

Evocative Music in George Moore's *Evelyn Innes*

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I

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus, or "the Thracian poet," draws "the woods and rocks to follow him," charms "the creatures of the wild" with his songs.¹ Since ancient times, certain mystical, moving powers have been attributed to music, though the methods of analysing its mystical effects and the words to express the mystery have changed from period to period. "The sounds of nature (thunder, water, wind, echo) seem to early man to be the voices of demonic beings, and a spirit is locked within the sounding instrument. The narcotic ecstasy induced by music and dance is seen as superhumanly and demonically inspired."² Music has been conceived of as a medium of communication not only between living creatures but also among celestial bodies, or between the animate and the inanimate. The idea of "music of the spheres" dates back to "the discovery of the Pythagoreans."³ Music links human beings with the principle of the whole universe, as "Living man was a part of a living universe and shared its harmony."⁴

This special charm of music has always been a powerful motif in literature. In Diderot's *The Nun*, the lesbian Superior's sensitivity toward music is described in parallel with her sexual excitableness. On the first evening of the heroine's arrival at the convent, the Superior becomes attracted to her through her musical skills and her "loveliest voice in the world," which makes the other nuns jealous: "there was hardly one of them who would not have deprived me of my voice and broken my fingers if she had been able to." There seems to be a form of rivalry, in which the one who is the best in singing and playing music would be chosen as the Superior's beloved.

Becoming ecstatic by the charm of the music and the nun who plays it, the Superior reaches orgasm:

Then I played some pieces of Couperin, Rameau and Scarlatti, during which she lifted a corner of my collar and rested her hand on my bare shoulder, with the tips of her fingers touching my breast. She was sighing and seemed oppressed, breathing heavily. The hand my shoulder pressed hard at first but then ceased pressing at all, as though all strength and life had gone out of her and her head fell on to mine. Truly that hare-brained woman was incredibly sensitive and had the most exquisite taste for music, for I have never known anybody on whom it had such an extraordinary effect.⁵

In the above scene, the erotic excitement of the Superior is so totally combined with the effect of music that the nun cannot detect anything inappropriate in it. When the Father to whom she has made confession points out the danger (of being sexually victimized), she wonders:

For example, what did he think was so strange about the scene at the keyboard? Are there not people on whom music makes the most violent impression? I myself have been told that certain tunes and modulations completely changed my facial expression; at such times I was quite beside myself and hardly knew what I was doing, but I don't think I was any the less innocent for that.⁶

It seems to be presupposed that even a perfectly chaste girl can be susceptible to the "violent" effect of music—an effect which is beyond control of the reason and which can be considered similar to sexual excitement.

In Victorian Britain, playing music was part of the culture that middle-class women and upper-class ladies had to be versed in: "Mrs Beeton made clear that the mistress of a household devote time to the 'pleasures of literature', 'the innocent delights of the garden, and to the improvement of any special abilities for music, painting and other elegant arts . . .'" Musical skill was considered to be an effective means of attracting desirable male partners. Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* enchants the "best people" of the upper class with her singing, playing the piano, and speech, both in English and in French. She nearly succeeds in procuring Joseph Sedley as her husband. She obtains his sympathy by singing a song about an "orphan boy," and impressing the audience with "the allusion to her departure, and to her hapless orphan state." The result is as she has desired: Joseph is so moved that he is tempted almost to make a proposal to her, and would have done so if it were not for the disturbance by another party:

Joseph Sedley, who was fond of music, and soft-hearted, was in a state of rapture during the performance of the song, and profoundly touched at its conclusion. If he had had the courage; if George and Miss Sedley had remained, according to the former's proposal, in the farther room, Joseph Sedley's bachelorhood would have been at an end.⁸

Joseph imagines his married life in the future: "how delightful it would be to hear such songs as those after Cutcherry—what a *distinguée* girl she was—how she could speak French better than the Governor-General's lady herself—and what a sensation she would make at the Calcutta balls."⁹

Not only the calculating Becky, but also the naïve Amelia, attract a man's heart unwittingly by singing. Captain Dobbin becomes a captive to her when he chances to hear her singing:

He had arrived with a knock so very timid and quiet, that it was inaudible to the ladies upstairs: otherwise, you may be sure Miss Amelia would never have been so bold as to come singing into the room. As it was, the sweet fresh voice went right into the Captain's heart, and nestled there.¹⁰

Amelia's voice goes "right" into his heart, for music transmits the vibration of her vocal chords, her presence, directly to his body. The verb "nestle", which can be associated with the

movement of a bird, is appropriately used, as the erotic nature of singing can be a biological link between birds and humans. And it is no wonder that Becky's speech and singing constitute her main charm, her main means of survival. Two decades later, there would be an influential attempt to give an explanation for the nature of these charms from the scientific point of view. In *The Descent of Man*, Charles Darwin seeks the origin of music and dance of human beings in the "musical tones and rhythm . . . used by our half-human ancestors, during the season of courtship,"¹¹ drawing on his studies of the "instrumental music" and "love-antics and dances" of birds.

