

Listening to the Music

Nineteenth Century Intersections between Music, Class, and Genre

by

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A thesis presented for the B. A. degree

with Honors in

The Department of English

University of Michigan

Spring 2008

To my parents, who have consistently supported my love of reading and my love of the viola.

Acknowledgements

Without the support of my professors, my colleagues in the English thesis cohort, my friends, and my family, this thesis would have remained merely an idea that was floating around in my head. I am unspeakably grateful to my thesis advisor, Lucy Hartley. I appreciated her enthusiasm, constructive criticism, and her dedication at reading all that I wrote, even on short notice. Her detailed comments and our long discussions, as well as her generous book lending policy, helped shape and clarify my thinking. I would also like to thank Catherine Sanok for her enthusiasm for reading my work, despite being a Mediaevalist, not a Victorianist, and Scotty Parrish, for shepherding us through this process. Merla Wolk, Jonathan Freedman, and Karen Fournier also inspired me to pursue interdisciplinary connections between music and literature.

Perhaps as much as my professors, my parents helped me bring this project to fruition. Their support, continued interest in my topic, and perspective helped to keep me sane throughout this project. I also would like to thank all of my friends for their encouragement in the past seven months, asking me about my thesis and caring about the answer.

I feel fortunate to have gone through this process with the other wonderful students who comprise the 2008 Thesis cohort. Without the group studying, the predatory capturing of study rooms in the UGLi, and the patient people who acted as sounding boards for many of my brainstorming sessions, I might still be struggling with my first five pages.

Finally, thanks to Caroline Coade, Joan Weekes, Claire Keeble, and Kathy Haugen, who taught me the power of music.

Abstract

This thesis examines the motif of music in three novels written in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot (1876), *Thyrza* by George Gissing (1885), and *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy (1896). Specifically, I shall examine the ways in which classical music, folk music, and popular music serve as motifs within the novels to raise questions about class mobility, the relationships between classes, and the power dynamic between members of the class structure and the structure itself. The way the authors discuss the English class system through the trope of music reveals how the novels expand beyond the boundaries of the genre in which they initially seem to be located.

The introduction provides a historical background on Romantic music, the music hall, and the changing position of the artist in Victorian society, as well as the English reform legislation that provided an atmosphere for the discussion of social tensions in these three novels. I also gloss the current critical conversation about the motif of music in these three novels, and introduce the genre terms that become important in each of the chapters.

In chapter one, I investigate Eliot's use of music to create a new societal hierarchy based around musicality. She deals with two extremes of the class structure: the upper class and what I term the "unclassed" outsiders, portraying the conventional social structure but at the same time upsetting it with indications of her own structure. The novel draws upon the Romantic music tradition and aesthetic philosophy to evaluate characters based upon their musicality and the influence of that musicality on other characters in the novel. I argue that the force of Romanticism in the music of the novel introduces a thread of idealism in the idea of the irrelevance of material commodities to determine class identity. These two concepts, in turn, expand Eliot's idea of realism, allowing her to not only faithfully portray the everyday world of Victorian England but also to create a reality from her hopes for society.

I examine Gissing's *Thyrza* in chapter two, which begins to reveal a shift in the conception of music's ability to affect the social structure. Gissing uses the trope of music to suggest that while musicality can no longer allow characters to escape the class structure, it still provides a chance for mobility within the class hierarchy. However, I argue that an examination of Gissing's use of folk music and classical music and the fate of the musical characters leads to an understanding that music can only allow for mobility if the upper classes embrace the value of musicality and cultural potential. This indicates Gissing's shift from the social novel genre towards naturalism, a trend that becomes pronounced in many of his later works.

The shift away from the power of music to affect class mobility continues as I inquire into Hardy's last novel, and even reveals a complete reversal of the cultural value of music. My last chapter discusses how Hardy uses music to ironically comment on the Romantic tradition, the ability of characters to transcend society through music, and the relevance of music to the working classes. He sees classical music and church music as completely indifferent to the individual, and sees musicality as harmful to the characters' ability to survive in society. By explicating the use of music in *Jude the Obscure*, I believe it becomes evident that the tragedy of Jude is tempered by a sense of pragmatism, questioning the usefulness of desiring mobility in what Hardy sees as a fixed society. Thus, I argue that the examination of music as a motif in the late Victorian novel provides a unique lens with which to examine the rapidly shifting opinions about social mobility in the late nineteenth century and their effect on the fluidity of genre, allowing the reader to reconsider the traditional genre labels that have been given to these novels.

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Prelude

“You could do nothing better [...] [than] the life of a true artist. [...] Art, my mistress, is worthy, and I will live to merit her.”

--- Herr Klesmer, *Daniel Deronda*¹

“Presently he gasped again: ‘Throat—water—Sue—darling—drop of water—please O please!’ No water came, and the organ notes, faint as a bee’s hum, rolled in as before.”

--- Jude, *Jude the Obscure*²

The relationships between the character and music in these two moments reflect polar extremes of the relationship between art and society. In the quotation, Herr Klesmer, the prototypical musician, figures his relationship to art as the intimate and romantic connection of man to his object of courtly love. Music is a force that exalts him and pushes him to greatness. In *Jude the Obscure*, in contrast, Hardy describes Jude’s relationship to art on his deathbed as antagonistic, for the description of music emphasizes his isolation from the community who are listening to the organ. Far from exalting him, the use of music ironically comments on his suffering and his desire for human sympathy by disregarding his plight. The vastly different relationship between the individual and music in these two examples gives a sense of the dramatic shift in authorial opinion regarding the way music affects different types of fictional characters in a hierarchical society. By examining the use of music in the novel in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, one may gain important insights into the correspondence between music and class mobility, and a fresh perspective on the evolving genre of the novel. My thesis will explore the ways in which changes in the form and function of the novel towards the end of the century

¹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984, 217. Hereafter cited as DD.

² Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, London: Macmillan, 1974, 408. Hereafter cited as JO.

diminish the link between music and class mobility and render musical appreciation less relevant for the lower classes and more exclusively the preserve of the middle and upper classes.

II. Objectives and Themes

This thesis examines the intersection of and overlap between egalitarian impulses in music and egalitarian social impulses in the English novel in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. I focus on three novels written in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: *Daniel Deronda* (1876) by George Eliot, *Thyrza* (1885) by George Gissing, and *Jude the Obscure* (1896) by Thomas Hardy. Specifically, I shall examine the ways in which classical music, folk music, and popular music serve as motifs within the novels to raise questions about class mobility, the relationships between classes, and the power dynamic between members of the class structure and the structure itself. The elucidation of the authors' views about the English class system through the trope of music reveals how the novels expand beyond the boundaries of the genre in which they are located. The primary focus of my analysis will be on classical music, broadly defined to encompass church music, instrumental music, and vocal music that has written instead of oral origins. However, folk and popular music becomes important particularly in *Thyrza* and *Daniel Deronda*. My goal is to inquire into the use of music in all of its variegated forms in these three distinct but related works and also to focus on the time period (the last quarter of the Nineteenth century) in order to trace the synergies and fractures in the linkage of music to class and genre.

Throughout my thesis, I investigate the connections between Eliot's, Gissing's, and Hardy's opinions of the power of music to serve as an avenue for social mobility. The Victorian period coincided with the Romantic period in music, and Romantic philosophies on music were reflected in both popular and classical music of the time. Edward Lee, a musicologist, writes,

The predominant impression of the age [of Victoria] is a sentimental one. The desire to have the heartstrings sounded strongly and often [...] the desire to dramatize the external

and to represent in by “realistic” and onomatopoeic effects [...] The difference between the popular and the serious in this vein was only in the degree of exaggeration, and the technical subtlety of the means of portrayal.³

These philosophies on music weave through all three of my chapters and through various musical styles that I discuss. I examine a wide range of musical styles because different styles are inextricably tied to different class identifications. For my thesis, I generally follow R.S. Neale’s conception of a five level class system: the upper class, the middle class, the middling class, the working class, and the poor.⁴ To this system, I add the unclassed—characters who operate outside of the class system because of religion, ethnicity, or social transgressions. In the three novels, upper-class characters have entirely different musical training, inhabit different musical spaces, and listen to different genres of music than the middle-class characters, and they, in turn, differ from the working-class characters in their musical experience. In *Daniel Deronda*, the characters are mostly upper class or “unclassified,” although Gwendolen exemplifies the middling class, for she exists between the two extremes. This creates a different dynamic between the characters than in *Jude the Obscure*, in which nearly all of the characters are members of the upper working class. Gissing, in contrast, represents the upper, middle, and lower classes in *Thyrza*, discussing the distance that the upper class places between itself and the lower classes. Thus, encroachment of the lower classes into the classical music world, as well as lower class expressions of music become micro-dramas through which class conflicts are addressed and questions about status and rank are voiced. This phenomenon, which Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff term “the Victorian

³ Edward Lee, *Music of the People*, London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970, p. 95-96. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

⁴ This conception of the English class system will be explained in chapter two, where it is most relevant.

connection between music and social improvement,”⁵ requires examination in order to understand the shifting sense of music as an index of social identity.

The motif of music, specifically as it illuminates class issues, provides a lens with which to re-examine genre categorizations. Thus, in order to discuss the ways in which musical sensitivity, performative ability, performance space, and the figurative use of music can affect the social order, one must not only examine class definitions but also genre. Eliot’s conception of music in *Daniel Deronda* indicates her commitment to realism and idealism and explains why the novel’s realism seems to be inconsistent. The relationship between the main characters’ musicality and their class rank in *Thyrza* reveals how Gissing moves away from the social novel genre and towards naturalism. And the tragedy of *Jude the Obscure* features an ironic use of music that combines a pessimistic view of the world’s indifference to human life and a pragmatic view that emphasizes the need for survival even in a hostile environment.

Indeed, the last half of the century featured many literary genres that bled into and mixed with each other, resulting in works that are challenging to label in terms of genre. Broadly speaking, English novelists transitioned from local concerns about class struggles within the stratified English class system to more universal concerns about the relationship of the individual to a hierarchical and rigid society. The genre terms that are important to my analysis of Hardy, Eliot, and Gissing include the genres of the social novel, realism, Romanticism, naturalism, and tragedy as well as the philosophies of idealism and pragmatism. There is a large body of criticism on each of these terms, but I shall limit my examination to their intersection with the motif of music and the expression of class issues because I believe this examination expands the current understanding of the genre of each novel. I will introduce the terms within the contexts of the

⁵ Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, Introduction, *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2004, xviii.

individual chapters, as well as provide an overview of the historical context as necessary. Most of the terms are specific to one author, and should be more salient when juxtaposed with the context in which they are most applicable.

III. Historical Context

According to the Norton *History of Western Music* (2005), the term, “Romanticism” is used by musicologists to characterize music written from approximately 1820 until the turn of the century.⁶ A reaction against industrialization, capitalism, and urbanization, Romanticism focused on the individuality of expression, the beauty of nature, and the spontaneous expression of emotion. In choosing to be musicians, then, performers and composers chose to pursue their love and their dream instead of money (Burkholder 602). The use of music for capitalistic means was looked down upon as a pollution of the higher, true art form. The era of Romanticism featured the popular German Lied, which fused music and poetry, elements of folk style and classical style, and focused on the performer’s emotions (Burkholder 604). Like Lieder, Romantic orchestral and piano music also featured strong contrasts, tuneful melodies, and dramatic emotions and moods created through more complex harmonies (particularly diminished seventh chords) (Burkholder 635-6).⁷ Popular composers during this era include Chopin, Brahms, and Liszt, as their music is representative of the Romantic ideals. Arthur Schopenhauer, the philosopher, defined this concept of Romantic music in *The World as Will and Idea*, arguing that music should be placed above all other arts because it uniquely reveals the human “Will”—his term for the “inner nature” of all things. While all other aspects of our world are merely representations of perceptions,

⁶ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*. 7th Ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005, 602. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “Burkholder.”

⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of Romantic music and its manifestations in opera and orchestral music, see chapters 24 and 25 of Burkholder. Because orchestral music is not dealt with in detail in *Thyrza*, *Daniel Deronda*, or *Jude the Obscure*, it will not be referenced again, although it makes up a critical part of Romantic music literature.

Schopenhauer argues, music reveals the human soul and the inner nature of the world.⁸ The idea of music being able to unveil the artifice of society and reveal objective truth became a cornerstone of the value that people applied to music during the Romantic period.

While philosophers were articulating the idea of Romanticism in classical music as a protest to industrialization and urbanization, the working classes were creating a musical space of their own in the music halls. As a manifestation of capitalism, the popular music in the music halls allowed the working classes to perform and created a lucrative business out of music. The advent of the music hall began in the middle of the nineteenth century, when pubs began to build singing saloons to give patrons amusement and incentive to stay and patronize the pub.⁹ Quickly, these singing saloons became separate buildings, and the focus shifted towards entertainment. Intent on furnishing the working classes with their own particular preferences for entertainment, the halls featured popular dance bands, show songs, and other popular repertoire.¹⁰ This immediately created social tension between the concert hall patrons and music hall patrons, for, as Dagmar suggests, “The halls made a mockery of middle-class interpretations of Victorian values and set up their own alternatives in opposition” (Kift 2). The halls were primarily patronized by working class individuals who wanted the luxuries that the middle class could afford. While music halls allowed the working classes to experience music and finer entertainment, they were often criticized for supporting prostitution and drunkenness¹¹. The halls also featured mixed audiences of both women and men, scandalizing the middle class critics of music halls, who

⁸ Alpers, Philip, “Schopenhauer and Musical Revelation,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40.2 (1981), 155-166, 158. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

⁹ Kift, Dagmar, *The Victorian music hall: culture, class, and conflict*, Cambridge UP: New York, 1991, 1-2.

¹⁰ Scott, Derek B. “God Bless the Music Halls: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Songs,” *The Victorian Web*, 2007, <http://www.victorianweb.org/mt/musichall/scott1.html>

¹¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, “Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900,” *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974): 477

thought women should not be exposed to the vulgar atmosphere (Kift 72). Because of these controversies, the halls were widely debated by socially conscious writers, including Gissing.

The nineteenth century also featured the rise of the artist's position in society, elevating him from servile status towards the status of a public idol. Beginning with Ludwig Van Beethoven, performers and composers began to rise from their formerly servile status and become cultural icons. In his Heiligenstadt Testament, Beethoven says, "I would have ended my life—it was only my art that held me back. It seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt that was in me." This dramatic discussion of musicianship, not just as a profession but as a moral obligation, helped create a tradition of the artist elevated above the rest of society because of his (or her) gift, a tradition that Liszt, Joachim, and others continued into the late nineteenth century (Burkholder 578).

Yet the public did not always fully embrace the worth of the professional performer. The English composer and pedagogue, John Pyke Hullah, who wrote his treatise *Music in the House* in 1877, illustrates this dilemma by his assessment of amateur and professional musicians. "Given competent performers," he says, "the instrumental concert piece, the pianoforte solo, the song [...], can be better heard and is likely to be better understood in a drawing-room of average capacity than a modern hall."¹² Privileging the dilettante over the professional, Hullah continues: "artists [...] have little idea of the pleasures the same music and the same, nay, inferior musicians can give [...] the bond of sympathy at once established between doers and hearers so much more favourably placed in relation to one another" (Hullah 3). Hullah's opinion highlights the conflict regarding the distinction between audience and performer in a public space versus music created through interpersonal experience in a private space. The issue of class becomes important in the

¹² Hullah, John Pyke, *Music in the House*, London: Macmillan, 1877, Google Books, 5 November 2007, <http://books.google.com> Hereafter cited parenthetically.

discussion of the private and public sphere of music, because only the middle and upper classes could afford to attend art music concerts. Paula Gillet highlights the paradoxical relationship between amateur performers in the private sphere and professional public performers, as she says, “Devotees from the literary world such as George Eliot [...] revered the musicians with whom they socialized and, by preparing for and attending their concerts, joined with other discerning audience members to stimulate the musicians’ best efforts [...] Yet even within intimate settings in the homes of cultivated music-lovers, incidents could arise that carried memories of the professional musician’s formerly servile status.”¹³

The nineteenth century was also a period of great social unrest and change, as the Industrial Revolution brought the upper class, middle class, and working class into conflict over work conditions, voting rights, and education reform. The novels of Eliot, Gissing, and Hardy are all preoccupied with what Walter Houghton calls the nineteenth century’s “democratic revolution.”¹⁴ The events and ideas in the period from the Second Reform Act of 1867 to the reforms of the 1880s are particularly important in my three chosen novels. The Reform Act of 1867 was one of the most important pieces of political legislation of the period. It built upon the Reform Act of 1832, which gave the middle class a stake in government by granting seats to large cities that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, increasing the electorate by 57% and redistributing seats in Parliament more fairly.¹⁵ The Second Reform Act of 1867 doubled the electorate, extending the franchise to many working-class men and removing the power imbalance that had been in favor of property interests and landed interests; suddenly working

¹³ Paula Gillet, “Ambivalent Friendships: Music-Lovers, Amateurs, and Professional Musicians in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Music and British Culture, 1785-1914*, Ed. Bashford, Christina and Leanne Langley, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000, 324-5.

¹⁴ Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870*, New Haven, Yale UP: 1957, 4. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁵ “United Kingdom,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2007, *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, 23 Oct. 2007, <http://search.eb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/ed/article-44942>. 227-236. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “United Kingdom.”

class concerns became concerns of Parliament (“United Kingdom”). “If it was the working class (or classes) who were claiming the vote, their entry into the political nation would entail the end of class politics,” says Keith McClelland, revealing the importance of their voice in government.¹⁶ The act “legitimise(d) the working class citizen in new ways,” but it seemed to make the conflict between the classes even more evident, a theme that is highlighted in *Thyrza* (McClelland 71).

This tension between classes resulted in subsequent reforms, which affected not only the working class but all classes. During the decade following the Second Reform Act, The Ballot Act of 1872 introduced secret voting and worked concurrently with the Second Reform Act to reduce voting fraud. The Education Act of 1870 established a primary school system (which was made mandatory in 1880), allowing children of lower classes to be on more level footing with those who could afford private education (“United Kingdom”). Unions were legalized and the judicial system was reformed, and the 1875 Employers and Workman Act put masters and men on the same footing in the event of a breach of contract. “When class lines broke down and it became possible as never before to rise in the world,” Houghton argues, “the struggle for success was complemented by the struggle for rank” (Houghton 6). The changes in the class system in the 1860s and 1870s led Victorians to question the status quo and explore the possibility of a less rigid structure or a structure based upon different criteria than tradition dictated.

IV. Critical Context

The field of literary criticism focusing on music in late Victorian texts has expanded significantly in the last fifty years, and yet it still remains a relatively small body of work. A general overview of the trends in literary criticism of music as a motif in late Victorian literature, particularly Eliot, Gissing, and Hardy, reveals three broad categories of criticism. One branch

¹⁶ McClelland, Keith. “England’s greatness, the working man.” Hall, Catherine, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall. *Defining the Victorian Nation*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 2000. 94

deals with defining and examining authorial philosophies on music and musicality in relationship to the broad conception of Romantic music as enumerated by Schopenhauer, Hegel, Beethoven Wagner, and others. This criticism is largely absent from criticism on *Thyrza*, but becomes critical in the criticism of *Jude the Obscure* and *Daniel Deronda*. Joan Grundy and John Hughes voice opposite sides of the debate regarding Hardy's philosophy on music. Grundy emphasizes Hardy's belief in music as an interactive experience of listening and responding to outside musical events. She also affirms the "vitality and vibrancy" of Hardy's conception of music. As she says, "Hardy uses music to express our experience of the world as it impinges on us through our sense of hearing, but that music outside ourselves often echoes and gives back a music within."¹⁷ This account, while critical to the understanding of Hardy's emphasis on the characters' musical responses, largely ignores the ironic forces of the music in *Jude*. Hughes also finds the characters' responses to music to be critical to Hardy's opinion about the relationship between music and the soul. He specifically deals with *Jude* in his first chapter, and generalizes about Hardy's opinion about music in the following terms: "Throughout his fictional career, music was associated by him with a mode of self-expression that is both physical and ideal: physical in that it relies on accidents of sensation and feeling, but also ideal in that it reveals these essential qualities of the soul."¹⁸ Hughes emphasizes Hardy's use of irony in the music of *Jude* to highlight the difference between the ideal and the real, a point that I shall expand by exploring the dichotomy between the ideal and the real and its relationship to class in my third chapter.

Eliot also serves as a primary source for criticism within this vein, and important critics who focus on Eliot's musical philosophy include Beryl Grey, Alison Byerly, and Shirley Levenson. These critics both define Eliot's beliefs on music based upon her own writings and

¹⁷ Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts*. London: Macmillan, 1979. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁸ John Hughes, *'Ecstatic Sound': Music and Individuality in the Work of Thomas Hardy*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2001. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

discuss the influences of Romanticism upon her works. Byerly and Levenson argue that music serves as the “language of the soul” for *Daniel Deronda*, providing the reader a touchstone to evaluate the moral worth of the characters. Raising the issues of the human soul as an instrument and the importance of listening to the concept of sympathy—Eliot’s principal concern in human relationships—Levenson and Byerly examine how music provides a unifying thread in a complex and sometimes fractured work. Beryl Grey also focuses on sympathy and music as a unifying theme of the novel, but she examines them through a musicological lens, focusing on the significance of the songs and lyrics that are cited in the novel. I have built my conception of Eliot’s philosophies on music from the foundation laid by these critics, taking the theme that they see as a unifying factor and looking for paradoxes in the ways in which Eliot evaluates different expressions of music. I also try to apply Eliot’s philosophies on music, as voiced through *Daniel Deronda*, to her opinions on class mobility in order to examine the mixed genre of the novel.

Another topic of interest within the subset of literary criticism on music is the relationship between gender, ethnicity, and music. Two of the essay collections on music in Victorian fiction, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* (2000) and *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction* (2004) primarily feature criticism in that vein.¹⁹ In fact, the music criticism of Thyrsa largely falls under the heading of gender studies. Nicky Losseff and Laura Vorachek explore female musicality in Gissing, particularly the commodification of the female artist and her interactions with her environment. Post-colonial criticism has shaped the criticism on the music motif in *Daniel Deronda*, for Herr Klesmer and Daniel are icons of Jewish patriarchy and also possess great musical ability. Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, Phyllis Weliver, and to some extent Beryl Grey and Delia da Sousa Correa all discuss the role of gender and race in the power dynamics between

¹⁹ Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000. Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, and *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*. Ed. Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff. Burlington: Ashgate, 2004.

the musical characters in Eliot's last novel. The relevancy of this criticism to my thesis topic lies mainly with the relationship of these disenfranchised people to the larger social structure, as well as the role of the artist in relationship to society.

