erotic potential of music-making is at work between two virtuous partners at the beginning of an entirely irreproachable relationship, there seems to be a necessity for distancing.

The love of Walter Hartright and the mentally fragile Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White* is surrounded by many obstacles (such as her betrothal to the evil Percival Glyde who connives in attempts on her life), but even so, it is watered down in her lover's enthusiastic description:

My natural fondness for the music which [Laura] played with such tender feeling, such delicate womanly taste, and her natural enjoyment of giving me back, by practice of her art, the pleasure which I had offered to her by the practice of mine [in drawing lessons], only wove another tie which drew us closer and closer together.⁶⁴⁷

Laura's music is made derivative, a poetic thank-you for the drawing lessons which Walter is paid to give her, and the erotic female performer power over the man is contained in the mutuality of 'drew us... together'. Such 'sanitizing' attitudes essentially belittle the music and its players and disempower performances.^{clxxii}

*It's just the trick of the trade that you learn,
as a girl learns the notes of her piano.
There's nothing to it. You forget it all the next hour.*
ANTHONY TROLLOPE

There, finally, is a more concrete and explicit form of devaluation that was not limited to fiction nor to the Victorian period; application had been demanded and virtuosity was frowned upon for centuries, but as in other respects, the mid-nineteenth century is also the

^{clxxi} As Markus Marti pointed out to me, Shakespeare's *Mid-Summernight's Dream*, for which Mendelssohn's Wedding March is part of the incidental music, is not particularly representative of Victorian sexual mores. Both Shakespeare's play and Mendelssohn's music were 'disinfected' by Victorian reception.

^{clxxii} One counterexample must be mentioned: In *Hard Cash*, Julia Dodd is pressed to sing in company by her mother, and her suitor wishes for 'something suitable to you and me'. After a seemingly hesitation ('[G]o further away, dear; I shall have more courage.' (Reade *Hard Cash* 1:v:164), she communicates her love with the words of a folk song. 'All the hearers ... were thrilled, astonished, spell-bound ... Judge, then, what it was to Alfred, to whom ... the darling of his own heart vowed constancy, while her inspired face beamed on him like an angel's.' (Reade *Hard Cash* 1:v:165). Alfred's terrible trial in a madhouse (Reade's cause in this novel are the abuses of the asylum system) can only delay their wedded bliss.

peak of this double-bind. Hours and hours of practice^{clxxiii} were forced on hopeless girls in the boarding-school Francis Power Cobbe remembers:

[Being an 'Ornament of Society'] was the *raison d'être* of each acquirement. Everything was taught us in the inverse ratio of its true importance. At the bottom of the scale were Morals and Religion, and at the top were Music and Dancing The order of precedence ... was naively betrayed by one of our schoolmistresses when she was admonishing one of the girls who had been detected in a lie. 'Don't you know, you naughty girl ... we had *almost* rather find you have a P –' (the mark of Pretty Well) 'in your music, than tell such falsehoods?' ... One day I said [65] ... 'My dear Fraulein, I mean to practise this piece of Beethoven's till I conquer it.' 'My dear' responded the honest Fraulein, 'you do practise that piece for seex hours a day, and you do live till you are seexy, at the end you will not play it!' Yet so hopeless a pupil was compelled to learn for years, not only the piano, but the harp and singing!⁶⁴⁸

A manual of *The Habits of Good Society* explains the need for such mediocre musical performance without the slightest irony:

We are not ... a nation of talkers; naturally, our talent is for silence. ... [231] It therefore becomes more and more essential that there should be some talent to supply the want of good conversation. And, for that end, there is nothing like music. ... A lively waltz, or a soft movement, carefully played, even without that great execution which *compels* listening, are often aids to conversation; it flows the more easily from that slight and agreeable interruption.^{clxxiv}

Trivializing music as 'slight and agreeable' seems to have been indispensable for keeping this potentially subversive art under control. It almost seems that slavish devotion to practice was *preferably* forced on unpromising musicians where there was no threat of music turning into a real passion. The resulting 'piano pest' was often criticized; even Shakespeare was called to repent of his advice not to trust 'a man that hath not music in himself':

If you could but contemplate the evils it has occasioned! ... In families the piano has extinguished conversation and the love of books ..., and it is difficult to pass between two houses without having a sonata thrown at you from one of them.⁶⁴⁹

Eliza Cook's Journal describes the practise of teaching girls 'without reference to their ability or musical taste' as 'tyrannical and absurd'⁶⁵⁰ – but to little avail.

Page-turning became an obnoxious chore for men because the necessary musical skill was getting rarer. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Aurora Leigh*, Captain Bulstrode, while paying a

^{clxxiii} The most frequently cited figure of daily practice is four hours a day; in a magazine story, a girl is 'tied, as she affirmed, for six mortal hours daily to the piano, and buried deep in all the mysteries of French and Italian' (Anon. 'Lilias Granger' 334). Cf. also Thackeray *Snobs* XXVII:435: '[T]he girls are beginning to practise their music, which in an honourable English families ought to occupy every young gentlewoman three hours', and Thackeray *Ravenswing* IV:170.

^{clxxiv} Aster *Habits* 230f. Cf. Sullivan 'On Music' 271: 'We do, indeed love music, but it is with an inferior affection to that [for] other objects in life. We have not yet ceased to talk while music is being performed.'

classical courtship to Lucy Floyd with chess, duets and advice about watercolours, becomes more and more fascinated with her cousin Aurora, whom he watches while 'leaning over Lucy's piano or drawing-board'. Lucy resents the limited significance of these attentions: 'She knew how often he forgot to turn over the leaf in the Beethoven sonatas ... and gave her wandering, random answers when she spoke to him.'⁶⁵¹ In Arthur Hugh Clough's 'Long-Vacation Pastoral' *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, Oxford undergraduates on holiday exalt unspoilt Scottish girls who make urban activities like 'going shopping to-gether, and hearing [girls] singing, / Dangling beside them, and turning the leaves on the dreary piano' seem unnatural, 'dull farces of escort' utterly removed 'from work, mother earth, and the objects of living'.⁶⁵²

The disdain for this sort of music extended to the girls, and a nasty little newspaper item illustrates how little sympathy they could count on:

It appears that a well-known musical savant has educated a favourite monkey^{clxxv} to become a good pianist. After only forty-eight lessons ... the monkey, Tabitha, who is a real ornament to her sex, could play scales with surprising dexterity.⁶⁵³

True, even species-transcending, femininity is simply not imaginable without scales, and scales, if there are, must come from female fingers. This inevitable conclusion is typical of the kind of literary paralysis that turned the indispensable piano into a victim of its own respectability. No rapturous musical enjoyment is allowed to go unchecked. No man may play. Any number of imaginable options for plot and nuances of characterization that were open to earlier and later writers are excluded in an attempt to define and weigh down what Richard Leppert calls the 'unstable locus of music in Victorian society'.⁶⁵⁴

2.3. Deflecting: 'Heroines [not] at the piano'

Just as inevitable as the gender of a piano-playing monkey is the fact that strong, intelligent and morally superior female figures, whose characterization would suffer from playing the 'dreary piano' or practising scales to rival those of an exotic pet, are regularly described as unmusical or reticent to perform. The impressive and potentially unsettling performances

^{clxxv} The civilized if mute Orang-Outan (Sir Oran Haut-Ton) in Thomas Love Peacock's *Melincourt* is very musical, and chooses his instruments in compliance with gender-norms about instruments: 'He, with some little instruction from a marine officer in the Tornado, had become a proficient on the flute and French horn. He could never be brought to understand the notes; but, from hearing any simple [131] tune played or sung two or three times, he never failed to perform it with great exactness and brilliancy of execution.' (VI:130f.). an Oxford sermon from the 1860s: 'When I have listened to those inspiring words "I know that my Redeemer liveth" sung to Handel's divine music, I have felt that it is indeed a long way from that to the squealing of some hideous ape in a primeval forest.' (q. *Weatherly Piano and Gown* 59).

they could be expected to give are withheld from the world of the Victorian novel in an indirect indictment of the humiliating character of musical performance which turns the player into a passive, curious or desirable, but always reprehensible object of male observation. That strategy of 'deflection' is the one that could be called subversive because it finds excuses to exempt positive figures from a humiliating social ritual. This happens so regularly that it was (implicitly) described as typical of a sub-species of 'silly novels by lady novelists' by George Eliot. She describes heroines of the 'mind-and-millinery' kind of novel as possessing perfect morals, dancing skills, dress-sense and an ability to read the Bible in the original tongues as well as 'a superb contralto and a superb intellect'⁶⁵⁵ – but no piano skills. Greek and Hebrew would be out of tune with 'The Lost Chord' or brilliant variations on 'Home, Sweet Home'. The title 'Heroines at the Piano' of one of the first articles to analyse musical scenes in nineteenth-century novels turns out to be misleading: it is non-heroines that sit there most often. Few heroines play well.

Margaret Hale in Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South* enlists filial obedience as an unanswerable defence for her inability: 'I am fond of hearing good music; I cannot play well myself; and papa and mamma don't care much about it.'⁶⁵⁶ It is significant that Margaret declares her alleged lack of talent herself; it is never the narrative voice that 'betrays' such women as actually playing badly; such self-declarations make the refusal to play seem like commendable, and not even quite factual, modesty. To complement this, a theoretical appreciation of music, which denotes intelligence, is often emphasised, as in Margaret's case. To Molly Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*, playing is a 'martyrdom', but we are assured that she has an 'excellent ear ... and both from inclination and conscientious perseverance of disposition, she would go over an incorrect passage for twenty times.' Even after this assertion of virtue and industry, the sting needs to be taken out of Molly's musicality: 'But she was very shy of playing in company; and when forced to do it, she went through her performance heavily, and hated her handiwork more than anyone.'⁶⁵⁷ When her silly stepmother insists on her playing in company ('You may not play it quite rightly; and I know you are very nervous; but you're quite amongst friends'), Molly obliges, but refuses the classical flirting aid of page-turning: 'Please go away! ... I can quite well fit for myself. And oh! if you would but talk!'⁶⁵⁸ However, Molly loses her concentration several times because she is trying to observe the engrossing conversation that ensues between Roger Hamley, whom Molly loves, and her flirtatious stepsister Cynthia.

While Mrs. Gaskell's notes indicate that she intended Molly and Roger to marry, the last (penultimate) finished chapter sees Roger leaving for an Africa expedition without having proposed. Molly will have to wait, at least, and this is typical for non-musical characters, whose marital happiness is often troubled, delayed or even impossible. In James Smith's poem 'The Two Sisters', Gertrude quotes John Locke and takes 'to wisdom' before she is twelve, whereas her sister Emma '[o]n all such topics is dumb', but conventionally accomplished:

The grand piano Emma greets
 With fingers light and plastic
 But never like her sister beats
 The drum ecclesiastic.⁶⁵⁹

Of course 'Emma, light Emma, blooms a bride, / And Gertrude fades a virgin!'⁶⁶⁰ Other cases of spinsterhood are Marian Halcombe, half-sister of the angelically insipid Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White* (who 'plays delightfully').⁶⁶¹ Marian is tall, dark, ugly, moustachioed and a wonderfully resourceful woman of the highest integrity, who claims not to 'know one note of music from the other'.⁶⁶² The only man ever to fall in love with her is the perverted Italian Count Fosco, and her happiness ever after consists in going to live with Walter and Laura. Rhoda Broughton's brilliant, lively Kate Chester who loves 'not wisely, but too well', wilts alone after having been tempted and abandoned by a cad. She wouldn't even go to hear Arabella Goddard^{clxxvi} play: 'The bump of music on my head is represented by a hollow. ... Saint Cecilia has neither part nor lot in me.'⁶⁶³

*To undertake an occupation or profession
 other than literature or painting
 is to run the risk of being considered 'masculine' or 'unladylike'.*
 KATE PERUGINI DICKENS

A significant number of unmusical heroines are credited with a positively connotated talent for the visual arts. Visual arts have so much dignity that some characters are even permitted to earn money by them, while professional female pianists are completely absent from fiction. Helen Huntingdon, Anne Brontë's 'Tenant of Wildfell Hall', betrayed by a charming musician and a dissipated husband, keeps herself and her little son by painting after having

^{clxxvi} Celebrated and highly respected English concert pianist (1836-1922), the only mention of a historical professional pianist that I have come across.

left home. She is 'most painfully, bitterly' jealous of the other woman's music because she herself has 'no power to awaken similar fervour. I can amuse and please him with my simple songs, but not delight him thus'.⁶⁶⁴ When she remonstrates with him for his behaviour, he assures her of his admiration with the ambiguous compliment: 'She is a daughter of earth; you are an angel of Heaven ... and remember that I am a poor, fallible mortal'.⁶⁶⁵ Such phrases demonstrate how untenable religio-marital musical metaphors are: drawing-room music is not really celestial, but almost inevitably earthy and sensual; and only then is it attractive. A true, dignified (if betrayed) 'Angel in the House' is not imaginable at the piano.

The heroine of Dinah Mulock Craik's *Olive* is born slightly deformed and 'scarcely would have been called a clever child; was neither talkative nor musical'.⁶⁶⁶ Her father comments predictably: 'Of course, she will never marry'.⁶⁶⁷ Olive is not a performer, not interested in attracting: 'Her yearning was always *to love* rather than *to be loved*';⁶⁶⁸ hers is a creative, 'ardent, almost masculine genius'.⁶⁶⁹ After reading Shelley and Byron, she cries out: 'Woman as I am, I will dare all things – endure all things! Let me be an artist!'⁶⁷⁰ and becomes a painter. Dorothea Brooke has no patience for the piano music which pestered her adolescence. When her father thinks that women 'up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know. A woman should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good old English tune',⁶⁷¹ Dorothea typically disagrees:

'Mr. Casaubon is not fond of the piano, and I am very glad he is not,' said Dorothea, whose slight regard for domestic music and feminine fine art must be forgiven her, considering the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period. She smiled and looked up at her betrothed with grateful eyes. If he had always been asking her to play the 'Last Rose of Summer,' she would have required much resignation.⁶⁷²

However, Mr. Casaubon is not able to substitute something worthy for the exercises Dorothea is glad to leave behind her on marrying:

'What shall I do?' 'Whatever you please, my dear'; that had been [Dorothea's] brief history since she had left off learning morning lessons and practising silly rhythms on the hated piano. Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty.⁶⁷³

Dorothea does not use her 'oppressive liberty' to paint, but she eventually marries a man who was a painter for a while, and the episode in Rome where Dorothea is being painted by Will Ladislav's friend Naumann shows George Eliot's sensitivity to the difference of object- or subject-hood, respectively, that painting and performing imply. Will becomes jealous of

Naumann who is looking at Dorothea in order to paint her, whereas Casaubon is childishly gratified to be painted as Thomas Aquinas, to take on the female role of the model, of the object of display.

Certainly the most famous non-pianist-but-painter is Jane Eyre.⁶⁷⁴ Her piano playing is tested (suitably, with Jane playing in a different room – Rochester does not want to *watch* her performance) and found wanting by Mr. Rochester with the same disregard for trifles with which he comments on her lack of beauty and she on his: "'You play a *little*, I see: like any other English schoolgirl; perhaps rather better than some, but not well.'" [152] I closed the piano, and returned.⁶⁷⁵ Jane does not care, and she is right, of course. But when he suspects that somebody helped her with her sketches and paintings, she defends her achievement: "'No, indeed!" I interjected.' The two analyse Jane's unusual artistic efforts at great length and Rochester evaluates them in detail carefully and sensitively. Later, Jane (who is quite capable of feeling 'a thrill of artist-delight'⁶⁷⁶ drawing a pretty insignificant girl) indulges her fantasies by dreamily sketching a portrait of Rochester. Nevertheless, she does not at first fully realize that he shares her ideas about the hierarchy of the arts, and is wildly jealous on hearing of his appreciation of her erstwhile rival: 'I heard [Mr. Rochester] say [Blanche Ingram's] execution was remarkably good.'⁶⁷⁷ She does not yet understand that a compliment on pianistic 'execution' from him does not conventionally denote infatuation, but characteristically tries to scold herself out of her dreams and back into maidenly independence of mind with a *painting* metaphor, exhorting herself to confront the chasteningly unbeatable beauty of her rival: 'Draw in chalk you own picture, faithfully' and then 'take a piece of smooth ivory ... mix your freshest, finest, clearest tints'.⁶⁷⁸ Fearing defeat as a woman, Jane at least wants to look and render, to observe and comment instead of being 'consumed' when on convenient display at the piano.

'She was greatly admired ... not only for her beauty, but for her accomplishments. She was one of the ladies who sang: a gentleman accompanied her on the piano. She and Mr. Rochester sang a duet.' 'Mr. Rochester? I was not aware he could sing.' 'Oh! He has a fine bass voice, and an excellent taste for music.'⁶⁷⁹

By painting, Jane works through her own world-view, and so painting, although it is part of the nineteenth century canon of accomplishments, is not mentioned in her famous denunciation of the suppression of women:

Women ... need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; ... it is narrow-minded in their privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to

playing the piano and embroidering bags.⁶⁸⁰

Accomplishments are significantly differentiated here. 'Tinkling' and 'smearing' are not equally despicable; at least painters *look* instead of being observed. Not only do they refuse the humiliation of being watched but establish – literally – their own point of view. This metaphor is significant because musical performance also has a strong visual element; Rochester's indifference about Jane Eyre's plainness is as great an exception as his lack of interest in her pianistic achievement.

3. 'A woman was playing, a man looking on'

3.1. Visual elements: Silencing the pianist

*Looking at angels, or indeed at people singing,
is much nicer than listening to them.*

OSCAR WILDE

*In short, to achieve what the world defined
as her highest and most appropriate role in life,
a woman had to be good and good-looking.*

PATRICIA ANDERSON

In the mid-nineteenth century as before, the visual aspect was a dominant element of musical attraction:

In general society ... a long noisy bravura duet is the signal for energetic conversation, and, with the exception of such gentlemen as approach the piano for the sake of admiring the young ladies' fair hands and rounded arms, no-one pays the smallest attention to the performance⁶⁸¹

Appreciation of the pretty girls can only be expressed afterwards in musical terms which is absurd because no one listened: 'When they have hammered away to the last chord, thanks and compliments are showered upon them, by those who have wished the piano at the Antipodes during the last ten minutes'.⁶⁸² Oscar Wilde, who did not care too much about music, obviously enjoyed living this stereotype:

I am going to be married to a beautiful girl called Constance Lloyd, a grave, slight, violet-eyed little Artemis, with great coils of heavy brown hair which make her flower-like head droop like a flower, and wonderful ivory hands which draw music from the piano so sweet that the birds stop singing to listen to her.⁶⁸³

Frances Power Cobbe remembers that 'next to Music and Dancing and Deportment, came

Drawing, but that was not a sufficiently *voyant* accomplishment, and no [66] great attention was paid to it.⁶⁸⁴ Drawing is, paradoxically, not 'voyant' enough because the object of all this showing-off is never the art or craft achieved but always the girl displaying herself. Catherine Sinclair elaborates in her anti-accomplishment novel *Jane Bouverie*:

By many parents, their own children are merely treated like ornamental volumes for the drawing-room, to amuse an idle hour, by their external decorations of beauty and accomplishments, without [46] reference to the far deeper interest they might, as intelligent and immortal beings, create.⁶⁸⁵

Fiction reflects this: virtually every piano scene contains at least a passing allusion to the visual aspect.

A young vicar on his first parish round is offered 'a nice place ..., Mr Vincent – quite the place for you, where you can hear all the music, and see all the young ladies.'⁶⁸⁶ Lucy Floyd's playing is typically rewarded with an optical recollection: 'I remember your graceful figure seated at the piano in the long drawing-room, with the sunshine on your hair.'⁶⁸⁷ Thackeray sums one heroine up: 'Most persons ... were pleased with the pretty little Rosey. She sang charmingly now, and looked so while singing',⁶⁸⁸ and also Gwendolen Harleth is ironically described as having 'the rare advantage of looking almost [42] prettier when she was singing than at other times'.⁶⁸⁹ In *Mildred Arkell*, the pretty Georgina Beauclerc manages to seduce even a talented musician like Henry with the visual charms of her amateur musicianship.

Henry ... sang song after song ... accompanying himself. One song that he was especially asked for, he could not remember without the music. ... Georgina said she could play it for him, and sat down. ... It was found, however, that she could not play it; and after two or three attempts, she began a waltz instead; and the ladies, in the distance round the fire, forgot at length that they had wanted it. Georgina wore an evening dress of white spotted muslin, a broad blue sash round her waist, and a bit of narrow blue velvet suspending a cross on her neck. She had taken off her bracelets [282] to play, and her pretty white arms were bare. ... What she really said ... will never be wholly known: certain it is, that she led him on, until he resigned himself wholly to the fascination.⁶⁹⁰

Georgina upstages the angelic Henry before seducing him; her negative character also effects a deprecation of too-successful female musicianship.

In Thomas Hardy's early novel *Blue Eyes*, the first meeting between Elfride Swancourt and her socially inferior admirer Stephen Smith occurs at the piano.

Every woman who makes a permanent impression on a man is afterwards recalled to his mind's eye as she appeared in one particular scene [39] Miss Elfride's image chose the form in which she was beheld during these minutes of singing.⁶⁹¹

This image is described at length, including the lighting effects of piano candles etc., and at the end Stephen positions himself so that he can see her from closer up, 'and gazed wistfully up into Elfride's face. So long and so earnestly gazed he, that her cheek deepened to a more and more crimson tint as each line was added to her song.'⁶⁹² This is a true example of the listener's gaze!^{clxxvii}

When Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White* describes his first evening near Laura Fairlie at the piano, all the recorded sensations are visual, from Laura's profile 'just delicately defined against the faintly-deepening background' to 'the dawning mystery of moonlight',⁶⁹³ and the passage ends: 'We all sat silent in the places we had chosen – Mrs. Vesey still sleeping. Miss Fairlie still playing, Miss Halcombe still reading – till the light failed us.'⁶⁹⁴ The music is so secondary to the visual here that it is no longer heard: again, music, a woman's wordless voice, cannot keep the attention of the audience.^{clxxviii}

Piano playing stops the pianist from speaking; and if her playing is not listened to, she loses her 'voice' doubly. Playing silences women, and is therefore the supremely attractive attribute of Victorian womanhood. Ruskin's exhortations to girl singers to discipline their voices demand a renunciation of speech and deny its necessity at the same time:

[T]hink only of accuracy; never of effect or expression: ... most likely there are very few feelings in you, at present, needing any particular expression; and the one thing you have to do is to make a clear-voiced little instrument of yourself, which other people can entirely depend on for the note wanted.⁶⁹⁵

George Meredith enthused about his second fiancée Marie Vulliamy: 'She is intensely emotional, but without expression for it, save in music. I call her my dumb poet. But when she is at the piano, she is not dumb. She has a divine touch on the notes.'^{clxxix} In a poem about Marie, the opposition of talk and music is one of a series of male-female antitheses: 'She can talk the talk of men, / And touch with thrilling fingers.'⁶⁹⁶ Arthur Hugh Clough's verse narrative *Amours de Voyage* turns the piano into a symbol of the simple, vague 'thinking' desirable in women:

^{clxxvii} The physical behaviour of self-conscious performers may of course be guided by such interests, and lead performers to assume that pantomime will have acoustic effects: 'Miss Cora, on the piano, prides herself on her sentiment of expression' but mimes rather than plays it: 'Her head is accustomed to work with wondrous energy over the "forte" passages, and her eyes are duly upturned to the ceiling at every interval of "pianissimo" effect.' (*Eliza Cook's Journal* VIII (1852) 76).

^{clxxviii} As Phyllis Weliver has remarked, even Daniel Deronda's reaction to Mirah's singing is introduced by a visual description (cf. Weliver 1996:43).

^{clxxix} Meredith *Letters* I:265, 06-06-1864. One fears that Meredith's praise for a friend's bride is not ironical: 'There's something right in one – a woman – who knows her capabilities to be not brilliant, sitting down to do her duty at the piano to pass the evening properly.' (Meredith *Letters* I:106, 19-10-1861).

It is a pleasure indeed to converse with this girl. Oh, rare gift,
 Rare felicity, this! she can talk in a rational way, can
 Speak upon subjects that really are matters of mind and of thinking,
 Yet in perfection retain her simplicity; ...
 No, though she talk, it is music; her fingers desert not the keys; 'tis
 Song, though you hear in the song the articulate vocables sounded,
 Syllabled singly and sweetly the words of melodious meaning.^{clxxx}

A woman does not talk, or her talk remains music, i.e. does not become too rational. As musical performance dwindles into a visual spectacle, so woman's speech dwindles into music or is frowned out by it.

In a poem by John Moultrie a father exalts his teenage daughter: 'Oft, as thy fingers sweep over the keys, / Melody stirs in thy soul like a breeze'.⁶⁹⁷ If the melody stays in the girl's soul, the girl will be shielded from the contamination of both praise and blame. Although her parents are wonderfully solaced by her music, silence would be the best solution:

So, whether vocal or silent thou be,
 Song shall be living in, welling from thee;
 If not the meed of the poetess thine,
 Thou shalt thyself be a poem divine.⁶⁹⁸

The ideal is the silence of the woman who *is* music instead of making it.

A student of the pianist Francesco Berger once asked him 'what *handsome* Edition of Beethoven and Chopin she should ask' as a wedding present. When he told her that she couldn't play such difficult music, she replied: 'That doesn't matter a bit ... it *looks* nice and artistic to have the volumes lying about *open* in the drawingroom.'⁶⁹⁹ Such a woman's room, imagined by the speaker while talking to an actual girl, figures in Frederick Locker-Lampson's 'Castle in the Air', where, among other domestic accoutrements, stands a piano:

Here, lately shut, that work-box lay,
 There, stood your own embroidery frame.
 And over this piano bent
 A Form from some pure region sent. [... 115]
 Her mouth had all the rose-bud's hue –
 A most delicious rose-bud too.
 Her auburn tresses lustrous shone,
 In massy clusters, like your own;
 And as her fingers pressed the keys,
 How strangely they resembled these!⁷⁰⁰

^{clxxx} Clough 'Amours' II:x:255-64. Philip James Bailey's lengthy closet drama *Festus* has the odd counter-example of a poet in love: 'The only music he / Or learned or listened to, was from the lips / Of her he loved; ... / Albeit she would try to teach him tunes, / And put his fingers on the keys; but he / Could only see her eyes, and hear her voice, / And feel her touch.' (Bailey *Festus* XXIII:17'005-15).

This is an extreme, but not unrepresentative example of a description of musical experience veering off immediately into visual terms. Most desirable pianists, are, however blondes.

3.2. Gentlemen prefer blondes (at their peril)

It fits the predominance of visual elements in the perception of female musicians that the strong women who refuse to perform have visual deficiencies compared to the more efficient players around them. If they are not downright plain, their charms are of the masculine 'tall, dark and handsome' order, and they are usually juxtaposed with morally or physically weaker characters who are pretty (often blond) and play charmingly. The two conflicting identities of an ideal woman, erotic object (disapproved of but described in detail) and strongly moral soul-mate, are projected into pairs of figures. The contradiction between an established canon of female duties and the underlying moral condemnation of its actual use is regularly acted out between such characters. Rosa Bud and Helena Landless in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* are the physically most emblematic couple, Rosa being everything her name promises and Helena 'an unusually handsome lithe girl ... very dark, and very rich in colour ... of almost the gipsy type'.⁷⁰¹ Being orphaned early on, she is 'a neglected creature ... unacquainted with all accomplishment'.⁷⁰²

*I'm determined to read no more books
where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness.*
GEORGE ELIOT

Magdalen Vanstone, the precarious heroine of Wilkie Collins' *No Name*, habitually spends 'the morning at the piano',⁷⁰³ while her sister Norah, virtuous throughout, has 'a fondness for reading' that 'had passed into a family proverb'.⁷⁰⁴ The differentiation may be very light, as between the half-sinister, half-ridiculous Blanche Amory and Arthur Pendennis' modest and virtuous cousin and wife-to-be Laura: 'Laura had a sweet contralto voice, and sang with Blanche, who had had the best continental instruction and was charmed to be her friend's mistress.'^{clxxxi} Disraeli's extremely high-minded 'Sybil' who first appears as 'A Religious' and

^{clxxxi} Thackeray *Pendennis* XXIII:216. Blanche even flirts with her cousin Laura: 'My name is Blanche – isn't it a pretty name? Call me by it. [...215] Her lips were of the colour of faint rosebuds, and her voice warbled limpidly over a set of the sweetest little pearly teeth ever seen. ... She played her some of her waltzes, with a rapid and brilliant finger, and [honest] Laura was still more charmed [and ...] forgot even jealousy in her admiration. ... The

only sings, reluctantly, Spanish hymns, is an example of a sanctified (as opposed to intelligent and practical) non-musical heroine. She is contrasted with a more conventional lady who is being treated as a sort of gramophone:

Soon the dear little Poinsett was singing, much gratified by being invited to the instrument by Mr. Egremont, who for a few minutes hung over her, and then, evidently under the influence of her tones, walked up and down the room, and only speaking to beg that she would continue her charming performances.⁷⁰⁵

Margaret Hale, the opposite of her pretty cousin Edith ('a soft ball of muslin and ribbons and silken curls'⁷⁰⁶) in *North and South* has a 'tall, finely-made figure' which 'set off the long, beautiful folds of the gorgeous shawls that would have half-smothered Edith'.⁷⁰⁷ She is also contrasted with her future sister-in-law Fanny Thornton who is first heard 'practising up a morceau de salon' and later dismisses Margaret because 'she's not accomplished ... she can't play'.⁷⁰⁸ To Margaret she wonders 'how you can exist without [a piano]. It almost seems to me a necessary of life'.⁷⁰⁹ Her mental range is clearly defined by this insistence, as is that of Edith when we hear in the first chapter of the novel how she worries about

her future life at Corfu, where [her fiancé's] regiment was stationed; and the difficulty of keeping a piano in good tune (a difficulty which Edith seemed to consider as one of the most formidable that could befall her in her married life) ...⁷¹⁰

In a significant drawing-room scene, a man who later turns out to be not quite worthy of her, leaves Margaret's side for her pretty cousin: "'Now I must go. Edith is sitting down to play, and I just know enough of music to turn over the leaves for her; and besides, Aunt Shaw won't like us to talk.'" Edith played brilliantly.⁷¹¹

Even George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë were not quite above such stereotyping: the non-performer Maggie Tulliver is contrasted with her cousin Lucy Deane in *The Mill on the Floss*, and Dorothea Brooke, glad to be spared musical requests from her first husband, has not only Rosamond Vincy as a musically accomplished but less mature counterpart, but also her own younger sister Celia.^{clxxxii} While George Eliot implicitly condemns the commodification of musical accomplishments by the faint praise she uses to damn Celia, an anonymous reviewer feared that young female readers of *Middlemarch* might imitate Dorothea and 'regulate their own conduct on the system of a general disapproval of the state of thing into which they are born'.⁷¹² Celia is held up as a positive example of a girl 'who not feeling it her

other smiled, looked in the glass ... sat down to the piano, and shook out a little song.' (Thackeray *Pendennis* XXIII:214f.).

^{clxxxii} When accepting Casaubon's proposal, Dorothea hears her playing an 'air, with variations', 'a small kind of tinkling which symbolised the æsthetic part of the young ladies' education' (Eliot *Middlemarch* I:v:44).

duty to subvert the world ... can take her place in it naturally',⁷¹³ and that place is, occasionally, the piano stool. In *Villette*, Ginevra Fanshawe, dressed in deep crimson, has 'the advantage in material charms'⁷¹⁴ while Paulina's attractions are 'more subtle and spiritual' and her attire 'in texture clear and white'.⁷¹⁵ Of course it is Ginevra who gets bored after dinner; when the 'gentlemen were heard to move, her railings ceased: she started up, flew to the piano, and dashed at it with spirit. Dr. Bretton entering, one of the first, took up his station beside her.'⁷¹⁶ However, John Graham Bretton later marries Pauline; as in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë does not punish unmusicality. She also had the originality to make Blanche Jane's worldly rival Blanche Ingram an impressively statuesque and *dark* beauty, and an accomplished pseudo-Byronic flirt.

The blond-dark or pretty-handsome contrast is frequently used for the strategy of denunciation: If the two contrasting women are rivals for a man, the non-musician would usually be better for him;^{clxxxiii} he may, with some delay marry her, or be miserable with the musician. The piano is used to get a man, not to make him happy later on,^{clxxxiv} and so when music is involved, Cupid's darts 'ofttimes fly of merit wide'.⁷¹⁷ In Trollope's *Framley Parsonage*, the modest parson's sister Lucy Robarts has to win over her potential mother-in-law, who has the statuesquely blond, bloodless and mindless heiress Griselda Grantly in mind for her son. Lucy wins thanks to her integrity, courage and biting wit, and naturally she

neither played nor sang; [whereas] Griselda did not sing, but she played; and did so in a manner that showed that neither her own labour nor her father's money had been spared in her instruction.⁷¹⁸

Lucy gets fed up with this: 'She had turned her back to the music for she was sick of seeing Lord Lufton watch the artistic motion of Miss Grantly's fingers, and was sitting at a small table as far away from the piano as the long room would permit.' This makes her interesting. Lord Lufton comes over and wonders: 'Perhaps you don't like music?' 'I do like it, – sometimes very much.'⁷¹⁹ This pert girl is, no surprise, 'thoroughly a brunette'.⁷²⁰

The eponymous hero of Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* is smitten with a pretty pianist at his first evening in society: 'I found Lillian singing at the piano. I had no idea that music was capable of expressing and conveying emotions so intense.'⁷²¹ But this conventionally

^{clxxxiii} A striking exception is Laura Fairlie, 'The Woman in White', who is apparently the right wife for Walter Hartright, while the statuesque Marian Halcombe goes to live with them in a strange, apparently sexless *ménage à trois*. Laura is a blonde musician but utterly lacks flirtatiousness.

^{clxxxiv} A Mrs. William Grey complained in Regency fashion that women 'are *not* educated to be wives, but to get husbands' and calculates that some girls devote '5,520 hours of their school life to music against 640 to arithmetic' (q. Beer 1986:178).

attractive girl – 'chatting so charmingly [and] stealing pretty saucy looks',⁷²² 'all April smiles and tears, golden curls, snowy rosebuds, and hovering clouds of lace'⁷²³ – turns out to be unworthy of the earnest young man. He belongs with Eleanor Staunton, 'a strong-minded woman'⁷²⁴ with glorious black-brown hair – 'the true "purple locks" which Homer so often talks of – [and] a tall and rounded figure'.⁷²⁵ Their serious exchanges culminate in an almost mystical union, effecting Alton's conversion and departure as a missionary. Musical skills are unimaginable as part of such a woman's attractions.

Plain Olive Rothesay has a ruthless blonde charmer of a cousin, who will betray her first lover and make her husband (who only later marries Olive) unhappy, and the two are at music together – 'Not that Olive practised ... but she listened to Sara's performance for hours, with patience, if not with delight.'⁷²⁶ The aptly nicknamed 'Pet' Minnie Meagles in Dickens' *Little Dorrit* is blond and dressed in white when Arthur Clennam sees her for the first time, deciding uselessly not to fall in love:

In the evening they played an old-fashioned rubber; and Pet sat looking over her father's hand, or singing to herself by fits and starts at the piano. She was a spoilt child; but how could she be otherwise?⁷²⁷

Little Dorrit herself, the 'Child of the Marshalsea', who eventually becomes Arthur's wife, has never had the slightest chance of acquiring ornamental accomplishments; she earns her family's living as a seamstress. For once, the non-pianist in the couple is not imposingly tall; Little Dorrit's superior dignity is constituted by the fact that her childhood in the debtors' prison has moulded her moral stature although it has stunted her physical growth. Clara Talboys, the virtuous counterpart of the blond-ringletted villainous Lady Audley (cf. p. 165f.), is an overdetermined example: she plays the organ and has a 'purely classical' face 'sublimated by sorrow'. 'Even her dress, puritan in its gray simplicity, became her beauty better than a more beautiful dress would have become a less beautiful woman.'⁷²⁸

In *Mildred Arkell*, the flashy Charlotte Travis is Mildred's direct rival for the love of her cousin William. Mildred, 'a quiet, sensible, lady-like girl' who knows Latin and mathematics, has 'no great pretension to beauty; not half as much as Charlotte; but William had found it enough before',⁷²⁹ and has not been taught 'a single accomplishment'^{clxxxv} With the arrival of

^{clxxxv} Wood *Arkell* 8. Mildred leaves home because she cannot bear to see William's marriage. Her savings later enable William's son Traveice to marry his perfect mate Lucy, the daughter of Mildred's mild and learned brother Peter. Thus, in a next generation, Mildred's intellectual and domestic skills make good some of the damage wrought by Charlotte's music. Charlotte's daughters despise Lucy, who receives a solid rather than ornamental education and is not 'beautiful or handsome' but has 'a sweet, sad earnest expression.' (111).

her clever rival, this becomes a problem:

Miss Tralice ... came down, a fashionable-looking young lady. ... She took her place ..., all smiles and sweetness; she glanced shyly at William ... and before that tea-drinking was over, they were all ready to fall in love with her. ... Then she went round the room ... and looked at the pictures ... sat down to the piano, unasked, and played a short, striking piece from memory.^{clxxxvi} They asked her if she could sing; she answered by breaking into ... 'Robin Adair', ... one of William Arkell's favourites, and he stood by enraptured 'You play, I am sure,' she suddenly said to him. He had no wish to deny it, and took his flute from its case. ... They began trying duets together, and the evening passed insensibly.⁷³⁰

Mildred comments to her mother that 'there is something in her that strikes me as not being true',⁷³¹ wishing passionately 'that they could see her as she really is! ... false and false!',⁷³² but is forced into the defensive, educational convention being on the side of Miss Tralice:

'How is it you never learnt music, Miss Arkell?' [Miss Tralice] was pleased to inquire one day, as she finished a brilliant piece, and gave herself a whirl round on the music-stool ... '[Your parents] must have been rather neglectful of you.' 'I suppose they thought I should do as well without ...,' was the composed answer. ... 'But everybody is accomplished now – at least, ladies are. ... I wonder they did not have you taught music, if only to play with [William].' Mildred's cheek burnt. 'I have listened to him,' she said; 'hitherto he has found that sort of help enough, and liked it.'⁷³³

However, William, who loves music passionately, is lured into a very unhappy marriage.