George Moore has made Owen, one of the characters in *Evelyn Innes*, give a similar version of the evolutionary theory of the origin of music and art, which certainly reflects contemporary scientific thoughts:

When man ceased to capture women, he reflected, man invented art whereby he might win them. The first melody blown through a reed pipe was surely intended for woman's ears. The first verses were composed in a like intention. Afterwards man began to taken an interest in art for its own sake . . . Women, having no necessity for art, have not been artists. (63)¹²

According to this idea, it is men who naturally have the creative urge, while women essentially are passive receivers. However, it is dangerous simply to identify Owen's opinion with the author's. Owen's is not the only dominant idea in Moore's novel, but there are three or more characters with different aesthetic positions about music, who influence and construct the music of Evelyn, Moore's heroine who is to become a successful opera singer. By giving such opposing views in one novel, Moore might have expected the readers to develop arguments on their own out of the given materials, and thus to contribute to the contemporary debate in some way. Though all academic fields had become definitely specialized and fixed toward the end of nineteenth century, and it was becoming more and more difficult for men of letters to dare to step into the domain of science, they still might have thought there was room for them to explore and make a contribution where science intersected with psychology and art, since human emotion is the main subject they treat with. Scientists also, it should be noted, have frequently referred to works of literature to give authority to their psychological theories. Therefore there has been a close interrelationship, which possibly can become circular.

Moore significantly employed musically gifted women as protagonists in several of his novels: Kate in *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), Evelyn in *Evelyn Innes* (1898) and *Sister Theresa* (1901), and Rose in *The Lake* (1905). These heroines all experience in some way conflicts between conventional Christian morality and their inner tendency opposing to it. It seems Moore has presented these women's musical sensitivity as a medium to feel and express their keen awareness of new modern selves. It can be observed that in chronologically later works, the heroines become more self-consciously revolutionary. In *A Mummer's Wife*, Kate, who is awakened by sensual comic-opera music from the monotony of everyday life and chooses to elope with the manager of an opera company, fails to enjoy the free life she has achieved, and is unable to reconcile her life with her former discipline. Twenty years later, however, Rose,

having given birth to an illegitimate child, succeeds in establishing such confidence in her choice that comes to influence a Catholic priest's way of life.

Moore's stylistic technique is also worth noting, for he was a novelist who kept introducing some innovation in his narrative. Judith Mitchell calls him a "quintessentially transitional" figure, whose work was influenced by "naturalism, symbolism, decadence, Impressionism, Russian literature, the Irish revival, and Wagnerian opera (to cite a partial list)."¹³ Musically talented female figures must have been fit tools for Moore's novelistic experiments both in form and content. In *A Mummer's Wife*, his most Zolaesque novel, the heroine's action and psychology is traced in a naturalistic method, which works well for in the depiction of the rather passive heroine and the effects of outer influences upon her—through the process of her downfall (which certainly owes much to Zola's *L'assomoir*) up to the ending on her deathbed (which might remind the reader of the death of Nana). In *The Lake*, on the other hand, the impressionistic flow of narrative succeeds in conveying fully the priest's subjective perception, meditation and contemplation to the reader.

What, then, are the narrative techniques used and what is the function of the musical heroine in *Evelyn Innes*, the novel which was written in the transitional period between *A Mummer's Wife* and *The Lake*, and the novel on which I am to focus in this essay? Dealing with Wagnerian motifs, it was certainly written under the influence of "Wagnerian opera," but what does this signify in the given cultural context?

Wagner was one of the most controversial figures in the latter half of nineteenth century, and to refer to Wagnerian music in one's own work inevitably meant to present his or her own stance toward the discussions around Wagnerism. People's reaction to Wagner interestingly tended to move between two extremes. While there were devoted worshippers of Wagner among people of cultural importance, there also were others who expressed their repulsion toward his music and thought. "His music is denounced, as is no other, in moral terms: it is 'immoral', 'corrupting', 'poisonous', 'degenerate'."¹⁴ Such a negative response was due, at least partly, to Wagner's "explicit representation of sexual intercourse (and especially of the orgasmic climax) expressed in music."¹⁵ Max Nordau, in his famous *Degeneration*, declared that "sexual emotion" was the feeling "that controls the entire conscious and unconscious mental life of Wagner."¹⁶ Bryan Magee, in searching for the cause of these radical reactions against Wagner, argues: "Wagner gives expression to things that in the rest of us, and in the rest of art, are unconscious because they are repressed."¹⁷ For people who have a fear of degeneration, the overt eroticism in his music is not only a symptom but also a promoter of the degradation and the corruption of the culture and the race.

On the other hand, however, many artists were inspired by Wagner's music and also his writings. Indeed, his aesthetic theory, which claims the "original union" of the "arts of Dance, of Tone, and Poetry"¹⁸ (whereby opera, the synthesis of these three, is regarded as the supreme art) had a great influence on literary figures. Magee says, "What influenced the Symbolists were not his operas but his prose writings"¹⁹ and also:

Most important of all, the use of the interior monologue in the novel originated as an attempt to make words do in fiction what Wagner's orchestra had done in his operas.

The novelist who introduced it, Edouard Dujardin (whose *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, according to the *Oxford Companion to French Literature*, 'is said to have given James Joyce the idea for the form of *Ulysses*') was founder and editor of the *Revue Wagnerienne*, which existed from 1885 to 1888—concurrently with his writing of the novel, which was published in 1888.²⁰

Moore, who was also in Paris when it came "under Wagnerian domination,"²¹ made acquaintance with Dujardin and they shared much in common in their aesthetic positions (one can note that Owen has been to the office of the *Revue Wagnerienne* before he makes his first appearance in the novel). Though *Evelyn Innes* is written in third-person narrative and not in real interior monologue as is the case in *The Lake*, Moore has employed various devices to present musical effects through language. And while conceiving Wagner's music as liberating one's unconscious, sometimes sexual, selves, Moore does not regard it necessarily as morally corrupting (though he makes Evelyn ponder much upon such possibilities), but he gives it a positive function of leading people to their self-discovery and self-expression.