The last prominent area of literary criticism on music in the Victorian period focuses on the relationship between music and genre. Alison Byerly's book, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (1997) focuses on the relationship between music and realistic representation in the Victorian novel, challenging the link between musicality and musical performance and revealing the supremacy of music over the other arts. Eliot, she suggests, sees music as more capable of representing truth than the other arts, while Hardy sees music as an emotional force, but not a communicative one.²⁰ Byerly presents an introduction to my discussion of the relationship between music and genre, but is more interested in the mimetic value of art than the intermediary of class. Delia da Sousa Correa also discusses the ways in which music pushes *Daniel Deronda* beyond the boundaries of realism, which will be one of the central points of my second chapter. I have drawn on criticism focused on class and genre within the three novels, as well as musicological criticism on musical trends in Victorian England. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, the relevant criticism spans a large array of subjects, providing multiple angles through which to examine the intersection of music, class, and genre in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

V. Negotiating the Argument

Each chapter serves to complicate the previous chapter's understanding of the way music works to negotiate class issues and expand genre boundaries, for the use and significance of

²⁰ Alison Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Realism*.

music shifts slightly in each novel. As the chapters progress, one can see how music's power to change society decreases, and the authors' responses to this grim reality lead to the shifts in genre.

The first chapter examines music as a motif in George Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda*. Through her concept of music, based heavily upon the Romantic philosophies of Schopenhauer and Wagner, Eliot expands her concept of realism to include Romanticism. By suggesting that musicality can serve as a criterion for creating a social structure, Eliot also reaffirms her commitment to idealism; the structure reveals that she believes idealism can be compatible with realism. Eliot remains faithful to some qualities of realism—depicting the world with accurate details and describing ordinary, everyday human experiences—while departing from it by creating a second way of viewing society that defies the existing class system. Examining the hierarchy Eliot sets up through her definition of musicality reveals a type of realism that expands beyond the limits of “the real.”

Thyrza serves as a segue into more cynical depictions of musical mobility. While Gissing embraces the conception of Romantic music and its power to a certain extent, this feeling is moderated by an understanding that an emotional and intellectual connection to the soul through music cannot lead to social mobility on its own. The upper classes must embrace those musical characters in order for musicality to result in status change. Gissing thus has a pessimistic opinion of the value of educating the lower classes, revealing the hypocrisy of the upper classes and middle classes because of their desires to help the lower classes but their reluctance to accept them as equals. The use of music in the novel reveals Gissing's movement away from the social novel genre, towards naturalism because of this sense that Thyrza and Gilbert's ordained class identifications cannot be changed despite valiant efforts on their part.

Hardy represents a further progression away from optimistic realism, manipulating the trope of music in *Jude the Obscure* to refute the idea that music can lead to either transcendence

or a change in the hierarchy at all. Instead, musicality leads to enslavement by the system and distracts the musical characters from focusing on successful survival in their own class. Instead of being at the top of the hierarchy, the musical characters find themselves on the bottom. This conception of musicality as an evolutionary weakness distinguishes Hardy's viewpoint from Gissing's and it also reveals how *Jude the Obscure* does not quite fit within the category of tragedy. Although the reader is sympathetic to the characters' faith in music as a provider of hope, the ironic use of music to comment on Jude and Sue's naivety and denial suggests an element of pragmatism within the tragedy. Music becomes irrelevant to survival, which is the opposite conception of music from Eliot only twenty years before.

The interactions between musical motifs and social mobility affect the ways in which realism shifts from Romanticism and idealism towards naturalism and pragmatism by the turn of the century. Musicality seems increasingly less relevant in a society that embraces the lower class musician as a novelty but does not accept him or her into the upper classes. By the time Hardy writes *Jude the Obscure* in 1896, music merely holds empty promises of hope that cripple the working class characters. Examining the genre of the novel through the lens of music provides a way to investigate the evolving viewpoints of the authors regarding the relationship between the individual and society. I shall demonstrate that this examination of the turn of the twentieth century will prompt us to reconsider the influence of class structure and genre on the use of music. What begins with the influence of genre on descriptions of social tensions using the motif of music results in this motif expanding the genre boundaries themselves and investigating the parameters of the social system.

Chapter 1: Re-imagining the Real through Music

“A man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than parliamentary eloquence.” (DD 206)

This idealistic statement is voiced by the quintessential musician of *Daniel Deronda*, Herr Klesmer, but it seems to reflect Eliot’s own commitment to speaking effectively by using music as a complex motif in her novels. In this metaphor, music is figured as a method for legislation. Eliot (1819-1880) uses music in exactly this fashion, encouraging her readers—that is to say, her “parliament”—to expand their concepts of genre and class stratification. Despite Eliot’s fame as the advocate of literary realism in England, sentences like the one above reflect a sense of hopeful idealism and Romanticism within the context of realism. As Alison Byerly says, “music becomes in *Daniel Deronda* a touchstone by which all of the novel’s characters can be evaluated” (*Realism* 140). Indeed, from Daniel Deronda’s “fine baritone” to Grandcourt’s “broken drawl, as of a distinguished personage with a distinguished cold on his chest,” Eliot describes each character’s relationship to music as a part of his or her very being (DD 92). This method of evaluation transcends their social class identification. An examination of the musicality of different characters reveals that Eliot sees music as a means to create a different social hierarchy that rejects society’s method of class distinction. Through the use of music, then, Eliot expands the criteria of realism by including an idealistic vision of a class system based upon sympathy and ability (as revealed through Romantic music) within a philistine society.²¹ Her two approaches to realism—sometimes depicting the societal hierarchy in minute detail, and sometimes unmasking the fictions generated by that hierarchy—allow her to incorporate romantic and idealistic ideals in

²¹ The OED defines philistine (n) as: an uneducated or unenlightened person; one perceived to be indifferent or hostile to art or culture, or whose interests and tastes are commonplace or material; a person who is not a connoisseur. “Philistine,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd Ed, 2008, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 24 January 2008, www.oed.com.

order to condemn class consciousness as antagonistic to fulfillment and a sense of humanity and allow her to suggest another method to evaluate characters.

Eliot asserts her commitment to realism throughout her writings, applying empiricism to narrative to promote multiple viewpoints and thus a “truer” whole without an omniscient, God-like narrator.²² Beer reveals how Eliot acts as a scientist of fiction, representing what she “sees” in a detailed and faithful manner. Eliot’s commitment to realism as both an aesthetic and moral goal can be seen in her essay, “The Natural History of German Life” (*Realism* 106). With realistic writing, she says, “more is done towards linking the higher classes with the lower, towards obliterating the vulgarity of exclusiveness, than by hundreds of sermons and philosophical dissertations.”²³ In other words, the writer has a responsibility to represent reality because only reality can fully evoke sympathy in the reader (“History” 271).

Yet this dominant focus on realism in Eliot’s writings misses the mixed modes of the narration in her novels, which simultaneously reflect realistic, idealistic, and romantic ideals.²⁴ For the purposes of this thesis, I will distinguish between idealism and Romanticism through the synecdoches of the head and the heart. Idealism focuses on the idea that reality is “fundamentally mental in nature,” while Romanticism focuses on feeling as the source of truth.²⁵ *Daniel Deronda*, which Graham Handley calls “the final and comprehensive expression of George Eliot’s idealism,” reflects the power of the mind through the character of Herr Klesmer, the ultimate

²² Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-century Fiction*, London: Ark, 1983, 160-165.

²³ George Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*. Ed. Thomas Pinney, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1963.

²⁴ William J. Hyde argues George Eliot’s naturalistic tendencies mainly focus on the lower classes, while her novels are much more realistic than naturalistic. Sarah Gates, on the other hand, argues that the Gothic and Romantic genres are important to her novels, especially *Daniel Deronda*.

²⁵ “Idealism,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn, Oxford UP, 1996, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford UP, 26 Jan. 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t98.e1168> I use the word, “idealism” solely to reference the influence of the philosophical concept on *Daniel Deronda*, not to suggest that it is a genre of literature like Romanticism.

idealist.²⁶ But aspects of the “Gwendolen” plot are unmistakably Gothic and romantic: the dark, handsome villain (Grandcourt), the hidden “first wife” Bertha Mason figure of Mrs. Glasher, and the emergence of the painting coinciding with Klesmer’s music during the tableau.²⁷ This overlap of genre makes it difficult for one to understand Eliot’s intentions for the text: does it embrace the epic life, echo the Gothic tradition, or commit to realism and attempt to depict the limited moral and intellectual life of the English upper class (as symbolized by Gwendolen)? Through close examination of the motif of music, one can see how the mixing of genre reflects Eliot’s reconceptualization of realism in her most experimental novel.

Both Byerly and Delia da Sousa Correa address the influence on music and genre, but they focus on Eliot’s unintentional expansion of realism through the motif of music. Sousa Correa focuses on the notion of second sight within *Daniel Deronda* to reveal how the novel works to “disturb notions of realism and forestall unified readings [of the novel].”²⁸ In this deconstructionist argument, Sousa Correa maintains that Eliot does not intend to expand genre. Instead, she believes the references to coincidence, telepathy, and prophets “join[s] a growing preoccupation with telepathy and second sight” of the time period, which Eliot incorporates into her Darwinist approach to literature (Sousa Correa 188). This suggests her expansion of Realism is more of a social reaction than a deliberate technique specific to *Daniel Deronda*. Byerly posits a different argument, but she still assumes that Eliot’s reconceptualization of realism is a byproduct of her use of music, instead of an intended result. Byerly argues that the mixing of genres in *Daniel Deronda* shows that, “in spite of [Eliot’s] vehemently expressed allegiance to realism, she could not avoid a certain nostalgia for aesthetic idealism” (*Realism* 146). I push this

²⁶ Graham Handley, Introduction, *Daniel Deronda*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.

²⁷ Sarah Gates, “‘A Difference of Native Language’: Gender, Genre, and Realism in *Daniel Deronda*,” *ELH*, 68.3 (2001), 710-712. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

²⁸ Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music, and Victorian Culture*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 130. Hereafter cited parenthetically as Sousa.

claim further, suggesting that Eliot's application of the motif of music to narrative—particularly *Daniel Deronda*—reveals a more nuanced view of realism than the conventional understanding provides. Through the motif of music and its interaction with class issues, Eliot experiments with the idea that realism is not opposed to Romanticism or idealism, but rather becomes richer because of an interdependent relationship between the other two concepts. As Hyde says, “the idealist begins with actuality but goes on to add a touch of sentiment to his characters, a touch of poetry [...] he creates compassion for the inner life of his characters, thus developing a “more real” approach that that of the artist who deals wholly in externals.”²⁹ Indeed, for Eliot, realism is less about strict adherence to fact than about pursuing the truth through literature in order to “surprise[s] even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves” (“History” 270).³⁰ If, as I suggest, Eliot uses realism to create sympathy in the reader and to put the reader in touch with his or her own humanity, the devices of Romanticism and idealism become integrated into a narration that expands beyond traditional genre labels.

I.

The class identifications of Eliot's characters reflect the relationship between realism, Romanticism and idealism in *Daniel Deronda* and present a way to understand their impact on genre. Eliot's striking departure from realism in this book can be seen in her rejection of the traditional class structure, supplanting it with a structure that centers around the idealistic and romantic notion of musicality. I will suggest that the novel presents two alternative social structures: the existing social structure, rendered with realistic details regarding minute class distinctions, and a mixed “idealist and romantic” social structure based upon musical ability. The “realist” representation deals primarily with the upper class, with the exception of the middle-

²⁹ Hyde, William J, “George Eliot and the Climate of Realism, PMLA, 72 (1957): 147-164. 150

³⁰ Byerly also talks about this passage in relationship to Realism in *Realism, Representation and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Literature*.

class Meyricks. Yet along with the upper class, Eliot portrays the social standing of a large group of characters who seem not to fit into society at all. They are what I will call the “unclassed”—characters that are excluded from the traditional social schema because of ethnicity, religion, or social choices. Mirah, Mordecai, and Ezra might be termed middling class, but are marginalized because of their religion. Daniel Deronda’s mysterious heritage colors the upper class’ opinion of him, and the upper class characters underestimate Herr Klesmer’s brilliance because of the stigma of his “universal alienism.”³¹ By dealing with the character of the “outsider” and the different manifestations of being “outside” society, Eliot acknowledges a group of people who cannot fit into the normal social hierarchy, and rejects a strict concept of realism in *Daniel Deronda* by underscoring, elevating, and perhaps even reversing their class standing through music.

By creating an alternate social structure that overlays her depiction of the traditional social structure, Eliot reveals her commitment to idealism and Romanticism at the same time as she reveals issues about the realistic situation of musicians in Victorian society. Musicians in this period were left to negotiate between the eighteenth-century concept of the musician as a high-class servant and the emerging concept of musicians as venerated artists who “suffer[s] courageously to bring humanity a glimpse of the divine through art” (Burkholder 593). All the upper class characters defer to Herr Klesmer’s opinions on music because of his fame and “expensiveness”—cultural signifiers of artistic success—but simultaneously relegate him to a servant’s position in the Arrowpoint household (DD 86).³² Most of the musical characters exist to a greater or lesser extent on the outskirts of society because of their religion, birth, or actions. Music becomes significant in the ways in which it raises up these social pariahs into positions of

³¹ The term refers to a lack of national or local homeland identity, a negative attribute in a nationalistic culture like Victorian England. Jonathan Taylor, “The Music Master and the Jew,” *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, Ed Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, Burlington: Ashgate, 2004. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “Taylor.”

³² “expensiveness” in this context refers to how much a family would have to pay to procure his services as a tutor, like Mr. and Mrs. Arrowpoint procure him for Catherine.

moral or intellectual influence over the middle and upper class characters—a concept rooted in idealistic notions of the primacy of intellectual potential over material differences, and romantic notions of music as a way to exert influence over the audience.³³

If indeed Eliot does believe musicality lifts ordinary people into a higher position—intellectually, emotionally, and culturally—one must then define what Eliot would term “musical.” The philosophies of Georg Hegel, Franz Liszt, and Arnold Schopenhauer affect Eliot’s idealistic theory of musicality as a way to differentiate people in society instead of differentiating by land, blood, or class. Hegel’s philosophy that music is the “language of the soul” epitomizes the very foundation of the ideal of Romantic music, which shifts the focus of music towards the individual and the expression of the self.³⁴ Schopenhauer also emphasizes the connection between music and soul, saying that music, “is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but the Will itself. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts” (Alperson 155). Music, says Schopenhauer, most reveals the “Will,” which is his term for the “inner nature” of all things—the soul (“Language” 6). People are elevated or demoted according to the worth of their inner natures. But there is another reason why music has the ability to elevate people far above their social superiors: it transports people from their individual, narrow viewpoints to a sense of being able to see and sympathize with the rest of the world. Richard Wagner, a famous Romantic composer (1813-1883) says that in music, “the individual will [...] awakes [...] as the universal Will [...] The will feels one forthwith, above all bounds of individuality: for Hearing has opened it the gate through which the world

³³ The discussion of music as a tool for influence can be found in the analysis of music and power creating a state similar to mesmerism in the chapter on “Music, Crowd Control and the Female Performer” in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*. Music was considered both a reforming force and a dangerous force that could excite a mob.

³⁴ Hegel’s Philosophy, as quoted in Alison Byerly, “‘The Language of the Soul’: George Eliot and Music,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 44 (1989), 6 Hereafter cited parenthetically as “Language.” Also, Burkholder 602.

thrusts home to it, it to the world.”³⁵ Transposed into Eliot’s fiction, musicians appear superior because they have a multidimensional conception of the world that others lack. That conception can help them effect change or see the failings of society. The characters are both literally and metaphorically mobile, changing locales because they have no “home” in England, and transporting themselves out of their own perspective into the perspective of others (Taylor 236). Thus, Eliot’s characters are doubly outsiders, by societal standards and because of their musicianship; mobility gives them more power because they are not tied to either the expectations of society or the limits of class identifications.

Eliot herself voices her concept of music in words close to Wagner’s when she says, “music [...] makes one feel part of one whole, which one loves all alike, losing the sense of a separate self.”³⁶ This quotation reveals two of her tenets regarding musicality: firstly, that to be musical the character must have an emotional response to music that lifts him or her to a higher plane of sympathetic response, and secondly, that music should be used to achieve community. Emotionality is important because it requires vulnerability and a chance to be affected by something outside one’s own experience. For Eliot, musicality also requires humility, without the intrusion of ego that obstructs attempts to create community. Musicality requires sensitive listening and openness to the music’s meaning, instead of imprinting one’s own agenda on the music. It also requires dedication—intelligent listening and meaningful performance requires effort. Music, for Eliot, is a deeply Romantic experience, connecting oneself with one’s own feelings and the feelings of others.

One can see that for Eliot, music is largely an abstract principle, a conflated expression of Idealism and Romanticism. Her aesthetic theories come from philosophers as much as from

³⁵ Richard Wagner, “Beethoven,” *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, London: K. Paul, 1896, vo.5:72, 65. Quoted in Taylor.

³⁶ Quoted in Beryl Gray, Introduction, *George Eliot and Music*, London: Macmillan, 1989. 12

experience, and the concrete manifestation of music, performance, is downplayed as a requirement of musicality. The two most “musical” characters in the book are each featured only once in performances.³⁷ Indeed, Klesmer’s one performance, and Mirah’s two performance have barely four lines of description of the singers. For Eliot, the way these artists sing matters little, for the listener’s response proves the worth of the musical experience. The abstraction of music indicates how music was not a highly regarded profession in Victorian England, though “as an ideal it occupied a privileged position in nineteenth century aesthetics” (*Realism* 134). In order to suggest a class system based on musicality instead of land, heredity, or money, Eliot needs her readers to recognize the worth of the characters who do not have access to those commodities. Without extensive emphasis on their performances, the characters can remain outside the parameters of the current system, because they are not commodified by their performance. This means that the reader can evaluate the characters based upon their musicality without having to be reminded of their subservient status as entertainers for the upper classes.

Through this sense of musicality, Eliot creates a natural antagonism between music and its performance. Paradoxically, performance of music hinders the musicality she values. Eliot criticizes performance again and again in her novels, especially *Daniel Deronda*, because of its emphasis on the wrong sort of self-awareness. Yet without performance, one cannot express musicality, either through listening or through singing or playing. Eliot seems to oppose performance because of her commitment to the concept of sympathy, which recurs throughout her novels. She argues that by imagining oneself in someone else’s shoes, one comes to a better

³⁷ Klesmer, despite being defined as a musician, evaluates instead of performing. He only performs in the beginning, with Catherine Arrowpoint. Daniel’s only “performance” is his humming of Rossini on his way to finding Mirah. Both musicians derive their power from listening.

understanding of oneself.³⁸ The problem with performing on a stage or other formal performance venue (as opposed to the informal home) is that the performer can become obsessed with how he or she performs instead of gaining self-consciousness or growth through a connection with the music. This kind of performing actually leads to a loss of self. As Mirah says, “[my father] set me to sing for show at any minute, as if I had been a musical box” (DD 181). Mirah becomes mechanized in the simile, for a music box can be wound up at will to play the same song. Similarly, Mirah became a moneymaking tool for her father instead of allowing music to impact her soul. Eliot thus seems to suggest that performance can be antithetical to musicality. Most audiences go to see Franz Liszt or Joseph Joachim because they want to see the men, or at best, their interpretation of the music. This creates a currency of “self” where one makes a living from one’s personality—a celebrity culture instead of a musical one. The obsession with the static (if magnetic) personality leads all too often to self-obsession instead of universality. Despite all of this, musicians must perform in order to express their musicality. When Mirah first sings for Daniel, the narrator says that she has “a subdued but searching pathos which had that essential of perfect singing, the making one oblivious of art or manner, and only possessing one with the song” (DD 315). Only this kind of perfection in performance can be classed as “musicality.”

Eliot’s problem with performance but attachment to music as an abstract concept is critical because it reveals her desire to expand the definition of “Realism” which she had adhered to in other novels like *Middlemarch*. Music becomes a metaphor for the amalgamation of genre seen in *Daniel Deronda*. For Eliot, there is a Romantic part of music—a connection to feelings and sympathy—and an idealistic part of music—music as an expression of the true self without material trappings. However, neither the romantic or idealistic aspects of music could exist

³⁸ This theme is particularly evident in *Middlemarch* with Dorothea Brooke and Will Ladislaw, but in *Daniel Deronda*, it can be seen in Gwendolen’s emergence from self-obsession into a better understanding of herself through her interactions with Mirah, Mrs. Glasher, and Daniel Deronda.

without the realistic part of music—performance. Indeed, true affiliation to Realism would require a faithful account of exactly what is observed and can be measured and documented, reducing musical experience to nothing more than the performance. One cannot see the expression of the soul through the music, or observe a connection between the listener and the audience; therefore for the realist, music is merely sound waves in the air going from one person's mouth to another's ear. This also reveals the problem with Realism—an obsession with “appearance” at the expense of capturing the depth beneath the surface of things. By condemning performance as an end in and of itself, Eliot rejects pure Realism. Instead, she uses Realism as a device to combine romantic and idealistic concepts, just as the perfect singer uses a performance to give voice to the soul and communication of the music.

II.

Herr Klesmer, as the prototypical musician in the novel, represents the voice of the idealist. He outlines the idea of a class system based upon musical sensibility during his conversations with members of the upper class. He says to Mr. Bult (a member of the aristocracy),

No man has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little [...] We help to rule the nations and make the age as much as any other public men. We count ourselves on level benches with legislators. And a man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than parliamentary eloquence. (206)

This speech not only elevates musicians by making them a select, talented group, it also redefines the purpose of music in Victorian society. Klesmer rejects the idea of music as drawing-room entertainment, instead claiming that musicians can improve humanity itself. He also gives them legislative power, suggesting that musicians have the power to create new paradigms for society. Through his belief that music can affect the intellectual life of a nation, he reverses the traditional hierarchy by placing himself and his fellow musicians far above Mr. Bult. Adopting the identity

of a “musician” renders any other social identity irrelevant and places the musician at the top of the social structure. In fact, Klesmer says that “neither man nor woman could do anything better” than to be an artist (DD 217). Klesmer specifically introduces the idea of class by saying the artist is “of another caste” than the average person (DD 207). The word “caste” alludes to the Hindu hereditary class system, with unchanging classes who “keep themselves socially distinct, or inherit exclusive privileges.”³⁹ Through this comparison, Klesmer suggests that true musicianship is innate, and those people who possess that musicality will always rank above those who lack those qualities, regardless of birth or wealth. Moreover, with this metaphor, Klesmer claims that musicians are so high above the unmusical that there cannot be interaction between them—a remarkably elitist argument from a man who is unclassed.

Nonetheless, it seems Eliot does not fully subscribe to Klesmer’s articulation of musical idealism, for the narrator gently mocks Klesmer even as he expounds on his grandiose ideas of musicianship. Critics seem to take two views of Klesmer: either they contend that Eliot creates Klesmer as a caricature of patriarchal musicianship, or they suggest that Klesmer embodies Eliot’s musical ideals.⁴⁰ Yet neither viewpoint allows for the fact that while the narrator does compare Klesmer to Ulysses, one who has “creative work and theoretic belief which pierces the whole future of a life with the light of congruous, devoted purpose,” there are moments when Eliot allows the reader to see through the mystique of Herr Klesmer (DD 204). In a commitment to Realism, Eliot describes more than just his idealistic intellectual aspirations. The narrator says Klesmer has a “mane of hair flowing backward in massive inconsistency with the chimney pot hat,” mocking his futile attempts to blend in to English society (DD 86). The description of his

³⁹ “Caste,” Definition B, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd Ed, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, 2008, 24 January 2008, www.oed.com.