In Hardy's village romance *Under the Greenwood Tree*, the parson is fairly begging the schoolmistress to marry him:

'Don't refuse; don't,' he implored. 'It would be foolish of you – I mean cruel! Of course we would not live here, Fancy. ... Your musical powers shall be still further developed; you shall have whatever piano you like; you shall have anything, Fancy! anything to make you happy – pony-carriage, flowers, birds, pleasant society; yes, you have enough in you for any society, after a few months of travel with me!'⁷³⁴

Fancy agrees in a 'faint and broken' voice which augurs no good; the piano is indicative of unwise reliance on external status symbols, and the parson soon hears of Fancy's pledge to the more modest carrier Dick Dewy, and retracts.

Pretty Georgina Beauclerc whom we see in continuation of the scene cited on p. 154, is toying with the feelings of a young man she has 'led on':

'One question!' he urged. '... Is it that you have played with me, loving another?' Her

^{clxxxvi} Charlotte Tralice exactly follows the advice in a manual detailing the *Habits of Good Society*: 'A short, perhaps brilliant, thoroughly well-learned air by some good [234] master, is the best response ... The loud, thumping style should be avoided; if possible, the piece should not be quite common and hackneyed; not what 'every one' plays. It should not be too mournful, nor too rapid. ... Be ready also to quit the instrument ... it is bad policy to wear your audience out.' (Aster *Habits* 233f.).

right hand was on the keys of the piano, striking chords continually; a false note grating now and then on the ear. Her left hand lay passive 'Have you all this while loved another?' She took her hand off the keys, and began picking out the treble notes of a song with her forefinger, bending her head slightly. 'The answer might not be palatable.' '... Nevertheless, ... give it me. You are killing me, Georgina.'⁷³⁵

These are examples of how Victorian fiction copes with the demeaning aspects of performance by making strong and positive woman characters avoid the activity altogether and especially its inessential, visual aspect which is felt to be especially trivializing.

Memoirs and similar documents afford glimpses of a marginal, different reality. Lady Helen Craven remembers her resistance to her mother's attempts at making her daughters accomplished:

I did not want to marry; I only wanted to hear music, and if possible, learn to make it. My mother tried to turn my ruling passion to account; she used to make me play after dinner ... at the various young men who also dined at our house, and whose fancies, after an excellent dinner, might thus be induced to turn to thoughts of love. [With] my sisters she succeeded well enough. Clelia's ... piping, ... Juliet's insipid watercolours and Adelaide's mechanical thumping of 'Les Cloches de Corneville' assisted them each and several by leaps and bounds into the sacred sphere of matrimony. ... The music I cared for [wasn't for these purposes ... I took no earthly interest in any subject that might have been discussed *tête-à-tête* behind the piano.⁷³⁶

Here, too, getting married thanks to the piano is a thoroughly despicable matter.

The only instance I have come across of piano playing leading to true lovers' confidence and a truly happy ending is a case of overheard playing which is intended only for the woman herself. Olivia Marston, the retiring, but powerfully moral and determined protagonist of Charles Aidé's *The Marstons*, declines to play at a social gathering, explaining that 'her musical capacity was small, and only fit for home consumption'. This indeed how she uses it: to play for her father and herself. The painter Thompson has told Olivia about his wretched marriage (which will dissolve in time for them to be happily united) and receives her confidences after discovering her playing for her father but wanders off into playing for herself:

One evening, at dusk, some days after, Olivia was at her piano [with her father], playing, by heart, a bit of Mozart, which had been a favourite of her mother's. The music carried her far away, upon a train of sad thought: she did not hear a low knock. [11] The fire-light ... just trembled fitfully, no more, upon the profile of the girl at the piano. The painter stole up, and leaning both elbows on it, he stood there, with his head bent over towards the player, who, unconscious of his presence, kept dreamily repeating that old air. Presently, the music, of a sudden, stopped: one hand hung listlessly on the keys; she bowed her head forward upon the music-desk, and low sob

broke from her. She rarely gave way thus. ... A hand was laid gently upon the hand which had fallen on the keys: its touch thrilled her. A shiver, but not of fear (for she felt whose hand it was), ran through her. She raised her head – so quickly that the painter's beard, as he leant across the piano, brushed her forehead before he had time to draw back.⁷³⁷

This only possible because the girl is unaware of her listener. The heroine's musicality is allowed to generate romance because, like in some didactic fiction, she is 'portrayed as unconscious of the emotional impact of her musical performance on her listener'.⁷³⁸ A if to distract from the slippery field of courtship, more domestic uses – with no such listener even present – were defined in conduct literature, but hardly represented in fiction.

4. The piano within the family

4.1. For fathers, brothers and husbands

Like music, woman was a handmaiden.
JAMES HUNEKER

What was earlier represented in fiction from *Tom Jones* to *The Heroine*, is now proscribed: Music served to solace fathers and brothers in need of refreshment,

to soothe the weary spirit of a father when he returns home from the office or the counting-house, where he has been toiling for her maintenance; to beguile a mother of her cares; or to charm a suffering sister into forgetfulness of her pain⁷³⁹

For brothers, such musical ministering was particularly important.

So many temptations beset young men, ... that it is of the utmost importance, that your brothers' evenings should be happily passed at home. Music is an accomplishment usually valuable as a home enjoyment, as rallying round the piano the members of a family, and harmonizing their hearts⁷⁴⁰

As so often, prescriptive and descriptive texts differ significantly. The topic of music in the family inspired narrative insets in advice books, the better to persuade girls of their duties:

'This has been a tiring day,' says the [13] hard-worked, often perplexed father; 'come, Annie, let me have a little music to rest me.'^{clxxxvii} I am so glad you have not gone out this evening. We are getting selfish about you, I am afraid; but I don't know how to spare you, even for an evening.¹⁷⁴¹

^{clxxxvii} The pianist Francesco Berger remembers a girl who left out entire lines in her exam pieces because 'Pa can't bear the *minor*; so I always leave out *those* bits in order not to distress him when he's tired.' (Berger *Reminiscences* 213).

This is pure propaganda, and not vindicated by the more revealing testimonials of general fiction.

In novels proper, I have been able to locate only two examples of the so frequently recommended in-family musical ministering. The more extended scene is, not surprisingly, by Charlotte Yonge, who characterizes a whole family by their reactions to the limpid, non-virtuosic playing of a spinster daughter / sister. Her brother asks for Phoebe's playing, when he is tired:

She took the opportunity of going over some fine old airs, which the exigencies of drawing-room display had prevented her from practising for some time. Presently she found him standing by her, his face softer than usual. 'Where did you get that, Phoebe? ... play it again; I have not heard it for years.' ... He was shading his face with his hand, but he hardly spoke again all the rest of the evening.⁷⁴²

Phoebe's music also wakes the vacuous mother from a doze, charms a retarded sister and incites the nasty, married (and of course 'accomplished') older sisters to play a duet for their mother, after all:

Maria sat entranced, with her mouth open; and presently Mrs. Fulmort looked up from a kind of doze to ask who was playing. ... 'Was that Phoebe?' she said. 'You have a clear, good touch, my dear, as they used to say when I was at school at Bath. Play another of your pieces, my dear.' 'I am ready now, Augusta,' said Juliana, advancing. ... Maria's face became vacant again, for Juliana's music awoke no echoes within her. ... Was [handicapped Bertha] studying 'coming-out' life as she watched her [147] sisters surrounded by the gentlemen who presently herded round the piano?

The hapless conditioned males do not respond to Phoebe's purer musicality, but to the playing of her sisters who are clearly signalling the purpose of their performance: captivation.

In Mrs. Gaskell's 'industrial novel' *Mary Barton*, the topic of music in the family is integrated into bitter social criticism. A burnt-down mill means dire poverty for the unemployed workers and temporary leisure for the owners who wait until the insurance has rebuilt the mills.

It was a pleasant thing [... 58] to have time for becoming acquainted with agreeable and accomplished daughters, on whose education no money had been spared, but whose fathers ... had so seldom had leisure to enjoy their daughters' talents.^{clxxxviii}

This is certainly not an edifying example of music at the hearth.

Husbands were musically ministered to far less often than courtship proceedings

^{clxxxviii} Gaskell *Mary Barton* I:vi:57f. John Barton reviles these 'do-nothing' ladies, worrying 'shopmen all morning, and screeching at her pianny all afternoon [without doing] a good turn to any one of God's creatures but herself'. (I:i:10).

would have led one to suppose, although the basic idea was that they should: 'If they have played and sung to attract the lover ... why not sometimes play and sing to gratify the husband'?⁷⁴³ Here, too, literary representations are rare^{clxxxix} and tend to feature less than ideal relationships. Tertius Lydgate is meditating on a scientific problem while enjoying the noise of Rosamond's 'quiet music which was as helpful to his meditation as the splash of an oar on the evening lake'.⁷⁴⁴ He has blissfully forgotten everything 'except the construction of a new controlling [644] experiment'⁷⁴⁵ when Rosamond, who has left the piano to watch him, shocks him out of his reverie with the galling announcement that 'Mr Ned Plymdale has taken a house already.'⁷⁴⁶ In Mrs. Gaskell's 'Uncle Peter', Lady Helena plays for her husband, who similarly uses her music as a distracting noise, and is about to confess that he has gambled away their fortune:

She was an admirable musician; but now, as her hands glided over the keys, they were calling forth from the instrument those old simple airs, which come over the heart sometimes like dreams of the far past with a power and tenderness often less felt in more elaborate compositions. ... He had been tossing uneasily about for some time [on the sofa] not exactly listening to her music, for his thoughts were far [441] away; but it soothed him; and whenever she had paused before, and seemed about to cease playing, he had said 'Go on;' and she had gone on accordingly, bringing out air after air ... some only remembered from her childhood, but all fraught with the same tender melancholy which gathers about such music.⁷⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, George Eliot's primadonna Armgart is aghast at the idea of neglecting her professional work in order to 'Sing in the chimney corner to inspire / My husband reading news'.⁷⁴⁸ This strong woman and professional musician refuses the humiliation of playing to an uninterested audience.

Dickens' dutiful daughters, on the other hand, conform, like Agnes Wickfield, David Copperfield's first love and eventual second wife. During David's first visit she looks mostly after her father:

I doubted whether he could have dined without her. ... Agnes set [out] glasses for her father, and a decanter of port wine. I thought he would have missed its usual flavor, if it had been put there for him by any other hands. There he sat, taking his wine, and taking a good deal of it, for two hours; while Agnes played on the piano, worked, and talked to him and me.⁷⁴⁹

The next evening is much the same, only that David is included in the servicing, too.⁷⁵⁰

^{clxxxix} The protagonist of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* uniquely uses music in her early efforts to morally educate her profligate husband: 'As he is so fond of music, I often try to persuade him to learn the piano, but he is far too idle for such an undertaking; he has no more idea of exerting himself to overcome obstacles than he has of restraining his natural appetites.' (Brontë *Wildfell Hall* II:vi:227).

Characteristically, David's previous unhappy marriage with Dora Spenlow contains no such scene. He falls in love with her in a flash: 'All was over in a moment' – and while the narrative does not even give David the time to hear and watch Dora play, 'Phiz' has put a piano in the foreground of the illustration for this scene 'A fall into captivity'.⁷⁵¹

4.2. 'A good cry upstairs'

*A good play on the piano
has not infrequently taken the place
of a good cry upstairs.*
REGINALD HAWEIS

A useful tool for contextualizing women's private and in-family playing is Erna Olafson Hellerstein's distinction between a 'positional' and a 'personal' family style. The former sees women as instruments with a static position in society (daughter, sister, wife) whereas girls needed to be aware of themselves as *persons* precisely in order to fill the *position* of submissive and sympathetic wife and loving mother. These 'virtually antithetical impulses shaped the early life of the Victorian girl'⁷⁵² and also her musical life. Her 'positional' duty to get married implicated musical skill, but a private use of music would fit her better for her emotional tasks: 'All accomplishments have the great merit of giving a lady something to do; something to preserve her from *ennui*; to console her in seclusion; to arouse her in grief; to compose her to occupation in joy.'^{CXC} Haweis uses a striking metaphor for the emotional plight of constrained women:

To set women to do the things which some people suppose are the only things fit for them to do, is often like setting the steam-hammer to knock pins into a board. ... Some outlet is wanted. ... The steam-hammer, as it contemplates the everlasting pin's head, cannot help feeling that if some day, when the steam was on, it might give one good smashing blow, it would feel all the better for it.⁷⁵³

Smashing the piano is not really advised, though; Haweis concludes tamely that music offers 'a gentle grace of ministration little short of supernatural'.⁷⁵⁴

Once more, it is fiction which displays the uneasiness limiting such sympathy most clearly. Fears of potential disturbance and of the emotional independence that private musical enjoyment could give determine even descriptions of music-making without an audience. The functional or (as Hellerstein would put it) positional reality of a woman's music

^{CXC} Aster *Habits* 237. Cf. also p. 230 and Grey and Shirreff *Thoughts* 228.

was to be 'a positive reflection, not on her, but on her husband, ... it required her to restrain any acknowledgement of musical devotion (her attachment to music for her own sake)'.⁷⁵⁵ Such restraint is enforced by textual strategies analogous to those discussed so far, which disempower women's practice of mustering or mastering emotion by playing for themselves.

Firstly, music may be trivialized into a mere anodyne relief from boredom or external tensions, a more distracting alternative to needlework: '[Music] is almost compulsory on girls, whether they have the talent for it or not, and who have at all events abundant other occupation, such as needle-work, for leisure moments.'⁷⁵⁶ The recently married Lady Isabel in *East Lynne* finds it hard to describe what she has been doing all day: 'Trying the new piano, and looking at my watch, wishing the time might go quicker, that you might come home.'⁷⁵⁷ When Phoebe Fulmort in Charlotte Younge's *Hopes and Fears* deafens herself to family tensions early in the morning, musical subtleties are destroyed:

Phoebe [as a girl under Miss Fennimore] practised vigorously. Aware that nothing pleasant was passing, and that, be it what it might, she could do no good, she was glad to stop her ears with music, until eight o'clock brought a pause in the shape of breakfast.⁷⁵⁸

Secondly, music may simply fail as a solace. Rosamond Lydgate, depressed because she will have to leave Middlemarch because of her husband's financial difficulties, cannot even muster the energy to play:

[S]he arranged all objects around her with the same nicety as ever, only with more slowness – or sat down to the piano, meaning to play, and then desisting, yet lingering on the music stool with her white fingers suspended on the wooden front, and looking before her in dreamy ennui.⁷⁵⁹

The blind heroine of *Poor Miss Finch* uselessly tries to get a new acquaintance (her eventual husband) out of her mind with piano music:

The music was a failure. I [Lucilla Finch's companion] played my best. From Beethoven to Schubert. From Schubert to Chopin. She listened with all the will in the world to be pleased. She thanked me again and again. She tried, at my invitation, to play herself; choosing the familiar compositions which she knew by ear. No! ... His voice was still in her ears – the only music which could possess itself of her attention that night. I took her place, and began to play again. She suddenly snatched my hands off the keys. ... 'I can't help thinking of him!'⁷⁶⁰

Thirdly, musical musings may be dedicated to false hopes. Lucilla celebrates her future on the eve of an operation that is to restore her sight:

'I shall see him! I shall see him!' In those four words the composition began and ended. She adapted the to all the happy melodies in her memory. She accompanied

them with hands that seemed mad for joy – hands that threatened [230] every moment to snap the chords of the instrument.⁷⁶¹

Just as the piano is threatened by true exuberance and Lucilla's transgressively simple and uncultured performance, her sight is restored only for a very short time. Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* indulges in dreams about a man who turns out to be too weak and selfish for a satisfactory husband:

She trifled away half an hour at the piano; and played, in [100] that time, selections from the Songs of Mendelssohn, the Mazurkas of Chopin, the Operas of Verdi, and the Sonatas of Mozart – all of whom had combined together on this occasion, and produced one immortal work, entitled 'Frank.' She closed the piano and went up to her room, to dream away the hours luxuriously in visions of her married future.⁷⁶²

At the beginning of Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, Rachel Verinder and her fiancé Franklin Blake are singing and playing duets together 'contentedly, ... in a manner most wonderful and pleasant to hear through the open window, on the terrace at night'.⁷⁶³ When the atmosphere gets soured by her suspicions of him, Rachel vents her preoccupations with playing, and also wards off an explanatory conversation she is afraid of (Franklin eventually turns out to have stolen the precious 'moonstone' under the influence of opium administered by the real villain):

I heard a few plaintive chords on the piano in the room within. She had often idled over the instrument in this way ... I was obliged to wait a little, to steady myself. ... After the lapse of a minute, I roused my manhood, and opened the door. ... At the moment when I showed myself in the doorway, Rachel rose from the piano. I closed the door behind me. We confronted each other in silence, with the full length of the room between us.⁷⁶⁴

The erotic tension and Rachel's powerful temperament are of course intolerable to another listener, the sanctimonious Miss Clack:

After breakfast she wandered listlessly from room to room – then suddenly roused herself, and opened the piano. The music she selected to play was of the most scandalously profane sort, associated with performances on the stage which it curdles one's blood to think of. It would have been premature to interfere with her at such a time as this. ... I escaped the music by leaving the house.⁷⁶⁵

Even though she is a caricature, Miss Clack voices a more general concern over aggressive and potent female performance which may well serve as a reassuring framework to the powerful femininity that is so typical of Wilkie Collins's texts. The strongest example of narrative containment as an indictment of the Victorian mistrust even of private music is the fact that the two strong, resourceful and attractive women who *do* play the piano superlatively well,

the two best pianists in nineteenth-century literature, are both bigamous murderesses.

Lady Audley in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* represents the perfect surface ideal of musical Victorian womanhood, which is never described in ordinarily virtuous and loving wives, playing 'dreamy melodies by Beethoven and Mendelssohn till her [second, rich] husband fell asleep in his easy chair'.⁷⁶⁶ As a young girl, she was equally perfect with '[h]er singing, her playing, her dancing, her beautiful smile, and sunshiny ringlets! She was always the talk of a place'.⁷⁶⁷ Her former employer at a girls' school qualifies this assertion: 'you never said she was *useful*. She was only ornamental; a person to be shown off to visitors, and to play fantasias on the drawing-room piano'.⁷⁶⁸ The supreme moment of deception is the scene where Lady Audley plays the piano for her husband just after having pushed her first husband down a well; the marks of the struggle on her wrists are the decisive clue for the narrator who is investigating her 'secret'.⁷⁶⁹

The intelligence and sardonic wit of Lydia Gwilt in Wilkie Collins' *Armadale*^{cxci} give her some of the dignity of virtuous dark, strong non-pianists,^{cxcii} and her extraordinary attitude to music corresponds completely to her unusual and impressive villainy. She is never seen performing at all *for* anybody (a further affinity with positive figures), and her private playing ('I can open the piano ... – that is one comfort'⁷⁷⁰) is not in the style commended by the Reverend Haweis. She gets annoyed if her husband does not tolerate her practising:

What am I to do with myself all the morning? I can't go out – it's raining. If I open the piano, I shall disturb the industrious journalist who is scribbling in the next room. ... Shall I read? No; books don't interest me; I hate the whole tribe of authors.⁷⁷¹

Another diary entrance reads:

Patience! patience! I must go and forget myself at my piano. There is the 'Moonlight Sonata' open, and tempting me, on the music-stand. Have I nerve enough to play it, I wonder? Or will it set me shuddering with the mystery and terror of it, as it did the other day?⁷⁷²

Lydia Gwilt heartily despises the mediocre performances of other women: 'Half the musical girls in England ought to have their fingers chopped off, in the interests of society'.⁷⁷³ Violating all codes of feminine performance, she puts a musical demi-god to her exclusive personal use:

I am very comfortable in this lodging. ... I have hired a reasonably good piano. The only

^{cxci} I am indebted to Alison Samuels of the Open University for bringing this fascinating heroine to my attention.

^{cxcii} There is even a touch of their integrity in her remorseful suicide after saving her husband from her own murder plot.

man I care two straws about – don't be alarmed; he was laid in his grave many a long year ago, under the name of BEETHOVEN – keeps me company⁷⁷⁴

So far from playing for a man, Lydia Gwilt professes indifference about men generally and uses the 'company' of a (male) genius purely for herself. Moreover, Beethoven sonatas, in 1863, were a signifier of intellectual rigour. The pianist and composer John Francis Barnett remembers playing Beethoven as a boy and hearing that 'it was a pity my playing was thrown away on such dry music.'⁷⁷⁵

Miss Gwilt is allowed to enjoy music even though she has a black conscience; whereas Lady Audley is no longer permitted to enjoy the 'womanly refinement' and artistic perfection of her room once her secret is out:

My lady's piano was open, covered with scattered sheets of music and exquisitely-bound collections of scenas and fantasias which no master need have disdained to study. [... however] She was [286] wretched by reason of a wound which lay too deep for the possibility of any solace from such plasters as wealth and luxury; ... the pleasure we take in art and loveliness being an innocent pleasure had passed beyond her reach.⁷⁷⁶

Wilkie Collins does not aim such preaching at Lydia Gwilt's music, but fascinating as she is, the narrative does not condone her crimes. Her music is extinguished together with her independence in her final suicide; a correct narrative framework contains both her and Lady Audley with their powerful music.

Frederick Denison Maurice, in his opening speech for the first women's college, wanted drawing and music cultivated because music can awake 'the sense of an order and harmony in the heart of things which, outwardly, were most turbulent and confused; of a spirit in themselves capable of communicating with other spirits'.⁷⁷⁷ However, 'women should 'view music more simply, and therefore more profoundly, to care less for its displays and results, and therefore to have their hearts and understandings more open to the reception'.⁷⁷⁸ Emily K. Auerbach has commented that 'To be a natural [i.e. passive, spontaneous, untutored] musician is heavenly ... but to be a cultivated musician is diabolical'.⁷⁷⁹

The idea that, for women, even performance had best be passive is implied in many texts. A woman 'whose performance is quite unfit for society in these days of artist-like perfection'^{cxciii} will be solaced by playing for herself. While drawing or intellectual pursuits

^{cxciii} Mrs. Hullah is the only source I have found to claim that 'ten times more musical power' would be necessary for solitary player: 'In company, ... it is not so much music, as something to break silence and dissipate dulness,

require energy for preparation, the piano is always ready and will itself wake up a languid performer, as Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff claimed:

There, at first, perhaps the hand will wander listlessly over the notes, but the chords of some favourite air are struck almost unconsciously, and then gradually the languor is dispersed, the interest roused, and a whole new train of associations excited.⁷⁸⁰

The 'good ear' and theoretical understanding of intelligent powerful heroines who do not themselves play can also be read in this context of passivity. George Eliot's novels afford a further aspect. While '[t]rue musicality is an index to the individual's potential for growth'⁷⁸¹ in her mature work, her most loveable heroines, Dorothea Brooke and Maggie Tulliver, have a passive, receptive musicality. Rosemarie Bodenheimer comments: 'George Eliot held a Romantic view of music as separate from its social practice; as she puts it, 'Music ... represents a pure, au- [11] thentic expression of self: it does not count as an "art" at all.'⁷⁸² 'Art' in this context is synonymous with 'performance'. Maggie Tulliver is deeply susceptible but not given to display, and plays for herself more than others:

The mere concord of octaves was a delight to Maggie, and she would often take up a book of studies rather than any melody, that she might taste more keenly by abstraction the more primitive sensation of intervals. Not that her enjoyment of music was of the kind that indicates a great specific talent; it was rather that her sensibility to the supreme excitement of music was only one form of that passionate sensibility which ... made her faults and virtues all merge in each other.⁷⁸³

Such images of passivity and sensibility obliterate the fact that Maggie's studies and the 'favourite air' assumed by Grey and Shirreff must have been deciphered and assiduously practised to become so readily available to dreamy reminiscence; unless trancelike improvisation is assumed, 'new associations' cannot come forth indefinitely from a limited repertoire of well-practised pieces. The way in which practising is elided in those texts points to the old dilemma between sanctioned use and feared *abuse*. It is reflected in the paradoxical demand that girls should work very hard at their playing, but not make playing well a true priority; desirable levels of musical proficiency and the quality and quantity of practice necessary to reach them were a difficult issue.

4.3. Practising: 'Music and Morals'

Practice and proficiency are never prescribed for themselves or for the pragmatic aim of

that is wanted. ... In order to make the pianoforte an agreeable companion to a lady ... it is necessary that she should be mistress of her instrument.' (Mrs. Hullah *Words* 23).

courtship, and recommendations in the context of family edification and individual solace are contradictory. Lack of talent may be a reason to stop lessons or a reassuring guarantee against vanity; its abundance could be threatening and need to be restrained, or useful because it shortened practice time.^{cxciiv} Instruction and instrument could be an unjustifiable expense or impose the duty to justify such expense by strenuously achieved skill; but striving for advanced technique is also feared to prevent the fulfilment of exactly such familial duties by ruining the required humble frame of mind. Intense practising could be a waste of time or a 'healthy outlet for emotion',⁷⁸⁴ endanger a girl's health (cf. note clxii p. 133) or morality⁷⁸⁵ or teach her physical and intellectual discipline. The English tradition of assigning value to musical activities for their secondary effects is very pronounced in Victorian discussions of practising and its uses, and the implicit insistence on mediocrity is striking. The protestations that girls shouldn't practise too much, are no longer voiced for their own benefits or that of music itself, but point in a somewhat sinister manner at 'the abuse of such gifts as the amateur happens to possess'. 'Abuse' means excessive musical devotion: 'A woman neglects her children's education for the sake of practising four hours a day; or a man fancies himself a Mario,^{cxcv} and is a nuisance to all his friends'.⁷⁸⁶

Thackeray perspicaciously called music 'prison-work' for women,^{cxcvi} done because they have 'no other exercising ground for their poor little thoughts and fingers; and hence these wonderful pincushions are executed, these counterpanes woven, these sonatas learned.'⁷⁸⁷ D. J. Smith comments: 'In few times and places apart from Victorian England would it seem correct to associate pincushions with sonatas.'^{cxcvii} *Trivialization* turns the ambiguous quality of femaleness into a less threatening domestic femininity with clearly defined functions. Hugh Reginald Haweis, a genuine lover of music, considered '[t]he cultivation of second and third class [musical] faculties is the bane of the musical world. ... it adds to a girl's social utility; but it is never worth while spending much time, money and trouble upon'⁷⁸⁸), but insisted nevertheless that 'the benefits of being able to play even a little are substantial'.⁷⁸⁹

^{cxciiv} At best, 'true musical talent' is useful because the wherewithal to accompany simple songs 'for the recreation of the domestic circle, may be easily attained, without involving a sacrifice of the time required for other pursuits'. (Baker 'Early Education' 245, q. Binstock 1985:111).

^{cxcv} The Italian operatic tenor Giovanni Matteo Mario (1810-1883).

^{cxcvi} A reference to Dickens and his 'American book' where he 'tells of the prisoners at the silent prison, how they had ornamented their rooms, some of them with a frightful prettiness and elaboration.' (Thackeray *Ravenswing* IV:169).

^{cxcvii} Smith 1963:521. Cf. Closson 1944:140f., Harding 1933:435f. and Burgess 1981:14 for instruments that incorporated sewing tables and work boxes or could be turned into a couch.

The time-honoured apprehensions of vanity and loss of valuable time are still the most explicit arguments against serious application. Matilda Pullan considers that 'where [accomplishments] are the *best* part of a girl's education, they lose half even of their beauty, and almost all of their value'.^{cxcviii} Modest skill may fulfil commendable purposes:

[N]ever does a daughter appear to more advantage than when she cheerfully lays aside a fashionable air, and strums over, for more than the hundredth time, some old ditty which her father loves.⁷⁹⁰

The conclusion is chilling: 'To her ear it is possible it may be altogether divested of the slightest charm. But of what importance is that?'⁷⁹¹

The idea that mediocre playing suffices for most purposes and is morally safer than great skill in music which is a 'temptation to pride and vanity'⁷⁹² and can be made 'to minister to sin and to foster the natural evil of the heart',⁷⁹³ also resonates in fiction. Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, a governess, criticizes such over-application in a vivacious teenage pupil:

[T]he love of display had roused her faculties, and induced her to apply herself, but only to the more showy accomplishments To music, indeed, she devoted too much of her time: as, governess though I was, I frequently told her.⁷⁹⁴

In Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*, pious Jane and sprightly Julia have 'an earnest conversation' about such issues after they have been asked to play by Julia's mother to cover an embarrassing moment.^{cxcix} Jane won't participate:

I have forsworn these vanities. I have not opened my piano these two years. ... I don't go so far as to call music wicked: but music in society is such a snare. At least I found it so; my playing was highly praised; and that stirred up vanity: and so did my singing, with which I had even more reason to be satisfied. Snares! snares!⁷⁹⁵

The consideration that finally makes Jane relent is the idea that 'a parent is not to be disobeyed upon a doubt'.⁷⁹⁶

Such a focus on a generally moral aspects is typical of the prevailing reluctance to confront actual uses of music. A magazine article similarly considers parental will 'a clear indication of the duty of the child to strive after proficiency',^{cc} a duty that does not cease with

^{cxcviii} Pullan *Counsels* 72. The *British Mother's Magazine* adds money as a consideration: 'Music ... is abused, when it is made so important as to engross much time and money; ... and when the gratification is sought in public assemblies, in which the company the display, and the expense are all objectionable.' (*British Mothers' Magazine* q. Da Sousa Correa 2003:67).

^{cxcix} Such scenes are more typical for novels from the 1830s, cf. note xxxixiii p. 62.

^{cc} A domestic return was expected from the musical commitment of girls who did not manage to get married through the piano, otherwise there is the 'painful spectacle' of a daughter who refuses her family's musical wishes but plays anything they like to guests and strangers: 'What must the parents of such a daughter feel, if

adulthood or marriage of 'the child',

when the constraints of authoritative education are removed, and when the acquired skill becomes itself an element to be taken into account in regulating her future avocations, and in estimating the duties of that state of life to which it has pleased God to call her.⁷⁹⁷

Such extreme vagueness of reasoning is typical of a period which also justified the modern habit of long and comparatively mechanical *practising* by reference to a variety of secondary benefits (moral, intellectual or physical). The Reverend Haweis stated that Latin strengthens the memory while 'the piano makes a girl sit up and pay attention to details'.⁷⁹⁸ More abstractly, piano practice is as useful because the 'cultivation of *any* power or talent'

demands in some degree, industry and perseverance; and may be employed as an instrument for gaining the mastery over that indolence and self-indulgence which are among the great hinderances [sic] to spiritual life, and to usefulness in the world.⁷⁹⁹

It is not mastery of music or an instrument that is desired, but musical practice is the instrument for mastering the self! In her evangelical youth, George Eliot (although the best pianist at her school) doubted the pureness of musical pleasure because it 'involves the devotion of all the time and powers of an immortal being to the acquirement of an expertness in so useless ... an accomplishment',⁸⁰⁰ and thirty years later, for all her love and understanding of music, she still hinted at non-musical rationales for striving for 'expertness': 'I think it will be good for me hygienically [!] as well as on other grounds, to be roused into practising'.⁸⁰¹

Hygiene and perseverance were the watchwords, and 'industrialized' piano practice (scales and exercises regulated by the metronome, or gymnastic machines and straps^{cci}) accentuated the disciplinary effect of music by placing technical mastery out of reach in a realm of mechanical perfection, keeping the girl practising indefinitely. Untalented pupils were encouraged to persevere with the promise that they might master the piano *eventually* – 'and what is of more consequence, [acquire] habits of perseverance, industry, method and good humour'.⁸⁰²

[W]hen I see two kind innocent fresh-cheeked young women go to a piano, and ... go through a set of double-barrelled variations upon this or that tune by Herz or

they recollect the fact that it was at their expense their child acquired this pleasing art, by which she appears anxious to charm any one but them?' (Ellis *Daughters* 106).

^{cci} Patent Elastic Bracelets, Bohrer's Automatic Hand Guide, Improved Hand Guide, Wrist Strengtheners, Ostrovsky Musician's Hand Development Apparatus and Musical Gloves and many others (cf. advertisements quoted in Scholes 1947:331-334) trapped hands to the keyboard, immobilized wrists or weighted down single fingers to enhance the independent action of others.

Kalkbrenner – ... my too susceptible heart is given up entirely to bleeding for the performers. What hours, and weeks, nay, preparatory years of study, has that infernal jig cost them! What sums has papa paid, what scoldings has mamma administered ...; what evidences of slavery, in a word, are there!⁸⁰³

The aim of practising is not mastery, but slavery. This is evident also from the fact that positive musical results of those 'preparatory years' are inevitably constructed as doomed from the start:

[A]n enormous proportion of the time required for general education to be devoted to this one fashionable accomplishment, and, even then, unless the pupil is favoured with extraordinary talents in music, aided by great zeal and perseverance, it is not to be expected that she will rise above mediocrity.⁸⁰⁴

Since the piano is the one of all instruments which can be mastered to a certain degree by sheer sporty effort, other deficiencies were predicted: 'By a fruitless waste of time and application, the hand may acquire the habit of touching the right keys, but all which constitutes the soul of music must be wanting.'⁸⁰⁵ Mrs. Hullah phrases this more gently:

True, every young lady learns to play and sing, by a certain mechanical process, similar to that by which she [5] acquires dexterity in ... crochet-knitting. But is *that* studying the heaven-descended art of Music? ... Two-thirds of the young ladies who can rattle through a host of polkas and waltzes with a brilliant finger, would be completely posed when they attempted Beethoven or Mendelssohn.⁸⁰⁶

Whatever brilliant rattling is attained 'by perseverance ... is not real excellence, and cannot be regarded as worth the time and labour expended upon it'.⁸⁰⁷

Too much 'labour expended' on music was a worry also because 'labour' was not a thing women should have to undertake. Ros Ballaster remarks:

While the domestic ... represented work for the woman, it meant leisure for the man. Moreover, man's domestic pleasure depended on the illusion that home was maintained without any work other than his. Home ... was both the site of woman's work *and* of the denial of that work.⁸⁰⁸

Likewise, musical work is enforced and denied. Matilda Pullan complains that an unwise girl 'will attempt in a drawing room some impossibility of Liszt, ... because it is *fashionable*, without the smallest regard to her own capabilities'. She is doomed to fail, and Pullan would not have it otherwise: 'for who would wish a wife or a daughter, moving in private society, to have attained such excellence in music as involves a life's devotion to it'.⁸⁰⁹

*It is well that all girls should play to a certain extent;
and if they are not really musical, this will no doubt involve*

some unpleasantness to themselves and others.
HUGH REGINALD HAWEIS

Apart from being an insidious social threat, assiduous piano practising can of course be a tremendous nuisance, and it continued to be the butt of weary satire. Thackeray reports from the home of 'some Country Snobs':

Piano strumming begins at six o'clock in the morning; it lasts till breakfast, with but a minute's intermission, when the instrument changes hands, and MISS EMILY practises in place of her sister, MISS MARIA. In fact, the confounded instrument never stops: when the young ladies are at their lessons, [the governess] hammers away ... and keeps her magnificent fingers in exercise.^{ccii}

The head of the family feels compelled to apologize: 'My girls, you know, practise four hours a-day, you know – must do it, you know – absolutely necessary.'⁸¹⁰ The conclusion is that clubs are necessary as refuges from 'the interminable discords and shrieks which are elicited from the miserable piano during the above necessary operation'.⁸¹¹ A poem jocularly incites girls to a mounting pitch of musical frenzy:

Play, play, your sonatas in A,
Heedless of what your next neighbour may say! ...
Sing, play – if your neighbours inveigh
Feebly against you, they're lunatics, eh?...
Rattle the 'bones,' hit a tinbottom'd tray
Hard with the fireshovel, hammer away!⁸¹²

The annoyance with practising spills into descriptions of the musical prowess it aims to produce. They regularly concentrate on its ridiculous and mechanical aspects, or on the inferior 'gymnastic' repertoire on which it is expended:

[A] gay miss who had just returned from boarding-school, when, after many solicitations and apologies, she seated herself at the piano, rocked to the right, then to the left, leaned forward, then backward, and began. She placed her right hand about midway on the keys, and her left about two octaves below the right. She now put off the right to a brisk canter upon the treble notes, and her left after it; the left then led the way back, and right pursued it in like manner.^{cciii}

The piano itself became synonymous for soulless music: 'For once that you hear any real

^{ccii} Thackeray *Snobs* XVI:392. It was vital to sell one's piano skill in order to get governess jobs, cf. Madame Pratolungo in *Poor Miss Finch*: 'My best side was my musical side. ... I was not a great player – far from it. But I had been soundly instructed; and I had, what you call, a competent skill on the instrument. Brief, I made the best of myself' (Collins *Miss Finch* I:i:3).