It is not an easy task to approach the effect of one art form through another one. "Language, according to Benveniste, is the only semiotic system capable of interpreting another semiotic system," argues Roland Barthes: "How then, does language manage when it has to interpret music? Alas, it seems, very badly."²² Walter Pater also says in *The Renaissance*: "the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phases or quality of beauty, untranslatable into the forms of any other."²³ However, it may be in trying to translate the untranslatable, that stylistic innovation takes place. Let us see, then, how Moore copes with such difficulties.

II

Wagner calls Music "the heart of man; the blood"²⁴ and resorts to the "simile of ocean, for picturing Tone's nature."²⁵ The image of fluid was also what strengthened the association between mesmerism and music,²⁶ for mesmerism operates with "some mystical universal fluid."²⁷

In *A Mummer's Wife*, the initiation of Kate, who is to become an opera singer, to the sensual world of opera is rendered through her transportation by the intoxicating effect of music, which is compared to wine—an association suggestive of her later alcoholism:

Never had she heard such music. How suave it was compared with the austere and regular rhythm of the hymns she sang in church! . . . All her musical sensibilities rushed to her head like wine; it was only by a violent effort, full of acute pain, that she saved herself from raising her voice with those of the singers, and dreading a giddiness that might precipitate her into a pit, she remained staring blindly at the stage.²⁸

Here, Kate is on the brink of losing control of herself, and "raising her voice" against her reason. In *Evelyn Innes*, there also is a similar scene, where Evelyn, who is to be a far more successful opera singer than Kate, feels like singing in the middle of the street in delight, after she has passed the audition at Madame Savelli's: "She would have liked to stand up in her carriage and

sing aloud, nothing seemed to matter”(142). For these heroines, the act of singing is linked directly to their spontaneous emotion, much more directly than words. It is notable that the violent emotion roused by the music attacks Kate in liquid form, rushes to “her head like wine,” conveyed in heated blood.

In *Evelyn Innes*, this kind of physiological descriptions of human emotion functions effectively to present the relationship between the stimuli and their effect upon the human body and mind. Just before Evelyn’s elopement with Owen to Paris, “her brain seemed to effervesce and her blood to bubble with joy, a triumphant happiness filled her, for no doubt remained that she was going to Paris to-night”(104). Music enters the veins of the characters to affect the function of their brain. When studying Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* with Ulick, to whom she has begun to be more attracted than to Owen who is regarded as her fiancé, the music penetrates into their body till they are not able to help paralleling, identifying themselves with Tristan and Isolde, who are doomed to be separated by their nominal spouses. The flow of the sensual music affects the flow of their blood:

The story of ‘Tristan and Isolde’ seemed to be their own story, and when their eyes met, each was afloat on the currents of their blood. It gathered in the brain, paralyzing it, and the nervous exhaustion was unbearable about six, when the servant had taken away the tea things; and as the afternoon drooped and the beauty of the summer evening began in the dark, speech seemed vain, and they could not bring themselves to argue any longer. (277)

In the quotation from *A Mummer’s Wife*, the “suave” secular music is compared with “the austere and regular rhythm of the hymns.” Moore seems to be perceptively using the contrast between different sorts of music, having opposing qualities. To be initiated into a different world of music means to enter a new phase in one’s life and personality in *Evelyn Innes*, just as in *A Mummer’s Wife*.

Evelyn has a musician as her father, and he has prepared the musical atmosphere she is to experience first. For him, music is a means to reconstruct the past. He can summon the image of his dead wife, or Evelyn’s mother, who also used to be a successful singer, by looking at her portrait and playing at the same time on the piano an aria which reminds him of her: “To see her lips and to strike the notes was almost like hearing her sing it again”(2). His ambition is “to restore the liturgical chants of the early centuries”(2). Though knowing that his daughter inherited her mother’s voice, “the same beautiful quality and fluency in vocalization”(2), he indulges himself in “sacrificing her to his ambition”(6), giving her proper education only in playing the lute and viola da gamba, but not in developing her voice. “These interests and ambitions had sufficed to fill her life”(30) till Owen comes to offer an opportunity of receiving a singing lesson in Paris, on condition that she becomes his mistress.

