

SELECTED CHAMBER WORKS OF DAME ETHEL SMYTH

By

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To Steve

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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SELECTED CHAMBER WORKS OF DAME ETHEL SMYTH

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Dame Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) was a British composer of great acclaim from the end of the nineteenth century to World War II. She composed many works, including operas, orchestral works, a mass, several choral compositions, and numerous songs, many of which have received scholarly attention and study. It is less widely known that Smyth composed over a dozen chamber pieces during a fifty-year time span. These works have seldom been performed or studied.

The development of Smyth's compositional style is discerned through a detailed examination of her chamber works in the context of her biography. Drawing upon traditional formal and stylistic analysis, Peter Smith's theory of expressive interpretation, and Sally Macarthur's theory of feminist aesthetics, the author examined select works from significant points throughout Smyth's life. The analysis of the music is based on autograph scores and published editions. Smyth's memoirs, letters, and diaries as well as those of her contemporaries illuminated the historical context of each work.

Throughout her career, Smyth turned to the genre of chamber music. Although these works were not as publicly recognized as her operas or her *Mass in D*, seven out of twelve chamber pieces were published by firms such as Breitkopf & Härtel and

Universal Edition, and these works were also publicly performed. More so than the other genres in which Smyth composed, the chamber works afford the opportunity to examine her style over a period of almost fifty years (from the *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano* composed in 1879 to the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"* for flute, oboe, and piano published in 1926). In addition to an examination of Smyth's musical style, studying these six pieces in their historical and biographical context will also partially demonstrate the degree to which Smyth's personal life influenced her compositions. Recent scholarship on Smyth has focused on the connection between her gender or sexuality and her music, but it will also be helpful to study the events in Smyth's life that shaped her philosophical and compositional style. Coincidentally, these events often corresponded with the specific years during which she was composing chamber music. Smyth began her career with the more intimate genre, writing several works before advancing to larger orchestral and vocal works. Four of these early pieces are discussed in detail in this dissertation. Smyth later returned to the genre at three profound moments in her life: on the cusp of operatic success in 1902; following the death of her friend, Harry Brewster, in 1912; and during the waning years of her career when her deafness made it increasingly difficult to compose.

A distinct musical style emerged after analyzing the early derivative compositions and the later mature works. Even as late as 1912, Smyth was composing multi-movement works that incorporated such traditional forms as sonata-allegro and scherzo-and-trio, yet her harmonic language became increasingly chromatic with each work. Her melodic style also defied expectations of the Classical tradition associated with the genres, except in specific examples where the section or passage adopted a

deliberately Classical style. Sally Macarthur argues that this avoidance of the Golden Mean in otherwise Classical structures is possible evidence of a feminist aesthetic. Broadening Macarthur's argument, I believe that an avoidance of the Golden Mean is an affront to the Classical style by Romantic composers of the 19th century, including Smyth, rather than a deliberate practice by female composers to subvert the masculine tradition. Partly a result of the musical elements, Smyth's compositions contain a high degree of emotional expression and the possibility for autobiographical interpretation, evidence of which will be revealed in the chapters below.

This dissertation also explores moments and people in Smyth's life that have either been overlooked or treated lightly. Often, this has been the result of little documented evidence with which to fully tell the story of Smyth's life. In particular, Smyth's years in Germany and her relationships with Elisabet von Herzogenberg and Henry Brewster were significant to her compositional development throughout her career. The composer's friendship with Herzogenberg has not gone unexplored in previous scholarship, and this study aims to further explore the influence Herzogenberg had on Smyth, both emotionally and musically. Brewster, however, has often been treated as merely her librettist, but their relationship was actually the longest and most profound of Smyth's life. Unlike Smyth's numerous but brief affairs with women, the twenty-five year bond Brewster shared with Smyth was only broken by his death in 1908. Their letters reveal a connection that went beyond professionalism or casual friendship. Years later, Smyth's struggle with deafness prompted the composition of her final chamber work, and previously unpublished diary excerpts reveal her frustration and

ultimate success. It is possible that the warm reception accorded to this work gave Smyth the confidence to compose her final large-scale effort, *The Prison*.

Little evidence exists to prove that Smyth had autobiographical intentions for her compositions. She strove to write to the best to her ability and to be recognized for her achievements. Her works are absolute compositions with minimal direct extramusical reference. The analyses undertaken in this study provide evidence of a skilled composer with an individual voice. Whether her music is the voice of women, the Britons, or the Romantic generation will only be revealed through further research. It is the hope of the author that this detailed examination will encourage the study and performance of Smyth's music and foster a greater understanding of the composer.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For fifty years, Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)¹ charged headlong into the male-dominated world of classical composition. Her biggest fear was not that music by women composers would be repressed out of prejudice against their gender; rather, she believed that their music would be disliked, and therefore disregarded, because it was musically different from works by male composers. She wrote in 1936, “*there is a bottomless cleft between man’s way of feeling and woman’s*, and it comes out in their work”, and that “the peculiar quality – the originality – of woman’s mind . . . is apt to antagonize ordinary men.”² As further evidence, she cited a letter from Maurice Baring to Vernon Lee in which her opera, *The Wreckers*, was described as “so *individual* as to be almost disagreeable.”³ Smyth interpreted this individuality as “sex-colour” or her gender being voiced in the music.⁴ She believed men and women were not only physiologically different, but also intellectually and creatively different. According to her memoirs, Smyth was concerned that her music would be rejected because male musicians and critics would not understand it. She hoped that someday “the Faculty, an all-male body, . . . may come to perceive that something not quite negligible is being uttered though in a language different to their own; while non-creative women, listening

¹ Ethel Smyth’s full title is Ethel Mary Smyth, D.M.A., D.B.E. She was awarded an honorary doctorate in music from Durham University in 1910 and was named a Dame of the Order of the British Empire in 1922 for her achievements and contributions to British musical culture.

² Smyth, *As time went on...*, 298-299. [Italics are Smyth’s.]

³ *Ibid.*, 319. [Italics are Smyth’s.]

⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

to the songs of their sisters . . . will say: ‘o what is this that knows the way I came?’”⁵

Despite the fact that scholars today have determined that gender cannot be distinguished in music, Smyth herself believed otherwise.

What was it in her music that exemplified this originality? Is it possible to distinguish a female voice in music, even or especially when the composer claims it is there? Smyth, for her part, never provided musical examples to demonstrate her statements. Since the 1990s, scholars, such as Sally Macarthur and Liane Curtis, have attempted to find traits specific to the music of female composers, but acknowledge that these same traits are also found in the music of male composers.⁶ Smyth’s own words, nevertheless, color any interpretation of her music. This study did not uncover a female voice, one that could claim to speak to other women musicians and listeners more so than to men. The research undertaken as part of this dissertation revealed a more significant finding in Smyth research – her consistent musical style within a larger nineteenth-century custom.⁷

Background of the Study

The explosion of research into women’s music that began in the 1980s has returned attention to Smyth’s music. Several recordings of her instrumental works have been issued, and her opera, *The Wreckers*, and her *Concerto for Violin, Horn and*

⁵ Smyth, *As time went on*, 300. “The Faculty”, as Smyth called them, were the male music professors at the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy of Music, Oxford University and Cambridge University as well as the press and music festival committees.

⁶ For further discussion, see Sally Macarthur’s *Feminist aesthetics in music*, 13.

⁷ Scholars such as Liane Curtis and Marcia Citron have argued that genres such as the sonata or string quartet, having been composed primarily by male composers, are therefore impacted by the male experience. The theory then suggests that female composers writing in these genres either adopt or subvert this gendered genre. As the Romantic style was primarily developed by male composers, there is possibly an inherent male experience in the style itself. See Marcia Citron’s *Gender and the musical canon* and Liane Curtis’s article, “Rebecca Clarke and sonata form: questions of gender and genre”.

Orchestra have recently been performed.⁸ An objective, albeit dated, biography by Christopher (Marie) St. John was published in 1959, and a non-academic biography by Louise Collis that focused on Smyth's personal life and love affairs appeared in 1984. An abridged and critical edition of her writings was published in 1987.⁹ Furthermore, several dissertations on her vocal works as well as some of the instrumental music have been written in more recent years.¹⁰ Elizabeth Wood, however, has published the most compelling and controversial research on Smyth to date; she focuses on gender and lesbian ideas in the composer's operas and compositional style. Despite recent attention, Smyth is still not granted the acknowledgements afforded Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, or Cecile Chaminade.

Today, Smyth is known primarily for her operatic works and for her involvement in the Suffragette movement. This information, however, represents but a small portion of her music and biography. Her instrumental music has not received the same degree of analysis and critical interpretation. In fact, only the *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra* and the *String Quartet in E minor* have been the subjects of dissertations or theses.

In addition to the *String Quartet in E minor*, Smyth composed over a dozen chamber works that have not been the focus of scholarly activity. Several possible reasons exist to explain this. First, many of the scores were not published or have not

⁸ *The Wreckers* was presented in concert form at Lincoln Center in New York City on 30 September 2007. The *Concerto for Violin, Horn, and Orchestra* was performed on 4 August 2008 at a Proms concert in Royal Albert Hall by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

⁹ Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, abridged and introduced by Ronald Crichton, with a chronological listing of works compiled by Jory Bennett.

¹⁰ Recent research is summarized in detail in chapter 2.

been in print for several years, rendering analysis of the music difficult.¹¹ Second, Smyth only briefly mentions a small number of the pieces in her memoirs and essays, suggesting that the works were not valued by the composer. Third, the chamber works, because they were not published or widely disseminated, may not offer anything new to the evolution of composition; they are often described as Brahmsian and put back on the proverbial shelf. Finally, few primary sources exist that could provide the necessary evidence for a critical interpretation based on gender analysis, which has been the primary focus of recent Smyth research.

Only five publications are currently available that examine the chamber works. A brief article appeared in *The Strad* magazine that reviewed the unpublished *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*.¹² The Glickman and Schleiffer collection of music by women composers published an introductory analysis and score of the *String Quartet in E minor*.¹³ “Performing rights: a sonography of women’s suffrage” by Elizabeth Wood briefly discussed the *String Quartet in E minor* as it related to Smyth’s Suffragette experience,¹⁴ and a master’s thesis by Jennifer Gwynn Hughes, *Sapphonic Listening: Ethel Smyth’s String Quartet in E minor*,¹⁵ explored the author’s listening experience as a lesbian in relation to the composition. This brief listing of secondary sources highlights the significant void in Smyth research with regard to her chamber works. The goal of

¹¹ Ronald Crichton and Jory Bennett established a chronology and location of these sources in their 1987 publication, but new information has emerged in the past twenty years.

¹² Franca, “An Ethel Smyth discovery”, 718-19.

¹³ Mercier and Pickett, “Ethel Smyth: String quartet in E minor (1912)”.

¹⁴ Wood, “Sapphonic”.

¹⁵ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening: Ethel Smyth’s String Quartet in E minor*.

this dissertation is to begin to fill that void while adding to the study of Smyth's life and musical style.

Throughout her career, Smyth returned to the genre of chamber music. Although these works were not as publicly recognized as the operas or the *Mass*, seven out of twelve chamber pieces were published by major firms and publicly performed. More so than the other genres in which Smyth composed, the chamber works afford the opportunity to examine her style over a period of almost fifty years (from the *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano* composed in 1880 to the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"* for flute, oboe, and piano published in 1926). Not only does this allow for an examination of her musical style over the course of her career, it also provides the opportunity to examine the music as it may relate to different events in her personal life. Recent scholarship on Smyth has focused on the connection between her gender or sexuality and her music, but it will also be helpful to study the events in Smyth's life which shaped her philosophical and compositional style. Coincidentally, these events often corresponded with the years she was composing chamber music.

Biographical Overview

Smyth's surroundings, as much as her internal motivations, impacted her genre choices and musical style. Like other composers of the same period, Smyth was heavily influenced by Brahms, who served both as a personal and a musical inspiration. Her early works (1878-1893) reflect a romantic style containing chromatic harmonies within traditional forms, but the pieces also demonstrate the German devotion to counterpoint. Most of her chamber music was composed during this period. Later, conversations with Tchaikovsky inspired Smyth to experiment with tone color and dramatic effect. Her middle period (1893-1914) focused on romantic grand opera as her primary genre.

Between 1902 and 1912, she also composed her only published string quartet. The end of this period is marked by the death of her friend Henry Brewster (1850-1908). It was also during this period that she took a two-year sabbatical from music to serve in the suffragette movement. Her experience with the Suffragettes inspired Smyth to write music for broader British audiences.¹⁶ Consequently, later works (1914-1931) focus on accessibility, partly by arranging her orchestral compositions as chamber ensembles. Smaller versions of her works also allowed for private consumption by amateur musicians and were more profitable as publications. It was also after 1914, and the beginning of World War I, that Smyth experienced increasing deafness, an affliction that limited her ability to compose as she grew older.

Between 1878 and 1931, Smyth composed over seventy works. Her instrumental works include piano solos; chamber music, including string quartets, a string quintet, piano trios (for violin and viola, or for flute and oboe), two cello sonatas and a violin sonata; a concert overture; and a multi-movement serenade for orchestra. Her vocal works include songs for voice and piano, for voice and small chamber ensemble, and for voice and orchestra; choruses (several of which were composed for the suffragette movement), both *a cappella* and with orchestra; six operas; a symphony for soprano and bass solos, chorus and orchestra; and a mass for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. Her works were premiered in Germany, England, and the United States, and championed by conductors Bruno Walter, Henry Wood, and Thomas Beecham.

In addition to composing, Smyth was also a prolific writer of prose, an avocation which she adopted after World War I. Her personal letters, often several pages long,

¹⁶ The desire to have one's music enjoyed by a broader audience was quite common at this time, and can also be found in the music and ideas of composers such as Hindemith and, later, Shostakovich.

offer tremendous insight into the memoirs. She also published ten volumes of autobiographical material and essays on a variety of subjects from 1919 to 1940. In many respects, this creative outlet filled the void brought on by her deafness. Just as Brahms and Tchaikovsky encouraged her to compose, Smyth was also encouraged by successful writers to publish her prose, including Virginia Woolf.

As the above paragraph demonstrates, Smyth's long life and her boisterous spirit led to numerous and varied relationships with prominent musicians, writers, politicians, and royalty. Her early career was heavily influenced by the musical culture of bourgeois society in Leipzig. She often attended and participated in regular *hausmusik* concerts, and her musical studies thrived under the tutelage and care of Heinrich and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, who were close friends of Johannes Brahms, Joseph Joachim, and Clara Schumann. In England she gained the support of Queen Victoria, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the ex-Empress Eugénie of France. Smyth's frequent travels also took her to major cities in Germany, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Egypt where she was welcomed into the homes of German chancellors and cosmopolitan sculptors.

Her music was accepted by audiences and critics on the continent, but Smyth often felt that she was constantly fighting against the musical "Machine" in England, her own term for Stanford, Parry, Sullivan, Holst and others on the composition faculty at the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music, Oxford University and Cambridge University.¹⁷ Her views may not have been entirely unfounded; she is rarely included in surveys of the English Renaissance in music during the early twentieth

¹⁷Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, 357.

century,¹⁸ even though research has shown that her works received almost as many performances as her male counterparts.¹⁹

Despite her musical and literary successes, Smyth is usually known among literary scholars for her close relationship with Virginia Woolf and among feminist scholars for her efforts on behalf of women's rights. She is also known by musical scholars for her anecdotes about Brahms, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, and Clara Schumann. Yet she is not widely known in her own right as a composer. Aside from brief mention in women's music history texts, Smyth's music has been relegated to the margins of music history. There are several reasons for this. Smyth believed that it was because she was a woman and suffered from the prejudices of male professors of music, male music critics, and male conductors. It is easy to assume that this early prejudice was then continued by music historians in the mid-twentieth century, who were ignoring many of the women composers and performers and excluding them from text books. Her music is also in the late Romantic style, and, after World War I, this style was set aside in favor of a lean, objective musical style exemplified by the music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Yet Rachmaninov's music was very popular despite its late Romantic style. Another plausible, though less controversial, theory is that she was British. The music of Stanford, Parry, Holst, Elgar, Vaughan Williams and others is still today not as popular as that of non-British Europeans among audiences or scholars. According to Nancy Gisbrecht's research, Smyth's works were performed as often as her British male

¹⁸ One exception to this is Sophie Fuller's dissertation on women composers of the British renaissance, as well as a published volume on the English musical renaissance, *Women composers during the British musical Renaissance, 1880-1918*.

¹⁹ Gisbrecht, *An examination of the operatic environment in which Ethel Smyth composed and its effect on her career*.

counterparts, yet none of them have the name recognition of their German contemporaries. Even so, the music of Smyth's British successors – in particular Holst, Elgar, and Vaughan Williams – has found its way into the musical canon while her music has not. In fact, Smyth's music receives far less attention than other female composers, including Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel, Cecile Chaminade, plus more recently, Ellen Taffe Zwilich, Joan Tower, and Judith Lang Zaimont. The evidence for Smyth's obscurity is unfortunately quite subjective and unable to be determined at this time.

The Problem Statement

Two questions arise out of a general knowledge of the music of Smyth and the current research. First, does Smyth's music communicate an individual style? Second, how did class, nationality, gender, and biographical events in her life express themselves in her music or influence her music? In order to answer these questions, this dissertation examines select chamber compositions by Ethel Smyth from four periods in her life: as a student at the Leipzig Conservatory, as a new and unknown professional composer, as a successful international composer at the high point of her career, and as her compositional career was waning. These works were chosen in part for their quality of composition and for their significance in her life. Where possible, the autograph scores, diaries, and letters have been consulted. These compositions do not, however, categorize her compositional style, for that was variable throughout her career. This dissertation aims to demonstrate the prominent traits of Smyth's chamber music and its related forms, to determine how her approach to the genre changed during her life, and ultimately to understand her music from the perspective of a female composer at the turn of the twentieth century.

Methodology and the Chamber Works

Many musicological methodologies in the past thirty years have either focused on a positivistic approach or an interpretive approach, exposing a dichotomy within the field whose boundaries have recently started to blur. A formalist, historical method might focus entirely on the music itself: the score, the manuscripts, and the musical relationships within the composition.²⁰ The challenge proposed over twenty years ago by Joseph Kerman demanded that scholars look beyond this approach and examine the composition as it existed in its cultural context, invoking not only biography but also social history, including issues of class, gender, and even the sexuality of the composer.²¹ This form of musicology draws upon critical theory (often from literature and gender studies) as well as music theory. Susan McClary's research has been at the forefront of the "new regime", as Kofi Agawu termed it, frequently drawing criticism for her controversial and speculative interpretations.²²

In the past ten years, many musicologists and theorists have tempered the two approaches. Lawrence Kramer, in his article "Musicology and Meaning" (2003), best described this compromise as cultural musicology (as opposed to a formalist approach on the one side and the New musicology of the 1990s on the other), noting that musicology itself has always included a study of the culture, sociology and biography of a piece of music. In particular Kramer wrote that "cultural musicology is above all a

²⁰ Kofi Agawu addresses the debate between formalism and the 'new musicology' in his article, "Analyzing music under the new musicological regime", 297.

²¹ Kerman, *Contemplating music: challenges to musicology*.

²² The most notorious, of course, is her interpretation of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* in *Feminine endings*, but articles such as "Narrative agendas in 'absolute' music: identity and difference in Brahms' third symphony", have also drawn criticism for offering multiple possible interpretations (Agawu, "Analyzing music", 302).

continuing effort to understand musical subjectivity in history.”²³ He notes that analytic knowledge of music is the “basis” of semantic, formal and stylistic understandings of music, but he then argues that without “ascriptions of meaning, formal and analytical knowledge is inert, unactualised, imperceptible.”²⁴ Today the debate persists between analytically-based musicologists and interpretively-based musicologists, although many scholars have drawn from both as a means of examining music.

Peter H. Smith’s methodology, which used expressive interpretation to examine a chamber work by Brahms, has served as a partial model for this dissertation and can be seen as a product of the debate of the past thirty years in American musicology.

Grounded in the theories of Leonard Meyer and informed by Edward T. Cone and Nicholas Cook, expressive interpretation seeks to address how a composition conveys particular emotions and how it expresses meaning.²⁵ Smith argues that “the idea of a formalist approach [to expressive interpretation] is not to force interpretation to become a mechanism through which structure somehow dictates meaning. Rather, the intention is simply to have some common ground for discussion.”²⁶ By basing a critical interpretation on musical analysis, it is not possible to provide a definitive interpretation of a piece of music, but to ground the argument in musical facts that serve as the starting point for possible discussion.

²³ Kramer, “Musicology and meaning”, 6.

²⁴ Ibid., 10.

²⁵ The question of “meaning” in music is one that has interested theorists and musicologists for centuries. The ideas of Meyer, Cone and Cook especially have influenced my theories of expressive interpretation, in particular the articles, “Theorizing musical meaning” by Nicholas Cook, “Schubert’s promissory note: an exercise in musical hermeneutics” by Edward T. Cone, and Leonard B. Meyer’s *Emotion and meaning in music*. My analysis, however, is more closely tied to that of Peter H. Smith.

²⁶ Smith, *Expressive forms in Brahms’s instrumental music: structure and meaning in his ‘Werther’ quartet*, 187.

The melodic analysis of each of the themes in this collection is also based upon Sally Macarthur's methodology in *Feminist Aesthetics in Music*. She argues that it may be possible to view a composer's music "in terms of difference based on the particularities of her sex."²⁷ Macarthur bases her analysis on the theory that "great masterworks from the canon conform to the ideal proportion (or Golden Section)":

What we find with the divine ratio is that the climax tends to be positioned around two-thirds of the way through the music (or at the proportion of 0.618). This corresponds to a stereotypical idea of male sexual experience in which erection and penetration leading to climax take longer than the aftermath leading to closure.²⁸

According to Macarthur, the stereotypical idea of female sexual experience might have different proportions or several climaxes instead of one, "perhaps avoiding closure altogether."²⁹ She does not argue that either stereotype is inherent to one sex or the other but that either sex may appropriate both "metaphors" and imitate them. Applied to Smyth's melodic structure, this methodology reveals that Smyth avoided the "ideal proportion" except when she was purposefully writing in the Classical (male) style. Thus, while Smyth was able to adopt both feminine and masculine modes of communication, her tendency was to subvert the Classical tradition. One must use caution, however, when applying gendered methodologies, for such theories may not apply to all female composers. Like Macarthur, I do not claim that Smyth's style is necessarily feminine (or feminist), but it does have a decisively Romantic style that is demonstrated by her often unpredictable phrase structures.

²⁷ Macarthur, *Feminist aesthetics in music*, 69.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

A structural and harmonic analysis of Smyth's chamber works establishes the building blocks of her musical style, as well as a foundation from which to attempt an expressive interpretation. Several similarities were found in the works examined. The first result of this study showed that Smyth's skill and craftsmanship steadily improved during the course of her compositional career. Second, Smyth's melodic style tends to have early or late climactic points with relation to the Golden Mean. The third finding revealed that three motives can be found in five of the six pieces. Fourth, Smyth's harmonic language freely incorporates mode mixture with a tendency toward N^6 chords and enharmonic spellings that facilitate key changes to distantly related key areas. Finally, the last movements of these works are experimental versions of standard sonata or rondo form. The data produced by the analysis reveals a consistent compositional style that continued to evolve. Furthermore, the emotional content in Smyth's works, expressed through ambiguous harmonies, unresolving melodies, and complex rhythms was partially the result of events in her personal life. Evidence from letters, diaries, and memoirs supports this.

In order to better understand the context in which the works were composed, the reader should have a general understanding of Smyth's biography. Chapter three is devoted to the social history of England and Germany as it directly related to Smyth's biography from 1858 to 1880. The purpose of this is to explore the motives and inspirations behind Smyth's unusual career. The biography of Smyth continues in subsequent chapters as it correlates to the pieces, establishing the context for each work as it is discussed.

The three analytical chapters progress chronologically, and each subsequent chapter builds upon the findings and discoveries of the previous chapter. The section examining the earliest chamber works reveals the elements of her musical style: structure, thematic and motivic treatment, harmonic language, and rhythmic design. Chapter five presents this first layer of analysis and also adds an interpretation of the work based on biographical details. In the four works examined in both chapters four and five, personal biography and musical analysis were more useful tools than general categories of gender or nationality. In chapter six, the analysis of biography and music counter-argues the most controversial topic in Smyth research: her sexuality. Based on Smyth's writings and events in her life, this chapter reveals that gender played a greater role related to motivation or inspiration than her sexuality. In four of the six pieces, markings in the score and personal letters and diaries suggest specific expressive interpretations of the works. Biographical connections between Smyth's prose and the scores provide a pathway for expressive interpretation.

It is tempting to want to analyze Smyth's music solely in terms of gender. Recent scholars such as Marcia Citron, Liane Curtis, Sally Macarthur, Susan McClary, and Elizabeth Wood have explored the theory that music by women composers does not always fit into sonata form (or indeed other standardized forms). They have argued that this is not because these women were incapable of composing in abstract forms, but because they chose to subvert the traditional, masculine model by not conforming to accepted traditions.³⁰ According to this theory, the musical forms may not contain

³⁰ Citron, *Gender and the musical canon*; Curtis, "Rebecca Clarke and sonata form: questions of gender and genre", 393-429; Hughes, *Sapphonic listening: Ethel Smyth's String Quartet in E minor*; Macarthur, *Feminist aesthetics in music*; McClary, "Narrative agendas in 'absolute' music: identity and

accepted ideas regarding principle and secondary themes, in which case it is the responsibility of the analyst to discover the actual structure, how it functions, and what the form communicates to the listener. It must be remembered, however, that these theories are quite speculative and depend as much on the analyst as the composer for the results. Male composers of the time were not necessarily composing in standard masculine models, either.

The gendered analyses presented by the above-named scholars are only relevant when sources pertaining to the composer's biography support such a theory. Although Smyth believed her music would speak to other women, her writing does not suggest that this quality would be as tangible as gendered themes in sonata form, for example. Rather than subverting the masculine tradition, the equality of themes in Smyth's music represents the equality between the musicians (both male and female) in Leipzig during the 1880s, as well as her penchant for contrapuntal textures. Smyth's melodic structure is the only element that exhibits a possible feminist aesthetic. Thus, her themes reveal more about her style than the conservative forms she chose.

The music and life of Ethel Smyth have been the subjects of either musical analysis or biographical study. This dissertation examined six chamber works from throughout her career through *both* musical and biographical analysis in order to understand her compositional style and to provide a useful interpretation of the music based on her life experiences. Smyth was a complex and vibrant woman and it is only by exploring all of her works, including the lesser-known chamber pieces, that it will be possible to better understand the woman and her music.

difference in Brahms's third symphony;" Wood, "Performing rights: A sonography of women's suffrage", 606-643.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“The harmony is uninteresting, the themes are just not good enough, the concerted writing is conventional, the orchestration heavy and Brahmsian.”³¹

Unfortunately for Smyth, she lived too long. By 1944, the music of Brahms had come and gone. Two world wars had turned audiences away from the lush, expressive music of Austro-German romanticism. The British musical renaissance was then led by Vaughan Williams and Britten; her contemporaries had been Parry, Elgar, and Stanford. That she was neglected by music historians is due as much to the lack of interest in British composers as it is to her gender. The assessment quoted above appeared in 1959; it was not until the feminist movement in musicology began in the 1980s that scholars began to explore, and understand, Smyth and her music.

Today, a vast amount of information exists on Smyth’s biography, her prose writings, and her music. Chapters from collections on women in music history and gay/lesbian musicology, scholarly articles and periodicals, and encyclopedia entries are excellent sources of secondary information. Three biographies of varying perspective and scope are also available. Although there are several dissertations, performance studies far outweigh musicological topics, but these studies contain sparse mention of the instrumental chamber works. It is the purpose of this dissertation to fill this void in the research, as well as to counter some of the more subjective interpretations discussed below.

³¹ Sackville-West, appendix to Christopher St. John’s *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, 254.

Biographical Sources

Smyth believed her music was ignored by critics and impresarios (she never blamed the public), but as early as the 1890s her compositions were known in Germany and Britain. By 1910, her successes in music were such that she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Durham University; in 1922 she was named Dame of the British Empire for her musical and literary contributions to crown and country, and in 1926 Oxford University also granted her an honorary doctorate.

Contrary to Smyth's belief that critics disregarded or censured her compositions, numerous, and often positive, articles and reviews were written about her and her music during her lifetime. The first evidence of her growing success as a composer is found in an entry from a musical dictionary dated 1897, still a time when most women composers received little attention. She was included, along with Parry, Elgar, Stanford, Sullivan and countless others, in Stratton and Brown's *British Musical Biography: A Dictionary of Musical Artists, Authors and Composers, Born in Britain and Its Colonies*. Although details such as her birth date are omitted (while they are included in most other entries), the editors do list her published chamber works as well as orchestral performances at the Crystal Palace (1890) and the Royal Albert Hall (1893). The success of these performances and news from Germany of her accomplishments seem to have warranted the entry. It also demonstrates the respect the editors had for her promising career.

Occurring decades later are entries found in the women's music history texts. The most recent such text is Karin Pendle's *Women & Music: A History*. Smyth is included briefly in the chapter on "European Musicians and Composers: 1880-1918" by

Marcia Citron.³² The three-page entry focuses on how Smyth “broke gender conventions”, through her decision to study in Leipzig, to compose opera, and to become a political activist. The summary provides details about Smyth’s *Mass in D*, including an account of Tovey’s favorable analysis. Like other similar entries, the bulk of information is about her life and her operas. Citron’s conclusion supports the need for further research on Smyth: “all in all Ethel Smyth counts as one of the most striking figures in women’s history. . . . she had the courage to live up to her convictions regardless of the consequences.”³³ The consequences to which Citron is referring are possibly the social consequences of being an unmarried woman with a professional career, subjected to the scorn of her middle and upper class peers. The results of Smyth’s decisions were actually positive, for she received numerous performances of her music, several awards, and the acclamation of composers such as Brahms and Tchaikovsky. Neules-Bates’s *Source Readings from Women in Music History*³⁴ offers excerpts from Smyth’s autobiography in the chapter on women composers, listing her among better known composers such as Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, and Amy Cheney Beach. Why have these three composers been included in mainstream music history texts, while Smyth has been omitted? One possibility is that Smyth had no direct connection to the “master composers” in music history, while Clara and Fanny were known in relation to their famous male counterparts. Amy Cheney Beach (and Clara Schumann) was a well-known concert pianist before she began a composing career and thus had a vehicle for presenting music to audiences. Smyth did not have

³² Citron, “European composers: 1880-1918”, 193-226.