^{cciii} *Eliza Cook's Journal* VIII (1852) 63. The passage elaborates lengthily upon the 'most awful conflict' between the hands: '[N]o one can imagine what noises the piano made during the conflict'.

music from a piano, do you not five hundred times hear mere artistic somersaults, distorted jingling, and [35] the hapless pretence of music?⁸¹³ Valid as Carlyle's complaint may have been in many cases, is nevertheless significant that neither fiction nor advice literature allow for hard-won pianistic female virtuosity in the service of great music. The mere idea is marginalized as so exceptional as to be insignificant or pathological: 'only exceptional natures can learn to regard music as more than a mechanical employment, involving a certain quantity of hard manual labour'.⁸¹⁴

The absence of strong (positive) musical women in fiction, apart from satisfying the subversive aim to free some heroines from commodification and saving novels from the powerful effects which the fully realized talent of energetic and intelligent performers might have, also corroborates the implicit assumption of the impossibility of impressive female musicianship. Extraordinary talent in a positive character is only allowed when, for instance, death and piety circumscribe it. In Camilla Toulmin's *Hildred*, a girl with 'the double gift of a rich voice and a rare genius for music'⁸¹⁵ gets free three-hour lessons⁸¹⁶ after singing the theme of a Beethoven sonata she has overheard⁸¹⁷ – but she is only seven years old, the daughter of a terminally ill seamstress, and incredibly pious. When she is offered free tuition by the heroine, she is speechless, and can only reply to her mother's remonstrances: 'I was thanking God first.'⁸¹⁸

The final twist of the argumentative convolutions which a defence of domestic piano-playing necessitates is that despite the negation of success from practice and the numerous literary strategies which suppress music in nineteenth-century fiction, literary heroines may be *blamed* for their lack of musical depth of understanding or skill. Excellence or exaggerated striving for it must be avoided – but women are nonetheless despised for being mediocre musicians in order to reinforce moral comments. Musical criticism in the service of that double-bind has very subtle gradations of disdain. Characters range from the slightly flawed, but essentially likeable young lady ('Cynthia's singing was ... graceful, but anything but correct; but she herself was so charming, that it was only fanatics for music who cared for false chords and omitted notes.'⁸¹⁹) to the 'plump' and 'pink' provincial girl whose musicality is dismissed as a 'thin superficial lacker'.⁸²⁰ In the case of Christina Allaby and her 'improvements' on Handel (cf. p. 138) the double-bind works both ways at once: her moderate but undoubted skills are not acknowledged but ridiculed because she uses them to cover up her vocal limitations – which again are made to tell against her.

And if women do play something well, their achievement is put firmly into second place in the order of things (in the nicest complimentary language possible): '[T]he sensitive touch of a female pianist [is] often found to invest a pathetic, slow melody, with an indescribable charm 'beyond the reach of art.'⁸²¹ This 'beyond' puts it in a nutshell: woman's performance is beyond, that is, celestially and metaphorically above, but also excluded from, real achievement. A narrow and easily-missed middle path of milk-and-watery piano performing is the only musical activity that can be counted upon not to be in some way punished' by narratives under an unwritten but powerful literary law. Notwithstanding individual traits like Collins' daring villainesses, Thackeray's trenchant satire or George Eliot's reverence for music, all writers of Victorian fiction contribute in their particular ways to the dominant discourse of suppression of an indispensable social practice. Nobody plays well happily or with success; musical performance is always a precarious, if not contaminating event. In the devious ways in which Victorian fiction handles domestic piano playing, possibly the most frequent musical activity in both life and literature, a patriarchal society's ambiguous attitudes to women and English fears and longings about music come to a head.

V. Death, the piano and the maiden: Music in nineteenth-century poetry

*As o'er the answering keys my fingers stray
The dear dead past arises, the renewing
Seeking of that which moulders in the clay.*

JOHN PAYNE

Victorian novels limit and suppress women pianists and the desire they threaten to inspire by a wide array of ploys. The general framework of realism and the more specific discourse of courtship usually demand, however, that they be spared the ultimate form of retribution and exclusion, death. Plot conventions make the actual death of nubile middle-class girls extremely rare because they are necessary for satisfactory narrative closure through marriage, and because the event needs justification as a consequence of having 'fallen' or being at least at odds with society, for instance through excessive musicality and the emotions it stands for. Poems, which do not need to sustain a narrative span leading to ruin as retribution, nor to marriage as reward, are at greater liberty to celebrate a dead woman as a paragon of virtue and beauty, as well as an exquisite pianist, without the need for 'poetic' justice, that is, a moral or logical explanation of her death as the outcome of her own or others' faults. A considerable number of poems depict female piano players as dead^{cciv} or at least far enough away in time or space to be no more than a memory.^{ccv} Death is poetry's genre-specific way of weakening and punishing the sexual power of music.

However, a woman's death also offers to elegiac poetry a space for indulging in the memory of lost erotic possibilities. The traditional lyrical motif of bringing the instrument to life by addressing it directly, which is worked out in many playful earlier texts, becomes here more sentimental. Like in Sonnet 128, where male personae discursively share the desired woman, female eroticism is at the core of these poems. But while the Renaissance discourse, in a far more life-affirming mode, 'merely' ignores the woman's subjectivity, many Victorian poems suppress her completely.^{ccvi} The nostalgic solidarity between man and instrument

^{cciv} I am indebted to Daniel Albright for the interesting comment that the final section of *Tristan* only acquired the title 'Liebestod' in its later form of Franz Liszt's piano transcription.

^{ccv} In one single poem it is a woman who remembers – and she remembers an *unhappy* past; a governess who used to try her employer's piano with her lover on the sly, stolen happy moments: 'I thought at the time it was too good to last, / That such excessive happiness *must* flee, / And *so it did*, but now hath followed fast / A far more radiant reality.' (Barlow 'Governess' 11-14).

^{ccvi} A prose example of such elision is the repentance brought on in impoverished aristocrat listening to a young teacher's playing. She only serves as a trigger: 'with the strains of Beethoven's sonata came the yearning longing

leads to the elision of the desired and remembered woman – her omission from a discourse that is about her being another powerful means of repression. The desire for sexual union creates the poem but the object is relegated to the past or the Hereafter, becoming a mere material support for an idea. She survives in her piano at which the male speaker is sitting. The instrument either becomes a trustworthy male friend of the mourning man or takes the feminine role of (sisterly) confidante.

1. 'La petite mort' in earlier keyboard poetry

*What shall I do? – 'tis certain death – to stay,
And worse than death, to go away!*
AARON HILL

It is instructive to compare the Victorian use of the musical love-death topos with its earlier incarnations. Death is a standard Renaissance metaphor for orgasm, but there seems to be no text connecting this with the attractions of a virginal player. However, a whole school of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poems to ladies at the harpsichord and pianoforte warn in graphic terms of loss, mutilation and death from Cupid's hand. Francis Fawkes' lady 'singing, and playing upon the Harpsichord' will only 'ravish your ears to inveigle your heart';⁸²² Thomas Chatterton compares his paragon's playing favourably with that of David's consoling Saul,^{ccvii} but her 'melting movements wound us as they charm'.⁸²³ For Henry Jones the musician at the harpsichord is

Harmonious to the ravish'd Sight,
Inspiring Joy and soft Delight, ...
But when the tuneful Keys you press,
And Musick's inmost Pow'rs express, ...
How ev'ry Finger flies a Dart,
In ev'ry Note he wounds a Heart⁸²⁴

In this context, even a girl's mere thinking of music lessons is alarming. George Woodward's 'Phoebe', who is 'wishing to learn upon the SPINET' is implored: 'How could you wish to see your Slave expire, / Struck by the Sweetness of your magick Lyre?' The instrument explicitly becomes a weapon: 'Are You too weak the Lover's War to wage, / That doubly arm'd you must our Sex engage?' and the heroically shrugging conclusion is 'Then, charming Creature!

for the irrevocable past, which brought a mist of tears ... and he murmured, – "Come back, come back to me, my darling! I have repented in dust and ashes." (Marshall *Alma* IV:40).

^{ccvii} Cf. also Whaley 'To A Lady', which compares David and the player as equals.

have your wish, and prove / How sweetly you can kill the Thing, you cannot love.⁸²⁵

In Richard Steele's extraordinary 'To Celia's Spinet' man, woman and spinet all die. The male speaker admonishes the (male, and enamoured) instrument to wither at the withdrawal of the lady's hand, and asks it to drive her to the suicide he contemplates for himself:

Thou soft Machine that do'st her hand obey,
 Tell her my Grief in thy harmonious Lay.
 To shun my Moan to thee she'll fly,
 To her Touch be sure reply,
 And if she removes it, die. ...
 Speak in melting Sounds my Tears,
 Speak my Joys, my Hopes, my Fears.
 Thus force her when from me she'd fly,
 By her own hand, like me, to die.⁸²⁶

The most typical death of this and other elaborations is that of the man; it is the male innamorato who is in danger of being wounded or killed by orgasm or frustration. In 1788, a 'Seraphina playing the piano-forte' could be implored quite explicitly:

Oh! let me burn beneath thy Phoenix eye,
 And all the wiles of love and music try,
 Conceive the angel flame, Promæthean fire,
 And in sweet ravishments of love expire.⁸²⁷

A century later, both the lethal intensity and the gender of the victim had changed. John Nicholson's 'Dying Lover', possibly the last of his species to die around a keyboard instrument, does not expire from sexual excitement fired by music; he is asking to be prepared for the moment when his instrument will be transmogrified into a harp:

Go, touch my sweet piano's strings,
 And chant me into rest,
 Till angels come, and on their wings
 Convey me to the blest.
 And mourn not as I soar away
 To tune my harp on high;
 Useless the tears upon my clay,
 For I'm prepared to die.⁸²⁸

That sort of earnestness makes the difficult transformation from an earthly piece of furniture to a celestial harp or lyre even more ridiculous than it is in more light-hearted earlier poems. While virginals and harpsichords and even the lightest pianofortes were portable, instruments had become so heavy by the middle of the nineteenth century that moving them usually involved removal men, and soaring was more inconceivable than ever. Rudyard Kipling joked

in his 'Song of the Banjo':

You couldn't pack a Broadwood half a mile –
 You mustn't leave a fiddle in the damp –
 You couldn't raft an organ up the Nile,
 And play it in an Equatorial swamp.⁸²⁹

Such difficulties may also explain Thomas Wade's self-promoting assumption that he was, in 1871, the first poet to address the piano:

Pianoforte! Ne'er before, perchance,
 Thy alien name with English verse was blent;
 But now 'tis meet thou to that place advance,
 As rival to whatever instrument.⁸³⁰

The piano had as a matter of fact advanced to an unrivalled place in life and literature long before 1871, and it had always been a domestic, indoor, un-romantic instrument.^{ccviii} The difficulties of such 'realist' associations are partly solved by transposing a remembered pianist into the realm of memory, where she can be playing in the parlour and in Heaven at once.

2. The Dear Dead Past and the Sweet Hereafter

Thank God!
we shall have music in heaven.
 THOMAS COOPER

Since they are dead and rotten,
you can call them lovely with impunity.
Only when they are dead and rotten.
 GERMAINE GREER

The Victorian predilection for long-dead piano players is not only a poetological convenience; Heaven was also simply felt to be the safest location for the precarious activity of musical performance. The musical enthusiast and self-taught choir-director Thomas Cooper does not explicitly condemn music in his memoir, but palpably needs to seek forgiveness. He remembers being ousted as a tyrant by his musical associates, and constructs this as a retribution:

But the check to my enthusiasm came; ... Oh, how easily I could again yield to it! But I dare not. ... Thank Good! we shall have music in heaven; and I can wait for it, till I get thither, remembering [111] that the music of heaven will unspeakably transcend all

^{ccviii} [Coleridge's 'Lines Composed in a Concert-Room' epitomize the Romantic attitude to indoor music-making, which would not even attempt such potentially absurd transfers.](#)

the music of earth.⁸³¹

The dream is to enjoy music, and even better music than Handel's oratorios, without feeling religious or moral qualms, – which is imaginable only in Heaven. Such evasion is particularly important when music is a memory prompt for erotic reminiscence: it is safer to indulge in memories of the woman's seductive power if she is imagined in the Hereafter. This makes it possible to evoke sensuality from a safe distance, at which erotic fantasies can turn into an almost religious exercise.

In Arthur O'Shaughnessy's 'Duet', a piano and 'cello conduct a dialogue in the Hereafter. They address each other as genderless 'grieving soul', but the instruments were so clearly gendered that a heterosexual couple must be inferred. William Sharp's 'During music' rejoices outright in the death of the hated body:

I hear old memories astir
 In dusky twilights of the past:
 O voices telling me of her,
 My soul, whom now I know at last: ...
 On one day yet to come I see
 This body pale and cold and dead:
 The spirit once again made free
 Hovers triumphant overhead.⁸³²

Once the body is safely disposed of – with no less than three unequivocal adjectives –, the spirit is free to be addressed as female.

The Hereafter may also appear as a mere salutary allusion, adumbrating death in a less melodramatic way. In Thomas Edward Brown's 'Preparation', keeping a virginal well tuned means keeping one's soul prepared for meeting God at death, 'for when He comes thou know'st not'.⁸³³ The name of the historical instrument provides an additional echo of the Biblical parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,⁸³⁴ the moral of which the poem elaborates. William Watt's 'Stanzas On Hearing A Young Lady Perform On the Piano Forte' are not so openly admonitory, but the player, whose skill is favourably compared to that of Orpheus and Jubal, is nevertheless reminded, albeit in the nicest possible way, of her final destiny:

Long be the time before thy hand
 Forego to raise such concord grand,
 And join the bright angelic band
 In the realms of bless'd eternity.⁸³⁵

Heaven as a reward for excellent moral (and musical) behaviour also looms in Frances Ridley Havergal's 'Moonlight Sonata' which maps Beethoven's work almost bar by bar onto a

spiritual itinerary, concluding 'This strange, sad world is but our Father's school; / All chance and change / His love shall grandly overrule.'⁸³⁶

John Todhunter's 'Cäcilchen at the piano' is very much a living presence, but the diminutive in her name as well as multiple religious associations^{ccix} rob her playing of all its power. She is a lazy little girl, basically unworthy of the music she is maltreating:

Spells Mozart and Haydn
Wrought in moods of power,
Kept this pretty maiden
Idling for an hour;
Themes that shook Beethoven
In the dusk she played,
(which the little sloven
Murdered, I'm afraid.⁸³⁷

Beethoven's ghost appears to stop these proceedings, relieving Cäcilchen on the piano stool and playing the piece she attempted before. The conclusion conflates him with Christ, as Cäcilchen recovers from his visit with flushed excitement and the words of John the Baptist:⁸³⁸

Then her heart beat faster,
And her cheek grew hot;
'Lo, it was the Master,
And I knew him not!⁸³⁹

These are essentially the deprecating and disinfecting strategies of prose, enhanced by a poem's licence to bring in a ghost and make him religious: the subtitle is 'She drew an angel down'.

Another effective means of suppression is to elide the woman from the constellation of listener and piano by turning her into the instrument. In Leigh Hunt's 'The Lover of Music to his Piano-forte', the piano itself, instead of being played by a woman, answers the male pianist with a voice that meets all the requirements of ideal Victorian womanhood:

O friend, whom glad or grave we seek,
Heav'n holding shrine!
I ope thee, hear thee speak,
And peace is mine. ...
To thee, when our full hearts o'erflow
In griefs or joys,
Unspeakable emotions owe
A fitting voice: ...

^{ccix} One of the few poems that openly celebrate the power of piano music, Thomas Wade's 'To the Pianoforte', addresses the instrument, not the player; and when she is mentioned, calls her the 'High Priestess of thy Mysteries' (Wade 'To the Pianoforte' 10) – not a serious religious comment, certainly, but enough to exempt the girl from erotic actuality.

No change, no sullenness, no cheat,
 In thee we find;
 Thy saddest voice is ever sweet,
 – thine answer, kind.⁸⁴⁰

The fact that a man plays here is unique, and could maybe only have been expected of someone like Leigh Hunt. In all other poems, it is safe to assume that the elided player is a woman. This is very efficient when the piano becomes the direct mouthpiece of great composers. In a poem simply called 'The Piano-Forte', only 'lightest finger-fall' is left of the woman, to 'inspire' the instrument

when Beethoven mingles low and high,
 The depths are stirred, preluding thunders rise,
 And Harmony, like Jove, descends the sky.⁸⁴¹

It is important to remember that the raising of such powerful effects is never allowed to a women player in Victorian prose, and also in poetry, pianists actually present in the flesh tend to disappear. In 'Night-wandering' by 'Evelyn Douglas',^{ccx} the speaker roaming the city at night hears piano-music, and here even the instrument is only implied:^{ccxi}

While far and faint and sadly taunting,
 Like memories of some star still haunting
 Our dreams of life before the womb, [71]
 'Mid smoking light from casements open
 Come ebbing airs that swoon and sob
 With panting passionate cries of Chopin,
 Or old Béthoven's [sic] thunder-throb:
 Long wails that flower-like fade and languish,
 Stray wraiths of Schubert's sweetest note ...⁸⁴²

In 1884, when this poem was written, not only 'old Béthoven', but also Schubert and Chopin had been dead for roughly half a century. In many poems, allusions to the historical period of pre-piano centuries enhance the theme of individual memory and loss.

Something old-fashioned for the spinet.
 OSCAR WILDE

*How many phrases of sweet music seem
 To take for theme
 Fear or regret*

^{ccx} A pseudonym of the homosexual poet and political activist John Barlas.

^{ccxi} This can be assumed not only because of the dominance the piano had in practice and discourse, but also because of Chopin (who wrote practically only piano music) and Beethoven (whose piano sonatas were becoming staple fare).

The name of an earlier keyboard instrument – harpsichord, clavichord, dulcimer or spinet – is frequently sufficient to set such a theme. Around 1800, the harpsichord was a thing of the recent past, something old-fashioned or ridiculous; after 1840, it was remote enough to become a dignified sentimental symbol for lost youth or love.^{ccxii} Such poems are not to be confused with the popularly jolly historical genre scenes;^{ccxiii} the spinet, for example, is regularly shown as what it has become *since* its own epoch: not only historical, but old, unstrung, broken, and therefore doubly apt to set scenes of loss and memory. Some of the many examples in this vein are Edward Waite's 'House Fantastic' (an imitation of Poe's 'Raven' or George Barlow's 'White', which describes the last sight of the beloved by, among other things, late rose petals and the 'last long wailing of a harpsichord'.^{ccxiv} Francis William Bourdillon shows a widower who is reminded of his long-dead wife by his grand-children's strumming on an old spinet,⁸⁴³ and in Michael Field's 'On a Portrait' an old man is similarly 'to some dear country of his youth / By those few notes of music borne away'.⁸⁴⁴

In John Gray's 'Lover's Manual', the trope is independent of the love in progress: a girl plays the piano after an evening walk with her lover, and muses on figures from the period of the music she has performed:

Those slim, poor spectres, dancing as they use
In dreams to dance, patched, powdered, satin clad,
Offering, for memory of love they had,
White hand to white –⁸⁴⁵

^{ccxii} *Felix Holt* and *Dombey and Son* furnish two prose examples. Mrs. Transome, in her mid-fifties in 1832, considers 'her young accomplishments ... almost ludicrous, like the tone of her first harpsichord and the words of the song long browned with age' (Eliot *Felix Holt* I:i:16), and Dickens' hopelessly loyal, faded Miss Tox, who remains devoted to the cold Paul Dombey throughout his two marriages, owns and plays 'an obsolete harpsichord, illuminated round the maker's name with a painted garland of sweet peas' (Dickens *Dombey* II:vii:86).

^{ccxiii} Style exercises such as Lionel Pigot Johnson's 'Song of Israel' renew [the](#) Elizabethan anachronism [of](#) introducing virginals into the group of Old-Testament instruments called upon to worship in psalms, while quaintly humorous genre pieces celebrate a merry older England and its classic keyboard practitioner, the 'Gentlewoman Of the Old School': 'I know she thought; I know she felt; / Perchance could sum, I doubt she spelt; ... / I know she played and sang, for yet / We keep the tumble-down spinet / To which she quavered ballads set / By Arne or Jackson.' (Dobson 'Gentlewoman' 41-48). The lady has 'all the old accomplishments within herself combin'd – / Work'd samplers – play'd the harpsichord – could sing, too, when inclined – / Danc'd Minuets ... !' (Moncrieff 'Gentlewoman' 17-22). Thomas Ingoldsby's 'Nell Cook' from 'bluff King Harry's days, while yet he went to shrift' is less genteel. She visits her uncle, a merry Canon, is kissed full on the lips first thing after her arrival and still living with him three weeks later: 'And fine upon the Virginals is that gay Lady's touch, / And sweet her voice unto the lute, you'll scarce hear any such; / But is it "*O Sanctissima*" she sings in dulcet tone? Or "*Angels ever bright and fair*?" – Ah, no! – it's "*Bobbing Joan!*"' ('Nell Cook' 61-64).

^{ccxiv} Barlow 'White' 9. Cf. also Andrew Lang's 'The Spinnet', and Violet Fane's 'The Old Rocking Horse'.

but neither she nor her friend connect this dead past to their own love. The little passage is typical, however, of a particular version of the historical keyboard instrument trope that became popular after 1890: willowy, pale, dreamy figures scarcely 'perform' at the keyboard but are rather seen or felt as a kind of visual emanation of music. Ezra Pound's early effort 'Nel Biancheggiar' uses the medieval dulcimer to celebrate a pianist friend's successful concerts in London:

I feel the dusky softness whirr
of colour as upon a dulcimer
'Her' dreaming fingers lay between the tunes,
As when the living music swoons
But dies not quite, because of love of us
– knowing our state
How that 'tis troublous –
It will not die to leave us desolate.⁸⁴⁶

'Scriptor Ignotus', on the other hand, describes a lady organist recorded by an eighteenth-century Dante scholar: She 'twas that played him power at life's morn,

And at the twilight Evensong,
And God's peace dwelt in the mingled chords
She drew from out the shadows of the past,
And old world melodies that else
He had known only in his dreams
Of Iseult and of Beatrice⁸⁴⁷

A similar twilight mist hovers about James Joyce's early poem cycle *Chamber Music*. The instrument is again only metonymically present in the 'yellow [i.e. made of *old* ivory] keys';⁸⁴⁸ 'one at twilight shyly played / And one in fear was standing nigh.' That love of course 'came to us in time gone by'.⁸⁴⁹ In all those texts the contemporary practice of piano performance is made a vehicle for nostalgia by wistful historicizing; what irony there may be in Joyce's cycle is not detectable in the piano pieces.

*My hand strayed o'er the piano keys,
And it chanced on a song that you sang, my dear
In that other year.*
PHILIP MARSTON

A similar earnestness dominates a considerable number of poems where the female performer exists only in the memory of a man sitting at the piano. Typically, he touches a

single key or chord – not properly *performing* – whilst he indulgently remembers^{ccxv} how *she*, now dead or gone, used to play or sing. Again hands are frequently described, literary ghosts of the 'tactile values' of the fingers that walked 'with gentle gait' over Shakespeare's virginals. Theodore Wratislaw's Verlaine translation 'Le Piano Que Baise' depicts such a scene:

The piano over which a light hand strays
Shines vaguely in the evening grey and rose,
While as with rustling of a wing that plays,
An ancient air most weak and charming flows
Discreetly and as though heart-broken goes
Throughout the boudoir where her memory stays.⁸⁵⁰

In John Payne's 'At the Piano' the touching of the keys prompts a sensuous resurrection:

As o'er the answering keys my fingers stray, ...
The memories of many a bygone day,
The curtain of the Present drawn away
Is from my thought and with the veil's undoing,
The dear dead past arises, the renewing
Seeking of that which moulders in the clay.
... I, as o'er the abyss
Of thought I lean and watch the wraiths emerging,
Feel on my lips once more my first love's kiss.⁸⁵¹

In Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's 'To a piano', the instrument is mute because the speaker cannot play:^{ccxvi}

If I might win me that remembered strain
By reverent lifting of thy gleamy lid,
I could forget the sorrowful refrain
Of all the world shall do – is doing – did.
Pandora's prisoned hope was not more vain.
The casket's there, the melody is hid.⁸⁵²

The allusion to Pandora's box is another reminder of the lethal powers apprehended from the female body for which the instrument stands. Thus objectified, safely displaced and locked up, it can be emerge as a veiled tactile memory: the piano 'only to one hand on earth

^{ccxv} Swinburne's 'Triumph of Time' is one of the few texts that fear, instead of regret, the memories that music calls up. Bidding farewell to his beloved, he says: 'I shall never be friends again with roses; / I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong / Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes, / As a wave of the sea turned back by song. / There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire, / Face to face with its own desire; / A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes; / I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.' (Swinburne 'Triumph of Time' 353-360 p.28).

^{ccxvi} The strength of the genre conventions under discussion here is illustrated in the fact that Mary Elizabeth Coleridge also wrote a novel where the overheard piano playing of *The Lady On the Drawing-Room Floor* promotes a late but happy marriage.

replieth'.^{ccxvii}

Such disembodiment, such dreamy and purely imaginary, sharply contrasts with the stress that prose texts lay on visual appearance. Edmund Gosse's 'Music' makes this contrastive parallel explicit, affirming à propos of a girl 'before the clavichord':

Fair is she, yet I could afford
To lose those deep eyes where clear violets dwell,
And, in a whirl of sound,
To gain the heaven where her young spirit soar'd,
Forgetful of the ground.⁸⁵³

This non-sensual rapture is uniquely plausible because it is shared, and because the girl's subjectivity is at least mentioned. In most of the others, the straying fingers of the dreamily reminiscing man re-enact the physical touch of the vanished woman player's fingers, that highly erotic and at the same time decorous body part. A rather gruesome version of the trope embellishes on actual ghostly hands or physical decay. In Hardy's 'Haunting Fingers',^{ccxviii} A group of old musical instruments is conversing in an attic,^{ccxix} and a harpsichord, 'as 'twere from dampened lips'⁸⁵⁴ remembers

The tender pat
Of her aery finger-tips
Upon me daily – I rejoiced thereat!⁸⁵⁵

Macabrely, we are told that its keyboard is

filmed with fingers
Like tapering flames – wan, cold –
Or the nebulous light that lingers
In charnel mould.⁸⁵⁶

The ghost is only a more melodramatic way of resurrecting the memory of a player. Hardy's 'The Re-enactment' has a ghost entering a woman's room, first mistaking the speaker for his

^{ccxvii} I am indebted to Delia Da Sousa Correa for suggesting this angle. The method is in striking contrast to the Elizabethan use of tactility where the erotic discourse does not use the keyboard instrument as a substitute for the body, but explores the physical relationship between player's body and instrument.

^{ccxviii} Hardy wrote a number of piano poems which are chiefly remarkable for representing music in a way that differs far more from music in his prose than can be explained by genre. He rarely uses it as a metaphor for communication between individuals: 'The almost hypnotic power that music possesses is not due to its authenticity as a personal expression. Instead, it expresses the immanent force of nature [... 169] Music articulates the voice of nature.' (Byerly 1997:165 and 169).

^{ccxix} In his 1915 novel *The Good Soldier*, Ford Madox Ford compares the relations of his protagonists before their emotional smash-up to a minuet: 'You can't kill a minuet de la cour. You may shut up the music-book; close the harpsichord; in the cupboard and press the rates may destroy the white satin favours ... but surely the minuet – the minuet itself is dancing itself away into the furthest stars. [... 12] Isn't there any Nirvana pervaded by the faint thrilling of instruments that have fallen into the dust of wormwood but that yet had frail, tremulous and everlasting souls?' (Ford *Good Soldier* 11f.).

'lady fair', then ordering her to re-arrange the furniture in the old way so that he could again envision his long-gone lover serving him – pouring tea and playing the piano:

Aha – now I can see her! ...
 She serves me: now she rises,
 Goes to play.
 But you obstruct her, fill her
 With dismay,
 And all-embarrassed, scared,
 She vanishes away!⁸⁵⁷

This is indeed a rather embarrassing instance of the difficulties of what F. R. Leavis calls 'that most dangerous theme, the irrevocable past'.⁸⁵⁸ It is this difficulty together with a frequent disregard – as known from earlier poems – of the practical givens of keyboard music-making that makes Victorian piano poetry a rather deplorable sub-genre.

Leavis himself, however, analyses, of all things, a piano poem approvingly as an example of a memory poem because its 'particularity' in remembering an 'unbeglamouring' situation enables a complexity involving 'the presence of something other than directly offered emotion, or mere emotional flow – the presence of something, a specific situation, concretely grasped'.⁸⁵⁹ It is the 1918 version of D. H. Lawrence's 'Piano':

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
 Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
 A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
 And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
 Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
 To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
 And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
 With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
 Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
 Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.⁸⁶⁰

The mother's 'poised' feet, the tinny sound of that modest family instrument, the hymns that are being played, in fact, keep the realist bearings that suit the piano so well.

Thomas Hardy's best piano poem equally avoids the ridiculous through particularity,^{CCXX} and this is especially impressive because he uses most of the conventional elements of piano poetry that Lawrence eschews. 'The Duettist To Her Pianoforte. Song of

^{CCXX} Cf. Lucas 1986:32: 'Hardy is too intelligent to indulge in a timeless, idyllic past'.

Silence', assembles the complete cast of the usual lyric effusion: the male speaker, the dead or absent beloved player, the apostrophe to the piano and the touch of the fingers; but exact historical detail and the domestic realism proper to the instrument lift this poem far above others.

Since every sound moves memories,
 How can I play you
 Just as I might if your raised no scene,
 By your ivory rows, of a form between
 My vision and your time-worn sheen,
 As when each day you
 Answered our fingers with ecstasy?
 So it's hushed, hushed, hushed, you are for me!

I fain would second her, strike to her stroke,
 As when she was by,
 Aye, even from the ancient clamorous 'Fall
 Of Paris,' or 'Battle of Prague' withal,
 To the 'Roving Minstrels,' or 'Elfin Call'
 Sung soft as a sigh:
 But upping ghosts press achefully,
 And mute, mute, mute, you are for me!

Should I fling your polyphones,
 plaints and quavers
 Afresh on the air,
 Too quick would the small white shapes be here
 Of the fellow twain of hands so dear;
 And a black-tressed profile, and pale smooth ear;
 – The how shall I bear
 Such heavily-haunted harmony?
 Nay: hushed, hushed, hushed you are for me!

And as I am doomed to counterchord
 Her notes no more
 In those old things I used to know,
 In a fashion, when we practised so,
 'Good-night! – Good-bye!?' to your pleated show
 Of silk, now hoar,
 Each nodding hammer, and pedal and key,
 For dead, dead, dead, you are to me!

The concluding line contains a unique touch: the instrument is not a coffin nor a casket but has itself died with the beloved. But instead of being made to ascend Heaven by some laborious poetic effort, it is described in quotidian earthly detail. Popular sheet music and the technicalities of four-hand playing are poignantly evoked: the beloved's face is remembered in the

profile view her duet partner would have had, and the two actually had to practise. The nonce-word 'counterchord' encapsulates a frequent structure of simple four-hand writing (the sec-ondo player, at the lower half of the keyboard, accompanies the double-octave melody of the primo with his chords), and may even allude to the effort it takes a not very advanced pair of players to sound these chords at the right time against the tune. The insistence on the piano's old-fashioned and worn-out trimmings (faded silk front, ivory keys, wood shining with use) helps to turn these moving lines into a farewell not just to an individual love but to a whole epoch, without having to resort to spinets and pseudo-Elizabethan jargon. The very conventionality, the humdrum quality of the domestic piano are used for a maximum of poetic poignancy. However, not many writers were able to use it to such effect.

John Lucas explains the preoccupation or even obsession with the past and its memories of many nineteenth-century writers: 'the predominant reason is quite simply that the pre-sent feels different.'⁸⁶¹ That this partly why such a contemporary motif as the piano, makes a high-risk genre of the elegiac piano poem. That it was attempted so often testifies to the importance of the scope it offered for celebration in the guise of nostalgia, but the traditional pitfalls of 'literature about music', practical and technical vagueness and inept metaphor, dog many of those texts.

3. 'Death or despair or disappearance': Melodramatic narratives

Death which is not only a poetic means of distancing an explosive reality, but is actually represented as occurring tends to be even more pernicious for style than the 'dear dead past'. While reminiscing piano poems communicate the familiar mixture of fascination with and fear of women in a peculiarly direct fashion, with death as a veiled but essential given, the need to justify it as it happens almost unavoidably produces forced characterization or plot development. Sentimentality or melodrama are the usual results in the (few) texts that attempt such scenes.

In the narrative 'The Surgeon's daughter' embedded in Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*, a woman plays and sings herself to death, a belated punishment for leaving her newborn son during her elopement and lengthy flight from her strict Sephardic father. As a grown man, the son meets his parents without knowing it, and castigates them while thanking the man he takes for a mere benefactor: 'O, my more than father,... how much greater a debt

do I owe to you than to the unnatural parents, who brought me into this world through their sin, and deserted me through their cruelty!⁸⁶² The mother hears a divine accusation in those words, and defies it: 'I will answer the thunder of Heaven with its own music'.⁸⁶³ This defiance kills her:

She flew to a harpsichord which stood in the room, and ... wandered over the keys, producing a wilderness of harmony, composed of passages recalled by memory, or combined by her own musical talent, until at length her voice and instrument united in one of those magnificent hymns in which her youth had praised her Maker⁸⁶⁴

Tears course down her face, and after 'a pitch of brilliancy seldom attained by the most distinguished performers', voice and instrument sink 'into a dying cadence, which fell, never again to arise, – for the songstress had died with her strain'.⁸⁶⁵

George Eliot uses the theme in what is arguably her weakest prose narrative, 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story' from *Scenes of Clerical Life*. The Italian orphan Caterina enjoys challenging an English rival in love with her singing, but the triumph does not last. After a serious illness, her recognition of Maynard Gilfil's redeeming love begins as she is wakened from her torpor by an accidental harpsichord sound: 'The soul that was born anew to music was born anew to love.'⁸⁶⁶ This formulaically posited love leads to marriage, but is not enough to save Caterina from the death (in childbirth) appointed to her for her previous emotional excesses. The uneven text mostly treats her as an exotic pet^{ccxxi} and her music-making is robbed even of its transitory social power and domesticated for Gilfil as she retires to a rectory with him.⁸⁶⁷ David Lodge notes 'the narrator's over-anxious appeals to the reader to appreciate the intensity of the heroine's emotions',⁸⁶⁸ but in the end this intensity that makes her desirable kills her, exactly as it does Thomas Hardy's 'Chapel-Organist'. That poem is the steamy interior monologue of a too-handsome girl who plays the village organ for free, but although her heated subjectivity is presented, as it were, at first hand, the voyeuristic element is the same as in other piano poems. Before the young woman is dismissed for 'the good name of the chapel', she plays, voluptuously and rousingly, for one last time, and then drinks poison while her feet keep the organ booming. Although she is glorying in her talent, she is also being enjoyed and exploited by her auditors and by the text.⁸⁶⁹

Arthur O'Shaughnessy's 'Music and Moonlight' presents one of the more spectacular pianist deaths. After a great ball, the speaker overhears the belle of the evening playing alone

^{ccxxi} Cf. also Lodge 1985:26. Rosemarie Bodenheimer speaks of the narrator's 'disguised contempt' (Bodenheimer 1990:15) for Caterina.

in the sumptuous, now empty, house. This drives him to over five hundred lines of mythological rhapsodizing, at the end of which Chopin's soul invites her

to be henceforth where never she need lose
 That fair illumined vision's height
 Then, she said not Yea,
 But with intense emotion inward spoke.
 And therewith something burst asunder – broke!
 Down in that shrouded chamber far away
 The grand piano snapt one string; but oh,
 Pale Lady Eucharis fell back, as though
 Her dream grew deeper; and at dawn of day,
 They found her – dead; as one asleep she lay!^{ccxxii}

This poem, impossible as it is, dramatizes the undercurrent of most Victorian writing about music succinctly. Playing is not a form of communication or self-expression; it prohibits speaking, blocks empowerment. It is not, here as in most novels, shown as a chance of communication, of 'having the floor'. It is not even able to bear, as a channel, the excess of pent-up emotion, although it was frequently advertised as having this power. The poem's outcome may be read as sympathizing (if in a somewhat voyeuristic manner) with the mind and soul that must burst under such containment, but also as an example of picturesque voyeurism that produces the ideal woman: beautiful and terminally silent.