According to Wagner, “Tone’s most living flesh is the human voice.”²⁹ Owen’s presence decisively comes into her life through “the sound of his voice,” which exercises upon her a hypnotic effect: “The sound of his voice conveyed a penetrating sense of his presence. It was the same happiness as the very sight of him had awakened in her, and she felt herself yielding to it as

a current. She was borne far away into mists of dream, where she seemed to live a long while”(14). And Owen also becomes interested in her after listening to her singing at her father’s concert. But her influence upon him is not so dominant as to involve him in her presence. His motivation to seduce her is rather a selfish one: his desire is to possess her as one of his accessories in society: “The discovery of a new prima donna would be a fine feather in his cap”(10). At the next concert, she sings just after noticing the presence of Owen’s former lover, and her mental confusion is reflected in her voice, and her father detects the existence of something that has troubled her, though he cannot identify the cause. Her emotion shows itself in her voice, which is her *raison-d’être*: “If she had lost her voice she was no longer herself”(22). In this novel, a voice can identify the person, betray his or her past. When Evelyn first stays at the convent, she can guess the background of two elderly women she happens to take a meal with: “Evelyn fancied that they belonged to the grandest society. She could tell that by their voices”(37). And on going back to the convent near the end of the novel, she imagines the Reverend Mother’s history from her voice: “Her voice was the clear, refined voice which signifies society, and Evelyn would not have been surprised to learn that she belonged to an old aristocratic family”(427). Even if the person has changed his or her position in society, and begun to lead a totally different life from the past life, the trace of the former life cannot be wiped out, for one’s personality has been believed to be the synthesis of one’s whole life and experiences. According to associationism, “all thoughts are imperishable”³⁰ and, Spencer had presented a view that human consciousness is incessantly going through the process of “differentiations and integrations” with new “material for thought,” and therefore “all actions are determined by those psychical connections which experience has generated.”³¹

Though her father’s “interests and ambitions had sufficed her life” and he “seemed to her the most wonderful of men”(30) till she encountered Owen, she discovers that “she was no longer happy,” “with an empty heart”(31). A new influence causes a change in her personality, which demands a new kind of musical expression other than the early music her father specializes in. Owen’s influence upon her at this stage is so thorough that Evelyn unconsciously repeats his words:

[H]er ears were full of his voice, and she heard the lilt that charmed her whenever she pleased. Then she asked herself the meaning of some casual remark, and her mind repeated all he had said like a phonograph. She already knew his habitual turns of speech; they had begun to appear in her own conversation. And all that was not connected with him lost interest for her. (47)

Owen imagines himself in future as “the prima donna’s husband, the fellow who waits with a scarf ready to wind it round the throat of his musical instrument”(72). The expression “his musical instrument” well represents the relationship between these two people: Evelyn is reduced only to her voice, and it is Owen who plays. Again, “She was the instrument, he was the hand that played upon it”(127). Though gifted with a musical talent, Evelyn is not given a status as an independently creative artist. She is allowed only to reflect his aesthetics, his “lilt” with her own voice, “like a phonograph”(72). Nevertheless, Evelyn is critical about being too much influenced

by Owen, losing herself, while fascinated by his speech: "Evelyn listened because she liked to hear him talk; she knew that he was trying to influence her with argument, but it was he himself who was influencing her, she dreaded his presence, not his argument"(72). The strength of the temptation of Owen is described in the image of flowing liquid, which might be associated with both the current of blood and the irresistibility of fate: "Owen was the first temptation in Evelyn's life, and it carried her forward with the force of a swirling river." And her heightened state of mind finds correspondence with the music in nature: "The quiet silence of the spring morning corresponded to her mood, and the rustle of last year's leaves communicated a delicious emotion which seemed to sing in the currents of her blood, and a little madness danced in her brain at the ordinary sight of nature"(50-51). Owen is of an opinion that life is for "art and love," and he appeals to her senses by sexualized music of Wagner so as to develop in her the sensuality suitable for the embodiment of his aesthetics:

He had said that life without love was a desert, and many times the conversation trembled on the edge of a personal avowal, and now he was playing love music out of 'Tristan' on the harpsichord. The gnawing, creeping sensuality of the phrase brought little shudders into her flesh; all life seemed dissolved into a dim tremor and rustling of blood; (73)

The penetration of Owen's presence into her seems almost to delete her own personality: "It was a sort of delicious death, a swooning ecstasy, an absorption of her individuality in his" (80).

Evelyn nevertheless attempts not to be just "carried forward" by Owen's influence, but to find out what her own desire is. What definitely brings her to betray her father to take Owen's offer is the presence of some cry she hears inside herself: "Something seems always crying within me, 'You're wasting your life; you must become a great singer and shine like a star in the world'"(59). In this novel, a person's hidden self takes form of a voice.³² The conscious self listens to it, but as Evelyn feels a new influence from outside, "strange alienation" happens in her brain, her personality seems to become more and more complex, multiple: "voices seemed speaking inside her"(92), but the conscious self cannot comprehend what they are saying, for they belong to the unconscious part and are not yet brought into awareness, not yet given words to express themselves. Then it occurs that "she was tortured with an uncertainty as to whether she was speaking the truth or not," and "Like one with outstretched hands striving to feel her way in the dark, she sought to discover in her soul" an answer, which remains hidden even to herself (100). When pushed to determine whether she remains with her father or elopes with Owen, her thoughts take the form of "ticking," corresponding to the beat of pulse: "Her thoughts were loud as the clock which ticked out the last minutes she was to remain at home, and trying not to hear them . . ."(102).

The harmonious feeling established between Evelyn and Owen is so subtle that it can only be expressed by music but might be damaged by words: "The secret of their lips floated into their eyes, its echoes drifted through their souls like a faint strain played on violins; and neither spoke for fear of losing one of the faint vibrations"(129).