⁴⁰ For the first viewpoint, see chapter five of Alisa Clapp-Itnyre’s book, *Angelic Airs, Subversive Songs*, Athens: Ohio UP, 2002. For the second viewpoint, see chapter four of Delia da Sousa Correa’s book.

comical appearance detracts from the grandiose persona that he cultivates in his grandiloquent speeches to Mr. Bult about music. Despite frequently calling Klesmer a man of “greatness,” (DD 86) the narrator describes his composition in a lackluster manner: “an extensive commentary on some melodic ideas not too grossly evident” (DD 39). The phrase is filled with sarcasm that seems to belie Klesmer’s claim of genius: “extensive” is an understated, polite way to say the piece is too long, and “not too grossly evident” implies a lack of substantive thematic complexity within the music. The narrator’s condescension towards the composition encourages a realistic outlook on Klesmer’s grand “extensive” composition and his grand idealistic ideas. Thus, though Eliot introduces idealism through the character of Klesmer, she renews her commitment to realism through the character of the narrator.

Eliot’s true views of the power of music to mark people as superior incorporate Romanticism and idealism, but moderate Klesmer’s claims of epic greatness.⁴¹ First, Eliot clearly believes that musicians are superior because of their self-awareness—they see themselves within the larger schema of society. Daniel emphasizes this opinion, saying, “I can bear to think my own music not good for much, but the world would be more dismal if I thought music itself not good for much” (DD 374). Both men humble themselves in pursuit of the greater purpose of furthering Art—an idealistic concept that reflects a rejection of corporeal needs. Eliot also suggests that musical characters are superior to society because of their ability to go against societal norms. The narrator echoes Klesmer’s distinction between “most men” and the musician through descriptions of society, saying they are “the ordinary crowd in silk and gems, whose’ utmost performance it must be to admire or find fault” (DD 476). The word, “ordinary” diminishes the phrase, “silk and gems” which would ordinarily elevate characters by marking them as upper

⁴¹ Klesmer’s egoism reflects the Victorian cult of the composer, which Eliot questions through the character of the narrator.

class. Moreover, the verb “must be” limits these upper classes to a very small role in the experience of music making, compared to the musician, who has the power to create the music (the romantic figure of the Bohemian). Thirdly, Eliot suggests that musical characters are superior because they are not tied to the material world or concerned with sordid money matters.

Klesmer’s disgust for performance and glory as an end to music is echoed by Mirah and Daniel, further detaching music from its practical purposes. Finally, Eliot suggests that musicality elevates a character because it gives them power to influence other characters through emotive response—the heart of the concept of Romantic music. Gwendolen’s response to Klesmer’s playing reveals how music can tangibly affect people’s aspirations and perspective. “The power of this playing [...] gradually turned her [Gwendolen’s] inward sob of mortification into an excitement which lifted her for a moment into a desperate indifference about her own doings,” says the narrator, revealing this change in perspective made possible through music (40).

Eliot not only differentiates between the status of the musical characters and the unmusical characters, she also creates levels of influence within her idealistic and romantic concept of a society based upon musicality. Because Eliot only deals with the upper class and the unclassed, her schema looks vastly different than the traditional Victorian class schema.⁴² Nonetheless, it retains its commitment to a hierarchical model. This reveals a symptom of her attachment to the realistic urge to portray society faithfully, oddly located within a very idealistic concept. She places Daniel Deronda and Julius Klesmer in the highest echelon of her schema, followed by Mirah and Miss Arrowpoint in the second tier and Gwendolen in the third tier. At the bottom of the schema are all of the unmusical characters, lumped together regardless of class: Grandcourt, Lush, and Mr. Bult, among others. The distinctions between each “class” in this society rely on

⁴² In chapter 2, I will follow RS Neale’s five-class conception of Victorian society. However, Eliot’s novel largely deals with only two classes, and thus Neale’s conception is not very helpful here.

characteristics of performance and musical response, as well as the ways in which their musicality allows them to influence and guide characters of lower “class.”

Beryl Gray emphasizes that “contact between the different strata of [...] society is schematically dependent on the social function of music,” and it is important to see that Eliot figures the interactions in two ways.⁴³ First, Eliot notes the traditional interpretation—that music allows the upper and lower class characters to interact (Gray 100). These interactions reflect Eliot’s concept of realism as a historically accurate portrayal of life, for music did indeed provide a point of interaction between the artist (often of the lower class) and the upper-class audience. Klesmer says after expressing his love to Catherine that their marriage “would be thought a *mésalliance* for you, and I should be liable to the worst accusations,” a comment that both indicates the social distinction between the two and reveals that music subverts the social structure and promotes their love (DD 208).⁴⁴ In the same way, Eliot accentuates the difference between Gwendolen’s class status and Mirah’s when Mirah sings at Lady Mallinger’s “musical party” (DD 475). “It was a new kind of stage experience to [Mirah] to be close to genuine grand ladies,” says the narrator, accentuating that fact that in her previous life as a stage performer, Mirah was objectified by the audience instead of actually interacting with them (DD 478). Mirah still does not truly “interact” with the upper class—as she sings, one of the upper class ladies comments to Deronda as if Mirah was his personal possession, “Well, *your Jewess* is pretty—there’s no denying that. But where is her Jewish impudence?” (DD 476-7, my italics). Thus, Eliot reveals that while music does allow characters that might never have crossed paths to meet each other, the elevation that society provides through music that Gray points out is of a superficial and

⁴³ Beryl Gray, *George Eliot and Music*, London: Macmillan, 1989, 100. Hereafter parenthetically cited as “Gray.”

⁴⁴ “*mésalliance*” is a French term that means “to marry beneath oneself.” The fear of Klesmer’s sexuality also stems from the Romantic concept of music as a release of emotion on the part of both the performer and the listener, and is a fear echoed throughout many of the musical references, especially in relationship to class. This anxiety is an extension of the anxiety about a sexual musical response seen in Thyrsa and Gilbert’s experience at the music hall.

transient kind. Klesmer and Catherine may be equals at the piano, but Klesmer is still subject to moral scrutiny by the upper classes when he steps away from his position as music master.

However, Eliot reaffirms her commitment to idealism by expounding on her view of how the two differing classes do more than just meet through the conveyance of music—they can reverse their very positions in society and leave the rigidity of the social structure through mentorship relationships. The musical characters mentor both other musical characters and the nonmusical characters in moral, intellectual, and spiritual matters, becoming ideals regardless of their societal status. Not only are they respected for their artistic talent or sensibility (which could lead to the commodification of the artist), but those characters that are less musical desire to emulate the unclassed characters they idolize.⁴⁵ Ironically, this type of societal interaction diametrically opposes the conventional relationships that society expects from these characters. After Sir Hugo's statement that Catherine's marriage to Klesmer is a "mésalliance," (repeating Klesmer's own observation), Deronda, replies, "If there were any mésalliance in the case, I should say it was on Klesmer's side" (DD 349). The repetition of the word, "mésalliance" juxtaposes the two views and forces the reader to expand his or her conception of class categorizations. If one follows the doctrine of realism and its faithful representation of society, Catherine would be considered "above" Klesmer in every area except musical ability. Eliot rejects this evaluation, revealing through Deronda's comment that Klesmer's musical ability has the power to reverse their class positions. Voiced by the protagonist, this reconceptualization of class distinctions influences the reader and suggests that musicality not only reveals the potential of a finer nature, but actually reverses the entire Victorian conception of social hierarchy.

⁴⁵ Beryl Gray, Phyllis Weliver, and Alisa Clapp-Itnyre all deal extensively with how musicians can become a commodity for the upper classes, and the implications of this idea with regards to gender.

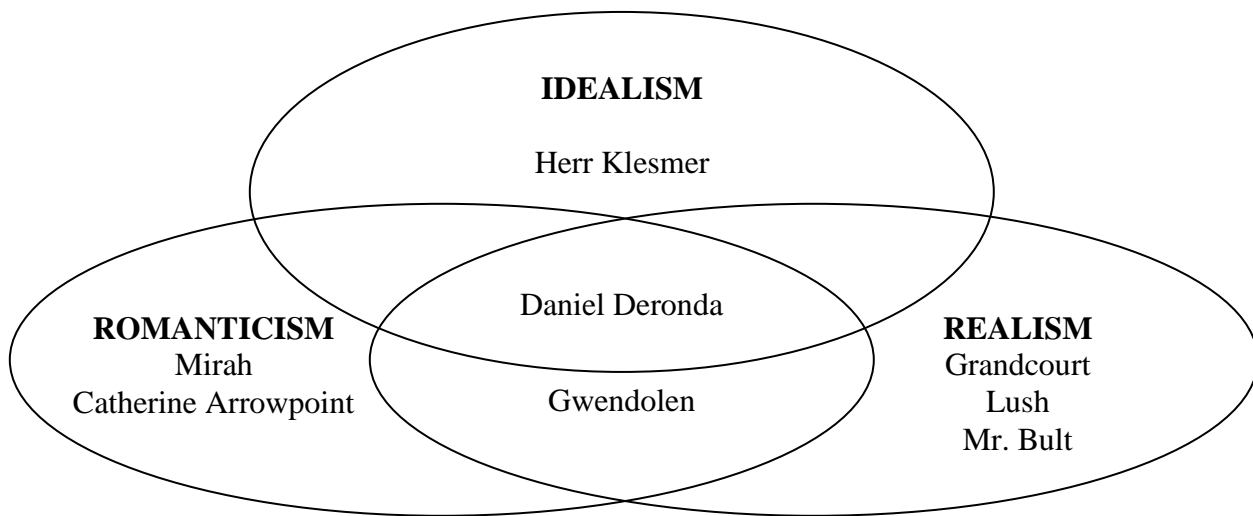


Figure 1A: Genre affiliations of the Characters in *Daniel Deronda*

III.

The first and perhaps most rigid distinction between characters in Eliot's social schema is the distinction between the antimusical and the musical.⁴⁶ As Shirley Levenson points out, "there is a formal, superficial quality about the English society which Eliot is describing that works against the development of music," indicating that society itself is antimusical.⁴⁷ Mr. Bult, the quintessential class conscious philistine, reflects this attitude: "Klesmer he hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being who ought to have a vote; and he did not mind Miss Arrowpoint's addiction to music any more than her probable expenses in antique lace," says the narrator, directly referencing the class battles over the Reform Acts and the commodification of musicians. Mr. Bult does not express any sympathy or concept of universality, a gross deficit stemming from his light estimation of the quintessential musician in *Daniel Deronda*. Moreover, he calls Catherine's musicality an "addiction," vilifying it instead of recognizing its societal importance. The narrator classifies the bulk of society as antimusical like Mr. Bult:

Everything, from low arithmetic to high art, is of the amateur kind politely supposed to fall short of perfection only because gentleman and ladies are not obliged to do more than they like—otherwise they would probably give forth abler writings and show themselves more commanding artists than any the world is at present obliged to put up with.(DD 224)

The narrative tone is condescending; Eliot exposes the embrace of mediocrity by connecting the amateurish skills to the upper class' sense of privilege. This voice of realism dispenses with the fiction presented by the upper class and attempts to present the reality of the upper class'

⁴⁶ I use the term anti-musical instead of unmusical (which Levenson employs) because of Eliot's strength of feeling against these characters. It is not only their lack of musicality that attracts her opprobrium, it is their devaluation of the importance of music to the world. At times these characters even express anger at artists—for instance Grandcourt's comment about "damned musicians" (DD 106).

⁴⁷ Shirley Levenson, "The Use of Music in *Daniel Deronda*," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 24 (1969): 317-334. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

relationship to music. The terms “gentlemen” and “ladies” are set up in direct contrast to excellence in art, suggesting that subscribing to societal values means rejecting artistic ones. Through her dismissive depiction of the general upper class public as antimusical and inane, Eliot raises questions about the values of the society and diminishes the impact of the traditional social structure upon the unclassed characters. This in turn encourages the reader to consider a class structure based upon the idealistic notion of ability instead of heredity. It is ironic that by condemning the antimusical she is condemning the “realists” who see music as an empiricist would see it: namely as a pastime, an entertainment, and a courtship ritual for the upper classes. Interestingly, this move allows her then to make a “realist” assessment of upper class shallowness using her commitment to the Romantic notion of music.

Daniel Deronda and Herr Klesmer belong to the opposite end of Eliot’s new social structure. The two characters exert the most power over the other characters in the novel, and thus can be seen as the highest characters in Eliot’s social schema.⁴⁸ Daniel Deronda takes on an almost godlike role in this musical society. He unites realism, idealism, and Romanticism in his musicality, providing an embodiment of the ability of the three concepts to unite into one cohesive whole. The narrator says Deronda had “one of those thrilling boy voices” and a “fine musical instinct,” and had the potential to be a great opera singer (DD 142). True to Eliot’s concept of musical idealism, he is disgusted by the idea of commodification, “being dressed up to sing before all those fine people who would not care about him except as a wonderful toy” (DD 144). His true joy comes from the Romantic dedication to music itself instead of performance: he says, “if you are fond of music, it will always be worth while in private, for your own delight” (DD 352). Indeed, Deronda connects to the music in an authentic and universal way, revealing his

⁴⁸ Many critics have pointed out that Klesmer may have been patterned after Anton Rubinstein or Franz Liszt. Either way, his character may be safely considered archetypal of musicians of the time. Please see “Language” for more on this topic.

sensitivity and cultural superiority. “In Deronda’s ear the strain was for the moment a continuance of Gwendolen’s pleading—a painful urging of something vague and difficult, irreconcilable with pressing conditions, and yet cruel to resist,” says the narrator, and Deronda’s connection of Mirah’s song to Gwendolen’s pain reveals that he sees beyond the performer to listen to the song and thereby gain a better understanding of the universal (DD 481). In this case, the song causes him to engage with a larger world that includes Gwendolen and her unhappiness in her marriage. For Deronda, the song is so powerful that it takes on human qualities, as can be seen in the words, “urging” and “cruel to resist.” As an appeal to emotion, this scene also reflects his Romanticism.

In addition to exhibiting Eliot’s criteria for musicality, Daniel’s actions as a moral and practical guide to Mirah and Gwendolen suggest his pre-eminent position in the “new” society. The first sentence of the novel: “Was she beautiful or not beautiful,” immediately sets up a power dynamic between Deronda and Gwendolen, and Deronda assumes the role of the realistic evaluator and critic (3). Though Deronda does not know Gwendolen, he judges her by his standards of beauty and finds her wanting. Interestingly, at this moment Deronda’s power comes through his empirical method, examining Gwendolen’s physical characteristics. The novel thus begins with a statement of scientific realism, but it is voiced by a character who, later in the novel, derives his power and social status from Romanticism and Idealism. Deronda uses the metaphor of music to instruct Gwendolen, and he adopts parts of the role of the Romantic hero as the novel develops; as Phyllis Weliver suggests, he is “Gwendolen’s moral rescuer” (Weliver 244). His first significant meeting with Gwendolen after her marriage centers around a piano, recollecting Gwendolen’s failed attempt to become a musician. Deronda asks Gwendolen to join in the music, but she refuses. Deronda begins by asking Gwendolen, “Are you not a musician?” another question that Deronda uses to categorize Gwendolen according to her musicality (DD 352). This question also reflects realism, for it implies the narrator’s earlier exposé of upper class musicality.

After finding out that she no longer sings, Deronda asserts his musical superiority by lecturing her, encouraging her to see objectively and gain a sense of the universal. Deronda says,

“But if you are fond of music, it will always be worth while in private, for your own delight. I make it a virtue to be content with my middlingness [...] it is always pardonable, so that one does not ask others to take it for superiority.”

“I cannot imitate you,” said Gwendolen, recovering her tone of artificial vivacity. “To be middling is another phrase for being dull.”

“[...] I think what we call the dullness of things is a disease in ourselves.” (DD 352)

Here, Deronda subtly condemns this society that labels mediocrity as “superiority,” while also blaming Gwendolen for her limited worldview. Deronda suggests that Gwendolen’s misery is caused by her own deficiency: that is to say, her lack of musicality is directly caused by her social instincts to improve her standing in the eyes of the world. He asks Gwendolen to reevaluate her priorities—choosing to shape her life not for an audience but for herself. The metaphor of the audience applies to the whole conception of class structure as well: the upper classes need the lower classes to be an audience that appreciates their sophistication and use the lower classes as an audience to feel their superiority. By encouraging Gwendolen to enjoy music “in private,” Deronda idealistically asks her to reject society and its values and instead embrace musicality. Gwendolen, in turn, acquiesces to Deronda’s claim of superiority. By asking for his moral guidance, she puts herself in an inferior position to Deronda despite his unknown origins. In fact, Gwendolen says that Deronda “was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her *superior*,” [my italics] revealing her acceptance of the reality of an alternative class system outside her realm of experience (DD 355).

Daniel also takes on an upper class role in relation to Mirah, adopting the role of musical evaluator. Although Deronda is not overtly listening to judge Mirah, Mirah places him in a

superior position by the very act of her singing for him. Mirah turns to him with a “look of mute appeal” after she sings, revealing her recognition and acceptance of Deronda as someone who can determine her worth as a musician through the word “appeal” (DD 315). Eliot chooses this strong word that connotes an entreaty or a serious request to show Mirah’s need for approval from Deronda, just as someone from the middle class might look for approval from the upper classes about their behavior. Deronda also uses Mirah as an example of musicality at the Mallinger’s party, combating traditional class distinctions by noting how Mirah surpasses all present because of her talent. The narrator says,

Pray excuse Deronda that in this moment he felt a transient renewal of his first repulsion from Gwendolen, as if she and her beauty and her failings were to blame for the undervaluing of Mirah as a woman—a feeling something like class animosity, which affection for what is not fully recognized by others, whether in persons or in poetry, rarely allows us to escape. (DD 477)

This is one of the rare times that the narrator references the direct relationship of “class animosity” and music. Not only does Eliot point to Deronda as the expounder of an alternate class order antithetical to the current one, she also makes the relationship between Deronda and the women unequal by having Deronda use Mirah and Gwendolen as symbols of their respective societal structures. Indeed, Gwendolen and “her beauties and her failings” represent the cultural philistinism of a society that is obsessed with the self. The narrative aside also reveals how Daniel can step away from society and analyze it, which suggests that Deronda possesses a unique sense of the universal, a marker of the upper class in her society. This is not to say that he is objective—certainly his ties to Mirah color his feelings—but he correctly notes why traditional society is at odds with a society based upon musicality. His talent to see the universal may be tied to his

embodiment of realism, idealism, and Romanticism, for he understands all of these facets of music, and thus can identify these responses in others.

Klesmer, as the idealist, also belongs in the top echelon of Eliot's society, although as I have suggested, his high status does not mean he is infallible. The first scene that features Klesmer, whose name means "Jewish Musician" in Yiddish, opens with a description of him as "a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave, and the Semite," emphasizing how Klesmer is a doubly removed from society, both by his religion and his ethnicity (DD 37). Klesmer possesses the requirements of a true musician, as voiced by Eliot. His primary concern for art trumps every other desire—Eliot says, "woman was dear to him, but music was dearer" (DD 39). His musicianship helps him to gain a sense of Schopenhauer's romantic concept of the "universal," which is why he finds Gwendolen's music so lacking—it has no "sense of the universal" (39). Eliot describes him as "taking up his cross meekly in a world overgrown with amateurs [...] careful how he moved his lion paws lest he should crush a rampant and vociferous mouse." The metaphor of the lion and the mouse reveals that Klesmer's superiority is embedded in his very nature—just as, traditionally, the lion is decreed by nature to be the king of the beasts (DD 49). The obvious Christian metaphor of "taking up his cross" presents Klesmer as a Christ-like figure, which gives Klesmer moral superiority over those around him and also makes him into a martyr for the principles of musicality.⁴⁹ The narrator describes his piano playing as "having an imperious magic in his fingers that seemed to send a nerve thrill through ivory key and wooden hammer, and compel the strings to make a quivering lingering speech for him" (DD 39-40). The quote reveals that Klesmer asserts a mystical, romantic dominance in the music, as the narrator indicates through "compel" and "imperious," and he interacts with the piano as if it were a human being. Klesmer's personality asserts this same natural dominance over both musical and

⁴⁹ This metaphor also reflects the larger-than-life personalities of Romantic artists like Beethoven.

unmusical characters, including Gwendolen, his future wife, Catherine Arrowpoint, and Mirah. In the critical scene in which Gwendolen sings for Klesmer, he responds:

You produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you. It is a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture—a dandling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff—the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon. There is a sort of self-satisfied folly about every phrase [...]: no cries of deep, mysterious passion—no conflict—no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. (DD 39)

In this passage, Klesmer not only evaluates Gwendolen as a singer (“you produce your notes badly”), but also as a person and a product of society. By using the phrase, “beneath you,” he puts himself in a position to evaluate Gwendolen’s potential as a person through her music. He also uses Gwendolen’s performance to critique society, setting himself up as superior to and in opposition to this society. He calls them “people without any breadth of horizon” with a sense of finality. The terms “dandling” “canting” and “puerile” devalue any judgments that this culture makes about musicians.⁵⁰ The alternative worldview which Klesmer presents: “deep, mysterious passion,” “conflict” and a “sense of the universal,” not only echoes Schopenhauer and Wagner, but also suggests that society deceives itself by accepting a shallow understanding of the world.

Klesmer’s role as the evaluator of others (and society) can also be seen in Klesmer’s relationship to Catherine Arrowpoint. Klesmer not only criticizes Catherine’s compositions, but he also asserts his artistic superiority over her, saying “Even you can’t understand the wrath of the artist; he is of another caste for you” (DD 207). Catherine’s accepts this evaluation, saying “[the artist] is a caste above mine;” this emphasizes that the upper classes should accept this authority. Even Mirah feels that Klesmer’s opinion of her singing validates her vocation, and she sings for

⁵⁰ The OED defines canting as “jargon and gibberish” of a particular class, an interesting classist statement and use of the word by one who belongs outside of the entire social structure. “Canting vbl. n,²” Definition 2, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd Ed, 2008, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, 18 January 2008, www.oed.com.

him before she sings at Lady Mallinger's.⁵¹ Yet Eliot juxtaposes these incidents of Klesmer's inherent superiority over other characters with reminders of Klesmer's actual class status—the aspect of her realism which values accurate portrayal of late Victorian life, which exists beside her assertion of idealism in putting Klesmer at the top of her society.

Mirah and Miss Arrowpoint, then, form the second tier of Eliot's society based upon musicality. Although Miss Arrowpoint comes from the upper class and Mirah is unclassed, their musicality combines with a passivity and unconscious influence on others (as opposed to the conscious influence of Klesmer and Deronda) to reveal their shared status level. As I have already shown, Mirah accepts and embraces the superiority of Klesmer and Deronda. Nonetheless, she is a formidable musician in her own right. Not only does Eliot equate her with a Romantic notion of "perfect singing," she also chooses Romantic music of depth and scope for Mirah to sing (DD 315). The themes of Mirah's songs are universal, such as separation from love in Beethoven and nationalistic, heroic passion in Leopardi's ode. As Beryl Gray notes, "she who is fitted to espouse the larger purpose must sing the larger music" (Gray 109). In contrast, Gwendolen sings Bellini, which Klesmer devalues as representative of "puerile culture" without these central themes of human existence.