Yes, he was such a dear little man Oh!
 FREDERICK ORME WARD

The few musical men who die in Victorian poetry are, like Guy Redclyffe (cf. p. 127f.), strongly feminized. Frederick Ward's curious sub-Ovidian 'Robin Redbreast' features Robin, a male musical flirt with predictably feminine characteristics:

Yes, he was such a dear little man Oh!
 And he sang them the properest songs;
 he performed on the harp and piano,
 and adapted to music their wrongs.⁸⁷⁰

But for all his 'harping and humming, / he could not be married to all',⁸⁷¹ and this imagined promiscuity is his downfall. He stabs a tormenting coquette and turns into a little bird; and the reader knows 'Why his voice has a tremor and sob in, / and his life is a life of unrest.'⁸⁷² In a similarly awful magazine short story, the middle-aged narrator remembers a young

^{ccxxii} O'Shaughnessy 'Music and Moonlight' 513-524. O'Shaughnessy is an early herald of the Nineties shift away from society and ethics, and towards Aesthetic introversion'. His 'An Epic' ends with a disillusioned lover who kills his girl after the first night, explaining: 'It was the only way to keep her mine.'

consumptive who faints at the execution of the murderer of an actress he loved from afar. Her little golden-ringletted girl has been entrusted to his care, but dies soon; and as she lies on her deathbed, a musical score is open on the piano 'as if the player had suddenly been interrupted in his playing'.⁸⁷³ The narrator recognizes the music on the piano for one of his favourites and describes it years later, after the sad young man has died as well:

a waltz of Chopin, a posthumous work, one of the saddest and most touching expressions of a broken heart. Innocent and tender in its utterance as this child's life, but sad as her untimely death, no piece of music ever composed by a great master mind could possibly have been more in harmony with what so lightly lay upon that bed than this. And at the young man's grave there invariably steals into my ear the sad despairing melody of that posthumous waltz of Chopin which always seems to me to tell, almost in detail, the story of Roselin Tudor's life.⁸⁷⁴

The young man's name is about as emblematic as can be imagined for a male Victorian pianist: the surname putting him in the realm of a decorative past, the diminutive flowery first name as feminized (and diminutive) as he is through his instrument, his foster-parenthood and his early death.

*Well, is it not a wise exchange,
Live maid for ghost of dead musician?*
ERNEST DOWDEN

During the period 1870 to 1910 that most of these poems come from, fiction began to celebrate pianists in new ways; survival and even success became narrative possibilities. An example in verse, somewhat ahead of its time in 1876, is Ernest Dowden's 'To Hester (At the Piano)'. It does evoke the past only ironically, likening Hester to a Kneller portrait and concluding, after references to *Werther* and *Childe Harold* that 'Weltschmerz is the modern mode', with a refreshing swerve to enact a 'wise exchange, live maid for ghost of dead musician':

But sweet seventeen is still a fashion.
Let be awhile the Infinite,
Those chords with tremulous fervour laden,
Where Chopin's fire and dew unite –
I choose instead one mortal maiden.⁸⁷⁵

This 'wise exchange' was more generally made towards the end of the nineteenth century, when representations of women at the piano became less stereotyped and often more empowering.

VI. Swan Song: The piano after 1880

Up to the 1880s, the power that sexual anxieties lent to normative gender stereotyping predetermined any representation of musical performance in fiction or poetry. But as Victorian sexual norms and concepts of gender and marriage were increasingly questioned, the paralysis lifted. Accomplishment as a social practice and literary topos continues to the end of the First World War; as late as 1914, Vera Brittain needed a scholarship for Oxford because her parents refused to spend money on her education, 'though the cost of my music lessons, and of the expensive piano which was ungrudgingly bought for me to practise on, would have paid for nearly a year at Oxford.'⁸⁷⁶ In the same year, E. M. Forster describes a perfect young bride (ignorant of sex on her wedding night) as 'accomplished but delightful'⁸⁷⁷ – the 'but' speaks volumes about changing attitudes –, and as representative of a species that 'every year England grew less inclined [154] to pay [for]'.⁸⁷⁸ Ten years on, nobody plays the piano at home in fiction. The discourse of love in the widest possible sense which permeates literary representations of keyboard playing is finding other locations.

May Sinclair is one of the voices that use again, after nearly a century of trivialization and pious downplaying, the scathing terms of Mary Wollstonecraft to denounce the pernicious emotional manipulations in Victorian courtship:

[T]he extreme shakiness of man's standard of sexual morality to-day, is largely due to the debilitating, the disastrous influence of the Early and Mid-Victorian woman. Her wilful ignorance, her sentimentalism, her sex-servility, amounted to positive vice, and could only be productive of viciousness in the unhappy males exposed to it.⁸⁷⁹

Katherine Mansfield's exasperation with a passage in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* has to do with the war, but also with those underlying gender issues. The young William Rodney (himself just able to pick out opera tunes on the piano), ponders the fact that Katherine Hilbery, whom he will leave in order to marry her young and more pliable cousin, has 'no particular liking for music', an unusual 'defect' in her family:

Her cousin, Cassandra Otway, for instance, had a very fine taste in music, and he had charming recollections of her in a light fantastic attitude, playing the flute ... The enthusiasms of a young girl of distinguished upbringing appealed to William. She ought to be given the chance of hearing good music.⁸⁸⁰

This girl represents the 'womanly side[s] of the [329] feminine nature',⁸⁸¹ while Katherine is more manly. Katherine Mansfield called the novel 'a lie in the soul' because of the message she found implied in it that 'The war never has been', and cites Rodney's 'trifling' musings on a

teachable, musical, lightweight creature scene as evidence of an '*utter coldness & indifference* [which] positively frightens me'.⁸⁸² The most telling portents of the nearing end of the institution of accomplishments and the piano as a domestic fixture are not, however, the complaints against the still omnipresent instrument and the medical, moral and intellectual perils it represents, but all those novels that simply do not feature a piano.

Those that do give an intrinsic interest to piano scenes that had not been reached maybe since Sonnet 128. A wide range of characters, 'Odd Women', 'New Women', gay and straight men, aspiring professionals and rebellious young ladies with an impressive repertoire, join the merely 'accomplished' girl at the instrument, and a far wider range of states of mind is represented as being kindled in listeners or – this is also new – experienced, vented and called forth in *players*. The modernity of a Sherlock Holmes story resides exclusively in the point of view of the young lady who describes a wholly traditional scene:

'[I]t had seemed to me sometimes that my employer, Mr. Carruthers, takes a great deal of interest in me. We are thrown rather together. I play his accompaniments in the evening. He has never said anything. He is a perfect gentleman. But a girl always knows.'⁸⁸³

Some girls may still have to play piano accompaniments – but now they 'know', and are heard to say so. Performance and reception of music at home become for the first (and last) time part of truly individualized characterizations 'rather than an abstractly social phenomenon',⁸⁸⁴ and are intentionally used by women to communicate or resist communication.

The new insistence on female intentions, susceptibility and sensuality is not always a real departure, however. Many texts remodel 'received images and patterns ... , largely to accommodate female sexuality',⁸⁸⁵ but continue to privilege the male gaze on the desirable woman to privilege, if anything, more explicit erotic fantasizing. The re-emergence of the striking trope of the feminine soul^{ccxxiii} being touched and vibrating like a chord (after the Elizabethan motif 'You are a viol, and your sense the strings', cf. p. 34) shows how much the passive image of women may be preserved even while her own imagination is represented. A rich bored widow envies a despairing girl: 'You have the melody of the air he played in you. No man ever played on me. I am like a harp that has lain away until the strings are frayed, and no one ever called out its deepest music.'⁸⁸⁶

The significance of such metaphors can also be gauged from the popularity of George

^{ccxxiii} Talking to Dorian Gray feels like 'playing upon an exquisite violin' answering 'to every touch and thrill of the bow' to Lord Henry Wotton (Wilde *Dorian* III:33), and Dorian himself feels that 'some secret chord that had never been touched before ... was now vibrating and throbbing' (II:28).

Egerton's^{ccxxiv} highly popular collections of short stories, *Keynotes* and *Discords*.^{ccxxv} The story 'Her Share' in *Discords* describes a strange wordless exchange between a young woman and the man next door in whose room she has left a ribbon while sneaking in to look at his things:

Evening after evening, I used to play, and he used to answer me with an improvised echo of whatever I played to him. ... One night he played to me – ah! how can I tell you of it? – music such as I had heard in dreams, or in mad hours when he restless spirit worked in me I walked up and down the garden in my white gown; he could see me from his window, and he drew my soul with his bow as one wind silk out of a cocoon, and he bent it across the strings of his violin.⁸⁸⁷

When he sings one night, she only throws him a rose because 'the fingers of fate were clutching my throat, choking down the sound ... though I groaned his name with all my being'.⁸⁸⁸ They never meet again: 'It is of him I will think when I am dying, and death may come easier for the thought.'⁸⁸⁹

Grant Allen's 'Woman Who Did' characteristically refutes the implications of passive femininity in her refusal of the chord stereotype. When her more conventional lover, addressing her as 'O my child' asks her not to play 'too hard on those fiercest chords in my nature': 'It isn't those chords I want to play upon. I want to convince your brain, your intellect, your reason.'⁸⁹⁰

Such intellectual aspirations and the respect which some fiction pays them, are new, however. A new respect for musical excellence reflects the glamour which the musical profession at last started to acquire; and excellent playing as a means of rebellious or private personal expression promises grants not only erotic leverage but also empowerment and the expression of individuality. Such individuality is represented as desirable also in non-fictional discourse:

The pianoforte ... puts a wide range of musical expression into the hands of one performer. ... the circumstances have produced a wider range of characteristics in pianoforte music than in any other branch of the art. ... In these days nearly every taste can be satisfied.⁸⁹¹

The emphasis on consumption in the last phrase represents a final aspect of late-nineteenth-century developments which found its most typical expression in the pianola and finally in

^{ccxxiv} The male pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne.

^{ccxxv} The former inspired the publisher John Lane to a whole 'Keynotes Series', the volumes of which were designed by Aubrey Beardsley and featured, among others, Stanley Makower's *The Mirror of Music* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* as well as Victoria Crosse's rebuttal *The Woman Who Didn't*.

recording technology and which also helped to make a Victorian relic^{ccxxvi} of the piano in the end. All these developments the piano illustrates and accompanies in its last great decades in life and literature.

1. Triumph and exasperation

The piano is too much with us.
ANONYMOUS (1899)

*The greatest assistance
the average young lady musician
can render to others is to stop.*
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

More tastes than before had to be satisfied also because the piano was more affordable than ever, and virtually ubiquitous; Cyril Ehrlich has calculated that by 1910 ownership cannot have been confined to the middle classes because there was one instrument for every ten to 20 people in Britain.^{ccxxvii} This was too much; the piano had overreached itself. Successful as never before, it was also hated and warned of as it had only been in the philippics and frank financial calculations of Regency satirists:

[T]he torture of professional performance, the ineffective strumming of the amateur, and the damnable iteration of the learner, ha[ve] sundered ancient friendships ... disturbed the cerebral machinery in many literary and scientific workers ... driven studious men from their books to the bottle ... and stimulated peaceful citizens to the commission of violent assaults.⁸⁹²

That article also blames the piano for the 'chloroses and neuroses from which so many young girls suffer'⁸⁹³ and suggests a parliamentary 'Act for the protection of minors from this form of cruelty'.⁸⁹⁴ Even conduct books warn of obnoxious over-use:

Your neighbours have nerves, and need at times a little relief from inflictions of this kind. If you could manage not to play on an instrument at all, unless you are an accomplished performer, so much the better.⁸⁹⁵

But even fairly accomplished piano performances were getting obnoxiously thick on the

^{ccxxvi} John Oliver Hobbes' *The Dream and the Business* of 1906 characterizes a rectory by an almost eighteenth-century propriety of instrumental gendering of visitors to the daughter of the house: 'Men might call at the Manse for the pleasure of conversation and tea; they might bring their violins, their flutes, their 'cellos and their devotion any afternoon.' (Hobbes *Dream* 23).

^{ccxxvii} Cf. Ehrlich 1975:7. '[H]ostility towards piano ownership in nineteenth-century Britain increased as the piano gradually lost its exclusivity as an index of social status and also as the economic hardship resulting from systems of hire purchase for shoddy (but not cheap) instruments became apparent.' (Da Sousa Correa 2003:211, n. 85).

ground,^{ccxxviii} as becomes evident from the reviews of George Bernard Shaw and Ezra Pound who both worked as music critics in that period.

Writing as 'Corno di Bassetto', Shaw confessed: 'Pianoforte-playing is becoming an accomplishment [94] most hateful to me. Death is better than eighteen recitals per week.'^{ccxxix}

Ezra Pound, expressed similar feelings more elaborately as 'Atheling':

The pye-ano, Ge-entlemen, the PYE-ano is the largest musical instrument known to man ...; [but it] may, with four fat men and considerable difficulty, be moved from on spot to another (Mr. Kipling notwithstanding);^{ccxxx} all of which is no reason for pye-ano recitals outnumbering all other concerts three to one, or seven to one, or seventeen to one in the damp season.⁸⁹⁶

Shaw also counters Ruskin's exhortation to girls to 'consider all your accomplishments as means of assistance to others'⁸⁹⁷ with the 'earnest' advice

to cultivate music solely for the love and need of it, and to do it in all humility of spirit, never forgetting that they are most likely inflicting all-but-unbearable annoyance on every musician within earshot. Some day, perhaps, when it is like a page out of *Wilhelm Meister* or *Sesame and Lilies*, when the piano is dead and our maidens go up into the mountains to practise their first exercises on the harp, Mr Ruskin's exhortations ... may gain some sort of plausibility. At present they will not wash.⁸⁹⁸

Ruskin's somewhat ignorant enthusiasm is denounced by attributing to him the prime sign of fuzzy thinking, the conflation of piano and harp, the substitution of a real (and mortal!) instrument with an immortal, unreal one. As long as the piano is alive and well, mythical beauty will always co-exist awkwardly with musical practice, metaphor won't wash.^{ccxxxi}

In fact, insulting the piano became a new literary topos. James Kenneth Stephen lists a series of 'sounds to rejoice in':

The whistle of the railway guard despatching the train to the inevitable collision,
The maiden's monosyllabic reply to a polysyllabic proposal,
The fundamental note of the last trump, which is presumably F natural⁸⁹⁹

^{ccxxviii} The pianola can partake of these associations: 'It was a chill, rain-washed afternoon of a late August day, that indefinite season when partridges are still in security or cold storage, and there is nothing to hunt And in spite of the blankness of the season and the triteness of the occasion, there was no trace in the company of that fatigued restlessness which means a dread of the pianola and a subdued hankering for auction bridge.' (Saki 'Tobermory' 79).

^{ccxxix} Shaw *Shaw's Music* II:93f. William Galloway saw 'a certain element of hopefulness' in the fact that so many private recitals were given at all, 'though very many of them exhibit a standard of artistic merit insufficient to justify their existence'. (Galloway *Musical England* 114).

^{ccxxx} The allusion is to 'Song of the Banjo' (cf. p. 176f.).

^{ccxxxi} Shaw obliquely disparages the piano also in *Pygmalion*; Eliza Doolittle becomes a proficient pianist in the same parrot fashion in which Higgins has trained her to talk: 'She can play the piano quite beautifully. We have taken her to classical concerts and to music halls; and it's all the same to her: she plays everything [736] she hears right off when she comes home, whether it's Beethoven and Brahms or Lehar and Lionel Monckton though six months ago, she'd never as much as touched a piano.' (Shaw *Pygmalion* III:735f.).

The industrial, matrimonial and religious topics all connect to the piano, and in fact 'better than all of them is the absolutely last chord of the apparently inexhaustible pianoforte player!'⁹⁰⁰ John Gray's poem 'Sound' has a similar punch line. A long list of quaint and menacing instruments such as oboes, bells, dulcimers, drums, gongs and bugles are called upon to 'Beat! Blow! – Insult the tiresome Piano.'⁹⁰¹ Ezra Pound described a song recital as reminiscent of Madame Tussaud's, and the piano 'looked like a hearse covered with bouquets'.⁹⁰²

The hearse or coffin is emblematic of a recurring topos of criticizing a social use of music; the piano coffin is also that of its players.^{ccxxxii} While a personal 'dear dead past' is mourned and celebrated in elegiac poems, a dying epoch with its lethal entrapment of women is suggested in such images. The most admirably economical example is Kurtz' 'Intended' in *Heart of Darkness*. A petrified 'Angel in the House', she is in mourning more than a year after the death of her fiancé, and looks 'as though she would remember and mourn forever'⁹⁰³ – which is of course what she has been trained to do. Her grand piano stands 'massively in a corner; with dark gleams on the flat surfaces like a sombre and polished sarcophagus'.⁹⁰⁴ The funereally empty instrument, devoid of the usual embroidered covers, vases and framed photographs, is closed because her life is over, and a whole epoch will soon be dead, too.

The piano's role as a deceptive screen (cf. p. 95) is once again adumbrated in the Victorian interior of domestic cleanliness and godliness, with fresh flowers and the piano 'open with a hymn-book on the stand'⁹⁰⁵ which sets the scene for a young woman berating her mother for sending her unprepared into a disgusting marriage in George Egerton's short story 'Virgin Soil'. In a poem by Austin Dobson, the piano participates similarly in a courtship 'fragment' that ends badly. A young man and a charmingly fresh young girl share a train carriage, chattering away about books, singers and the relative difficulty of Chopin and Spohr:

And oh! the odd things that she quoted,
With the prettiest possible look,
While her talk like a musical rillet
Flashed on with the hours that flew.⁹⁰⁶

Afterwards, the speaker dreams of sailing with the 'Incognita' over a sunny sea: 'And we split on a rock labelled Marriage, / And I woke, – as cold as a stone.'⁹⁰⁷ When the school friends

^{ccxxxii} Leopold Bloom's repeated coffin associations (Joyce *Ulysses* XI:216, XV:458 and XVII:580) may have less to do with a nostalgic iconography of the piano than with his memories of a funeral earlier in the morning.

Hilda and Winnie in Walter Chalmers Smith's 'Hilda and the Broken Gods' meet as adults, they reminisce about their unmarried schoolfellows who are 'strumming pianos, or working in Berlin wools / Pictures of foolish youths for catching the youthful fools'.⁹⁰⁸ Their piano reminiscences are also connected with an old-fashioned, pious education:

Oh, the old-maiden morals we had,
So scrupulous, prim, and demure!
What the decalogue never forbade
Our consciences could not endure. ...
And the scales that we practised for hours,
Till we hated the sight of the keys!^{ccxxxiii}

The difference between a Victorian and a 'newer' use of the piano often corresponds to a generation gap between fictional characters. The aspiring teenage *girl* composer in *The Mirror of Music* is wheedled out of practising too seriously or professionally by a mother whose arguments embody the Victorian double-bind: 'I tried to do some needle work and my mother was so pleased to see me away from the piano that she tried to show herself grateful by talking about music. She said it was one of God's best gifts.'^{ccxxxiv} Mrs. Hilbery in *Night and Day* – a woman whose identity is rooted in being the daughter of an eminent Victorian poet whose shrine she inhabits with her family – is placed by her comment on the approaching marriage of her daughter's erstwhile fiancé William Rodney to her niece Cassandra: 'I own I was a little grudging at first, but, after all, she plays the piano so beautifully.'⁹⁰⁹ Katharine, unmusical but masculine and intelligent in the classical Edwardian fashion, doubts her mother's childhood memories of 'the chandeliers, and the green silk of the piano, and Mamma sitting in her cashmere shawl by the window',⁹¹⁰ seeing that

the facts themselves were so much of a legend. The house in Russell Square, for example, with its noble rooms, and the magnolia-tree in the garden, and the sweet-voiced piano ..., and other properties of size and romance – had they any existence?⁹¹¹

Martin Challoner, battling his father's opposition to his plan of becoming a professional musician ('You mean that my son should devote the most useful, the most active years of his life to playing the piano?'⁹¹²) insists: 'At last this generation has said, "I will lead my own life, not the life dictated to me by other people."⁹¹³

^{ccxxxiii} Smith 'Hilda' II:139-142 and 163f. When the girls *were* still young, Winnie had complained about 'commonplace wives, who drop / Their friends and their French and pianos, and put to the Past a full stop' (5f.).

^{ccxxxiv} Makower *Mirror* 16. Cf. also the violinist Rosie in *Robert Elsmere*, whose father gave her her first violin although he thinks it 'wicked to care about anything except religion. If he had lived, of course I should never have been allowed to study music.' (Ward *Elsmere* I:ii:XIII:310). When she cries because of practice restrictions, he asks her 'not to make him sad before God that he [313] had given me that violin' (I:ii:XIII:312f.).

In characters of roughly the same age, this appears as an 'attitude gap'. In George Gissing's *Odd Women*, the wedding gift of a simple cottage piano calls forth tears of joy which are purely Victorian: 'Well, it's the greatest kindness I ever received, that's all. Fanny will be devoted to you. With music in the house, our blind sister will lead quite a different life. Confound it! I want to begin crying.'⁹¹⁴ The blind sister comments: 'So long as I have music I can forget that I can't see',⁹¹⁵ and the young wife plays 'simple, old-fashioned music, neither well nor badly, but to the infinite delight of two of her hearers'.^{ccxxxv} In the same book the 'New Woman' Rhoda Nunn tries to interest a girl in office skills to save her from shop-assistant drudgery and describes music with a professional pragmatism that would have horrified pious Victorian educationalists:

'There's a good deal of employment for women who learn to use a type-writer. – Did you ever have piano lessons?' 'No.' 'No more did I, and I was sorry for it when I went to type-writing. The fingers have to be light and supple and quick.'⁹¹⁶

Rhoda maintains that there 'should be no such thing as a class of females vulgarized by the necessity of finding daily amusement'⁹¹⁷ in playing the piano.

However, early representations of typing describe this occupation (which guaranteed a certain independence to young women) with exactly the patronage and scopic orientation that Victorian pianists were exposed to: '[Typing] is sedentary in character, does not take very long to learn, and serves as an equipment for a variety of posts [for a] fair typist, her fingers dancing quickly over the tiny ivory keys'.⁹¹⁸ In other texts, typing serves as a derogatory standard of comparison for uninteresting piano performances. Shaw admires a 'swift, accurate, steely-fingered' concert pianist 'as I admire the clever people who write a hundred and eighty words a minute with a typewriter',⁹¹⁹ and an acquaintance able to 'click the piano quite quickly' made Wilfred Owen wonder why 'these people buy pianos at all, when a good typewriter is so much cheaper, and makes almost the same noise'.^{ccxxxvi} An Oscar Wilde paradox exposes the demeaning aspects of both old and new keyboard skills:

I assure you that the type-writing machine, when played with expression, is not more annoying than the piano when played by a sister or near relation. Indeed, many

^{ccxxxv} Gissing *Odd Women* XII:125. A magazine article published in 1892, one year before Gissing's novel, ridicules such scenes: 'Running over the list of my married friends, I can only single out one or two whose wives affect a liking for music, and duly endeavour to soothe their lords of an evening by trips up and down the key-board.' (*Musical Opinion* October 1892:37). Winnie Urquhart as a young girl complains about 'commonplace wives, who drop / Their friends and their French and pianos, and put to the Past a full stop' (Smith 'Hilda' II:1-16).

^{ccxxxvi} Owen *Letters* 541, 21-03-1918. Only Sherlock Holmes, examining a client's hands, argues inversely: 'I nearly fell into the error of supposing that you were typewriting. Of course it is obvious that it is music. ... There is a spirituality about the face, ... which the typewriter does not generate.' (Conan Doyle 'Cyclist' 527).

among those most devoted to domesticity, prefer it.⁹²⁰

As with typing, many contradictory stereotypes of the Victorian piano discourse live on – more explicitly questioning and aggressive maybe, and in different texts.

2. Stereotypes revisited

The topos of contrasting a blonde man-trap at the piano with the unmusical, statuesquely intelligent heroine lives on. Hardy, truly 'the last Victorian', conventionally associates the piano with the less virtuous woman in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: Elizabeth-Jane Henchard muses '[i]f they only knew ... that I can't show any of the accomplishments they learn at boarding-schools, how they would all despise me!⁹²¹ while the coquettish Lucetta Templeman (to die of a miscarriage) owns an instrument and calls a new-fangled agricultural implement 'a sort of agricultural piano'.⁹²² However, irony of the fair player's outmoded attempts at seduction or her inadequate musicality is now more frequent than condemnation. When Lupin Pooter, the son of 'A Nobody', moons over a married lady's singing, his father expresses *musical* rather than moral disapproval: 'Mrs. Posh sang a dozen songs at least, and I can only repeat what I have said before – she does *not* [293] sing in tune; but Lupin sat by the side of the piano, gazing into her eyes the whole time.'⁹²³ The tall dark Girton student Herminia, 'The Woman Who Did', will not marry her lover because nothing but 'living together' would be outrageously honest enough. He compares these 'strange ideas' to those of a more conventional girl:

How could he listen with becoming show to Ethel Waterton's aspirations on the piano after a gypsy girl – oh, a gypsy life for her! – when, in point of fact, she was a most insipid blonde from the cover of a chocolate-box?⁹²⁴

Parallel to such disempowering irony runs the upgrading of masculinity of the non-player. Douglas Sladen contrasts two sisters in his verse narrative about *A Summer Christmas* in Australia; 'pretty,' 'soft,' 'dainty,' 'tender' and 'graceful' Lil lacks 'the robust and keen / Brain of the other',⁹²⁵

And tastefully the keys she played,
Whether for Lied of Mendelssohn
Or new waltz she was called upon.⁹²⁶

The unmusical sister Kit is predictably older and of 'noble, queenly loveliness', brainy and with 'rough sports and manner' based '[o]n manly canons of good taste'.⁹²⁷ This is not an outraged

description of a virago as it would have been thirty years before, not is it in Arnold Bennett's potteries novel *These Twain*, where the unfeminine (or not yet womanly) but highly likeable Hilda Lessways enjoys organizing musical evenings although she is unable to play herself. She works in her husband's printing press: 'immature, graceless, harsh, inelegant, dowdy ... , in the midst of all that hard masculine mess, – and a part of it'.⁹²⁸

In the 1890s genre of the 'New Woman' novel, 'not playing' encodes neither powerful masculinity nor spinsterhood, but emancipated modernity. Like Herminia, the eponymous heroine of Méné Muriel Dowie's shocking *Gallia* is never seen playing, and her friend Gertrude, a 'shining example of the modern girl', '[d]oesn't play a note, doesn't paint a stroke'.⁹²⁹ Contrarily, Margaret Essex, the first flame of the man whom Gallia will marry for eugenic reasons, is a perfect specimen of Victorian womanhood enabling old-fashioned romance-based marriage, and her accomplishments 'are ever and ever so far above the amateur average'.⁹³⁰ In Ella Hepworth Dixon's *Story of a Modern Woman*, an older friend of the would-be-artist heroine has done sculpture in Paris, swears in French and has 'serious views'. Also, 'with the best heart in the world, she had a somewhat caustic tongue, could interpret Chopin like an artist, and always had her hair exquisitely dressed'.⁹³¹ This woman, too, does not 'play a little'; it is significant that the term is not the generic 'play the piano', but a more specific, correct expression.

2.1. Finally: Playing well. Self-expression and respectful listeners

Women were becoming better at playing the piano, and the minority of music-lovers with a somewhat better taste grew towards the end of the century. It was no longer only cranky individualists like Peacock that complained about the enduring awfulness of the popular piano repertoire. A letter to the editor of the *Musical Opinion* deplores the young lady who

cherishes a belief that 'The Maiden's Prayer' – so called presumably because it leads to profanity in others – is the greatest and most tuneful composition in the whole répertoire of music.^{ccxxxvii} ... In this masterly composition the hands of the executant cross over, I believe, and this prodigious feat of gymnastics is supposed to indicate a very high degree of general culture.^{ccxxxviii}

^{ccxxxvii} This artistically worthless super-seller found more than 80 publishers in France, Germany, Italy, Australia and the USA from 1865 and spawned follow-up titles like 'Seconde prière d'une vierge', or 'Prière exaucée, ou Réponse à la prière d'une vierge'.

^{ccxxxviii} *Musical Opinion* October 1892:37. Somerset Maugham characterizes a vulgar character by her admiration of this 'feat': 'She does play well, doesn't she? ... And what's more she's never 'ad a lesson in 'er life; it's all ear.' (Maugham *Bondage* CIV:791).

In fact 'a rather arbitrary selection from [the great romantic] composers became widely [307] appreciated by domestic pianists (and presumably by those who taught them music and so chose their repertory)'.⁹³² As taste improved, so did skill; after the eight-hour stints imposed on girls around 1800, once again 'amateur' students reached standards that would be considered professional today. John Francis Barnett remembers a girl from a ladies' school who played both of Chopin's extremely virtuosic concerti, learning the F Minor one in three weeks.⁹³³ Such advanced amateurs pursued many 'professional' activities and were not 'the professional's opposite ... but rather, his or her complement in 'an overlapping and complex spectrum'.^{ccxxxix} 'Fond of music' no longer means 'eager to please and play' but dedication to a serious practice. As James Huneker put it:

Life has become too crowded, too variously beautiful, for a woman without marked musical gifts to waste it at the piano. ... The new girl is too busy to play the piano unless she has the gift; then she [293] plays it with consuming earnestness.⁹³⁴

Such earnestness also informs certain literary texts. What Oscar Schmitz describes as the German attitude to music can be detected at least in some fictional characters 'who abstain from musical performance altogether, because their musical standards are higher than their own ability'.⁹³⁵ It is no longer apt to explain the zeal of stupefied human 'automatons' by 'the assumption that she [18] is totally unmusical, otherwise she could not bear her own strumming'.⁹³⁶ In fact, players now sometimes get attention for the sounds they produce and not only for their looks, and thanks to the technical progress of real players, the canonical works (mainly Beethoven and Chopin) become available to literary figures.

The weight of such music becomes a 'divine' power (more pagan than heavenly), which makes it a downright sin to pretend to a non-existent musicality, or even only to practice without success. In E. M. Forster's short story 'Co-ordination', a music teacher renounces music after Beethoven has himself made her hear his A minor quartet:

'I will not return to my duties. ... I am not musical. I have deceived the pupils and the parents and you. I am not musical, but pretended that I was to make money. What will happen to me now I don't know, but I can pretend no longer.'⁹³⁷

The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford has a young woman of very decided masculine and forthright opinions who is at least ashamed of her incompetence:

She was fond of music, and ... had a great contempt for bungling, and not being a professional player, she never would try a piece in my presence of which she was not

^{ccxxxix} Cf. Paula Gillett's article 'Ambivalent Friendships', which discusses the relationship between amateurs and professionals in the second half of the nineteenth century.

perfectly master. She particularly liked to play Mozart, and on my asking her once to play a piece of Beethoven, she turned round upon me and said: 'You like Beethoven best. I knew you would. He encourages a luxurious revelling in the incomprehensible and indefinitely sublime. He is not good for you.'^{ccxi}

In Arthur Pinero's box-office hit *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, the eponymous heroine, a woman 'with a past' ostracized and driven to suicide, is differentiated from figures like the horribly vulgar Lady Orreyed by musical means.

LADY ORREYED Oh yes, do play! That's the one thing I envy you for.
 PAULA What shall I play?
 LADY ORREYED What was that heavenly piece you gave us last night, dear?
 PAULA A bit of Schubert. Would you like to hear it again?
 LADY ORREYED You don't know any comic songs, do you? [110]
 PAULA I'm afraid not.⁹³⁸

Her husband comments: 'Poor girl, how ill and wretched she looks.'⁹³⁹ Paula's music underscores her sensitivity;^{ccxli} she uses cheap melodies only as a kind of desperate musical small talk to cover up embarrassing situations: 'Good morning. (*Brightly*) We've been breakfasting this side of the house, to get the sun. *She sits at the piano and rattles a gay melody.*'⁹⁴⁰ A prose version describes Paula's inadequate performance in stressful situations (a subtlety that would have been hard to convey even for as skilled a musician as Mrs. Patrick Campbell who greatly delighted her friend G. B. Shaw's with her theatrical and musical performance)⁹⁴¹ as obviously below her usual standard:

He found her alone in the drawing-room one afternoon, and asked her to play to him. After a pause she sat down and rattled through a Schubert [102] impromptu, in schoolgirl fashion. Then she turned round. 'Don't moon about after me, Cayley,' she said. 'Surely Aubrey will be lonely without you. ... I wish you wouldn't stare so.' ... Paula played a little longer, mechanically, then slipped away in the middle of a phrase, and went to the window.⁹⁴²

The erotic triangle man-woman-piano now has a new centre of gravity: the piano becomes more of an accomplice for the woman – as opposed to the complicity between man and jacks in Sonnet 128.

They had been talking about her playing.

^{ccxi} White *Autobiography* VIII:109. Beethoven was deemed 'not good' also for Lucy Honeychurch (cf. p.). That she should play Beethoven's opus 111 somewhat strains realism, but the very fact that, 80 years after its creation, this sonata had found its way into a novel is significant.

^{ccxli} In *Pygmalion* the piano is mute but essential prop in Professor Higgins' laboratory, supporting 'a dessert dish heaped with fruit and sweets, mostly chocolates' (Shaw *Pygmalion* II:684) which Higgins, that 'very impetuous baby' (II:685) snatches in critical or happy moments.

*'I knew,' she said, it was bad in places.
'I don't care whether it's bad or good. It's you.
The only part of you that can get out.'*
MAY SINCLAIR

*I love this instrument; it speaks; it thinks! nay, I could kiss it. Look!
Jealous? Three things love I, half killingly:
Thee lastly; and this, next; and myself first.
'HELEN' (JAMES BAILEY)*

The male listener's is no longer the predominant perspective, and no longer the predominant thing in the heroine's mind where we have access to it. A poem by Theodore Wratishlaw which does feature a male speaker nevertheless has a great humility:

Your delicate fingers on the keyboard make
The riotous notes beat swift as driving rain
But I who lack all things that else might move
Your inmost eyes to read my longing heart –
I can but fill a sonnet with my love!⁹⁴³

The great European form of the Sonnet, the male voice, is inferior to a Schumann piece, to a still wordless, but, at least symbolically, accepted 'speech act'. Such loving and respectful listeners now come to the fore.

Music becomes in fact a frequent metaphor for female (and occasionally male) self-expression and independence,⁹⁴⁴ and the emotional comfort which Victorian treatises commended as a bonus of musical skill finally enters fiction, and not only for some desperate or melancholy strumming, but in the guise of almost professionally skilled players like Mrs. Manderson in *Trent's Last Case* ('I have played a great deal ever since I can remember. It has been a great comfort to me')⁹⁴⁵ or Lady May Davenant in William Barry's novel *The New Antigone*, waiting for her fiancé to recover from brain fever,

from day to day, without hope, letting the hours creep on, and finding existence like sand in the mouth. She lived a proud solitary life, making the most of her music as the channel of emotions she must otherwise conceal, and conscious every day that she was walking in a vain shadow.⁹⁴⁶

Also in Louise Creed's *The Music Makers* a woman flees to the piano, deeply depressed after discovering her husband's love for a younger woman:

[Opening] the thick pale book with 'Chopin' in big black letters on its cover, she turned over the pages till she came to the wonderful First Ballade. She played, and gradually

all the storm and stress began to die down. The hatred fled from the atmosphere.^{ccxlii}

The exact mention of the piece is typical of such scenes. The narrators themselves take the woman's music more seriously, specifying the composer and frequently the piece, instead of positing a 'composition by Handel' (who never wrote anything for the pianoforte), or 'concertos' (i.e. showy solo pieces) by third-raters like Kalkbrenner. Although the howlers that constitute what H. Sutherland Edwards described as 'The Literary Maltreatment of Music' are still to be found even in books by near-professionals like Catherine Carswell, descriptions tend to be apt and recognizably relating to firsthand experience:

To keep myself from crying I practised frantically at the Brahms Intermezzo in G minor. With what a soaring, generous melody it opens! It set my grieving spirit free and gave my soul great pinions. But what a state my hands are in with want of practice! To-day they are aching badly after half an hour of Czerny.⁹⁴⁷

Brahms left no G minor Intermezzo; what is meant was probably the G minor Rhapsody op. 79,2, a 'hit' of medium difficulty, which opens indeed with a 'soaring' theme and a dramatic flying hand-cross, and the classical finger technique of Czerny's is very apt to fatigue untrained muscles. The piano's capability to console its (woman) players is finally 'made flesh' in this and other texts.

Certain scenes hint at an emotional depth which the player is unable to express more explicitly *to a listener*. In Joseph Conrad's 'Freya of the Seven Isles' it is a particular *situation* that forbids a verbal declaration of vehement feelings. Eighteen-year-old Freya Nelson lives on a South Sea island with her retired sailor father and an 'upright grand' from which her scales resound to passing ships.⁹⁴⁸ When Freya is visited by an unwelcome suitor, she virtually plays him off the island.