After the elopement, Owen brings Evelyn to take an audition at Madame Savelli's. This

teacher is an authority who “would know for certain” if Evelyn “had, or was likely to acquire, sufficient voice for grand opera”(131). Just before the audition, both Evelyn and Owen are afflicted with anxiety; “for the poison of doubt had entered into his, as it had into her, soul. He had begun to ask himself if he was mistaken—if she had really this wonderful voice, or if it only existed in his imagination?”(133) This “doubt” if her voice “only existed in his imagination” occurs, partly because of the quality of voice, or sound, existing only in a limited time duration and not to be grasped as substance; “everything was passing; the notes she sang existed only while she sang them, each was a little past”(270). But the doubt also derives from the commodification of musicians. Even Owen, Evelyn’s lover, cannot believe in the existence of her “wonderful voice” till its value is guaranteed. Even for music, an art form regarded as the most directly related to personal emotions, subjective judgement is no longer thought of as effective. Evelyn performs successfully, and “poured all her soul and all the pure melody of her voice into this music, at once religious and voluptuous [a song from Purcell’s *Indian Queen*]”(137). Having heard Madame Savelli’s words, “I found a star” in Evelyn, Owen says to Evelyn, “In that throat there are thousands of pounds”(140), and to himself, “She was his. It was like holding the rarest jewel in the world in the hollow of his hand”(146). This simile, “like holding the rarest jewel in the world in the hollow of his hand,” well expresses the exchange value of the singer and his fetishistic pleasure in possessing her exclusively to himself. According to Adorno, “At its most passionate, musical fetishism takes possession of the public valuation of singing voices . . . Voices are holy properties like a national trademark.”³³

The piece by Purcell they have chosen for the audition, “at once religious and voluptuous,” is suitable for pouring “all her soul and all the pure melody of her voice” into, for at this transitional stage in her life, Evelyn is a mixture of the religious and the voluptuous. Being under the influence of Owen and his sensuality, she still retains an innate piety. These two qualities remain conflicting elements inside her, and though the balance between them fluctuates, neither of them perishes completely, for everything in one’s past is to be perpetually preserved in the person, in some form. And voice is the best receptacle in which to “pour all her soul”, as voice has been thought of as the vehicle for the singer’s spirit since old days:

According to still another theory popularized by Neo-Platonic philosophers of love, air entering the air carries with it not only harmonious sound or moving air, but also the spirit of the singer. That voice is caused by breath and spirit striking the windpipe, and that living spirit issues with breath, were established beliefs in the inherited physiology of the Renaissance. Song, then, is animated breath carrying with it the feelings and temperament of the singer, which are communicated to the spirits of the listener . . .³⁴

In this novel, Evelyn’s voice certainly works as a medium to convey her emotions, to expose hidden aspects of her personality, but it does not mean that all her emotions and personality find free expression in a given song. They appear only in response to the mood the music holds: therefore, Evelyn cannot express herself fully and independently. Some aspects of her personality are revealed under the action of music, but some remain suppressed. As Evelyn is made into a Wagner singer (Owen has set Isolde and Brunnhilde as the final goal), her voice

becomes overloaded with sexuality, which is emphasized in Wagnerian operas; but other aspects of her nature become repressed.

Having adopted Owen's philosophy of life as hers, "by degrees love and music came to fill her life from end to end"; "[h]e desired a Wagner singer, and every day her voice seemed to develop in that direction"(149). Thus, Evelyn is created into Owen's instrument. Music becomes "a means of expressing her sex"(150). In her singing, her past selves are recalled into the operatic parts: "Her pious girlhood found expression in the Elizabeth, and what she termed the other side of her character she was going to put on the stage in the character of Isolde"(151). She cannot understand parts that have no equivalent or corresponding experience in her own life. Her way of interpreting parts is a kind of incarnation rather than artistic creation: "Her acting was so much a part of herself that she could not think of it as an art at all; it was merely a medium through which she was to re-live past phases of her life, or to exhibit her present life in a more intense and concentrated form"(162). However, she asks herself, "how much of her own life she could express in the part, for she always acted one side of her character"(151). That means there remains always something unexpressed. In Wagnerian operas, the characters are legendary heroes and archetypal men and women, but Evelyn takes away the individuality from each part. In playing Isolde, she "cared nothing for the Irish princess" unlike "all other actresses," but cares only for her psychological patterns, "a great deal for the physical and mental distress of a woman sick with love"(151). Isolde is deprived of her attributes and status, and reduced to "a woman sick with love" in general. "And in holding up her own soul to view, she would hold up the universal soul"(153), but in this process, Evelyn's own personality is also reduced from individuality into universality.

During her performance, she is not conscious of the way she acts, for: "It was all so natural to her. She simply went on the stage, and once she was on the stage she could not do otherwise"(162). She does not know this till reading a review written about her performance. She says to Ulick, a musician and reviewer: "I hardly knew that I acted as you describe in Margaret. I hope I did, for I seemed very good in your article"(188). Therefore, while music works as a medium to enable Evelyn's unconscious selves to be communicated to others, language translates them into an articulate form, by which Evelyn can have a fuller recognition of her whole self.