³³ Pendle, *Women & music: a history*, 188-191.

³⁴ Neules-Bates, ed., *Women in music: an anthology of source readings from the middle ages to the present*.

those early opportunities. Even more interesting, in Jezic's *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found*,³⁵ in which a handful of composers are discussed in each musico-historical period, Smyth is not one of the composers to receive her own section, even though she is referred to in other composers' descriptions. One can only conjecture why she was excluded. Was she too successful and thus not "lost"? Did she not compose the appropriate (read: *feminine*) types of pieces, preferring masses and operas to songs and character pieces? Or was it simply because she was not a performer first, a trait common to composers discussed before the twentieth century?

Smyth's place in music history has fluctuated since her death, and the successive editions of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* provide a succinct and clear view of this circumstance. The breadth or brevity of the articles corresponds to trends in musicology and musical taste. When the first edition of *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was published in 1954, Smyth was still prominently mentioned in British music histories. J. A. Fuller-Maitland admired her music and wrote a detailed entry that also included a complete list of works, both published and unpublished.³⁶ Fuller-Maitland lists her student works at Leipzig, as well as the opp. 1-7, and states that the *String Quintet, Op. 1* "was performed with success in 1884."³⁷ He also lists her orchestral performances and provides a detailed discussion of her *Mass in D*, "a far more important work . . . [that] definitely placed the composer easily at the head of all those of her own sex."³⁸ This last assessment is difficult to judge because it is unclear

³⁵ Jezic, *Women composers: The lost tradition found*.

³⁶ Fuller-Maitland, "Smyth, (Dame) Ethel (Mary)", 860-863.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

who the other female composers are to whom Fuller-Maitland is referring. Perhaps he was comparing Smyth to Fanny Mendelssohn or Cécile Chaminade, but he may also have been referring to the lesser known Augusta Holmès. Despite comparing her only to other women composers, Fuller-Maitland declares that the work was “entire[ly] absen[t] of the qualities that are usually associated with feminine productions; throughout it was virile, masterly in construction and workmanship, and particularly remarkable for the excellence and rich colouring of the orchestration.” He noted that the *Mass* was not performed for another thirty years. By that time Smyth had switched to opera, after successful reception (but few performances) in the 1890s of her *Serenade for Orchestra* or her *Overture to Anthony and Cleopatra*. Specifically, he claims that *The Wreckers* (1906) was her “crowning achievement,” and the remainder of the entry, subtitled “The Later Years,” summarizes the events after this. According to Fuller-Maitland, “British music was becoming a fashion in the concert-room, and moreover feminism was receiving notoriety from the campaign of militant suffragists.”³⁹ Consequently, many of Smyth’s early works were revived, including the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, for violin and piano. He details her remaining operas, as well as her *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra* (written exclusively for British hornist, Aubrey Brain) and *The Prison* (1930). Furthermore, Fuller-Maitland posits that “the early *Mass* has probably been more performed than most works of its period by British composers.”⁴⁰ He also argues that the *Mass*, *The Wreckers*, and *The Prison* were the three major works of her career, adding that the chamber works among others “add a distinctive bouquet of minor works

³⁹ Fuller-Maitland, “Smyth, (Dame) Ethel (Mary)”, 860-863.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

She was larger than life as a character, and there is nothing shrinking about Smyth's music. It demands to be judged by the highest standards. But her personal style was eclectic and she never acquired a settled, personal voice. . . . Throughout her work remarkable harmonic conventions lie cheek by jowl with conventional formulae, and striking thematic ideas are followed by themes that are plainly manufactured. Nevertheless, the overall impression is of power and grandeur and great sincerity, and her music remains an important part of that new seriousness of purpose that characterized the renaissance of English music.⁴⁴

This concluding paragraph is a mixture of appreciation for her musical importance and disapproval of her musical style. It is a reserved description that in many ways revealed mainstream musicology's position at the time, granting Smyth conditional importance among the composers of the British musical renaissance.

Twenty years later, in an article written by one of the foremost champions of women's music, Smyth was returned to her status as a significant British composer. Sophie Fuller's article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) is highly detailed, including a portrait of Smyth and the title page for "The March of Women" chorus.⁴⁵ A complete works list (including lesser-known works not previously mentioned) and a detailed bibliography demonstrating the surge in research since 1980 is also provided. Many more details about her life are included, especially regarding her musical upbringing. Sophie Fuller, unlike Fuller-Maitland and Hurd, reserves judgment on the early chamber works. Instead, she simply lists the *String Quintet, Op. 1* and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, for violin and piano as having received performances at the *Gewandhaus* in Leipzig, omitting any references to their success or failure. A detailed discussion of Smyth's compositions includes many of the same details found in Fuller-

⁴⁴ Hurd, "Smyth, Dame Ethel (Mary)", 425-26.

⁴⁵ The "March of the Women" chorus is not one of Smyth's best works, but it has served as a useful example in the study of the role of music in the women's movement. It is also Smyth's only blatantly feminist composition. These extramusical associations are frequently the reason that this work is afforded more attention than Smyth's absolute works.

Maitland's entry. Sophie Fuller's is the first of the *Grove* articles, however, to write of Smyth's sexual orientation. It is a commentary on changing views on Smyth and musicology in general that Fuller mentions Smyth's attraction to women. She provides no evidence of any physical relationships with women, however, and she fails to mention that Smyth's longest relationship was with a male companion: Harry Brewster. This article does offer more insight into the socio-cultural context of Smyth's long life, mentioning several of Smyth's female friends and their influence with regard to gaining performances of her works.

The second half of the entry examines Smyth's musical works. According to Fuller, the early works of the Leipzig period "show the influence of her German training and immersion in Brahmsian circles."⁴⁶ She discusses in detail the songs and piano works, especially with regard to Smyth's use of autobiographical programs. According to Fuller, the Op. 1, Op. 5 and Op. 7 are the most important of the early chamber works; she notes that they "demonstrate an assured approach to form and an expressiveness that is most telling in the slow movements." The *String Quartet in E minor* (1912) is described as Smyth's only "substantial" chamber piece of her mature style. There is equal detail and positive commentary on the rest of Smyth's output. Fuller concludes that "although she was by no means the only professional female composer of her generation to achieve public recognition, her forthright determination and astute political awareness ensured that she remained a feminist icon even when her music ceased to be heard after her death."⁴⁷ Yet despite her recognized status during her lifetime, Smyth

⁴⁶ Fuller, "Smyth, Dame Ethel (Mary)", 592.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 593.

has not achieved the name recognition since her passing that has been afforded to Clara Schumann or even Fanny Mendelssohn.

Several articles in collections have also informed the academic public of Smyth's accomplishments. One of the writings that helped bolster Smyth's current position in musicology was Jane Bernstein's chapter "'Shout, Shout, Up with Your Song!' Dame Ethel Smyth and the Changing Role of the British Woman Composer", which appeared in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1900*. Bernstein presents the historical background which sets the stage for Smyth's career. Citing numerous examples of women composers of parlor music and performer-teachers, Bernstein suggests that Smyth was the first woman composer to strive for success at the level of her male counterparts. As evidence of this success, she specifically cites three chamber pieces from the 1880s, her two major orchestral works of 1890 and the *Mass in D* of 1893. Bernstein provides some musical examples, but aside from brief detail about the *Mass* there is little formal analysis. All information is presented within a biographical narrative of Smyth's life. Of the chamber works, Bernstein writes that "these chamber compositions, written in a Brahmsian vein, demonstrate the technical skill in counterpoint and harmony the young woman acquired from Herzogenberg, a skill that proved exceedingly valuable in her later years."⁴⁸ The author discusses Smyth's operas in detail with some musical description of *The Wreckers*. Bernstein's biography does not address Smyth's lesbian tendencies; on the contrary, she specifically recounts Smyth's grief following the death of Harry Brewster in 1908, describing him as "her most intimate

⁴⁸ Bernstein, "'Shout, shout, up with your song! Dame Ethel Smyth and the changing role of the British woman composer", 308-9.

friend and collaborator.”⁴⁹ She then briefly describes Smyth’s two-year period with the Suffragettes in 1910, supplemented by a musical example from her chorus, “The March of the Women”, and a photograph of Smyth dating from 1916. Like Fuller, Bernstein concludes her article with a high view of Smyth:

Ethel Smyth stands out as one of the most original figures of British music history. She ranked with such contemporaries as Parry, Stanford, Sullivan, and even Elgar. . . . She proved, in the age of the amateur lady musician, that a woman could attain the status of a professional opera composer. In this sense Ethel Smyth stands alone as an important pioneer whose fight for recognition and efforts as a composer, writer, and feminist paved the way toward a new age in music.⁵⁰

The remainder of the chapter focuses on Smyth’s books and her romantic relationships, both male and female.

Similarly, in *New-Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-century English Music* (1998), Derek Hyde devotes an entire chapter to Smyth’s life and music, labeling her as “the first ‘professional’ woman composer in England whose aim was that her music and its performance be received on equal terms with that of male composers.”⁵¹ The chapter presents an overview of Smyth’s long life, drawing upon her various autobiographies, essays, and letters.⁵² Unlike earlier articles, Smyth’s music and her gender are the primary focus of this article. According to Hyde, she was always conscious of and concerned with being a woman in a man’s world, both musically and socially. He argues that:

⁴⁹ Bernstein, “Shout, shout, up with your song!”, 313.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 319.

⁵¹ Hyde, *New-found voices: women in nineteenth-century English music*, 153.

⁵² After 1919, Smyth became quite prolific as a writer, publishing three autobiographies, each covering a different part of her life; five collections of essays; and numerous newspaper articles and letters.

Both in her music and her lifestyle many of the characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity predominate: she was a born fighter, quite fearless both physically and morally, and a keen sportswoman, with riding, tennis and golf her major preoccupations. Perhaps she felt it necessary to adopt certain masculine characteristics so that her music would be viewed more seriously.⁵³

Although Smyth did use her initials rather than her full name on scores at the beginning of her career (not an unusual practice for women authors), her autobiography revealed that she did not “adopt certain masculine characteristics” to advance her career. Quite the opposite, Smyth’s memoirs reveal that it was her natural personality, even as a child, to be a tomboy. Her tenaciousness and love for sport were not traits that she chose later in life in order to better her career, but traits she already had when she became a professional composer.

Hyde does make the interesting point, however, that Smyth herself was concerned that her work would be ignored or misunderstood because she was a woman. What separates Hyde’s conclusions from mere gender bias is his emphasis on Smyth’s beliefs at the end of her life that a woman is inherently different from a man. According to Hyde, Smyth believed that, “her originality as a woman composer was not understood . . . that the male-dominated public of her day was not ready to accept feminine modes of expression in music.”⁵⁴ Yet these “modes of expression” were never defined by Hyde or by Smyth. This begs the question: does Smyth’s music reflect her personal belief that a female composer writes differently than a male composer? Rather than attempt to answer this in any definitive manner, Hyde acknowledges that it is next to impossible to determine the gender of a composer due to the “range of emotional

⁵³ Hyde, *New-found voices*, 153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

expression” in music.⁵⁵ In his section on musical analysis in this chapter, Hyde disregards the gender issue, preferring to analyze the music from a formalist perspective.

Hyde states that the significant characters in Smyth’s life were not merely the composers who influenced her but also the personal relationships that she cherished so deeply. He notes the important relationship with Elisabet von Herzogenberg during Smyth’s period in Leipzig (1877-1889), as well as the direct influence of Brahms, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, and even the music of Bach. He also points out that this period of inspiration was halted by the ending of Smyth’s friendship with Herzogenberg. During the 1880s Smyth first met Brewster, and Hyde discusses this relationship with Brewster as well as her relationships with women. He confirms the conclusion presented here: “though drawn to imposing women for whom she was overwhelmed by intense and passionate feelings, her real love, though not overtly sexual, was Henry Brewster who exercised the greatest influence on her life.”⁵⁶ The list of women, however, extends from childhood passions to Lisl von Herzogenberg and Marie Geistinger in Germany, as well as Rhoda Garrett, Pauline Trevelyan, Emmaline Pankhurst, and Virginia Woolf in England. None of these lasted as long or carried as much weight as Smyth’s twenty-five year relationship with Brewster, which ended in 1908 with his death.

In the remainder of the chapter, Hyde provides a detailed overview of the *Mass in D*, *The Wreckers*, the chamber music songs of 1908, *Hey Nonny No*, *The Boatswain’s Mate*, and *The Prison*, a survey which spans the majority of Smyth’s career yet omits

⁵⁵ Hyde, *New-found voices*, 155.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

any of her purely instrumental works. Much of the information involves rehearsals, performances, and reception, along with a general description of the work. He points out influences of the German style in the *Mass*, while the operas reveal the influence of Wagner and the English ballad opera tradition. In *Hey Nonny No* (1911), however, Hyde states that, “Ethel Smyth’s fondness for intervals of the tritone and resultant diminished and augmented chords infuses the whole work and tonally makes for good contrasts with the more deliberately diatonic sections.”⁵⁷ Hyde also argues that in the chamber music songs of 1908, one finds Smyth’s “more imaginative style of writing”, citing the “variety of instrumental colour” as well as the varied textures and virtuosic instrumental writing.⁵⁸ However, there is no discussion of harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic characteristics that would help to place these songs within an overall style. Appendix four of this volume also presents a brief commentary on the performances of Smyth’s works during her lifetime. He argues that Smyth’s works did not receive more performances because she did not write enough music and that the few works she did write were too difficult. He concludes that “it would seem that [the lack of performances] had more to do with the kind of music she wrote and its inability to escape from a narrow and confining influence.”⁵⁹ Hyde’s final section details the literary works. He discusses her writing style as well as common threads and details she included, supporting the summary with quotations from the texts themselves. He provides extensive footnotes, a detailed bibliography, and several musical examples.

⁵⁷ Hyde, *New-found voices*, 171.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 170-1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

Of the other biographical works which have been published in English, only Christopher St. John's 1959 biography attempts to present an objective point of view of Smyth as a woman, composer, and writer. This biography draws heavily on Smyth's own published writings as well as letters and diaries that Smyth did not publish. Written by Smyth's estate executor and friend, it is a useful companion to the autobiographies, especially after 1908, the last year narrated in *What Happened Next*. The appendices are especially valuable: Edward Sackville-West's personal account of Smyth's life, Edith Somerville's analysis of Smyth's writings, and Kathleen Dale's discussion of Smyth's musical works all provide additional interpretations and opinions on Smyth's creative outlets.

Louise Collis' 1984 biography *Impetuous Heart: The Biography of Ethel Smyth* focuses almost entirely on Smyth's personal life and love affairs. The illustrations and anecdotes are numerous, and some are not found in other sources, yet the sources of many of the quotations are not cited. The author simply describes the music of the Leipzig period as "early compositions" in the index and the *String Quartet in E minor* only receives a brief mention; her later ensemble works are absent. The audience of this biography is the interested everyday reader and not necessarily an academic scholar; although it is a fascinating story, the lack of documented evidence undermines the work's credibility.

Gwen Anderson's extremely brief booklet *The Burning Rose: Ethel Smyth: A Brief Biography* (1997), by contrast, contains more relevant information toward understanding Smyth as an entire person. The title comes from a description by Virginia Woolf of Smyth, and this text largely examines Smyth's literary output, which was

directly influenced by Woolf. Anderson also discusses the operas and the instrumental works. She believed the music to be as important to understanding Smyth as her biography, but there is more emphasis on Smyth's literary career than her musical career. Unfortunately, there are also some errors in this book that are easily corrected when cross-referenced with the autobiographical writings. Anderson writes that "after [Brewster's] divorce, Ethel married Brewster."⁶⁰ This is not true. Brewster repeatedly asked Smyth for her hand in marriage, but only after his wife died, and Smyth repeatedly turned him down. Smyth's refusal may seem like a trivial fact, but she was adamantly against the institution of marriage and to state otherwise is to misrepresent the composer herself.

Richard Crichton's abridged edition of the *Memoirs of Ethel Smyth* contains useful explanations of dates and people in addition to the primary sources. It helps to present the context of Smyth's life, although Crichton does take a minimalist approach, largely allowing the anecdotes to speak for themselves. The Crichton edition can be a useful resource for the more obscure writings by Smyth, such as *A Final Burning of Boats*. A detailed chronology of works, while outdated, includes publication and performance information, as well as details on Smyth's unpublished works. This was compiled by Jory Bennett.

Descriptions and Analyses of Compositions

Very few articles or chapters in the collections actually analyze Smyth's music or attempt to define her musical style. Often authors use general statements or descriptive adjectives without providing any musical examples. While this allows for a sense of the

⁶⁰ Anderson, *The burning rose: Ethel Smyth: a brief biography*, 17.

character of a work, it makes it difficult to ascertain any real information about the music itself. In addition, several of the later authors offer their personal interpretations of the works they discuss, a perspective that has become increasingly common in the past thirty years in musicology. A few works do offer analyses of the music. This section details briefly those writings and includes relevant descriptions and analyses of Smyth's works.

Sir Donald Francis Tovey was one of the first academic champions of Smyth's works. In his 1937 *Essays in Musical Analysis*, he provides a detailed account of Smyth's *Mass in D*, comparing it to Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and placing it among the more praised masses in music history.⁶¹ According to Tovey, "the mystery of the incarnation [in the Credo] is sung in strains of such spirituality as Palestrina would have approved if he had been brought into touch with our orchestral language."⁶² Comparing Smyth to Beethoven and Palestrina places her among the great composers, not just the women composers.⁶³ More significantly, this demonstrates that by the 1930s Smyth was held in high respect by a major scholar.

Another contemporary analyst of Smyth's music was Kathleen Dale (1895-1984), the neighbor, friend, and eventual musical executor to Smyth's estate. Dale was one of the first to have access to Smyth's scores and manuscripts, letters, and diaries after the composer's death. Her article in *Music & Letters* (1949) surveys Smyth's earliest works.

⁶¹ Tovey, *Essays in musical analysis: vol. V, vocal music*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 238.

⁶³ Tovey's comparisons of Smyth to Beethoven or Palestrina do superficially designate her as an important composer of history; however, comparing composers of different musical styles and periods to one another is a difficult if not futile exercise. A better comparison would be to determine Smyth's place among her contemporaries, such as Brahms, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky or Verdi.

The article recounts early biographical data, listing Smyth's first published works: the *String Quintet, Op. 1*, and two sets of songs, *Balladen und Lieder, Op. 3* and *4*. She also lists the chamber work manuscripts and their location, now outdated. Dale also describes Smyth's personal catalogue, which omits the *Opp. 1, 3, 4* and *Op. 5*. Of the unpublished works, only her two larger orchestral pieces are listed. Dale's primary question is why Smyth kept the Leipzig compositions but never published them nor mentioned them in her musical catalogue. Smyth also kept several sketches, exercises, and various vocal works, all of which were unpublished.⁶⁴ Among the unpublished manuscript scores are string quartets, orchestral works, songs, and fugues, yet Dale only provides a detailed description of the piano works. The focus on the piano works appears to be largely due to her surprise at finding piano works at all in the collection; Smyth never published them or returned to the genre as she did with the chamber music. Dale proposes that "the unexpected discovery of her early attempts at writing for the piano suggests that the principal reasons for her not pursuing this line of composition any further was her lack of any real distinctive feeling for keyboard style."⁶⁵ If this were true, however, one could make a similar argument about her chamber works. During the composer's apprentice years, as Dale pointed out, Smyth wrote several string quartets and, up to 1887, she wrote works for chamber ensemble with piano. She then stopped writing chamber music completely. Dale's argument would imply that Smyth felt incapable of writing chamber music. Smyth, however, did publish the sonatas for string instrument and piano and did not publish any piano music. What

⁶⁴ Tovey, *Essays in musical analysis*, 331-2.

⁶⁵ Dale, "Dame Ethel Smyth's prentice works", 332.

Dale's statement discourages is a more detailed examination of these early works, having declared them "of little interest" musically.⁶⁶ She dismisses the works as student compositions that have no bearing on Smyth's musical style. The actual detailed descriptions of Smyth's piano sonatas are Dale's analysis of the music mixed with anecdotes from Smyth's memoirs. Her descriptions are supported with only one musical example. Dale describes the first movement of the *Sonata No. 1* for piano as "a naïve little piece of patchwork", the third movement is "lifeless throughout", and only the second movement "give[s] any effect of spontaneity despite their Brahmsian tinge."⁶⁷ She depicts the slow movement of the sonata no. 2 for piano as "a turgid Andante in 9/8 with devastatingly sentimental harmonies."⁶⁸ As fascinating and colorful as Dale's descriptions are, they offer little that actually tells us about the music. There is no mention of form, melodic style, particular rhythmic characteristics, or textures, and one can only guess what Dale means by "sentimental harmonies".

Dale's account of the *Piano Sonata No. 3* is slightly more specific, but only if one is already familiar with Smyth's music. She notes that the first movement *Allegro*, "whose principal subject swings along in 6/8 time . . . prefigures in character and rhythm, though not in mood or tempo, the *Andante (Romanze)* of the Sonata Op. 7."⁶⁹ Rather than provide musical examples or even a brief comparison of the two rhythms, Dale moves on to the second movement. This, she said, "displays the authentic

⁶⁶ Dale, "Dame Ethel Smyth's prentice works", 333.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 334.

Smythian gusto.”⁷⁰ It is then up to the reader/listener to figure out the meaning of “Smythian gusto”. Other vague accounts include the *Variations on an Original Theme for Solo Piano* and its “rich harmonies and thick texture”; Dale describes the first variation as “rhythmically ingenious” and the fifth variation as “definitely pianistic in style” but without further explanation as to *how* the music is ingenious or pianistic.

Dale also wrote a critical study of Smyth’s music for St. John’s 1959 biography, and the introduction reveals Dale’s perspective on Smyth. Like many other scholars, she seems to be more interested in the fact that Smyth even became a composer, rather than in the music she produced. As one who knew her, at least at the end of her life, Dale demonstrates that Smyth had developed celebrity status more as a personality than as a composer:

Her prominence as a personality during her lifetime makes it imperative to study her as a woman of her times. . . . Her career gains enormously in interest when it is considered as the achievement of a woman who, in the face of strong opposition, embarked upon serious music study when women had yet to win recognition as creative musicians.⁷¹

This statement also suggests that Smyth’s music cannot stand on its own without the rich biography of her life.

The critical study itself affords more detail with regard to the larger works. Dale does offer significant insight into the interpretation of Smyth’s music and the importance of social context. For example, she writes that “the musical output of Ethel Smyth’s maturity [which Dale claims came after 1887], wide as it is in range and varied in scope,

⁷⁰ Dale, “Dame Ethel Smyth’s prentice works”, 335.

⁷¹ Dale, “Ethel Smyth’s music: a critical study”, 290.

is dominated by her preoccupation with human qualities and the human voice.”⁷²

Continuing with this theory of the importance of human qualities, Dale suggests the interpretation of Smyth’s works as expressions of emotional points in her life. According to Dale, the friendships in Smyth’s life were just as important to her as her music:

Indeed they were indispensable to her creative faculty. The intensity of feeling which characterized her own human relationships distinguishes the majority of her important compositions, most especially those she wrote while under the spell of some outstanding emotional or spiritual experience.⁷³

Dale was referring to works such as the *Mass in D*, but I argue that this also applies to the *Piano Sonata No. 2*, the three string sonatas, and the *String Quartet in E minor*.

The next two articles offer only brief glances at the music itself. In 1981, Carl Johnson’s article on the premier performance of *The Wreckers* (1906) by the Metropolitan Opera Company was published in *American Music Teacher*.⁷⁴ The article is primarily biographical and historical, using the rare performance as a window into Smyth’s overall biography. The only descriptions of the opera itself are from contemporary reviews, and those focus primarily on her gender. The *London Times* wrote that the opera was “well-scored, with rich coloring and skillful command of instrumental effect,” while the *Musical Courier* commented that Smyth “thinks in masculine style, strong and virile . . . Her melodic vein is pronounced . . . Her climaxes

⁷² Dale, “Ethel Smyth’s music: a critical study”, 290. My own research into her piano sonatas has concluded that this was also true of her early student works, which were often programmatic. The chapters in this dissertation will also demonstrate a vocal quality in many of her melodies as well as the influences of folk styles of Britain and Germany.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Johnson, “Ethel Smyth: the only woman composer ever to be heard at the Met”, 14-17.

are full-blooded and the *fortissimi* real.”⁷⁵ While these are interesting opinions, they (and the author) do not tell us anything about what makes her music distinct.

The Strad also published an article the same year on Smyth’s unpublished *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*.⁷⁶ John Franca, as with Johnson, wrote more about Smyth’s biography than about the piece itself. The author was able to compare the unpublished work to the published *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, for cello and piano, although his comments are brief. About the two he wrote: “the published sonata is more finished in presentation but academic in approach compared to the manuscript, which to me is more spontaneous and individual.”⁷⁷ The remainder of the article focused on biography and Franca’s search for more information. It lacks an analysis or even a description of the music itself.

The next item in this survey stands apart from the previous sources because of its use of musical examples. Lisa Hardy’s comprehensive book, *The British Piano Sonata, 1870-1945*,⁷⁸ includes Smyth, although her opinions are not always positive nor are they very different from those of Dale. Hardy argues that the Smyth sonatas demonstrate “how this British composer responded to the dominant Germanic influences.”⁷⁹ Her methodology, formalistic in nature, is also applicable to Smyth’s chamber works. Hardy succeeded where Dale failed at providing informative musical descriptions. For example, of the *Piano Sonata No. 1 (1877)*, Hardy writes:

⁷⁵ Johnson, “Ethel Smyth: the only woman composer ever to be heard at the Met”, 14.

⁷⁶ Franca, “An Ethel Smyth discovery”, 718-19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 718.

⁷⁸ Hardy, *The British piano sonata, 1870-1940*, 24-28.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

The first subject is almost Mozartian, the textures are clear, and there is frequent use of ornaments throughout. The second subject is in the expected dominant key. More remote modulations seem to present problems for Smyth, and there are a number of occasions on which a diminished seventh chord is used to wrench the phrase into a new key.⁸⁰

The detail of Hardy's descriptions combined with musical examples sets her study apart from earlier essays. For example, her comparison of Smyth with Brahms attempts to give the reader a detailed account: "The third movement [of the first sonata] is a funeral march that opens with low thick chords, doubled in octaves and filled-in with thirds in the manner of Brahms."⁸¹ She also elaborates her definition of pianistic style, with the following statement: "the Second Sonata in C sharp minor . . . demands a more advanced piano technique as its scales are virtuosic and it is dramatic and emotional in mood."⁸² At least with this sentence, the reader can discern that fast or technically difficult passages were one aspect of Smyth's writing.

Despite a greater attention to musical details, by the end of the section Hardy demonstrates that she may only be elaborating on ideas first stated by Dale. In one particular instance Hardy is no clearer than Dale in her musical description. For example, Hardy describes the second movement of the *Piano Sonata No. 2* as having:

a lilting feel, and its use of 9/8 metre makes it similar to a barcarolle. It is in the key of D-flat major, the enharmonic equivalent of the tonic major [a technique to which Smyth was prone]. Smyth is harmonically quite adventurous and the movement contains frequent modulations and chromatic notes, although it lapses into sentimentality in parts.⁸³

⁸⁰ Hardy, *The British piano sonata, 1870-1940*, 26.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Dale also described the second movement of the *Piano Sonata No. 2* as “sentimental” (see pg. 53). It is at this point that one begs to know what Dale and Hardy mean by “sentimentality” as neither defines it in a harmonic context. Unfortunately, it is also difficult to compare to a score as neither author provides measure numbers for the sentimental parts of the movement. Hardy concludes that despite Smyth’s stated admiration for both Brahms and Wagner, Mozart and Beethoven were her primary influences, at least in her early piano works.

All of the sources examined thus far avoid drawing conclusions on Smyth’s musical style. Elizabeth Wood’s article “Sapponics” attempts to do just that. Primarily discussing the possibility of lesbian listening and music, the article posits that, “Smyth’s music counterbalances a German romantic influence with the rugged dance rhythms and robust folksong melodies of her native English music and a French musical tradition of order, clarity, and (in opera) antisentimental realism.” She argues for a strong French influence, citing Smyth’s “Paris-born” mother and numerous scores by French composers in Smyth’s library.⁸⁴ Although the focus of this article is not Smyth’s music, this description is the closest to a summary of Smyth’s musical style that can be found in the current literature. In this article, however, as in others, Wood provides no musical examples.

The best representative of scholarly research that directly examines the music and its place in Smyth’s life is the recent work of Anita Mercier and Susan Pickett. They present a detailed formal and harmonic analysis of Smyth’s later chamber work, the

⁸⁴ Wood, “Sapponics”, 49. However, Smyth also had numerous scores by a variety of composers, ranging from British motets to Verdi’s *Requiem*. Smyth’s musical training in Leipzig, with an emphasis on counterpoint, is more likely reason for the clarity and order in her works.

String Quartet in E minor,⁸⁵ in *Women Composers: Music Through the Ages*. Unlike most other articles on Smyth, this chapter not only provides a lengthy biography but also the complete score, along with a formal and structural analysis. This particular chapter is one of the few articles that focus specifically on Smyth's chamber music. The authors note that, while Smyth is known for her operas and large-scale choral works, "her chamber music, familiar to British audiences in the early twentieth century, is important in its own right."⁸⁶ The authors also state that the chamber music serves as a vehicle to examine Smyth's full career because it is the only genre found throughout her compositional years from her student days in Leipzig to her last years before total deafness. The authors focus on Smyth's most famous chamber work, the *String Quartet in E minor* (1902-1912), but also include details on the early Leipzig works, as well as her late popular trios from 1928.