Freya, aware that he had stopped just behind her, went on playing without turning her head. She played with spirit, brilliantly, a fierce piece of music, but when his voice reached her she went cold all over. '... I say, won't you leave off this confounded playing?' ... She shook her head negatively, and in desperation put on the loud pedal, but she could not make the sound of the piano cover his raised voice. [195] 'You are fit for a prince.' Freya did not turn her head. Her face went stiff with horror and indignation. ... It was not in her character to jump up and run away. ... It was best to ignore – to ignore. She went on paying loudly and correctly, as though she were alone, as if Heemskirk did not exist. ... 'Stop it, I say, or I will lift you off that stool!' Standing behind her, he devoured her with his eyes, from the golden crown of her rigidly motionless head to the heels of her shoes, the line of her shapely shoulders, the curves of her fine figure swaying a little before the keyboard.⁹⁴⁹

^{ccxlii} Creed *Music Makers* 115 q. Gillett 2000b:5. Gillett notes that the highly virtuosic G minor Ballade was available in a simplified edition.

Once again, the sex appeal is visual and the music soon only an annoyance. Conrad uses this traditional topos here to make Heemskirk more despicable. He is reduced to grabbing Freya's waist, whereupon she smacks him and takes revenge when he leaves the next day:

He could not be allowed to sneak off scot free. Never – never! She was excited, she tingled all over, she had tasted blood! ... But to run to the front rail and shout after him would have been childish, crude – undignified. ... Then how? She frowned, discovered it, dashed at the piano, which had stood open all night, and made the rosewood monster growl savagely in an irritated bass. She struck chords as if firing shots after [him ...] and then she pursued him with the [206] same thing she had played the evening before – a modern, fierce piece of love music She accentuated its rhythm with triumphant malice 'What's become of the lieutenant?' [her father] shouted. ... She shook her head slightly and went on playing louder than before.⁹⁵⁰

When she hears the last whistle of Heemskirk's departing boat, Freya stops, 'feeling a sudden discontent, a nervous lassitude, as though she had passed through some exhausting crisis.'⁹⁵¹ Heemskirk's revenge is to ruin Freya's fiancé, which drives him into madness and Freya to an early death of 'anaemia', a belated instance of punishment for excessive musicality.

A rather less dramatic but emotionally similar situation occurs in the pious family saga *The Smiths of Surbiton*. Young Enid Smith is quite an imperious young lady, a pianist of the new dignified sort:

taller than her husband by some two or three inches, carried herself well, knew both how to buy and how to wear clothes, had studied the piano at the Royal College of Music, sang a little, and regarded her mother with a dutiful toleration.⁹⁵²

When her husband angrily goes for a walk after their first tiff, Enid employs the same means as Freya, and is perfectly understood:

Enid, hearing the front door close, rushed across to the piano and began to play, with the loud pedal down, the gayest piece she knew. Ralph, although fully recognizing the futility of the proceeding, bit savagely on the stem of his pipe. There was no [26] door to slam, unfortunately, but he did the best he could with the front gates.⁹⁵³

The ethnomusicological questions 'Is dissent acted out through performance? Do women seek to change the balance of power in their communities and accomplish or define these changes through performance?'⁹⁵⁴ are certainly pertinent for these fictional scenes.^{ccxliii}

^{ccxliii} In such scenes, Lucy Green's general claim that female instrumentalists are by definition in particular control of their activity becomes (partly) true for the first time: '[W]omen instrumentalists ... tend to be less "feminine" than women singers in that they appear less locked into the vicissitudes of their bodies, less alienated from technology, less sexually available [54...] The display [the instrumentalist] enacts, rather than that of a playful or alluring singing bird, is that of a more controlled and rational being who appears capable of using technology to take control over a situation.' (Green 1997:53).

Otherwise precarious couples are also seen at the piano, but usually without the earlier disapproval of the narrator who instead often endorses the meetings of soul-mates who 'shouldn't' (that is what counts now) be married to their lawful spouses. Such scenes may nevertheless be overshadowed by tragedy, as in the case of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead. He is playing a comforting hymn in the 'empty schoolroom' when Sue comes up:

'Don't stop,' said Sue. 'I like it. I learnt it before I left Melchester. ...' 'I can't strum before you! Play it for me.' 'O well – I don't mind.' Sue sat down, and her rendering of the piece, though not remarkable, seemed divine as compared with his own. She, like him, was evidently touched – to her own surprise – by the recalled air; and when she had finished, and he moved his hand towards hers, it met his own half-way. ... 'Sue, I sometimes think you are a flirt,' said he abruptly. There was a momentary pause ... 'I can't talk to you any longer, Jude! ... It is getting too dark to stay together like this, after playing morbid Good Friday tunes that make [222] one feel what one shouldn't! ... We mustn't sit and talk in this way any more.'⁹⁵⁵

Other scenes are much lighter. In Ada Levenson's *The Little Ottleys*, such a scene constitutes the follow-up to the first meeting of Edith Ottley, married to an unutterably fatuous man, and Aylmer Ross, whom she will marry in the end,

Edith was standing by the piano in her condensed white drawing-room, trying over a song, which she was accompanying with one hand ... 'Oh, I'm glad I'm at home,' she said, in a gentle way that put him at his ease, and yet at an immense distance. 'I felt in the mood to stop at home and play the piano today.' ... 'You were playing something when I came in. I wish you'd play it to me over again.' Nine women out of ten would have refused, saying they knew nothing of music, or that they were out of practice, or that they never played except for their own amusement, or something of the kind; especially if they took no pride whatever in that accomplishment. But Edith went back to the piano at once, and went on trying over the song that she didn't know, without making any excuse for the faltering notes.⁹⁵⁶

The simplicity and straightforward compliance with requests for music that Edith Ottley and Sue Bridehead display are what every Regency or Victorian educationalist would have approved of – except that they are not soothing a brother or edifying a father, but impressing the man who will make them break their marriage vows.^{ccxliiv}

In Henry James' short story 'Beast in the Jungle', the failure of piano companionship is

^{ccxliiv} The more serious relationship between Lucia and Keith Rickman begins with a similarly graceful compliance. Shyly asked if she would play for him one day, she simply says: 'Now, if you like.' and the narrator comments: 'Why not? If she had enjoyed his music [i.e. poetry], had he not a sight to enjoy hers?' She plays the *Appassionata*. 'The space around the lamp grew dim to him; she had gathered into herself all the whiteness of the flame; the music was a part of her radiance, it was the singing of her pulses, the rhythm of her breath. When she had stopped playing he rose and held out his hand to say good-night. "Thank you. I don't think so badly of my life now. You've given me one perfect moment."' (Sinclair *Divine Fire* 155). Lucia has, with her 'formidable innocence' (157) no idea (as yet) of his love for her.

characteristic for the emotional and moral blindness to love which John Marcher perceives as 'selfishness' and is at pains to 'repair'

by inviting his friend to accompany him to the opera. His point was made, he thought, by his not eternally insisting with her on himself; made for instance, at such hours, when it befell that, her piano at hand and each of them familiar with it, they went [82] over passages of the opera together.⁹⁵⁷

In Joyce's *Dubliners* story 'A Painful Case', a bank clerk drives a (married) woman to suicide because he ends their platonic friendship after she presses his hand too hard. He likes Mozart and plays himself ('His evenings were spent either before his landlady's piano or roaming about the outskirts of the city'⁹⁵⁸), but it is an erotic or sentimental stimulant only for her: 'Many times she allowed the dark to fall upon them, refraining from lighting the lamp. The dark discreet room, their isolation, the music that still vibrated in their ears united them.'⁹⁵⁹

The shallow, unlikeable heroine of May Sinclair's first novel *Audrey Craven* makes a pianistic attempt at seduction that is also an act of self-defence, but both fail. Her explorer fiancé (one of three altogether, before her marriage to a 'nonentity') proposes to take her with him to Canada.

She sat silent and passive. The situation had a charm which she was powerless to break. In order to assert herself against the intolerable fascination she rose hastily and crossed the room to where her piano stood open in the corner. She played loud and long, – wild Polish music [in all probability Chopin], alive with the beating pulses of love and frenzy and despair. It would have roused another man to sublime enthusiasm or delirious rapture. It sent Hardy to sleep.⁹⁶⁰

As Audrey continues to play, the reader is treated to an insight into her aggressive fantasies at her failure:

[S]he dreamed that he stood with her on the midst of the burning prairie, they two on a little ring of charred black earth. ... As he turned to her she thrust him from her into the sea of fire, crying, 'It's perfectly fair, Vincent, for you dragged me here against my will!' He woke with a snort as the music suddenly ceased. It was midnight. He had to start from home early next morning, and if he delayed longer he would lose the last train out.⁹⁶¹

Audrey's music fails because she is too outer-directed. Suzanne Raitt comments:

[L]ike Wilde's 'sphinx without a secret', Audrey is revealed as having no inner life, doomed to a life of performance, to ... 'the feminine masquerade': 'the feminine creature artless in perpetual artifice, for ever revealing herself in a succession of disguises.'⁹⁶²

Henry James describes how a painter doing illustrations for society novels poses a love scene.

The man,

drawing up a chair to Artemisia's piano-stool, says extraordinary things to her while she ostensibly fingers out a difficult piece of music. I had done Miss Churm [my versatile cockney model] at the piano before – it was an attitude in which she knew how to take on an absolutely poetic grace. ... it was a charming picture of blended youth and murmured love, which I had only to catch and keep.⁹⁶³

The predominance of visual attraction is old, but is deployed more frankly and sensually. Judith Rowbotham has noted that the term 'Angel in the House' was substituted by the term 'Home Goddess' in the post-1880 period, 'as being more suited to a later development in the feminine stereotype'⁹⁶⁴ – of a more heathen and sensual attraction, with a love not subservient to the male God Almighty.

2.2. From Angel to Goddess (and Medea)

Jones Brown's 'The Heroine' takes account of such stereotypes which now exclude domestic attractions. 'Ah, we all know very well that a heroine ought to be charming; / She whom the hero loves ought to be dainty and fair.'⁹⁶⁵ Luscious details are provided:

Chiefly, whoever she be, she is bound to have beautiful shoulders,
Beautiful hands and arms, white as the virginal snow;
Fingers of roseate tint, that dazzle the ravish'd beholders
Watching them over the keys moving adroitly a-row.⁹⁶⁶

Mark Gurdon, later the husband of a 'New Woman' has mainly visual memories of his first falling in love with 'a picture, an etching of the type – a silver-point'⁹⁶⁷:

He had sat in the little Hammersmith drawing-room and *watched* Margaret's fine *flower-like* hands moving over the *yellow* keyboard of the old sweet Broadwood, and his cold nature had warmed and warmed as he *looked*. ... Or he had *seen* her singing. Margaret singing was a *picture for the gods* [all italics mine].⁹⁶⁸

Although Margaret is a model of a Victorian lady, this heathen revelling in her aspect belongs to the new sensuality that now colours the sexist stereotypes in piano scenes.^{ccxlv} The enigmatic Irene in *Forsythe Saga*, for instance, is as little shown from inside as an Elizabethan temptress or a Regency caricature: her feelings are only to be guessed at. This essentially

^{ccxlv} The piano could also be at the service of the new sensuality as a piece of furniture: 'Placed near a bay window, [the piano] shuts in the cosiest lover's nest imaginable. ... Soft-cushioned window seats that have room for just two – intuitive seats they may be called – are hidden thus away completely from the cold, cruel world. ... Or the back of the piano may be hung with a soft shade of yellow, brocaded with dull green leaves and flowers. Against it a little tea-table can be placed, with its dainty belongings, and a low chair beside it. (*Musical Times* February 1893:83).

Victorian muteness now also signifies unavailability, a conscious refusal to share or explain emotions which exasperates her husband Soames, who, 'no musician, had regarded [her playing at a musical tea] as an unmitigated bore.'⁹⁶⁹ When their marriage is over, he remembers his first night out during their marriage:

With what eagerness he had hurried back; and, entering softly as a cat, had heard her playing. Opening the drawing-room, he had stood watching the expression on her face, different from any he knew, so much more open, so much more confiding, as though to her music she was giving a heart he had never seen. And he remembered how she stopped and looked round, how her face changed back to that which he did know, and what an icy shiver had gone through him.⁹⁷⁰

This scene is re-enacted years later when Soames goes to ask Irene for a divorce. His materialist eye notices that her new piano is made of satinwood, but his wife remains bafflingly opaque to him:

She had risen and stood recoiled against it; her hand, placed on the keys as if groping for support, had struck a sudden discord, held for a moment, and released. The light from the shaded pianocandle fell on her neck, leaving her face rather in shadow. ... 'Yes, it's a queer visit. I hope you're well.' 'Thank you. Will you sit down?' She had moved away from the piano, and gone over to a window-seat. ... Soames moved towards the piano and back to the hearth, to and fro, as he had been wont in the old days in their drawing-room when his feelings were too much for him.⁹⁷¹

In 1926, Elizabeth Drew commented with annoyance on such 'typical Galsworthy women', who are wonderfully dressed even when alone,

and spend perfumed passionate exist- [168] ences playing the piano, till the lover appears, bringing some fate which can never be possibly be settled by a straightforward divorce, and plunging them both forthwith into death or despair or disappearance.⁹⁷²

In fact, the pointless magic of Irene's music works even when the listener is her son, in love with Soames' daughter Fleur whom he cannot marry because of Irene's past:

After dinner his mother played; she seemed to play all the things he liked best, and he sat with one knee clasped, and his hair standing up where his fingers had run through it. He gazed at his mother while she played, but he saw Fleur ... – in his mother's hands, slim and white on the keys, in the profile of her face and her powdery hair; and down the long room in the open window where the May night walked outside.⁹⁷³

Also in Edith Somerville's *The Real Charlotte*, piano music attracts a male listener not to the player but vicariously to a different woman, this time present in the room. A diffuse general sensuality which is not aimed at a particular listener is described through the perceptions of young Francie Fitzpatrick (cf. note cclxxxi p.215):

Pamela was at the piano, looking a long way off in the dim pink light of the shaded room, and was playing such strange music as Francie had never heard before, and secretly hoped never to hear again. She had always believed herself to be extremely fond of music, and was wont to feel very sentimental [when listening] to the band playing [62] 'Dorothy' or 'The Last Chord', in the dark of the summer evening, but these minor murmurings ... were to her merely exercises of varying difficulty and ugliness, in which Miss Dysart never seemed to get the chords quite right.⁹⁷⁴

During this performance Pamela's brother Christopher discovers his interest in Francie, while they are looking at photographs together:

Perhaps it was the influence of the half-civilised northern music that Pamela was playing, with its blood-stirring freshness, like the whistling wind of dawn, that woke some slumbering part of him to a sense of her charm and youth. But Pamela guessed nothing of what Grieg's 'Peer Gynt' was doing for her brother.⁹⁷⁵

This is a far cry from the prodigal son being wooed back home by a sister's playing of an evening hymn in Sarah Ellis (cf. p. 149).^{ccxlvii}

Music is not only vaguely and infuriatingly sensual and incomprehensible to the uninitiated or insensitive; it is also viewed by some as more dangerous than before. Some very successful works of fiction associate music with evil, which suggests 'that fear of music's sensuality and affective power was deeply ingrained – and that [the] interest in music and musicians ... had evolved into a morbid fascination'.⁹⁷⁶ This fascination is possible because moral fears are no longer important, just as pious vindications of music's celestial task and origin have fallen silent. Even a society lady's flippant comment in *Dorian Grey* makes the change from moral condemnation to fascinated horror perceptible:

'I adore [music], but I am afraid of it. It makes me too romantic. I have simply worshipped pianists – two at a time, sometimes, Harry tells me. I don't know what it is about them. Perhaps it is that they are foreigners. They all are, aren't they? It is so clever of them, and such a compliment to art. Makes it quite cosmopolitan, doesn't it?'⁹⁷⁷

More serious is the ambiguous evil that pervades 'The Turn of the Screw', where precarious little Miles and Flora envelop their worried governess 'in a cloud of music and love and success and private theatricals. ...The schoolroom piano broke into all gruesome fancies'.⁹⁷⁸ Miles uses his good-boy piano-playing to send the governess into a trance which affords his

^{ccxlvii} Another scene of a sister playing for a brother, in Robert Gissing's *New Grub Street*, is equally far from the unproblematically redemptive family fireside: 'She sat down at the piano, whilst her brother lay on the sofa, his hands clasped beneath his head. Dora did not play badly, but an absent-mindedness which was commonly observable in her had its effect upon the music. She at length broke off idly in the middle of a passage, and began to linger on careless chords. Then, without turning her head, she asked: [30] "Were you serious in what you said about writing story-books?"' (Gissing *New Grub Street* III:29).

sister yet another opportunity to escape and meet the evil ghosts that may or may not be lurking around the house.

He had never at any rate been such a little gentleman as when ... he came round to me and asked if I shouldn't like him for half an hour to play to me. David playing to Saul could not have shown a finer sense of the occasion.⁹⁷⁹

When the governess recognizes that she has been tricked, the old concept of the double moral identity of music is evoked:

'The trick's played,' I went on; 'they've successfully worked their plan. He found the most divine little plan to keep me quiet while she went off.' "'Divine?'" Mrs. Grose bewilderedly echoed. 'Infernal, then!' I almost cheerfully rejoined.⁹⁸⁰

The terms 'infernal' and 'divine' are religious in origin but would never have been used so bluntly in earlier literature, which worried about sensuality but not demons or madness.

In Stanley Makower's *Mirror of Music*, a hereditary musical curse kills a girl composer at 24. After a hugely successful performance of her 'opera' (scored for wordless choir and orchestra), madness engulfs her, prompted by her father's diary notes that relate how *his* mother died in a fit of musical insanity. A poem about a Chopin nocturne introduces this narrative of her first symptoms: 'She can never leave her music, and we all love it so much that we do not help to keep her from it.'⁹⁸¹ Sometimes she is delirious, and starts sleepwalking:

The moonlight poured in. She sat at the piano playing exquisitely, whilst her eyes stared in a dull senseless way. When she saw them she began to sing, and her voice was soft and low. She sang the melody of 'Aveu' whilst she played with her delicate sensitive touch. Suddenly she burst into loud hysterical laughter, and then fainted away.⁹⁸²

At her death after long insanity, the woman leaves crumpled note saying simply 'Aveu'. The granddaughter is deeply impressed, and her own diary from then on chronicles decline: 'Now I have told it all. ... Perhaps I am mad already. No rest all night. I was haunted by the thing that I had read. I can see the figure at the piano in the moonlight.'⁹⁸³ Such explicit anxiety about music is less moralistic than psychological (as in Ernest Newman's assertion that the 'musical temperament probably borders more closely than any other on some form of dementia',)⁹⁸⁴ but also irrationally demonic. Shaw's mockery of 'the Religion of the Pianoforte' is typical for the new significant contrast of 'divine' versus 'demonic', while the Victorian dichotomy is maybe best expressed as 'godly' versus 'sinful'.

Representations of the dangerous fascination of musical women evolve in an

analogous way. Lady May, the 'New Antigone', seems at first uncongenial to her future husband because she is able to furnish the name of an obscure saint in a learned argument: 'He disliked learned women; they seemed to him unfeminine, the most beautiful thing in the world spoilt.'⁹⁸⁵ When it turns out that she was above all trying to please her father, he is relieved to think that 'she is not a church dictionary after all; she is only an affectionate daughter'⁹⁸⁶ and allows her beauty to grow on him. They converse at a moonlit window:

'Oh,' said Lady May, looking pleased, 'have you those feelings when you hear music? Do you translate it into figures of people moving, scenery, a sense that you are journeying on and on into unknown lands? I am constantly doing so.' 'And I, too.'⁹⁸⁷

When they have agreed to liken the present tempestuous weather to a Chopin piece, he asks her to play, and the simplicity of a true soul-mate is in her straightforward answer: 'Yes, I play ... and there are many of Chopin's works in the drawing-room.'⁹⁸⁸ However, Lady May turns the melancholy classic into an impressive, even threatening improvisation.

[N]ow proudly defiant, now self-accusing and full of regret, now fainting to utter weariness, [a human voice] in some way repeated and intensified the passionate throbbings of Chopin's nocturne. ... The words were foreign ...; the accents of grief were not Lady May ... had forgotten his existence it seemed [... 32]. What sort of temperament was it that broke loose in such perilous fashion? A Medea! ... And yet how tender had some passages of the improvisation sounded! He was at a loss; he could not tell what to think, except that in this high-born, delicately-nurtured lady there were unknown possibilities of good and evil.⁹⁸⁹

Returning to the company, Lady May again becomes a dutiful daughter, and Glanville has 'an eerie feeling, as if he had seen her in the form of panther or tigress vanishing in the twilight.'⁹⁹⁰ That a work by Chopin, 'the classical signifier of femininity',^{ccxlvii} performed by 'only an affectionate daughter', can call up such violent associations that are reminiscent of the worst Victorian villainesses, is typical of partly-liberated Edwardian music-and-gender ethics. Lady May's performance is given an impressive, empowering weight; on the other hand, she will dwindle into a wife in classical narrative closure. The demonic features of music are often only a superficial titillation,^{ccxlviii} and do not inspire the true fear that would, twenty years before, inevitably have sent any such a character to the narrative closure of death.

^{ccxlvii} I am indebted for this phrase to Dr. Thomas Cooper, Open University. Cf. also James Huneker's article 'Eternal Feminine'. Other examples are 'Chopin's heart-complaint' in Ernest Dowden's 'An Interior' and numerous ekphrastic poems that 're-create' Chopin's Nocturnes and Polonaises.

^{ccxlviii} Cf. the picturesque demonic traits which Martin Challoner's teacher, Karl Rusoff (cf. p. 211f.), acquires in his pupil's overheated imagination: 'The cheerful flickering blaze shining through his thin long hands made the fingers look transparent, as if they were luminous and lit with a red light from within.' (Benson *Challoners* X:215).

2.3. Stereotypes of masculinity revisited

Edmund Fellowes notes that in 1854 Sir Frederick Ouseley was told by his Dean that it would be 'utterly derogatory for a man in his social position' to consider acquiring an Mus. Bac. Degree, and continues:

Times have changed. I have heard a Vice-Chancellor and an ex-Vice-Chancellor, both of them Heads of Houses, perform a duet for two pianofortes at a meeting of the Oxford University Music club, ... early in 1914.⁹⁹¹

As early as 1875, classified ads in the *Musical Times* offered 'Gentlemanly Occupation' in the musical field, looking, for example, for an 'efficient performer, and one of gentlemanly manners and address'. It was still necessary to specify that what was wanted was 'strictly a Gentleman',⁹⁹² but the two are no longer mutually exclusive. Norman Gale's poem 'The Old Piano' (published in 1912) is a plea to save an old instrument from the attic because 'it joins of infancy / And age the sleep-defended poles';⁹⁹³ to schoolchildren it '[h]as stood for misery and fears';⁹⁹⁴ the young girl confides the love she has felt at the instrument ('Twas in a summerhouse of sound / She trembled to the touch of bliss'⁹⁹⁵) first to the piano and *then* to her mother; the bride fantasizes '[a] son or daughter on the notes',⁹⁹⁶ the young mother plays her infants to sleep, and '[t]he lad of twenty made the tramp / Of regiments pass along the keys'.⁹⁹⁷ The piano is now not only for all ages, but for all genders.

While male music-making is often described at more length and with narratorial approval, slightly more benevolent stereotypes linger on exactly as they do for women; reservations about the masculinity, morality or healthiness of musical performance continue to be felt in fiction. Philip Carey in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* refuses to be suspected of such abilities at a 'social evening' of his office: 'I'm afraid I don't [play]. I have no parlour tricks.'⁹⁹⁸ Gerald Du Maurier's Svengali in *Trilby* is as sinister^{ccxlix} as a musician could be, though with a demonic intensity no Victorian musical villain could attain, while Little Billee in the same novel represents the effeminacy stereotype:

Little Billee was made to sit down to the piano and sing ['Ben Bolt']. He sang it very nicely with his pleasant little throaty English barytone. It was solely in order that Little Billee should have [43] opportunities of practising this graceful accomplishment of his, for his own and his friends' delectation, that the piano had been sent over from London, at great cost to Taffy and the Laird. It had belonged to Taffy's mother who was dead.⁹⁹⁹

^{ccxlix} The demonic traits of music, as described above, are not gender-specific, although they stem, of course, from the same underlying mistrust of music.

Billee's name and physique,¹⁰⁰⁰ the narrative passive voice, the piano's female origin, terms like 'graceful accomplishment', adjectives like 'little', 'nice' and 'pleasant' and the fact that the piano is paid for by other men completely overdetermine Little Billee's femininity.

The Duke in Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* sports a highly feminized list of accomplishments. Apart from being impossibly beautiful, he is 'fluent in all modern languages, had a very real talent in water-colour, and was accounted, by those who had had the privilege of hearing him, the best amateur pianist on this side of the Tweed'.¹⁰⁰¹ The fact that he always plays 'without notes',¹⁰⁰² and the medium-like passivity with which he follows his intuition on the evening before his suicide are further female traits: 'He had not considered what he would play to-night. Nor, maybe, was he conscious now of choosing. His fingers caressed the keyboard vaguely; and anon this ivory had voice and language.'^{cc1}

A new departure, to be felt also in the descriptions of Little Billee and the Duke, is the fact that effeminacy is still associated with music, but no longer so strongly condemned. Wilfrid Owen, musing about taking music up professionally, worried moderately:

Music? If only I dare say Yes! I certainly believe I could make a better musician than many who profess to be, and are accepted as such. ... I love Music ... with such strength that I have to conceal the passion, for fear it be thought weakness.¹⁰⁰³

The afterthought 'Failing Music, is it Pictures that I hanker to do?' makes Owen's reflections seem more like a general yearning for 'art'. His musical taste ran to popular middlebrow classics such as Rubinstein's 'Melody in F' or Sinding's 'Rustle of Spring'.¹⁰⁰⁴

*A gentleman accustomed to assuage
His passion at the piano with a song
While caring little if the notes are wrong.*
THEODORE WRATISLAW

Robert Louis Stevenson at 36 had more self-irony for 'Himself at the Piano' and 'His' unglamorous repertoire:

I am now gay, free and obnoxious. Je ne vis que pour le piano; on the which I labour like an idiot as I am. You should hear me labouring away at Martini's celebrated,

^{cc1} Beerbohm *Zuleika* IX:147. Being a superior artist himself, the Duke is unimpressed when his landlady's daughter puts her best educational foot forward: 'I utilise all my spare moments. I've read twenty-seven of the Hundred Best Books. I collect ferns. I play the piano, whenever –' She broke off, for she remembered that her music was always interrupted by the ringing of the Duke's bell and a polite request that it should cease. 'I am glad to hear of these accomplishments. They do you great credit, I am sure. But – well, I do not quite see why you enumerate them just now.' (XV:257).

beroomed [= berühmt] Gavotte or Boccherini's beroomed famous minuet.¹⁰⁰⁵

Stevenson ironizes these piano transcriptions of eighteenth-century 'hit' tunes in a little poem:

Where is now the Père Martini?
 Where is Bumptious Boccherini?
 Where are Hertz and Crotch and Batch?^{ccli}
 Safe in bed in Colney Hatch?¹⁰⁰⁶

Such irony directed at an inept *male* performer is new, as is the tacit understanding that the fruit of such labours would be an absolutely private enjoyment.

Literature recurrently derides men for the sort of inadequate musicianship which does neither attempt nor attain performance for others. Again, a moral reproach (weakness or evilness as typical musicians' faults) turns into an irony for lack of style or grace. The *Boy's Own Paper* featured a story in June 1893 in which a musically inclined student is derided as 'the greenest fresher of the year'.¹⁰⁰⁷ Phillotson in *Jude the Obscure* is a pianistic failure:

[T]he only cumbersome article possessed by the master, in addition to the packing-case of books, was a cottage piano that he had bought at an auction during the year in which he thought of learning instrumental music. But the enthusiasm having waned he had never acquired any skill in playing, and the purchased article had been a perpetual trouble to him ever since.¹⁰⁰⁸

A lack of focused effort is criticized in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*: the idle Henry Otway persists] 'in spite of the disapproval of uncles and aunts, in practising both violin and piano, with the result that he could not perform professionally upon either.'¹⁰⁰⁹ In Meredith's *One of Our Conquerors*, a highly accomplished amateur performer on the flute is gently ridiculed, especially in confrontation with the excellent pianist Nesta:

[Music] was the saving of poor Dudley. It distinguished him in the group of the noble Evangelical Cantor Family; and it gave him a subject of assured discourse in company; and oddly, it contributed to his comelier air. Flute in hand, his mouth at the blow-stop was relieved of its pained up-draw by the form for puffing; he preserved a gentlemanly high figure in his exercises on the instrument ... – an Apollo brilliancy in energetic pursuit of the nymph of sweet sound.¹⁰¹⁰

The elusiveness of this nymph is sometimes defended by the inept male pianists by gestures of distancing themselves from centuries of girls sweating over the acquisition of accomplishments.

Zachary Menaida in Sabine Baring-Gould's Devon novel *Roar of the Sea* is a loveable

^{ccli} i.e. 'Bach' in mocking phonetic transcription of an inadequate English pronunciation.

old maid of a man, educated to read law, but precariously maintaining himself as a taxidermist, prone to drink, 'not clever' and not even good at the music he so passionately loves.

[B]ecause ... urged, he had refused to qualify himself to play decently on pianoforte, violin, or flute, till his fingers had stiffened, whereupon he set to work zealously to practise, when it was no longer possible for him to acquire even tolerable proficiency.¹⁰¹¹

These defects are revealed when his young ward finds him late at night attempting a Beethoven sonata quite beyond his reach:

Whenever he made a false note he uttered a little grunt and screwed up his eyes, endeavoured to play the bar again, and perhaps accomplish it only to break down in the next. ... 'Bless me! how badly they [81] do print music now-a-days. Who, without the miraculous powers of a prophet, could tell that B should be natural? Are you fond of music? ... Every one says he or she is fond of music I hate to hear those who call themselves musical strum on a piano. They can't feel; they only execute. ... I give not a thank-you for mere literal music-reading. You must play with the spirit and play with the understanding also, as you must read with the spirit and read with the understanding also.'¹⁰¹²

This is beautifully earnest, but also the excuse of a shambling eccentric. Algernon Moncrieff does this more elegantly, but is essentially in the same situation. When the curtain goes up for *The Importance of being Earnest* on a 'luxuriously and artistically furnished' room, the sound of a piano is overheard before he enters:

Algernon. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane? *Lane* [Servant]. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir. *Algernon.* I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately – anyone can play accurately – but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life. *Lane.* Yes, sir.¹⁰¹³

All these characters play for themselves, prefiguring the auto-erotic, largely tactile pleasure of the (male) twentieth-century amateur musician, who does not need to produce a highly adequate sound because recordings are readily available. Such (often homosexual) figures, as described by Roland Barthes in his essay 'Musica practica' are rare in fiction after the First World War.^{cclii} They are often homosexuals.^{ccliii}

Lord Henry Wotton first sees Dorian Gray seated at the piano going through Schumann's 'Waldszenen' ('perfectly charming'¹⁰¹⁴), and their following exchange features (in

^{cclii} The typical twentieth-century pianist-in-fiction is a professional male musician, whose striving to realize his potential for artistic, commercial and social success often constitutes the substance of the plot (cf. Sennett *An Evening of Brahms*, Conroy *Body and Soul*, Thomas Bernard *Der Untergeher* and many others).

^{ccliii} Cf. Kopelson 1996 for a discussion of queer and gender issues in Barthes' defence of amateur music-making.

the *Importance* style) the piano again:

'I am in Lady Agatha's black books at present,' answered Dorian, with a funny look of penitence. 'I promised to go to a club in Whitechapel with her last Tuesday, and I really forgot all about it. We were to have played a duet together – three duets, I believe. I don't know what she will say to me. I am far too frightened to call.' 'Oh, I will make your peace with my aunt. ... And ... The audience probably thought it was a duet. When Aunt Agatha sits down to the piano she makes quite enough noise for two people.'¹⁰¹⁵

In the penultimate chapter, Dorian and Lord Henry sit together on a warm summer evening, and Henry wonders about Dorian's invulnerability to vice. 'Let us have our coffee in the music room, Dorian. You must play Chopin to me. The man with whom my [162] wife ran away played Chopin to her.'^{ccliv} Dorian meanwhile lets his fingers 'stray' over the keys.¹⁰¹⁶ Wotton's ensuing great monologue about the soul is underlaid with Dorian's playing:

'No: we have given up our belief in the soul. Play me something. Play me a nocturne, Dorian, and, as you play, tell me, in a low voice, how you have kept your youth.'^{cclv} How lovely that thing you are playing is! I wonder did Chopin play it at Majorca, with the sea weeping round the villa, and the salt spray dashing against the panes? ... Don't stop. I want music to-night. It seems to me that you are the young Apollo, and that I am Marsyas listening to you.'^{cclvi}

When Forster's Maurice is staying in the country house of his friend and lover Clive Durham, they are delighted to find themselves secluded and furnished 'as like college' as Clive has been able to ensure. A piano is part of this: 'Except for meals we need never be in the other part of the house Jolly, eh? I've a piano ... '¹⁰¹⁷ Memories of this haunt a distressing visit that Maurice later pays to the newly married Clive:

The rain poured down with a monotony nothing could disturb. In the lulls of conversation its whisper entered the room, and towards the end of the evening there was a 'tap, tap' on the lid of the piano. 'The family ghost again,' said Mrs. Durham with a [158] bright smile.¹⁰¹⁸

Maurice's disappointment over Clive's rejection of their earlier shared experience coincides with the first appearance of the gamekeeper Alec Scudder who is to become Maurice's more faithful lover. After their first night together, Alec tells Maurice how he observed him when he

^{ccliv} Dorian Gray is fascinated by Wotton's 'low' and 'musical' voice (Wilde *Dorian* II:20). '[M]usic and that indefinable attraction that Dorian seemed to be able to exercise' also brings Dorian and Alan Campbell, who plays 'both the violin and the piano better than most amateurs' (XIV:129) together.

^{cclv} The effect of talking against one's own playing was also a hallmark of the gay entertainment icon Liberace (1919-1987).

^{cclvi} Similar moods pervade *The Critic as Artist*: 'And now let me play Chopin to you, or Dvorák? Shall I play you a fantasy by Dvorák? ... Ernest: ... No, Gilbert, don't play any more. Turn round and talk to me. Talk to me till the white-horned day comes into the room. There is something in your voice that is wonderful.' (Wilde 'Critic' 82).

helped to move the piano from under the leaking part of the ceiling,¹⁰¹⁹ and Forster noted during the writing that Alec

has to be developed from the masculine blur past which Maurice drives into Penge, through the croucher beside the piano and the rejecter of a tip and the haunter of shrubberies ... into the sharer who gives and takes love.¹⁰²⁰

Educated companionship *at* the piano, within society, has failed Maurice in Oxford as well as with Clive; the unconventional love he comes to share with Alec emerges from shrubberies and from under the piano, which is no longer an unequivocal gender signifier, but continues to stand for class.

E. F. Benson's *The Challoners* features an intense relationship between the piano student Martin Challoner and his German teacher: 'All this, the charm of which Karl Rusoff felt almost too keenly for his peace of mind, he knew to be extremely dangerous.'¹⁰²¹ His exclamation 'Oh Martin, you child' is what any lover could have said to his girl. At his *début* concert, Martin looks only to Karl, ignoring his own family^{cclvii} and his unmusical fiancée ('Ever since you played to us at Chartries she has been trying to learn the "Merry Peasant". ... She is not getting on very well, but art is long, is it not?'¹⁰²²). Martin's last delirium turns his teacher into a piano, and himself into the volatile notes: 'Karl [321] is the loud pedal, you see, and the music stool, and I'm only the black notes.'¹⁰²³ The way in which death is meted out to an excessively musical female or feminized character is of course very traditional.

2.4. 'Real men' at the piano

What is new are musical male characters of conventional heterosexual attractiveness whose masculinity is not compromised by their musical sensitivity or prowess. The sprightly young clerk Mr. Bevis in *The Odd Women* is, however, still morally reprehensible. He uses his skill to seduce Monica Widdowson, a disappointed wife. At their first meeting, '[r]equested to make music for the company, he sang a gay little piece, which, to Monica at all events, seemed one of the most delightful things she had ever heard.'¹⁰²⁴ Then he becomes more direct:

Mr. Bevis came and took a place by her side. 'Thank you so very much,' she said, 'for that charming song. Is it published?' 'Oh dear, no!' He laughed and shook his thick hair about. 'It's one of two or three that I somehow struck out when I was studying in Germany, ages ago. You play, I hope?' Monica gave a sad negative. 'Oh, what does it matter? There are hosts of people who will always be overjoyed to play when you ask them.'¹⁰²⁵

^{cclvii} Martin's mother was – of course – Italian and is – of course – dead.