Nonetheless, one of Mirah's definitive characteristics, aside from musicality, seems to be passivity. Eliot creates a double-edged sword with this characteristic; it strengthens her musicality, but weakens her influence over others, which places her in a lower social position than either Deronda or Klesmer. Daniel Deronda consistently acts for Mirah—he rescues her and puts her in a good home, finds her an opening to begin to make her living by singing, and reunites her with her family. Interestingly, one of the attributes of great singing which Eliot values is the

⁵¹ Saying, "Feeling sure that he would scold her, like a great musician and a kind man," Mirah seems to desire Klesmer's criticism (DD 414).

effacement of personality, but this also contributes to Mirah's passivity, for she lets the music work through her instead of expressing her own personality. Deronda labels Mirah's approach to music the "model of feminine singing," which raises Eliot's concerns with public performance. As Sousa Correa aptly says, "Mirah's portrayal manifests a high level of anxiety over female performance," an anxiety that we will see echoed in *Thyrza* (Sousa 148). Mirah, as a female, does not evaluate other female performances the way that Deronda and Klesmer evaluate Gwendolen, Mirah, and Catherine. Yet it seems extreme to label Mirah, as Clapp-Itnyre terms it, a "muted conformist" (Clapp-Itnyre 125). Mirah does influence others in this society, but her influence stems from her role as the idealized musician, a role created for her by Deronda.

Mirah most obviously affects Gwendolen, although she touches the lives of some other upper class characters and inspires Mab Meyrick with her music. Deronda holds Mirah up to Gwendolen as a paragon of excellence, saying, "most of us ought to practise art only in the light of private study—preparation to understand and enjoy what the few can do for us. I think Miss Lapidoth is one of the few" (DD 374). This reverses Gwendolen's and Mirah's social positions, and stemming from this point, Mirah affects Gwendolen's actions and decisions. "I should like to hear Miss Lapidoth and have lessons from her, since you admire her so much," says Gwendolen (DD 376). She humbles herself directly to Mirah, saying, "we shall all want to learn of you—I, at least," indicating her recognition of Mirah's superiority (DD 478). She also uses Mirah as a moral compass to affirm her faith in Deronda, which directly shows the relationship of the three. Mirah confirms Gwendolen's faith in Deronda, but in doing so, Mirah also reveals her subordinate attitude towards him, saying, "I would not believe any evil of him, if an angel came to tell it me" (DD 505). Mirah holds sway over Gwendolen, but this stems from Mirah's relationship with Deronda. Mirah's faith in Deronda and Deronda's use of Mirah as the model example lead to Gwendolen's elevation of Mirah to a higher class level.

Catherine Arrowpoint reflects a musicality that is similar to Mirah's, and she also unconsciously uses it to affect others in the novel. As the only person within the social structure who may be truly deemed as musical, Catherine forms an interesting study in Eliot's philosophies about how the musical class structure and traditional class structure can interact. Not only is Catherine an heiress, Klesmer says, "She is a thorough musician, and has a soul with more ears to it than you will often get in a musician" (DD 416). This important comment reveals two of the most important qualities in Eliot's conception of musicality: a connection to feeling and a disdain for the outer trappings of performance. Klesmer does not describe her physical features at all to Mirah—all he mentions is her "soul," thereby identifying her with Hegel's ideal that music is the "language of the soul." Catherine, it seems, has no trouble ignoring the physical and focusing on the music itself. Also, the odd metaphor, "soul with [...] ears," juxtaposes the sense of hearing with the deepest repository of feeling, the soul, revealing that Catherine not only appreciates music, she has an emotional connection to it (an characteristic of Romanticism).

Catherine's reveals her power in this society by her influence over Gwendolen, who idolizes Catherine almost against her own will. Eliot says, "Miss Arrowpoint each time they met raised an unwonted feeling of jealousy in her [...] because it was really provoking that a girl whose [...] figure was slight and of middle stature, her features small, her eyes tolerable and her complexion sallow, had nevertheless a certain mental superiority which could not be explained away—an exasperating thoroughness in her musical accomplishment" (DD 42). The use of the word, "superiority" directly evokes a sense of hierarchy, and musical accomplishment is used as the metaphor for Miss Arrowpoint's mental superiority. This mental superiority is manifested in her disregard for societal mores and her acceptance of Herr Klesmer as a teacher. Gwendolen also recognizes Catherine's superiority in her performance—she says Catherine has "a mastery of the instrument which put her own execution out of the question" (DD 38).

Despite the similarities between Mirah's approach and Miss Arrowpoint's approach to music, it is the differences between the two characters that reveal Eliot's pessimistic opinion of the ability of traditional society to adapt to a new basis for its hierarchical structure. Miss Arrowpoint, unlike Mirah, Deronda, and Klesmer, does not inspire Gwendolen to transcend her selfishness and sympathetically connect to the greater world. This may be because, unlike Mirah, her talent must be cultivated by Herr Klesmer in order to be revealed. Because Catherine is a product of society, her innate musicality must be brought forth and redeveloped by someone outside of society. In contrast, Mirah seems to have a kind of natural talent, which gives significance even to songs she does not understand, like the Hebrew hymn.⁵² Catherine reveals the tension that Eliot sees in the relationship between musicality and society. Catherine's choice to align herself with serious musicianship—to marry Klesmer—is also a choice to reject society, and it nearly leads to her disinheritance and does result in social opprobrium (Levenson 318). Mirah, on the other hand, enjoys upward mobility as a byproduct of her musicality; she uses music to make a living, allowing her to support herself respectably. Mirah and Catherine demonstrate on a microscopic level the macroscopic tension between Eliot's idealism and realism. Mirah, who is not bound by society, can transcend the boundaries and power relationships that society establishes between the classes and can inspire Gwendolen, Lady Mallinger, and Mab Meyrick. The "rules" of realism, as it were, do not apply. Catherine, however, exists within society and is therefore bounded by Eliot's realistic depiction of the way society operates.

The "middling class" of this musical society is epitomized by Gwendolen Harleth. Gwendolen, is the archetypal socialite of the upper class, yet her vanity, smallness and self-absorption make her an unlikable character, reflecting badly on the society that has produced her

⁵² Clapp-Itnyre extensively explores how Mirah's gift is innate on p. 137-8 of her book.

and that venerates her.⁵³ Gwendolen focuses on the audience response to her singing, reflecting society's assessment of music as a way to get praise and attention. This behavior displays her valuation of performance (realism) instead of musicality (idealism/Romanticism). Eliot says,

[Gwendolen's] voice was a moderately powerful soprano (someone had told her it was like Jenny Lind's), her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than at other times, and that Herr Klesmer was in front of her seemed not disagreeable [...] (DD 38).

The description of Gwendolen's singing emphasizes the dichotomy between her opinion of herself and reality. The diction alludes to mediocrity—her voice is “moderately powerful” and pleases “ordinary” listeners, and the very criteria for receiving “unmingled applause” (being in tune) reflects badly upon the low musical standards of society. Hence, the parenthetical reference to Jenny Lind mocks Gwendolen's complacency about her talent, because Jenny Lind was a famous soprano of the time.⁵⁴ Clearly, Gwendolen has focused on the audience response to her singing instead of the singing itself, revealing the low opinion she holds of singing as an inclusive art. Music is merely a way to present herself to best advantage: thus, she chooses an aria in which she “felt quite sure of herself” and can show off her training, and she is excited to sing because it emphasizes her beauty. In high society, music is merely a means to encourage admiration, a selfish endeavor, which only scratches the surface of music's potential.

In response to this denigration of music as an art, Herr Klesmer turns music into a tool to make a class argument about Gwendolen's inferiority. He immediately sees through Gwendolen's ruse, saying “it is always acceptable to *see* you sing (my italics)” (DD 38, Levenson 321). In

⁵³ The middling class is especially important in my second chapter and will be discussed in detail there. When referring to Gwendolen, the term indicates her status, as she is caught between traditional society and Eliot's society.

⁵⁴ Graham Handley, Footnotes, *Daniel Deronda*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.

recognizing Gwendolen's motives, Klesmer simultaneously belittles her singing (the unsaid portion of the quote is that *hearing* her sing is "unacceptable" to the trained listener) and creates a power structure by requiring her singing to measure up to his standards. He refuses to accept the traditional power dynamic that she wants (her desire for power over him) and instead reverses it. In fact, the narrator says, "Was there ever so unexpected an assertion of superiority? At least before the late Teutonic conquests?" and the allusion to the conquest of France and Austria reminds the reader that an assertion of superiority in art is also a political assertion (DD 38-9).

Gwendolen's inferior musicality and class status would classify her as antimusical, except that she learns to recognize the value of musicality. Sousa Correa argues that Gwendolen is "trapped in her own elegantly superficial role on the social stage," which reminds the reader that Gwendolen attempts to attain musicality (Sousa 149). She tries to take lessons from Mirah, and also tries to follow Deronda's advice, delivered through musical metaphors. Although she cannot attain musicality, her journey from a realist concept of music to a recognition of the Idealism and the Romanticism also inherent in true musicality rank her above the antimusical realists.

IV.

Thus we find that George Eliot creates a three tiered social system: Deronda and Klesmer, Mirah and Catherine, and Gwendolen.⁵⁵ The interesting part of this society is its apparent stasis. Mirah, Catherine Arrowpoint, and Gwendolen all do not rise to be equals with Deronda and Klesmer despite their relationships with the "upper class" of the musical society. After creating a society based upon the romantic and idealistic notion of inherent musicality, Eliot seems to see this society as fixed as traditional society, albeit with different boundaries.

⁵⁵ Daniel's mother, the Princess, is also an enigmatic musical figure, but her relatively small role in the novel and the wealth of other musical characters in the book requires me to omit discussion of where she would fit in this society.



Figure 1B: Eliot's Societal Structure Based Upon Musicality

Klesmer tells Mirah that her voice will never be appropriate for large stages, which prevents Mirah from becoming entirely financially independent. Despite the growing number of characters, both within society and without who recognize her talent towards the end of the book, Mirah still relies on Deronda and Klesmer for validation. For instance, at the scene at the Mallingers, Mirah treasures Klesmer's evaluation—"good, good,--the crescendo better than before" (DD 478). And it is towards Gwendolen that this society seems to be the most closed. Although Gwendolen aspires to the musical status of Mirah, and asks Deronda and Klesmer for advice, she can never attain the "middle" or "upper" class in this society: Klesmer tells her bluntly that her voice would not have "counted for much" even if she had trained properly (DD 219). Daniel Deronda also has a fatalistic attitude towards Gwendolen's ability to transcend the philistine society in which she has been raised. While Levenson persuasively argues that Gwendolen is unable to learn enthusiasm for something more than her own appetites and vanities, it seems to me that Deronda is not highly effective in teaching her how to transcend society; he merely tells her she must (and can) transcend it (Levenson 328). He enters her life only for short moments, and speaks in vagaries instead of concretes. "It is impossible to explain such things," says Deronda when Gwendolen asks what displeased him about her manner, expressing the fatalism of trying to help her attain musicality (DD 481). Gwendolen, in turn, expresses her frustration: "I don't know how to set about being wise, as you told me," and she understandably fails to fully become "musical."

The fate of the characters reveals that Eliot's idealism in creating a society based upon musicality instead of on land, wealth, or heredity is still framed within a realistic context. With the exception of Catherine Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer, who largely disappear at the end of the novel, Eliot depicts the two societies as mutually exclusive. Deronda and Mirah embark on an epic journey to found a Zionist state, an idealistic ending that suggests that those who do not fit into society can create their own. One would assume that this state will have a social structure

based upon the tenets of musicality—connection to feeling and sympathy, a sense of the universal, and a sense of humility—and reject traditional society. Yet Eliot strictly adheres to realism when determining Gwendolen’s fate. Symbolically, she never again sings after Klesmer tells her she cannot become a singer, which indicates her failure to understand how to attain musicality. However, she does not die tragically despite her alienation from traditional and musical society. In her letter to Deronda that concludes the novel, Gwendolen says,

I have remembered your words—that I may live to be one of the best of women, who makes others glad that they were born. I do not yet see how that can be [...] If it ever comes true it will be because you helped me [...] It is better—it shall be better with me because I have known you. (DD 695)

The letter epitomizes Eliot’s use of music to negotiate between idealism and realism. Eliot leaves Gwendolen’s fate purposefully ambiguous; encompassed in the “may live to be” and “If it ever comes true” there is the potential for musical society to merge with traditional society or for Gwendolen to move out of one society into the other. Still, the language reveals how idealism can conflict with the realism. “I do not yet see how that can be,” reflects realism—representing actuality. Gwendolen has not transcended societal limitations by the end of the novel, and Deronda abandons her to pursue his epic mission. However, Eliot sees in Gwendolen’s ideals the potential for it to become reality. The fractured sentence, “It is better—it shall be better,” begins with confident idealism (“is”) but regresses to an assertion of idealism in the face of realism (“shall be”). Whether or not Gwendolen ever achieves musicality, she recognizes that Idealism can become realism through personal effort. This gives her the power to continue to live.

And thus, music reflects realism, Romanticism, and idealism in the novel. Instead of the inadvertent nostalgia for aesthetic idealism which Byerly sees creeping into the realism in Eliot’s works, I believe that Eliot deliberately sets up a statement of idealism in her new class structure

based upon the romantic and idealistic nature of music in order to expand the definition of realism. At one point Herr Klesmer says to Gwendolen, “I should require your words to be what your face and form are—always among the meanings of a noble music,” (DD 98) and this “noble music” is Eliot’s goal in her prose style as well. For Eliot, a romantic, idealistic concept of musicality expresses inner truth—the essence of people and society without the limitations of traditional societal hierarchy. This may not be the perception—the realistic actuality from the point of view of the reader—but Eliot asks the reader to see a world in which the idealism becomes a reality through a change in humanity itself.

Chapter 2: Naturalism and the Potential for Musical Transcendence

She was not happy, she was not downcast; her eyes saw something, something which stirred her being, something for which she yearned, passionately, yet with a knowledge that it was forever forbidden to her. A face of infinite pathos, which drew tears to the eyes, yet was unutterably sweet to gaze upon.⁵⁶

The description of the portrait of Thyrza that Mrs. Ormande possesses reflects the opinion Gissing (1857-1903) holds about the mobility of the working classes. Much like Eliot, Gissing's belief in the principles of Romantic music permeates his novel. The portrait's purpose—drawing “tears to the eyes,” reflects the Romantic desire to, as Lee says, “have the heartstrings sound strongly and often” (Lee 95). The desire for upward mobility, personified in eyes that “saw something,” juxtaposed with the word “forbidden,” indicates Thyrza's conflict with society. Yet the pathos of Thyrza's thwarted desires for self-improvement is “unutterably sweet to gaze upon,” reflecting the ambivalence of the use of music to conceptualize change. Gissing utilizes the motif of music in the novel to amplify the sympathy the reader feels for the protagonists, drawing “tears to the eyes.” His belief in the potential for music to restructure society, however, is tempered by the sense that the very characters that display musical sensitivity far beyond their class station will become objectified and limited because their uniqueness relies upon their class identification. They become revered for their potential, but are merely objects to be “gaze[d] upon” as novelties, instead of subjects who can be truly accepted into middle or upper class society.

Like Eliot, Gissing uses music in *Thyrza* to distinguish the protagonists from their less musical counterparts within the working class. He identifies Thyrza and Gilbert's emotional response to music with the upper-class musical response in order to reveal their upwardly mobile

⁵⁶George Gissing, *Thyrza. A Tale*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1974, 487. Hereafter cited parenthetically as “T.”

potential. Gissing diverges from Eliot's point of view on the value of performance, however; it is not only Thyrza's response to music, but her performance of it that characterizes her attempt to transcend the class identity she is born into. Moreover, Gissing sees the interaction between class structure and music as a reciprocal relationship. Music does provide the potential for transcendence, but the class structure must embrace not only the concept of theoretical class mobility through music, but actual movement. Romanticism and idealism alone are no longer seen as independent forces working outside the class structure: instead, characters can only successfully fulfill their ability within the class structure and with the acceptance of the higher classes. Thus, music reveals the characters' innate superiority to other class members, and reveals how limits of "nurture" prevent that superiority from translating into Thyrza and Gilbert's successful move into the environment to which they naturally belong.

After publishing his first book, Gissing declared himself to be a social novelist, working to address the plight of the working class and make the middle and upper classes aware of the inequalities in the English class system of the time.⁵⁷ As defined by Suzanne Keen, the term, "social novel" is a fluid phrase that encompasses industrial novels, Condition of England novels, social problem novels, novels-with-a-purpose, and the roman à these.⁵⁸ A reaction to the problems created by the Industrial Revolution, the social novel featured stories that were commonly written from a middle class perspective; the novels tried to use literature to inspire reform and suggest solutions to class issues as well as to promote understanding between the classes.⁵⁹ Gissing wrote

⁵⁷ Jacob Korg, *Introduction, Thyrza. A Tale*, George Gissing, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1974, x. The terms, working class, middle class, and upper class are undeniably broad and fluid. For the purposes of this thesis, I adopt R.S. Neale's model of class delineation. Please see page three for an explanation of this methodology.

⁵⁸ Suzanne Keen, "The Victorian Social Novel as a Genre," *Victorian Web*, Dec 2004, National University of Singapore, 5 November 2007 <www.victorianweb.org/genre/problem.html>

⁵⁹ "Social problem novel," *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Ed. Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer, Oxford University Press, 2007, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, 10 December 2007. <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t54.e5726>> Hereafter cited parenthetically as "Social."

his novels towards the end of the social novel movement, and his later works are examples of naturalism, less concerned with posing a solution to problems of the working class as a whole and more concerned with the accurate portrayal and psychological development of the individual characters (“Social”).⁶⁰ Naturalism, which was a movement centralized in France and championed by Emile Zola, is “characterized by a refusal to idealize experience and by the persuasion that human life is strictly subject to natural laws” (“Naturalism”). Although naturalism shares the preoccupation with the lower classes that is seen in the social novel, it focuses much more upon the cultural and environmental factors that form personality, as well as heredity. Instead of serving as a political or social change platform, then, naturalistic novels focus on the permanence of the class system and its effects on the working classes and the poor. Perhaps most importantly, they do not gloss over the sordid parts of lower class existence. Gissing himself was born into the lower middle class, and personally experienced poverty and class conflict during his lifetime.⁶¹ Thus it is not surprising that *Thyrza* represents an attempt to seek unconventional answers to questions about class tensions and education as a method of social reform.⁶²

Contemporary criticism on Gissing has centered mainly around his discussion of social issues: namely women and their place in society, poverty and its effects, class struggles between the working and higher classes, and realism. Yet, by looking at the motif of music in the novel, one can see how Gissing expresses a naturalistic philosophy in a novel that initially appears to

⁶⁰ This information was amalgamated from the “social problem novel” entry and the “Naturalism” entry. “Naturalism,” *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Ed. Margaret Drabble, Oxford University Press, 2000, Oxford Reference Online, Oxford University Press, 3 March 2008 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t113.e5361>. Hereafter cited as “Naturalism.”

⁶¹ Gissing made his living as a tutor, writing novels and short stories on the side to supplant his meager income. He first married a prostitute and then married the mentally ill, lower class daughter of a music hall proprietor. He saw the sordid sides of the working class, and thus he represents characters without much of the Romanticism that characterizes other social novelists.

⁶² For a full argument on the evolution of Gissing’s writing style, see Frederic Jameson, “Authentic Ressentiment: The “Experimental” Novels of Gissing,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 31 (1976): 127-149.

belong to the social problem novel genre. Jameson conceptualizes the difference as a move away from ideology as an organizing principal and towards narrative as the driving force of a novel (Jameson 128). Gissing uses music as a motif to both criticize the upper class concept of philanthropy for the lower classes—a frequent solution suggested by social problem novelists—and to reveal his pessimistic view of the mobility of the working class. Jameson suggests that *Thyrza* may “owe her constitutive simplicity to the brutalizing limits of her situation and her poverty,” a comment which, although perhaps a simplification, reflects the ambivalence with which Gissing depicts mobility (132). Gissing criticizes both the class situation and the social novelists’ attempts to solve it, a double-sided criticism that leaves the reader unsure as to whether there is a solution to the class conflict so evident in the middle and late nineteenth century.

In order to understand the use of music to negotiate class in *Thyrza*, one must first understand the composition of the social hierarchy in the Victorian period. Traditionally, historians identify three classes during the Victorian period: the upper class, the middle class, and the working class. Yet because of the many reforms during the 1840s-1870s, these broad concepts of class become problematic. In his analysis of the nineteenth century class structure, R.S. Neale says that social classes are “really conflict groups arising out of the authority structure of imperatively coordinated associations.”⁶³ This suggests that in each novel I examine, class distinctions may be different based upon the authority structure set up in that novel. For *Thyrza*, I am adopting Neale’s five class method—the upper class, the middle class, the middling class, the working class A, and working class B. The “middling” class consists of the petit bourgeois (petty producers, retailers, and tradesmen), literates, and artisans. The petit bourgeois had education but little capital or connections, making them unfit for what Neale calls “industrial employment” but

⁶³ Imperatively coordinated associations refer to the organized structure of power. Neale calls them “an association of men held together by an authority structure resting on the law.” *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Routledge, 1972.

unable to enter the middle class successfully.⁶⁴ The idea of “the People,” the image of “the industrious and literate workman and shopkeeper,” was used by Philosophical Radicals (including many of the social novelists) to refer to the petit bourgeois, who often were featured as the main characters in social problem novels (Neale 20).

Neale divides the working class into “working class A”—describing industrial proletariats in factories and domestic industries who want government protection rather than liberation—and “working class B” — “agricultural labourers, other low-paid non-factory urban labourers, domestic servants, urban poor, [and] most working class women, deferential and dependent” (Neale 23). Neale conceives of these class categories not as boxes but as pools, a metaphor that becomes very useful in my discussion of the ways in which music affects this class system as the classes bleed into one another. He argues that successful members of working class A and less successful members of the upper class may merge into the middling class (Neale 24). Thus, the middling class displays a fluidity and instability that allows the lower classes to occasionally migrate into these classes, a fluidity that the middle class and the upper class do not display.