Mercier and Pickett marvel at Smyth's quick musical development once she arrived in Leipzig. They conclude that the chamber works were influenced by Brahms and Mendelssohn "but that they already manifest the strikingly expressive colors and rhythms that mark her more mature compositions."⁸⁷ No examples of those "expressive colors and rhythms" are given. Following this statement is the most accurate published account of Smyth's nine early chamber works, including both published and unpublished works and their dates. The analysis provided by Mercier and Pickett of the *String Quartet in E minor* will be discussed in chapter seven.

⁸⁵ Mercier and Pickett, "Ethel Smyth: String quartet in E minor (1912)", 303-307.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Dissertations and Theses

In the past thirty years, several dissertations on the music and life of Smyth have been released. These works often combine the categories of biography and analysis and therefore are better discussed in a separate category. Three D.M.A. dissertations have been written since 1990 on Smyth's *Mass in D*. All are performance studies and include an analysis of the work.⁸⁸ Two D.M.A. dissertations were written on Smyth's *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra* or its arranged counterpart for piano trio.⁸⁹ Of these, Mary Keays' ideas regarding Smyth's harmonic language are insightful; particularly that Smyth had a tendency toward the flat-side and favored the subdominant over the dominant in her works.⁹⁰

Five dissertations have been written on Smyth's operas, the social ideas behind and within them, and even her national identity.⁹¹ Eugene Gates' study of Smyth as a woman composer in the nineteenth century primarily establishes her as a composer similar in stature to Clara Schumann or Fanny Mendelssohn. The dissertation also examines the myth of women's creative inferiority and how that myth developed and

⁸⁸ Edith Copley, *A survey of the choral works of Dame Ethel Smyth with an analysis of the Mass in D (1891)* (D. M. A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1990); Robert Marion Daniel, *Ethel Smyth's Mass in D: a performance study guide* (D. M. A. diss., University of North Carolina – Greensboro, 1994); Linda J Farquharson, *Dame Ethel Smyth: Mass in D* (D. M. A. diss., University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 1996).

⁸⁹ Mary Lee Keays, *Tooting her own horn: Dame Ethel Smyth's Trio for horn, violin and piano* (D. M. A. diss., University of California – Los Angeles, 2001); Janiece Marie Luedeke, *Dame Ethel Smyth's Concerto for Violin, Horn, and Orchestra: a performance guide for the hornist* (D. M. A. diss., Louisiana State University, 1998).

⁹⁰ Keays, *Tooting her own horn*, 26-30, 34-36.

⁹¹ Eugene Gates, *The woman composer question: four case studies from the romantic era* (Ed. D. diss., University of Toronto, 1992); Nancy Gisbrecht, *An examination of the operatic environment in which Ethel Smyth composed and its effect on her career* (M. A. thesis, University of South Carolina Press, 1980); Jean Hoover, *Constructions of national identities: opera and nationalism in the British Isles* (Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1999); Ruth A. Robertson, *The 'immoral' woman as social conscience: autobiographical dimensions of Thizra's role in Ethel Smyth's opera, The Wreckers* (D. M. A. diss., University of Kansas, 1995).

changed from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Nancy Gisbrecht's comparison of the operatic careers and successes of Charles Villiers Stanford, Frederick Delius, and Ethel Smyth reveals that Smyth was not less successful than her male counterparts in terms of the number of performances. Smyth, however, composed fewer works and even fewer choral works, thus limiting her potential for performances of her music.

Finally, literary scholars have researched the connection between Smyth and the world of *belle lettres*.⁹² She wrote several autobiographies and published collections of essays from 1919 to 1940. Most of the research, however, has focused more on Smyth's relationships with authors rather than on her own authorship and writing style. The studies on Smyth and Woolf focus either on the literary connection or lean towards an examination of Woolf through Smyth. The limitations of this dissertation do not allow for an examination of Smyth's writing style, although such an undertaking may further enhance our understanding of the person as a whole.

Smyth and the Issue of Gender and Sexuality

In more recent years, Smyth and her music have become the subject of research in gender (or sexuality) and music. Since 1980, research on Smyth has grown exponentially. For example, Sophie Fuller's dissertation on women in the British musical renaissance actually avoids a discussion of Smyth and her works because, according to

⁹² Elicia Clements, *Resonant dis-closures: aural strategies of resistance in Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and Ethel Smyth* (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2003); Donna Sue Parsons, *Their voices sing true and clear: British women musicians and their literary counterparts, 1860-1920* (Ph. D. diss., University of Iowa, 2001).

Fuller, a great deal of research was already being accomplished on the music and life of Smyth.⁹³

Leading this scholarly charge has been Elizabeth Wood, one of the most prolific scholars on Smyth. She has written and published articles on the composer since 1981. Her first major article was “Gender and Genre in Ethel Smyth’s Operas,” first read at several conferences and then published in 1991 in *The Musical Woman, Vol. 3*.⁹⁴ She describes Smyth as “one of our most outstanding composers” and states that Smyth’s music “has more flair and originality than most of her British contemporaries.”⁹⁵ This is quite a statement considering that Smyth’s contemporaries were Elgar, Holst, and Vaughan Williams. Wood argues that the instrumental works are “unjustly neglected . . . her abstract works equally well-wrought in counterpoint that is Brahmsian in cast but with a particular rhythmic vitality and an originality of unexpected, almost daring harmonic ideas that stamp the music as her own.”⁹⁶ Similar to many of the articles discussed here, Wood does not illustrate those particular musical elements in Smyth’s music that have rhythmic vitality or daring harmonic ideas. I do not disagree with Wood and the analysis presented in subsequent chapters will demonstrate Smyth’s rhythmic and harmonic style.

Much of Wood’s commentary and analysis is insightful especially when it is describing vocal works. For example, she writes that the solo voice in *The Wreckers*

⁹³ Fuller, *Women composers during the British musical renaissance*, 10. Fuller’s thesis also focused on composers who wrote songs and parlor pieces rather than sonatas and operas, placing Smyth outside of the parameters of her research.

⁹⁴ Wood, “Gender and genre in Ethel Smyth’s operas”.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 493-4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 494.

(1906) faced particular musical challenges, such as “tricky key and tempo changes, and thorny chromaticism”,⁹⁷ although specific musical examples are not provided to demonstrate this description. She also praises Smyth’s writing for chorus and orchestra in the dramatic setting of the opera.

Wood’s descriptions soon venture away from the music itself into the theoretical realm of interpretation. In her commentary on *The Wreckers*, an opera about social upheaval in a coastal community, Wood argues that the cave in the last act where the protagonists die “is a vision of the underworld. The cave engulfed by water is also a female symbol of the womb as sanctuary and as a seal of sexuality.”⁹⁸ Without knowledge of the music itself, these ideas are difficult to substantiate. There is no evidence that Smyth felt this way about the cave setting in her operas. These descriptions are subjective, but it is important to remember that this article appeared in a larger work which explored theoretical interpretations involving gender and sexuality in music.

The most interesting ideas on gender and genre, or at least gender as it is found in the genre of opera, are finally stated at the end of the article. According to Wood, Smyth’s heroines are strong mezzo-sopranos abnormally partnered with high tenors, “and they struggle to define a gender-free reality” within the tradition of opera. “Her heroines, like Smyth herself, personify and dramatize sexual ambiguity” through a lower vocal register and a strong sense of independence.⁹⁹ The lack of musical examples, however, limits the persuasiveness of the argument. That aside, the above statement

⁹⁷ Wood, “Gender and genre”, 496-497.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 500.

regarding key, tempo, and chromaticism is more useful in a wider application to Smyth's other compositions.

The next article by Wood on Smyth was "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts."¹⁰⁰ Wood speculates that Smyth's life was analogous to a fugue, with a constant theme of lesbianism and counter-themes and episodes which involved two important figures in her life, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg and Henry Brewster. She rightly argues that Smyth's musical scores and her literary works serve as two voices which intertwine with variations and fragments of the same material:

Reading Smyth's work – both music and writing – together with her life, [Wood] found 'the Contrapuntalist' [Smyth] using music in ways that simultaneously reveal and conceal lesbian experience; that her narrative invention, which inscribes a musically coded lesbian message, is derived from the craft as well as the metaphor of fugue and fugal counterpoint.¹⁰¹

The difficulty with this interpretation, however, is that it limits the understanding of Smyth's life to this narrow viewpoint of homosexuality. Although Wood does clarify that she is applying the term lesbian as a broad term encompassing romantic friendships and physical relationships, the connotative baggage that accompanies such a label implies that Smyth had physical relationships with other women, despite a lack of evidence to support such a theory. Wood labels Smyth's music and writings as "lesbian autobiographical narratives,"¹⁰² focusing entirely on the possible homosexuality in Smyth's life. She concludes that the twenty-five year relationship with Henry Brewster was "prominent but insubstantial"¹⁰³ in the memoirs because Smyth chose to write

¹⁰⁰ Wood, "Lesbian fugue: Ethel Smyth's contrapuntal arts", 164-183.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 165.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 171.

about friends and personalities other than Brewster after his death. According to Wood, the story of their friendship in the memoirs was a ploy to deny or subvert Smyth's lesbianism from the reading public.

Later in the article, Wood makes an argument for Smyth's preference for trios in her life and music. The memoirs, specifically *As Time Went On...*, served as a basis for her ideas, writing that "Smyth likened herself to an instrument with two strings that embodied two lovers and vibrated to their touch, a triple play on love, for her favorite ensemble formation was a love triangle."¹⁰⁴ This idea serves as an interesting point from which to begin analytical research on Smyth's trio compositions. But Wood extended metaphor further, imposing characters in Smyth's life onto her *String Quintet, Op. 1*:

On learning of Rhoda Garrett's death that November [1882], Smyth composed a quintet for two violins, viola, and two cellos. Its central adagio movement, dedicated to the memory of Rhoda [with whom Smyth had developed a strong friendship], gives the main theme to the viola, instrumental kin to Smyth's mezzo voice, inviting speculation that the accompanying counterpoint on paired upper and lower strings may have been intended to represent Irene [Hildebrand] and Julia [Brewster], Adolf [Hildebrand] and Harry [Brewster].¹⁰⁵

This type of speculation proposed by Wood, however, is purely subjective and, while intriguing, is not supported by any manner of analysis or biographical evidence in this article. A description or musical interpretation of the movement itself is not provided with the above speculation, and the music appears to not be as important as the people it might represent.

A succinct chronology of Smyth's chamber music composed during this period in her life is also presented in this article. There is no analysis of the music itself, at least in

¹⁰⁴ Wood, "Lesbian fugue", 173.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 179.

terms of harmonic or formal details. Wood continuously draws conclusions based on parallels between the chronology of composition and the chronology of the autobiographies in an effort “to explicate texts, listen to music, and hear its secrets.”¹⁰⁶ The danger in this analysis, as acknowledged by Wood, is that it is speculative and therefore impossible to prove without specific statements by Smyth or her friends. Overall, the author’s treatment of Smyth’s letters, memoirs, and music as a fugue is a unique model by which to approach the composer.

In more recent research, Wood has incorporated greater amounts of queer theory and the focus of her scholarship has been Smyth’s alleged homosexuality and its manifestation in her music. “Sapponics” contains the strongest evidence for these ideas.¹⁰⁷ This article focuses primarily on opera and the singing voice, specifically with a discussion of female singers and opera within nineteenth-century society. She briefly describes a “homosocial and homosexual community” which included various artists, writers, musicians, and aristocrats of the period, especially those connected to Princess de Polignac.¹⁰⁸ According to Wood, Smyth knew the Princess and was inspired by Bizet’s *Carmen* and the singers who created the famous role. In fact, she wrote that “Carmen’s representation both of female desire as dominant and defiant, and of the cultural oppression of the sexual outsider, is the vocal and dramatic model for the operas of the lesbian composer Ethel Smyth, who, I believe, heard *Carmen* Sapphonicly.”¹⁰⁹ A definition of “Sapponic”, created by Wood, is discussed at the

¹⁰⁶ Wood, “Lesbian fugue”, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Wood, “Sapponics”, 27-55.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 44.

beginning of the article, and over half of the article is devoted to Wood's ideas regarding lesbian opera singers and artists at that time. The musical focus of the discussion revolved around Smyth's operas *Der Wald* and *The Wreckers*. The analysis centered on the plots and libretto as well as vocal registers, but Wood does not examine the music nor provide musical examples, despite her own argument that Smyth "heard" *Carmen*, and composed her own operas, in a particularly lesbian manner.¹¹⁰

In "Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women's Suffrage", Wood examines the connection between politics and music through an analysis of Smyth's involvement in the militant Suffragette movement from 1910 to 1912. She views Smyth as a feminist and activist. Although the article discusses specifically the "suffrage music," the ideas may also apply to other works. Wood writes:

Smyth's acts and statements similarly manipulate traditional musical materials. They invade and disrupt music's institutional structures, public sites, and performance conventions. They break boundaries among opera's gendered roles and musical genres. They invent parodic, subversive counternarratives to musical models. Her music articulates and performs the female voice and visionary compulsion of a rebellious feminist activism.¹¹¹

Although the musical focus is largely on choral and/or vocal music, Wood also discusses Smyth's *String Quartet in E minor* (1912), a work finished just after Smyth's period as a Suffragette. According to Wood, Smyth completed the work (begun in 1902) as a way to "reclaim music, her career, and her status as a leading British composer" after her sabbatical.¹¹² Wood's analysis of this work will be discussed in greater detail below.

¹¹⁰ Bizet's *Carmen* was one of Smyth's favorite operas. She frequently went to performances in Leipzig and elsewhere. See Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 243.

¹¹¹ Wood, "Performing rights: a sonography of women's suffrage", 615.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 623.

Jennifer Gwynn Hughes takes Wood's theories on Sapphonics and on the *String Quartet* and combines them in an even more personal interpretation. Her thesis, *Sapphonic Listening*, is focused on how she hears the music and what it tells her about Smyth, partially based on Wood's theories presented in "Performing Rights" and "Sapphonics" articles. According to Hughes, "The Quartet can be understood as a narrative of Smyth's struggle to express her desire for women in purely instrumental terms."¹¹³ This statement ignores the relationship Smyth had with Henry Brewster in 1902 when she began the *String Quartet in E minor*, as well as the impact of his death in 1908. There is no acknowledgement of Brewster's significance at this period in Smyth's life in the entire thesis. Thus, Hughes's interpretations are not based on all of the biographical factors upon which she is grounding her thesis. Hughes believed "that the opening subject of the fourth movement is the voice of a butch [a masculine-natured homosexual] woman who will not be silenced."¹¹⁴ I argue that the voice in Smyth's music is that of a woman composer who will not be ignored. Chapter seven will examine this work and the research around it in detail.

Finally, in a thesis that focused on a broader topic which included Smyth, Andrea Lowgren examined the effects (or lack thereof) of marriage on British women composers, specifically Ethel Smyth and Elizabeth Lutyens.¹¹⁵ Her research concluded that Ethel Smyth's career was possible because of several economic reasons as well as personal ones. First, she came from a wealthy, land-owning upper-middle class family,

¹¹³ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening: Ethel Smyth's String Quartet in E minor*, 29.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹¹⁵ Lowgren, *If creative women had a wife: the effects of the institution of marriage on two British women composers*, 39.

which allowed more freedom than if she had been born of a strictly middle-class family. She also had a small pension from her father, and then after his death an annual income as a “military orphan,” since she never married. The many wealthy supporters Smyth acquired over the years also aided in her ability to compose and promote her music. Finally, Lowgren states that “Smyth recognized that the roles prescribed by the traditional marriage of her generation did not complement her desire to become a composer, or as she put it, she relied on ‘my old instinct, no marriage, no ties – I must be free and the old “simplification of life” thing is what I want most and will keep.’”¹¹⁶ Thus it appears to have been the institution of marriage itself that Smyth was rejecting, given the era in which she was raised and the limitations which still existed for married women even in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁷

The research conducted on Smyth and her music in the past century has been extensive, covering almost all of her compositions and biography. This research has not yet covered the chamber works of Smyth or their place in her biography, thus necessitating the need for this study. Like Mercier and Pickett, I believe the chamber works provide a window through which to view Smyth’s musical style and a new perspective on the chamber music repertoire of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries.

¹¹⁶ Lowgren, *If creative women had a wife*, 49. Quoting Smyth in a letter to Lady Ponsonby, January 30, 1895.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Lowgren does refer to the relationship with Brewster and his numerous marriage proposals, but unfortunately, her dates are incorrect. She states that Brewster and Smyth consummated their relationship after his wife died, but Lowgren provides an anecdote that refers to the winter of 1884-85 – Julia Brewster died in 1895. In fact, the winter of 1884-85 was at the height of Brewster’s pursuit of Smyth and the Leipzig love triangle referred to above. It is entirely possible that the affair went that far although Smyth is ambiguous at best about it; however, it is completely inaccurate to state that they waited until after his marriage dissolved to do so. Julia Brewster was very much alive and living in Florence, Italy. This relationship is examined further in chapter five of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3 ENGLAND AND GERMANY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The 1870s and 1880s in England and Germany were decades of fluctuation. Relative peace and stability prevailed in Europe, even as class struggles smoldered or exploded. The women's movement was beginning to gain strength and supporters while meeting much opposition. Smyth encountered these two political and social climates, or their aftermaths, as she was coming of age and embarking on her musical course in life. She also experienced the differences between English and German cultures and learned to navigate them. This juxtaposition of the two cultures and ideas is a theme found in many of Smyth's struggles, both personally and compositionally. To better understand her perspective as a composer at the cusp of the Romantic era, it is necessary to briefly examine the two cultures, noting in particular the commonalities and differences.

The first part of this chapter examines Victorian society. Smyth was fortunate to have been born into a large, wealthy, upper middle-class family in 1858. But her circumstances also presented direct challenges to her musical desires. Part two of this chapter continues the biographical history upon Smyth's arrival in Germany in 1877, recognizing those particular aspects of her new life which were at various times comforting and foreign. This detailed account of Smyth's musical and social surroundings will enhance an understanding of Smyth's perspective as a composer and creative artist, particularly during years of growth and experimentation.

Victorian Society and the Upbringing of Ethel Smyth

In many ways, Smyth did not conform to the mores of Victorian society. She preferred traditionally masculine activities, such as riding horses and hunting, to

traditionally feminine activities, such as attending balls and doing needlework. She chose not to marry but rather to embark upon a career, and she generally preferred the company of women. Her upbringing was also typical of a girl growing up in High Victorian England, yet for reasons unexplained, Smyth chose to rebel against the restrictions placed on women in the nineteenth century. Thus, the course of her life is more akin to a twentieth-century biography than one of the late nineteenth century.

The ideologies held by middle- and upper-middle class society in mid-to-late nineteenth century England supported the acquiring of musical skills and encouraged musical performance by women. At the same time, young women were restricted from using these talents for anything other than securing a husband and creating a home for him, or possibly for the education profession. From a general perspective, Victorian education, law, morality and ideology impacted Smyth as a woman of her era. On a more personal level, an awareness of the unfavorable role as wife, the musical influence of her governess (a lower class status than herself), and Smyth's early affinity for ladies with creative or musical ability all contributed to her decision to reject Victorian ideologies (including marriage) and become a composer.

Smyth's unusual life and career path draws into question the nature of her childhood and teenage years in England. Why did she choose the profession of a composer? Did something or someone influence her rejection of the institution of marriage? Why did she choose to travel to Germany instead of training in England? To answer these questions, I examined Smyth's memoirs within the context of the major social and musical sources on Victorian England. Although much of Smyth's account of

her life represents a typical English family, there is also evidence of her natural rebelliousness and a learned tendency toward progressiveness as a woman.

The ideology of public and private spheres for men and women was aimed at and supported by the middle-class. In the working class, both men and women labored for an income to support the family, and in the upper-class aristocracy women had the financial freedom to pursue professional pursuits of the literary or patronage nature. Middle-class ideologies in Victorian England, however, purported that a hard-working, responsible, and ethical husband would earn enough income to support his wife and children. Therefore, a woman with an income was a sign that she could not garner a husband, or worse, that her husband was not doing his duty for his family.

The economic nature of the middle-class created a wide spectrum of income level. The middle-class gained distinctions such as *upper* and *lower* middle-class depending on the amount of capital, or they were also referred to as the *bourgeois* or the *leisure* class.¹¹⁸ The term “class” gained negative connotations, and descriptors such as the “wealthy and educated” or “our leading families” replaced these more negative class descriptors of the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁹ Monetary status did not ultimately determine stature in society although it did provide for other accoutrements. Education was a large factor in improving the social stature of the family. Literature, philosophy, theology, and languages were taught to both boys and girls, but mathematics, sciences, and politics were specifically taught to boys and music, arts, and domestic services were taught to girls.

¹¹⁸ Gunn, *The public culture of the Victorian middle class: ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1890-1914*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

These restrictions had developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as new social distinctions emerged in the roles of men and women. Following the Industrial Revolution, men increasingly left the home to work while the women stayed at home and cared for the family and the household.¹²⁰ In the urban public sphere, a carry-over from rural society, the family household was still extremely important.¹²¹ According to Simon Gunn, “the ‘rise’ of the middle class between 1780 and 1850 was characterized by the development of a ‘domestic ideology’ and a sharp division between a public world of work and politics associated with men, and a private world of home and family to which women were confined.”¹²² Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff also attribute the development of distinct gender roles to the “revival of the Puritan doctrine within the Evangelical movement.”¹²³ The moral reaction of the middle-class to aristocratic excesses of the eighteenth century influenced the development of gender ideology as much economic factors.

This ideology, however, was primarily limited to the middle-class. Unlike her counterparts in the working or aristocratic classes, a woman in the middle class, was identified with a “domestic and moral sphere” that prohibited her involvement in business enterprises and from supporting herself.¹²⁴ The ideology of separate spheres,

¹²⁰ Cooper, *The Victorian woman*, 10.

¹²¹ Gunn, *The public culture of the Victorian middle class*, 26.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²³ Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850*, 21.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

however, was so prevalent that it even made an appearance in the widely popular *Punch* magazine: “man’s sphere, the world; woman’s sphere, the home.”¹²⁵

Smyth’s family lived in England from the 1850s to the 1890s, having relocated from a military post in India. Their lives demonstrated the precariousness of middle-class status. Smyth’s father was a captain whose loyal service to the Queen resulted in a command position at Aldershot Artillery Depot in Surrey County, a rural area just southwest of London.¹²⁶ They owned land and a manor home. Because Captain Smyth’s military occupation was not associated with active participation in the economy, the Smyths would have been considered upper middle-class, despite frequent financial difficulties. Certainly, their actions resemble those of the typical bourgeois family.

The Smyth household employed several servants to care for and run the house and grounds, as well as a governess who minded and educated the eight children. A governess in the home was the preferred form of education for young middle-class children. In fact, there was much debate over sending Ethel and her older sister Mary off to boarding school, rather than continue their education at home. Smyth wrote in her memoirs, “the idea was not readily entertained for at that time it was not considered the thing to let your girls associate with Heaven knows whom under a strange roof.”¹²⁷ In the end, it was decided that they would go away to school because certain aristocrats’ daughters also attended the same institution, thus confirming its high reputation. Even at a young age, the Smyth girls were learning the importance of status and social connections.

¹²⁵ Quoted by Cooper in *The Victorian woman*, 13.

¹²⁶ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

As the anecdote demonstrates, association with other members of a social circle had an enormous impact on the lives of the middle-class. It was necessary to carefully consider the status of friends and acquaintances so as to not become associated with a person of lesser status, possibly someone who was of a lower profession, or perhaps a girl who was too free with her emotions towards the young men. Character traits could raise or lower the status of the family. Responsibility, solid work ethic, determination, and ambition were expected for boys; purity, grace, and beauty were expected for girls. Embedded in these labels was a sense of morality and responsibility that pervaded the Victorian era.

The Smyths's status in society, however, was not secure or always viewed favorably by their contemporaries. The failure of the Agra Bank in the 1860s caused General Smyth to lose all his savings and placed the Smyths in a precarious financial situation.¹²⁸ Their situation was not unknown to their neighbors. After Ethel Smyth's older sister, Mary, had reached courting age, one mother said that she "had no intention of letting her darling and only son marry a girl without money."¹²⁹ It seems that in the eyes of others from their social circle, the Smyths were not as wealthy as their peers. Throughout Smyth's memoirs, money continued to be a concern. For a family with six daughters, it was imperative that the girls marry above their status. In fact, Ethel wrote that her father's "one idea in later years was to rush his six almost portionless daughters into matrimony, and ship his only remaining boy, Bob, off to India; and with one solitary

¹²⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 29.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

exception, myself, these plans were realized.”¹³⁰ For the daughters of an upper middle-class family, marriage was the only way to achieve financial support.

One way that General Smyth secured his daughters’ marriages (and their social advancement) was through their musical education. All the girls were taught to sing and play the piano. By the mid-1800s, pianos were relatively inexpensive and came in a variety of sizes.¹³¹ Affordable editions of a variety of music were also widely available. The family still had to have the time and money, however, to spend on a piano, music lessons, and practicing. A family that had one or more daughters with musical ability was able to include itself among the leisure class by these actions alone.¹³² Music itself was not valued; the value was placed on that which the pursuit of music represented (such as leisure time, money, and taste).

Young ladies learned early on that the primary goal of their upbringing was to secure a good marriage. This was encouraged by not only mothers and grandmothers but “professional” women such as journalists, novelists, and even the Queen.¹³³ Smyth in her memoirs provides anecdotes that support this belief. On one occasion, while visiting friends in Ireland while in her teens, her hostess advised Smyth to put forth just a little more effort in finding a husband. The lady said, “you must remember, my dear, your poor father has still got four girls on his hands.”¹³⁴ It was Smyth’s duty to secure a marriage without delay to allow younger sisters to begin courting. Another anecdote

¹³⁰ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 36.

¹³¹ Mackerness, *A social history of English music*, 175.

¹³² Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs: music as discourse in the Victorian novel*, 33.

¹³³ Cooper, *The Victorian woman*, 18.

¹³⁴ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 101.

demonstrated just how well aware the girls were of their place as a commodity to be bought and sold by suitors. In this example, Smyth and her older sister were at a ball, and Smyth slipped and fell while on the dance floor. Her sister's comment was, "you must have knocked at least fifty off your price,"¹³⁵ indicating that Smyth was less eligible as a marriage partner. Clearly, Smyth and her sisters knew that marriage was based much less on love than on money, grace, beauty, manners, talent, and intelligence. Another piece of evidence that summarizes the prevailing attitude of the time was written by a journalist for the *Saturday Review* in 1867: "The ideal of womanhood . . . her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival; one who would consider their interest identical . . . who would make his house his true home and place of rest . . . a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper."¹³⁶ These were the virtues of the ideal Victorian woman, and they were constantly reinforced.

The ideology of the woman's role in English society was reinforced by publications. Maria Edgeworth's *Practical Education*, published in the early 1800s and republished frequently throughout the nineteenth century, stated that the education of a young lady was solely to better herself and her home. Music was a large part of this, but mainly to stave off boredom and to add entertainment rather than to develop artistic talent.¹³⁷ Likewise, Eliza Cook's journal from 1850 stated that, "[piano-playing] is a fashionable branch of education . . . prowess at the keyboard increases a girl's chances of matrimony."¹³⁸ In 1864, John Ruskin wrote that women should be exposed to "the

¹³⁵ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 93.

¹³⁶ Cooper, *The Victorian woman*, 10.

¹³⁷ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 32.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Mackerness, *A social history of English music*, 173.

finest music.” He went on to state that through a stellar education and a development of good taste, a woman could be a spiritual and emotional support to her husband.¹³⁹ The *Schools Inquiry Commission* report of 1868 stated that “Music . . . is equally demanded of all girls. . . . One of the considerations which mainly influence parents of the middle class in selecting a school for their daughters is that instrumental music is the leading subject of instruction for women. . . . It is said to be seldom more than the acquisition of manual skill.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, while music was a primary concern for female pupils and their parents, the goal of musical instruction was not to produce artists and performers but to raise upstanding women. These same women were then expected to drop their musical talents upon marriage and children in exchange for running the household. In a very back-handed way, English society proclaimed that music was not a value in itself but only a means to an end.

Periodicals and magazines were also another effective means of maintaining Victorian ideals. Through women’s magazines filled with articles related to the responsibilities of managing a home, the proper place of a woman was reinforced.¹⁴¹ Women who tried to step out of this role and exhibited masculine qualities were discussed in a negative tone.¹⁴² One example of this came from an 1868 article titled, “Feminine Affectations”. In it the author wrote that the woman who dressed like a man, and who loved animals such as dogs and horses more than children was exhibiting “affectations . . . from first to last, affectation; a mere assumption of virile fashions utterly

¹³⁹ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted by Mackerness, *A social history of English music*, 173.

¹⁴¹ Fraser, Green and Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian periodical*, 7.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

inharmonious to the whole being, physical and mental, of a woman.”¹⁴³ According to this writer, any woman who pursued these interests was pretending to be someone she was not and behaving against nature’s intentions.

The Smyth girls’ education in music, math, languages, and literature contributed to the family’s higher social status while also giving the girls the necessary skills to attract a husband. An anecdote written in 1875 clearly demonstrates this situation: playing the piano was valued partially because “it makes a girl sit upright and pay attention to details.”¹⁴⁴ Here the Reverend H.R. Haweis extolled the virtues of music as an aspect of morality; he even believed that “most musicians were embodiments of virtue.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, women who were musical were also moral in the eyes of the Victorians. E.D. Mackerness, in his *A Short History of English Music*, wrote that playing the piano was “a valuable social accomplishment for two particular reasons: on the one hand, the pianoforte is an excellent accompanying instrument; on the other, it is a first-rate vehicle for social display.”¹⁴⁶ Boys and young men of the middle- and upper-classes, however, were not encouraged to be musical, as this was seen as a feminine trait. It was emasculating for a British man to be very musical. Well-known figures such as Tennyson and Gladstone even bragged about how un-musical they were.¹⁴⁷

In many ways, Ethel Smyth received conflicting information while growing up in the Victorian era. She was encouraged to excel in subjects that would make her a

¹⁴³ Fraser, Green and Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian periodical*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Hyde, *New-found voices*, 51.