Evelyn visits her father, hoping to reconcile with him, at Dulwich, her home village, where "life there was a sheeted phantom, it evoked a hundred dead Evelyns"(204). She searches for words to ask him for forgiveness, for her neglect of her duties as his daughter, but "there was a knot in her throat, she could not sing, she could hardly speak"(210). And when she has come to be able to express herself, it is only through singing: she sings the part of Brunnhilde in "The Valkyrie,"³⁵ without knowing it:

The wonder of the scene she was acting—she never admitted she acted; she lived through scenes, whether fictitious or real—quickened in her; it was the long-expected scene, the scene in the third act of the 'Valkyrie' which she had always played while divining the true scene which she would be called upon to play one day. . . . She knew she was expressing all that was most deep in her nature, and yet she had acted all that

she now believed to be reality on the stage many times. (211- 12)

She does not recognize that she is singing, till her father “asked her why she was singing Wagner.”(212) Richard Cave says:

[T]he act becomes a self-indulgent ‘playing’ at penitence as the imaginary cadences seem to lift her out of her fleshly self and to purge it of the corruption of her daily existence. Music is perversely now her escape from an awareness of sin.³⁶

However, I am rather reluctant to judge her negatively for her escaping into “playing,” for it seems that Evelyn has had no other means of expressing herself than by playing, or singing. “[W]ithout music I could not express myself. Words without music would seem barren”(199), she says. She is only trained in singing, expressing herself through performing a given role. There was not much room for Victorian women at this period to explore their true selves, or to produce their own account of themselves. Sybil Vane in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an emblematical figure who is loved only while she is acting obediently the role in a play, but as soon as she begins to try to live in reality (“To-night, for the first time, I became conscious that . . . the words I had to speak were unreal, were not my words, were not what I wanted to say,” she says³⁷), she is cruelly thrown away by Dorian, who says “Without your art you are nothing.”³⁸ For Evelyn, singing is the only means to liberate her emotion, but not without restriction: she is still put within a framework set by her male musical director, within the image of female sexuality constructed by Wagner.

Evelyn and Mr. Innes become reconciled while singing pieces from an opera written by Ulick, who is a friend of Mr. Innes, and who has “invented a new orchestration,” trying to synthesize the early music represented by Mr. Innes, and Wagnerian music represented by Owen: “He had sent her [Evelyn] six melodies—strange, old-world rhythms, recalling in a way the Gregorian she used to read in childhood in the missals, yet modulated as unintermittently as Wagner; the same chromatic scale and yet a haunting of the antique rhythm in the melody”(159).

Wagner’s music and Mr. Innes’s music are opposed in the novel as mutually exclusive. Once having become familiar with modern tuning under the influence of Owen and Wagnerian music, Evelyn loses the sense of perfect pitch required for early music. “[T]he piano has spoilt your ear,” Evelyn’s father says to his daughter (246). About the idea of the church music he is attempting to revive we learn:

The practice of singing in church proceeds from the idea that, in the exaltation of prayer, the soul, having reached the last limit obtainable by mere words, demands an extended expression, and finds it in song. The earliest form of music, the plain chant or Gregorian, is sung in unison, for it was intended to be sung by the whole congregation, but as only a few in every congregation are musicians, the idea of a choir could not fail to suggest itself . . .

Then the art of religious music had gone as far as it could, and the next step, the introduction of an accompanying instrument, was decadence. (229)

This “decadence” brought about with “the introduction of an accompanying instrument” is both in a musical and a spiritual sense. Owen’s music and aesthetics are, as I have suggested above, under the influence of Darwinian theory and emphasise sensuality. They are also associated with agnostic thought, by which Owen attempts to demolish Evelyn’s belief. However, though Owen’s influence becomes dominant over Evelyn, he cannot delete completely her father’s music flowing inside her like an undercurrent. She begins to be aware of the dissatisfaction she feels toward Owen. She dislikes singing songs he has composed:

When singing some of his songs, she had caught a look in people’s eyes, a pitying look, and she could not help wondering if they thought that she liked such commonplace, or worse still, if they thought she was obliged to sing it. But when she had remembered all he had done for her, it seemed quite a disgrace, that she should hate to sing his songs. It was the one thing she could do to please him, and she reflected on her selfishness. (279)

The fact that she can be conscious of “a look in people’s eyes” clearly tells that she cannot get absorbed in his music, and she no longer can remain his instrument. She expresses her sense of incongruity about becoming his wife and being called “Lady Asher.” When Owen asks if she thinks they “shall be as happy in married life,” she says:

‘I hope so, Owen, but somehow I don’t see myself as Lady Asher.’

‘You know everyone—Lady Ascott, Lady Somersdean, they are all your friends, it will be just the same.’

‘Yes, it’ll be just the same.’

He did not catch the significance of the repetition. (287)

As music and musicians merely represent sexuality for Owen, he cannot understand her reluctance to be reduced to a mere “Lady Asher,” “just the same” as the other ladies, and to have her individuality subsumed under her husband’s name. Evelyn begins to feel “the marriage between them impossible,” because of his incapacity to appreciate her presence as a whole: “How well he understood one side of her nature; how he failed to understand the other! It was this want in him that made marriage between them impossible.” And Owen also feels “frightened” at the prospect of discovering “the other side” of Evelyn: “If he were to find a different woman in his wife from the woman he had loved in the opera singer!”(288)

Evelyn is attracted to Ulick, who seems competent to enable her to give expression to her other aspects: “she could not think of herself as the same person when she was with Owen as she was when she was with Ulick”(316). But her approach to Ulick might have another motive: she needs him to establish a triangular relationship between the three of them, Evelyn, Owen, and Ulick, so as to get inspiration to perform *Isolde*; for it is in studying this part she first feels an urgent need to consult Ulick. “To sing *Isolde* and live a chaste life, she did not believe it to be possible”(233). Her life is not only reflected in her performance, but it is even defined by artistic

demand. While Ulick talks about his dreams, “in a clear, harmonious voice”(185), “she sat listening, like one enchanted”(306). “I love to listen to you,” she says (307), and “she determined to sing his opera and get nearer his ideas than any other woman did”(252). She is on the brink of making herself into his instrument.