Thyrza, A Tale tells the story of the intersection of working class A and B and the middling class with the upper class, and explores the problems this commingling creates. The novel opens with the character of Gilbert Grail, a middle-aged worker at a candle and soap factory, proposing to the much younger Thyrza Trent, a trimmer in a felt-hat factory. Despite being a member of working class A, Gilbert displays a desire for more knowledge, filling his room with books and studying late into the night—indicating his fitness for the middling class. Thyrza also delights in expanding her world, and finds herself discontented with her condition, a hallmark of this petit bourgeois (Neale 15). When Walter Egremont, a young, idealistic member of the upper class, implements a plan to deliver educational lectures for the benefit of working

⁶⁴ R.S. Neale, “Nineteenth Century England: Three Classes or Five?” *Victorian Studies*, 12 (1968): 5-31.

class A, he attracts Gilbert as an avid audience member.⁶⁵ Egremont mentors Gilbert, replacing his job at the factory with a job as the manager of a lending library for the working classes, but then he falls in love with Thyrsa, and she with him. Egremont finds that his educational and philanthropic schemes unravel as his love for Thyrsa destroys his relationship with Gilbert, and he leaves England in order not to ruin their engagement. Nonetheless, Thyrsa runs away from Gilbert and tries to improve herself to make herself worthy of Egremont, for she overhears Egremont promise a mutual friend, Mrs. Ormande, that he will return to seek her love in two years. Unfortunately, Egremont returns two years later without the burning passion for her that he once displayed, and Thyrsa returns to marry Gilbert, but dies before they can marry.

I.

Gissing presents two types of musicality seen in typical working class characters in order to indicate the potential for transcendence in the working class. Through their interactions with music, these characters serve as a foil to demonstrate that Thyrsa and Gilbert have a more sensitive understanding of music than the average member of the working class. The first of these scenes concerns the lowest class that Gissing deals with—the poorest members of working class B. Gissing describes a scene in which Gilbert (a working class A character) is the accidental viewer of a moment of street music with children and a street organ. Gissing creates a conflicting tone that alternates between revulsion, condescension, and empathy in his treatment of the musical experiences of the poor. Although Gilbert overhears this music, Gissing also intends for the reader to assume the role of the audience: “Do *you* know that music of the obscure ways, to which children dance?” he asks the reader (my italics) (T 111). But although he identifies the reader with the refined, working-class Gilbert (thus situating the reader in a superior and

⁶⁵ Egremont forms an interesting class study because his parents came from the lower middle class, worked themselves up to the upper middle class, and he is treated as upper class because of his disposable income. Yet he no more truly belongs in the upper class than Thyrsa does in working class A.

condescending position), he also challenges this condescending attitude of the listener. He follows his question to the reader with the statement, “Not if you have only heard it ground to your ears' affliction beneath your windows in the square” (T 111). This comment simultaneously produces conflicting opinions. Gissing admits that the lower-class music can be an “affliction,” which sanctions middle-class snobbery for lower-class music.⁶⁶ In fact, Gissing sets this musical scene by describing the oppressive setting: the “blear-eyed houses, in the dim burrows of poverty, in the unmapped haunts of the semi-human” (T 111). Far from sentimentalizing the poor, the words “blear-eyed”, “semi-human,” and “haunts” distance the reader from working class B because they suggest uncivilized behavior. Through this imagery, Gissing admits that these feelings exist when one deals with the lower classes, and that they might be part of the truth expressed in this music. Yet, he also insists that the lower classes have an essential humanity that is blocked by society. He asks the reader to step out of his or her superior situation—symbolized by the literal height of the “windows in the square”—and “be at one with those who dwell around”(T 111). “Then you will know,” says Gissing, “the significance of the vulgar clanging of melody: a pathos of which you did not dream will touch you, and therein the secret of hidden London will be half revealed” (T 111). The scene reveals a commitment to Eliot’s notion that music provides an avenue for sympathy: by listening, the reader can see past his or her original instincts and connect with the working class emotionally (implied by the word, “touch”) and intellectually (implied by the word, “revealed”). Music moves the reader out of his or her class identification: it is not enough to pity the plight of the lower classes—one must understand and empathize or “know” in more than just a theoretical sense.

⁶⁶ For more on the opinion of the higher classes on lower class music, please see Kift’s *The Victorian music hall: culture, class, and conflict*.

The street music scene displays music as a symbol of the transient desires in the hopeless, fated sordidness of the life of the poor. The melody of the street is “vulgar,”—the music of the lower classes reflects their lack of refinement; indeed, the music becomes vulgarized by those who perform it. In this scene, music emphasizes the pathos of Gissing’s description of the plight of the London poor, for Gissing emphasizes the Romantic view that music affects the listener emotionally in a way that mere sight or logic cannot. Music embodies “the hunger of an unshaped desire,” and “sweetness [...] perishing under labour and misery;” it symbolizes youthful vigor in shadow of old age, and defiance against the fate of the poor (T 111). The music, the narrator says, “is the half-conscious striving of a nature which knows not what it would attain, which deforms a true thought by gross expression, which clutches at the beautiful and soils it with foul hands” (T 112). Within this sentence, two narrative tones war against each other again: “striving” and “true thought” show the potential of the working classes for cultural refinement, but these words conflict with “gross” and “soils,” which represent the failure to translate the wish into reality.⁶⁷ Musicologist Allan Atlas argues that this vulgar clanging “offers no promise of escape,” but surely this is exactly Gissing’s point, and the source of its pathos.⁶⁸ Despite the effort that the poor invest in their music making, it cannot rise above the vulgarity of their environment. The crux of the passage lies in the phrase, “half-conscious striving.” The lowest working classes cannot hope for transcendence because they lack the knowledge (they are “half-conscious”) to

⁶⁷ Christine DeVine argues in her essay, “We are the working classes”: The London Poor in Gissing’s *The Nether World*,” that Gissing unconsciously wants to both condemn the lower classes and sympathize with them because of his conflicted feelings about his own status. However, this instance of his duality seems to be intentional. For her argument, see *Class in Turn-of-the-Century Novels of Gissing, James, Hardy and Wells*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.

⁶⁸ Allan W. Atlas, “George Gissing’s Concertina,” *Journal of Musicology*, 17 (1999): 304-318. Hereafter cited parenthetically. For Atlas, it is not just the music as a whole but the instrument (the street organ) that symbolizes the London poor.

elevate themselves.⁶⁹ Without transcendence, their attempt to create a beautiful melody results in a vulgar, clanging one. Thus, their noble natures are artificially repressed by educational inequality. Atlas says that this music “reveals [...] the “voice” of London’s working poor,” a voice of desire without the means to realize the desire (Atlas 309). In this situation, music becomes an identifier of class structure instead of a way to transcend class; “vulgar clanging” identifies this segment of the London poor instead of a “melody.” Although Atlas sees this melody as despairing, the music identifies and brings together a whole community, who express through their music a shared experience of not only their frustrations, but also their hopes. The setting for the music, continually reminding the observer of the limitations imposed on the poor by society, creates a sense of irony with the music itself (which ignores this reality). Building upon this description, the revolted tone symbolizes the present reality of the lowest working class, while the empathetic tone symbolizes the possibilities of a future in which the lower classes can achieve a melody.

Thyrza’s surrogate grandfather, Mr. Boddy, displays the second typical response to music that is found in the working classes. A member of the upper end of working class B, Mr. Boddy’s fiddling represents an intermediate space between the vulgar, communal music making of the poor and the performer-audience dynamic of the working class music hall and upper class concert hall.⁷⁰ Atlas suggests that the violin symbolizes hope for Gissing, as opposed to the pathos of the street organ (Atlas 307). Mr. Boddy plays his violin for his family and the friends, giving them pleasure and giving himself a sense of purpose in life. “That’s the toon as always goes with me on my way [...] it keeps up my courage,” he says, a comment that shows the purpose of the music is

⁶⁹ Transcend: (v) “To pass or extend beyond or above (a non-physical limit) [...] To go beyond in some respect, quality, or attribute; to rise above, surpass, excel, exceed.” Definitions 2 and 3 from “Transcend,” Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2nd Ed, 2008, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, 4 Nov. 2007. <<http://www.oed.com>>.

⁷⁰ Mr. Boddy does not have gainful employment, but his speech and demeanor are more refined than the street musicians.

firmly rooted in his present situation (T 28). While Mr. Boddy's fiddle gives him hope in a dismal situation, it does not allow for a glimpse of the divine or present the possibility of transcendence of class boundaries. But then again, Mr. Boddy is not interested in transcendence or even musical excellence. He makes a distinction between his talent and Thyrza's father's talent, whom he notes as unique, saying, "Lambeth 'll never know another like him" (T 29). In contrast, Mr. Boddy's music comfortably fits in his working class setting. Mr. Boddy's choice of music—a fiddle tune called "The March of the Men of Harlech,"—as well as the purpose (encouragement in daily life) specifically address his listeners' working class identity. Mr. Boddy's music does, however, identify its participants as socially higher than the participants in the street music because the music has a goal that is achieved when the listeners regain hope through the music. In contrast, the goal of street music is "half conscious," and it can only provide imaginative class transcendence. Played at home for an intimate circle, Mr. Boddy's fiddling also mimics the aura of the more refined music making that occurs in Mrs. Ormande's upper-middle-class abode. In these two vignettes, Gissing uses fiddling music and street music to delineate class distinctions through musical performance and response. The typical working class person can use music as a palliative (street music) or as encouragement in the struggle of life (fiddle music), but the music reaffirms his or her own class identification instead of removing him or her from those confines.

II.

After setting up these expectations of how music works for the working classes, however, Gissing confounds them through the characters of Gilbert and Thyrza. The musical sensibilities of both characters give them a means to transcend the class confines that limit the other working-class characters. Gissing elevates Thyrza and Gilbert above their working-class origins through a scene in which they attend an art music concert in Piccadilly. The concert isolates the two characters,

putting each of them into their own imaginary world and allowing them to understand, through the music, the possibility of identifying with the middle class instead of the working class.

In the midst of Thyrza's distress over falling in love with Egremont, and about a week before Gilbert and Thyrza's wedding, Gilbert takes Thyrza and her sister, Lydia, into Piccadilly in order to see a classical concert. From the moment the three enter the middle-class concert hall, Gissing creates a contrast between the rest of the audience and Gilbert, Thyrza, and Lydia. Simultaneously, he sets up a contrast between Thyrza and her sister. While neither Thyrza and Lydia have experienced a concert before, they respond completely differently to the music and the concert experience, separating Thyrza even from her closest friend and companion—her sister. Before the concert begins, Thyrza gazes wonderingly at the dresses of the other concertgoers, which reminds the reader that the three are identified superficially as members of the working class from their appearance. And while Thyrza responds to the clothes with “wonder,” Lydia immediately begins evaluating the other concertgoers and comparing their clothes to her tastes. Lydia “could not help trying to think how Thyrza would look if ‘dressed like a lady’” suggesting that Thyrza has the potential to become a part of this upper-class society (T 224). Gissing also contrasts Lydia's response to the music with Thyrza's response. While the orchestra tunes, Lydia says, “Grandad doesn't take anything like that time to tune his fiddle,” comparing the professional orchestra to Mr. Boddy's playing (T 225). Her comment indicates that she approaches the concert from a firmly working-class perspective. The narrator says Lydia is “conscious that she was daring in her criticism,” which suggests that she realizes she is criticizing all of the upper class by criticizing their musical experience (T 225). She seeks to validate her own lower-class experience of music, instead of opening herself up to the sophistication of the classical music experience. In this way, Lydia identifies more closely with the music experience of Mr. Boddy and his friends in a setting that is comfortable for her. Thyrza, in contrast, says dramatically, “I shall never pretend

to sing again,” which indicates that she recognizes the difference between the training of the opera singer and her own lack of formal training (T 226). Paradoxically, admitting her inadequate musical education—which identifies her with her lower-class background, because only the upper classes had the luxury of musical studies—raises her up above Lydia, because her response indicates a higher level of musical sensitivity than her class rank would suggest. This sensitivity is innate, another clue that Thyrza is intended to be above her working-class contemporaries.

Gissing juxtaposes Thyrza’s response to the music and Gilbert’s response in order to demonstrate how music can reveal not only class identity, but also the way one responds to the world. Thyrza’s emotional response to the concert classifies her as a Romantic, while Gilbert’s movement from emotion to intellect classifies him as a realist. Thyrza has a bodily response to the music: “Her breathing was quick. The heart in her bosom seemed to swell, as always when some great emotion possessed her, and with difficulty she kept her vision unclouded” (T 225). This vocabulary uses the jargon of a religious trance—“vision [un] clouded” “possessed” and “swell.” The unprompted physical response suggests that she cannot cope with the music rationally, and so she is swept away by the emotion. Her response is heavenly laden with sexual content as her breathing quickens, a reflection of the Victorian tension between emotional response to music and control of the self.⁷¹ Thyrza’s inability to control her sexual response to the emotion is indicative of her inexperience with Romantic music and distinguishes her from the upper classes even as she reveals her upper-class musicality. Through this description of Thyrza’s musical response, Gissing voices the upper class fear that the lower classes cannot control their emotions and will respond in an irrational way to the strong stimulus of classical music.

The experience of passionate listening in this public space alienates Thyrza from the other audience members around her; she is unconscious of Gilbert and Lydia staring at her. She also

⁷¹ Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills, *Representing Emotions*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.

removes her hand from Lydia's grasp, a symbolic, deliberate removal from her current situation and the bonds that tie her to a specific identity as a prosaic, unimaginative working-class girl (exemplified by her sister, Lydia). Her connection with the music is so intense that she leaves the temporal world behind. The language used evokes Rousseau's concept of "affective interiority:" that music could only truly affect the listener if "it possessed the power to evoke strong emotions and thereby [to] stir the soul" (Gouk 174-5). However, this strong effect is necessarily an isolating event. Thyrza's experience indicates that music has the potential to raise someone up from his or her original class onto a higher plane. Yet Gissing makes the diction both spiritual and sexual, which raises questions of whether experiencing this higher plane results in an uncontrollable emotional response. This controversy regarding the physical response to music and the emotional response to music was an anxiety that pervaded discussion of Romantic music.⁷² According to Gesa Stedman in her book, *Stemming the Torrent*, "[for the middle class] it is the dangers of the impassioned 'mob' [...] that they want to set themselves off [from]."⁷³ Thus, Thyrza's emotional response, leading almost to a loss of consciousness, puts her in opposition to the middle class audience that she so closely resembles in other aspects of this scene.

In contrast, Gilbert has a very intellectual response to the music, though it begins with a strong emotional response like Thyrza's response. Gissing says, "He, too, was moved in the secret places of his being—moved to that ominous tumult of conflicting joy and pain which in the finer natures comes of music intensely heard" (T 225). At first glance, this sentence seems to contain overtones of sexuality aroused by the music, the same overtones that were present in Thyrza's description. Yet to become fixated on the sexuality in those lines or in the description of Thyrza is

⁷² Menuret, Marmontel, and La Harpe were a few of the French philosophers who studied the bodily response to music.

⁷³ Gesa Stedman, *Stemming the Torrent: Expression and control in Victorian discourses on emotions 1830-1872*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2002, 123 Hereafter cited parenthetically.

to miss Gissing's point in his description of the characters' responses. Gilbert, like Thyrza, has an intensely emotional experience, though his emotions (like hers) may be intertwined with his sexuality. The phrases, "secret places" and "ominous tumult" as well as the juxtaposition of "joy" and "pain" are cultural catchphrases of the time which emphasize the "intensely emotional engagement with the music that was characteristic of the age" rather than a sexual response for the sake of expressing sexuality through music (Burkholder 606).⁷⁴

Although Gilbert's response begins with emotion created by the music, he also has an intellectual response. He connects the music to his love of Thyrza, and the social conditions of his life; the music spurs a thought process that paradoxically takes him far away from the music itself. For Gilbert,

The strong wings of that glorious wordless song bore him into a finer air, where his faculties of mind and heart grew unconditioned. If it were possible to go back into the world endowed as in these moments! To the greatest man has come the same transfiguration, the same woe of foreseen return to limits. (T 225)

Gissing repeats the word, "finer," which first appeared in the passage describing Gilbert's nature as a "finer nature;" this indicates that he is superior to the rest of his Working Class A acquaintances and perhaps the upper classes as well, given his noble behavior towards Egremont's duplicity. Music allows Gilbert to enter a metaphorical realm in which his nature and his circumstances match. The word, "unconditioned," defined as "not dependent upon, or determined by, an antecedent condition," alludes to the antecedent, artificial limitations placed upon him by his society because of his class identity.⁷⁵ Gissing appeals to the sympathy of the reader by choosing the words, "mind and heart" as a synecdoche for Gilbert's intellectual growth,

⁷⁴ For more on conventionalized emotion phrases, please see chapter three of Stedman's book, *Stemming the Torrent*.

⁷⁵ "Unconditioned," Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. *OED Online*, 2nd Ed. 4 Nov. 2007, <<http://www.oed.com>>

for the words universalize Gilbert's desires for his own betterment and make the reader forget his working-class persona. Through the description, music is revealed as a world of its own—after all, “to go back into the world,” indicates that Gilbert is out of the world when he has this musical experience. For a moment, Gilbert experiences through the music an ideal society where he could better himself without the limitations of class, money, or education. Yet Gissing makes clear that this world is idealistic; transcendence is impossible for more than a passing moment.

Because Gilbert has an intellectual response after his initial physical response—unlike Thyrsa, who has primarily an emotional response—he understands that the concert experience cannot be realized in his everyday life. This causes him to connect the music to someone who can raise him up to this “finer air”—namely Thyrsa. “One thing was real and would not fail him. She who sat by him was his—his now and forever,” Gilbert says, and it is interesting that he substitutes possession of Thyrsa for this life in a higher social realm of which music gives him a fleeting glimpse (T 225). Despite being affected by the classical music, Gilbert sees that its promises will “fail him;” thus, he moves away from this transcendental realm in order to return to a realm in which he can find fulfillment. Repeating “his” as well as the word “forever,” shows this intense need for possession of Thyrsa to help him create a simulation of ascending into the middling class to which he clearly belongs.

Despite the important descriptive differences, music similarly alienates both characters from their surroundings and isolates them from other characters in the view of the reader. The paradox of the experience at St. James Hall lies in Gilbert's and Thyrsa's reaction to the music. This intense, emotional response identifies them as aesthetically sensitive—a marker of the upper class and a characteristic absent from the previous two music scenes—but also uniquely susceptible to emotion—a marker of the lower class. Gilbert's experience in this concert becomes a metaphor for the plot of the entire novel—music lifts Thyrsa, and to a lesser degree, Gilbert, up

and out of their class and draws out their “finer natures,” but, ultimately, music cannot force the middle and upper classes to accept these sensitive, working-class characters. Music merely indicates their emotional and intellectual fitness for operating on a higher level, leaving it to the members of the higher classes to recognize their refinement and assist them in escaping their class identity. Gilbert realizes this, and reconnects at the end of his musical experience with another sympathetic soul from his own class—Thyrza—but Thyrza remains isolated in her own world.

After revealing different musical responses within the subset of the working class, Gissing contrasts upper-class and working-class experiences. Gilbert and Thyrza function as the representatives of the working class, while Walter Egremont represents the upper class. Egremont, bored with the world and especially with the upper class, responds critically to the concert, because it reminds him of the shortcomings of his colleagues. He projects this criticism of the higher classes and their entertainment onto the singers, saying to Thyrza, “Mr. Grail must take you to hear better singers than those...[they were] certainly not bad, but not really excellent” (T 235). Egremont’s cynicism seems anticlimactic in comparison with Gilbert and Thyrza’s response. In fact, the musical response reveals Egremont’s general lack of strong emotion, foreshadowing his inability to maintain passion for Thyrza (T 444).

Thus, Gissing does not suggest that music equally affects all people who possess “finer natures.” The interpretation of the scene rests on the phrase, “music intensely heard” (T 225). For instance, Thyrza’s musical experience changes because she sees Egremont in the audience before the music. Though Thyrza’s extreme reaction to the singer (“I will never sing again,”) does assure the reader that she focuses on the concert, Thyrza also relates the music to her love for Egremont (T 53-54).⁷⁶ This makes her more emotionally receptive—and perhaps also more vulnerable to a

⁷⁶ Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2006. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *George*

loss of “control and expression” of emotion—than her sister, who is mainly looking to validate her own, working class A experiences (Stedman 138). Importantly, the classical music she hears is a part of Egremont’s world, and so by transcending her class status and entering into the music completely, she collapses the boundaries that separate his world and hers. In opposition to Thyrza’s expression of idealism, Gilbert’s love for Thyrza and his discontent with his social situation make him experience the music intensely in a way that leads him to conclusions about how to reconcile his artistic soul with his working-class identity. The music becomes a vehicle through which Gilbert and Thyrza vicariously, albeit temporarily, achieve their social desires. All three responses indicate that the characters respond differently to music according to their experience of the world, including their class experience. Gilbert and Thyrza’s class situation combines with their sensitivity to make them uniquely open to being affected by the classical music in a more powerful way than equally sensitive members of the middle or upper classes. In a way, their finer natures are only revealed because their class identity contrasts with the rest of the audience—their response seems exceptional because it stems from their ignorance (for Thyrza, at least, gives the music more weight than Egremont says it warrants). Egremont is inured to classical music and finds it unaffecting, while it is a special event for Gilbert and Thyrza.

This extra sensitivity comes at a cost to Thyrza, foreshadowing how she will suffer for her idealism and her ability to transcend her class identity. Gissing describes Thyrza’s experience after the concert as almost painful: she “moan[s]” that the music will not leave her, and she cannot sleep despite her exhaustion (T 227). Through Lydia’s worry that the music may make Thyrza physically ill, Gissing implies the experience of music and its ability to raise Thyrza to a higher plane creates pain and distress. Indeed, for Thyrza, the displacement of class identity through the music is a negative experience in the long term, though in the short term it is a positive one. Gissing uses the physical pain that Thyrza feels from the music as a metaphor for

the eventual pain she will experience as she temporarily transcends her class status through Mrs. Ormande's patronage, only to be barred from entering the middle class because of Egremont's fickle passion.

In this short description of the concert, Gissing uses music to reveal the behavior and psychology of working-class characters that have the potential to rise above their class. Unlike the communal experience of street music and fiddling (which reaffirms class identity through group bonding over musical genres that are specific to class), Gilbert and Thyrsa have isolating, strongly emotional experiences when they listen to music. Their responses are also distinct from the unemotional, upper class response. However, the concert also reveals the passion of the working classes, a passion that was seen in the street music, though perhaps in a less sophisticated form. Gilbert and Thyrsa's "striving" towards refinement, revealed through their responses to the music, has a definite goal and consciousness, and so it seems less futile than the striving of the London poor. For Gissing, therefore, music can indicate a character's class, or indicate class mobility—that they belong in a higher (or lower) class. The format and the performance space, whether private or public, formal or informal, are important in understanding the distinctions between these three scenes. As Nicky Losseff explains, Gissing's descriptions of middle-class music-making "highlight the gulf between the social worlds and construct an alternative soundscape for the privileged which contrasts with the 'vulgar clanging' of the streets."⁷⁷

III.

Initially, therefore, it appears as though Gissing believes that music can change the class structure and can allow those who seem rightfully to belong to a higher class despite an accident of birth to reveal their "natural" status. As the most musical character in the novel as well as the protagonist,

⁷⁷ Nicky Losseff, "The Voice, the breath, and the soul: Song and poverty in *Thyrza*, *Mary Barton*, *Alton Locke*, and *A Child of the Jago*," *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, Ed. Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, Ashgate: Burlington, 2004. Hereafter cited parenthetically as "Voice."