¹⁴⁵ Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century: a social history*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Mackerness, *A social history of English music*, 173.

¹⁴⁷ Weliver, *Women musicians in Victorian England, 1860-1900: representations of music, science and gender in the leisured home*, 20.

properly educated, tasteful, and graceful woman. For the middle class, especially, education for girls was focused on “moral improvement” rather than intellectual education.¹⁴⁸ In addition to the examples mentioned, other anecdotes show that she was also encouraged to take the *Cambridge Local Examination* for which her brother voluntarily helped her prepare, and he was also helping her with her math homework, which involved such advanced concepts as square roots.¹⁴⁹ Yet she was not supposed to pursue a career of any sort; she was instead intended to secure a good husband and make a proper home for him and their family. Smyth objected to this ideal as she approached the courting age.

Smyth knew early on that she was not suited for marriage. In her memoirs she describes how, even as a young child, she had strong attractions for women, especially older cousins or women in maternal roles.¹⁵⁰ As she grew up, Smyth entertained brief flirtations with boys, but noted that they always ended up turning their attentions to her sister, Mary:

It had always been an axiom in the family that from earliest years Mary had been drawn by me into tomboyish ways that really were foreign to her nature. I think this is probably true; anyhow, as time went on, boys who began by being attracted by my independence and proficiency in games always ended by forsaking me in order to minister to Mary’s more feminine helplessness.¹⁵¹

By her teenage years, Smyth had decided that instead of coming out to society, she would instead pursue a career in music.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, 289.

¹⁴⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 119.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 109.

Captain Smyth would not hear of one of his daughters becoming a professional musician. It was the equivalent of “going out on the street.”¹⁵³ Smyth explained part of her father’s reasons for not allowing her to go to Germany, and these also show the prevailing attitude towards married versus single women.

My father would never let me go abroad willingly, if only for reasons of economy, and I quite grasped that making an allowance to a married daughter, whose future is no longer your business is quite another thing than financing a maiden’s sterile whims. In his mind’s eye he would see me, no doubt, returned on his hands a failure and knocking too late at doors in the marriage market; meanwhile his income was none too large to keep the home going.¹⁵⁴

It would not have been his burden to bear if she had been married, but as an unmarried woman, her schooling in Germany would still be funded by him (and might reflect on the morality of their family). He was therefore completely against the idea.

Parallels with Smyth’s situation were not uncommon; in fact, her decision to pursue a career in music rather than marriage was a central plot in a successful novel from that same year. *Daniel Deronda* (1876) was George Eliot’s last and most widely acclaimed novel. In the story, a young woman of considerable beauty and musical talent is faced with marriage in order to help her family’s financial problems. She would rather rely on her own resources and become a famous singer than marry a man she does not love. While her music teacher believes she is looking for a quick path to a wealthy marriage, this is exactly what she is trying to avoid. When he confronts her with this, she responds curtly, “I desire independence.”¹⁵⁵ Indeed, as the character of George Eliot’s

¹⁵³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 109.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁵⁵ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 44.

novel demonstrates, young women desired the independence that music teaching, and even performance, could provide.¹⁵⁶

The above anecdotes demonstrate one of the key contradictions in a young Victorian woman's life; they were given a thorough education grounded in the arts, languages, and literature but then were prevented from using that education. Music, especially, was a field of double standards and mixed messages. Conservatories on the continent had finally opened their doors to female students in the 1870s,¹⁵⁷ but in England a professional pursuit of music was still often viewed by society as immoral, even akin to prostitution. To perform on the stage was to invite scandal and gossip about one's morality and chastity.¹⁵⁸ Female professional musicians were also given unequal or no pay, and they were usually limited to performing salon music (vocal and small piano pieces) in private homes. For these reasons, as well as limited high-level training, many female musicians turned to teaching rather than performance or composition as a means of income.

Of all the possible professions, the role of a governess was often a viable alternative for young, well-educated, musically inclined women. Music especially offered women an opportunity at financial independence, and teaching in the home was attuned to the social ideologies. As Hyde noted, "The piano provided the musical liberation of countless women, particularly as the accomplishments of singing and playing were

¹⁵⁶ While no direct correlation has been made between the writings of George Eliot and the career motives of Ethel Smyth, Eliot is mentioned in Smyth's memoirs. She witnesses her at a concert with her husband. She also received two letters from friends who mention also seeing Eliot at concerts. It seems that Smyth knew who she was enough to recognize her on sight. Further research could prove to be very interesting on this subject. See *Impressions that remain*, 109-110, 124-25, 275.

¹⁵⁷ Weliver, *Women musicians in Victorian England*, 26.

¹⁵⁸ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 133.

encouraged wholeheartedly by fathers, suitors, and husbands.”¹⁵⁹ Consequently, scores of middle-class women were educated in music. It was a skill they possessed and one that was needed by successive generations. While any form of work in place of a favorable marriage was considered a demotion in class status,¹⁶⁰ it was often necessary in a family with several children or when faced with an undesirable marriage. The teaching profession was one acceptable solution.

The role of the governess was also often addressed in literary fiction of the time. If a female character earned money by music in these novels, she was not a performer but a governess.¹⁶¹ For example, in the novel *Emma* by Jane Austen, as discussed by Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, the character Jane Fairfax is a talented musician and as such “would be able to ‘name her own terms’ as governess. [Jane] hesitates because she associates the job with the ‘slave-trade.’”¹⁶² Young women in the 19th century faced this dilemma. They were not prevented by law from earning wages, but they did face judgment from society. The choice of profession often relied on its relative approval. The governess was not viewed in the same light as a professional musician on stage because she was still confined to her proper place in the home.

The musical direction of Ethel Smyth was largely initiated by one governess in particular, although Smyth never considered the profession of governess for herself.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Hyde, *New-found voices*, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ In fact, she considered the profession “monstrous and unworkable; even as a child I vaguely understood how impossible is the position of these poor unwilling intruders into the family circle.” Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 58.

This young lady had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. One day, she played a Beethoven piano sonata for Smyth and “opened up” the world of classical music to her.¹⁶⁴ Smyth recalls in her memoirs her decision to study music in Leipzig in 1870. She wrote, “when I was twelve a new victim [governess] arrived who had studied music at the Leipzig Conservatorium; for the first time I heard classical music and a new world opened up before me. . . . I then and there conceived the plan, carried out seven years later, of study at Leipzig and giving up my life to music.”¹⁶⁵ The Leipzig Conservatory had only been established since 1843. Mendelssohn, revered composer in England and a representative of an upstanding middle-class gentleman, was the first director.¹⁶⁶ By the 1870s it was in “the hey-day of its reputation in England.” It had also begun to admit female students into its composition and orchestration classes, in addition to instrumental lessons and pedagogy classes.¹⁶⁷

Before Smyth matriculated in Leipzig, she studied music with amateur musicians in England. In her teenage years, Smyth was taught music and piano by an instructor at her boarding school. She sang children’s melodies and hymns, and she and her friends also composed their own songs. During these years she also was exposed to the music of Mendelssohn. While seemingly satisfied with her musical studies at home, however, Smyth expressed discontent at school. There appeared to have been a lack of musical opportunities for girls there. She took it upon herself to lead the girls in “home services” on Sunday afternoons. She made the girls learn to sing chants and hymns that she

¹⁶⁴ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 74.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century*, 84.

¹⁶⁷ Weliver, *Women musicians in Victorian England*, 26.

herself had composed, and as she put it, “imposed [herself] musically” into the school.¹⁶⁸ Smyth’s creativity seems to have been to the dismay of the German Jewish male music teacher, who wanted the girls to sing and play his compositions. But as Smyth explained it, “indeed is it likely that one already deep in Schumann, Schubert, and Beethoven would add Herr A.S. to the list?”¹⁶⁹

This last comment reveals several things about the musical influences of Smyth’s upbringing. One is the training she acquired (albeit by a governess of possibly amateur ability) in musical knowledge, piano-playing, along with harmony and composition. Another is that once introduced to classical music by her governess, she had quickly absorbed works of the great masters of the early nineteenth century. The religious music of the Anglican Church, with its chants and hymns, often experienced in the home on Sundays after lunch, was a third influence. Smyth makes reference to church music as early as 1869. She wrote of her musical activities as a child; “by this time I had taken to composing chants and hymns, music being connected in my mind . . . mainly with religion – a well-known English malady. And to each of these productions the name of a ‘passion’ was given.”¹⁷⁰ These early pieces of her childhood and school days were never published and no manuscripts exist of these early works. Even in this situation, though, there were restrictions. The types of pieces Smyth was writing complied with the idea that women’s music should be lyrical and graceful works for piano and voice; it would not have been acceptable to write powerful, aggressive music as this was associated with masculine qualities. Yet Smyth later rejected these societal norms of

¹⁶⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 81.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

music for the home and of a passive nature in favor of large-scale “masculine” forms such as the string quartet, the opera and the concerto.

Societal changes took place in the 1870s that may have actually encouraged Smyth to consider a life as an independent professional woman. The very idea of marriage may have been a negative one for young girls: being treated like commodities by men yet all their worth leaving their hands upon marriage. Up until 1870, by law all goods and funds assigned to a lady passed to her husband with marriage. After 1870 a woman could only keep a small sum of her earnings for herself (a maximum of 200 pounds).¹⁷¹ The laws and attitudes toward women as the property of their fathers (and then husbands) was commonplace, painting marriage as a restrictive institution that may have been something to dread instead of anticipate. The situation did improve, and by 1882 a law was passed that allowed a woman to own and administer property – five years after Smyth broke free from Victorian England.

Ideas and attitudes persisted after laws had passed, of course, especially in the rural areas of Surrey County. Single women still needed chaperones to travel and were still considered under the care of their father. Smyth’s memoirs show the restrictions placed on young women as late as the 1870s and 1880s. For example, her father’s initial refusal to allow her to study music in Germany led her to take increasingly drastic measures as a means of persuasion. In 1875, Smyth stole away across the fields of Surrey County to reach a train station that would take her to London. There, she took the bus to the various music concerts throughout the city. By sneaking out, borrowing money on her father’s credit, and traveling alone, she was breaking many of the rules of

¹⁷¹ Cooper, *The Victorian woman*, 20.

society. As Smyth put it, “in those days, no decent girls traveled alone, third class [trains] and omnibuses were things unheard of in our world, and I had no money.”¹⁷² Her appearance at these concerts largely went unnoticed. Many of the popular concerts were frequented by a wider variety of classes (unlike the classical concerts which were usually by invitation and attended by upper-class society). But coordinating a chaperone after older sisters had moved away and younger siblings needed to be looked after was difficult; the lack of an available chaperone to escort her to concerts may have contributed to her insubordination. Smyth’s naturally independent nature is perhaps one reason why she pursued a professional career rather than marriage.

Historically, male professional musicians had dominated the field, but fortunately for Smyth a change in this trend began in the nineteenth century. The middle class desired more qualified music teachers as musical skill increasingly became a measure of status. In England, music was not a skill that was desired in a middle- or upper-class young man. In contrast, women were not expected to perform or compose music, only to teach it. According to census recordings of 1851 of England and Wales, there were more male music teachers (2,800) than female music teachers (2,300); just ten years later the census recorded a drop in male music teachers (2,400) and a significant increase in female music teachers (3,100). While music education was allowing more women to enter the work place, “musicians” recorded in the census (the categories were separate, presumably indicating a distinction between teachers and performers or composers) were overwhelmingly comprised of men in 1861: 7,800 to 600 women.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 109.

¹⁷³ Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century*, 53.

This decline in male musicians and the rise in female musicians was most assuredly a result of the changing attitudes of Victorian society. Men were expected to choose professions that provided for the families and allowed for upward social mobility. Women who had not yet married or who may have been considered lower middle-class turned to music as a profession. Governesses were in high demand, and women were “allowed” to go into the profession. A cycle of sorts developed. It was socially acceptable and advantageous for a young woman to sing or play the piano or harp.¹⁷⁴ According to Clapp-Itnyre’s research, “music-making is as functional [in Victorian homes] as cooking when it comes to the domestic comfort of family . . . Growing up to ‘love . . . domestic life’ is crucial, especially for young girls.”¹⁷⁵ Yet the more women excelled musically, the more women desired a professional outlet for this talent and became music teachers.

Men regarded music in two different and contradicting manners. Noble and upper middle-class young men and boys were discouraged from gaining “feminine” musical skill, yet the lower-class men were encouraged to join choruses and the many brass bands. For the upper-class men and those seeking upward mobility, music was actually viewed as a “debasing activity.”¹⁷⁶ Thus the practice was largely “forbidden to boys of ‘good family,’ particularly if they betrayed signs of talent or serious interest.”¹⁷⁷ For the lower-class men, music was thought to build confidence and a strong work ethic, and it was also believed that musical activities would keep them out of the public houses.

¹⁷⁴ Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century*, 157.

¹⁷⁵ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Weliver, *Women musicians in Victorian England*, 19

¹⁷⁷ Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century*, 71.

Foreign musicians, on the other hand, such as Mendelssohn, Thalberg, or Joseph Joachim, were highly praised – but they were not English.

Smyth describes this non-musical quality in the young men she encountered at dances and balls; she was, in fact, rather annoyed that “the ‘smart’ young men [the ones who were acceptable for courting . . .] were the worst time-keepers of all.”¹⁷⁸ She notes that the better dancers [and the more musically inclined] were the “cads,” or the less physically attractive, less wealthy young men. Her conclusion from the experience also helps explain the notion of England at the time as a non-musical nation. She wrote, “I have come to the conclusion that the best sort of English man we breed nowadays . . . is ‘the man that hath not music in his soul,’ or indeed artistic proclivities of any kind.”¹⁷⁹ Smyth’s experience was not unusual, although her sensitivity to England’s musical culture might have been.

Many Victorians were indeed prejudiced against native composers and musicians even though a national music identity crisis was declared.¹⁸⁰ In fact, this non-musical quality, according to Weliver, may have been another means of distinguishing upper class English men from women, foreigners, and the working class; while others played, upper-class men watched and appreciated.¹⁸¹ Mackerness agreed in his assessment of the situation: “this [the development of amateur instead of professional music] was wholly due to the intense commercialism of the nineteenth century and the short-sighted utilitarian philosophy which made fathers compel their sons who showed

¹⁷⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 104.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Clapp-Itnyre, *Angelic airs, subversive songs*, 10.

¹⁸¹ Weliver, *Women musicians in Victorian England*, 19.

any signs of musical or other gifts go into business.”¹⁸² One can thus safely assume that it may have become increasingly acceptable for women to enter the music profession.

Smyth’s musical plan also had the backing of her sisters, female friends, and her mother. With the help of these conspirators, Smyth was able to convince her father to let her go to Leipzig to study music. Her description of the extensive arrangements required to satisfy her father demonstrates the restrictions of the society aptly:

Fraulein Freidlander was able, by some miracle, to produce adequate testimony to the respectability of her aunt, Frau Professor Heimbach, who lived at Leipzig and would certainly be willing to take me under her wing, till her very own mother had a room at my disposal; the terms suggested confirmed Mary Schwabe’s reports as to the cheapness of life in Germany; my father named the maximum allowance he could make me; it was pronounced to be sufficient, with care; and finally, on July 26, 1877, under the charge of Harry Davidson [Ethel’s brother-in-law], who knew Germany well, I was packed off, on trial and in deep disgrace, but too madly happy to mind about that, to the haven of my seven years’ longing [she had first conceived this plan in 1870].¹⁸³

In order to study at the Leipzig Conservatory and forego marriage, Smyth needed respectable and accountable lodging, a minimal financial allowance, and a chaperone. Once these were acquired, the General was finally coerced by family members to grant the aspiring musician her wish – to study composition at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Nineteenth-Century German Society, Women, and Music

The period of 1870 to 1890 in Germany was one of relative political and social peace. It was also a time of little progress for the women’s movement. The following categories of analysis are used to examine this period in German history: the distinction of the classes, gender ideology and its practice, and the role of music in the lives of the German people, especially as it differed between men and women. These issues

¹⁸² Mackerness, *A social history of English music*, 63.

¹⁸³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 111-112.

provide a cultural context for Smyth's development as a composer. When she arrived in Germany, Smyth found a society in which the divisions between the sexes and the ideology of "separate spheres" were more pronounced than in England. The most noticeable difference between the two countries, according to Smyth, was not in the social hierarchy, but the musical culture of the German middle and upper-middle classes. Although it was a patriarchal society, the musical world of Leipzig allowed a more equal relationship between men and women than that found in England.

In Germany, the ideology of separate spheres was much stronger than in England. A still primarily agrarian society limited the number of women who were needed for factory work (and even that work was confined to textiles and clothing).¹⁸⁴ The women's movement was slow to organize in Germany as well. Universities did not open their doors to women until 1908,¹⁸⁵ and the fight for suffrage did not surface for several more years.¹⁸⁶ These developments are decades behind their counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom. Frank Tipton points out, for example, that "agriculture remained the largest employer of women, officially 3.9 million in 1882."¹⁸⁷ Even after 1875, feminist activities continued to focus on demands for education and social welfare, causes which fell under the woman's sphere.¹⁸⁸ Although women were working, they were still limited to traditionally female tasks and prevented from entering

¹⁸⁴ Tipton, *A history of modern Germany since 1815*, 105.

¹⁸⁵ Sagarra, *Germany in the nineteenth century*, 162.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-7.

¹⁸⁷ Tipton, *A history of modern Germany since 1815*, 155.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

the dominant male work forces and professions. Barriers to professional careers were especially prevalent for married women of child-bearing years.

The idea of separate spheres emerged in Germany after the Napoleonic wars and during the period of Restoration prior to the 1848 revolutions.¹⁸⁹ The growing middle-class as a force in society greatly impacted gender ideology. According to David Blackbourn, “the institution that epitomized shared bourgeois values was the family. At the heart of it was the separation of workplace from home, how much clearer than it had been and the progression of material resources sufficient for the employment of servants to run the household.”¹⁹⁰ These ideas then applied to the class most affected by new industries and technologies – the middle or bourgeois class.¹⁹¹ Frevert writes:

as the external world [in Germany] changed more rapidly and radically (one only has to think of the revolutionary innovation of the railway after 1835, or progress in industry and technology), in other words, as men’s professional and public activities grew more and more animated, so the disparities between the family life of women and the vocational orientation of men became more distinct.¹⁹²

In Germany as in England, the woman at home was the source of escape, creating a refuge for her husband from the competitive and callous world of business. Ruth-Ellen Boetcher-Jores writes that middle-class German women were more influenced by “the ideological perceptions of that other sphere, the home, the private space and ostensibly peaceful and orderly refuge in which women were said to be in charge, and to which they were, to all intents and purposes, confined if they were members of the married

¹⁸⁹ Ute Frevert, *Women in German history*, 65.

¹⁹⁰ Blackbourn, *Fontara history of Germany, 1780-1918: the long nineteenth-century*, 213.

¹⁹¹ Sagarra, *Germany in the nineteenth century: history and literature*, 251. The term *bourgeoisie* during the second half of the nineteenth century usually indicated the upper-middle class, those who were wealthy through commerce and industry or who were well-educated professionals. The German lower-middle was labeled *Mittelstand*.

¹⁹² Frevert, *Women in German history*, 65.

middle class who were neither forced nor encouraged to go out and work.”¹⁹³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, this ideology was firmly set in the minds of the middle-class.

There are many anecdotal examples to support the gender ideology of nineteenth-century Germany. Fanny Mendelssohn, a known amateur composer and musician, was told by both father and brother that despite her gift for composition, her place was to run a household and to serve music by providing a welcome venue for performances, not to create it herself. Indeed, this idea of woman’s proper place in society, her “*bestimmung* or destiny”, was supported by treatises in medicine as well as philosophy and education since the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁴ Patricia Herminghouse quotes philosophers such as Emmanuel Kant in her essay, writing that, “with an astonishing universality that dates at least as far back as Kant’s postulation of the male principle as the sublime, and the female as ‘beauty,’ socially conditioned differences between the sexes have been conceptually justified as ‘natural.’” She further explains that “in the relation of the sexes, Kant’s notion that ‘one side must be subordinate to the other’ provided the foundation of a cultural myth about ‘the nature of woman’ and her ‘natural vocation’ which was internalized by women as well as men.”¹⁹⁵

Further evidence of the widespread adherence to this ideology can be found in the books read by the middle class. For example, in 1854 linguist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl published *Die Familie*, a book on the sociology of the family that supported the notion that the separation of the sexes was due to natural law, and that these

¹⁹³ Boetcher-Jores, *Respectability and deviance*, 257.

¹⁹⁴ Sagarra, *Germany in the nineteenth century*, 153.

¹⁹⁵ Herminghouse, “Women and the literary enterprise in nineteenth century Germany”, 81.

differences only increased with advancing civilization. According to Riehl, the progress of society was dependent on the “natural” division of the sexes.¹⁹⁶ Twenty years later, the *Conversation Lexicon* was a popular middle class encyclopedia, published in 1876. Its popularity suggests that the ideas and beliefs the *Lexicon* espoused were read by many. Sagarra notes that “these encyclopedia were widely bought and went through successive editions. . . . Woman was here primarily defined by and in her relationship to man. Her claims to education were to be defined, not by her personal need or wish for self-development but by the requirements of husband, household and children.”¹⁹⁷ She further quotes the *Lexicon* itself when it states, “Man’s achievements lie in the field of action, communication, and creativity, woman’s special quality are patience, receptiveness, care for others . . . Man’s thinking is consistent and logical, woman does not think, she perceives, instinctively, intuitively.”¹⁹⁸ According to Sagarra, Herminhouse, and others, this attitude prevailed in German culture.

Smyth’s arrival in Leipzig in 1877 brought her face-to-face with the prejudice against women. As a member of English upper-middle class society, she was accustomed to more freedom than was permitted in Germany, where the separate spheres of male and female were more distinct. Soon after arriving in Leipzig, the restrictions on young women became very apparent. She had heard about an outdoor concert and announced to her guardian that she wanted to attend:

¹⁹⁶ Herminhouse, “Women and the literary enterprise in nineteenth century Germany”, 81-2.

¹⁹⁷ Sagarra, *Germany in the nineteenth century*, 153.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 154

Frau Professor said this was impossible, that no young girl could go to a place like that by herself and she unfortunately could not take me as the next day was “*Grosse Wasche* [the Great Wash].” The idea of going with B. [the other, male, lodger] was ruled out of the question, so I hit upon a plan which this capital old lady somewhat reluctantly fell in with.¹⁹⁹

Smyth then proceeded to disguise herself as an old women, complete with a gray wig and knitting needles, and traveled alone to the evening concert. She did not return home until almost eleven o’clock:

Frau Professor was so well broken to English eccentricity, and so convinced that sons and daughters of our race can look after themselves, that she never even sat up for me – a fact which raised her immensely in my estimation.²⁰⁰

This anecdote not only demonstrates the barriers Smyth faced as a young woman, it also demonstrates how she manipulated her status as a foreigner to her advantage.

She comes back to this issue of independence later in the memoirs:

It was quite unusual for girls of my class either to go to restaurants or to walk about the streets alone at night, and at first friends used to implore me to let a servant see me home; but neither that nor any other curtailment of my liberty would I permit. . . . Reflecting on it all, I am astonished to think how calmly, on the whole, my Mentor, now my neighbour, took my proceedings. . . . Moreover she was clever enough to see that though the ‘nice people,’ by way of explaining their indulgence to her protégée, were for ever reminding each other feverishly that I was English (a card I played, alas, poor England! for all it was worth), as a matter of fact I met with more than tolerance.²⁰¹

In many ways, music enabled the women in Leipzig to negotiate the boundaries of the separate spheres, something not possible in England. Women in Leipzig frequently performed music with men, they attended public concerts and belonged to musical societies such as the Bach-Verein. Women in Smyth’s musical circle, however, rarely participated in a professional capacity, meaning that they did not receive a fee for their

¹⁹⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 140.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

performances or compositions. Elizabeth von Herzogenberg played piano quite well, having been a pupil of Brahms, and she even composed small pieces; yet she did not earn an income from her music.²⁰² The Röntgen women were as talented as the men, but only the men played in professional orchestras, composed, conducted, and taught at university. Women were encouraged to make music, provided that it was in the home or did not interfere with the household duties.

Two notable exceptions that inspired Smyth were Clara Schumann, who was permitted to earn a wage because she had to support her family after Robert's death,²⁰³ and Amalie Joachim, a renowned mezzo-soprano and wife of Joseph Joachim. Reich points out, however, that these women would have been considered part of the professional artisan class rather than the bourgeoisie, a distinction that made wage earning permissible.²⁰⁴ Both women were performers and not composers. The ideology of the time prescribed that men created and women *recreated*, that men were intellectual and women were intuitive. Thus, to be a performer was to interpret another's work rather than create one's own, conceivably a task more humble than composition.²⁰⁵ Schumann and Joachim both were also married.²⁰⁶ Although Schumann had seven children, her widowhood required her to have an income in order to support her family. Joachim never bore any children, but Joseph insisted she stop singing in

²⁰² Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms: the Herzogenberg correspondence*, viii.

²⁰³ Reich, *Clara Schumann: the artist and the woman*, 158.

²⁰⁴ Reich, "Women as musicians: a question of class", 211.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ It is known that Robert Schumann died in 1856. The divorce of Joseph and Amalie Joachim is not common knowledge (see "Amalie Joachime," *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians*). The absence of a husband in both cases seems to have enabled these talented women to resume their careers.

operas after they wed, thus removing her from the larger public stage. Despite Clara's and Amalie's unusual careers as professional performers, both women were still subjected to social constraints directly related to their gender.

Renate Mohrmann supports Reich's conclusions that women of the artisan and working classes were at least permitted employment, even if it was not the ideal situation. Mohrmann writes that "female gainful employment is known to have been regarded as a family stigma only for women and girls of the upper classes. Women of the proletariat had to learn very early on to support themselves and to contribute to the upkeep of the family as men did."²⁰⁷ Descriptions of society in Smyth's memoirs support this ideological divide. Although the husband of Elisabet von Herzogenberg was a professor of music (part of the educated bourgeois class), she herself was of royal birth, being the daughter of Baron von Stockhausen of Hanover. She would never have even thought of working, as it was her duty to run the household and support her husband. Her happiness in her marriage, at least as told in the Smyth memoirs, was due to the fact that she married a fellow musician, a man she admired and loved. Based on the case studies of women's lives presented by several studies of German culture, Elisabet von Herzogenberg's marriage seems to have been an unusual arrangement.²⁰⁸

Smyth also discovered that more people in the educated class were musically inclined than in England, even if they were not professional musicians. A strong musical education was part of the expectations of the bourgeois class, as well as a part of the

²⁰⁷ Mohrmann, "Women's work as portrayed in women's literature", 63.

²⁰⁸ The books on female German history referenced in this chapter provide these case studies. Those by Frevert, Boetcher-Jores, and Maynes were especially helpful.

German culture which produced generations of significant composers and performers. As a foreigner and new student at the conservatory, Smyth was introduced to a variety of people of all classes. Naturally, her life seems to have revolved around those who were connected to music, but she also noticed that men without musical careers were quite musical themselves. For example, one of Smyth's dear friends was the daughter of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Her husband, Dr. Adolf Wach, "a distinguished Prussian lawyer, was notoriously musical. One of the most interesting men I have ever met, he was also, as I realized later, a typical modern German in many respects."²⁰⁹ In another example of her surprise at the musical talent of German men, Smyth wrote that "that's what is so nice about Germany; almost everyone you meet can take a part in a vocal quartett [sic]."²¹⁰ Smyth's encounter with German men who were musically talented was quite different from her experience in England where very few men were musical. Another German family she met was the Limburgers (Consul Limbuger "was a wealthy wool merchant [and] president of the Gewandhaus Concert Committee").²¹¹

According to Smyth:

the Limburgers were typically German in that, with the exception of the mother and the one daughter, every member of the family was as much at home in music as ducks in the water. They danced, shot, rode, skated, besides being assiduous young men of business, but all played the piano or some other instrument, and a new work performed at the Gewandhaus was as much an event for them as for the Herzogenbergs.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 168.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 175

²¹² *Ibid.*

These anecdotes demonstrate not only the prevalence of musical interest and talent among the German middle and upper class, but also the lack of musical talent among those English men with whom Smyth had been acquainted.

German dilettantism and the assumptions about a German woman's life were clear; the success of the husband was very much reflected in the actions and lifestyle of the wife. In letters between Smyth and Elisabet von Herzogenberg, the subject of amateur music-making versus a professional music career demonstrates how difficult the position of a trained and talented female musician could be. Herzogenberg wrote on 15 July 1878, "I often could weep to think of the time I have lost, how badly I have husbanded my little talent [playing the piano and composing]. And now here I am – for all my artist's soul in the bands of wretched dilettantism."²¹³ By this statement, Herzogenberg is referring to a common situation for trained female musicians; they could perform and compose but never for a fee, and they were never treated in the same manner as the male composers. Later in this same letter, Herzogenberg warned Smyth not to squander her time on activities other than her composition studies. The difficulty women faced is clearly demonstrated. Elisabeth von Herzogenberg had married and her playing became a leisure pursuit, yet she regretted her choice and encouraged Smyth in many letters to pursue a professional career. This life of the *dilettante* is also found in the research of Frank Tipton and Ute Frevert, as well the musicological research of Nancy Reich. According to Tipton, German social status after

²¹³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 270.