The connotations cannot be but negative; the relationship continues in a chapter titled 'The First Lie', beginning with the usual self-deception about ignoring 'cant' and 'ignoble prejudices'¹⁰²⁶ running through Monica's mind. They meet alone, and he plays her 'composition' that tells Monica 'of sadness and longing and the burden of a lonely heart. She thought it very [295] beautiful, very touching.'¹⁰²⁷ The narrator, however, describes the playing as 'rattle',¹⁰²⁸ discrediting the lovers musically and morally. Bad musical taste or lack of perception is as always a bad sign. When she cannot look him in the eyes afterwards for embarrassment, he fishes for a compliment and is able to carry his point:

'I made this [copy] specially for you, and – If you will forgive me – I have taken the liberty of dedicating it to you. Song-writers do that, you know. Of course it is altogether unworthy of your acceptance' – 'No – no – Indeed I am very grateful to you, Mr. Bevis. Do give it me – as you meant to.' 'You will have it?' he cried delightedly. 'Now for a triumphal march!' Whilst he played, with look corresponding to the exultant strain, Monica rose from her chair. She stood with eyes downcast and lips pressed together. When the last chord had sounded: 'Now I must say good-bye, Mr. Bevis. – I am so sorry your sisters haven't come.' [209] 'So am I – and yet I am not. I have enjoyed the happiest half hour of my life.' 'Will you give me the piece of music?' 'Let me roll it up. – There; it won't be very awkward to carry. – But of course I shall see you again before the end of July? You will come some other afternoon?'¹⁰²⁹

And so it goes on. But also far more admirable male characters can now play, illustrating the fact that 'permission' for such figures was given in 1895 with more justification than in 1862 when Charles Aidé proclaimed an end of prejudice against male musicianship (cf. p. 127): A tough servant of the Empire could now be comforted by a piano in a colonial outpost:

In the wearisome monotony of bush life, such a solace cannot easily be dispensed with nowadays. For an educated man to seat himself at the pianoforte is no longer thought effeminate, and a musical instrument renders life in lonely regions less insupportable than it otherwise would be.¹⁰³⁰

Tertius Ingpen in Arnold Bennett's *These Twain*, a keen amateur musician on several instruments, fascinates the more stolid Edwin and Hilda Lessways with his eccentricities – which are, however, not of the boyish, quaint or effeminate sort. He is, solidly, District Factory Inspector in the Five towns, but has lived in London. He prides himself on his (pleasant) outspokenness, rides a bicycle on which he brings scores along to social evenings of his own initiative, and 'remembers' after duet playing that he has eaten nothing all day: 'some of us are born mad'.¹⁰³¹ He proposes sight-reading 'the Mozart fiddle sonatas' with a proficient lady pianist,¹⁰³² courageously and enthusiastically plays piano duets with many wrong notes and

explains 'with genuine scientific unegotistic interest in himself, "but d'you know, I thoroughly enjoy playing the clarinet in a bad orchestra whenever I get the chance."¹⁰³³ Another man present shows 'by two words that he was an expert listener to duets',¹⁰³⁴ Edwin, having learnt to have 'a vague idea "where a player was" on a page',¹⁰³⁵ turns the pages and the performers are pleasantly excited by their success. The upshot is that regular musical evenings are planned and 'a new and promising friendship was in the making',¹⁰³⁶ but nobody is 'punished' for his music. That neutrally presented variety of musical experience is typical of the openness of the Edwardian music discourse; Bennett's world is so saturated with detail as to be almost ideologically opaque, without a palpable narratorial agenda behind musical scenes – a rare achievement unthinkable thirty years earlier.

The hero of the prototype of the modern detective novel, *Trent's Last Case*,^{cclviii} stumbles into declaring his love for the widowed Mrs. Manderson when moved by her masterly playing.

She played with a perfection of execution and feeling that moved him now as it had moved him before. 'You are a musician born,' he said quietly when she had finished, and the last tremor of the music had passed away. 'I knew that before I first heard you.' 'When did you first detect music in me?' [... 252]'I think I knew it the first time I saw you.' Then understanding of his own words came to him, and turned him rigid.¹⁰³⁷

This is no longer conditioned seduction by 'accomplishment' because the man knows too much about music. The musically knowledgeable and apt listener is a significant Edwardian novelty, as is the willing female performer devoid of coquettishness.^{cclix}

In May Sinclair's *The Helpmate*, we meet an ordinarily attractive man performing. As in Victorian literature, we see no husband and wife in musical interaction, but at least husband and wife reacting differently to a mutual friend's playing. Charlie Gorst is in love with Walter Majendie's invalid sister Edie. The Majendies' marriage is in danger because Anne Majendie has been refusing herself to her husband after his honeymoon confession of a pre-marital affair, and her unsympathetically drawn righteousness and chastity finally drive both Walter and Charlie from the house and into the arms of 'fallen' women. The reactions to Charlie's playing for Edie sharply define the three listeners' characters; from Edie's despairing joy to Anne who saw to it that the piano would accumulate dust:

^{cclviii} Chris Baldick calls Trent's artistic temperament an 'important feature of the nineteenth-century detective' (Baldick 'Introduction' to *Trent xi f.*), but it also points forward to tall, slim and devastatingly attractive detective figures like Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey and Paul Gallico's Alexander Hero (*Too Many Ghosts*).

^{cclix} '[W]hen he asked if she would delight him again with a favourite piece of his which he had heard her play at another house, she consented at once.' (Benson *Trent XIII:261*).

He rose joyously and went to the piano, removing the dust from the keys with his handkerchief. 'How will you have it? Sentimental and soporific? Or loud and strong?' 'Oh, loud and strong, please. Very strong and very loud.' 'Right you are. You shall have it hot and strong, and loud enough to wake the dead.' That was his rendering of Chopin's 'Grande Polonaise'.^{cclx} He let himself loose with it, with a rush, a vehemence, a diabolic brilliance and clamour. The quiet room shook with the sound he wrenched out of the little humble piano in the corner. And as Edith lay and listened, her spirit, too, triumphed, and was free, it rode gloriously on the storm of sound. ... This was the miracle that he alone could accomplish for her.¹⁰³⁸

To Anne downstairs it seems 'the most immoral music, the music of defiance and revolt', while her husband's face lights up 'responsive to the delight and challenge of the opening chord'. Anne meantime resolves 'that Mr. Gorst's music was never to be heard again in this house',¹⁰³⁹ and that continuing music provides an ironical comment to their arguing:

'If he dines here I must dine at the Eliotts!' Overhead Mr. Gorst burst into a dance measure, so hilarious that it seemed the very cry of his delight. 'As long as Edie will go on seeing him, he'll think it's all right.' Overhead Mr. Gorst's gay tune proclaimed that indeed he thought so. [Finally] the music ceased. The prodigal's footsteps were heard crossing the room and coming to a halt by Edith's couch. Majendie rose, placid and benignant. 'I think,' said he, 'it's time for you to go to bed.'¹⁰⁴⁰

George Bernard Shaw's one-act play (or 'variety turn' as he called it) *The Music-Cure* inverts most gender stereotypes. Lord Reginald Fitzambey, 'a fashionably dressed, rather pretty young man' refuses to have his depression soothed by music. The doctor is worried:

[W]hat would become of you without your turn for music? You have absolutely no capacity in any other direction; the day you give up vamping accompaniments and playing the latest ragtimes, you're a lost man socially.¹⁰⁴¹

His mother arranges for the 'female Paderewski', Strega Thundridge, to visit him anyway. He tries to stop her from playing and, wrestling, exclaims: 'Oh, I say, what lovely hands you've got!' Strega is insulted and 'hurls him to the carpet'¹⁰⁴² but finally decides to 'make a man'¹⁰⁴³ of him by playing Chopin's A flat Polonaise. They go through the famous octave passage four-handedly, and after she pushes him to the floor to continue the piece on her own, they discover that their dreams match. He says:

I am a poor little thing, Strega: but I could make a home for you I can play quite nicely after dinner. And I shouldn't mind at all being tyrannized over a little; in fact, I like it, It saves me the trouble of having to think what to do.¹⁰⁴⁴

^{cclx} Chopin's only official 'Grande Polonaise' is op. 22, which is, however, preceded by a quiet 'Andante spianato'. A more likely candidate is the polonaise op. 53 in A flat, an impressively fiery work which opens indeed with a loud single chord.

Meanwhile, Strega has always dreamt of

a timid little heart fluttering against mine, of a silky moustache to kiss my weary fingers when I return from a Titanic struggle with Tchaikovsky's Concerto in G major. But I should beat [the thing I love] to a jelly, and then cast myself in transports of remorse on its quivering frame and smother it with passionate kisses.¹⁰⁴⁵

Such inversion is in a distinctly Edwardian vein of humour, as is its effect of demonstrating how firmly the normative structure persists. A more substantially new aspect in 'The Music-Cure' is the fictionalisation of professionals whose voices begin to be heard and afford insight into traditional domestic practices from a new angle.

3. A new perspective on the drawing room

After *Charles Auchester* in 1853 musician novels started to abound,^{cclxi} and although the genre continues to be plagued by technical blunders,¹⁰⁴⁶ texts from the 1880s onwards are more realistic and more representative both of musicians' experiences and, where they describe them, of more general attitudes to music.^{cclxii} They are complemented by the newly popular genre of musicians' memoirs^{cclxiii} which seems to have been beloved especially by aspiring young lady pianists, if we can believe George Bernard Shaw:

Students of that curious disease, pianomania, which fills St James's Hall with young ladies every afternoon during the season and puts countless sums into the pockets of teaching virtuosos, will find such a treat in Bettina Walker's *My Musical Experiences* as they have not enjoyed since Miss Fay.^{cclxiv}

The Victorian double-bind ('do play, but do not play well') and the traditional notion of 'accomplishment' still influence, if not stop, the professional aspirations of such young women, as in the anecdote about Anton Rubinstein quietly advising a young hopeful: 'My dear young lady, get married.'¹⁰⁴⁷ Other girls were told to keep away from a professional development of their skill; when they tried to argue for music as 'service', that Victorian concept backfired on them, as in this editor's answer to a letter in *Our Mothers and*

^{cclxi} Binstock 1985 provides an extremely useful survey.

^{cclxii} Makower *Mirror of Music* (cf. p. 210 f.), Bottome *Life, The Interpreter* (cf. p. 225), Hobbes *Dream and the Business* (cf. p. 194) and Benson *Challoners* (cf. p. 197 and 217 and note ccl p. 212), which I all quote for other aspects, are musician's novels, artists' *Bildungsromane*, but not as exclusively concerned with that way of life – and hence not pertinent to this study – as are, for instance, Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest* or Phyllis Bottome's *Broken Music*.

^{cclxiii} Cf. Barnett *Musical Reminiscences*, Berger *Reminiscences*, Craven *Notes*, Grossmith *Society Clown*, Haweis *My Musical Life*, Kuhe *Recollections*, Midgley *Musical Memories*, Spark *Musical Memories*, Walker *My Musical Experiences*, Weatherly *Piano and Gown* and many others.

^{cclxiv} Shaw *Shaw's Music* II:207. The allusion is to the American pianist Amy Fay who studied, among others, with Franz Liszt and in 1880 published a widely-read memoir, *Music Study in Germany*.

Daughters of 1892:

Your work and your mission are [at home]. God can accept no service which is self-imposed while positive duties are neglected. I am sorry your father's tastes and yours do not agree about music; but you owe the cultivation of your talent to his money and should certainly humour his fancies.¹⁰⁴⁸

Sterndale Bennett's encouragement to Bettina Walker which is recorded in her memoir is significant: 'though you are not a public player, yet remember that I tell you you have not for all that missed your vocation'.¹⁰⁴⁹ Frederick James Crowest identified the 'one-sided bargain' that newly demanded true proficiency but still forbade professionalism:

Society [... 283] impose[s] upon Women a totally opposite *role* [to that of the 'great Listener'], and ...in many drawing-rooms they resolve into the 'sole performers.' ... [I]t becomes almost obligatory with every educated girl to shine musically in the drawing-room; yet those who would have her ambitious there, decline to countenance anything approaching what they term a 'public' (not a 'professional') appearance.¹⁰⁵⁰

Although Crowest maintains that women meet all the physical, intellectual and mental qualities 'to follow Music both as a study and an accomplishment',¹⁰⁵¹ most fictional and many factual narratives still pit musical ambition in some ways against marriage.

George Gissing's *The Whirlpool*, the story of a failed (and ultimately doomed) violinist, shows, with increasing disapproval, 'the progression from female ambition of a selfish rejection of wifely and motherly duties ... as inevitable'.¹⁰⁵² But musicianship *may* now prevail. Frank Frankfort Moore's *The Food of Love* ends with the marriage of 'cellist Maurice Neverne to a soprano – who does retire immediately after marriage, but only because her mother does not have the time to help out with domestic duties'.¹⁰⁵³ The couple's German mentor in fact prophesies at the end: 'You will come back, both of you. You cannot help it. You will come back to the lyric platform', and the novel concludes: 'Well, perhaps they will'.¹⁰⁵⁴ The experience of such professionals and technically and musically advanced amateurs is not *per se* pertinent to this study, since they document a non-domestic activity. It is important, however, for the new perspective on domestic music-making it provides.

Instead of the earlier narratorial suspicions and circumventions of both good and bad playing or the caricatures of lecherous music-masters, scathing anecdotes ridicule gushing or ignorantly patronizing hostesses and inept hopefuls as well as the particular brand of

ignorance of people who are guilty of bad taste^{cclxv} or falsely pretend – under the impulse of fashion^{cclxvi} – to musical interest.^{cclxvii} The pianist Francesco Berger reports his milkman's boasts about his daughter:

Selina is a *completionner* at the 'Universal Palace' for the Piano-prize ... There's three minutes allowed for each player to get through [the set piece], but my S'lina she can do it in two, that's why I know she'll get the prize.¹⁰⁵⁵

Wilhelm Kuhe, fed up with working hard for nothing at musical 'At Homes',^{cclxviii} played the same piece three times over and then asked the hostess which she preferred. She chooses the 'second piece': "'But ... not that I didn't appreciate the others, only the second one was sweetly melodious.'" I told her I thought her discrimination wonderful. And so it was.¹⁰⁵⁶ Other anecdotes describe a pianist's 'style' as being recommended as not loud enough to interfere with conversation¹⁰⁵⁷ etc.

In fiction, that perspective is mainly provided by music teachers who give a new lease of life to the Regency topos worked out in *The Wanderer*. In *The Food of Love*, numerous young ladies intensify their piano lessons from the local teacher because they ridiculously hope that a piece, drilled in in a few weeks, will captivate the rising star cellist Maurice Neverne. The only one not to grumble about the extra effort is, predictably, 'the plainest and most mature'¹⁰⁵⁸ girl, who is hopelessly practising 'The Maiden's Prayer' (cf. p. 207). Meanwhile, sympathetic neighbours reassure the anxious Mrs. Neverne about her son's musical inclinations: '[T]here was no reason to be despondent ..., all young men, were, roughly speaking, alike, and that the estimably quality of inconstancy was common to all'.¹⁰⁵⁹ A delightful passage ridicules the aspects of nationality and class that had participated in constructions of maleness for centuries:

^{cclxv} Wilfrid Owen, himself not a first-rate pianist, enumerates twenty-one things he prays to be 'preserved from', among them 'the player who in the same chord strikes the bass before the treble'. (Owen *Letters* 557, 09-06-1918).

^{cclxvi} An extreme example are pianos which represent status exclusively as furniture. The most extreme example of the late-nineteenth-century fad for historicized interior decoration is the celebrated 'Byzantine' grand which Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema designed in 1885 for his own Roman-Oriental interior, with a case inlaid with coloured woods, ivory, brass and alabaster. George Bernard Shaw found it 'difficult to contemplate [that piano] for five minutes without looking about for a heavy woodchopper' (Shaw *Shaw's Music* I:359). In Catherine Carswell's *Camomile*, a similar instrument graces a pseudo-medieval Glasgow drawing-room with stained and leaded windows: 'Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Lockhart plays a note [171 ... but they] dare not have a house without a piano But how to fit in a Steinway grand with all that carved oak and tapestry? ... She had the guts taken out of the new Steinway, scrapped the case, and had another receptacle made purposely of carved oak. ... The beauty of it is that, until you actually open the keyboard, you would never suspect there was a piano in the room.' (Carswell *Camomile* 170f.).

^{cclxvii} Cf. the thoughts flitting through pseudo-musical concert audiences cited in Scholes 1947:224.

^{cclxviii} For similar incidents of more famous musicians such as Arthur Sullivan and Joseph Joachim actually refusing to play cf. Gillett 2000a:325.

'I have never met any of these foreign musicians, but I suspect they are rather dreadful.' 'And you are obliged to consent to your son being one of them' suggested Lady Meddleham. 'No. No. Whatever he may be, Maurice will never be a foreign musician.' 'I am glad that you have put down your foot down there; it is well to give him to understand that you know where to draw the line.'¹⁰⁶⁰

That is purely Victorian prejudice, seen by a narrator who is now fully on the side of music.

Whereas Victorian texts deride inept pianists, Edwardian ones make fun of inept listeners, often in satirical vignettes: 'The music stopped with a crash. The hostess cried "Oh, how delicious! Thank you! And *which* of the dear old masters was that?" The conversation leaped joyously into freedom.'¹⁰⁶¹ The same joy is reported in Catherine Carswell's description of a musical 'At Home', where everyone

with any capacity whatever, and a good few with none, had sung or played, while the others had murmured, 'Thank you,' 'What a sweet thing that is!' '*What* is it called?' 'Of course! I always forget the *names* of the pieces, don't you?' – and after the decent interval of a few seconds had started chattering to their neighbours on ordinary topics with immense relief.'¹⁰⁶²

After that, the audience's joyous response to an amusing solo consisting of 'Yankee Doodle' on a comb with left-handed piano accompaniment comes as a revelation: 'What unconcealed relief in every face! And the applause – what a reflection upon any applause that had gone before!'¹⁰⁶³ Musical 'At Homes' are generally an ideal locus for such irony with their strange mixture of amateurs, professionals, enthusiasts and ignoramuses with money and cultural pretences.

As they have no music in themselves and are too stingy to pay professionals to come and play to [163] their friends, they simply get together a party', telling people to 'bring their music' at the last minute.'¹⁰⁶⁴

Alma, the Story of a Little Music Mistress describes how Alma Montgomery is forced to play dance music at the parties of Mrs. Law, the mother of three of her pupils; her anxiety about the propriety of it is overrun: 'But it might lead to other engagements, and I always understood that you had very limited means.'¹⁰⁶⁵ When Mrs. Law's son Herbert, who was very much impressed with Alma's playing, manages to dance with her his mother intervenes: "'Miss Montgomery, will you have the goodness to return to your duties at the piano," she said, the feathers on her head vibrating with the wearer's repressed emotion.'¹⁰⁶⁶ Alma and Herbert nevertheless confess their love on the way home, and Alma is dismissed the week after. That is not seen as scandalous misbehaviour of a grasping 'professional person', but as Love at odds with unjustifiable snobbery.

Mrs. Law is too mean to pay for an expensive 'professor'; her daughters 'stumble hopelessly' and 'thump violently', but 'Dr. Earle was so far out of her reach! And yet, in that social ladder of success up which she longed to see her girls climb, music was such an important factor!¹⁰⁶⁷ So she prolongs or sits in at lessons at Alma's expense and advises her:

'Oh well, make a list after you have given the younger girls their lessons on Saturday, and we will see about it. But do not let me waste the time by talking. Go on, Maudie,' said Mrs. Law. Then she stood by for a few minutes and then saying, 'I think she has a good deal of taste, which only needs cultivating,' she left the room.¹⁰⁶⁸

Alma never expresses the moral disdain for Mrs. Law which the narrative clearly intends to stimulate in the reader, but is merely conscious of her own musical superiority. At the humiliating job interview (with the main purpose of lowering fees), she wakes the old piano to new life,

and the plaintive cry of Beethoven's sonata in E flat held Herbert at least spellbound. 'That is music,' he thought; But when Alma ceased, Mrs. Law said in her dry, unsympathetic voice: – 'Something a little more lively now, Miss Montgomery; that kind of music is not what takes in a drawing-room. Have you no waltz or air with variations?' Something like an amused smile rippled over Alma's face, but she made no reply, merely striking a few sharp chords, and then playing with quick spirit a set of waltzes which were popular at the time.¹⁰⁶⁹

In most older texts, performing the cheap delight of an 'air with variations' would have reflected badly upon performer and audience alike.

The young piano teacher Ellen Carstairs, protagonist of Catherine Carswell's *The Camomile*, defends herself with rather more spirit from predatory women clients. When she is asked to play, regularly and for free, to the unborn child of a society lady while the mother (who hates classical music) takes a nap, she ends the employment by 'executing' two forbidding Bach preludes and fugues:

Executed is just about the right word! I played them with such vigour that sleep was out of the question for her, and I scarcely paused between the end of one and the beginning of another. Strangely enough, I don't think I ever played them better. ... and with the last chord I [169] emerged in the highest spirits.¹⁰⁷⁰

She is not asked back.

On a somewhat higher level, musical disdain for the conventional pillars of society helps to bolster the stature of the heroine who has to live among them – though she never teaches – in Mary Patricia Willcock's *Wings of Desire*. The socialite Mrs. Woodruffe wants to 'get' Sara Bellew for her parties:

Sara's music [and] her husband's fame ... were to burn like sacred lamps before the shrine of the Woodruffe gentility. 'Dear Mrs. Bellew, we cannot possibly let you off! Such a cachet! It will be like having Paderewski or Madame Schumann within our portals. Do, do let me entreat you. And if I might suggest before the lovely Brahms you play so exquisitely, just some Beethoven – perhaps the Kreutzer Sonata.' She was catching wildly at the tail of culture. 'Or some little trifle of that sort,' laughed Molly. '[... My mother] is just throwing out suggestions. The Kreutzer and perhaps the Moonlight and of course the Eroica Symphony.'¹⁰⁷¹

When somebody suggests that 'the Kreutzer' has an 'aroma',

Mrs. Woodruffe's prominent eyes gleamed. She remembered now that there was something quite improper connected with the Kreutzer Sonata.^{cclxix} 'No, no, of course not,' she cried. 'Of course one wouldn't wish dear Mrs. Bellew to play it.'¹⁰⁷²

'Wings of Desire' is an optimistic title; the heroine achieves the conventionally ideal outcome of perfect partnership with a perfect lover, although she has left her husband to become a successful concert pianist. She was married off to an unworthy man by her scheming parasitic father, feels trapped and retorts to compliments about her performance: 'What's the good? I never can do anything with it, tied as I am down here. I feel like a rat caught in a trap.'¹⁰⁷³

However, she finally escapes, to study for three years with an old Italian master and become a professional. Physically, she is the type of the Victorian non-pianist,

a tall woman with a square head crowned with the black parted hair above a low broad forehead. Her type is found constantly in Provence. Her hair, buoyant and crisp, encircled her head with the curves first caught by a Roman chisel. A still woman, she moved gracefully.^{cclxx}

This description clearly shows that piano playing now has intellectual and moral dignity; it is not the tying-down device it used to be.

Sara has a music-room at the back of their country house where she can practise at any hour. When interrupted, she easily deflects her husband by a change of music:

Supremely pleased with himself, he felt his pulses begin to sway to the music that had now changed to a dance metre. Obeying a sudden impulse he followed [his sister-in-law] into the cool gloom of the music-room, caught her round the waist with a laugh and began to dance. Laughing, swinging to her music, in the glimmer of the candles on the piano, Sara played on.¹⁰⁷⁴

^{cclxix} A reference to Tolstoy's novella of 1891.

^{cclxx} Willcocks *Wings* II:2. Lady May Davenant (cf. p. 198 and 206) is another statuesque pianist: 'She is 'not exactly beautiful – or was she? The features were regular, the eyes dark and full; cheek [26] and throat of a ruddy brown, and hair as black as night. There was intelligence in the forehead, and a proud decision in her movements. ... passionate she seemed by temperament, inclining to despise those about her.' (Barry *Antigone* I:ii:25).

When she is alone again, Sara returns to her work with relief, 'hot on the mastering of difficulties. She played on, stopped to analyse, to repeat, rejoicing in her own powers. But she took no notice, now that the work was going.¹⁰⁷⁵ Her husband's confession that he used to *really* love (was engaged and went to bed with) another woman is also framed as an unwelcome intrusion on Sara's practice:

Father Bach died away into silence as Sara looked up from her piano keys to find her husband standing just within the lighted circle that revealed the heavy timbered roof of her music room. 'What is it, Archer?' she exclaimed sharply.¹⁰⁷⁶

He characteristically explains his need to confess as a bid for her attention: "'Why have you told me this, Archer?' 'I don't know. Perhaps that you might look at me. You always give me the impression that I'm invisible to you. And I don't like the feeling.'"¹⁰⁷⁷ Sara is in the end almost relieved: 'I've never been his wife at all. I'm free. Before he – what they call, married me, he gave his best to another woman.'¹⁰⁷⁸ In the end, with the understanding of Billy's wonderful mother, Sara and Billy brave the scandal and go to live together. At the same time, Sara embarks on a European touring career Friends discussing Sara's professional concert which ends the novel comment: "'And Sara – Sara – to be the one to have to go through the mud for all their sakes. I see red.'" "Never mind. She's above it all now."¹⁰⁷⁹ This 'above' is not the celestial heaven of Victorian womanhood, nor a virginity demanded by a secularly spiritual dedication to art (as by Sara's first serious teacher who asked her father to let Sara remain unmarried because '[g]entility ... feeds like a Minotaur on the brains of fair virgins'¹⁰⁸⁰), but a moral and artistic Parnassus. In the end, it is emotional truthfulness, not conventional decency that determines Sara's artistic blossoming, and emotional truthfulness now comes also through music which is no longer only a mere social ritual almost synonymous with deceit.

4. The piano and beyond

The little pianos are closed, and a clock strikes.
WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN

However impressive Sara Bellew's biography, the literary future did not lie with concert pianists but with women who are liberated from the piano. George Bernard Shaw, although aware of the importance of the instrument in helping people to a first-hand acquaintance with orchestral music, looked forward early on to the day when affordable reproduction

technology would help everybody 'to recreate him' without a piano.

[W]hen that golden age comes, everybody will see at last what an execrable, jangling, banging, mistuned nuisance our domestic music machine is, and the maddening sound of it will thenceforth be no more heard in our streets.¹⁰⁸¹

The maddening sound of practising was indeed getting rarer, as a strict work ethic was being superseded by the Edwardian 'Gospel of Fun':

NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE! – Challenge to the World. – £ 5 to any Person not blind and in full possession of their faculties who fails to play the Piano, Organ, or Harmonium immediately by my MAGIC PIANOFORTE INSTRUCTOR. Post-free, 18 stamps.¹⁰⁸²

Similarly, 'Roylance's Numerical system' was supposed to teach 'a choice selection of forty sacred and secular melodies composed for the use of those who have no time to study music. Thousands^{cclxxi} are now able to play who did not believe such a thing possible.'¹⁰⁸³

*Without the ennui and slavery of practice,
she was enchanting herself.*
ARNOLD BENNETT

Hilda Lessways in Arnold Bennett's *These Twain* can play the piano as little as her husband. Her experience after a musical evening at which she has heard Dvorak's 'Legends' for piano duet,¹⁰⁸⁴ is emblematic of the Edwardian experience: the woman cannot play, but dreamily considers being a glamorous concert pianist, and traces, as only men used to do, a melody that impressed her on the following day:

She had nothing do. ... [W]ith much labour and many slow hesitations she could puzzle out a chord or a melody from the printed page. She was now exasperatingly spelling with her finger a fragment of melody ... that had inhabited her mind since she first heard it Now she had recognizably pieced its phrases together, and as her stiff finger stumbled through it, her ears heard it once more; and she could not repeat it often enough. What she heard was not what she was playing, but something finer – her souvenir of what Tertius Ingpen had played; and something finer than that, something finer than the greatest artist could possibly play – magic!¹⁰⁸⁵

This is basically the wish for reproduction: 'It was in the nature of a miracle to her that she had been able to reproduce the souvenir in physical sound. ... And at the same time she was abject because she "could not play the piano".' She imagines sacrificing 'many happinesses' to play at least as well as her little son, and how rapturous it would be to be a 'world-renowned

^{cclxxi} The gender of the thousands is no longer an issue, nor is it indicated in the consumer's thank-you letter which Scholes reproduces.

pianist', such as she has never even heard, 'dominating immense audiences in European capitals. ... Meanwhile, without the ennui and slavery of practice, she was enchanting herself.'¹⁰⁸⁶

*The tea-rose tea-gown
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
The pianola 'replaces'
Sappho's barbitos.*
EZRA POUND

A first step towards the perfect realization of such recreational, passive enchantment was the player piano or pianola which flourished in the first three decades of the twentieth century.^{cclxxii} In Hugh Walpole's 1919 novel *Jeremy*, 'vastly superior' furniture in a newly renovated house comprises 'a gramophone, a pianola, and a lift to bring the plates from the kitchen into the dining-room and a small motor-garage'.¹⁰⁸⁷ These self-playing instruments were steered by perforated paper rolls that determined pitches and rhythm. More effectively than miracle-promising, practise-free 'Systems', the player piano contributed to the liberation from the disciplinary practice, to the move from musical work ethics to the consumer culture which ultimately undermined the piano's domestic position.^{cclxxiii}

The musical experience became completely passive only with the gramophone; the pianola still allowed for some personal touches. The suction power that drives the instrument is being generated by the player's feet operating two pedals not unlike those of a harmonium or a treadle sewing-machine, and the amount of suction at any given time determines loudness. Thus, judicious pedalling and the use of a tempo regulator could personalize the rendition. Male amateurs – less inured to extended practising^{cclxxiv} – left most passionate testimonials to the pianola, many of them in a homosexual context (cf. 261 p. 201). Risley, who gives E. M. Forster's Maurice first hopes of being really understood at Cambridge, plays

^{cclxxii} In 1925, more player pianos than ordinary ones were manufactured in England; in 1929 sales collapsed.

^{cclxxiii} 'With the demise of classical political economy in the 1870s, however, a new value emerged: consumption ... desire began to replace property as the 'symbolic badge of individuality' at the turn of the century.' (Trotter 1993:13). In Thomas Hardy's poem 'To a Lady Playing and Singing in the Morning' the speaker, despite 'duties due' decides to 'lurk here listening, / Though nought be done, and nought begun, / And work-hours swift are scurrying.' (2-4). No evening hymns solace a hard-working *pater familias*, but an incitement to waste work time (a reproach centuries old) is greeted as a benefit of female performance. Before, only the woman's time was wasted, now she consumes the man's too, and is welcomed.

^{cclxxiv} C. F. E. Joad, a great pianola fan, relates how a Beethoven movement that he was desperate to hear again after an exciting concert 'nearly broke up an, at that time happy, marriage' because he depended for it on his wife, who was not up to the piece. 'I used to dance about the room beside myself with impatience. "Hit the notes, woman, hit them! Hit them hard!" I cried. "Hit any notes."' (Joad *Pleasure* 52).

the 'March from [Tchaikovsky's] Pathetic Symphony' and then switches to the 5/4 movement because it's 'nearer waltzes'¹⁰⁸⁸ which Maurice prefers. In 1916, the designer and art critic Charles Ricketts stressed these artistic possibilities as well as the physical and mental ('at least comparable to riding a bicycle') effort which the use of the pianola's pedals imposed.

The first day of its arrival I played on it for some five hours, and was prostrate in the evening, in a new shirt – the former one had got wet through – and with sore insteps and back of thighs.¹⁰⁸⁹

Instead of being made to 'sit upright and pay attention to details',¹⁰⁹⁰ like a girl at the piano, a (male) pianola player works up an honest sweat. Ricketts was not alone in insisting on the sentimental advantages of being able to play, a belated and unexpected vindication of all the Victorian and earlier advice to lonely women to cultivate the piano:

[I am] able entirely to forget the war^{cclxxv} and the general lowering of one's vitality it has brought with it in these two tragic and tedious years. The pianola is a friend – a rather expensive friend, but this probably adds to friendship, affection, love!¹⁰⁹¹

The few other literary appearances of the pianola mostly accentuate the inhuman aspect of the uncannily independent 'rattle-trap pianos which never stop'.¹⁰⁹² In Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, restaurant conversations between political conspirators are interrupted by 'an upright semi-grand piano'¹⁰⁹³ which repeatedly goes off by itself, echoing their violent plans with its 'aggressive' or 'brazen' noise. When a bomb detonator is discussed, the pianola

clanged through a mazurka with brazen impetuosity, as though a vulgar and impudent ghost were showing off. The keys rose and sank mysteriously.^{cclxxvi} Then all became still. For a moment Ossipon imagined the overlighted place changed into a dreadful black hole ...¹⁰⁹⁴

At the end, Ossipon reads the newspaper headline reporting Winnie Verloc's suicide as an 'act of madness or despair', and the pianola 'played through a valse cheekily, then fell silent all at once, as if gone grumpy.'¹⁰⁹⁵

4.1. 'For dead, dead, dead you are to me!': Women and texts without pianos

*Man poets no longer make sonnets to our Ladies of Ivories,
nor are budding girls chained to the keyboard.*

JAMES HUNEKER

^{cclxxv} Such oblivion was more difficult to achieve for Vera Brittain's brother, an excellent violinist, who nevertheless sought solace at the piano after the death of a friend and the blinding of another in the War, 'silent, uncommunicative, thrust in upon himself ... improvising plaintive melodies, and playing Elgar's "Lament for the Fallen"'. (Brittain *Testament* 356).

^{cclxxvi} An sad ghostly echo of Shakespeare's leaping jacks...

The pianola did not last very long (sales collapsed in 1929), and even before it appeared, many literary texts had dispensed with the pianoforte completely. While certain 'New Women' are characterized by the contrast to more conventional ladies who still play, other 'New Woman' texts, such as H. G. Wells' *Ann Veronica*, Iota's *Yellow Aster* and Emma Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman* do not mention the instrument at all. When three orphan cousins set up house in London in Ethel Forster Heddle's *Three Girls in a Flat*, the only piano (serving mostly as a stand for bird-cages) is in the flat of their poor saintly neighbour Miss de Bréton Trip, and the girls get married anyway. Far from guaranteeing marriage, the piano is turning into the spinster's accessory it would be for many a crazy or disappointed lady (teacher) in twentieth-century fiction.^{cclxxvii} Norman Gale's sugary 'Aunt Jan', who has nothing to do but visit her nephews and nieces, is at least a happy and child-loving singleton; her visits mean romping happiness, and even when she plays, 'the piano seems alive, / With all the notes as busy as the bees are in a hive',¹⁰⁹⁶ but in the same author's 'The Old Piano' (cf. p. 212) 'the lank spinster, full of starch'¹⁰⁹⁷ raps tearful piano-pupils' knuckles.

*I don't want a piano, nor a reading-stand, nor a sofa.
I simply want a place that I can call my own.*

MAY SINCLAIR

Seven years before *A Room of One's Own*, the protagonist of *The Camomile* formulates a central concern of women writers – and, as she is as yet, musicians:

Don't you agree that there must be something radically wrong with a civilisation in which a hard-working, serious young woman like myself cannot obtain, without enormous difficulty, expense or infliction of pain on others, a quiet, clean, pleasant room in which she can work [i.e. teach and practice], dream her dreams, write out her thoughts, and keep her few treasures in peace?¹⁰⁹⁸

This girl later gives up the piano; dreaming her dreams and especially writing out her thoughts determine her life.

The narratives of three very different novel heroines who are all excellent pianists, though not professionals, share some common features that are characteristic of the historical moment (between 1898 and 1922) in which they were created, the very last moments of the piano's 'long nineteenth century'. The new interest in a woman's

^{cclxxvii} Cf. Bernice Rubens *Madame Sousatzka*, Thomas Mann 'Das Wunderkind', Eudora Welty 'June Recital'.

development and inner life manifests itself first of all in the narrative perspective which is always her own, but also in an interest in the musical experiences of childhood^{cclxxviii} or adolescence. For E. M. Forster's Lucy Honeychurch, Sarah Grand's Beth Caldwell and May Sinclair's Mary Olivier, music is always the accomplishment that society expects of them as well as a battleground for rebellion. Drawing, the perfectly decorous alternative for independent-minded Victorian women, is not mentioned in *A Room With a View*, and 'was not to be one of [Beth's] accomplishments';¹⁰⁹⁹ and after the dream of seven-year-old Mary Olivier 'I shall paint pictures and play the piano',¹¹⁰⁰ painting never figures in the novel again. This may be a subtle indictment of disappointed conventional hopes, which all these characters have to transcend. In the end, they also go beyond music, which is initially a great means for self-expression but turns out to be a second-best in the end, as it does for Ellen Carstairs in *The Camomile*. Finally, the sober, but dignified titles, none of which is as optimistic as the exuberant *Wings of Desire*, announce the centrality of female life experience and achievement: Lucy Honeychurch's *View* on life opens up, and *The Beth Book* and *Mary Olivier: A Life* emphasise the interest of female biography.