Thyrza provides the primary example in Gissing's discussion about whether music can indicate a different sort of class structure based upon musicality instead of land, heredity, or money.

Thyrza's voice and vocal training develop throughout the novel, paralleling her social ascendance from the working class towards the upper-middle class. As Losseff points out, "Thyrza does not necessarily see her singing as a means to raise her social status," but the reader objectively sees how her voice sets her apart and indeed isolates her from both upper-class and working-class society ("Voice" 6).

Gissing subtly undermines the surface plot structure in relationship to music by showing how Thyrza's gift stems from her class status, binding her to her class identity. In the fourth chapter of the novel, Gissing describes Thyrza singing at a music hall. He carefully describes the three performers before Thyrza, setting them up as foils to contrast Thyrza's behavior and musical talent. The first performer is a pompous character who dreams of becoming "the great Sam," the second is a man singing a song of courtly love, ironic in view of the setting of the music hall (the haunt of prostitutes), and the third is a pale, ugly girly who sings of "springtime and the country and love" (T 42, 43). All three are out of touch with their reality, as can be seen through their descriptions. Gissing treats them with heavy sarcasm, especially the last girl, quoting the lyrics, "Underneath the May-tree blossoms / Oft we've wandered, you and I" and then saying, "The girl had a drunken mother, and spent a month or two of every year in the hospital" (T 43). While Gissing encourages the reader to feel pity for these characters, this automatically puts the reader in a condescending position, pitying them for their denial of their circumstances.

In contrast, Thyrza sings at the music hall to honor her late, musical father, and in his description of it, Gissing seems to subscribe to Hegel's philosophy that "It is primarily through

the voice that people make known their inwardness.”⁷⁸ The narrator highlights Thyrza’s own inner nature through his description of her singing. She sings one of her father’s songs—what Gissing calls, “a true expression of the life of working folk,” and the description reveals her refinement (T 44). Ironically, the authentic expression of her class identification indicates Thyrza’s separation from her working class compatriots: “it was different enough from anything that had come before; her pure sweet tones touched the hearers profoundly”(T 44). Gissing also indicates her potential to rise in society, saying Thyrza’s voice “was a voice well worthy of cultivation,” and in this case, the voice is a symbol of Thyrza herself (T 44). P.J. Keating notes that Thyrza’s “qualities of beauty and character” make her “independent of, or indeed out of place in, a working-class setting,” but these qualities seem to be revealed primarily through music (after all, Egremont falls in love with her first for her voice).⁷⁹ She not only separates herself through her talent and her song choice that reflects reality, she also separates herself morally. As Liggins explains, “The scene in the pub is also designed to reinforce Thyrza’s distance from her unrefined fellow workers, refusing to drink,” revealing that music highlights her purity (*George* 54). Yet all of these distinctions are only valuable when considering Thyrza in light of her class identity. By suggesting that a reader should consider Thyrza “special,” Gissing continues to classify her as a member of working class A.

The opening of Thyrza’s “musical world” through music lessons in the city is a metaphor for her emerging understanding of middle-class concepts and values rather than the middling-class yearnings she experienced at the beginning of the novel.⁸⁰ The training changes her voice from charmingly rustic into sophisticatedly trained, indicating her social development. As she

⁷⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of the Subjective Spirit*, Ed. Michael John Petry, Springer: Berkeley, 1978, 181. Quoted in “Voice.”

⁷⁹ P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971, 68.

⁸⁰ Thyrza says, “I’m discontented. There’s never any change [...] I should like to see a new place! [...] I want to know things!” (T 52)

received lessons, “A world of which she had had no suspicion was opening up to her; music began to mean something quite different from the bird-warble which was all that she had known” (T 396). Gissing deliberately compares her original voice to a bird to suggest naturalness, but also to suggest that the compelling spontaneity of her original voice has been lost in this training. Thus, Gissing introduces a discussion of the cost of fulfilling her musical potential. Becoming musically trained (the metaphorical equivalent of learning middle-class behaviors) dampens Thyrsa’s soul, the very aspect of her character that gave her music potency. This can be seen in the narrator’s treatment of her singing master, saying harshly, “he had only a larynx to deal with, and was at no pains to realize that the fountain of its notes was a soul” (T 396). The narrator’s condemnation of the soullessness of vocal training shows that the power of Thyrsa’s raw voice to affect the soul risks diminishment as it becomes more refined. However, her training refocuses the power of her music to affect the soul into a power, derived from music, which allows her to move within the levels of the social hierarchy. In Thyrsa’s daydream after her lessons, she elucidates the vague yearnings for power that she had voiced earlier, revealing the ability of music to bequeath power. “She imagined herself before a great hall of people, singing, yet singing in truth to one only. But all the others must hear and praise, that he might have joy of her power,” she says to herself (T 399). It is no longer just music that gives her power, power that she would normally lack as a member of the working classes. Once her voice has been trained, she fully realizes that the audience gives her power, and the amount of power she wields depends on the type of audience (higher class or lower class) that she has.

Added to Thyrsa’s concert hall experience and her music hall performance, the distinction between Thyrsa’s untrained and trained voice reveals Gissing’s opinion that the uniqueness of a working class A position combined with musical sensitivity and skill provides a valuable expression of emotion that the upper classes lack. Losseff calls Thyrsa’s music, “that symptom of

her passionate soul,” and what the upper classes may be attracted to is her vibrancy, her passion—given voice through her music (Losseff 18). Egremont first reveals the upper class lack of emotion through his concert response (foreshadowing his later inability to feel deep, constant emotion), and Gissing further develops this upper class neutrality through Annabel Newthorpe. Gissing sets up Annabel as a foil to Thyrsa, using a comparison of their musical styles to suggest that Thyrsa’s unique passionate sensitivity to music is superior to Annabel’s musicality, but this sensitivity also presents obstacles to her acceptance into a higher class. Annabel, a firmly established member of the upper class, has much less passion than Thyrsa, but considerably more formal education. Gissing calls her “sober [...] her step measured itself to the grave music of a mind which knew the influence of mountain solitude” (T 3). The image of Annabel setting her life to “grave music” suggests that she makes decisions with caution and deliberation. Thyrsa’s musical personality is much more impetuous and passionate, and so is her conduct—engaging herself to Gilbert, falling in love with Egremont, and so on. Annabel chooses the piano as her instrument, while Thyrsa chooses her voice; music thus identifies Annabel as upper class, because owning a piano implies the possession of wealth.⁸¹

Gissing privileges Thyrsa’s singing over Annabel’s singing and playing to reveal that Thyrsa’s unique gift stems from other characteristics of her identity as a member of the lower classes. Annabel’s singing and playing differs from Thyrsa’s, both in the reaction it elicits and in the location of the performances. Annabel chooses the respectable, upper class venue for her musical performance. She plays in Mrs. Ormande’s house, in the company of all women, and does not draw attention to herself through her music—in fact, Gissing includes no description of Annabel actually playing. This makes Annabel less appealing to the reader, because this scene is

⁸¹ Pianos were as much a symbol of class as a useful instrument for music making. See Jodi Lustig, “The Piano’s Progress: the piano in play in the Victorian novel” in *Ideas of Music in Victorian Fiction*.

much less vivid than the scenes describing Thyrza's performances. The reader must glean a sense of Annabel's playing from indirect comments from other characters. For instance, Thyrza's response to Annabel's music making is described thus: "Thyrza let her head droop a little. Music such as this she had not imagined" (T 189). The word, "drooping," deliberately reveals a physical manifestation of Thyrza's first moment of awareness of the large gap that exists between herself and the upper classes. Annabel's music reminds Thyrza of her own limitations (she "had not imagined" such musical skill), ironically separating Thyrza from the upper class characters to a greater degree just as she begins her attempt to rise in status.

Yet, though Gissing implies that Annabel's music is superior technically to Thyrza's, it excites less enthusiasm from its listeners and is thus seen as lacking. Egremont, who falls in love with Thyrza because of her voice, merely says that Annabel plays "well." Even Thyrza, who does have a fairly strong reaction to Annabel's music, has a more subdued response than she has when listening to the concert hall music. For Thyrza, the important part of hearing Annabel play is the glimpse of the upper-class experience; she summarizes the event to Egremont by saying, "I heard a lady play the piano. I did enjoy that!" (T 216). The operative word in the sentence is "lady;" the setting impresses Thyrza instead of the music itself. Gissing emphasizes Thyrza's "Artist's soul" through his comparison of her with Annabel, and Annabel becomes a more refined but ultimately less interesting character because she lacks the deeply passionate musicality that Thyrza displays (T 399). Through Annabel's playing and personality, Gissing positions himself opposite most social novelists, arguing that passion is a valuable quality and superior to education.

IV.

Though emotion may lift Thyrza's singing above even the upper classes, it causes the upper classes to think of her as a novelty instead of one who belongs in their society. Unlike Annabel, Thyrza staggers her audience, but this is due to both her class position and her musicality. Her

exceptional performance ironically underlines her class identity. She sings “Annie Laurie,” a popular sentimental Scottish folk song that she associates with Mr. Boddy; her familiarity with the song because of her working-class relatives deliberately grounds her in the working class.⁸² Yet despite the folk song’s humble origins, Thyrza impresses her audience with “wonder”—so much so that “a moment or two of quietness followed” (T 186). This dramatic audience reaction differs greatly from the reaction to Annabel’s playing, but the wonder seems to stem more from Thyrza’s class status combined with her unexpected gift than her gift alone. When Mrs. Ormande explores the breadth of her talent, the narrator says that Thyrza sings songs, “such as the people sing,” another phrase that figures her as a sociological study for the upper class and distinctly separates her from the environment of Mrs. Ormande’s home.

Despite Annabel’s more developed talent, it is Thyrza who interests her audience. Whereas Annabel plays only once, Thyrza sings three times at the house, and each time is asked to sing “Annie Laurie.” This treatment sets boundaries for Thyrza’s performance, keeping her out of the upper classes by asking her to sing exclusively working-class music. The response of the upper and middle-class characters isolates Thyrza as much as the lower class music hall audience isolates her. She is treated as a novel toy—asked to sing the same song repeatedly, fawned over as a class anomaly, and yet given no indication of the talent that she possesses; Mrs. Ormande hides her opinion about Thyrza’s talent from Thyrza (T 186). In addition, the language used to refer to her—Mrs. Ormande calls her a “child” in her discussion with Annabel, despite Thyrza being only a year or two younger than Annabel, also indicates the well-meaning condescension of the upper classes (T 190). Whereas Mrs. Ormande deemphasizes Annabel’s performance (saying only that Annabel is much better at piano than herself), Thyrza is seen as an abnormality because of her

⁸² although Annie Laurie was not an exclusively lower class song, it is significant that the children in Mrs. Ormande’s house must be taught the words of the song, because they do not know them—it comes from outside their class experience.

gift. Through the scene and the comparison between Annabel's subdued performance and Thyrza's electric one, Gissing reveals that the emotion in Thyrza's singing elevates her musicality above the upper classes, but the members of the upper classes do not realize it. Her passion does not gain her admission into the middle class—it only increases the likelihood that she will become a working class “project” of Mrs. Ormande's.

Hence, Thyrza's talent and ability to temporarily transcend her class only creates promises that are not fulfilled. As Losseff says, the voice is “directly expressive of our personalities and emotions,” and Thyrza's personality could easily fit into the middling or middle class if she controlled her emotions (Losseff 7). Nonetheless, Gissing reveals only two methods of allowing her to rise in status—through performance and through marriage. Gissing suggests the first can never result in a complete acceptance into the upper classes, because Thyrza negotiates a dangerous situation when she performs in front of an audience as a woman. Liggins points out that Thyrza advertises her sexual availability when she sings at the pub, which is part of the reason her sister is horrified (*George* 54). Even as she dreams about being a professional performer, Thyrza walks the fine line of negotiating her sex with her talent. Several times in the novel, upper class characters like Mrs. Ormande and Annabel emphasize that Thyrza will have to give up singing when she marries, because the objectification that is associated with performance would compromise a married woman. Indeed, it risks sullyng the good name of even an unmarried woman.⁸³ As Liggins notes, in some of his other novels, Gissing suggests that “entry into the performing professions [...] necessitate sexual and financial exchanges with men which put women on a level with the prostitute” (“Appearance” 32). As the working class heroine of the

⁸³ *Whirlpool* (1897) and *The Nether World* (1889) deal with this issue most explicitly. Emma Liggins, “Her Appearance in Public: Sexual Danger, Urban Space and the Working Woman,” *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed*, Ed. Martin Ryle and Jenny Bourne Taylor, Ashgate: Burlington, 2005. 32. Hereafter cited as “Appearance.”

novel, Thyrsa cannot actually become a successful, performing artist, because that would compromise her idealized, impeccable character. The narrator alludes to this disjunct by saying, “Artist’s soul that she had, [Thyrza] never gave it a thought that, if she became his wife, he might prefer that she should not sing in public”(T 399). Performing in public gives Thyrsa power, but it does not guarantee that she will be treated as an equal by the members of the audience—she is made into a commodity and idolized, but not necessarily respected. The promise that Mrs. Ormande’s patronage, by helping her to develop her voice, would raise her to Egremont’s level, cannot ever be fulfilled because of the nature of the role of the artist in Victorian society.

This leaves marriage as the tool by which Thyrsa can enter into the class in which she truly belongs. Yet marriage fails Thyrsa, too, because of the upper classes’ lack of passion and commitment. After Egremont returns from his two-year exile, he says “His passion for Thyrsa was dead; he even wondered how it could ever have been so violent,” and backs up his failure of commitment with rational reasons for the imprudence of their marriage (T 444). Gissing contrasts Egremont’s “perishable love” and Mrs. Ormande’s “prudential forecasts and schemings” with Thyrsa’s “sacred and inextinguishable ardour [...] the ideal of womanly fidelity”(T 455). One of Mrs. Ormande’s prudential reasons for discouraging the marriage focuses on Thyrsa’s singing. In discouraging Egremont from marrying Thyrsa, Mrs. Ormande says, “[Thyrza] has, too, far more strength than most women, a mind of a higher order, purer consolations. And she has art to aid her,” assuming her singing has supplanted her emotional desire to marry Egremont (T 442). With the phrases “higher order” and “purer consolations,” Gissing reveals how the upper classes try to dampen Thyrsa’s passionate emotions by turning her into a sort of ethereal, sexless angel.

Gissing suggests the rational caution and emotional restraint of the upper classes, also seen in Annabel’s playing, fails the working classes. According to the Victorian education theorist Charles Bray, the middle-class value system focuses on the fact that “man can be distinguished

from animals by ‘the proportion in which his feelings are under the control of his reflective powers.’”⁸⁴ Gissing turns this value system on its head, however, by revealing the lack of humanity that can result from emotional control. Mrs. Ormande and Egremont destroy Thyrza’s idealistic hopes to marry Egremont by first recognizing her musical potential as indicative of her ability to be Egremont’s equal, but then cultivating that potential and using it as evidence of her unfitness for Egremont.

Though initially musical sensitivity and performative ability distinguish Thyrza (and to some extent, Gilbert) from their other working class contemporaries who participate in music, this distinction leads them to more misery instead of allowing them to attain their rightful place in society. For most of the novel, Thyrza and Gilbert have mostly similar experiences. Both are distinguished from their class by their musicality and potential for improvement, and are picked out as projects by a member of the upper class (Mrs. Ormande and Egremont, respectively). Both also suffer from the inability of the upper classes to fulfill the promise of class mobility—Egremont’s fickle passion affects them both, although for different reasons. Yet, Thyrza and Gilbert do not suffer the same fate, because Gilbert realizes that “Daily his thirteen hours went into the manufacture of candles, and the evening leisure, with one free day in the week, was all he could hope for” to expand his mind (T 68). Gilbert understands that after Egremont falls in love with Thyrza, he must reconcile himself to his unchangeable position in working class A. He refuses to remain Egremont’s “pet project” of philanthropy in the face of Egremont’s love of Thyrza, a moral choice that condemns him to remain in the working class. Thus, Gilbert may be no less contented with his fate than Thyrza, but he remains a realist. His realism causes him to

⁸⁴ Charles Bray, *The Education of the Feelings*, London: Taylor and Walton, 1838. Quoted in *Stemming the Torrent* 139.

pragmatically focus on survival within the limits that society has created, while Thyrza's idealism cannot be reconciled with her disappointed hopes.

Thyrza's commitment to the higher spiritual and emotional realm that she attains through her music leads to her depression and eventual death. In a narrative aside, Gissing warns,

The happy people of the world are the dull, unimaginative beings from whom the gods, in their kindness, have veiled all vision [...] whose ears are thickened against the voice of music, whose thought finds nowhere mystery. Thyrza Trent was not of those. What joys were to be hers she must pluck out of the fire, and there are but few of her kind whom in the end the fire does not consume. (T 396)

The quote indicates Gissing's cynicism about the way music can negotiate class struggle. The "voice of music" and "vision" reveal to Thyrza the potential of a better life, less focused on subsistence and more focused on intellectual, moral, and cultural growth. Her musical sensitivity opens a wider world to her, just as the middling class is characterized by their educational experience. Her talent for singing gives her the means to rise and be distinguished above her class contemporaries—a way to "pluck [joy] out of the fire." Yet the emotional investment in Egremont and her passion revealed through her music becomes the "fire" that consumes her in the end, because the upper classes do not emotionally invest in Thyrza as much as she invests in them. They continue to see her as a novelty, interesting because of her class identity. Gissing says the "secret of [Thyrza's] soul" is "that gift of passionate imagination which in her early years sunk her in hour-long reverie, and later burned her life away"(T 486-7). Without her "passionate imagination" expressed through her music, Thyrza would have never raised her expectations above Gilbert and a fulfilling life in working class A, and thus would not have been disappointed. With this conclusion, it does seem that the street music and fiddling music participants suffer much less than Thyrza—they are "happy" in a limited way. There is no doubt in the reader's

mind, from all of the positive descriptions of Thyrza, that she is worthy of the middle class, but society fails her through its inability to commit to helping her transcend her class.

Indeed, Gissing critiques society's philanthropy towards the lower classes through the very identity of the two main characters. Gissing follows the Victorian convention of making the working-class protagonists intrinsically more sensitive than the other working-class characters around them. By including Lydia in the novel, Gissing reveals that two children, from the same parents, have very different aptitudes for music and different desires for rising above their current situation. As Keating points out, this was the traditional solution in the Victorian era when dealing with working class heroes and heroines—to distinguish them from their class contemporaries because of their innately better nature and disposition (Keating 69). However, Gissing reveals the fallacy of many other social novels that use this technique by making the reader question why, if Thyrza and Gilbert are indeed so superior, they cannot enter into the middling or middle classes. Social problem novels like *Mary Barton* by Elizabeth Gaskell feature exemplary heroines and heroes, but they remain firmly grounded in their class even though they do not fit with realistic working class behavior.⁸⁵ Gissing uses the fate of Thyrza to demonstrate how society isolates these characters because they do not fit with the lower classes and they threaten the upper class social order. Through the use of music as a motif, Gissing criticizes the upper class treatment of the promising members of the lower classes. The only person Thyrza can remotely identify with is Gilbert, for he shares her “classless” sense of limbo; this is why Gissing has her return to marry him at the end of the novel. Yet, Thyrza cannot even marry Gilbert, because he represents the realistic response to the rigid English class structure: he denies his spiritual and intellectual desires to rise because he sees that upward class mobility is impossible. Thyrza, as an idealist who

⁸⁵ *Mary Barton* chronicles the life of Mary, who is an ideal moral, intelligent, and sensitive woman from the working class. Although she is courted by a member of the middle class, this courtship is strongly condemned in the novel and she marries another exemplary member of her own class.

continues to love Egremont despite their class differences, finally attempts to reconcile herself to the reality of remaining in the working classes, but crushing her dream kills her. Significantly, she gives up singing before she returns to Gilbert, a symbol of giving up her passionate soul.

For this reason, Gissing suggests that Thyrza can only transcend her class identity by transcending the earthly life entirely—in short, through death. Gissing raises this question of whether Thyrza ever really commits to her present world at all; she is constantly ill and frequently expresses discontent with her life: “always dreaming of something beyond and above the life which was her lot” (T 49-50). In fact, Thyrza never seems quite corporeal because of her physical frailty: Losseff says, “Thyrza’s existence is located only partially in the material world” (Losseff 16). Thyrza’s musicality leads only to frustrated hopes and disappointed promises on earth, and so Thyrza is conveniently relegated to heaven because she cannot fit in the Victorian social structure any more. But Gissing does not figure her death as a beautiful, transcendent moment where Thyrza finds the realm in which she belongs. Although Losseff says, “the sacrificial death of Thyrza might actually have saved her from the disappointment of having to surrender desire for a public life of music,” Gissing seems to suggest that her death is itself disappointing (Losseff 24). He describes her death as tragic, despite using many of the right religious catchphrases.

Had she not herself desired it? And what gift more blessed, of all that man may pray for?
[...] The heart that had ached so wearily would ache no more; for the tired brain there was no more doubt. Had existence been to her but one song of thanksgiving, even then to lie thus had been more desirable. For to sleep is better than to wake, and how should we who live bear that day’s burden but for the promise of death. (T 473-4)

At first glance, describing death as a release, as “blessed,” a “promise” and a “gift,” evokes Victorian religious doctrine. However, this reading ignores the unusual phrase, “the promise of death.” In Gissing’s view, death itself, not resurrection or heaven, provides the release from

suffering, suffering which cannot be alleviated in life. Her heart stops aching and her brain stops doubting not because she has reached fulfillment, but because she has lost her will to battle against societal mores. This view, common in later naturalistic novels, opposes the social novel focus on redemption of the working classes during the present life. Instead, Gissing generalizes in the last line that we only survive because of the promise that we will not have to suffer forever, a fatalistic philosophy on life. Hence, although the heroine might be happier in death, this represents a failure on the part of society instead of representing Thyrza's saintliness.

Although music distinguishes Thyrza from her surroundings, giving her the means to move out of the working class into the middling class, it also isolates her from both her working class counterparts and her upper class acquaintances. As a working-class, musical character, she reveals potential and brilliance. This is a catch twenty-two, however, because she receives attention from the upper classes primarily from her working-class status. She successfully moves into the middling class, when she trains with the vocal teacher and sews for a living, but cannot enter into the middle or upper class, where her musicality and performative ability indicate she truly belongs. The failure of Egremont to remain steadfast in his love for Thyrza represents a failure of the upper classes to feel true emotion and empathy, a gift that Thyrza has which simultaneously elevates her morally and limits her upward mobility. Thyrza's understanding of music lifts her above the working class, but also isolates her from both the upper and lower "mass of mankind;" in gaining culture she loses her connection with humanity. For women, Losseff argues, "It is the idea of music itself that puts them in the position of permanent exile of one sort or another, and this will continue as long as they live lives where music occupies a pre-eminent position" (Losseff 25).