1875 was increasingly determined by possession of wealth rather than birth.²¹⁴ A

description of a bourgeois wife is also offered by Frevert:

A manufacturer's wife was highly personal proof of the prosperity and stability of her husband's business; her demonstrable idleness, ever-changing and fashionable wardrobe and collection of tasteful jewelry, and her dilettantish interest in public cultural life were all standard trappings of bourgeois affluence. She was the living projection of the aristocratic leanings nurtured by large sections of the wealthy bourgeoisie. . . . free of the necessity to pursue any particular end, she was to devote herself to the fine arts, and to develop her hospitality in such a way that guests felt they were with cultivated and educated beings.²¹⁵

Smyth was fortunate, however, to have witnessed both types of female musicians, the professional and the amateur, for these models clearly demonstrated the expectations of women while also revealing the possible exceptions. Knowing these two women only bolstered Smyth's spirit.

One factor in the slowly changing position of women in Germany that may have aided Smyth's position was the growing number of unmarried women during the nineteenth century. Whether the result of birthing trends, war and revolution, or the German practice of waiting for financial stability before marriage, more and more women were finding themselves reaching adulthood without immediate marriage prospects. Women were still prevented from entering most professions and were not allowed to attend university; teaching and the arts were the only respectable avenues open to them.²¹⁶ Smyth witnessed part of this trend at the conservatory. Most of the students attending the conservatory were there merely to get a teacher's certificate, as

²¹⁴ Tipton, *A history of modern Germany since 1815*, 146.

²¹⁵ Frevert, *Women in German history*, 109.

²¹⁶ Mohrmann, "Women's work as portrayed in women's literature", 64.

opposed to a degree in composition.²¹⁷ Smyth, on the other hand, had arrived at Leipzig wanting to be the next Wagner and to have her first opera performed by the age of forty.²¹⁸ A university education (as opposed to conservatory training) was fortunately not necessary for achievement of such a goal.

The pieces which allowed Smyth to matriculate at the conservatory had been put in motion several years before she arrived. The growing need for higher education for women was aided by the spirit of the 1848 revolution. Women argued that they would not be able to properly educate their children and run the household in a manner that would better society unless the women themselves were better educated.²¹⁹ Private commercial schools for girls eventually appeared after 1860. These schools were created to teach unmarried young women basic skills to begin a career in the business world, perhaps as a shop assistant or clerk.²²⁰ Teaching was still viewed as the better alternative to business despite these developments; it fulfilled a female role defined by child-rearing and the safe-guarding of society. Even so, Frevert notes that “it was only single women who were to seek through this occupation ‘a substitute for the happiness’ that married women found in matrimony and motherhood.”²²¹ Despite the progress made in education and business, the woman’s role was still as a wife and mother.

Thus, when Smyth arrived in Germany at age nineteen, properly escorted by her brother-in-law, it was not unheard of for women to seek some form of higher education,

²¹⁷ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 146

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

²¹⁹ Frevert, *Women in German history*, 76.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

such as a teaching certificate at the Leipzig Conservatory, because many other women were also seeking employment while awaiting marriage. Smyth was, however, surprisingly fortunate to have made her way into the higher social circles of Leipzig, where she came to know the people who would have the most influence on her life: the Herzogenbergs, the Joachims, the Griegs, and eventually Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms. Specifically, Smyth encountered extremely talented female musicians who either performed professionally or in the home; these women were a great source of inspiration for Smyth.²²² Although her new friends gradually became aware of Smyth's talent and ambition, they also came to realize that she would not marry and "husband her talent," as Lisl had.²²³ Her career choice and her lifestyle would not reflect the conflict that previous generations of women confronted.

During the 1860s and 1870s, Smyth developed a passion for music while also witnessing the realities of the institution of marriage in Victorian society. If she had married, she would not have had the time or independence to devote her life to music as she had desired since childhood. Fortunately, music teachers were needed and laws were becoming more progressive. It was much more possible for a woman to embark on a career in the arts than the distinctly male realm of business. However, it was England's own negative perception of its musical heritage and, more importantly, the high reputation of the Leipzig Conservatory as represented by Smyth's own governess, which inspired her to break free from the chains of society and embark on the romantic, bohemian life of an artist.

²²² Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 170-171, 147-48.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 270.

CHAPTER 4
THE EARLY CHAMBER WORKS OF 1880:
SONATA IN C MINOR FOR CELLO AND PIANO AND
TRIO IN D MINOR FOR VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO

Smyth's earliest compositions were chamber works, including several string quartets, the *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano* (1880) and the *Trio in D minor for Violin, Cello and Piano* (1880). She was still learning the craft of composition, yet these pieces already demonstrate Smyth's ability to work within established forms while expressing her own creative ideas. The two works discussed in this chapter were not published in her lifetime, and no evidence exists that either piece received a public performance prior to 1980. The manuscripts appear to be final drafts, with few changes in the score. The manuscript of the *Sonata in C minor* in the Rare Books and Music Collections of the British Library does not have any performance markings, although it does reveal revisions to the work.²²⁴ The manuscript of the *Trio in D minor* exists in autograph score and parts at the University Library, Durham University, United Kingdom. It was published in 2003 by Roberton Publications. The editors, Margaret Lucia and Terry King, discovered hand-written markings in the parts that suggest a private performance.²²⁵ Both compositions have been recorded by independent record labels and have received performances in recent years, yet these works are still largely

²²⁴ In 2006, 2007, and 2008 I traveled to London to examine the manuscripts within the Ethel Smyth Collection at the British Library, London. Over the course of three trips to England and several letters and emails to various estate and literary agents I received permission to reproduce several of Smyth's manuscripts, including the *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*. The manuscript itself, Add. MS 45949, includes a full score for cello and piano as well as a separate part for cello only. I also discovered a draft of the cello part, Add. MS 46863, which differs from what appears to be the final manuscript. The details of this work, including revisions apparent in the score, have never before been discussed in a public forum, and the music itself has not been performed live since 1981. I intend to publish a critical edition of this deserving work in the future.

²²⁵ Smyth, *Trio in D minor for violin, cello and piano* (1880). I was able to verify this in July 2008 by examining the manuscript held at the University of Durham. The individual parts have added tempo and dynamic markings, but the parts do not differ significantly from the piano score.

unknown to musicians. The analysis presented in this chapter will demonstrate that the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor* are well-crafted, consciously-conceived works composed with a thorough knowledge of Classical and Romantic music traditions. The analysis will also demonstrate Smyth's development as a composer in the early stage of her career, for the *Trio in D minor* has a surer voice and greater inventiveness in musical ideas than the *Sonata in C minor*.

Both compositions were completed in 1880, Smyth's third full year in Leipzig. The manuscript score of the *Sonata in C minor*, now housed at the British Library in London, is not dated but was probably composed in 1880.²²⁶ The cello part, by an unknown copyist, has a handwritten address ("4 *Untere Promenade*"²²⁷) that appears to be in Smyth's handwriting, but this address does not appear anywhere in the memoirs.²²⁸ The only piece of evidence that dates the sonata is a letter to Smyth from Elisabet von Herzogenberg, who was visiting family in Florence during the spring of 1880. On 17 April 1880, she wrote, "send your Cello Sonata quick, quick; she [Julia Brewster] wants to hear something of yours."²²⁹ As Smyth only wrote two extant sonatas for cello and piano, one of which is the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, for cello and piano published by C. F. Peters in 1887, it is highly probable that this letter refers to the earlier manuscript. Conversely, the autograph score for the *Trio in D minor for Violin, Cello and Piano*,

²²⁶ Jory Bennett's catalogue of Smyth's works, compiled and published in the abridged memoirs by Ronald Crichton, dates the work to 1880. For further information, see *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, abridged and introduced by Ronald Crichton.

²²⁷ London, British Library, Add. MS 45949.

²²⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 159, 230, 349. The memoirs cite Smyth's lodgings on Salmonstrasse in Leipzig during the period of 1878-1884, while the Herzogenbergs, with whom she was spending much of her time, resided on Hauptmannstrasse. Smyth traveled frequently to Berlin and Crostewitz in addition to her journeys to Leipzig.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 283.

housed in the special collections of the University Library at the University of Durham, is dated twice.²³⁰ According to the manuscript, the first movement was completed on 26 April 1880 and the final movement manuscript was completed on 25 August 1880.²³¹ This evidence places the two works in close proximity.

The training Smyth received in Leipzig prior to the composition of the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor* influenced her developing style. Her brief study of music at the Leipzig Conservatory was followed by private tutoring with Heinrich von Herzogenberg and included frequent private performances in the homes of the musical elite. This period in Smyth's life will be discussed in detail below, providing a biographical context for the analysis.

A study of reception has proved difficult. Only one review exists of a recording of the *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*; there is none of the *Trio in D minor*. In an online review of the sonata performed by Friedemann Kupsa and Anna Silova, Rob Barnett wrote, "firmly absorbed into Brahmsian generosity of heart it is a strong work in its own right and receives a deeply passionate and sensitive performance [in this recording]."²³² Thus, Barnett described the *Sonata in C minor* as a well-constructed, convincing composition. The emotional performance (at the center of this review) also reveals the artistry of the composer that yielded such an inspired performance. Smyth's biography from 1877 to 1880 reveals the extent of her training that produced such expressivity in addition to compositional craft.

²³⁰ The *Trio in D minor* was published in 2003 by Robertson Publications. The editors were Margaret Lucia and Terry King.

²³¹ Durham, UK, Durham University, Dame Ethel Smyth MSS ASC Ref Z Smy 2a.

²³² Barnett, "Review".

Biographical Context

Smyth arrived in Leipzig in July of 1877, a full month prior to the start of classes. She was not the first female student at the Leipzig Conservatory, but she was the first female composition student of Carl Reinecke (1824-1910). She also studied theory with Salamon Jadassohn and piano with Joseph Maas. She soon discovered, however, that the celebrated days of the conservatory under Felix Mendelssohn had passed. What had once been an established, acclaimed conservatory appeared to Smyth to have become a teaching college. She writes in her memoir that the other students were only interested in gaining their teaching certificates, and the professors' instructions were "a farce."²³³ She cites instructors showing up late and theory errors that were not corrected. The Leipzig Conservatory was not living up to her high expectations.

Despite the apparent faults of the Leipzig Conservatory, Smyth was able to obtain musical training. The young composer had a letter of introduction to a Frau Dr. Brockhaus, "one of the great ladies of Leipzig", who then introduced Smyth to many significant musical families, where both men and women participated in the creation and performance of *hausmusik*.²³⁴ As well, her friendship with the baritone George Henschel, whom she had first heard sing Brahms's *Liebeslieder* in England, sparked a letter to Brahms directly:

Henschel to Brahms in Leipzig

Barmen, 28 December 1877

The bearer of this [letter] is a jolly English girl, Miss Smyth, as talented as she is amusing. She wrote some quite charming little songs, even before she had had any lessons, and she is burning with longing to say just one word to you, or better still to hear you say it. Grant her that word, even if it were only "Get out of here!"

²³³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 145.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

Besides all this she jumps over chairs, back and all, rides, hunts, fishes, swims, etc., etc.

The Härtels, through whom she hoped to see you, are in Leipzig momentarily, and therefore I have taken the liberty of sending these lines of introduction, whose purpose would be fulfilled, I am told, by one word from you.

With devoted greetings,
always your
Henschel²³⁵

Through her friendship with Henschel, the Frau Dr. Brockhaus, and the contacts she made at the Leipzig Conservatory, Smyth formed an advantageous circle of musical friends. She developed a close friendship with the soprano Livia Frege (1818-1891) and with (Elisabeth) Lili Wach (1845-1910), the daughter of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, shortly after her arrival in 1877. The following spring she met a prominent musical family, the Röntgens. Engelbert Röntgen (1829-1897) was concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig and the leader of a string quartet. His wife, Pauline, and one of his daughters, Johanna, were accomplished pianists. His son, Julius (1855-1932), was a successful violist and composer who later became music director of the Amsterdam Conservatory, and was life-long friends with Edvard Grieg.²³⁶ The wife's family, the Klengels, was purported to be able to "raise a piano quintet among themselves, and together with their Röntgen cousins a small orchestra."²³⁷ Furthermore, Pauline Röntgen's nephew was Julius Klengel (1859-1933), a talented cellist who became one of the foremost cello pedagogues in the early twentieth century.²³⁸ Klengel

²³⁵ Henschel, letter to Johannes Brahms, 38 December 1877.

²³⁶ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 142.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Campbell, "Masters of the twentieth century", 73. Klengel's studies for cello are still practiced by students today.

was also the cellist in Röntgen's quartet, which met weekly for rehearsals and entertainment. Many evenings of music-making in the Röntgen home involved playing through the chamber works of the major Romantic composers such as Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms. Typical of the period and society, the women played piano or sang and the men played the string instruments and also piano. One exception to this gendered division of instruments was Julius Röntgen's new wife, Amanda Maier (1843-1894), who was an excellent violinist.²³⁹

Smyth's earliest chamber works were composed for those talented musicians, and she sought their approval on a personal and professional level. For example, on 2 June 1880, Röntgen and his quartet performed one of Smyth's string quartets (she does not say which one); she referred to it in 1919 as "a mere piece of student's work of course."²⁴⁰ This environment had a direct impact on her writing; in fact, the later *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5* for cello and piano of 1887 was dedicated to Julius Klengel and presumably performed by him.²⁴¹ The memoirs contain numerous anecdotes attesting to the frequency of chamber music among these musicians and their families. Smyth wrote of finding these musical kindred spirits:

sitting at tea with my new friends, Herr Concertmeister Röntgen, leader of the Gewandhaus orchestra, and his family, I had found an answer to the question: "What went ye out for to seek?" In those walls was the concentrated essence of old German musical life, and without a moment's hesitation the whole dear family took me to their bosom.²⁴²

²³⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 144. Information on Amanda Maier Röntgen as well as the more prominent Röntgens and Klengels can be found in Peter Clive's *Brahms and his world: a biographical dictionary*, 261-263 and 367-370.

²⁴⁰ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 254.

²⁴¹ Smyth, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, for cello and piano*.

²⁴² Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 141-2.

In Germany, Smyth found the musical environment she had lacked in England. This musical culture enabled Smyth to grow as a composer. The style of playing and the preferred repertoire of these musicians influenced the types of pieces Smyth composed in these early years.

She was soon spending less time at the conservatory and more time among professional and amateur musicians. This environment provided her with opportunities to hear her music almost immediately and it is likely that she received feedback from her friends. In the spring of 1878, she finally met the Herzogenbergs. Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843-1900) was a professor at the University of Leipzig and a successful composer. His wife, Elisabet (Lisl) von Herzogenberg (1847-1892) was an amateur pianist and composer who had briefly studied with Brahms. Heinrich decided quickly after meeting Smyth and seeing some of her compositions that she should study with him. During the winter of 1878-1879 Smyth pursued her lessons with Herzogenberg in counterpoint, harmony and composition. She also took violin lessons from Englebert Röntgen, even playing in the Bach-Verein concerts.²⁴³

Smyth continued to attend and participate in evenings of *hausmusik*. She spent a considerable amount of time with the Röntgens plus new friends she made through the Herzogenbergs, most notably, Conrad and Mary Fiedler and Theodore and Emma Engelmann.²⁴⁴ Conrad Fiedler, a patron of the arts and aesthetic philosopher, took immediately to Smyth and her music. The following letter from Fiedler to Irene

²⁴³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 233 and 245.

²⁴⁴ Mary Fiedler (1854-1919), soprano, and Emma Engelmann (1854-1940), piano, were both highly skilled musicians who gave up professional careers after marriage (as did Livia Frege). For further information on Engelmann, see *Brahms: a biographical dictionary*, 127-129. For further information on Mary Fiedler, see Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 250-251, and Brewster, *The cosmopolites: a nineteenth-century family drama*, 98 and 133.

Hildebrand (wife of sculptor, Adolf Hildebrand) in 1880 describes the affect Smyth had on her new acquaintances, musically and personally:

We have spent Christmas quite happily; if not a herd of children we too had a child, and English girl of twenty-one. She is studying music in Leipzig under Herzogenberg and is on close terms of friendship with his wife. As they had left for Christmas and New Year she came to stay with us for a fortnight and has become very dear to us. As regards her musical talent I cannot but trust the very favourable opinion of Joachim who is here. I have been much impressed by the 'cello sonata she has composed, though I am no judge in such matters. But quite apart from this she is one of the cleverest and most remarkable persons I have come across for a long time, natural, lively and full of inner earnestness. I could write a good deal about her. You must get to know her some time. She has become very attached to my wife and our relationship has developed on a lasting basis. Sooner or later we shall no doubt all get together.²⁴⁵

While the Fiedlers were a part of the Leipzig scene, the Engelmanns were friends of the Herzogenbergs and Brahms who lived in Utrecht and occasionally visited Leipzig. One such visit is detailed in a letter from Elisabeth von Herzogenberg to Brahms, dated 28 December, 1880, and demonstrates the musical life in which Smyth found herself:

My very dear friend – What a very great pleasure to have your overture [The Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80] drop from the skies half an hour before we lit our Christmas-tree. I carried the roll to Heinz [Heinrich] so as not to spoil my own fun, and he propped it up with due solemnity, where it outshone all the other nice things, and rejoiced my heart more than I can say. Next day we went to Engelmanns', first thing, with our treasured roll, and there we played and played the dear overture, and four happy people put their heads together and said what they never can say to your face.

... And now I am requested to entreat you to fix the date of your coming, if possible. The Engelmanns are in correspondence with various friends in Amsterdam, who are coming for the overture, and are therefore entitled to an interest in the day. ... The poor young Röntgens, who are here now, will unfortunately, have to leave before it. We practice together most vigorously. There is a grand Brahms evening the day after tomorrow, when Emma [Engelmann] will play the A major quartet, Julius Röntgen the quintet, with a few other trifles thrown in. Amanda, Julius's wife, is to play the violin concerto by heart,

²⁴⁵ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 28. Brewster's grand-son (also christened Harry) wrote this book using personal family letters and the Smyth memoirs. Unfortunately, he does not cite the letters written by Henry Brewster, and he provides no details regarding the location of accessibility of these letters.

just by way of an encore, when the family has already been playing for three hours! Oh yes, we all have tough digestions!

... Last of all, let me thank you once more. When it is done in writing, at least I don't see you wriggle! Let us know soon when we may have the pleasure of preparing for your visit. – Your

Herzogenbergs.²⁴⁶

As part of her composition studies, Smyth copied the scores of Brahms that were sent to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, Brahms's most valued critic next to Clara Schumann. Such exercises included studying a four-hand piano reduction done by Elisabet of Brahms's *Symphony No. 2 in D major*²⁴⁷ and copying the *Op. 76* piano pieces.²⁴⁸ The following letter from Elisabet von Herzogenberg to Brahms supports Smyth's anecdotes and provides an excellent example of the music-making that was constantly taking place:

Leipzig, 13 December 1878

My Dear Friend – I wonder if you set me down as the wretch I am conscious of being for keeping the longed-for pianoforte pieces [Op. 76] without a word of thanks. ... And, do you know, the dear pieces are still with the copyist – our Leipzig copyists are such slowcoaches – but I will really send them off tomorrow. The one in B minor [Op. 76, no. 2], which I kept back because it gave me such untold pleasure to practice it, is now being copied out for me by our little English friend [Ethel Smyth]. Please note, however, that I have only *one* very nice little English girl.

... But I must stop. She gives me no peace, the B minor copyist [Ethel Smyth]. If you want to see something beautiful, look at the last eight bars. We play them over and over, and can never have enough of them.

I am going to play them to the Utrecht Engelmanns shortly. What a triumph to forestall Emma for once!

My favourite, now and forever, is the F sharp minor [Op. 76, no. 1]. I flatter myself that I really appreciate it, and should play it exquisitely if I were any sort of pianist.

²⁴⁶ Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 115-117.

²⁴⁷ St. John, *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, 26.

²⁴⁸ Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 70.

But good-bye. I know I shall not get the Romanze now, for my sins, any more than the C sharp minor [Op. 76, no. 5].

Heinrich sends messages (he is working very hard), and Ethel Smyth too. She does the prettiest gavottes and sarabandes. Write and tell us when you are coming, so that we can look forward to it. – Your devoted,

Herzogenberge.²⁴⁹

The letter also shows the level of musical intellect of Elisabet and the possible value of this friendship for Smyth. As this letter also demonstrates, Smyth received daily tutorials in music and first-hand contact with leading composers. This group of musicians saw nothing unusual about Smyth composing as noted by the reference to Smyth's gavottes and sarabandes; other female composers in the circle included Clara Schumann as well as Elisabet von Herzogenberg. Ironically, it was outside the conservatory that Smyth received a thorough music education.

These friends were not the only influences on Smyth's creativity and musical style. Prior to her matriculation at the Leipzig Conservatory, she had enjoyed the music of Beethoven and Schubert, studied the orchestration of Berlioz, and had been introduced to the operas of Wagner. She also loved to sing and compose songs, and she became enamored with Bizet's *Carmen*. Unfortunately, her new Leipzig friends did not care for the music of Berlioz, Bizet, or Wagner, but rather preferred the more instrumental, absolute style of Brahms, Bach, and Beethoven, as well as the occasional work by Mendelssohn or Schumann.²⁵⁰ Smyth lamented in her memoirs that her friends were not open to composers of the New German School of Wagner or Liszt, or other, non-German composers of the time. Performances of French music were ignored;

²⁴⁹ Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 69-70.

²⁵⁰ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 243.

Wagner operas were rarely attended by this Leipzig circle. Most likely owing to her status as a student and novice, Smyth followed their lead, despite her own attraction to dramatic operas and less serious or German styles. She described the musical environment in her first memoir:

My musical education was possibly being narrowed in that severely classical atmosphere, but I suppose every scheme of education is either too narrow or too diffuse. Certainly the impulse towards opera, of which I had been conscious in the days of Mr. Ewing, was checked for the moment. ... The Golden Age of Leipzig had been orchestral and oratorical, and both musicians and concert public were suspicious of music-drama. ... I used to go and hear *Carmen*, still my favourite opera, whenever I had a chance, and was indignant at Herzogenberg's patronizing remark that Bizet was no doubt *ein Geniechen* (a *little* genius). But in that school Bizet, Chopin, and all the great who talk tragedy with a smile on their lips, who dart into the depths and come up again instantly like divers – who, in fact, decline to wallow in the Immensities – all these were habitually spoken of as small people.²⁵¹

And yet Smyth saw fit to ignore their slights against these musicians. So common were her interactions with her Leipzig friends that she called them the “Brahms group,” a term to denote not only Brahms admirers but also those composers who descended upon Leipzig and the Herzogenberg home whenever Brahms came to visit. This group included such composers as Grieg, Dvořák, Kirchner, and later Tchaikovsky, as well as performers such as Joseph Joachim, George Henschel, and Clara Schumann.²⁵²

Smyth was strongly influenced in these formative years by Johannes Brahms. She had been an admirer of his music for several years and, despite Henschel's early introduction, only met him through the Herzogenbergs in 1879. Indeed, it was fortuitous that she had won over the Herzogenbergs as she did, if only for the opportunity to study

²⁵¹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 242-243.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 241.

Brahms's newest works firsthand.²⁵³ She and her new friends also attended the premiers of his works, often gathering after concerts for discussion. In one instance, Smyth attended a concert in January of 1878 where she heard his new *Symphony No. 2 in D major*.²⁵⁴ She was such a mainstay in the Herzogenberg household that she was referred to as "our little friend" in the Brahms-Herzogenberg correspondence and treated as the pet-project of these Leipzig musicians.²⁵⁵

Smyth's student works, including the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor*, are derivative, at times revealing her knowledge of other composers through similar melodies and harmonic movements. The historic connection between Smyth and Brahms has been so strong that critics often fail to mention the significance of other composers on Smyth, such as Schubert, in addition to Brahms. The music of Schubert is suggested in Smyth's *Sonata in C minor*. In the first movement, a melodic similarity is apparent between the opening measures of Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata* and those of Smyth's *Sonata in C minor* (Figure 4-1). Smyth did not mention the *Arpeggione Sonata* in her memoirs, but she does reference other Schubert works, suggesting a familiarity with his music. Similarly, the main theme of Smyth's *ländler* bears a resemblance to a passage from Brahms's *Symphony No. 2* (Figure 4-2). The rhythmic character of the violoncello in Brahms's symphony is similar to Smyth's melody, with a half-note and two eighth-notes for two measures followed by two measures of quarter notes. The

²⁵³ Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 59-185. The Herzogenberg correspondence between 1878 and 1885 gives a glimpse of the culture and lifestyle of which Smyth was a part.

²⁵⁴ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 158.

²⁵⁵ Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 83.

accompaniment is modified only slightly, with Smyth shifting the two quarter notes to beats two and three.

Figure 4-1 consists of two musical excerpts, A and B. Excerpt A shows the first five measures of Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata* in A minor, first movement. It features a piano accompaniment with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 108$ and a dynamic of *mp*. The right hand plays a series of arpeggiated chords. Excerpt B shows the first four measures of Smyth's *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*, first movement. It is marked *Allegro appassionato* and *mf*. The cello part has a melodic line with a slur, and the piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Figure 4-1. Comparison of a work by Schubert and a work by Smyth. A) Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata* in A minor, first movement, mm. 1-5. © WIM, Inc. (Greeley, CO, USA). B) Smyth's *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*, first movement, mm. 1-4. Transcribed by Amy Zigler and Steven Landis from the original manuscript, British Library, London. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.²⁵⁶

Figure 4-2 consists of two musical excerpts, A and B. Excerpt A shows measures 82-88 of Brahms's *Symphony No. 2 in D*, first movement. It is a full orchestral score with parts for Flute (Flg.), Violin I (VI.), Brass (Br.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Keyboard (Kb.). The strings are marked *cantando* and *pizz.*. The woodwinds are marked *p sempre dolce* and *dolce*. Excerpt B shows the first four measures of Smyth's *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*, second movement. It is marked *Allegretto* (Ländler tempo) and *p*. The cello part has a melodic line with a slur, and the piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Figure 4-2. Comparison of a work by Brahms and a work by Smyth. A) Brahms's *Symphony No. 2 in D*, first movement, mm. 82-88. © Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1935. B) *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*, second movement, mm. 1-4. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The musical output of this young composer was limited to chamber music because that was the preferred medium of the “Brahms group,” and her studies focused

²⁵⁶ All future examples for *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano* were transcribed and edited by Amy Zigler and Steven Landis from the original manuscript unless otherwise noted.

on counterpoint, formal analysis, and harmony.²⁵⁷ The others looked down upon opera, and “orchestration apparently failed to interest them,” wrote Smyth.²⁵⁸ Between 1877 and 1887, she composed piano works, string quartets, quintets and trios, two cello sonatas, and a violin sonata. Smyth’s compositional skills improved noticeably during these years. In fact, a letter from Clara Schumann to Brahms in 1883 demonstrates the respect Smyth received from her colleagues: Schumann wrote, “To-morrow morning we are expecting Ethel Smythe [sic] for a day or two. I am surprised at the progress she has made and even if she has no originality as a composer, I cannot help feeling respect for such ability in a girl.”²⁵⁹ After five years of study, Smyth’s compositions and talent were already commanding the respect of a discriminating musician. The following analysis of two pieces composed in close proximity will demonstrate Smyth’s ability as a composer, as well as the “progress” Schumann described above in her letter.

Analysis

Any analysis of music is dependent first on the observer and second on the available information (scores, recordings, memoirs, letters, etc.). The analysis presented in this chapter is based on primary source material, including Smyth’s memoirs and the reception of the work, a recording of the work, the published score (where available) and the autograph manuscript. In many respects, the analysis is based in part on the idea of interpretation as Peter H. Smith describes it: “not that there is one and only one correct interpretation, but that interpretation should be grounded in

²⁵⁷ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 253.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁵⁹ Litzmann, *Letters of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms*, 86.

the materials of music.”²⁶⁰ He argues that interpretation of a piece may be derived from both musical analysis and biographical context, thereby offering a more thorough understanding of the work. However, Smith points out that no interpretation, no matter how grounded in the musical facts of the piece, is definitive. My analysis of Smyth’s chamber works relies on the musical material first, with biography informing a possible interpretation.

The analysis of Smyth’s melodies, in particular, is also influenced by Sally Macarthur’s recent study, *Feminist Aesthetics in Music*. She interrogates the traditional ideal of the Golden Mean as the model in music wherein the climactic point of the structure of a piece occurs approximately two-thirds of the way through the piece, or at a proportion of 0.618.²⁶¹ Her analysis argues that a composer might present a feminine (or feminist) method of musical structure by offering a different, yet equally effective, technique; with this technique, the climax occurs significantly sooner or later in the structure than the Golden Mean, or where more climaxes of varying intensity occur instead of the one main climactic point. Macarthur acknowledges that this *Other* approach is easily appropriated by men, just as women have appropriated male methods of composing music for centuries.²⁶² I have applied Macarthur’s method of analysis in a more general manner as a consistent way to analyze and compare Smyth’s melodies, in order to determine any patterns in structure or style and not to classify the music as feminine or masculine.

²⁶⁰ Smith, *Expressive forms in Brahms’s instrumental music*, 187.

²⁶¹ Macarthur, *Feminist aesthetics in music*, 70.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 71.

By adopting a multi-movement, absolute genre, Smyth was aligning herself with her immediate German contemporaries, including Brahms, Reinecke and Herzogenberg. She also set herself apart from other composers known for their programmatic through-composed or sectional works, such as Schumann, Liszt and Grieg. This creative decision seems unusual in hindsight, given Smyth's later turn to opera and vocal works. However, her teachers and mentors were quite conservative musically, and this most likely accounts for her own musical preferences during the 1880s. Smyth's choice of the sonata as a favored genre (even the *Trio in D minor* and the later *String Quartet in E minor* are sonatas for multiple instruments) also brings with it over a century of musical traditions, including expected forms, key relationships, and thematic tendencies. Her treatment of the genre is not as inspired as that of Brahms nor as experimental as the late works of Beethoven, and yet her compositions are well-written and expressive, and are therefore worthy of study. The *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor* may be her earliest chamber works with piano, but elements of her style and evidence of her ability to compose are already apparent. As the compositions are still relatively unknown, my analysis incorporates a linear approach in order to examine the musical elements as one might encounter them in a rehearsal or performance.