However, she chooses not to sing his opera, not to become his instrument, for she comes to be deeply influenced by Monsignor Mostyn, a supporter of her father in his Palestrina revival. The impression his voice gives to the congregation is overwhelming: “Was it the sweet, clear voice that lured the different minds and led them, as it were, in leash? . . . The preacher’s voice and words were as the voices they heard speaking from the bottom of their souls in moments of strange collectedness”(231). He points out “a dangerous influence” of the stage upon her, and accordingly, she determines to quit the stage, to part with both lovers. His voice penetrates in her mind and controls her actions: she is able to write farewell letters to Owen and Ulick, “the words coming easily to her, so easily that there were times when she seemed to hear Monsignor speaking over her shoulder”(415). However, it is doubtful if the words of Monsignor really correspond to the desire of her soul, for she seems to be fascinated by his voice, the tone of his speech, rather than by his thoughts: “the intonation of his voice began to ring in her ears. . . . But she could not recall what Monsignor had said” (384). It may be that Monsignor happened to be the person who seemingly is able to fill her desires, both the sensual and the religious. But he also may be incompetent to help her realize herself completely, for Evelyn has more capacity than Monsignor as a human, as implied in sentences such as; “Her clear, nervous vision met the dry, narrow vision that was the priest, and there was a pause in the conflict of their wills. . . . He could not understand, and therefore could not sympathize with her hesitation on points of doctrine”(401). Therefore, “He was determined to reduce her to his mind”(402). And to do so, he employs his musical voice as his weapon, by which he achieves a striking effect on Evelyn:

[H]is voice was so kind, so irresistibly kind, that she heard nothing but it. However she might think when she had left him, she could not withstand the kindness of that voice; it seemed to enter into her life like some extraordinary music or perfume. He could see the effect he was producing on her; he watched her eyes growing bright until a slight dread crossed his mind. She seemed like one fascinated, trembling in bonds that were loosening, and that in that moment would break, leaving her free—perhaps to throw herself into his arms. (402)

Her fascination has a certain erotic nuance, judging from her showing the chance of throwing herself “into his arms,” therefore there does not seem to be so definite a difference between the fascination she has experienced with her former lovers and this time. When he tells her to “go and spend a few days at the Passionist Convent,” “It seemed to Evelyn that that was what she had wanted all the time, only she had not been able to say so”(421), but it may be what only “seemed to Evelyn” and not really “what she had wanted.” She does follow his advice and go to the convent to live with the nuns, but it does not mean she finally has come to see clearly what she wants. She might again feel frustration. The passage in the very last paragraph of the novel does not seem so promising: “Life is but a continual hypnotism; and the thoughts of others

reach us from every side, determining in some measure our actions. It was therefore certain that she would be influenced by the prayers that would be offered up for her by the convent”(482). But it is also worth noting that the first person pronouns in the plural form, “us” and “our” are used in the concluding paragraph, which involve the reader in the novel, and give Evelyn the status of the representative of her contemporaries, or of the intellectuals of the age.

III

Though Evelyn’s behaviour itself is not so different from the old stereotype of the female musician, she is not given a negative moral judgement: “And the strange thing is that she did not believe herself to be a bad woman; at the bottom of her heart she loved truth and sincerity”(327). Though she is critical about her own vulnerability to the influence of male characters (she asks herself, “[w]as her character essentially weak, and was she liable to all these influences, these facile assimilations? Was there nothing within her, no abiding principle, nothing that she could call her own?”—[385]), she is placed higher than the males who attempt to change her one-sidedly, but who do not change themselves. Monsignor’s self-confidence might derive from his inflexibility, his “dry, narrow vision.” Living in an age under the influence of new philosophical scientific thoughts, it needs trial and error to establish one’s belief. Her life with plural lovers is the result of her sincere pursuit of herself. The fact that her soprano voice remains powerfully beautiful is the evidence that her character is not “essentially weak,” for voice represents one’s personality.

Her singing at the convent impresses the nuns with its too strong sensuality:

In the beautiful classical melody her voice was like a ’cello heard in the twilight. In the music itself there is neither belief nor prayer, but. . . the nuns, who knelt in two grey lines, were afraid to look up. In a remote consciousness they feared it was not right to feel so keenly; the harmonious depth of the voice entered their very blood, summoning visions of angel faces. (452)

Thus, though Evelyn feels shocked at the “impurity” of her own voice, it still has the power of summoning angels in nun’s souls. However, she feels her voice is lacking in the expressive power found in the voice of nuns:

Evelyn hummed the plain chant under her breath, afraid lest she should extinguish the pale voices, and surprised how expressive the antique chant was when sung by these etiolated, sexless voices. She had never known how much of her life of passion and desire had entered into her voice, and she was shocked at its impurity. . . . For all her life was in her voice, she would never be able to sing this hymn with the same sexless grace as they did. (453)

As the very substance of her voice is its feminine sexuality, it logically is incompatible with the “sexless grace” of the nuns. Nevertheless, the sentence near the ending of the novel, “It was

therefore certain that she would be influenced by the prayers that would be offered up for her by the convent,” might imply the prospect of the synthesis of conflicting elements, for in her life so far, Evelyn always has succeeded in supplementing a new aspect to her personality, and her voice, at each new encounter.