4.2. 'Too much Beethoven': A modern view of a Victorian room

Music in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View* is conditioned by the same Victorian inhibitions and constraints which Lucy Honeychurch is struggling to escape from in her life. Forster noted about her: 'One of those difficult people who have developed through music ... Properly conventional except when she forgets herself.'¹¹⁰¹ At the beginning, Lucy's only access to her own emotions is through music: 'Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music',¹¹⁰² and Mr. Beebe's famous remark 'I put it down to too much Beethoven'^{cclxxix} occurs in fact after she has expressed such an – unsuitable – desire: 'I want to go round the town in the circular tram – on the platform by the driver.'¹¹⁰³ This is obviously not her deepest wish, but at least

^{cclxxviii} In Edith Somerville's *The Real Charlotte*, young Francie Fitzpatrick, on an unhappy honeymoon, starts to cry when she overhears a street organ playing 'a piece of music in which Francie herself had a certain proficiency. She was back in the Tally Ho drawing-room, strumming it on Charlotte's piano, while Mr. Hawkins [122] holding the indignant Mrs. Bruff on his lap, forced her unwilling paws to thump a bass. Now the difficult part, in which she always broke down, was being played; he had pretended there that he was her music teacher, and had counted out loud, and rapped her knuckles with a teaspoon, and gone on with all kinds of nonsense.' (Somerville *Charlotte* III:xl:121f.).

^{cclxxix} Forster *Room* III:59. Beethoven became *the* undisputed musical God towards the end of the century, the epitome of music as Shakespeare was that of drama and poetry; for Henry Davey, for example, the lowest and the highest degrees of musical achievement were '[w]hen a child practises a scale, when a great pianist plays a Beethoven concerto'. (Davey *History* 105).

Beethoven has spurred her into some piece of clumsy communication. For Lucy, the wordless kingdom of music', where those whom 'breeding and intellect and culture have alike rejected'¹¹⁰⁴ can experience success, is 'a more solid world' than daily life which she finds 'rather chaotic',¹¹⁰⁵ and when she tries to put her this into words, the result is predictably platitudinous: 'Oh, but your son wants employment. ... I myself have worries, but I can generally forget them at the piano; and collecting stamps did no end of good for my brother.'¹¹⁰⁶ Whatever Lucy's vision, she has never 'translate[d it] into human words, and [her] experiences into human actions',¹¹⁰⁷ the classical predicament of the Victorian girl who is silenced by at the piano. Forster may have abandoned an earlier version of the novel called *The Concert* because that fragment got this significant point wrong. The Lucy of *The Concert* is a submissively co-operative pianist for an English charity do in Florence, spending entire afternoons 'patiently playing a throbbing accompaniment',¹¹⁰⁸ or 'practising and hearing scandal',¹¹⁰⁹ – but has decided opinions enough to leave Florence for Rome after acrimonious rows, to stop with friends, while the Lucy in *A Room With A View* is up to bewildering a parish hall audience with Beethoven's immensely difficult and not exactly 'pleasant' opus 111 but lets herself be dragged from Florence to Rome by her prim spinster cousin after a kiss from a young man who 'won't do'.

What is un-Victorian about *A Room With A View* is the insight into and narratorial sympathy for Lucy. Her solitary pleasure in playing is reported in detail: 'Like every true performer [Lucy] was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone did she come to her desire.'¹¹¹⁰ It is not, as in Sonnet 128, an infatuated listener who imagines the caresses between keys and fingers, but the playing girl whose sensations are represented. Her most perceptive listener, incidentally, is a homosexual clergyman who regards her with a speculative psychological interest. Lucy is not a 'true performer' in the sense that she plays for anybody; she is discovering and enjoying herself through music: 'Once I said that I liked my own playing better than anyone's. My mother has never got over it. Of course, I didn't mean that I played well.'¹¹¹¹ As the novel develops and Lucy's 'view' broadens, her playing starts to have an impact, to communicate – though still almost against her will – something of the emotions she is learning to perceive. During her engagement to the priggish Cecil Vyse (which she possibly agrees to because she has run out of polite formulas at his third proposal), she is asked to play, botches it and refuses to oblige any further:

She had seen Gluck's *Armide* that year, and played from memory the music of the enchanted garden [but] such music is not for the piano, and her audience began to get restive, and Cecil, sharing the discontent, called out: 'Now play us the other garden – the one in *Parsifal*.' She closed the instrument.¹¹¹²

On discovering that George Emerson (who had kissed her wordlessly in Florence) is listening, too, Lucy exclaims, not very coherently:

'Oh, I had no idea!' ... getting very red; and then, without a word of greeting, she reopened the piano. Cecil should have the *Parsifal*, and anything else that he liked. 'Our performer has changed her mind,' said Miss Bartlett. Lucy did not know what to do, nor even what she wanted to do. She played a few bars of the Flower Maiden's song very badly, and then she stopped.¹¹¹³

Lucy gets things wrong in what we hear of her inner monologue, telling herself that she consents to oblige Cecil, while the narrator makes it clear that it is the presence of George, to whom she really 'connects', that makes her play. Lucy enacts no conscious defiance in the manner of Freya Nelson; instead narrator and reader share a truth about Lucy that she herself is still too confused to articulate. As soon as her difficulty (having refused to play for her fiancé, she finds herself spontaneously obliging her 'lover') is put into – however approximate – words by Miss Bartlett, she stops completely, because now her playing is no longer a secret code. It never becomes, however, an open means of communication; salvation in love only comes when Lucy is finally able to stop the emotional 'Lying' that dominates the final chapters of the book, and learns to use words instead of the mute and hedged-about language of music, to 'come to her desire'.

4.3. 'If I had not struck the piano, I should have struck you': *The Beth Book*

'Beth', Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, suffers far more than Lucy Honeychurch, before a less romantic narrative closure. Music is, from the beginning, a solace and a challenge, but also part of a disciplinary order she continuously fights. The unglamorous setting of her first decisive experiences already establishes this theme of non propriety:

It was down in that empty kitchen that Beth first felt the enchantment of music. Some one suddenly played the piano overhead and Beth listened spell-bound. Again and again, the player played, and always the same thing, practising it. Beth knew every note. Long afterward she was trying some waltzes of Chopin's, and came upon one with which she was quite familiar ... but could not think when or where [she had studied it]. Presently, however, as she played it, she perceived a smell of black-beetles, and instantly she was back in that disused kitchen ..., listening to the practising overhead.¹¹¹⁴

Beth's first childish steps towards her own music are resisted: she learns to play the piano *in spite* of her environment, discovering as she does music before she has the 'proper' lessons that are part of the Victorian disciplinary regime, and continuing to rebel through it.

Sarah Grand's narrative voice is not completely in control of Beth's rebellion, possibly because of a lack of technical knowledge. Metaphors like 'the poorest instrument would lay hold of her, and set high chords of emotion vibrating, beyond the reach of words'¹¹¹⁵ belong to the worst sensualist kind of discourse, while the disclaimer that Beth's 'ear was defective; she rarely knew if anyone sang flat'¹¹¹⁶ harks back to the Victorian usage of exempting intelligent heroines from the piano,^{cclxxx} but is rather at odds with the way Beth teaches herself music. When given a piano primer 'one wet day to keep her quiet', she 'learnt her notes in the afternoon, and began at once to apply them practically at the piano. She soon knew all the early exercises and little tunes, and was only too eager to do more ...'¹¹¹⁷ This surreptitious use of music promptly meets its Victorian nemesis in Beth's mother (her official teacher), who cannot manage the girl:

[H]er mother hated the music-lesson more than any of the others, and was so harsh that Beth became nervous, and only ventured on the simplest things for fear of the consequences. When her mother went out, however, she tried what she liked ...¹¹¹⁸

Beth tries to lengthen her fingers to manage a piece she likes ('my head will play it!'), peruses music which her sister brings back from a holiday and 'and in a few weeks knew all that it had taken Mildred six months to learn'.¹¹¹⁹

When Beth implores her mother to teach her a difficult passage, she needs to insist: "'But I do so want to learn it," ... "Oh, very well ... But I warn you!"¹¹²⁰ Little later, Mrs. Caldwell makes her threat true and repeatedly beats Beth for not understanding a sign that has never been explained to her: "'I've a great mind to beat you as long as I can stand over you." Beth was a piteous little figure, crouched on the piano-stool, her back bent beneath her mother's blows',¹¹²¹ but by the next lesson, she is ready for confrontation:

'Do you know your lesson?' 'No, I do not,' said Beth, and then she doubled her fist, and brought it down bang on the keyboard. 'How dare you!' Mrs. Caldwell exclaimed, startled by the vehemence of the blow, and jarred by the discordant cry of the poor piano. 'I felt I must – I felt I must make something suffer,' said Beth, in a deep chest-voice and with knitted brows, twisting her finger and rising to face her other as she

^{cclxxx} Beth Caldwell hates blonde heroines as much as Maggie Tulliver (cf. note clxv p.128: 'I never will have a faultless beautiful heroine ... especially if she has golden hair yards long, a faultless complexion, and eyes of extraordinary dimensions' (Grand *Beth* XLIII:396).

spoke; 'and if I had not struck the piano, I should have struck you.'¹¹²²

Mrs. Caldwell is not fazed for long: 'It's your own fault, Beth You are so conceited; you try to play things that are too difficult for you, and then you get into trouble.'¹¹²³ Later that day, Beth draws a squiggly 'hieroglyph', asks her mother to read it and taunts her in front of visitors: 'Couldn't you make it out if Aunt Victoria beat you?... That is what you expected me to do, at all events'.¹¹²⁴ This makes Mrs. Caldwell at least wince, but she discontinues the lessons as a punishment. Beth no longer mentions the subject to her mother;

but from that day forward she practised regularly and hard and [164] studied her instruction books, and listened to other people playing when she had a chance, and asked to have passages explained to her, until at last she knew more than her mother could have taught her.¹¹²⁵

The piano, diligently studied, is an accomplice in the first steps away from an overbearing mother.

In adolescence, Beth does not keep up this strict attitude, and her liberated playing validates centuries-old fears of the moral dangers of music:

Beth was kept without ... intellectual pursuits. Her time was devoted not to practising, but to playing; to poetry, and to dreamy musings. She wove words [such as *Lalla Rookh*] to music at the piano by the hour together, lolled about in languorous attitudes, was more painfully concerned than ever about her personal adornment, delighted in scents and in luxurious imaginings, and altogether fed her feelings to such excess, that if her moral nature were not actually weakened, it was certainly endangered.¹¹²⁶

At boarding school, the ferocious teacher 'Old Tom' is not enthusiastic about Beth's preference for Chopin:

'Sit down here and play on of his compositions, if you please' But Beth felt intimidated for once, because Old Tom's doubt of her own powers, which she perceived, was shaking her confidence. She sat down, at the piano, however, and struck a few notes; then her nerve forsook her. 'I can't play,' she said. 'I'm nervous.' 'Humph!' snarled old Tom. 'I thought that 'ud be your Chopin. Go and learn exercises with the children ... '¹¹²⁷

Beth rattles through all these exercises faster than the other girls and is soon back with 'Old Tom' and on good terms with the tyrannical spinster. Discipline seems to be positive for her, although Old Tom is shown at first as misunderstanding her passion for such a romantic composer as Chopin. On the other hand, the system of practising synchronously with many other girls is said to ruin Beth's 'excellent musical memory' and delicate touch: it is 'impossible for her to feel what she was playing or put any individuality of expression into it.'¹¹²⁸ After a

religious crisis, she sinks into visions and daydreaming:

All wholesome interest in her work was over. There was an old piano in the reception-room which the girls were allowed to use for their amusement on half-holidays, and she often went there; but even when she practised, she moved her fingers mechanically, her mind busy with vivid scenes and moving dramatic incidents; so that her beloved music was gradually converted from an object in itself into an aid to thought.¹¹²⁹

The novel continues to waver in its attitude to music: The piano is aligned again *with* Beth when her repulsive husband refuses her the 'luxury' of a piano until his lover (ostensibly a rest patient) comes to live with them and has one ordered for her: 'Beth wished Dan had let her choose it; but a piano of any kind was a delight.'¹¹³⁰ In the end, Beth abandons this kind of delight altogether to become a writer. What she has to say is now brought 'within' the reach of words, out of the fallacious nebulosity of music. Her newly discovered gift as an orator is kind of performance that infringes far more on male territory, as the heroine of *The Camomile* explains:

I know so miserably well what people mean when they say it is 'a pity' that a woman should write. I can feel why it is so different from, for instance, a woman singing or acting. Because, however severe the technique of these arts may be, they are in their effect womanly.¹¹³¹

Certain inconsistencies in the musical thread of *The Beth Book* are one more example of musical metaphor as a symptom of confused thinking about music. *Mary Olivier* is a better book also because, despite the fact that music is an absolutely central element, it does not need musical metaphors.

4.4. *Mary Olivier*: 'Something has happened to the piano'

May Sinclair's novel *Mary Olivier – A Life* tells that life very much with the aid of the piano, charting as it does so also the last part of the piano's domestic (literary) history in its precisely dated chapters. In 1870, music is part of seven-year-old Mary's dreams of adult womanhood:

'I shall paint pictures and play the piano [70] and ride in a circus. I shall go out to the countries where the sand is and tame zebras and I shall marry [my brother] Mark and have thirteen children with blue eyes like Meta.'¹¹³²

Of all these dreams, only the one of playing the piano comes true. Music is the primary symbol of Mary's tortured relationship with her mother and the deeply frustrating values she internalizes in an almost lifelong but fated attempt to be reassured about her 'Little

Mamma's' never guaranteed love: 'You knew *when* [Mamma] loved you. You could almost count the times'. Those times are exclusively when Mary has been hurt or saddened, when she has been very, very good ('Then you knew.'¹¹³³), or – exceptionally – when the emotional satisfaction of making music and her little daughter's admiration enable Mrs. Sinclair to make at least an affectionate gesture:

It was wonderful. Mamma was wonderful. She swayed and bowed to the beat of the [Hungarian March], as if she shook it out of her body and not out of the piano. She smiled to herself when she saw that you were listening. You said 'Oh – Mamma! Play it again,' and she played it again. When she had finished she stooped suddenly and kissed you. And you knew. But she wouldn't say it. You couldn't make her.¹¹³⁴

Music, the conventionally permitted emotional safety valve, is already also elusive and treacherous, calling up emotions but not permitting true communication between the women it has been imposed on.

Soon the covert disappointment, jealousy and ill will that Mrs. Olivier bears her daughter are acted out more explicitly in their interactions around music. When Mark, the favourite son and brother, is about to go to India for five years, the father weeps drunkenly at supper, and brother and sister go under acoustic cover: 'Make a noise, Minky. Perhaps they'll go.'¹¹³⁵ Music here symbolizes and allows emotional rebellion – and immediately causes guilt:

Mamma never could see that the bass might be even more important than the treble. She was glad that she could play it better than Mamma, and she hated herself for being glad. ... 'Don't you wish they'd go? Clever Minx. Clever paws.'¹¹³⁶

Mamma is as ever keenly aware of these attempts to exclude her.

Mamma passed and looked at them. Her face shrank and sharpened under the dropped wing of her hair. She must have heard what Mark said. She hated it when Mark talked and looked like that. She hated it when you played *her* music. Beethoven then.¹¹³⁷

'Mamma's music' consists of drawing-room pieces like 'Violetta', the 'Guards' and 'Mabel' Waltzes and the 'Pluie des Perles',¹¹³⁸ bound up in one volume with the 'Sonata Eroica'^{cclxxxi} Mary eventually plays.

The contrast between traditional drawing-room music and Beethoven, the musical God of the Edwardian period (the future of this scene, which is set in the late 1870s), is emblematic for two periods and two female lifestyles. As Mary grows older and commands a larger repertoire, her choice of music becomes increasingly symbolic. With one of Chopin's

^{cclxxxi} Calling 'Sonata Eroica' what is clearly a piano transcription of Beethoven's Third Symphony (the subtitle is given in nearly correct Italian; 'sulle [sic] morte dun eroe') is a typical error of the period; cf. p. BRAHMS

few 'optimistic' works (as like middle-period Beethoven as can be imagined), Mary repels the patronizing village vicar who asks her to teach Sunday school, exulting after her refusal like the wild South Sea girl Freya Nelson (cf. p. 198):

Through the window of the room Chopin's Fontana polonaise^{cclxxxii} went out after him, joyous, triumphant and defiant, driving him before it. Nothing could touch you, nothing could hurt you while you played. If you could only go on playing forever –¹¹³⁹

But Mrs. Olivier knows very well how to destroy such triumphs.

'Mary,' she said, 'if you *will* play, you must play gently.' 'But Mamma – I can't. It goes like that.' 'Then,' said her mother, 'don't play it. You can be heard all over the village.' [... 206] She went on playing. But it was no use. She struck a wrong note. Her hands trembled and lost their grip. They stiffened. Dropped from the keys. She sat and stared idiotically at the white page, at the black dots nodding on their stems, at the black bar swaying. She had forgotten how to play Chopin's Fontana Polonaise.¹¹⁴⁰

On many more occasions Mary's mother continues her attempts at silencing Mary's music, pushing the piano, her vehicle of rebellion, into a dark damp corner until she plays it only in her head:

It stood there in the quiet room, with its lid shut, patient, reproachful, waiting for you to come and play on it. When Mary thought of the piano her heart beat faster, her fingers twitched, the full, sensitive tips tingled and ached to play. When she couldn't play she lay awake at night thinking of the music. She was trying to learn the Sonata *Appassionata*, going through it bar by bar, slowly and softly, so that nobody outside the room could hear it. That was better than not playing at all. But sometime you would forget, and ... Papa would come in and stop you. And the Sonata would go on sounding inside you. Trying to make you play it, giving you no peace.¹¹⁴¹

Even when Mary is able to play, her performances are never purely her own. As her longing for music, as a young adult, becomes more and more an impersonal love for the works themselves, her family continues to make them into symbols of their issues and moral, dragging at her as her father sinks deeper into alcoholism and the family into genteel poverty.

When the front door slammed behind [her father] she rushed to the piano. There might be a whole hour If you could only reach the last movement, the two thundering chords and then – the *Presto*. The music beat on the thick stone walls of the room and was beaten back, its fine, live throbbing blunted by overtones of discord. You longed to open all the doors and windows of the house, to push back the stone walls and let it out. ... You kept on looking at the clock, you wondered whether his time Papa would really go. You hoped – Mamma's eyes hurt you. They said, 'She doesn't care what becomes of him so long as she can play.'¹¹⁴²

Constant surveillance and reproof finally begin to turn Mary away from music:

^{cclxxxii} Probably op. 40,1 in A major.

She would never play well. At any minute her father's voice or her mother's eyes would stiffen her fingers and stop them. ... She would make poems. They couldn't hear you making poems. They couldn't see your thoughts falling into sound patterns.¹¹⁴³

Soundless poetry, an occupation far from the centre of the accomplishments canon, will be Mary's eventual way out.

But the joys and temptations of the piano are not easily got rid of. When Mary is asked to play at a party, she decides to sidestep the conventional occasion by playing 'something so soft and slow thy they won't hear it. I shall be alone, listening to myself.'¹¹⁴⁴ She opts for the 'beautiful, quiet grief' of the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata, and unexpectedly what was intended as an acoustic screen draws the attention to itself – an unprecedented moment of the magic of artistic power.

Suddenly they all left off talking. They were listening. Each note sounded pure and sweet, as if it went out into an empty room. They came close up, one by one, on tiptoe, with slight creakings and rustlings Mr. Sutcliffe sat where he could see her. He was far away from the place where she heard herself playing, but she could feel his face turned on her like a light. ... Somebody was saying 'how beautifully she plays.' Life and warmth flowed into her. Exquisite, tingling life and warmth. 'Go on. Go on.' Mr. Sutcliffe's voice sounded miles away beyond the music. ... She could see their hushed faces leaning nearer. You could make them happy by playing to them. They loved you because you made them happy.¹¹⁴⁵

Even if it still contains the bargaining for love that her mother has made her used to, this is one of Mary's happiest musical moments.

Such musical triumph cannot last, of course. Mary Sinclair has been called 'a modern Victorian',¹¹⁴⁶ and in *Mary Olivier*, the Victorian constraints embodied by Mary's mother check her 'modern' longings again and again. Mary's moment of progressive command is brutally curtailed by her father's fatal stroke that forces her back into the daughter's role.

She was playing the *Presto agitato*. It flowed smoothly under her finger, at an incredible pace, with an incredible certainty. Something seemed to be happening over there, outside the place where she heard the music. ... She thought: 'Papa again.' But she was too happy to care. Nothing mattered so long as she could listen to herself playing the Moonlight Sonata.¹¹⁴⁷

Mary cannot ward the interruption off for more than a few seconds, before it becomes clear that something dramatic has happened. Her father dies shortly after, and the piano becomes a guilty thing again:

For months she hadn't thought about him except to wish he wasn't there so she could go on playing. When he was in the fit she had been playing on the Kendals' piano, conceited and happy, not caring. ... She hated the conceited self that hadn't cared. The

piano, gleaming sombrely in the hushed light, reminded her of it. She hated the piano.¹¹⁴⁸

Mrs. Olivier continues to use this new emotional lever against Mary, suggesting that making music is a sinful refusal of mourning:

Mammy would think you unfeeling if you wanted to sit in [the drawing-room] when Papa was dead. ... The piano. Under the lid the keys were stiffening with the damp. The hammers were swelling, sticking together. She tried not to think of the piano. [... 230] She turned and looked again at the piano. She went to it. She opened the lid and sat down before it. Her fingers crept along the keyboard; they flickered over the notes of the Sonata Appassionata: a ghostly, furtive playing, without pressure, without sound. And she was ashamed as if the piano were tempting her to some cruel, abominable sin.¹¹⁴⁹

In her early twenties, Mary keeps house and nurses her invalid brother Roddy in increasing desperation: 'So the first year passed. And the second. And the third year. She was five and twenty.' The day after Roddy's death, 'she got up and dressed and dusted the drawing-room. She dusted everything very carefully, especially the piano. She would never want to play on it again.'¹¹⁵⁰

But before Mary abandons the instrument forever, she encounters its full sensual and romantic promise. In her brother's friend Lindley Vickers '[H]er intelligence had found its mate.'¹¹⁵¹ Mary deduces this compatibility from his understanding of her musical language:

You had only to play and he would come to you. He would get up and leave Dan in the smoking-room; he would leave Mamma in the garden. When you played the soft Schubert Impromptu he would sit near you, very quiet; when you played the Appassionata he would get up and stand close beside you. When you played the loud, joyful Polonaise he would walk up and down; up and down the room.¹¹⁵²

But even here music is deceptive. To hide from Dan's comprehension, the two young people retire into wordless or veiled communication. Vickers seems to announce his impending defection, but cannot be more explicit than using the lyrics of an old German folksong, which Mary does not choose to read as a personal message:

He sang: 'Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath / Dass man vom liebsten was man hat / Muss scheiden.' Dan called out from his corner, 'Translate. Let's know what it's all about.' She pounded out the accompaniment louder. 'We won't, will we?' He jumped up suddenly. 'Play the *Appassionata*.' She played and he talked. [323] 'I can't play if you talk.' 'Yes, you can. I wish I hadn't got to go tomorrow.'¹¹⁵³

Lindley Vickers returns to the village hotel after his visit to Dan has officially ended and the pair continue to communicate against Mamma's threatening presence. Certain pieces

become calls to the desired man, always threatening to spill their secret:

Her fingers pressed and crept over the keys, in guilty, shamed silence; it would be awful if he heard you playing ['Es ist bestimmt'], if Dan heard you or Mamma. You had only to play and you could make him come. Supposing you played the Schubert Impromptu – She found herself playing it. He didn't come. He wasn't coming. ... Her hands dropped from the keys. It wasn't possible. ... 'Mary,' [Mamma] said, 'I wish you would remember that Mr. Vickers has come to see Dan, and that he has only got two days more.' [... 325] Mary began to play the Sonata Appassionata. She thought: 'I don't care if he doesn't come. I want to play it, and I shall.' He came. He stood close beside her and listened.¹¹⁵⁴

Vickers' ready concern with her playing for its own, for her sake, makes Mary feel that she is indeed being taken seriously

'Tell me the truth, shall I ever be any good? Shall I ever play?' 'Do you really want the truth?' 'Of course I do.' Her mind fastened itself on her playing. It hid and sheltered itself behind her playing. 'Let's look at your hands.' She gave him her hands. ... 'There's no reason why you shouldn't have played magnificently.' 'Only I don't. I never have.' 'No, you never have.'¹¹⁵⁵

The serious conversation grows into a sensual encounter; Mary tries to go back to talking, but the man's desire obscures the exchange:

He came closer; she didn't know whether he drew her to him or whether he came closer. A queer, delicious feeling, a new feeling, thrilled through her body to her mouth, to her finger-tips. Her head swam slightly. She kept her eyes open by an effort. He gave her back her hands. She remembered. They had been talking about her playing. 'I knew,' she said, it was bad in places.' 'I don't care whether it's bad or good. It's you. The only part of you that can get out. You're very bad in places, but you do something to me all the same.' 'What do I do?' 'You know what you do.' 'I don't. I don't really, Tell me.' 'If you don't know, I can't tell you – dear –' [326] He said it so thickly that she was not sure at the time whether he had really said it. She remembered afterwards.¹¹⁵⁶

Vicker's predominant interest emerges a few days later when Mary observes him kissing a farm girl; the sensual expectation comes to nothing and the deceptiveness of romantic-sensuous 'communication' is exposed. Now all the new vistas that music seemed to open on at the end of the nineteenth century have been shown and checked or discarded in the novel. Dan, the last brother left alive after Mark's death in India, emigrates to Canada, and Mary is left in sole charge of her mother whose will has dominated her life.

When Mary does find a true soul mate in the poet Richard Nicholson, the piano does, significantly, not have a part to play. Mary, however, refuses to marry, partly because she is still looking after her old mother and partly because she does not want to give up the inner

independence she has come to value. Only her mother's death frees her completely, and now she can also discard the piano from her life. Her old nanny correctly considers it 'unfaithful not to have kept the piano when Mamma had played on it'.¹¹⁵⁷ Mary stops playing to embrace solitude, discovering the happiness of renunciation, and sublimates all her restless energy into the writing of poetry.

The instrument that lent its voice to many silenced women is superseded because they are now finding their own. May Sinclair records the last instances of the piano's role as part of the containment of women but uses the piano also as a potent symbol of a passing epoch. One dreary evening scene set in 1897 encapsulates the approaching end of the heroine's dependence on her mother, the (Victorian) mother's impending death and the end of a three-hundred-year-old tradition. It is the old woman who still plays on a decrepit instrument.

The knocking of loose hammers on dead wires, the light, hacking clang of chords rolling like dead drum taps: Droom – Droom, Droom-era-room. Alone in the dusk, Mamma was playing the Hungarian March, bowing and swaying as she played. When the door opened, she started up, turning her back on the piano, frightened, like a child caught in a play it is ashamed of. The piano looked mournful and self-conscious. Then suddenly, all by itself, it shot out a cry like an arrow, a pinging, stinging, violently vibrating cry. 'I'm afraid,' mamma said, 'something's happened to the piano.'¹¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

From the Tudor period to the First World War, the 'piano' is a constant presence in the lives of young heroines of English literature, as it was in the lives of most women of the gentry and an increasing part of the middle classes for three centuries and a half. In the English imagination, performing on this instrument was connoted as feminine even more strictly than musical, that is, physical performance in general, and the corresponding reservations about active male participation in music and particularly at the keyboard mean that the perspective of such descriptions is mostly male. Although men very often disliked music and lacked even basic training or knowledge, an conditioned erotic interest in music as a spectacle kept their gaze on performances they were only rarely musically interested in. A mainly visual (i. e. contiguous) interest in musical performance determines many representations, which belong mostly to a regime of commodification of women. While women musicians are being set up and displayed as erotic objects, textual strategies of suppression and denigration in literary descriptions as well as gaps, overlaps and contradictions between normative texts, representation of music and musical metaphor testify to a certain ineradicable fear or unease.

Even the literary and actual liberation of the piano that sets in after 1880 and provides increasing emotional leeway for music in the private sphere and more space for women's and English men's professional ambitions ultimately contributes to and rounds off a narrative of restrictive ideologies and social structures. The literary 'tragedy' of the piano is that it was used so much and would have made an ideal representative of women's plight and joys, but was used for a long time mainly to record suppression. When new topics and emotions became available, many older gender stereotypes nevertheless continued, and so the literary heyday of the instrument is very brief. Even while it lasted, women are shown as moving on from the expressive relief of music to an actually changed lifestyle as writers. Their voices were no longer wordlessly alluring – and essentially silenced – but found readers and true listeners in actual, not metaphorical language. The piano was left behind. By the time women had come more fully into their own as professionals and literary protagonists, and would have made impressive pianists to write about, technological developments and the Great War had obliterated the piano's domestic (and literary) habitat.

The professional pianist as a literary creature is essentially a twentieth-century phenomenon. However, now that the cultural connotations have acquired so much power and glamour the field is almost exclusively occupied by men. The typical literary pianist is a

professional male, whose striving to realize his potential for artistic, commercial and social success often constitutes the substance of popular latter-day *Künstler-* or *Bildungsromane*.^{cclxxxiii} Nostalgically historicizing or grotesque narratives in film and literature^{cclxxxiv} take the instrument to the swamps Kipling had not deemed it suitable for (cf. p. 176) and romantic bestsellers^{cclxxxv} continue to exploit a modern amateurs' mystique (cf. note ccliv p. 216) that earlier female victims of the piano could not have surmised and which seems to have taken hold even of an intellectual amateur player like Edward Said.^{cclxxxvi}

However, all this is marginal. It was before the First World War that the piano was truly relevant to everyday life and its literary appearances a valid witness to gender regulations and negotiations, even if the fears it helped to record and the fascination its players exert are not yet over.

^{cclxxxiii} Cf. Sennett *An Evening of Brahms*, Conroy *Body and Soul*, Thomas Bernard *Der Untergeher* and others.

^{cclxxxiv} Cf. Daniel Mason's novel *The Piano Tuner* (Picador 2002) and Marcio Souza's *Mad Maria* (Record 1980), Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, Alessandro Baricco's novella *Novecento* (Feltrinelli 1980) and the film *Legend of 1900* made from it. Roman Polanski's recent film *The Pianist* foregrounds the Holocaust, which is present as a background in many pianist *Bildungsromane*, usually as the catastrophe which engulfed or exiled the protagonists' European Jewish teachers.

^{cclxxxv} Cf. T. E. Carhart's *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank* (Vintage 2001).

^{cclxxxvi} Edward Said: *Musical Elaborations*. New York: Columbia UP 1991.

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Endnotes

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- ¹ Cf. Leppert 1993:215.
² Dunn 1994:59.
³ Cf. Green 1997:26.
⁴ Gilbert and Gubar 1979:19.
⁵ Binstock 1985:125.
⁶ Adorno *Minima Moralia* q. Leppert 1993:62.
⁷ Cf. Harley 1994:II:171-191.
⁸ Cf. Leppert 1993:27.
⁹ *Woolf Room* 35.
¹⁰ *Essex Young Ladies* V:84f.
¹¹ Closson 1944:9f.
¹² Fletcher 1995:6.
¹³ *Keep* 1997:403.
¹⁴ Belsey 1994:13.
¹⁵ Bovenschen 1979:68.
¹⁶ Berkenhout *Letters* XIX:166.
¹⁷ Mulvey 1989:51.
¹⁸ Austern 1998:637f.
¹⁹ Hollander 1961:162.
²⁰ Barlow 'Marriage in Music' II. 9-14.
²¹ Shepherd 1993:57f.
²² Easthope 1991:21.
²³ Bal 1993:383.
²⁴ Irigaray 1985:133.
²⁵ Easthope 1991:133.
²⁶ Leppert 1993:64.
²⁷ Bové 1995:51.
²⁸ Cf. Austern 1991:19.
²⁹ Peacham *Gentleman* 104.
³⁰ 103.
³¹ Hooker *Ecclesiastical* V:38 p.146.
³² Case *Praise* unpaginated foreword 'To the Reader'.
³³ Mulcaster *Positions* 36 and 39.
³⁴ Prynne *HISTRIO-MASTIX* V:viii:268.
³⁵ Ascham *Scholemaster* fol. 19.
³⁶ Ascham *Toxophilus* fol. 10.
³⁷ fol. 10 and 11.
³⁸ fol. 10.
³⁹ Cf. Austern 1994:85.
⁴⁰ Hoby *Courtyer* 195.
⁴¹ Becon *Jewel* [fol. G8verso].
⁴² Q. Harley 1994:II:181.
⁴³ Elyot *Governour* fl. 19 verso.
⁴⁴ Peacham *Gentleman* 98f.
⁴⁵ Stevens 1979:268.
⁴⁶ Salter *Mirrhor* [42].
⁴⁷ Whythorne *Autobiography* 205.
⁴⁸ Hoby *Courtyer* 100.
⁴⁹ Elyot *Governour* fol. 23.
⁵⁰ Stubbes *Anatomie* 3.
⁵¹ 128.
⁵² Easthope 1991:21.

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- ⁵³ Spenser 'Iambicum' 4-12.
- ⁵⁴ Rowlands *Good Nevves* fol. B2.
- ⁵⁵ Shakespeare *Othello* IV:iii:60.
- ⁵⁶ Ascham *Works* I:191 (letter to J. Sturm of April 1550).
- ⁵⁷ Melville *Memoirs* 96.
- ⁵⁸ Tallis and Byrd *Cantiones Sacrae* unpaginated prefatory matter.
- ⁵⁹ Anon.: *Biographia Britannica* II:1007.
- ⁶⁰ Pindar 'Ballade of Prayer' 13-16.
- ⁶¹ H. F. C. 'The Pianoforte' 307f.
- ⁶² Gardiner 1929:120.
- ⁶³ Cavendish *Contract* 187, sig. Bb2.
- ⁶⁴ Q. Chappell 1961:60f.
- ⁶⁵ Anon. *Office* [140].
- ⁶⁶ Smith *Preparative* 55.
- ⁶⁷ Browne *Works* 143.
- ⁶⁸ Holyday *Technogamia* 111.
- ⁶⁹ Reynolds *Trivmphs* [[10],4].
- ⁷⁰ Heywood *Woman Kilde* 24f.
- ⁷¹ Saltonstall *Picturae* No. 24.
- ⁷² Marmion *Fine Companion* IV:i:164, fol. G2 r.
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- ⁷⁵ Shakespeare *Othello* IV:i:179 and 187f.
- ⁷⁶ Hoby *Courtyer* 75.
- ⁷⁷ 194.
- ⁷⁸ Austern 1989:427.
- ⁷⁹ Salter *Mirrhoe* 41.
- ⁸⁰ Cf. Wager *Life* fol. D iii.
- ⁸¹ Gough *Strange Discovery* III:i:86f.
- ⁸² Shakespeare *Winter's Tale* I:ii:115f. and 125f.
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- ⁸⁴ Dekker and Middleton *Honest Whore* I I:xiii:[500].
- ⁸⁵ Lyly *Midas* III:ii, fol. D.
- ⁸⁶ Barthes 1977:189.
- ⁸⁷ Byrd *Parthenia* unpaginated dedication.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Wright 1993:x.
- ⁹⁰ Blom 1969:57.
- ⁹¹ Crookes 1985 and Kitson 1987.
- ⁹² Booth 1977/1978:438f.
- ⁹³ Shakespeare *Pericles* I:i:81f.
- ⁹⁴ Jonson *Out Of His Humour* III:ix:101-106.
- ⁹⁵ Fineman 1986:18.
- ⁹⁶ 17.
- ⁹⁷ Cf. 257.
- ⁹⁸ 257.
- ⁹⁹ Hollander 1961:136.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cf. Sedgwick 1985.
- ¹⁰¹ Austern 1991:17 and 25.
- ¹⁰² Shakespeare 'Sonnet 129' 13f.
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- ¹⁰⁴ Cf. Raynor 1972:141.
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- ¹⁰⁸ 15, editor's note quoting MS 'Travels' I:8.
- ¹⁰⁹ Q. Johnson 1972:11.

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- ¹¹⁰ Richardson *Familiar Letters* LXV:82.
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¹¹⁴ Sheridan *Plan* 91.
¹¹⁵ Fielding *Joseph Andrews* III:iii:203.
¹¹⁶ I:iv:27.
¹¹⁷ Mar *Legacies* 186.
¹¹⁸ Haywood *Jessamy* I:xiii:137.
¹¹⁹ I:xii:135.
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¹²² Pepys *Diary* IV:201, 27-6-1663.
¹²³ Defoe *Augusta* 16.
¹²⁴ 16f.
¹²⁵ Darrell *Gentleman* 156.
¹²⁶ Anon. *Player's Tragedy* [[17], 6].
¹²⁷ Shadwell *Fair Quaker* I:[i] p.5
¹²⁸ I:[i] p.8.
¹²⁹ Sewell 'Addison's *Cato*' 10f.
¹³⁰ Colman *Musical Lady* II:14
¹³¹ II:16.
¹³² I:8.
¹³³ II:27.
¹³⁴ I:8.
¹³⁵ Costeker *Fine Gentleman* 41.
¹³⁶ Defoe *Augusta* 16.
¹³⁷ Home *Loose Hints* 244.
¹³⁸ Essex *Young Ladies* V:85.
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¹⁴² III:ccxi:114, 15-08-1710
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¹⁴⁴ Home *Loose Hints* 244.
¹⁴⁵ Cf. Kristeva 1980:36-63.
¹⁴⁶ Sobba Green 1991:72 and 79.
¹⁴⁷ Amory *Buncle* I:lxix:415.
¹⁴⁸ Richardson *Clarissa* [Third Edition] VIII:300-303.
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¹⁵⁵ Aubin *Charlotta* XXII:254.
¹⁵⁶ Scott, Sarah *Ellison* II:i:53.
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¹⁵⁸ II:i:54.
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¹⁶⁰ Armstrong 1987:114.
¹⁶¹ Scott, Sarah *Ellison* II:vi:92.
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¹⁶³ Brooke *Fool* XIII:183.
¹⁶⁴ Ward *Don Quixote* I:147ff. 9.
¹⁶⁵ Scott, Sarah *Ellison* II:vii:95.
¹⁶⁶ Goldsmith *Wakefield* XI:63f.