The analysis in this chapter has three goals. The first and most basic goal is to introduce her compositional style to those unfamiliar with the works. An overview of each movement will illustrate the forms Smyth uses and how she adopts or adapts these forms. Structural analysis, rooted in functional harmony and Classical ideas of form, will also provide a foundation for understanding these works and their place in the

tradition of the sonata. Smyth's treatment of formal structures closely follows Classical models, such as sonata-allegro form or minuet-and-trio, yet with each work she explores the forms with increasing structural and harmonic creativity.

The second goal is to examine the ways in which Smyth creates her personal style by revealing the particular traits that exhibit unity within and among each of these compositions. A study of her melodies illustrates the development and improvement of her compositional skill, while also revealing Smyth's emerging creative voice: a voice that increasingly avoids Classical phrase structures unless she is purposefully portraying a Classical style.²⁶³ In addition, principal themes begin with long durational values and accelerate, secondary themes frequently contain with triplet rhythms, and both themes incorporate dialogue between the instruments. Motivic, harmonic, and rhythmic analysis demonstrates the musical elements that mark her musical style. Specific pitch and rhythmic motives are found in both works, unifying the movements in each work. The frequent use of enharmonic equivalents, mode mixture, and chromatic modulations often obscure the key center, and significant structural cadences are frequently evaded or undermined. In addition, the use of hemiolas, polyrhythms, and metric shifts also reveals her study and absorption of nineteenth-century musical style. Finally, Smyth's tendency to write across the bar line is an important rhythmic element that characterizes her themes and the characters of the pieces. This rhythmic propulsion partially accounts for the term "Smythian gusto" that Kathleen Dale coined over fifty years ago and will be addressed in the discussion of each movement. As later

²⁶³ Definitions of Classical phrase structures can be found in several music theory textbooks. For the purposes of this study, I define a prototypical Classical phrase as a unit consisting of four measures with a melodic climax at or near the proportion of 0.618 (in accordance with Macarthur's research). In the Classical style, these phrases may also be set in a antecedent-consequent pair.

works will show, the four-movement format was preferred by Smyth (similar to Brahms's trios), and the placement of the dance as the second movement is also common in her multi-movement works.

The third goal of this analysis is to demonstrate the value of the compositions as a contribution to the chamber music repertoire through the stylistic analysis of melody, motivic use, harmony and form. Combined, these analyses demonstrate Smyth's skill as a composer and also her creative uses of what had become an out-dated genre. The following discussion demonstrates Smyth's ability to incorporate the compositional techniques and stylistic traits of the late-nineteenth century, yet the works are not predictable, nor are they passé. These early works are her interpretations of the traits of the Romantic period, but the idioms Smyth develops here stay with her compositional technique throughout her career.

Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano

The *Sonata in C minor* is the first of several sonatas that Smyth composed for strings and piano. It establishes the style in which she was composing and the model on which she relied during her years in Leipzig. At the structural level, this sonata adheres to the models of formal and harmonic structure that Smyth would have learned in her first years as a composition student. She closely follows the accepted procedures of sonata, theme-and variations, and rondo forms by incorporating the requisite thematic areas and their prescribed tonal centers. Within this early work are the motivic devices and melodies, the unexpected harmonic choices, and the rhythmic drive that Smyth

used in her chamber works throughout her career. More specifically, rhythmic and intervallic motives provide the work with an audible coherence and unity.²⁶⁴

A four-movement work, the *Sonata in C minor* is organized at the larger structural level by fourths instead of the more common circle of fifths or even movement by thirds. The tonal centers of the movements proceed from i to iv to ^bVII and back to i, a harmonic relationship that Smyth did not repeat in later works. Her choice of forms, on the other hand, is quite standard. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form, the second movement is a dance in minuet-and-trio form, the third movement is a slow theme-and-variations, and the final movement is a sonata-rondo. Smyth created a composition that logically progressed from one movement to the next. She achieved this through her melodic style, the cyclical use of motives, and key relationships at the period-level that refer to the harmonic relationships at the movement-level (specifically the relationship of the keys of C, F, and B^b), in a manner similar to her predecessors.

Her lyrical, melodic style is also directly influenced by her proclivity for vocal music (she had composed songs since her childhood and her first published works were a set of *lieder*). The themes in Smyth's movements are also given equal weight; the traditional hierarchy of first and second themes is not the guiding principle in her structures. Thematic equality is further explored in the development sections of the sonata-form movements, where the main themes are superimposed, often leading to unexpected harmonic choices and rhythmic ideas. Smyth seems to have had a tendency for disregarding the rules of tonality, resulting in harmonies that resist

²⁶⁴ Numerous works by Beethoven and Haydn provide a precedent for motivic unity. One such figure can be found in Beethoven's *Sonata Op. 31, No. 3*.

traditional tonal functions and resolutions.²⁶⁵ The combination of these distinct qualities produces a unified work recognizable to the listener.

Allegro appassionato

The young composer's treatment of form in the first movement demonstrates her knowledge of accepted formal practices, but it also reveals a naïveté in her craft. The form of the first movement has a clearly delineated exposition, development, and recapitulation with a coda. The sections are equally balanced; the themes of the recapitulation are repeated without modulation at the tonic. Consequently, assuming a repeat of the exposition, the work divides into two equal portions (plus a coda) to execute a model rounded-binary form. Such a compositional technique might imply an immaturity in her writing, or it could imply an economy in her writing similar to some chamber works by Schubert.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, the autograph score demonstrates a command of tools and techniques rather than experimentation with new ideas. In fact, the autograph score has only two revisions in the first movement, although the autograph is possibly a final draft.²⁶⁷

In keeping with the evolving techniques of sonata treatment, Smyth uses the first movement to set the harmonic parameters of the composition. The key relationships

²⁶⁵ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 239. In 1879, Smyth had written a fugue, which was shown to Brahms by the Herzogenbergs. Smyth, all of 21 years old, asked excitedly, "Don't you think if I feel it that way I have a right to end on the dominant?" To which Brahms replied, "I'm quite sure, dear child, you may end when and where you please!"

²⁶⁶ In Schubert's chamber works, such as the "*Trout*" *Quintet*, recapitulations were often an exact replication of the exposition, with harmonic changes to keep the material in the required tonic key.

²⁶⁷ The analysis of this work was based entirely on the autograph score in the British Library in London. The top layer of manuscript (in some cases there are two or three layers of manuscript pasted over an original manuscript) was assumed to be the final version, as the lower levels were marked out. There is no published edition. The transcriptions used in this document are directly from the autograph. The discrepancies between the different layers of the autograph score will be discussed in more detail below.

between the various themes in this movement demonstrate Smyth's newly acquired knowledge of traditional sonata-allegro form. As shown in Table 4-1, the principal theme establishes the key of C minor followed by a modulation to the relative major at the secondary theme. The development then explores the two main themes while moving through various key areas. The recapitulation maintains the tonal center of C while moving between minor and major modes, a technique that was common in Smyth's works. The second theme returns in C major in the coda, and the movement closes in the parallel tonic major.²⁶⁸ Only in the development does Smyth's interest in chromatic harmonies and unusual key relationships become evident as the themes modulate to distantly-related keys, shown in the chart below. These distant keys, such as E minor and F major, however, serve as the significant tonal areas of subsequent movements, further uniting the entire composition.

This movement follows standard formal procedure for sonata form and maintains a clear sense of the structure. Admittedly, the *Sonata in C minor* is the most conservative of her chamber works, and much of the following discussion will only demonstrate how well Smyth knew the paradigms and traditions of the genre. Her themes are vocal in nature and similar in structure, often adhering to the Classical ideal of the Golden Mean (see p. 117). She also relies on a minimum number of motives to create the themes and transitions, demonstrating an economy in her writing.

Conversely, Smyth's harmonic language in this movement is somewhat immature, with abrupt modulations to distant keys, such as E^b major to E minor, despite a distinct effort

²⁶⁸ Smyth was not breaking into new territory by beginning and ending in different modes. One such Figure can be found in Haydn's *String Quartet Op. 76, No. 1*, where the last movement also opens in a minor key and closes in the parallel major. Other examples abound in 19th-century music, as the motion from minor to major (especially C minor to C major) came to represent darkness giving way to light and the struggle between good and evil.

to conform to the prescribed tonal areas. Finally, the composer's use of rhythm as a unifying device and as a means of propulsion presents the best basis for an argument for a recognizable Smythian style.

Thematic design: Smyth's various themes often share elements of articulation, rhythm, or contour dictated by the principal theme. The principal theme in this movement is comprised of two phrases. The first is a straightforward four-bar phrase marked as "phrase a" in Figure 4-3. Using Macarthur's method of comparing climaxes in a piece, the climax of the phrase falls on beat one of m. 3, or two-thirds of the way through the phrase. The second phrase, labeled "phrase b", extends the idea for an extra measure plus one beat. However, the climactic moment occurs early in the phrase, on the third beat of m. 6, only one-third of the way into the melody. And yet if the two phrases are instead treated as one continuous idea, the stronger second climax does, in fact, occur two-thirds of the way through the entire theme, creating a proportion of 0.622.

The image displays a musical score for the principal theme of the first movement of the Sonata in C minor, measures 1-9. The score is written for Violin (Vlc.) in 3/5 time and C minor. It is divided into two phrases: 'Phrase a' (measures 1-4) and 'Phrase b' (measures 5-9). A bracket above the first staff indicates the end of 'Phrase a' at the end of measure 4. A downward arrow points to the first note of measure 3. A bracket above the second staff indicates the end of 'Phrase b' at the end of measure 9. A downward arrow points to the third note of measure 6. The measure numbers 5 and 9 are written below the staves.

Figure 4-3. *Sonata in C minor*, principal theme, first movement, mm. 1-9. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Table 4-1. Formal diagram of first movement, *Sonata in C minor*, sonata-allegro form. PT = principal theme, ST = secondary theme.

	Exposition				Development				Recapitulation				Coda
Theme	PT	transition	ST	trans.	PT	ST	motivic devel.	ST	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	ST
Key	Cm	G to E ^b	E ^b	E ^b	E ^b -e	Cm	E ^b -B ^b -F	B ^b	Cm	G to Cm	Cm	C/Cm	C
Mm. #s	1-10	11-20	21-36	37-44	45-51	52-63	64-71	72-85	86-95	96-105	106-21	122-31	132-142

Smyth's treatment of the principal theme demonstrates how she adhered to standard practice: by placing climactic points at the expected proportions of the theme. Yet the second phrase also demonstrates an early ability to experiment with the model, while still achieving Classical proportions overall.

Smyth's melodic style is also characterized by its organic nature, whereby the themes grow out of significant motives. One of the key elements of Smyth's secondary themes is that they provide contrast to the first themes through rhythmic and harmonic variety. In this case, the secondary theme is first suggested as part of an accompaniment figure in the piano and distinguished by upward stems. It contrasts with the first theme through a narrower range, longer note values, and expressive markings, while retaining the lyrical quality of the principal theme (Figure 4-4).



Figure 4-4. *Sonata in C minor*, introduction to secondary theme, first movement, mm. 21-24. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

In the relative key of E^b major, the second theme is distinguished by the quarter notes in the upper voice of the piano part for the first four measures. The shape of the theme is not an arch but instead travels the distance of a diminished fourth demonstrated by the E^b/B-natural in mm. 21-23 (see Figure 4-4) and the A^b/E-natural in mm. 25-27 (Figure 4-5). This theme is continued in the next eleven measures by the cello. The cello melody derives from the fragment presented in the first five notes, developing the leap of a diminished fourth and the half-step neighbor-note motion. The climactic moment is not reached until m. 34, or over four-fifths of the way through the melody (a proportion

of 0.84). This delay of the melodic climax creates tension and drama in an otherwise lyrical melody. Compared to the principal theme, the secondary theme avoids the model of a Classical theme. The entire secondary theme is also marked *dolce* and *gebunden* in the piano part (Figure 4-4) and *compassionately* in the cello part (Figure 4-5), suggesting a contrasting character with the principal theme. The syncopated rhythms and rising pitches in the second part of the theme, mm. 30-34, also create more tension than that heard in the principal theme.

The image shows a musical score for the secondary theme in the first movement of the Sonata in C minor. The top staff is for Violoncello, and the bottom staff is for Piano. The Violoncello part begins at measure 25 with a dynamic marking of *mf* and the instruction 'compassionately'. It consists of two phrases, each marked 'dim. 4th'. The second phrase, starting at measure 30, is marked 'cresc.' and 'f', and is further marked 'espressivo'. The Piano part starts at measure 30 and features a running triplet pattern.

Figure 4-5. *Sonata in C minor*, secondary theme, first movement, mm. 25-35. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The themes are stated in the recapitulation at the tonic, following the standard procedure for sonata form. However, Smyth undermines the expected hierarchy of the principal and secondary themes by using the secondary theme as material for the coda, in effect letting the secondary theme have the final say in this narrative (Figure 4-6). In this example, marked *Poco meno mosso* and *molto espressivo*, both aspects of the secondary theme, a fragment of the melody in the cello line and the running triplets in the piano part, are present. The meandering nature of the triplets creates an ending that is ambiguous rather than decisive, especially when coupled with the pianissimo dynamic marking and the *sempre rallentando* in m. 138.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of the Sonata in C minor, measures 132-139. The score is for Violoncello and Piano. Measure 132 is marked 'M' and 'poco meno mosso'. Measure 133 is marked 'S'. Measure 134 is marked 'pp molto espressivo'. Measure 135 is marked 'pp'. Measure 136 is marked 'rall.' and 'p'. Measure 137 is marked 'pp' and 'sempre rallentando'. Measure 138 is marked 'pp'. Measure 139 is marked 'pp' and 'rall.'.

Figure 4-6. *Sonata in C minor*, use of secondary theme in the coda, first movement, mm. 132-139. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Motivic design: A product of nineteenth-century conservatory training, Smyth uses the motives in her themes to unify the movement, and as source material for the development section. “Phrase a”, presented in Figure 4-7 below, contains four of the five motives that serve as the primary material for the entire sonata. The first pitch motive (marked PM1) is comprised of the scale degrees $\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$. The second motive (PM2) uses the same three pitches, but the primary difference is the direction of the three scale degrees to form $\hat{2} - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$. PM2 does not always maintain exact intervallic relationships; the motive is instead better described as the combination of a step and a leap in the opposite direction. The rhythmic element in both motives is a dotted-quarter-eighth-note combination, labeled RM1. This material is followed by another rhythmic motive labeled RM2, characterized by the straightforward rhythmic figure of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes. Smyth’s reliance on these motives to create her themes is even more apparent in “phrase b”. In Figure 4-8 below, the second phrase of

the principal theme is a combination of the four motives stated in the first phrase, presenting the PM1 in inversion and a modified PM2. The rhythmic motives also help preserve the unity of the theme.

Figure 4-7 shows the first five measures of the first movement of the Sonata in C minor. The notation is for Violin (Vlc.) in 3/8 time, marked *mf*. The motives are labeled as follows: PM1 (measures 1-2), RM1 (measure 1), RM2 (measure 2), modified PM2 (measures 3-4), PM2 (measures 1-2), and RM1 (measures 1-2).

Figure 4-7. *Sonata in C minor*, pitch and rhythmic motives, first movement, mm. 1-5. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-8 shows measures 6-8 of the first movement of the Sonata in C minor. The motives are labeled as follows: RM1 (measures 6-7), RM2 (measures 7-8), RM2 (measures 8-9), RM1 (measures 9-10), RM1 (measures 10-11), PM1 (measures 6-7), PM2 (measures 7-8), and PM2 (measures 8-9).

Figure 4-8. *Sonata in C minor*, pitch and rhythmic motives, first movement, mm. 6-8. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Finally, the third pitch motive, labeled PM3 and appearing at the end of the second phrase, is a lower-neighbor note figure with the scale degrees $\hat{1} - \hat{7} - \hat{1}$ (Figure 4-9). The two bars in the example also represent the first cadence, in m. 10. The final beat of m. 9 is actually a truncated version of the opening three notes of the melody, using the beginning of the theme to subtly act as the ending of the theme.

Figure 4-9. *Sonata in C minor*, pitch and rhythmic motives, first movement, mm. 9-10. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Motives from the principal theme are also found in the secondary theme. The use of PM2 and PM3, and not PM1, distinguish the secondary theme from the principal theme. The motive is first mentioned in the top voice in the piano part with the pitches C-B-C and is immediately followed by a reminder of the earlier motive, PM2, with the pitches E^b-B-C (Figure 4-10).

Figure 4-10. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 21-24. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The secondary theme continues in the cello line in m. 25 as a combination of PM3 and PM2. In the next four bars, the rhythm of the original PM3 has expanded from the eighth-notes in m. 10 to quarter notes (Figure 4-11). Smyth builds the tension of this theme by going back to the eighth-notes in m. 29. Rhythmic diminution plus the leaps of an octave and a ninth create momentum in the music, leading to the climactic point in the theme.

Figure 4-11. *Sonata in C minor*, pitch and rhythmic motives, first movement, mm. 25-35. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

As the fragments of the two themes are reworked in various ways in the development section, the motives also return as components of those distinct melodic ideas, demonstrating Smyth's skill for motivic development. The first part of the development explores combinations of the themes in their entirety, but in m. 60 Smyth develops the motivic components. This development is immediately heard in the accompaniment in the piano part and the triplet eighth-note passage in the cello part at m. 60 with a reprise of PM3, shown in Figure 4-12.

Figure 4-12. *Sonata in C minor*, pitch and rhythmic motives, revised first movement, mm. 60-63. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Only two measures after this passage, the cello line hints at both PM1 and PM2 by outlining the interval of a third (Figure 4-13). Use of these motives occurs less and less as Smyth incorporates transitional material from the exposition to lead into the

recapitulation. The motives examined above not only appear throughout the first movement but also in subsequent movements. Furthermore, the interval of a minor third that characterizes PM1 and PM2, as well as the dotted rhythm of RM1, plays a primary role in establishing the sonata's recognizable footprint.

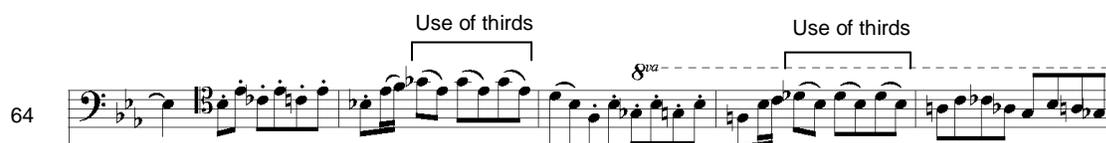


Figure 4-13. *Sonata in C minor*, revised first movement, mm. 64-68. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Harmonic design: Smyth's harmonic language combines Classical diatonic harmonies and Romantic chromaticism in a fluid manner. Diatonic harmonic progressions are soon embellished with added ninths, suspensions, and borrowed chords, and authentic cadences are elided or avoided. Her modulations are often abrupt or awkward, especially leading into the development section. Of all the movements in this work and the subsequent chamber works, however, the harmonic language in this early first movement is the most traditional.

Smyth's melodies alone do not convey the emotional content of the work. The expressiveness of her melodies is illuminated by Smyth's harmonic language. Chromatic harmonies and secondary dominants push the tonal barriers while mode mixture and enharmonic re-spellings create a sense of ambiguity. The climactic moment of "phrase a" occurs on a ii° harmony, while the climactic moment of "phrase b" arrives at the tritone between the cello and piano. The second phrase is supported by a V^6/iv leading to iv , an underlying harmonic structure with the chromatic melodic lines emphasizing the harmonic movement. The added leading tones (B^b and D^b resolving to

C) create tension and imbue the theme with a yearning and apprehensive quality.

These moments of dissonance and harmonic tension within a largely diatonic passage foreshadow movement away from the tonic (Figure 4-14).

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of a sonata in C minor, measures 1 through 8. It features two staves: Violoncello (Cello) and Piano. The Violoncello part is in the upper staff, and the Piano part is in the lower staff. The key signature is C minor (three flats). The tempo is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). A downward arrow points to a specific note in the Violoncello part. The Piano part includes a section marked *poco marc.* (poco marcato). Harmonic annotations include $\text{ii}^{\circ 6/5}$ and $[\text{V}^6/\text{iv}] \text{ iv}$.

Figure 4-14. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 1-8. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Smyth's cadences are directly related to the construction of her themes. In the second phrase of the principal theme, after the climactic point the melody decreases in volume and descends in pitch toward the cadence, but resolution is delayed by two measures (Figure 4-15). Even when the cadence is finally achieved the melodic line continues, proceeding without pause to the next idea. The expected dominant-tonic cadence, when it does occur, releases the tension, but the feeling created is rarely one of resolution or pause. Further examples throughout this chapter and the entire study will demonstrate the frequency of this trait.

Allegro appassionato

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the first movement of the Sonata in C minor. Each system includes a cello line (Vcl.) and a piano accompaniment (piano). The piano part is marked with *mf* and *poco marc.* The chord analysis below the piano part identifies the following chords: $c:$, $ii^{\circ 6/5}$, $vii^{\circ 7}/V$, V^7 , $[V^6/iv]$, iv , V^6 , iv^6 , $i^{6/4}$, ii° , $i^{6/4}$, V^7 , i , and $G: I$. Three boxes on the right side of the score label the cadences: 'Half cadence' (at the end of the first system), 'Subverted cadence' (at the end of the second system), and 'Perfect authentic cadence' (at the end of the third system). The tempo 'Allegro appassionato' is indicated at the top left.

Figure 4-15. Example of Smyth's cadential style. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 1-11. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The secondary theme builds upon the suggested chromaticism of the principal theme. Although the secondary key area is eventually established in m. 30, the secondary theme, initially tonicizes F minor (Figure 4-16). Frequent chromatic alterations instill a sense of urgency despite the four measures of a B^b pedal-point in the bass. Secondary diminished-seventh chords unfold in the piano part, adding to the tension in this passage. In the cello line, leading tones and minor seconds combined with leaps of as large as the octave create an unpredictable quality and push the music forward. But as the cello line increases in chromaticism, the piano part becomes more stable, clearly progressing to the tonic. In m. 34 of this example, the same extended

harmony from the principal theme appears. In both cases, it is a dominant harmony with added 7ths and 9ths moving to F minor. Smyth's recontextualization of this harmonic progression in the relative major grants it particular significance and is an unusual harmonic device not often found in the music of her contemporaries.

Further harmonic ambiguity occurs in the transition to the development, the result of enharmonic spellings and mode mixture. The iv chord (A^b) in the previous key of E^b major becomes a G[#] minor chord in the new key and a iii chord in the key of E minor, an unusual modulation to a distantly-related key (Figure 4-17). However, the key of E minor is abruptly abandoned through a deceptive cadence and a modulation to the tonal area of C. C minor has returned to the key signature, but the presence of E-naturals in the piano and cello parts suggest the key of C major despite frequent iv and v chords (Figure 4-18). The use of harmonies from both C minor and C major demonstrates a significant element in Smyth's music. Her key centers are not mode-specific but instead rely frequently on mode mixture.²⁶⁹ It is not merely the shifting tonal centers that create uncertainty in the development; Smyth's mode mixture and enharmonic respellings allow for several possibilities of musical direction with each new harmony.

Rhythmic design: In addition to melody and harmony, Smyth's treatment of rhythm unifies the four movements and places her among her contemporaries. Rhythmic ideas such as hemiolas, metric shifts, and polyrhythms relate this piece to other composers of the late nineteenth-century, such as Schumann and Brahms, but these techniques are also an integral part of Smyth's style. Examples of hemiolas

²⁶⁹ Similar uses of chromatic harmonies created out of voice-leading and half-step motion can be found in the music of Smyth's contemporary, Edvard Grieg. One similar use of enharmonic spellings in order to effect a key change occurs in the first movement of the *Valse-Caprice, arr. of Op. 37*.

Violoncello *compassionately*
mf *cresc.*

25
 Piano *cresc.*

E^b: V V [vii^{°7} i vii^{°7} i] V i vii^{°7}/V
 f

29 *espressivo*
f *cresc.*

col 8
 V V^{4/2} I⁶ i⁶ V⁷/V V⁷

33 *ff* *decresc.* *p* **C**

I⁶ V/ii ii V V I

Figure 4-16. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 25-37. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Vlc.

45

E^b: I iv I⁶ iv
 e: iii i

Figure 4-17. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 45-46. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

45

Vlc.

49

53

e: iii i V⁷/vi vi^{6/4} i It⁶⁺ V⁷ IV V⁷

(8^{vb}) ped.

I^{6/4} V⁷ i V⁷ i vii^{o7}/V V⁷ C: I⁷ vii^{o4/3}/iii I^{6/5}

I^{4/2} I V iv⁶ I⁶ iv i⁶ V^{4/3} I

Figure 4-18. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 45-56. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

can be found in three of the four movements. In the second measure of Figure 4-19, Smyth interrupts the steady triplets with the illusion of quicker duplets by placing emphasis on every other eighth note. Development of the two themes combines the differing rhythms and accompaniments unique to each theme, juxtaposing the duple rhythm of the principal theme with the triplet accompaniment of the second theme. In m. 50 (Figure 4-20), the cello continues the principal theme over the triplet accompaniment from the secondary theme. Rather than continuing to contrast the two themes, highlighting one and then the other, Smyth superimposes them, creating a symbiotic relationship. In the fourth measure of Figure 4-20, the piano part contains both the triplet pattern and the neighbor-note motive from the second theme while the cello continues the duple principle theme. Thus, the two contrasting ideas occur simultaneously, one supporting the other. The secondary theme immediately follows the reprise of the first theme at m. 56. Then the triplet pattern is traded between the cello and piano, furthering the impression of combining not only the two themes but now the two instruments, as well.

The musical score for Figure 4-19 consists of three staves. The top staff is the cello part, the middle staff is the piano part, and the bottom staff is the bass line. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 57. The piano part features a triplet pattern in the right hand and a duple rhythm in the left hand. The dynamic marking *ff* (fortissimo) is used for the first two measures, and *p* (piano) is used for the last two measures. The cello part features a duple rhythm in the right hand and a triplet accompaniment in the left hand. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is used for the last two measures. The score includes a rehearsal mark 'A' above the piano part in measure 59. The bottom staff has a marking 'sempre col 8' below the first measure.

Figure 4-19. Sonata in C minor, first movement, mm. 57-60. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-20. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 49-60. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The overarching rhythmic trait that gives Smyth's music its rhythmic drive and sense of propulsion is the consistent use of a connecting rhythm. In the principal theme, the connecting eighth-note pushes the melody from m. 1 to m. 2 and into m. 3, as shown by the arrows (Figure 4-21). A connecting rhythm is also the driving force behind the second theme, with the motive PM2 occurring across the bar and with three eighth-notes leading into the following measure, demonstrated by the arrows (Figure 4-22). This incessant forward motion creates tension and excitement in the music.



Figure 4-21. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 1-4. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

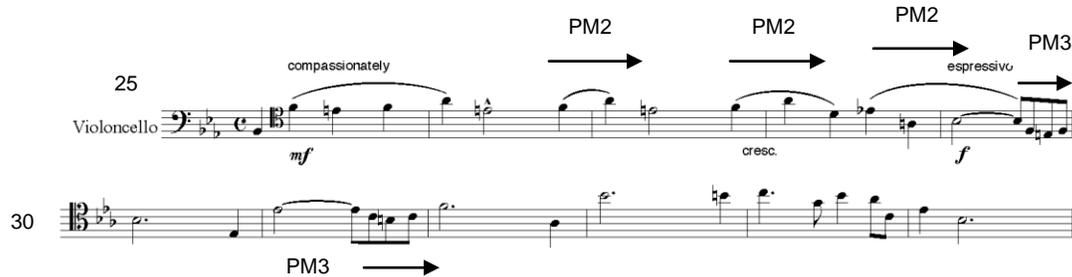


Figure 4-22. *Sonata in C minor*, first movement, mm. 25-35. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

An even clearer example of Smyth's preference for rhythmic variety through syncopation is found in the autograph score of the first movement. The following passage is the largest revision to the manuscript, occurring in the development section of the first movement. The original score continued the cello line of eighth-note triplets, with a simple syncopated accompaniment (Figure 4-23). Smyth altered this section in the revision, choosing to add rhythmic variety to a monotonous rhythmic texture. In the first four bars of the revision, the triplets are traded between the cello and piano while also maintaining the original melody and chords in the piano part (see Figures 4-24 and 4-25). Following this passage, the cello shifts to duple rhythms in m. 64. The shift is sudden and disjointed yet it also maintains the rhythmic drive of the first movement (Figures 4-26 and 4-27).

Figure 4-23 shows a first draft of the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor*. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 60-62) features a Violin line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment with a steady bass line and chords. The second system (measures 63-65) continues the melodic development in the violin and the accompaniment. The third system (measures 66-68) shows further melodic ornamentation in the violin. The fourth system (measures 69-71) concludes the draft with a final melodic phrase in the violin and a sustained accompaniment.

Figure 4-23. *Sonata in C minor*, first draft of first movement, mm. 60-71. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-24 shows a first draft of the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor*, focusing on measures 60-62. It features a Violin line and a piano accompaniment. The violin part has a melodic line with some ornamentation, and the piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation.

Figure 4-24. *Sonata in C minor*, first draft of first movement, mm. 60-62. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-25 shows a revised draft of the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor*, focusing on measures 60-63. The Violin line is more developed than in the previous drafts. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and triplet markings (*3*) in the bass line, indicating a more refined and detailed composition.

Figure 4-25. *Sonata in C minor*, revised draft of first movement, mm. 60-63. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-26 shows the original draft of the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor*, measures 60-68. The score is in C minor, 3/4 time. It features a violin part (Vlc.) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of block chords and simple rhythmic patterns. The measures are numbered 60, 63, and 66.