This pessimistic interpretation of the conflict between the individual and society through the motif of music reveals Gissing's naturalistic philosophy, even as he ostensibly writes a social

problem novel. Gissing uses music to expose the hypocrisy of the upper classes who claim to encourage class mobility in deserving members of the lower classes, but fail to fulfill these promises of mobility. He reveals through *Thyrza* that cultural education of the lower classes (popular in the period of reform from 1860-1875) hurts rather than helps them, for it makes the upper classes feel virtuous without actually disturbing the social order of the time. The upper classes are seen as impoverished because they lack the emotion and soulful song that *Thyrza* possesses, and these deficits make them culpable for *Thyrza*'s death. Despite her superiority, *Thyrza* experiences only temporary transcendence through music, giving her expectations for promises that are not fulfilled and making her discontented without providing her with a solution to that discontent. And death is her only option in a society that has isolated her from participation in life. The picture of *Thyrza* with which this chapter began reflects the anxiety of the upper classes. *Thyrza*'s portrait encapsulates all of the attractiveness of her intellectual promise while locking her in the stasis of canvas and paint, allowing the upper classes to be moved with emotion at her plight but not requiring them to act upon the revolutionary idea of creating a society where characters like *Thyrza* can thrive.

Place saver for Thyrsa figure

Chapter 3: Musical Irony, Romanticism, and Tragedy

It is a difficult question, my friends, for any young man [...] whether to follow uncritically the track he finds himself in, without considering his aptness for it, or to consider what his aptness or bent may be, and re-shape his course accordingly. (JO 335-6)

This question is at the heart of the social preoccupations of *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's last and perhaps darkest novel. The word "uncritically," reveals the bias of the quotation, which favors the path of the iconoclast in society. The question, however, is posed not by the narrator, nor Hardy (1840-1928), but by Jude, and his fate causes the reader to question this noble, egalitarian idea of reshaping one's own destiny. Music provides Jude with the hope of changing his course to align with his "aptness," both in terms of his marriage and his vocation. However, this hope is hollow, for Jude is fated to remain in his unhappy marriage and his unfulfilling career.

Jude's philosophizing provides a question for the lives of the four main characters in *Jude the Obscure*. All four characters come from the working classes, but respond differently to music, which affects their response to their social station. Hardy's two protagonists, like Eliot's and Gissing's protagonists, are set above the unmusical characters because of their sensitivity, which is revealed through their stereotypically Romantic response to music. But because this sensitivity is produced from an illusion of hope which music provides, it serves to not only limit the characters to their social state such as we have seen in Gissing; in *Jude the Obscure*, music actually contributes to the characters' destruction. Their musicality prevents them from seeing reality and learning how to cope in their environment. In a Darwinian sense, this Romantic conception of music thus makes them unfit for survival. Unlike in *Thyrza*, where society sabotages Thyrza, leaving her outside of all class communities, Jude and Sue sabotage themselves because their superior cultural and emotional viewpoint allows them to embrace the false hope that music provides. In contrast, the less musical characters, Arabella and Mr. Phillotson, see

music as merely entertainment or environmental ambience, and this frees them to focus on their own survival and perpetuation within the working class. Music and pragmatism seem to oppose each other in Hardy's society, for they represent the mobility versus stasis debate in the working class society.⁸⁶ Thus, in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy brings the literary foundations of the concept of Romantic music and its relationship to class mobility into question. While musicality can cause social, psychological, or even physical harm to a character, it also endears the character to the reader because of the affinity the reader feels for the character's cultural sophistication. Through the ironic use of music, Hardy emphasizes this paradox, causing the reader to question his or her sympathetic response to self-destructive characters.

Critics have labeled *Jude the Obscure* as a tragedy, representing Hardy's disillusionment with society and its antagonism towards social revolution or enlightenment.⁸⁷ In his essay, "*Jude the Obscure* in the Age of Anxiety," Barry Schwartz argues that Hardy creates a modern epic that is existentialist instead of heroic: the two protagonists feel morally isolated, and they confront human society and are crushed by it.⁸⁸ When viewed as an epic as well as a tragedy, the novel is not only a tragedy of the individual, it is a tragedy of the system. While it lacks the urban setting and the wide variation of class status in the characters, *Jude the Obscure* still has an objective similar to the objective of the social novel: revealing the flaws in the system and how it limits the rural working class. Critic Raymond Williams emphasizes Hardy's social commitment by saying he portrays the "educated world of his day" as "locked in its deep social prejudices and in its

⁸⁶ While William James did not articulate the philosophy of pragmatism until the early 1900s, Charles Pierce, according to James, introduced the word into philosophy in 1878. In my discussion, I am not referring to the philosophical movement, but the general concept of pragmatism: assessing a debate or an issue by looking at its practical consequences. I believe Hardy's pragmatism reflects a shift of writers and philosophers towards this philosophy at the turn of the century. James, William, *Essays in Pragmatism*, New York: Hafner, 1948. 141-158.

⁸⁷ R.P. Draper, *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, London: Macmillan, 1975.

⁸⁸ Schwartz, Barry N, "Jude the Obscure in the Age of Anxiety," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 10 (Nineteenth Century), 1970: 793-804.

consequent human alienation.”⁸⁹ The emphasis on alienation, which was also seen in Gissing and in Eliot, comes to the forefront in *Jude the Obscure*. Hardy attacks many of the institutions within society that he sees as limiting factors on the potential of mankind, most obviously educational institutions (symbolized by Christminster), Victorian opinions on sex and marriage, and organized religion. These institutions create obstacles that lead to Jude’s tragic downfall, causing the reader to critique the institutions as fallible and limited. Indeed, the results that make *Jude the Obscure* so tragic (it has been called his bleakest novel) stem from specific class issues. The preference for the moneyed upper class at Christminster prevents Jude from realizing his intellectual potential, and the middle class conception of marriage prevents Jude from being aligned with his intellectual and cultural equal, Sue and requires him to descend in status because he honors his tie to Arabella. The Church is condemned as a palliative for Jude and Sue, manipulating their emotions and providing them false hope. As Sue says, “the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star patterns,” and Hardy clearly shows how the struggle against religious, educational, and social “molds” is a fruitless one (JO 222-3).

Hardy’s use of music, then, serves to emphasize his idea of the limitations that the social system has, not on mobility, but on the attempt to reach one’s potential without the resources available to the middle and upper classes. Music helps to clarify the point at which Hardy’s tragedy becomes social criticism. The three primary venues for music in *Jude the Obscure*, the piano, the bells, and church music, serve as means for this criticism. The piano reveals the limitations of marriage, the bells of Christminster show the limits of the education system, and the Church music that Jude connects with allows Hardy to criticize Christianity. Music occurs in the tragic plot of *Jude the Obscure* as a mocking echo of the Romanticism and idealism that Eliot

⁸⁹ Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, New York: Oxford UP, 1970, 110.

voiced only a few years earlier. In Hardy's world, it is no longer possible to consider music as way to renegotiate the class hierarchy (as in Eliot), or even to reveal the "true" position of a working class character. Hughes argues, "in an ironic world, music merely encourage a fated and forlorn hope or projection of relatedness," a hope of harmony that was very real in both Eliot and in Gissing (Hughes 26). Indeed, in Gissing, Thyrza's musical sensibilities make her sympathetic to the middle class reader. Hardy, in contrast, distances the reader from the characters by ironically depicting the Romantic ideals of music, and shows how adopting these ideals only bring the characters more pain and disappointment. Hence, the motif of music magnifies the tragedy of the novel and the tragedy of a system that stands in opposition to the ideals presented in the music.

I.

Unlike *Thyrza*, which deals with nearly every class level, and *Daniel Deronda*, which deals with the extremes in society, *Jude the Obscure* focuses on distinctions within one class of people instead of the relationships between the classes. Hardy's focus on the rural working class—the stone mason, the barmaid, the illuminator, and the school teacher—changes the class comparisons from vertical to horizontal, allowing the reader to focus on the characters' different responses within the same class level. Although he deals with the middling class insofar as he examines these characters' movement towards or away from middling class characteristics, examining their potential for intellectual and cultural growth (evoking Gissing's methodology), none of his characters move from their initial position in society. Mr. Phillotson does hold a more prominent position in society than Jude, Sue, and Arabella simply because he holds a position in education rather than trade. Nonetheless, Jude's comment, "He was too clever to bide here any longer—a small sleepy place like this!" must be juxtaposed with Mr. Phillotson's failure to ever become something more than a village schoolmaster (JO 35). Jude may see Mr. Phillotson as "the great

Phillotson” for aspiring to a Christminster education, but the reader can see that Mr. Phillotson’s education gives him no advantage in mobility, and thus he must be classed with the other three characters despite his role as an educator (JO 123).

Because the characters all occupy the same stratum of society, music becomes a way to delineate the differences between them, creating a hierarchy within the working class. Despite making their living as skilled artisans without much formal education, Jude and Sue display sophistication through music that far surpasses Arabella’s and Phillotson’s talents. Jude is the perfect depiction of a member of the middling classes, if one forgets his literal position in society. As Langland says, “Hardy frames the larger issue of Jude’s struggle with social codes by stressing his desire to learn the languages of the past [...] with the goal of ultimately being authorized to speak as an educated, middle-class man.”⁹⁰ He also has class aspirations, and thinks of entering the church as a vocation because of a feeling of “social unrest [...] which was purely an artificial product of civilization” (JO 149).

In addition to his intellectual potential and his initiative in teaching himself how to read Latin (much like Gilbert), Jude responds to music in a way that defies his working class upbringing. Like Thyrza, Jude feels keenly the emotion and cosmic import of music, which indicates his intellectual potential to rise above the limits of his trade. When Jude first walks into the church where he sees Sue worshipping, he not only connects to the hymn being sung, but he applies it to his own life: “the great waves of pedal music tumbled round the choir, and [...] he could hardly believe that the psalm was not specially set by some regardful Providence for this moment”(JO 114-15). Not only does he have an intellectual response to music, applying it to his life as instruction instead of entertainment, but he also reveals his emotional responsiveness

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Langland, “Becoming a Man in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*,” *Telling Tales*, Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2002. 50

through music. In this visit to Sue's church, the narrator says he remained in "ecstasy" throughout the service, an indication of the passion that the music evokes in him. Sue also displays her true middling-class identity through her response to music.⁹¹ When Jude and Sue play on the piano in the schoolhouse, she is touched by the same air on "The Foot of the Cross" (JO 219-20). This is particularly significant because it offers a glimpse of the inner sensitivity of a character who frequently seems reserved and incapable of deep emotion. Hardy also uses music as a metaphor to describe Sue. The narrator calls Sue, "a harp which the least wind of emotion from another's heart could make to vibrate as readily as a radical stir in her own" and her nature like "harp strings" (JO 292, 241). The Aeolian harp, the central image of the Romantic poets to connect music and nature, is linked to Sue, and it highlights both Sue's sensitivity and the disconnect between her beauty, fragility, and Romantic disposition and the callousness of the world of the novel.

In contrast, Arabella and Mr. Phillotson completely lack this sensitivity and refinement in the enjoyment of music. Although Mr. Phillotson buys the piano at the beginning of the story, it almost becomes his antagonist from the first paragraph of the novel. The reader learns that Phillotson bought the piano at an auction "during the year in which he thought of learning instrumental music" (JO 33). Yet Hardy emphasizes Mr. Phillotson's transient interest in music saying, "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 in moving house" (JO 33). The quotation reveals volumes about Phillotson's lack of musicality or indeed fixed purpose. The word, "waned" indicates that he sees the instrument merely as a diversion, a fad, and has no deeper connection in his soul to music (such as Jude and Sue display). It is no accident that "Phillotson" is mnemonically similar to the word "philistine," and his reaction to the piano

⁹¹ Sue is both a fascinating character and is involved many references to music, but because of lack of space, I have used Jude as the prototypical "outsider." This is why there are fewer references to Sue than to Jude in this chapter.

reveals his antagonism towards the arts. Phillotson removes the piano from its musical purpose, calling it a “purchased article” and calling it a “perpetual trouble” until the reader almost forgets that a piano is the source of his difficulties (JO 33). This labeling of the piano also reveals that Phillotson subscribes to Victorian society’s view of the piano as a marker of wealth or position instead of a true vehicle for music.⁹² His practical viewpoint may make readers disdain Phillotson and his emotional impoverishment, but it simultaneously proves that Phillotson understands the cultural currency of the time—though he does not always subscribe to it.⁹³ Ironically, Sue and Jude use this very piano to exclude Phillotson in their spiritual connection to each other through music. Phillotson’s response to the piano also indicates his lack of perseverance, a lack of perseverance that will be seen again in his failure to ever enter university at Christminster and rise above his job as a schoolmaster. Thus, the music (and specifically the piano as a symbol of music) reveals Phillotson’s lack of emotional and intellectual potential. He possesses the material markers of the middling class, but not the markers of higher cultural sophistication.

Hardy debases Arabella’s character even more dramatically via music than Phillotson’s, suggesting she is far below Jude despite their apparent class equality. When Arabella sings in with the church members, Hardy says, “she had a clear, powerful voice, which could be distinctly heard with the rest, rising and falling to the tune, her inflated bosom being also seen doing likewise” (JO 325). The jab of sarcasm in reference to her “bosom” combined with the word “distinctly” suggests that Arabella may purposefully be using music to display her physical attributes. Hardy’s irony is in full force here, for Arabella, who lies, commits bigamy, and

⁹² Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History*, London: Dent, 1976.

⁹³ One might argue that Phillotson’s decision to divorce Sue to allow her to live with Jude, which leads to excessive opprobrium from the community because it defies societal values, is evidence that he does not understand the cultural mores. However Phillotson realizes that society will ostracize him, and when it becomes detrimental to his livelihood, he understands the steps he must take to repair his reputation. It is this manipulation of society which Jude and Sue find difficult.

manipulates other characters, is (in her words) “spreading the gospel” through music (JO 325). Music not only shows her hypocrisy, it reveals her complete lack of sympathetic feeling. As Arabella watches Jude die, the narrator says, “the faint notes of a military or other brass band from the river reached her ears; and in a provoked tone she exclaimed, ‘To think he should die just now!’” (JO 410). The music only indicates to her the joy of the parade and celebration she is missing instead of the irony of the world celebrating as Jude gives up his battle against the social system. Just in case the reader misses the sympathetic response he or she is to adopt with the juxtaposition of the music and Jude’s death, the narrator reintroduces the band, saying, “a band in red uniform gave out the notes she had already heard in the death-chamber.” The close juxtaposition of the words “death chamber” and “notes” re-emphasizes Arabella’s complete lack of sympathy and musical sensitivity. Yet at the same time, Arabella possesses an instinct for survival that is aided by her lack of sympathy. From her artifice of creating dimples to attract Jude to her adroit manipulation to persuade him to remarry her, Arabella pursues her desires with a single-minded purpose. She is not distracted by hopes of community or mobility that are voiced through the music, for she hears the music, but does not listen for any message.

Thus in a way, Hardy seems to be echoing Gissing in that the musical responses of Jude and Sue indicate their fitness for the middling class or even middle class. Certainly, Jude and Sue have far more sensitivity than the average member of the working class. However, Hardy’s tragedy takes a darker turn because it indicates that the characters’ sensitivity towards music creates a weakness instead of a strength. Their sensitivity and intellectual promise (displayed through music) isolates them instead of helping them transition into the middle class. It also makes them more likely to be deceived by the promise of hope and community found through the music. In reality, this hope is nonexistent; at every plot turn, the protagonists’ hopes for success are dashed. While music appears to indicate intellectual and emotional potential, it ultimately

makes Jude and Sue less intelligent about society and less astute about their maneuverability within it. Aesthetic response to music turns in to a liability for the characters, and it paradoxically indicates both their potential and indicates that they are less fit for survival because their time and energy is spent in introspection—seen in their responses to music—instead of the everyday needs of existence such as food, housing, and steady income. As Gillian Beer notes, “the death of their children [...] leaves Jude and Sue as aberrant, without succession, and therefore ‘monstrous’ in the sense that they can carry no cultural or physical mutations into the future” (Beer 257). Hardy reveals this point through an objective narrator, who alternately asks the reader to sympathize with Jude and Sue and then mocks them for their naivety. This narrative technique helps the reader to realize when he or she wants to adopt the same vision of hope that music provides to Jude and Sue, and thus recognize the fallacy of that hope. In fact, although John Hughes argues that Hardy’s repetition of the futility of hope paradoxically reveals the need for it, I believe that Hardy is instead trying to detach his readers from the escape hatch that he sees in music; he wants his readers to face the reality of life (Hughes 26).

Jude and Sue, as Terry Eagleton is quick to point out, have many flaws and self-destructive behaviors, a fact which is clearly represented in their response towards music.⁹⁴ Hardy’s refusal to idealize them serves as a way to unite realism with tragedy in the novel. The complexity of the novel stemming from Hardy’s desires to make Jude and Sue’s musical response both appeal to the reader’s emotions, and frustrate the reader’s intellect. No one in this society can break out of the social patterns, and the ways in which music promises an opportunity to deviate from the pattern leads to eventual tragedy. But the tragedy underscores the theme of the necessity of adapting to society instead of attempting to stand against it, because Jude and Sue’s suffering is

⁹⁴ Terry Eagleton, Introduction, *Jude the Obscure*, London: Macmillan, 1974.

seen as senseless as well as fated. Hardy's use of music allows him to criticize the social institutions at the same time as he reveals the harm caused by a belief in music's promise that one can transcend the limitations of those institutions.

II.

Understanding Hardy's description of music in the novel is essential to understanding his paradoxical use of it as both a motif to show the tragedy of the social system and a way to question the usefulness of musical sensitivity in this society.⁹⁵ In the scenes in which characters interact with music, Hardy ironically expresses a Romantic and idealistic concept of music that reveals how Gissing's and Eliot's conceptions of music become so different from the reality of the late Victorian social hierarchy that Hardy views them as completely false. On the surface, music appears to evoke what critic John Hughes says, "seem[s] like a signal, of expressions of the soul, of community and the future" (Hughes 26). The scene between Jude and Sue playing Mr. Phillotson's piano at the schoolhouse illustrates this concept of music, as well as Hardy's mockery of it. In a short respite from Sue's marriage to Phillotson and Jude's connection to Arabella, Jude and Sue experience a connection to each other and can begin to express their inner souls. Jude begins the scene by playing the piano. "Jude touched [the notes] in his humble way, and could not help modulating into the hymn which had so affected him in the previous week. A figure moved behind him [...] and laid her fingers lightly upon his bass hand" (JO 219). At the introduction of the scene, important Romantic principles emerge. First, the involuntary physical reaction that music creates in Jude, indicated by the phrase "could not help," reflects the power of music on the rural, working classes, a power that was also seen in Gissing. Hardy also introduces

⁹⁵ In addition to the three types of music I discuss, Hardy frequently uses the music of nature to create a mood like, "a mournful wind blew through the trees, and sounded in the chimney like the pedal notes of an organ" (JO 145). This music accurately reflects Jude's emotions (in this case, despair). Hardy's use of music in nature in his descriptions of setting are complex, but have little bearing on the questions I investigate because they do not directly involve the characters. The important point is that music itself is not necessarily false; it is the characters' interpretation of it that leads to false hope.

the idea of sexual and romantic relationships negotiated through music, an idea that was previously seen in *Thyrza* and *Egremont* and was a concern in the Romantic music genre.

As the scene progresses, music reveals the inner natures of the characters, much as it did for Eliot and Gissing. After Jude plays the song, Sue plays it, each having their private experience with the performance of the hymn, but also having a private experience of listening to it. The doubly private nature of their experience reflects ironically on the physical connection they make by touching each other's hands, because it is only a temporary connection. Music reveals the tendency of both characters towards isolation, even within the context of an event that fosters a moment of communication. Hardy further reveals the inner natures of Jude and Sue through the music, suggesting music can temporarily allow for communication and revelation that is impossible through words. The narrator says,

She played on, and suddenly turned round; and by an unpremeditated instinct each clasped the other's hand again. She uttered a forced little laugh as she relinquished his quickly.

‘How funny!’ she said. ‘I wonder what we both did that for?’

‘I supposed because we are both alike, as I said before.’

‘Not in our thoughts! Perhaps a little in our feelings.’

‘And they rule thoughts [...]’ (JO 220)

Again, Hardy emphasizes the “unpremeditated” nature of Sue and Jude’s response during the music.⁹⁶ Here, the societal limitations come from both characters’ marriages, and their true natural affinity for each other can only be expressed through the music. Eliot’s conception of the sympathy that is made possible through music can also be seen elucidated in this passage and the obsession with “alike” or “not alike,” as the two characters are literally discovering the other’s

⁹⁶ The response evokes Gissing’s concept of naturalism—music revealing the true nature of a person without the societal limitations.

response to music, seeing their similarities, and getting outside themselves. Indeed, Sue denies in her language what the music makes evident. Jude's comment on the emotions ruling thoughts again harkens back to Romanticism and its connection with the heart, which we see in Eliot. The heart (Romanticism) and the head (idealism) are connected as one by Jude through the expression created by the pair in the music.

However, the characters' opinions about music and Hardy's own views of the characters' responses do not coincide. Although this scene first appears to closely reflect Shopenhauerian theories on aesthetics, taken within the greater context of the book, it becomes an ironic symbol of musical naivety. Communication may be possible for a short period of time, but within the greater scope of the novel, isolation triumphs over community. Even within that scene, Jude and Sue's interactions at the piano are almost comic. For instance, three times during the music, Jude and Sue are spontaneously moved to grab each other's hands (JO 219-20). The repetition of this action is an obvious symbol of their sexual attraction to each other, which lowers their ostensibly spiritual connection to each other to a basic animal level of desire. Joan Grundy calls it "the seductive power of music" in Hardy's novels, which stems from a Darwinian philosophy that music primarily serves as a "mating call" (Grundy 143).⁹⁷ Through the choice of song, the Good Friday hymn, Hardy highlights the fiction of the idea that the music creates these feelings in Jude and Sue. This music is designed for the contemplation of the crucifixion, a symbol of Jesus assuming the sins of the world. Yet Jude and Sue use the music as a vehicle for the sin of adultery. Hardy suggests through the music that the characters are using their personal experiences to *respond to* the music, instead of the Romantic idea of an emotional response that is

⁹⁷ Charles Darwin, "The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals," As cited in Siegfried Nadel; Theodore Baker, "The Origins of Music," *The Musical Quarterly*, 16 (1930), 531-546.

evoked *by* the music.⁹⁸ This is also supported by the narrator's insistence that all of these actions are unpremeditated. Moreover, given the fact that the previous several chapters detailed Jude's obsession with Sue, this insistence on spontaneity merely serves to highlight the characters' denial of their desires instead of the veracity of their claims.