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¹⁶⁸ III:xi:VII:211f.
¹⁶⁹ III:xi:VII:215.
¹⁷⁰ Shadwell *Epsom* III:i p.41.
¹⁷¹ Smollett *Launcelot Greaves* I:iii:22f.
¹⁷² Richardson *Pamela* III:xxxiii:389f.
¹⁷³ III:xxxi:390.
¹⁷⁴ Q. Stone 1992:50.
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¹⁷⁶ Smollett *Humphry Clinker* II:286.
¹⁷⁷ II:286.
¹⁷⁸ Aubin *Charlotta* I:3.
¹⁷⁹ Aubin *Lady Lu*
cy I:2.
¹⁸⁰ I:2ff. The pagination is faulty, page 5 follows directly after 2.
¹⁸¹ Behn *Nun* 214.
¹⁸² Bunyan *Progress* II:231.
¹⁸³ II:272.
¹⁸⁴ II:285.
¹⁸⁵ Lee *Cleve* I:ii:8f.
¹⁸⁶ Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* 2.
¹⁸⁷ 51.
¹⁸⁸ Cf. 5.
¹⁸⁹ 21.
¹⁹⁰ Essex *Young Ladies* V:47.
¹⁹¹ Evelyn *Diary* IV:271, 07-02-1682.
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¹⁹³ IV:421, 14-03-1685.
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¹⁹⁹ IV:429, 14-03-1685.
²⁰⁰ Batchiler *Virgins Pattern* 45.
²⁰¹ Richardson *Pamela* IV:xxx:181.
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²⁰³ Fielding *Tom Jones* V:ii:205.
²⁰⁴ V:ii:205.
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²⁰⁶ Haywood *Foundlings* VII:94.
²⁰⁷ Mackenzie *Man of Feeling* IXXX:143f.
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²¹⁰ VII:v:274.
²¹¹ VII:v:275.
²¹² Hollander 1970:13.
²¹³ Smith 'Jilting Mistress' 89.
²¹⁴ Cf. Bacon 'The Kite'.
²¹⁵ Baker 'On Mrs. S-' 1.
²¹⁶ Hill 'Bellaria' 50ff.
²¹⁷ Leapor 'To Cloe' 22f. and 27f.
²¹⁸ Tollet 'Elizabeth Blackler' I:3-III:48.
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²²¹ Langhorne 'To Miss -' 10ff.
²²² 45ff.

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- ²²³ Smith 'Jilting Mistress' 98-101.
²²⁴ 92-5.
²²⁵ Hill 'Bellaria' 1-12.
²²⁶ 67f.
²²⁷ Hill 'Celinda' 1-8.
²²⁸ 13f.
²²⁹ Cf. Hollander 1961:374.
²²⁹ Brooke *Fool* XIII:187.
²²⁹ Cf. Finney 1959:19.
²³⁰ Mackenzie *Roubigné* I:xi:95.
²³¹ II:xxxi:71.
²³² II:xlvi:178f.
²³³ Head *English Rogue* III:ii:[21].
²³³ 43.
²³⁴ I:vii:49.
²³⁵ I:vii:53.
²³⁵ I:xii:50.
²³⁶ II:vii:55.
²³⁷ II:vii:56.
²³⁸ Anon. *Whole Duty* 48.
²³⁹ 49.
²⁴⁰ Allen *Polite Lady* 21f.
²⁴⁰ Fordyce *Sermons* VI:256.
²⁴¹ Chapone *Improvement* II:viii:93f.
²⁴² Amory *Buncle* I:lxxx:415.
²⁴³ *European Magazine* 30 (July-December 1796), 180.
²⁴⁴ Burney *History* 997.
²⁴⁵ Busby *Dictionary* 214.
²⁴⁶ More *Strictures* 69.
²⁴⁷ *QMMR* 7 (1825):296.
²⁴⁸ Cf. Stone 1977.
²⁴⁹ Bennett *Short History* 19.
²⁵⁰ Gore *Armytage* I:xv:99.
²⁵¹ Gore *Cecil* 311.
²⁵² Shelley *Falkner* I:xv:90.
²⁵³ *QMMR* 4 (1822):178.
²⁵⁴ Cf. Gellrich 1992.
²⁵⁵ Gore *Désennuyée* 96.
²⁵⁶ Burney *Wanderer* II:iii:XXIV:237f.
²⁵⁷ II:iii:XXIV:237f.
²⁵⁸ II:iii:XXI:208.
²⁵⁹ II:iv:XXIX:283.
²⁶⁰ Cf. II:iii:XXIV:233f.
²⁶¹ II:iii:XXIV:239.
²⁶² II:iii:XXIV:230f.
²⁶³ II:iii:XXIV:231.
²⁶⁴ II:iii:XXIV:232.
²⁶⁵ Coleridge *Letters, Conversations etc.* 1822. II:159 q. OED.
²⁶⁶ Gore *Désennuyée* 28.
²⁶⁷ Hood 'Ode' 43-48.
²⁶⁸ Pinnock *Library* 179.
²⁶⁹ More *Strictures* 7f.
²⁷⁰ Appleton *Private Education* 189.
²⁷¹ Gore *Désennuyée* 6.
²⁷² Cf. Johnson 1972:14.
²⁷³ Hanway *Ellinor* II:vi:110.
²⁷⁴ Holcroft *Hugh Trevor* II:iv:114.

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- 275 II:iv:115.
276 II:iv:115.
277 II:iv:116.
278 H. F. C. 'The Pianoforte' 341.
279 This term is printed in black letter, not italics.
280 Gore *Cecil* 321f.
281 323.
282 324.
283 323.
284 Austen *Pride* XXXI:206.
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287 VII:29.
288 More *Strictures* 115.
289 Darwin *Plan* I:12.
290 Broadhurst *Advice* viiif.
291 ix.
292 Burgh *Anecdotes* vii.
293 Fordyce *Sermons* vi:256.
294 More *Coelebs* XXIII:111.
295 Darwin *Plan* I:12.
296 Hanway *Ellinor* II:306f.
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300 Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:14.
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302 Sinclair *Modern Accomplishments* I:3.
303 Knox *Essays* 78.
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305 *Mirror of Graces* q. Selwyn 1999:127.
306 Cf. Austen *Mansfield Park* I:vi:90.
307 Burney *Wanderer* II:iii:XXIV:229f.
308 II:iii:XXIV:235.
309 Darwin *Plan* I:12.
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311 Henry *Stultifera Navis* Section xxi:5ff. p. 88.
312 Colvill 'Extempore' 7-9.
313 Colvill 'Seraphina' 36-8.
314 Hanway *Ellinor* I:ix:107.
315 I:xiv:177.
316 Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:4.
317 III:xx:5.
318 Figs 'Introduction' to *Belinda* 1986:ix.
319 Berkenhout *Letters* XIX:189.
320 Jarrold 'On Education' 12.
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328 309.
329 Radcliffe *Sicilian Romance* I:i:48.
330 I:i:50.
331 I:i:50.

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³³³ Bloomfield ,May-Day' 914 p.178.
³³⁴ 936 p.179.
³³⁵ 938f. p.179.
³³⁶ 1004-9 p.184f.
³³⁷ 1027 p.185.
³³⁸ 1031 p.185.
³³⁹ 1046-1049 p.185f.
³⁴⁰ Peacock *Crotchet Castle* VII:695.
³⁴¹ Peacock *Nightmare Abbey* V:373.
³⁴² Lister *Granby* 179ff.
³⁴³ 185.
³⁴⁴ Combe 'Miser's End' 105.
³⁴⁵ 114-119.
³⁴⁶ Edgeworth *Helen* 150.
³⁴⁷ Peacock *Nightmare Abbey* I:358.
³⁴⁸ Hanway *Ellinor*:IV:i:13.
³⁴⁹ Bage *Hermesprong* VIII:26.
³⁵⁰ I:5.
³⁵¹ Austen *Emma* XXII:194.
³⁵² Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:6.
³⁵³ Edgeworth *Helen* 57.
³⁵⁴ More *Coelebs* XXIII:107.
³⁵⁵ XIV:67.
³⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft *Vindication* 79 (Introduction).
³⁵⁷ Edgeworth *Belinda* II:xiv:76.
³⁵⁸ Austen *Lady Susan* XVII:45f.
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³⁶⁰ II:xxiii:335.
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³⁶² II:xxiii:338.
³⁶³ II:xxiii:339.
³⁶⁴ II:xxiii:339.
³⁶⁵ II:xxiii:340.
³⁶⁶ II:xxiii:342.
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³⁶⁸ Inchbald *Simple Story* I:i:4f.
³⁶⁹ III:vi:221.
³⁷⁰ IV:xii:337f.
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³⁷² Wollstonecraft *Mary* I:1f.
³⁷³ I:2.
³⁷⁴ II:vi:51.
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³⁷⁶ II:vi:61.
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³⁷⁸ XII:263.
³⁷⁹ Macneil *Bygone Times* 318-20 p.21.
³⁸⁰ 333-338 p.22f.
³⁸¹ 375f. p.25.
³⁸² 380-382 p.25.
³⁸³ 306-310 p.21.
³⁸⁴ I:ix:87f.
³⁸⁵ I:ix:92.
³⁸⁶ Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:5.
³⁸⁷ Edgeworth *Belinda* II:xvi:126f.
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 390 Austen *Emma* XXXII:279.
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 392 Peacock *Nightmare* I:358.
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 396 Peacock *Gryll Grange* VI:802f.
 397 Cockle *Important Studies* 241.
 398 Gerritson *Remarks* 314.
 399 More *Coelebs* XXIII:112.
 400 I:10.
 401 *New Female Instructor* VII:55.
 402 More *Farmers* 11.
 403 Rowson *Mentoria* II:vi:86.
 404 II:vi:88.
 405 Dibdin *Preceptor* 103ff.
 406 VII:55.
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 410 Rowson *Inquisitor* I:17.
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 414 II:i:XI:102.
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 416 More *Strictures* IV:107.
 417 Rowson 'Women as they are' 183ff.
 418 More *Coelebs* XXIII:113.
 419 Lister *Granby* 122f.
 420 Edgeworth *Belinda* II:xx:295f.
 421 More *Coelebs* XXIII:111.
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 423 Hanway *Ellinor* II:x:182.
 424 Godwin *Fleetwood* II:xiii:192.
 425 Austen *Sanditon* XI:421.
 426 Rowson *Fille* VI:22.
 427 XVIII:101.
 428 Hays *Emma Courtney* I:xxii:71.
 429 Edgeworth *Helen* 7.
 430 Rowson *Fille* XXVII:138.
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 441 XXII:176f.
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 467 XVI:xliv:398f.
 468 Holcroft *St Ives* II:xxx:98f.
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 470 Smith *Emmeline* I:xvi:114f.
 471 III:xi:328.
 472 West *Advantages* I:xvii:165.
 473 I:xvii:166.
 474 Holcroft *St. Ives* I:xxxv:113.
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 476 IV:lxxvi:251.
 477 IV:lxxvi:252.
 478 IV:lxxvi:252.
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 483 Thelwall 'On a Dog' 9ff.
 484 Dyer 'Musicians' 20f.
 485 28ff.
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 487 29f.
 488 25f.
 489 Rowson *Fille* XVII:80.
 490 XVII:81.
 491 Rowson *Trials* III:xlvii:108; cf. also III:xliv:41f.
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 493 V:16f.
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 500 II:461ff. p.51.
 501 Godwin *Caleb Williams* I:vii:47f.
 502 I:viii:57f.

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- ⁵⁰³ Edgeworth *Practical Education* III:xx:7.
⁵⁰⁴ III:xx:6.
⁵⁰⁵ Burney *Cecilia* 460.
⁵⁰⁶ Rowson *Fille* XVIII:101.
⁵⁰⁷ Radcliffe *Sicilian Romance* I:i:31f.
⁵⁰⁸ Burney *Camilla* I:ii:XIV:156f.
⁵⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft *Wrongs* II:xii:73f.
⁵¹⁰ Shelley *Lodore* II:viii:152f.
⁵¹¹ Austen *Sense* XXIII:119.
⁵¹² XXIII:120.
⁵¹³ XVI:69.
⁵¹⁴ Austen *Persuasion* I:vi:48.
⁵¹⁵ VI:49.
⁵¹⁶ Cf. Austen *Pride* VI:71f.
⁵¹⁷ Cf. Austen *Emma* VI:72.
⁵¹⁸ Cf. Austen *Sense* V:21 and 24.
⁵¹⁹ Cf. X.
⁵²⁰ Cf. Fergus 1981:74.
⁵²¹ Selwyn 1999:134
⁵²² Austen *Sense* XXXVI:210.
⁵²³ Austen *Persuasion* II:viii:178.
⁵²⁴ II:viii:180.
⁵²⁵ II:vii:170.
⁵²⁶ Austen *Pride* XXXI:207.
⁵²⁷ XXXI:208.
⁵²⁸ XXXI:209.
⁵²⁹ X:96.
⁵³⁰ XXXI:209.
⁵³¹ Ward *Reign* 594.
⁵³² 619.
⁵³³ *Musical Times* August 1873:175. Cf. also Ehrlich 1976:9f.
⁵³⁴ Hardy *Madding Crowd* I:iv:65.
⁵³⁵ XIII:123.
⁵³⁶ I:xv:133.
⁵³⁷ Meredith *Feverel* VIII:61.
⁵³⁸ XX:161.
⁵³⁹ Eliot *Mill* II:i:142.
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⁵⁴² Rossetti 'During Music' 5-8.
⁵⁴³ Auerbach 1982, Heinemann 1983, Honig 1988, Janson 1971, Langland 1995, Mitchell 1981, Peterson 1984.
⁵⁴⁴ Lodge *Nice Work* I:ii:52.
⁵⁴⁵ Clapp 1996.
⁵⁴⁶ Da Sousa 2003.
⁵⁴⁷ Sullivan 'On music' 285.
⁵⁴⁸ Southgate 'Treatment' 28 and 39.
⁵⁴⁹ Rita *Countess Daphne* q. Southgate 'Treatment' 26.
⁵⁵⁰ *Eliza Cook's Journal* VII (1852) 96.
⁵⁵¹ Hullah *Music* 24.
⁵⁵² Sennett 1976:20.
⁵⁵³ H.F.C. 'The Pianoforte' 307.
⁵⁵⁴ *Nature* 10 (17-9-1874):395.
⁵⁵⁵ Ehrlich 1985:71.
⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Dickens *Drood* XII:103.
⁵⁵⁷ Cf. 239 (Appendix E).
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⁵⁵⁹ Eliot *Mill* V:iii:291.

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 566 Meredith *Beauchamp* XXVIII:312f.
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 571 Unwin 1994:331f.
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 578 Rose 1986:76.
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 603 Reade *Hard Cash* I:v:167.
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 605 Dickens *Dombey* XVII:liv:724.
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⁶¹⁸ Clapp 1996:58.
⁶¹⁹ Cf. Oliphant *Marjoribanks* X:107ff.
⁶²⁰ Butler *All Flesh* XI:43.
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⁶²² XI:45.
⁶²³ Sinclair *Jane Bouverie* VII:77f.
⁶²⁴ Trollope *Eustace Diamonds* I:ii:18.
⁶²⁵ James *Daisy Miller* IV:61.
⁶²⁶ IV:61.
⁶²⁷ IV:63.
⁶²⁸ IV:61f.
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⁶³⁰ IV:64.
⁶³¹ Armstrong 1974:270f.
⁶³² Ella *Musical Sketches* 28.
⁶³³ Haweis *Ideals* 140.
⁶³⁴ Dickens *Twist* XXXII:211.
⁶³⁵ II:XXXII:212f.
⁶³⁶ Thackeray *Newcomes* XI:121 and 123.
⁶³⁷ Haweis *Ideals* 43.
⁶³⁸ 43.
⁶³⁹ Collins *No Name* X:103.
⁶⁴⁰ XIV:144
⁶⁴¹ Thackeray *Vanity Fair* LIX:691f.
⁶⁴² Dickens *Dombey* VI:xviii:242.
⁶⁴³ White *Autobiography* VI:114.
⁶⁴⁴ VI:115f
⁶⁴⁵ VI:117.
⁶⁴⁶ Patmore *Angel* VII:i:65-68.
⁶⁴⁷ Collins *Woman in White* I:ix:52.
⁶⁴⁸ Power Cobbe *Life* 63ff.
⁶⁴⁹ Anon. 'Concert of Amateurs' 7.
⁶⁵⁰ *Eliza Cook's Journal* VIII (1852) 77.
⁶⁵¹ Braddon *Aurora Floyd* I:v:100f.
⁶⁵² Clough *Bothie* II:56-61 pp.123f.
⁶⁵³ *Musical Times* September 1886:528.
⁶⁵⁴ Leppert 1993:186.
⁶⁵⁵ Eliot *Essays* 302.
⁶⁵⁶ Gaskell *North and South* I:xii:97.
⁶⁵⁷ Gaskell *Wives and Daughters* I:xxiv:273.
⁶⁵⁸ I:xxiv:275.
⁶⁵⁹ Smith 'Two Sisters' 25-28.
⁶⁶⁰ 39f.
⁶⁶¹ Collins *Woman in White* I:vi:27.
⁶⁶² I:vi:27.
⁶⁶³ Broughton *Not Wisely* XXVI:236.
⁶⁶⁴ Brontë *Wildfell Hall* II:vii:230.
⁶⁶⁵ II:viii:237.
⁶⁶⁶ Craik *Olive* I:xi:142.
⁶⁶⁷ I:x:139.
⁶⁶⁸ I:xii:163.
⁶⁶⁹ II:v:115.
⁶⁷⁰ I:157.
⁶⁷¹ Eliot *Middlemarch* I:vii:64.
⁶⁷² I:vii:64.
⁶⁷³ III:xxviii:268.

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⁶⁷⁵ Brontë *Jane Eyre* I:xiii:151f.
⁶⁷⁶ III:vi:471.
⁶⁷⁷ II:i:200.
⁶⁷⁸ II:i:201.
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⁶⁸² 21.
⁶⁸³ Wilde *Letters* 224, 22-01-1884.
⁶⁸⁴ Power Cobbe *Life* 65f.
⁶⁸⁵ Sinclair *Jane Bouverie* IV:45f.
⁶⁸⁶ Oliphant *Salem Chapel* I:i:8.
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⁶⁸⁹ Eliot *Deronda* I:v:41f.
⁶⁹⁰ Wood *Arnell* 281f.
⁶⁹¹ Hardy *Blue Eyes* I:iii:38f.
⁶⁹² I:iii:39.
⁶⁹³ Collins *Woman in White* I:viii:45.
⁶⁹⁴ I:viii:46.
⁶⁹⁵ Ruskin *Sesame* 38 [preface to the 1871 edition].
⁶⁹⁶ Meredith 'Marian' 7f.
⁶⁹⁷ Moultrie 'Violets' 25f.
⁶⁹⁸ 57-60.
⁶⁹⁹ Berger *Reminiscences* 175.
⁷⁰⁰ Locker-Lampson 'Castle' 53ff.
⁷⁰¹ Dickens *Drood* VI:44.
⁷⁰² VII:52.
⁷⁰³ Collins *No Name* I:22
⁷⁰⁴ I:22
⁷⁰⁵ Disraeli *Sybil* II:vi:77.
⁷⁰⁶ Gaskell *North and South* I:i:5.
⁷⁰⁷ I:i:9.
⁷⁰⁸ I:xviii:142.
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⁷¹⁰ I:i:5.
⁷¹¹ I:i:13.
⁷¹² Q. Carroll 1971:315.
⁷¹³ 326.
⁷¹⁴ Brontë *Villette* XXVII:397.
⁷¹⁵ XXVII:398.
⁷¹⁶ XXVII:399.
⁷¹⁷ Smith 'Sisters' 37.
⁷¹⁸ Trollope *Framley Parsonage* XI:139.
⁷¹⁹ XI:140.
⁷²⁰ X:118
⁷²¹ Kingsley *Alton Locke* I:xiv:162.
⁷²² I:xvi:171.
⁷²³ II:ii:216.
⁷²⁴ I:xvi:169.
⁷²⁵ II:ii:216.
⁷²⁶ Craik *Olive* I:xii:157.
⁷²⁷ Dickens *Dorrit* I:xvi:192.
⁷²⁸ Braddon *Secret* II:v:201.
⁷²⁹ Wood *Arnell* 51.
⁷³⁰ 23.

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⁷³⁵ Wood *Arkeil* 283.
⁷³⁶ Craven *Notes* 4.
⁷³⁷ *Aidé Marstons* 10.
⁷³⁸ Da Sousa Correa 2003:80.
⁷³⁹ Ellis *Daughters* 104.
⁷⁴⁰ Arthur *Advice* 97.
⁷⁴¹ Farningham *Girlhood* 12f.
⁷⁴² Yonge *Hopes and Fears* II:iii:35.
⁷⁴³ 68.
⁷⁴⁴ Eliot *Middlemarch* VII:lxiv:643.
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⁷⁴⁷ Gaskell *Uncle Peter* 440f.
⁷⁴⁸ Eliot 'Armgart' II:137f. p.129.
⁷⁴⁹ Dickens *Copperfield* V:xv:192.
⁷⁵⁰ Cf. VI:xvi:198.
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⁷⁵² Cf. Hellerstein 1981:4-8.
⁷⁵³ Haweis *Morals* 526.
⁷⁵⁴ 526.
⁷⁵⁵ Leppert 1993:70.
⁷⁵⁶ *Nature* 10 (1874):395, 17-9-1874.
⁷⁵⁷ Wood *East Lynne* I:240.
⁷⁵⁸ Yonge *Hopes and Fears* I:ii:134.
⁷⁵⁹ Eliot *Middlemarch* VIII:lxvii:760.
⁷⁶⁰ Collins *Miss Finch* I:v:26.
⁷⁶¹ II:xxxiii:229f.
⁷⁶² Collins *No Name* X:99f.
⁷⁶³ Collins *Moonstone* I:vii:81.
⁷⁶⁴ II:iii:VI and VII:390.
⁷⁶⁵ II:i:VII:295.
⁷⁶⁶ Braddon *Secret* I:i:10.
⁷⁶⁷ I:iii:32.
⁷⁶⁸ II:viii:235.
⁷⁶⁹ Cf. II:xi.
⁷⁷⁰ Collins *Armadale* IV:i:666.
⁷⁷¹ IV:i:662.
⁷⁷² III:x:515.
⁷⁷³ II:xi:344
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⁷⁷⁵ Barnett *Reminiscences* 2.
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⁷⁷⁹ Auerbach 1989:66.
⁷⁸⁰ Grey and Shirreff *Thoughts* II:228f.
⁷⁸¹ Binstock 1985:229.
⁷⁸² Bodenheimer 1990:10f.
⁷⁸³ Eliot *Mill* VI:vi:426.
⁷⁸⁴ Haweis *Morals* 516.
⁷⁸⁵ 'Agnes' 'Woman' 407.
⁷⁸⁶ *Aidé* 'Amateur Music' 93.
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⁷⁹² *Englishwoman's Magazine* 1851:407.
⁷⁹³ 406.
⁷⁹⁴ Brontë *Agnes Grey* vii:67.
⁷⁹⁵ Reade *Hard Cash* I:v:162.
⁷⁹⁶ I:v:162.
⁷⁹⁷ 'Agnes' 'Woman' 405.
⁷⁹⁸ Haweis *Morals* 515.
⁷⁹⁹ 'Agnes' 'Woman' 405.
⁸⁰⁰ Eliot *Letters* I:13, 06-11-1838.
⁸⁰¹ IV:478, 13-10-1868.
⁸⁰² Mrs. Hullah *Words* 49.
⁸⁰³ Thackeray *Ravenswing* IV:169.
⁸⁰⁴ Baker 'Early Education' 245.
⁸⁰⁵ Ellis *Daughters* 101.
⁸⁰⁶ Mrs. Hullah *Words* 4f.
⁸⁰⁷ Baker 'Early Education' 245.
⁸⁰⁸ Ballaster 1991:89.
⁸⁰⁹ Pullan *Counsels* 82.
⁸¹⁰ Thackeray *Snobs* XVI:392.
⁸¹¹ XXVII:435.
⁸¹² Calverley 'Play' 22ff.
⁸¹³ Carlyle q. Young 1965:34f.
⁸¹⁴ Aidé 'Amateur Music' 96.
⁸¹⁵ 169.
⁸¹⁶ Cf. Toulmin *Hildred* 169.
⁸¹⁷ Cf. 150.
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⁸¹⁹ Gaskell *Wives and Daughters* I:xxiv:273.
⁸²⁰ Oliphant *Salem Chapel* II:10.
⁸²¹ Carl Czerny cited in Ella *Musical Sketches* 40.
⁸²² Fawkes 'On a Lady's singing' 12.
⁸²³ Chatterton 'To Miss C—' 6ff.
⁸²⁴ Jones 'To a Young Lady' 29-39.
⁸²⁵ Woodward 'To Phoebe' 3-14.
⁸²⁶ Steele 'To Celia'.
⁸²⁷ Colvill 'Seraphina' 60-3.
⁸²⁸ Nicholson 'Dying Lover' 13-20.
⁸²⁹ Kipling 'Banjo' 1-4.
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⁸³¹ Cooper *Life* 110f.
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⁸³⁴ Cf. Matthew 25, 1-13.
⁸³⁵ Watt 'Stanzas' 25-28.
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⁸³⁷ Todhunter 'Cäcilchen' 13-20.
⁸³⁸ John 1, 33.
⁸³⁹ Todhunter 'Cäcilchen' 65ff.
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⁸⁴¹ Ellison 'Piano-Forte' 12-4.
⁸⁴² Douglas 'Night Wandering' 33-41.
⁸⁴³ Bourdillon 'The Spinnet'.
⁸⁴⁴ Field 'On a Portrait' 11f.

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⁸⁴⁶ Pound 'Biancheggiar' 3-10.
⁸⁴⁷ Pound 'Scriptor' 20-28.
⁸⁴⁸ Joyce '[Chamber Music](#)' II:
⁸⁴⁹ XXX:1-3.
⁸⁵⁰ Wratislaw 'Le Piano' 1-6.
⁸⁵¹ Payne 'At the Piano'.
⁸⁵² Coleridge 'To a Piano' 9-14.
⁸⁵³ Gosse 'Music' 4-8.
⁸⁵⁴ Hardy 'Haunting Fingers' 28.
⁸⁵⁵ 25-27.
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⁸⁵⁷ Hardy 'Re-Enactment' 61-70.
⁸⁵⁸ Leavis [1977:76](#).
⁸⁵⁹ 78.
⁸⁶⁰ Lawrence 'Piano'.
⁸⁶¹ Lucas 1986:32.
⁸⁶² Scott *Canongate* II:ii:231.
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⁸⁶⁴ II:ii:232.
⁸⁶⁵ II:ii:232.
⁸⁶⁶ XX:183.
⁸⁶⁷ Cf. Bodenheimer 1990:17.
⁸⁶⁸ Lodge 1985:24.
⁸⁶⁹ Cf. Unwin 1994:57.
⁸⁷⁰ Ward 'Robin Redbreast' 17-20.
⁸⁷¹ 31f.
⁸⁷² 3f.
⁸⁷³ Field 'Waltz of Chopin' 236.
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⁸⁷⁵ Dowden 'To Hester' 39-44.
⁸⁷⁶ Brittain *Testament* 53.
⁸⁷⁷ Forster *Maurice* XXXIV:153.
⁸⁷⁸ XXXIV:153f.
⁸⁷⁹ Raitt 2000:44, quoting a 1912 essay.
⁸⁸⁰ Woolf *Night and Day* XXII:267.
⁸⁸¹ XXVI:328f.
⁸⁸² Mansfield *Letters* 204f., 10-11-1919.
⁸⁸³ Doyle 'Cyclist' 529.
⁸⁸⁴ Cf. Unwin 1994:333.
⁸⁸⁵ Stubbs 1979:59.
⁸⁸⁶ Egerton *Discords* 171.
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⁸⁹² *British Medical Journal* 22-04-1899:988.
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⁸⁹⁷ Shaw *Shaw's Music* III:197, 02-05-1892.
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910 VII:101.
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913 IV:81.
914 Gissing *Odd Women* XII:123.
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916 I:36.
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922 XXIV:166.
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927 271f.
928 Bennett *These Twain* I:vii:77.
929 Dowie *Gallia* XVII:110.
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931 Dixon *Modern Woman* 46.
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934 Huneker 'Eternal Feminine' 292f.
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938 Pinero *Tanqueray* III:109f.
939 III:110.
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941 Cf. Shaw *Shaw's Music* I:72.
942 Anon. *Tanqueray* II:101f.
943 Wratislaw 'To a Pianist'.
944 Cf. Unwin 1994:91.
945 Bentley *Trent* XIII:251.
946 Barry *Antigone* III:iii:XXXIII:201.
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949 IV:194f.
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953 25f.
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955 Hardy *Jude* IV:i:219ff.
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957 James 'Beast' III:81f.
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⁹⁶⁰ Sinclair *Audrey Craven* 22.
⁹⁶¹ 23.
⁹⁶² Raitt 2000:70.
⁹⁶³ James 'Real Thing' 67.
⁹⁶⁴ Rowbotham 1989:11, note 2.
⁹⁶⁵ Brown 'The Heroine' 1.
⁹⁶⁶ 9ff.
⁹⁶⁷ Dowie *Gallia* XVII:110.
⁹⁶⁸ XIII:87.
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⁹⁷⁰ II:i:IV:378.
⁹⁷¹ II:i:XI:419.
⁹⁷² Drew 1926:167f.
⁹⁷³ Galsworthy *Forsyte* III:i:x:689.
⁹⁷⁴ Somerville *Real Charlotte* II:xix:60.
⁹⁷⁵ II:xix:66.
⁹⁷⁶ Binstock 1985:327.
⁹⁷⁷ Wilde *Dorian* IV:40f.
⁹⁷⁸ James 'Turn of the Screw' IX:132.
⁹⁷⁹ XVIII:168.
⁹⁸⁰ XVIII:170.
⁹⁸¹ Makower *Mirror* 98.
⁹⁸² 99.
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⁹⁸⁴ Newman 'Psychology' 150.
⁹⁸⁵ Barry *Antigone* I:i:II:23.
⁹⁸⁶ I:i:II:27.
⁹⁸⁷ I:i:II:29.
⁹⁸⁸ I:i:II:30.
⁹⁸⁹ I:i:II:31f.
⁹⁹⁰ I:i:II:34.
⁹⁹¹ Fellowes *Memoirs* 9.
⁹⁹² Cf. Scholes 1947:337.
⁹⁹³ Gale 'The Old Piano' 50ff.
⁹⁹⁴ 10.
⁹⁹⁵ 29f.
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⁹⁹⁷ 17ff.
⁹⁹⁸ Maugham *Bondage* CIV:790f.
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¹⁰⁰⁰ Cf. 22.
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¹⁰⁰² II:34.
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¹⁰⁰⁴ Cf. 264 and 280.
¹⁰⁰⁵ Stevenson *Poems* 548, note quoting an unpublished letter.
¹⁰⁰⁶ 548.
¹⁰⁰⁷ Cf. Gillett 2000b:228.
¹⁰⁰⁸ Hardy *Jude* I:i:33.
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¹⁰¹⁰ Meredith *Conquerors* VIII:72f.
¹⁰¹¹ Baring-Gould *Roar* I:vi:70.
¹⁰¹² I:vii:80f.
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1028 XX:208.
1029 XX:208f.
1030 Rose *Greater Britain* 15.
1031 Bennett *These Twain*:v:62.
1032 I:v:62.
1033 I:v:62.
1034 I:v:61.
1035 I:v:61.
1036 I:v:64.
1037 Bentley *Trent* XIII:251f.
1038 Sinclair *Helpmate* XV:128.
1039 XV:128.
1040 XV:132.
1041 Shaw *Music-Cure* 883.
1042 887.
1043 890.
1044 892.
1045 893.
1046 Cf. Southgate 'Treatment'.
1047 Kuhe *Recollections* 220.
1048 Q. Gorham 1982:183.
1049 Walker *Experiences* 39.
1050 Crowest *Phases* 282f.
1051 266.
1052 Unwin 1994:177.
1053 Cf. Moore *Food of Love* XXIX:318f.
1054 XXIX:319.
1055 Berger *Reminiscences* 187.
1056 Kuhe *Recollections* 367.
1057 Cf. Lake 'Social Appreciation' 101 and Pearsall 1973:87.
1058 Moore *Food of Love* V:55ff.
1059 I:6.
1060 I:9.
1061 Bottome *Life* 264.
1062 Carswell *Camomile* 165.
1063 166.
1064 162f.
1065 V:55.
1066 X:119.
1067 Marshall *Alma* I:7.
1068 V:52.
1069 II:18.
1070 Carswell *Camomile* 168f.
1071 Willcocks *Wings* VI:98f.
1072 VI:98f.

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- 1073 VII:128.
1074 XII:255.
1075 XII:256.
1076 XIII:279.
1077 XIII:283.
1078 XIV:308.
1079 XVI:354.
1080 XV:335.
1081 Shaw *Shaw's Music* III:123, February 1892.
1082 *Musical Times* August 1884 q. Scholes 1947:335.
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1084 Op. 59
1085 Bennett *These Twain* I:vii:73.
1086 I:vii:74.
1087 Walpole *Jeremy* I:6.
1088 Forster *Maurice* VI:29.
1089 Ricketts (14-10-1916, q. Kermode 1995:481).
1090 Haweis *Morals* 515.
1091 Ricketts (14-10-1916, q. Kermode 1995:481).
1092 Marshall *Alma* 94.
1093 Conrad *Agent* IV:61.
1094 IV:67.
1095 XIII:310.
1096 Gale 'Aunt Jan' 1f. and 13f.
1097 Gale 'The Old Piano' 13.
1098 Carswell *Camomile* 40.
1099 Grand *Beth* IV:32.
1100 Sinclair *Olivier* II:ii:II:69.
1101 91.
1102 Forster *Room* IV:60.
1103 III:59.
1104 II:50.
1105 II:50.
1106 II:48.
1107 II:50.
1108 38.
1109 Forster *Lucy Novels* 9.
1110 Forster *Room* III:51.
1111 III:52.
1112 XV:173.
1113 XV:174.
1114 Grand *Beth* II:17.
1115 XVII:149.
1116 XVII:149.
1117 XVIII:159.
1118 XVIII:159.
1119 XVIII:159.
1120 XVIII:159.
1121 XVIII:159f.
1122 XVIII:160.
1123 XVIII:160.
1124 XVIII:162ff.
1125 XVIII:162ff.
1126 XXVII:249.
1127 XXX:293.
1128 XXX:295.
1129 XXXII:306.

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- ¹¹³⁰ XLIII:396.
¹¹³¹ Carswell *Camomile* 132.
¹¹³² Sinclair *Olivier* II:ii:II:69f.
¹¹³³ II:ii:VII:79.
¹¹³⁴ II:ii:VII:80.
¹¹³⁵ III:iii:II:140.
¹¹³⁶ III:iii:II:140.
¹¹³⁷ III:iii:II:140.
¹¹³⁸ Cf. III:iii:II:140.
¹¹³⁹ IV:I:X:205.
¹¹⁴⁰ IV:i:X:205f.
¹¹⁴¹ IV:ii:I:212.
¹¹⁴² IV:ii:II:212f.
¹¹⁴³ IV:ii:II:213.
¹¹⁴⁴ IV:ii:V:216.
¹¹⁴⁵ IV:ii:V:216.
¹¹⁴⁶ Cf. Raitt 2000:177.
¹¹⁴⁷ Sinclair *Olivier* IV:ii:V:217.
¹¹⁴⁸ IV:ii:XI:222.
¹¹⁴⁹ IV:ii:XIV:229f.
¹¹⁵⁰ IV:vii:XI:312.
¹¹⁵¹ IV:viii:VI:322.
¹¹⁵² IV:viii:VI:322.
¹¹⁵³ IV:viii:VI:322f.
¹¹⁵⁴ IV:viii:VII:324f.
¹¹⁵⁵ IV:viii:VII:325.
¹¹⁵⁶ IV:viii:VII:325f.
¹¹⁵⁷ V:v:III:429.
¹¹⁵⁸ IV:xi:III:371.