Figure 4-26. *Sonata in C minor*, original draft of first movement, mm. 60-68. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-27 shows the revised first movement of the *Sonata in C minor*, measures 60-68. The score is in C minor, 3/4 time. It features a violin part (Vlc.) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamic markings (*p*, *mf*, *ff*, *mp*) and articulation marks (accents, slurs). The measures are numbered 60 and 64. A *8va* marking is present above the violin part in measure 64.

Figure 4-27. *Sonata in C minor*, revised first movement, mm. 60-68. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The supporting harmonic progressions in the piano part, however, remain almost identical to the original version. Smyth's decision to keep the original harmonies further demonstrates that her changes to this section were for rhythmic and melodic variety rather than a change in the larger harmonic structure of the work. In this first look at Smyth's compositional style, I have highlighted the traits which reappear frequently over

the course of her career. Examination of subsequent movements and compositions reveals an overarching Smythian style.

Allegretto (ländler tempo)

Smyth’s placement of the dance movement in the second-movement position became a standard format in her sonatas. In addition to changing the standard order of movements, Smyth also substitutes a *ländler* for the minuet in the *Sonata in C minor*, while maintaining the same formal parameters of the minuet-and-trio, as demonstrated by the chart in Table 4-2. This substitution was not uncommon as composers replaced the out-dated minuet and the *scherzo* with popular dances such as the waltz or *ländler*. Schubert and later Mahler were both fond of this dance form. Traditionally, a *ländler* is distinguished by a slower triple meter than the minuet and a heavy emphasis on beat one; Smyth’s movement also presents these traits.

Table 4-2. Formal diagram of second movement, *Sonata in C minor*, dance and trio form.

	Ländler			Trio				Coda	
Section	A	A ¹	A	B	C	B	D	A	B ¹
Key	C-D ^b	Fm- C	C E°	F	C	F	F	F	F
Mm. #s	1-17	18-43	44-60	61-75	76-87	88-97	98-110	111-118	119-130

Following standard formal practice, Smyth creates a harmonic distinction between the *ländler* section and the trio section. The *ländler* is quite chromatic and shifts between C minor and both F major and minor, despite an F minor key signature from the beginning. Conversely, the trio is highly diatonic and set in the key of F major. This dance movement, however, exhibits an unusual trait that Smyth also uses in later dance movements; the opening section is not in the tonic key but in the dominant key. By doing this, the composer has created harmonic ambiguity that becomes clear as the

movement progresses. It is only in the coda that this large-scale V to I motion is declared and the tonic key of F is affirmed.

The markings in this work are also tri-lingual, occurring in Italian, German, and English. In addition to the expected Italian markings, she also writes “compassionately” at the beginning of the second theme. Then, at the beginning of the B section in the *ländler*, Smyth writes “*gebunden*” in the piano part, indicating that the melody within the triplet figure to be held to the full quarter-note value; this marking also occurs in the recapitulation. Furthermore, the first ending of the *ländler* is marked in the score with the following instructions: “*Beim Weiderholung nach dem Trio hier gleich au den Coda gehen!* [In the repetition after the Trio here go immediately to the Coda!]”²⁷⁰ These instructions are written in place of symbols or signs. At least in the autograph score, Smyth used English and German for the instructions in addition to the standard Italian, a growing trend in the late nineteenth century.

Thematic design: Drawing upon her study of her contemporaries, Smyth uses developing variation, a common Brahms’s technique, to explore the main theme in this movement. The first theme is clearly stated in the first twelve measures. Similar to the first movement’s principal theme, the first four measures present “phrase a”. The second phrase, “phrase b”, begins with the same figure as the first phrase but quickly varies the idea (Figure 4-28). Unlike the first movement, these two phrases are both four measures long and neither possesses an arch-like structure or a defining climactic moment. Instead, the phrase continues to descend from the opening C down a sixth to E-natural. Yet Smyth again defies the listener’s expectations by adding a third phrase,

²⁷⁰ Smyth, *Sonata in C minor for Cello and Piano*, 9.

“phrase c”. In “phrase c” it is unclear which instrument has the melody; the cello plays a legato arch-like line while the piano plays a countermelody. The melodic nature of “Phrase c” is finally established in the return of the A section in m. 44 (Figure 4-29). A modified version of the piano melody clearly has more significance than the repeated figure that has replaced the cello’s *legato* line. Through variation and a gradual declamation of ideas, Smyth created an organic movement that is only interrupted by the entrance of the trio section. The climactic moment of this theme actually occurs in m. 13, a proportion of 0.771 (see Figure 4-28).

Figure 4-28. *Sonata in C minor*, first theme, second movement, mm. 1-18. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949. Repeat markings, such as those found in mm. 2 and 3, are original to the manuscript.

Figure 4-29. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 44-51. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

In the trio, new melodic material is still based on the same ideas of the *ländler*, especially the interval of a third emphasized by the opening bars of both sections. Characterized by a running eighth-note pattern in the piano part accompanied by a drone in the cello part, the melody of the trio is also more instrumental in nature than the vocal quality of the *ländler* theme (Figure 4-30).

Figure 4-30. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 63-67. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

It is not until section D in the trio that a distinctly different melody appears, acting as a codetta before the return of the *ländler*. This section is characterized by an ostinato bass line and a syncopated descending figure in the piano's upper register (Figure 4-31). Despite the new elements, this material, too, is based on the material from the opening phrase. Notice especially the figure of thirds in the second measure. This

economy of material is a compositional technique that Smyth uses quite frequently and will become more apparent through a motivic analysis of the themes.



Figure 4-31. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 97-110. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Motivic design: Two melodic motives from the first movement form the main theme of the *ländler*, that of PM1 and PM2, as shown in Figure 4-32. Furthermore, the pitch motive PM2 plays a fundamental role in the structure of this movement, both as a three-note motive and as a minor third. In the B section, the motive appears as part of the main theme in its modified form (Figure 4-33). In the highly chromatic transition back to the A section, PM2 is the driving force that propels the music forward (Figure 4-34). This motive also acts as the basic building block for the theme of the trio section. It not only begins the eighth-note pattern in m. 63, but it appears as part of the melody in m. 71 (Figure 4-35). In this movement in particular, the motive PM2 is the primary unifying device, yet this motive is also borrowed directly from the principal theme of the first movement. Although Smyth incorporates the same motives throughout the work, the significance that she places on each motive changes among the movements, allowing for the variety exhibited by her melodies and rhythms.

Allegretto
(Ländler tempo)

PM2 PM2 PM1 PM1

Vlc.

Figure 4-32. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 1-4. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

PM2 PM2 PM2 PM2

18

violoncello

Figure 4-33. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 18-25. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

vic.

PM2

poco rit. A Tempo

p

PM2 PM2

30

vic.

PM2 PM2

36

Figure 4-34. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 30-41. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The image displays two pages of a musical score. The left page, numbered 63, shows a Violin (Vlc.) part and a piano part. The Violin part has a 'Trio' marking above it. A bracket labeled 'PM2' is placed under the piano part's melody. The right page, numbered 71, shows a piano part with a bracket labeled 'PM2' over a specific melodic phrase.

Figure 4-35. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 63-64, and m. 71. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Harmonic design: The second movement provides further evidence of harmonic ambiguity as a primary element in Smyth's harmonic language. In this movement Smyth experimented with the *definition* of a tonic or key area as a stabilizing harmonic center by adding sevenths and ninths, avoiding the dominant, or tonicizing distant keys and thus undermining the tonal center. At the larger harmonic level, various tonal centers and modulations create contrast between sections A and B. The key signature is F minor, but the A section is set in C major; yet the use of added sevenths create further harmonic ambiguity (see mm. 1-4 of Figure 4-36). At a more detailed structural level, the phrases and their cadences enhance the harmonic uncertainty. The A section is comprised of three four-bar phrases. The antecedent phrase resolves to a $B^{\circ 7}$ chord; the consequent phrase ends with a plagal cadence on C but the melodic idea continues immediately in the piano part, and the next four bars proceed to tonicize the D^b major chord. This harmony later acts as a VI chord leading into the A^1 section. We finally hear an F major chord in F minor, demonstrating another example of mode mixture (see m. 18 of Ex. 4-36). The return of the A section is marked by the return to the C^7 chords. In the first eighteen measures Smyth has yet to establish a definitive tonal center.

1

Vlc. 8^{va}

p

C: I^7 I^7 -- vii^7

7

ff

loco

cres - cen do

$iv^{6/4}$ $iv^{6/4}$ I I $IV^{6/4}$ IV/N^6 V/N^6

13

decrease.

N^6 vii I F: I

Figure 4-36. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 1-18. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

This chromaticism continues in the *ländler* as the music makes its way back to C major. Between the F major harmony at the beginning of the A¹ section and the return of the A section, brief tonicizations of B major and F[#] minor occur surrounded by chromatically-derived chords that elude functional harmonic analysis. The enharmonic respelling of G^b as F[#] at m. 26 in Figure 4-37 creates the opportunity for a new harmonic direction. This harmonic turn is further emphasized by the cello line which plays G^b-E^b-C followed by F[#]-D[#]-B-natural. The half-step adjustment on the third beat confirms the move to B major in m. 28. And yet, B major is quickly abandoned in this volatile

Figure 4-37. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 24-44. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

transition section. As Figure 4-37 shows, mm. 31-35 hovers in a chromatic ambiguity between $D^\#$ and $G^\#$. Closer inspection reveals the subtlety of Smyth's craft. The pitch motive PM2 is three pitches that circle a minor third, such as the scale degrees $\hat{2} - \hat{b}3 - \hat{1}$ in the first movement or $\hat{7} - \hat{1} - \hat{2}$ in this movement. In this passage, however, Smyth

applies the motive to her harmonic progression. In m. 34-37 the harmonies progress as $G^\#-E^\#-F^\#-G^\#$, embodying the motive PM2. Since the progression returns to its original harmony, in this case the distantly-related $G^\#^7$, the effect is static and delays the expected forward motion set up by the original move to B major in m. 27. Only in m. 38 do the diminished harmonies finally lead to a cadence, now in the original tonal center of C. Conversely, the trio section is quite diatonic. Smyth maintains either F major or C major tonal centers and uses only tonic, dominant, and secondary dominant harmonies. This respite of diatonic harmonies reinforces the dramatic and chromatic nature of the surrounding *ländler*.

Rhythmic design: Rhythm continues to play a pivotal role in this movement, as it did in the first movement. There are three rhythmic devices that draw the attention of the listener in the *ländler*: the hemiola, the connecting rhythm, and the Scotch snap. Smyth's use of the hemiola, however, is not as frequent as one might expect of an admirer of Brahms. In this movement, one example occurs in the A section at m. 80 where slurs across the bar lines turn a triple meter into a duple meter (Figure 4-38). In the very next measure, Smyth undermines the bar line further with descending arpeggios in a group of five eighth-notes instead of six. Finally, in m. 83 groupings of six eighth-notes return. This four-measure passage presents a metric shift from 4/8 to 5/8 to 6/8, creating rhythmic tension before a restatement of the melodic material from the opening *ländler*. The effect is that of forward motion, literally pushing the music ahead by ignoring the bar line.

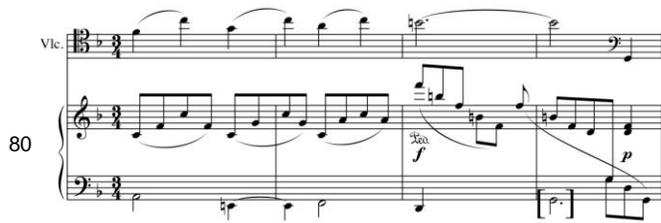


Figure 4-38. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm.80-83. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The second rhythmic device is Smyth's use of a connecting rhythm, already found in the first movement. The main theme does not begin with an anacrusis but instead uses the final beat of the measure to push the music across the downbeat, seen in Figure 4-39.

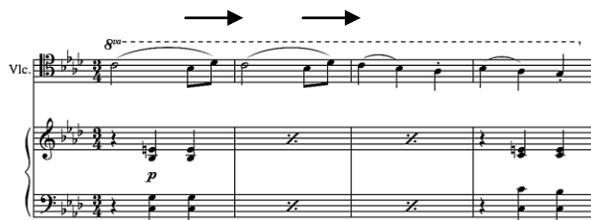


Figure 4-39. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 1-4. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

This means of propulsion is also the primary rhythmic trait in section D of the trio, marked by arrows in the example below (Figure 4-40). Smyth is effectively using the eighth-notes on the third beat throughout this movement to instill a restless character that is likewise found in the harmonic language.

The third rhythmic device is the Scotch snap, found in several of Smyth's early chamber works. Her string quartets of the 1870s contain this rhythm, as does the slow movement of the *Sonata Op. 7* discussed in chapter five. This unexpected rhythm, seen in m. 67 of Figure 4-41, stands out in her music because it reverses the prevailing rhythmic quality of the entire work.

Figure 4-40. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 97-110. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-41. *Sonata in C minor*, second movement, mm. 63-67. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

As a final note on this particular movement, a lighter texture not usually found in Smyth's pieces is heard in the trio of the second movement. In the above example, the cello plays a drone supporting the two-voice counterpoint in the piano part. The texture is quite a bit thinner in this section compared to the rest of the work, and it presents one of the more unusual moments in Smyth's writing (see Figure 4-41). The octaves and multi-note chords are gone, and the harmonies are distinctly diatonic. Although it is considered typical for the trio to have a lighter texture and possibly a more playful mood, this particular passage does not bear the strength or seriousness often found in Smyth's works of this period, even of other trio sections; it hints at her later pieces of the 1920s.

Andante

The third movement is a theme-and-variations in the key of B^b major. The two-phrase theme is developed melodically, texturally, and rhythmically through four clearly labeled variations. Two large sections based on previous thematic material act as an extended and thickly-textured coda. Of all four movements, this movement adheres most closely to the traditional form, as demonstrated in the chart in Table 4-3.

Thematic Design: The theme of the third movement comprises two repeated six-measure phrases (Figure 4-42). Unlike the first movement, the climactic points of the two phrases occur at the same respective beat, not quite halfway through each phrase (a proportion of 0.44). Smyth seems to be experimenting more with melodic structure in each successive movement by shifting the climactic point of the melody. On the other hand, the countermelody in the piano part does have an arch structure, although the climactic point is not significantly altered by this. The first phrase, solidly in the key of B^b major, continues the overall *cantabile* character of the work with long tones in the cello. The more rhythmically active second phrase, however, travels briefly through C minor and E^b major harmonies before moving back to the tonic. The first phrase is structurally very similar to the first two movements; a half-note in the first part of the measures followed by shorter note durations in the remaining beats.

Each variation of the third movement maintains the basic structure and harmonic center of the theme while presenting an altered version of it, thus conforming to the standard model of variation form. Thirds and sixths are the most common sonorities and create a unified quality with the first two movements, although the texture in the piano part changes from variation to variation. Variation I presents a countermelody in the

Table 4-3. Formal diagram of third movement, *Sonata in C minor*, theme-and-variations form.

	Theme		Var. I		Var. II		Var. III		Var. IV		A	B
Phrase	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b a
Key	B ^b	B ^b	B ^b -D	G-B ^b	B ^b	G-B ^b	b ^b -D ^b	C-f-D ^b -B ^b	B ^b	B ^b	e-B ^b	B ^b
Mm. #s	1-6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25-31	32-37	38-44	45-51	52-58	59-64	65-78	79-96

accompaniment but maintains the overall character of the theme. A rhythmic crescendo increases the tension in Variation II as chromatically-moving triplets appear in the accompaniment. Then in Variation III, Smyth briefly switches to the minor mode as the second theme motive is presented in an inverted form. The most differing variation is the fourth, as the rhythm of the piano becomes an oscillating sixteenth-note figure. The cello's melody over this accompaniment is the most active of the movement thus far, containing an ascending eighth-note line in the first measure (Figure 4-43).

The final part of the movement emerges out of Variation IV. The sixteenth-note figures extend into two large sections of the movement which are not marked as variations but are instead labeled with rehearsal letters "A" and "B." The A section continues the sixteenth notes in the upper register of the piano over an octave bass accompaniment. An eighth-note cello line adds excitement and contrast from the earlier variations over the thick chords in the piano part. The B section presents a new twist to the nature of the work; octaves appear in the piano part and a final drawn-out statement of the main theme in the cello part concludes the work (Figure 4-44).

Motivic design: The melodic and rhythmic motives from the first and second movements are again present in this movement. The rhythmic motive RM1 appears in the third and seventh measures and in modified form in m. 5. PM1, a melodic motive comprised of three notes in conjunct motion, is heard in mm. 8 and 10; PM2 is found in mm. 5 and 8 (Figure 4-45). First theme motives are heard in Variation IV, despite the change in character. PM2 occurs at mm. 52-53 in the cello line, RM1 is found in m. 54, and PM1 occurs in m. 55-56 (Figure 4-46).

Andante
Molto dolce

Vlc.

Phrase a

Phrase b

7

Figure 4-42. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 1-12. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Var IV

Vlc.

p
gebunden

52

p

55

cres - cen - do

f

Figure 4-43. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 52-57. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

B

Vlc.

73

77

82

87

f

pesante

p

p

tr

pp

pp

decresc. rall.

molto ritard.

dan - do

Figure 4-44. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 73-90. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Andante
Molto dolce

Vlc.

RM1

PM1

PM2

7

PM2

Figure 4-45. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 1-12. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Var IV

Vlc.

PM2

RM1

p
gebunden

52

RM1

PM1

55

f

Figure 4-46. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 52-57. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Harmonic design: Harmonic ambiguity also plays a significant role in the third movement. Even in the original statement of the theme, the tonic area of the second phrase is not clear until the final cadence in m. 12 (Figure 4-47). This motion from ambiguity to clarity is also found in Variations I, III, and IV. For example, the first phrase of Variation I progresses from the key of B^b (I) to the key of D major (III), which then serves as the dominant of G major (VI). The second phrase of Variation I begins in G major before modulating back to B^b major (Figure 4-48). Thus, while the phrase may begin in a distant key or on a non-diatonic harmony, the melody always returns to the tonal center. Smyth's cadential style is frequently an avoidance of perfect authentic cadences, enhancing the overall ambiguous nature. The final section is the best example of this trait. The music builds through ascending pitches and a *forte* dynamic level to the climax in the second system of Figure 4-49. Although tonic is reached in the measure immediately following the highest point in the melody, indicated by the arrow in the second system, the harmonic progression is only a plagal cadence, IV-I⁶. An authentic cadence occurs two measures later at a *piano* dynamic level as the melody descends to $\hat{1}$. The final measures are a prolongation of the tonic and a quiet resolution to the movement (see Figure 4-49).

In this movement, Smyth adhered to the tradition of the theme-and-variation while also demonstrating her ability to develop her ideas and transcend the standard form. Compared to the surrounding movements, however, the third movement is relatively stable. Brief modulations to nearby keys and minor modes provide tension but do not stray far from the melodic and harmonic parameters of the opening theme.

PAC

B^b: vii[°]7/ii ii V/IV IV V⁷ vi IV⁶ I^{6/4} V I

Figure 4-47. Use of a perfect authentic cadence (PAC). *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 7-12. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

G: I⁶ iv V (sus.) I vii[°]6/5

B^b: vi⁶ I I ii[°] vii⁷ I

Figure 4-48. Example of imperfect authentic cadence (IAC). *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 19-24. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The image shows a musical score for the third movement of Beethoven's Sonata in C minor, measures 73-90. The score is in 3/4 time and features a violin and piano. The key signature is C minor. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, and *pp*, and performance instructions like "decrease. rall." and "molto ritard.". Specific musical features are labeled as "Plagal cadence" and "PAC". The lyrics "dan - do" are present in the final system.

Figure 4-49. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 73-90. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Rhythmic design: The use of the connecting rhythm as a driving rhythmic element is as much of a factor in this slow movement as in the surrounding movements. In this case, the main theme and its accompaniment are more regular than the other movements with fewer instances of dotted rhythms and a greater use of straight eighth-notes. However, the eighth note at the end of m. 3 and the three eighth notes in m. 5 in

the cello part are an example of how Smyth's incorporates the dotted-rhythmic idea even in the most subtle ways. The second phrase of the theme is more rhythmically active in the cello part, and the piano part engages in greater dialogue with the cello with eighth notes during the cello's quarter notes (Figure 4-50).

The image shows a musical score for a cello and piano. The tempo is marked 'Andante' and 'Molto dolce'. The key signature is C minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the cello part with three arrows pointing to specific rhythmic patterns, and the piano part with a complex accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system continues the dialogue between the two instruments.

Figure 4-50. *Sonata in C minor*, third movement, mm. 1-12. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The subtle use of rhythmic elements from the theme in all the variations and the final sections is clearly seen in the examples given above.

Allegro con fuoco

The final sonata-rondo movement re-establishes C minor as the overriding tonal area, as shown in Table 4-4. The principal theme is again set in C minor, while the second theme this time in G minor. After a repeat of the A section, the C section (acting as the development) travels through various harmonies instead of maintaining a related tonal center such as the subdominant or submediant. The A and B sections return in the tonic C minor. A meter shift in the coda switches the time signature from 3/4 to 6/8,

launching the two players to an accelerated end. This clearly-defined structure provides stability and closure to a work that has emphasized harmonic ambiguity.

Table 4.4. Formal diagram of fourth movement, *Sonata in C minor*, sonata-rondo form.

Period	A		B		A	C	A		B		A/coda
Theme	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	PT	Development	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	PT
Key	Cm		Gm	G	Cm	Various	Cm		Cm		Cm/C
Mm. #s	1-16	17-30	31-48	49-54	55-70	71-133	134-49	150-63	164-81	181-91	192-207

Thematic design: The previous three movements have either treated themes equally, as in the first movement, or the themes were monothematic, as in the second and third movements. In some respects, the equal treatment of themes was contrary to nineteenth-century theory and compositional practices. At the end of the nineteenth-century when Smyth was studying composition and theory, musicians and theorists considered the principal theme in sonata form, often characterized as rhythmic, regularly accented, loud, and clearly articulated, as *masculine* while the secondary theme, commonly a lyrical, legato, and soft, was interpreted as *feminine*. These theorists wrote treatises and taught courses that provided a model for musicians that used this gendered idea of themes. Smyth, however, seems to have avoided this stereotype until the fourth movement of this work, granting all her previous principal themes a static, lyrical quality and her second themes an active, dramatic character. In fact, Smyth's manner of writing a strong and contrasting second theme was not uncommon in the music of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, including in the music of one of her favorite composers, Beethoven. Charles Rosen notes that in the themes of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, the second subjects "are usually more

intense than the first subjects,”²⁷¹ thereby undermining the 19th-century assumptions about gendered themes. Until this movement, Smyth’s themes also seemed to ignore the principle of nineteenth-century theorists. The themes of the *Finale*, however, clearly portray these thematic stereotypes.

The principal theme in the final sonata-rondo movement is quite distinct from its counterparts in earlier movements both rhythmically and intervallically. It is comprised of two four-bar antecedent and consequent phrases; the first phrase cadences on the dominant and the second phrase cadences on the tonic, both very typical harmonic progressions for a classically-modeled melody (Figure 4-51).



Figure 4-51. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-8. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

The melodic line is more angular than previous themes in this work, with an opening octave jump followed soon after by several sixteenth notes. For the first time in this composition, the rhythms and leaps create a strong, accented melody that might have been perceived in the nineteenth century as *masculine*.²⁷² Unlike the first and third

²⁷¹ Rosen, *The classical style*, 70.

²⁷² Several articles have also discussed the genderizing of themes in sonata form. For further reading on this subject please see Curtis, “Rebecca Clarke and sonata form: questions of gender and genre”, 398-399; Marcia Citron, *Gender and the musical canon*, 132; Scott Burham’s “A. B. Marx and the gendering of sonata form”, 163-86; and Susan McClary’s “Narrative agendas in ‘absolute’ music: identity and difference in Brahms’s third symphony”, and Rosen, *The classical style*, 81.

movements, but similar to the *ländler*, this theme has a descending melodic structure, and the climactic highpoint occurs at the end of the phrase (a proportion of 0.917).

The secondary theme of the last movement, while slower and more lyrical, maintains a similar character to the principal theme. Despite the markings of *meno mosso* and *gebunden*, the angular nature of the theme closely resembles the opening idea (Figure 4-52). The secondary theme also maintains the propulsive quality of the movement. Finally, the structure of this theme parallels the principal theme, with the climactic moment occurring on the final note of the phrase.

Figure 4-52. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 31-38. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Motivic design: The cyclical nature of this work is confirmed by a comparison of the motives in this movement to earlier movements. The theme and its accompaniment are clearly grounded in motives from the first movement. The rhythmic motive, RM2, is heard in the second measure of the principal theme, only in a diminished form. Smyth has also combined motives in new ways, such as the combination of PM1 and RM2 from the first movement (Figure 4-53). Motives from the first movement are also found in the second theme. PM1, PM2, and RM1 are both present in the following example (Figure 4-54). In this movement, Smyth has also relied more exclusively on motives to serve as transitions. For example, the transition to the second theme concludes with a repeat of the combined PM1/RM2 motive, as shown in the Figure below (Figure 4-55).

Figure 4-53. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-5. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-54. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 31-35. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-55. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 28-30. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Harmonic design: Smyth is more conservative harmonically in this final movement, maintaining the expectations of sonata-rondo form. The opening A section is in C minor, and the transition suggests a move to the dominant for the second section. Instead, the music stays in C minor with only a brief move to G major just before the return of C minor in the A section. The other notable harmonic motion occurs at the end of the work. Smyth's move to the major mode at the end of the composition places this

piece in a long tradition of works that begin in the minor mode and end in the major mode, especially when the key is C minor/major. In this example, though, the trajectory from minor to major was not a move that occurred over the course of the whole work but one that happened in each movement. The gradual modulation from minor to major is a common trait in Smyth's works that will become more apparent in subsequent chapters.

At a lower structural level, Smyth's harmonic progressions maintain a diatonic quality. The principal theme is diatonic; the two phrases clearly cadence in C minor. Secondary dominants color the music but do not direct it away from the tonic. After sixteen measures, the music is still in the tonic key, manifesting a stability and devotion to the tonal center that did not occur in the earlier movements. A key change in m. 31 continues the eventual move to G minor (Figure 4-56).

The second theme is more harmonically unstable than the first theme. The eight-measure phrase can be divided melodically into two parts, but the harmonic progression reveals the theme to be a single, extended idea. The V-I cadence is not heard until mm. 38-39 (Figure 4-57). More significantly, the harmonic progression of "phrase a" models the harmonic relationship among the movements; the harmonic progression moves by fourths in mm. 33-35. Finally, "phrase b", as it is stated in the cello line, cadences on the dominant in m. 38, resolving only through the continuing piano line in mm. 38-39. This example demonstrates Smyth's harmonic style. Phrases are elided, cadences are elusive, and resolution to the tonic is delayed and undermined through harmonic choices and instrumentation. Smyth's tendency toward the flat keys is also witnessed in the movement by fourths. This element is explored even further in the development section.

Allegro con fuoco

violoncello

piano

col. g^{nb}

c: i V/iv iv⁶ V⁷/iv iv V i V i V i i V/iv

6

pno.

iv V/III III i iv⁶ ii^{ø6} i^{6/4} V i i^{6/4} V i iv^{6/4} V/V i V⁶ G:[V/V V

12

pno.

I I i⁷V⁷ i iv⁶ V/III III i iv ii^{ø6} i^{6/4} V⁷ i

Figure 4-56. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-16. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Meno mosso

violoncello

31

Meno mosso
gebunden

piano

g: i ii^{ø4/2} I IV V⁷/III III^{6/4} vi^{6/5}

v.c.

36

pno.

v^{6/4} V⁷/IV V⁷ V⁷ i

Figure 4-57. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 31-39. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Section C of this sonata-rondo form modulates through several keys, many more than the development in the first movement (Figure 4-58). The first part continues the key of C minor for five measures with a brief tonicization of F major before modulating by thirds from the D^b minor to G major. The harmonies then quickly move chromatically to G major and A^b major before settling on A major. In the very next passage, another example of Smyth's use of enharmonic spellings allows the harmonies to shift between E^b and B major, which then proceed on to E minor and back to C major. This passage is made possible through the use of accidentals without regard to a tonal center; the constantly shifting harmonies render a Roman numeral analysis irrelevant. Frequent chromatic alterations and enharmonic spellings highlight two trademarks of Smyth's music.

82

f

ff pp

G⁶ c A^{b6} d^b A⁶ A⁶

86

po co - a - poco cresc. - cen - do

d B^{b6} e^b B⁶ e C⁶ g^{o4/2} C⁶

90

g^{o4/2} C^{6/5} b^{b6} B⁻⁷ C⁷

Figure 4-58. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 82-92. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Rhythmic design: Supporting the melody and harmony of the work, the “Smythian gusto”, as Dale termed it,²⁷³ is one of the music’s more obvious traits and best described as an energetic, driving rhythmic quality. The rhythmic element that truly pushes the music forward and creates relentlessness – more than harmony or voice-leading – is the frequent use of the connecting rhythm. In this work it is most audible in the last movement, as there is always a rhythmic move to the downbeat in the melody.

²⁷³ Dale, “Dame Ethel Smyth’s prentice works”, 335.

A strong, rhythmic theme opens the sonata-rondo form, built out of smaller note values. No quarter note or half note can be found in the entire theme. Designated *Allegro con fuoco*, the four-measure phrase contains two contrasting motives which unify the entire movement (Figure 4-59). The first is an eighth-note rhythm over the distance of an octave, and the second is an eighth-note followed by two sixteenth notes. This rhythmic motion carries through the entire finale. Even the slower second theme of the B section contains a rhythmic motive from the first theme while maintaining a vocal quality, as discussed above (Figure 4-60). A presence of quarter notes and half notes, as well as the *gebunden* marking, distinguishes this melody from the principle theme. The development (section C of the rondo), *con energica*, invokes the rhythmic qualities of the earlier themes while traversing a variety of key areas.