As Asquith suggests in his book, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics, and Music*, "For Schopenhauer [...] the activity of listening to music performs a dual function: it enables the individual to submerge their will in the wider process and therefore find solace from the misery of life, and it also allows the listener to experience a 'picture' of the inner-life of man governed by the will 'but entirely without reality and far removed from their pain.'"⁹⁹ For Hardy, the "solace" that Jude and Sue find through their Romantic and idealistic experience of music is entirely false; they neither admit their own sexual desires nor do they really achieve good communication with each other.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, despite the temporary musical connection, they remain irrevocably separated. The scene with the piano, when viewed in light of the whole novel, demonstrates the lasting physical, psychological, and social harm of a connection to music. Alison Byerly aptly notes that in Hardy, "the almost hypnotic power that music possesses is not due to its authenticity as personal expression," indicating that music is not a reliable form of communication in *Jude the Obscure* (Realism 65). This may be a result of the conflict between the hope of musical Romanticism and the harsh reality of existence for the rural working class in the late nineteenth

⁹⁸ Jody Lustig discusses Hardy's use of the piano and its relationship to the subjective experience in her essay, "The Piano's Progress," *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, Ed Nicky Losseff and Sophie Fuller, Burlington: Ashgate, 2004.

⁹⁹ Thomas Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics, and Music*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 52. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁰⁰ Hardy's own personal views of the experience of music seem to express a mix of Romantic musical principles and an echo of the existentialist denial of the value of those principles in the real world. In a response to a concert, Hardy wrote, "Music is something that passes between your soul and that of another person, drawing out the soul of the listeners in a gradual thread of excruciating attenuation." There seems to be something risky or dangerous in this gradual thinning of the soul to emaciation which shadows the joyful idealistic concept of shedding corporeal bodies and being one with another's soul through music.

century. Byerly's comment also points to a breakdown of the very heart of music—true communication—that is so important in Gissing and Eliot (*Realism* 168)

III.

The scene with Jude and Sue at the piano is not only a way for Hardy to mock a Romantic philosophy of music; it is also a way to criticize the institution of marriage and the social taboos on sexuality. In this criticism, however, Hardy also emphasizes that although music can be a site of social transgression, the social transgression is not feasible once the experience of music has ended. The very scene of the couples' musical connection creates overtones of adultery. The overlay of hands is a physical manifestation of Jude and Sue's desire for each other, made possible through the vehicle of the piano. The piano symbolizes Mr. Phillotson (as his property), and so Jude and Sue's romantic connection is made possible through the instrument that represents her husband and marks their acts as adulterous. Hardy underscores Jude's denial of Sue's marital state when the narrator says, "Jude grasped [her hand] –just as he had done before her marriage" (JO 219). His action attempts to erase the convention of society, treating her as a single woman to whom he can display his desire and affection. Within the schoolhouse, Jude and Sue seem to escape their roles in their respective marriages, and explore both their sexual connection and their spiritual connection of being "alike." The scene convincingly reveals that Sue and Jude's connection to each other is much stronger than their connections to their legal spouses, and the music emphasizes their fitness for each other. However, once they leave the piano, societal mores return abruptly. Sue takes Jude to have tea, ironically using Jude's wedding present to Sue and Mr. Phillotson to serve him. "The kettle of his gift sang with some satire in its note," says Hardy, reminding Jude of society's taboos on his relationship with Sue (JO 220). Music repeatedly makes Jude feel a connection with Sue, from the harmonies that he thinks "ensphered" them both at the Cathedral, to their experience of the military band at the fair in

Stoke-Barehills. There, Sue and Jude see “[...] their own lives, as translated into emotion by the military band” (JO 307). As Asquith notes, “it is through such music that Jude and Sue find harmony with their surroundings” (Asquith 160). Unfortunately, this harmony may be joyful for the characters to experience, but it does not reflect the strictures that society imposes. Music encourages Jude and Sue to fulfill this connection that they experience through the piano by living together and having children. Their adultery harms both themselves and their children.

Psychologically, Sue is tortured by her transgression of social mores and her continual desire for the union with Jude that she experiences with him playing the piano. Their doubly adulterous union also leads to the suicide of their children, dooming Jude and Sue to “live out their lives merely at odds with the present” (Beer 257). They are unsuccessful in producing lasting markers of their social rebellion, and only manage to create more pain for themselves. Music presents an attractive, but ultimately unsuccessful, alternative to the societal requirements relating to marriage in Victorian England, allowing the reader to see both the potential for a different order, and inability of the individual to change the society he or she lives in.

Hardy reinforces his point that music is an ironic force through two juxtaposed scenes that demolish the cult of the composer and the concept of community created through music. In the first, Jude has joined the choir to sing on Good Friday. He is incredibly affected by the beauty of it; the narrator says, “It turned out to be a strangely emotional composition [...] its harmonies grew upon Jude, and moved him exceedingly” (JO 211). The phrase “strangely emotional” is an example of the detached narrative tone that isolates Jude from the reader. The narrator chooses the word “emotional” instead of “moving” or “inspiring” because it does not place a value judgment on the music itself. This suggests that Jude creates his own response to the song; it is not innately engendered by the hymn itself. The objective eye on the role of subjective experience is also present in the term “strangely.” The word raises the question of whether the piece really

deserves Jude's emotional response, or whether he is attributing his emotional response to Sue to the music.

Hardy hints that the latter may be the case because Jude goes to see the composer as much for moral support in his heterodoxy as for an appreciation of the hymn. "If there were any person in the world to choose as a confidant," Jude says naively, "this composer would be the one for he must have suffered, and throbbed, and yearned" (JO 211). This sentiment directly echoes the cult of the composer embodied by Eliot's Klesmer, and Hardy has no mercy as he destroys the stereotype in the very next scene. Instead of a "man of sympathies," the composer is mercenary and intends to leave music for the wine business. To Jude's comment, "I think it extremely beautiful," the composer replies, "Ah well—other people have said so too. Yes, there's money in it [...]" (JO 212). Here, Hardy juxtaposes the aesthetic response of the Romantic, seen in the word, "beautiful," with the capitalistic and pragmatic notions of money. The key phrase, "other people," indicates that the composition has no intrinsic worth; it is only worthwhile because the response has deemed it so. The commodification of music, which becomes a concern in *Thyrza*, is presented as an inescapable reality in *Jude*. Moreover, this scene demonstrates how Jude's hope for relatedness results in deeper isolation, for his hope sets him up for a harder fall when he realizes the composer is as soulless as Arabella.

The bells of Christminster also serve as an ironic force, but instead of criticizing Romantic music and the illusion of meaningful relationships between humans, the bells symbolize the education system and its unfulfilled promises. Jude is dreaming about Christminster, and the bells become an icon for him; the narrator says, "surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, 'We are happy here!'" (JO 47). Of course, by the end of the novel, the reader can see that this personification of the bells is entirely a delusion, for Christminster brings Jude neither happiness nor even welcomes him as these bells purport to do

through the word, “calling.” The bells entice him instead of Arabella or Phillotson, because he has the capacity to respond to the music. Christminster’s surface beauty, represented through the music of the bells, is figured as almost a religious force, and a force of community. As the old man Jude meets says, “there’s beautiful music everywhere in Christminster. You med be religious, or you med not, but you can’t help striking in your homely note with the rest” (JO 49). Again, the promise of community in music is left unfulfilled as Jude is left without a way to enter Christminster, and works in the city, largely alone and friendless except for Sue. As the story progresses, the bells return as a motif, becoming an ironic reference to Jude’s failure instead of his hope. When Jude hears the bells ring to announce the new Doctors from the University after he has given up his dream to go to Christminster, he calls the day his “Humiliation day” (JO 334). No longer do the bells speak to him; his imagined intimacy with the bells is replaced by their role in signaling a process that he can never take part in. “I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days,” says Jude, showing the emptiness of the initial promise of the bells and the music of Christminster (JO 336). The bells also return as a jubilant force at Jude’s death scene, where the narrator says they “struck out joyously” at Jude’s funeral (JO 412). However, this sound is now antagonistic to Jude’s fate; the bells still resound with joy, but the joy is totally unconnected to human events, a fact that Jude fails to realize when he believes the bells have a message for him personally. Jude makes this mistake again and again, ignoring the hostility of his environment in favor of the hope he interprets in the music he hears (*Realism* 169).

Finally, Hardy criticizes church music because it encourages Jude and Sue to believe they can disobey the marriage mores and pursue happiness, but he simultaneously uses it to further reveal how Jude and Sue are unfit for survival in this world. His use of juxtaposition between Jude’s voice and the narrative voice indicates Jude’s misreading of signs that affect his course of

action. Consider the scene when Jude reveals his musicality through his response to the psalm at Sue's church. Hardy's narrator mocks Jude's naïve belief that the psalm was "specially set by some regardful Providence for this moment" by juxtaposing that sentiment with the declamatory sentence, "And yet it was the ordinary psalm for the twenty-fourth day of the month" (JO 115). Immediately after the narrative aside, Jude continues, "The girl for whom he was beginning to nourish an extraordinary tenderness, was at this time ensphered by the same harmonies as those which floated into his ears" (JO 115). By choosing to name the exact day of the psalm as well as the use of the word "ordinary," the narrator not only encourages the reader to reject Jude's logic, he or she also encourages the reader to connect music with superstition. The narrator's tone mocks a belief in signs and portents, and emphasizes Christianity's ties to the prosaic. In Hardy's world, there is no place for benevolent God who directs the activities of mortals. Later, when Jude and Sue's children kill themselves, the coroner and Sue have a conversation that further highlights the disjunct between the promises of the church, voiced through music, and reality.

'What is it?' said Sue, her spasmodic breathing suspended.'

'The organ of the College chapel. The organist practicing I suppose. It's the anthem from the 73rd Psalm; "Truly God is loving unto Israel."'

She sobbed again. 'O, O my babies!' (346)

Again, music is seen to be separate from Jude and Sue's life and concerns, and yet intimately and antagonistically connected with them. The 73rd Psalm, presented through the music, speaks of God's care for the downtrodden Israelites, saying "God is the strength of my heart."¹⁰¹ Sue identifies with the point of view of the Israelites and renews her faith in God after the children's triple suicide. However, given Hardy's anti-Church rhetoric in the novel and the unhappy fate of Jude and Sue, the psalm cannot be taken literally by the reader. Indeed, by provocatively quoting

¹⁰¹ *The NIV Study Bible*, Kenneth Barker, gen. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

the first line of the psalm and juxtaposing the word “loving” with the sentimental term, “babies,” right after their death, Hardy raises the issue of whether God even exists in this world. The text of the music mocks Sue’s pain, but through an unfortunate overlap of the organist’s rehearsal time and the inquest, not as a cosmic reproach for Sue’s adultery. The coroner’s mundane comment, “I suppose,” indicates the music is not superstitiously connected to the tragedy, but merely randomly and ironically coincides with it. Interestingly, the music in this scene has ties to both the College and the church, which emphasizes both institutions’ irrelevance in responding to the needs of the working classes.

IV.

Hardy consistently suggests in *Jude the Obscure* that music is separate from and often even antagonistic to humanity. It does not communicate hope and the possibility for mobility and social change, but merely adopts whatever significance the listener wants to attribute to it. Thus the capacity for musical response plays out much more negatively in Hardy than in either Gissing or Eliot. Jude’s death scene is riddled with references to music, indicating music’s ambivalence towards Jude and his aspirations. As Arabella waits for Jude to die, “Bells began to ring, and the notes came into the room through the open window, and traveled round Jude’s head in a hum,” says the narrator (JO 407). The image of the joyous festival music encircling Jude ironically reveals how removed Jude is from the music. The music, Asquith notes, “undermines the litany of despair with which Jude’s life comes to an end” (Asquith 164). Jude’s death, like his life, will not affect the world around him. As an individual, he has been defeated by the system, and the music continues to reflect the “system” instead of joining with the reader as he or she mourns Jude’s plight. His death scene also reveals how music isolates him instead of providing the community that it appears to promise. Music has this isolating power because Jude uses it as encouragement to pursue an iconoclastic course, both in his relationship to Sue, and in his pursuit of an education

at Christminster. As Jude wakes up, alone on his deathbed, “the powerful notes of that concert rolled forth [...] they reached so far as to the room in which Jude lay” (JO 408). But instead of comforting him, this music emphasizes the community from which he is isolated. ““throat—water—Sue—darling—drop of water—please—O please!”” says Jude, but the narrator notes, “No water came, and the organ notes, faint as a bee’s hum, rolled in as before” (408). The phrase, “rolled in” makes the music seem like an inexorable force, relentlessly reminding Jude of Remembrance day at Christminster and his failed aspirations.

The death scene also causes the reader to examine the fate of the unmusical character, Arabella, and compare her responses with Jude’s responses. In contrast to Jude’s perceived spiritual and emotional connection to music, Arabella sees music as a mundane part of existence. In the death scene, it provides her merely with entertainment as well as a chance to meet with the doctor whom she wants to marry. Arabella misses the musical irony that the reader sees in the scene, because she does not have the capacity for deep sympathy when listening to music that Jude and Sue express. Arabella’s indifference to music outside of its capacity for amusement identifies her as a member of the working class. Concerned with subsisting and improving her monetary position, she sees Jude and Sues preoccupation with music as childish.¹⁰² Instead, Arabella focuses on working within the system to achieve a comfortable position. After she leaves Jude’s deathbed, Arabella wanders to the Remembrance Day concert. Instead of listening to the organ music at the concert, she notes the social position and identity of the concertgoers (JO 408). This tellingly reveals how Arabella’s mind pragmatically focuses upon what matters to society (i.e. position, money) instead of what affects her soul (i.e. education, moral philosophy). She consistently displays a point of view much like that of the “antimusical” in Eliot, taking music at its face value: the performance and entertainment matter instead of the listener’s response.

¹⁰² Please see the scene at fair with Jude and Sue holding hands to the music of the band. JO 304

This provides a conundrum to the reader. Throughout the book, the reader feels sympathy with Jude's and Sue's responses to music because they are so much superior to Arabella's and Phillotson's responses. At the death scene, the reader wants to be repulsed by Arabella's callous response to Jude's death. However, Hardy works against this view by having Arabella accurately sum up Sue's self-destructive behavior in returning to Phillotson. Clearly, Arabella is a good judge of human nature, a much better judge than Jude, who mistakes the composer for a sympathetic man, or Sue, who marries Phillotson. Despite, or perhaps because, of her callousness and lack of musical sensitivity, Arabella is not preoccupied by spiritual and emotional matters or social rebellion. Within a fixed society, she is most "fit" in a Darwinian sense, because she can survive successfully to reproduce.

Through the novel, Hardy asks the reader the difficult questions about music and class distinctions that reveal how strongly he presses against the ideas elucidated by Eliot and Gissing. Does it matter if we cannot respond to music? To what extent are musicality and pragmatism irreconcilable? Why is clinging to false hope that music provides in a fixed, static society reprehensible? The first two questions seem to have equally complex answers, for musicality matters to the readers' response to the character, but make it no more likely that a character will survive. Clapp-Itnyre aptly notes that "middle class-appropriated music customs precipitate or accompany death," in *Jude*, but her explanation I believe relies too much on Hardy's disgust of middle class music morality and the Victorian primness of middle class music (Clapp-Itnyre 181). Similarly, Lustig's explanation that music reveals the utter subjectivity of experience and the inability to create a coherent narrative within the world seems to focus on the tragedy of the narrative without taking into account the success of characters like Arabella, who function well in this world ("Piano" 102-104). It seems rather that Jude and Sue are reproached for adopting a middle-class musicality mindset without the means with which to enjoy this luxury. They

pointedly ignore reality, a dangerous thing in Hardy's hostile social world. Musicality, at least Romantic musicality, and pragmatism do seem irreconcilable because the fixed society allows for no transcendence of limits which music seems to promise. It seems that Hardy's viewpoint may be summed up in this quote referring to Jude's woeful response to having to deny the crows the bits of corn. "Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony," says the narrator, and the word harmony is crucial to this comment (JO 42). Jude, and to some extent Sue, want the world to be "harmonious." Their interpretations of music within the novel reflect this desire for harmony in the world; music often expresses a sense of purpose by confirming a course of action. Yet in reality, music can reflect Nature's "horrid" logic as well as imaginary hopes, such as the irony of the bells, or the sound of the 73rd Psalm at Jude and Sue's children's death. Often, it reveals Phillotson's opinion that "cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would!" (JO 329). Jude's method of dealing with this cruelty: "when he passed objects out of harmony [...] he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them," is a manifestation of his denial that leads to his unhappiness and death (JO 103). As the reader realizes this ambiguity of music as a motif, it becomes evident that the novel can be both a tragedy and a pragmatic warning against fighting a fixed and entrenched social system.

Coda

Through this thesis, I have argued that the references to music in late nineteenth-century fiction provide a way of understanding the complicated genre mixings that resulted from rapidly changing views on social mobility in the English class structure. The last quarter of the century provides a particularly interesting microcosm of the widely diverging opinions about the use of music in the novel, moving away from the early Victorian writers' methodology and their use of music as a method of courtship or a mark of cultural sophistication. Hardy, Eliot, and Gissing by no means encapsulate the entirety of literary musical allusions, but they express the contested debate around the use of the arts, and especially music, to provide an alternative and nuanced method of evaluating a person's position in society. An understanding of these novels becomes richer through the illumination of the musical motifs because music reveals the potential for social mobility (either real or imagined) and musicality signifies intellectual potential and cultural sophistication. As DeVine suggests, "changing approaches to realism in late century fiction [...] are tied to, react to, and become part of changes in scientific, journalistic, moralistic, sociological, political, and commercial discourse" (DeVine 138). In other words, the interactions between musical allusions and social mobility affect the ways in which perspective shifts from Romanticism and idealism towards naturalism and pragmatism.

Jude the Obscure, *Thyrza*, and *Daniel Deronda* provide three different depictions of the potential for music to renegotiate societal ideas about class mobility and structure. This in turn allows the reader to question genre boundaries for those novels. By investigating the use of music in the novels, one can understand more clearly how the motif of music changes from a means of transcendence into a mark of the lower classes' lack of agency. In *Daniel Deronda*, the idea of Romantic music provides the possibility of a different class order based upon a display of musicality. This musicality, ironically, is much harder to cultivate within society than outside of

society, and this uniquely privileges the unclassed. Eliot's new society created through the use of music provides a way for her to incorporate Romanticism and idealism into the genre of realism. Rather than money, position, or land, it is emotion—seen in the sympathy that music engenders by allowing for communication between characters that goes deeper than words—which becomes the prerequisite for this new social order.

Yet a few years later, Gissing sees little of the hope that Eliot held for the creation of a new class system. Thyrsa and Gilbert's musicality can no longer help them to create a new social system entirely, as Mirah and Daniel go off to create in the end of *Deronda*. Still, Romantic musicality reveals Thyrsa and Gilbert's fitness for the upper classes, and musical performance becomes valuable in a way that it was not in *Deronda*. Instead of sullyng the concept of Romantic musicality, performance now provides a way for the working-class Thyrsa to display her potential in order to achieve acceptance by the upper classes. Gissing's belief in music as a way to move within the class system instead of outside of it creates a need for acceptance by the upper classes. It is no longer enough for Thyrsa or Gilbert to merely display their superiority; the aristocracy must realize (along with the reader) that Thyrsa and Gilbert could assimilate into another class because of their intellectual and cultural potential. Thus Gissing exposes the hypocrisy of the upper classes in their encouragement of cultural education by revealing how the upper classes educate the working classes but then leave them to founder without the avenues to display that education. This actually leaves these characters in more misery than before, for they no longer belong to any class and are isolated from any real human sympathy or compassion. Music paradoxically becomes an indicator of the fixed nature of the social structure and the effect of heredity and economic circumstances on opportunity. These indicators of stasis in society reveal Gissing's shift towards naturalism that continues into his later works.

For Hardy, the potential of music to provide an opportunity for social mobility is discarded entirely in *Jude the Obscure*. Instead, the concept of Romantic music becomes a charade in the deception of the working classes. Hardy makes it clear that though Jude and Sue still display something akin to Eliot's optimistic belief that Romantic music can provide hope for societal change, this is a fiction that serves only to cripple Jude and Sue and their chances of survival. In the hostile environment that Hardy envisions for the characters, survival becomes the primary goal for a successful life. Society limits the class mobility of the working classes and music is a product of this society, so it is necessarily involved in the hostility towards those who do not belong to the privileged classes. Music becomes an ironic force, revealing the disjunct between the concept of music as an embodiment of Romanticism and idealism of a past era and music as a glorified mating ritual in the human race's pursuit of survival. The study of the motif of music within *Jude the Obscure* indicates that the influence of Darwinism and pragmatism conspire to make music irrelevant in the attempt for social mobility this society. The schism between the ideal and real becomes too large to be surmounted even through the use of music.

Despite its pessimistic outlook for the use of music as a meaningful way to understand reality, *Jude the Obscure* does not sound the death knell for the use of music as a motif in the novel by any means. It does, however, perhaps indicate a move away from valuing musicality as a method of social mobility. The influence of Darwin's philosophy of music indicates the connection between music and expressions of sexuality (often deviant sexuality) in the early twentieth century. Impressionism begins to supplant the Romantic affect in music, and a focus on ambivalence, interpretation, and originality replaces the primacy of emotion and the response of the audience (Burkholder 764-5). The continued rise of popular music, which is glimpsed in the discussion of music halls in *Thyrza*, also creates avenues outside of the classical concert house for

the appreciation of music, which means that the lower classes begin to embrace their own music instead of the learned music of the privileged upper classes.

Music complicates, accentuates, and deepens one's understanding of the ways in which an author's conception of the social structure can affect the point of view and genre of the novel. Struggling with the link between music and independence and music and transcendence, my chosen authors display different perspectives on the degree to which musicality and the performance of music can result in significant transcendence and emancipate the performer or the listener from the confines of the class system. Rather than confusing the reader, these different points of view suggest a transition from the certitude of music as a tool for communication between and within classes, creating social change, to a sense of uncertainty about not only social change but communication itself. As the reader moves from the extreme comparisons between the aristocracy and the outsiders in Eliot, to the macrocosm of society that Gissing represents, and finally to Hardy's focused examination of only one class group, one can see how the communication that seems at first possible through music fails not only between class groups but within them. In this progression, the boundaries between genres break down to reveal the late Victorian conflict over the relevancy of art to society.

My examination of Eliot, Gissing, and Hardy begins a critical analysis of the trope of music in relationship to class systems and genre, but by no means brings it to a conclusion. It is possible to imagine further fertile areas of inquiry, which might include the continuation of the influence of musical motifs on the genre boundaries of modernism, the study of music's effects on social mobility as women and minority ethnicities take on the role of the "lower class," or the effect of impressionism on the ways in which authors talk about music and its relationship to class tensions. In the late Victorian period, music provides a unique method of communication through which Eliot, Gissing, and Hardy can criticize the current social system. My thesis has, I hope,

demonstrated that the study of music as a motif in the novel provides a chance to question the traditional genre boundaries, revealing the power of music both as social criticism and as a tool of literary criticism. Indeed, the authors ask the reader to adopt a sort of musicality in order to understand the nuance that music reveals in each work. It is not until we stop and listen to the music within these novels that we can see and understand the structure of the harmony and disharmony of ideas that were developing at the end of the nineteenth century.

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