As we have seen, Evelyn has the qualities of a new type of woman in a transitional period. While still lacking her own language to express herself (which Rose in *The Lake* succeeds in attaining), she is depicted as capable of deep self-analysis, and with a sense of her own subjectivity to be realized. Though she is susceptible to influences of various men, she herself is a creative artist, and not a passive automaton like Du Maurier’s Trilby: nor does she accuse anyone but herself for her own conduct, unlike Kate, who accuses Dick for disturbing her former peace of mind. Evelyn always takes responsibility for what she has chosen with her own will, what she has chosen to fulfil best her own creative and mental urges. Nevertheless, whenever different systems of values happen to clash within her, she inevitably experiences mental fluctuations, which Moore’s fluid narrative effectively conveys to the reader.

Paula Gillett points out a certain change in depictions of “singer-heroines” which took place in the 1890s and 1900s, and which shows “how the context of romantic personal liberation associated with English Wagnerism became closely linked with New Woman issues of female sexuality.”³⁹ Evelyn is a heroine who represents this period, and who could not have been created in any other period.

Notes

¹ *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. Translated and with an Introduction by Mary M. Innes (New York: Penguin, 1955). 246.

² Reinhold Hammerstein, “Music as a Demonic Art” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies in Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973). 264.

³ Greytchen Ludke Finney, “Harmony or Rapture in Music” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies in Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973). 389.

⁴ *Ibid.* 390

⁵ Denis Diderot, *The Nun*. 1796. Translated by Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin, 1974). 135.

⁶ *Ibid.* 164.

⁷ Pamela Horn, *Pleasures & Pastimes in Victorian Britain* (Thrupp • Stroud • Gloucester: Sutton Publishing, 1999). 31.

⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*. 1848 (London: Penguin, 1985). 73.

⁹ *Ibid.* 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 86.

¹¹ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. 2nd Edition. 1874 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1901). 871.

¹² George Moore, *Evelyn Innes* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898). Hereafter, all the parenthesised page references are to this edition.

¹³ Judith Mitchell, “Naturalism in George Moore’s *A Mummer’s Wife*” in Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer ed. *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996). 159.

¹⁴ Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). 33.

- ¹⁵ “Narrative Description” of “Musical Degeneracies: Intersections of Music and Ideas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century”. <http://www/duke.edu/web/aall/description.html>.
- ¹⁶ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*. (New York: D.Appleton and Company, 1895). 180.
- ¹⁷ Magee, 34.
- ¹⁸ Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*. 1849 (Translated by William Ashton Ellis, 1895). 6 – 7.
- ¹⁹ Magee, 50.
- ²⁰ Ibid. 47– 48.
- ²¹ Magee, 49.
- ²² Roland Barthes, *Image—Music—Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977). 179.
- ²³ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. The 1893 Text (Berkeley • Los Angeles • London: University of California Press, 1980). 102.
- ²⁴ Wagner, 110.
- ²⁵ Ibid. 112.
- ²⁶ Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860– 1900* (Hants: Ashgate, 2000). 63.
- ²⁷ James Braid, *Neurypnology: or, the Rationale of Nervous Sleep, Considered in Relation with Animal Magnetism* (London: John Churchill, 1843), 15–20, 75–6. rpt. in Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth ed. *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830 – 1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). 61.
- ²⁸ George Moore, *A Mummer’s Wife*. 1885 (Kyoto: Rinsen Book, 1983). 124.
- ²⁹ Wagner, 9.
- ³⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, I, 108 – 16, rpt. in Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth ed. *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830 – 1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). 76.
- ³¹ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*. 1855. 332–4, 617–20. rpt. in Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth ed. *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830– 1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). 83–85.
- ³² This kind of “voice” appears as early as in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1889) and Susan Dick, in her notes to 1972 edition of *Confessions*, argues that it shows Moore’s emphasis on “brain instincts”, reflecting his being influenced by Shopenhauer’s “will” philosophy (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press). 233.
- ³³ Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening” rpt. in A. Arato & E. Gebhardt ed. *The Essential Frankfurt Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978). 277.
- ³⁴ Greytchen Ludke Finney, “Harmony or Rapture in Music” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies in Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973). 393.
- ³⁵ “Brunnhilde is Wotan’s favourite daughter, but his features are dark with fury at her disobedience of his command. Throwing herself at her father’s feet, she pleads that he himself had intended to save Siegmund and had been turned from his purpose only by Fricka’s interference.” *Kobbe’s Complete Opera Book edited and revised by the Earl of Harewood* (London: The Bodley Head, 1981). 241
- ³⁶ Richard A. Cave, *A Study of the Novels of George Moore* (Gerarrds Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1978). 150.
- ³⁷ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde: Plays, Prose Writings and Poems* (London: Everyman, 1930). 141.
- ³⁸ Ibid. 142.
- ³⁹ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870– 1914: “Encroaching on All Man’s Privileges”* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 2000). 168.