This rhythmic ambiguity intensifies as the movement progresses, as the musical ideas rely on Smyth's use of the anacrusis. For example, beginning in m. 93, a syncopated eighth-note rhythm is slurred across the bar-line, obfuscating the beat (Figure 4-61). Then, the 3/4 meter takes on the qualities of 2/4 and 6/8 at differing points. Specifically, two measures before rehearsal letter "G" the eighth-notes are beamed as triplets, anticipating the shift to a 6/8 meter in the coda. The coda then presents the initial motive of the original theme, but in 6/8 time while the eighth notes remain equal, transforming the theme into a swirling dance (Figure 4-62). It is not until m. 194 that the time signature becomes apparent to the listener. This rhythmic shift drives the piece to its final cadence.

Allegro con fuoco

Figure 4-59. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-5. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Meno mosso

Meno mosso
gebunden

Figure 4-60. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 31-39. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Con lotta la forza

Figure 4-61. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 93-97. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Figure 4-62. *Sonata in C minor*, fourth movement, mm. 192-195. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. Add. MS 45949.

Summary

The above descriptive analysis has highlighted the significant aspects of this work. Smyth's treatment of themes is lyrical in its approach; she then connects these various themes through motives and their transmutations. The composer's musical style, one in which expression is reserved and yet full of tension, is the result of her harmonic language where chromatic harmonies lie next to diatonic harmonies in a manner often unexpected. This work also demonstrates her adoption and adaptation of 18th- and 19th-century musical forms and conventions, demonstrating her ability as a composer and the effectiveness of her studies with Reinecke and Herzogenberg. Smyth's creativity and individuality, however, do not begin to manifest themselves until her next project, the *Trio in D minor*.

Trio in D minor for Violin, Cello and Piano

In August of 1880, just over three months after writing the *Sonata in C minor*, Smyth finished the score and parts of the *Trio in D minor*.²⁷⁴ This work is similar to the previous sonata. There are four movements, each of which is written in a standard form. Motives also serve to unify the piece, but in this work the significant interval is the

²⁷⁴ Smyth, *Trio in D minor for violin, cello and piano (1880)*, preface.

fourth, rather than the interval of a third as in the *Sonata in C minor*. The melodies are again lyrical, and the contrasting nature of the themes is the result of varying degrees of articulation, dynamics, and direction. Smyth's approach to this work, however, is more linear and subtle than in the *Sonata in C minor*. The introduction of expansive gestures combined with motives from the *Sonata in C minor* establishes the *Trio in D minor's* individual identity while also revealing it to be related to the earlier work.

There are also significant differences between this work and the *Sonata in C minor*. Phrases have irregular lengths, rhythmic combinations are more complicated, and musical ideas exhibit greater variety and contrast, which the following analysis will reveal. These changes demonstrate the speed at which Smyth's abilities as a composer were progressing. Overall, it is a better crafted work than the earlier *Sonata in C minor*.

Allegro

The first movement of the *Trio in D minor* is clearly in sonata-allegro form with principal and secondary themes stated in the tonic and dominant respectively, demonstrated by the chart in Table 4-5. One significant difference between this first movement and the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor* is the early turn to chromaticism in this work. The first transition section in both the exposition and the recapitulation traverses three distant harmonic areas in a parallel manner. Unlike the *Sonata in C minor*, however, the development of this movement treats the themes and transitional material as whole entities instead of primarily exploring the motives. This second example of sonata form further illuminates Smyth's manner of treating the form in a textbook fashion. In the *Trio in D minor*, however, she experiments more with the ideas and harmonies within the confines of the form than in the earlier composition.

Table 4-5. Formal diagram of first movement, *Trio in D minor*, sonata-allegro form.

	Exposition				Development			Recapitulation				Coda
Theme	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	trans.	PT	ST	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	ST
Key	Dm	E ^b /C#/E	A	~	~	Em	~Dm	Dm	A ^b /F#/A	D	D	Dm
Mm. #s	1-22	22-37	38-71	72-80	81-109	110-17	118-141	142-63	163-78	179-212	213-24	225-238

Thematic design: Smyth applies the same organic melodic style found in the earlier *Sonata in C minor* to this work. The principal theme of the first movement sounds like it grows from a single pitch in the cello line and eases into the melody. The *cantabile* quality is reinforced by the imitative entrance of the violin in m. 5 (Figure 4-63). The two instruments then present a duet, swirling around each other, and already developing the principal theme. In particular, the counterpoint between the violin and cello explores the main motives and establishes the tonal setting of the piece. Unlike the slightly earlier work, the theme of the *Trio in D minor* does not adhere to the model of a Classical melody. Instead of balanced phrases with a distinct melodic climax, this theme seems to defy melodic expectations. “Phrase a” begins in the cello and descends for three measures. The ascension to a higher pitch and a possible climax is undermined by the entrance of the violin and its descending melodic line, or “phrase b”, in m. 5. Even the highest note of the phrase in m. 9 does not fulfill its role as the pinnacle of the melody. In fact, the entire opening section of the movement is a series of overlapping phrases and dovetailing entrances of all three instruments. Self-contained balanced phrases do not appear until the secondary theme.

As noted in the *Sonata in C minor*, secondary themes in Smyth’s forms offer variety while also incorporating the main musical ideas of the composition. In this work, the secondary theme of the first movement contrasts directly with the principal theme through distinct four-measure phrases, as opposed to the overlapping phrases of the principal theme (Figure 4-64). This theme also demonstrates Wood’s theory that Smyth’s sonata forms “avoid having a conventional second subject.”²⁷⁵ Here the second

²⁷⁵ Wood, “Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women’s Suffrage”, 624.

theme is stronger and more declamatory than the principal theme, with regular rhythms and a conjunct line. The secondary theme further challenges the Classical paradigm of melodic structure by undermining the climax of the phrase.

Figure 4-63. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, principal theme, mm. 1-9. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-64. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, secondary theme, mm. 35-42. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Each phrase contains two possible climactic moments, although the second is more like an echo or an after-shock than the true climax of the melody. In the first phrase, the highest and most important note is the D in m. 36; the higher E that sounds after this in m. 38 prevents the phrase from attaining a sense of resolution. This melodic idea repeats in a similar fashion in the second phrase, with the climax occurring on the E in m. 40, only to be surpassed by the F# in m. 42. In both the principal and secondary themes, Smyth is already demonstrating a creative freedom that was not apparent in the earlier work.

The sonata-allegro form also contains a closing theme, again a trait found in the *Sonata in C minor*. The closing theme adds a new rhythmic element to the movement, a  followed by a syncopated accompaniment only on offbeats. This phrase also begins on beat two (m. 72) in the bass register of the piano, which is then repeated two octaves higher (Figure 4-65). In the first ending, this idea is continued in the cello and then the violin. In the second ending, however, these two rhythmic ideas form the basis for the first section of the development (mm. 81-102). In both endings, the phrase cadences in the piano on the pitch A. This theme is the only theme in this movement that adheres to the Classical ideal of melodic structure, with the climactic point occurring just over two-thirds of the way through the phrase.



Figure 4-65. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, closing theme, mm. 72-75. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Unlike the development sections in the *Sonata in C minor*, the development sections of the outer movements in the *Trio in D minor* treat the main themes independently instead of combining them. In both the first and fourth movements, transitional material is developed alongside the principal and secondary themes. The closing theme of the first movement also serves as a transition into the development. After a lengthy imitative section, the principal theme is presented over a triplet eighth-note pattern in the piano accompaniment. Fragments of the second theme lead into the recapitulation.

Motivic design: Smyth continues to use motives to relate her themes, but the motives that unify this work are not as clearly delineated as in the previous work, nor are they as rhythmically-oriented. One motive in particular from the *Sonata in C minor* also appears in this composition: the appoggiatura motive, in this case with a modified pitch framework of $\hat{4} - \hat{5} - \hat{1}$. Rather than focusing on the interval of a third, the interval of a fourth rules over many of the motives, themes and harmonies found in the *Trio in D minor*. In this movement, Smyth has combined and deconstructed the motives in a manner not explored in the earlier composition. Much of the work can be defined by the first seven notes in the cello line. Two smaller fragments of this idea reappear with enough consistency to be distinguished individually.

These motives arise in all four movements. The first pitch motive (PM1) represents a downward gesture, with the scale degrees $\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{2} - \hat{7}$ (Figure 4-66). With the scale degrees $\hat{4} - \hat{5} - \hat{1}$ and a motion of a step in one direction followed by a leap in the opposite direction, PM2 becomes increasingly familiar. Similar to its predecessor in the *Sonata in C minor*, PM2 is often modified and extended.

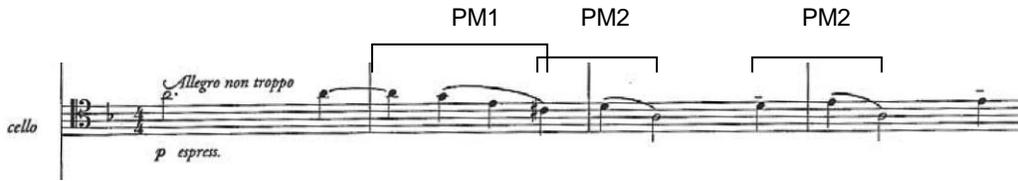


Figure 4-66. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 1-4. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Although PM2 first appears as part of PM1, the repeat of this idea in m. 4 establishes its individuality. The significance of this motive is reinforced in “phrase b”. PM2 appears inverted and in retrograde form in the dialogue between the cello and violin in mm. 7-8 (Figure 4-67). The second theme differs from the principal theme through its initial conjunct motion, but it also concludes with PM2, hinting at a possible monothematic interpretation (Figure 4-68).

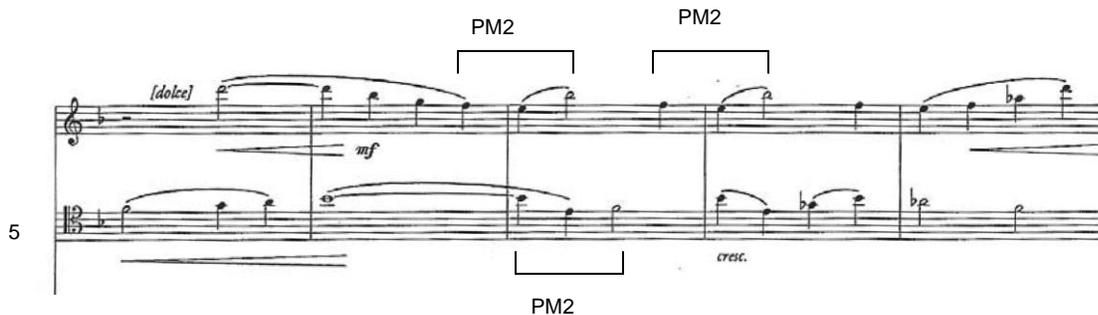


Figure 4-67. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 5-9. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

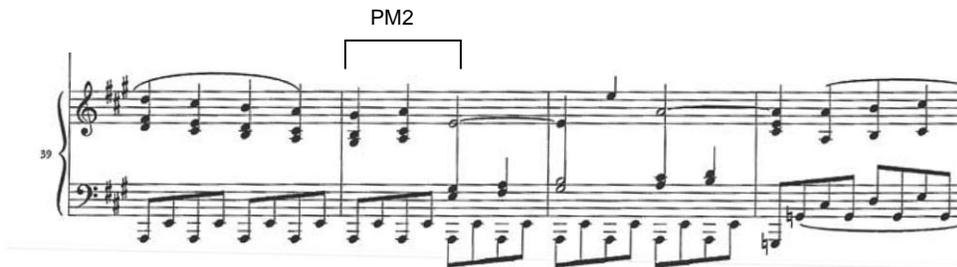


Figure 4-68. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 39-42. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Despite the differences in rhythm and character between the principal and secondary themes, the two melodies are connected by the $\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ motion of PM2.

Harmonic design: Smyth continues to develop her harmonic language in this movement. Mode mixture in particular becomes more than a colorful device; it is also a means by which Smyth creates ambiguity and opportunity in her music. The tonal area is established in the first five measures by a i-vii-i motion over a D pedal tone and the tonic-dominant cadence discussed above (p. 178-179). Smyth, however, begins the development process in the fifth measure of the theme with the introduction of a C-natural in the bass and the entrance of the violin (Figure 4-69).

The image shows a musical score for the principal theme of the Trio in D minor, first movement, measures 1-9. The score is for violin, cello, and piano. The tempo is 'Allegro non troppo'. The piano part includes dynamics 'p' and 'sempre legato'. The cello part includes 'p espress.'. The violin part includes 'dolce' and 'mf'. The piano part includes 'cresc.'. The score shows a harmonic progression of i - vii D - i - V6. The piano part has a bass line starting on D and moving to C natural in measure 5.

Figure 4-69. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, principal theme, mm. 1-9. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The harmonies supporting the next several measures of thematic development are mostly secondary dominants, yet it is not until after the statement of the principal theme by the piano that a true modulation occurs. Hints of G minor (iv), E^b major (N⁶), and then C[#] major (#VII) are heard across twenty measures before a sudden appearance of E natural signals the E dominant harmony (V/ V) that prepares the secondary theme in A major (V).

The use of strict sonata structure actually grants Smyth some freedom with regard to phrasing and cadential style. Her technique of avoiding cadences in the *Trio in D minor* relies partially on chord progressions and partially on phrasing style. The first cadence on tonic is a weak one; it is a V⁶ chord resolving to tonic with the cello moving from scale degree $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$ and the bass moving from the scale degree $\hat{7}$ to $\hat{1}$ (see mm. 4-5 in Figure 4-69). Immediate motion away from the tonic harmony undermines any sense of resolution at the end of the first phrase, heard in the ascending cello melody and the descending motion in the piano line. This weak cadence with an addition of another instrument creates the impression of no cadence. The first real sense of resolution arrives in m. 14, after both instruments have stated the theme (Figure 4-70). The piano then takes the principal theme and accompanies it with arpeggios similar to the first measure of the movement.

Also in this movement, Smyth incorporates a concerto-technique for her treatment of themes and harmonic areas in this composition with multiple instruments. The two string instruments present the theme initially and do not modulate away from the tonic. However, when the piano states the theme, the modulation to the dominant begins, similar to the harmonic relationships and functions of a double-exposition in a

concerto (Figure 4-70). This technique is unique to this piece, a compositional distinction she made between sonatas for a two instruments and sonatas for three.

Figure 4-70. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, principal theme, mm. 14-20. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The principal thematic section further avoids any sense of an authentic cadence by overlapping the phrases of the different instruments. For example, at m. 54 the cello and piano cadence in A major, but the violin plays the pitches E to B at this cadence, adding the interval of a second to what should be a tonic chord, and then continuing immediately on from that (Figure 4-71). The cadence is undermined by motion in the string parts, preventing resolution and adding tension to the work.

Figure 4-71. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 51-54. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

With the secondary theme, the order of instruments is switched, but the harmonic convention stays the same. The statement of the secondary theme by the

piano part remains in the dominant key area. Not until a subsequent statement of the theme by the violin and cello do the harmonies suggest other key areas and a transition to a closing theme or the development. In the case of the secondary theme, the appearance of a C^{#7} in m. 66 creates the possibility of a return to the tonic, allowing the exposition to repeat or to move on to the development (Figure 4-72). The example below also demonstrates Smyth's frequent use of the Neapolitan harmony as a predominant chord, found in mm. 63, 65, and 68. The Neapolitan harmony presents the harmonic option of maintaining the current tonal center or modulating to an alternate key area. In this case, she chooses to stay in A major, the dominant key area.

A: V⁷ N⁶ V⁷ I⁷ I N⁶ vii⁷/iv

vii⁷/iv iv N⁶ V⁷ IV V^{4/2} I⁶ IV

Figure 4-72. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 63-70. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

As Table 4-5 shows on pg. 183, the recapitulation closely follows the harmonic structure of the exposition. Whereas in the exposition the harmonic movement in the

transition shifted from E^b to C[#] to E, in the recapitulation, the harmonies in the transition shift from A^b to F[#] to A, setting up the cadence to D minor at the second theme. The parallel between these two transitions clearly demonstrates Smyth's approach to sonata-allegro form and the sanctity of the model for her. Her treatment of this Classical form stays with her throughout her career.

Rhythmic design: Smyth continues to incorporate nineteenth-century rhythmic qualities in this work, including 2-against-3 rhythms, hemiolas, and metric modulations. Unlike the *Sonata in C minor*, the first movement of the *Trio in D minor* does not use all of these elements in the first movement. In fact, the movement is rhythmically straightforward. Only during the second statement of the secondary theme and the transition to the closing theme is there clear rhythmic variety. Beginning in m. 54 in Figure 4-73, triplets are introduced in the piano part while dupe eighth-notes continue in the violin part. This 2-against-3 rhythm adds variety and tension to the movement just before the close of the exposition. Ironically, the development does not use this tension.

Figure 4-73. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 51-54. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The rhythmic nature of the closing theme has greater force in the development than either of the previous themes. Characterized by a dotted rhythm on the fourth beat of the measure, the rhythm of the closing theme is the most active of all three themes.

This rhythmic element plays the greatest role in the development. Not only does the theme begin the development proper, the offbeat syncopation in the accompaniment is the prevailing rhythmic idea for the first twenty-one measures of a sixty-measure development section (Figure 4-74). The dotted rhythm of the closing theme highlights the rhythmic propulsion discussed in the previous section. The sixteenth-notes in m. 82-84 and 89-90 create an obvious forward motion. Less obvious is the same technique used in an augmented manner in the principal theme.

Figure 4-74. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, development section, mm. 81-92. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$ rhythm stated in the principal theme as early as m. 3 has the same effect over a greater expanse of time and with the subtle character of the principal theme. This

constant movement into the next musical idea also explains why the sudden appearance of half-notes in m. 134 has such a dramatic affect: the rhythmic propulsion across the bar line has temporarily ceased (Figure 4-75). Another instance of half notes occurring on the strong beats does not occur until the end of the movement. The resulting perpetual-motion effect creates a sense of urgency in the music.



Figure 4-75. *Trio in D minor*, first movement, mm. 132-141. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The final section is marked *Meno mosso*, a common designation for the codas of Smyth's works. In the *Sonata in C minor*, the first, second and third movements all end with a *Meno mosso* designation. By slowing down the tempo and drawing out the emotion, Smyth is able to lead one movement into the next without needing an *attacca* designation but also without allowing the tension of the music to be prematurely resolved, thus preserving the level of anxiety in the music.

Andante

The second movement is an *Andante* theme and variations in D, the parallel major.²⁷⁶ The opening theme and subsequent variations are each twenty-four measures in length subdivided into phrases of six measures. The six variations are not specifically marked; double-bar lines delineate the distinct variations. The middle variations shift between the dominant and the tonic minor, creating harmonic contrast and developmental middle section.

Table 4-6. Formal diagram of second movement, *Trio in D minor*, theme-and-variations form.

	Theme	Variation I	Variation II	Variation III	Variation IV	Variation V	Variation VI (Coda)
Key	D	D	A	d	A-d	D	D
Mm. #s	1-24	25-48	49-66	67-90	91-114	115-137	138-161

Smyth explores varying styles and treatments of the theme, as well as different modes and characters, while retaining the structure and key area of the theme and first variation, as would be expected of a conventional treatment of the form. Following the initial statement of the theme, the subsequent measures present an extension of the theme with the same texture, instrumentation, and harmonic and rhythmic ideas. Variation I shifts the rhythmic nature to triple instead of duple and adds a trill to the theme. Variation II, *Scherzando*, is imitative in nature. This particular variation has repeated sections instead of written-out repetitions. An emphasis on the offbeat in the piano accompaniment adds to the jocular nature of this variation. Variation III (*molto legato*) is the first variation in D minor. The cello begins with a similar melodic line to the

²⁷⁶ Smyth, *Trio in D minor for violin, cello and piano (1880)*, preface.

previous variation, but the staccato articulation has been replaced by a legato articulation and solemn character. The syncopation has also been replaced by regular rhythms. Of all the variations, Variation IV truly captures the listener: it is the most static and somber passage in the entire composition, with long tones and a gradually evolving melody (Figure 4-76). The strings alternate with the piano, which is relegated to a supporting role here.

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of the Trio in D minor, measures 91-97. It consists of three systems of staves. The top system features a piano part (treble and bass clefs) and a string part (treble and bass clefs). The piano part is marked *pp* and features long, sustained notes with a gradually evolving melody. The string part provides harmonic support with long tones. The bottom system continues the piano and string parts, with the piano part marked *mp* and the string part providing a steady accompaniment. The score is in D minor, as indicated by the key signature of one flat.

Figure 4-76. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 91-97. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Variation V, a return to tonic major, is an exercise in polyrhythms, specifically 2-against-3, as the piano presents a triplet pattern supporting eighth notes in the strings. The coda then begins with sixteenth-note arpeggios in the piano part supporting the statement of the theme. The texture quickly simplifies, slowing down to repeated eighth-note thirds in the accompaniment. The dotted-rhythm motive is presented several times as the movement softly and slowly draws to a close.

Thematic design: Smyth has created greater variety in her principle themes in the *Trio in D minor* than the *Sonata in C minor*. The theme of the second movement, for example, opens with a dotted anacrusis and a leap of a fourth, the main motivic idea of the theme that will be developed throughout the movement. This theme is also an

example of phrasing similar to Brahms, with a 1+1+4 bar phrase grouping (Figure 4-77). This melody also demonstrates the ways in which Smyth was learning to compose beyond the classical models of form while adhering to its basic principles. The theme, shown above, is an excellent example of the Golden Mean in music (a proportion of 0.618). The climax of the melody, the A in m. 4, occurs on beat 11 of an 18-beat phrase, or a proportion of 0.611. Of all her themes discussed thus far, this theme, in a decidedly Classical form and style, follows the ideal of a perfect Classical theme, with clearly-defined antecedent and consequent phrases and melodic climax two-thirds of the way through the theme.



Figure 4-77. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 1-6. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Motivic design: Smyth treats the main motives in a more subtle fashion in this movement compared to the first movement. In m. 7 the downward arpeggiated motion recalls the opening figure of the first movement (PM1), but it is the gesture that is familiar more than scale degrees or intervals (Figure 4-78).



Figure 4-78. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 7-12. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

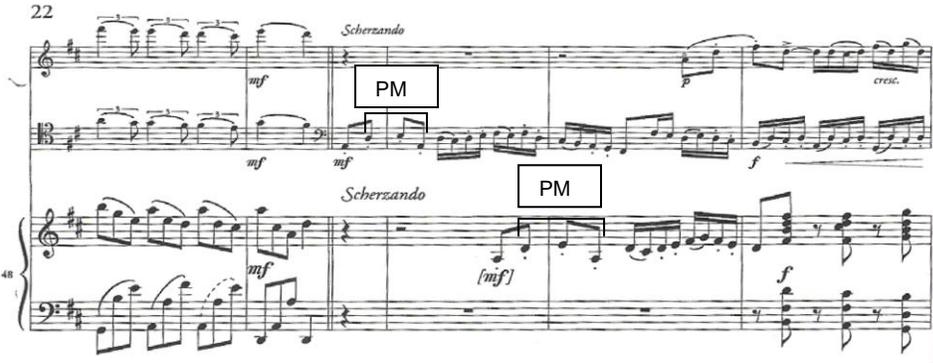


Figure 4-81. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 48-51. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Harmonic design: This movement does not require as significant of a discussion in the area of harmonic language or function because it relies largely on diatonic harmonies and can be easily analyzed using Roman numeral analysis. This diatonic quality lends the movement a particularly Classical sound that may also be connected to the title of the movement, “The Courage of Simplicity?!”. The opening theme progresses seamlessly from tonic to dominant, with the first six measures resolving to the dominant key of A major (Figure 4-82).



Figure 4-82. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 1-6. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The remaining twelve measures gradually return the music to the tonic key with only a brief detour to C[#] major in m. 14. That brief chromatic move to C[#] returns in the succeeding variations, adding color and variety. Similar chromatic embellishments

prevent the movement from being predictable or static, but Smyth seems to have been experimenting with diatonicism in this particular movement.

Rhythmic design: More so than the first movement, the use of the anacrusis (as opposed to simply a connecting rhythm in earlier movements) is vital to the rhythmic design of this movement, as the theme actually begins with an anacrusis unlike earlier themes. Furthermore, the anacrusis itself is divided into smaller units (Figure 4-83).



Figure 4-83. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 1-6. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The rhythm $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ is the driving force of the theme, but it also factors into each of the variations. In Variation I, the dotted rhythm is transformed into a triplet rhythm of $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$, as seen in the example below (Figure 4-84). In Variation II, the anacrusis idea is simplified to two eighth-notes (Figure 4-85). The anacrusis is then further simplified, appearing as a quarter note in the fourth variation (Figure 4-86). In Variation V, however, Smyth reverses this trend and introduces a 2-against-3 cross-rhythm between the piano and cello in the anacrusis to m. 115 (Figure 4-87). Variation VI is the only variation that is not preceded by an anacrusis. In fact, the final measure of Variation V is elided by the first measure of Variation VI. However, the dotted rhythm from the initial theme has also returned, bringing the set full circle. Almost every measure in the coda has a dotted rhythm of some kind, providing the final evidence of the significance of this particular rhythmic idea.

Figure 4-84 shows the musical score for the Trio in D minor, second movement, measures 20-30. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a first violin part with a *pp* dynamic marking and an arrow pointing to a specific note. The piano part includes markings for *grazioso* and *staccato*.

Figure 4-84. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 20-30. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-85 shows the musical score for the Trio in D minor, second movement, measures 48-51. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a first violin part with a *Scherzando* marking and a *mf* dynamic marking. The piano part includes markings for *Scherzando* and *mf*.

Figure 4-85. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 48-51. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-86 shows the musical score for the Trio in D minor, second movement, measures 91-97. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features a first violin part with a *pp* dynamic marking and an arrow pointing to a specific note. The piano part includes markings for *pp* and *mp*.

Figure 4-86. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 91-97. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

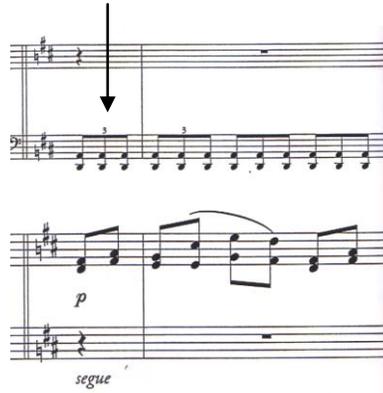


Figure 4-87. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 115-116. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Scherzo

The third movement is a scherzo and trio in G minor with irregular five-bar phrases (Table 4-7). The 3/8 time signature, along with the alternating sixteenth notes in the piano, create a wild dance-like character. More than the others, this movement requires virtuosic technique of all the players. Similar to the *ländler* in the previous work, Smyth experiments with the idea of tonic in this movement. The scherzo is framed in the key of D minor (see sections A and B below) despite material in G major and E^b major in the B section. The trio, on the other hand, is set in the distant key (to D minor) of C major. It is not until the coda restates the A material in G minor that the actual tonic becomes apparent. Smyth has, in both this movement and the *ländler*, defined her tonic by its dominant harmony, reserving the tonic for brief appearances in the dance sections and the final trio and coda of the movement. Because of the stronger harmonic and rhythmic qualities over thematic or motivic ideas, the following discussion will first look at harmony by an intertwined discussion of themes, motives and rhythms.

Table 4-7. Formal diagram of third movement, *Trio in D minor*, scherzo and trio form.

	Scherzo						Trio				Coda
Period	A			B			C			D	A
Phrase	a	b	a	c	d	a	e	f	e	g	
Key	Dm	D	Dm	G	E ^b	Dm	C	Gm	C	Cm	Gm
Mm. #s	1-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-79	80-99	100-23	124-41	142-64	

Harmonic design: In the Scherzo proper, Smyth reveals her tendency to move to the flat side of the circle of fifths. The entire A section is securely grounded in the key of D, with changes in mode only. In fact, in the first sixteen measures the music does not leave the tonal area of D (4-88).

The musical score shows the beginning of the piece. It starts with a piano introduction in the right hand (pp) and a forte introduction in the left hand (f). The key signature is D minor. The tempo is marked 'Presto con brio (à 5 battute)'. The score includes the first 16 measures, showing the initial key signature change to D minor and the first few measures of the Trio section.

Figure 4-88. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 1-16. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

As Table 4-7 illustrates, the majority of key areas are directly related to the initial harmonic area of D minor, such as the parallel major or the move to G major in the B section. However, in m. 51 of the B section, just after the modulation to G the music progresses further to E^b major, the N⁶ chord in D minor. This modulation to E^b is

reinforced by a change in key signature and an E^b pedal point in the piano for the first four measures of the section (Figure 4-89).

E^b (N): I

Figure 4-89. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 51-54. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Departing even further from the tonic, the first twenty measures of the trio present a light, open melodic idea in C major, demonstrated by Figure 4-90.

C: I

Figure 4-90. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 80-90. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Following this introduction, G minor chords announce the development of this idea. Smyth again moves the arpeggios around the circle of fifths to D major, B major, and then a V⁷ built on G abruptly leads back to the C major of the opening of the trio. The trio actually serves to establish the significance of the key of G minor, as C major is so far removed from D minor. Only at the end of the work does it become clear that the

opening section of the scherzo acts as a large-scale dominant harmony which eventually cadences on tonic in the coda.

Thematic design: The themes of this movement are energetic and continuous, with an overall *fortspinnung* quality. Section A launches a dramatic and driving dance theme full of tension that is only released in Section B. In the first forty measures, the five-bar phrases further create a sense of unease by beginning on D without clearly stating the tonic chord (G minor), denying an anticipated cadence at the end of the phrase (Figure 4-91). The principal theme, a descending line that returns to D but does not have a linear direction, acts as a dramatic and pressure-filled introduction rather than a distinct melody. Sudden shifts in dynamics add to the emotion of the passage. This tension is held for ten measures before the violin states the principal theme.

Principal Theme

The image shows a musical score for the Principal Theme of the Trio in D minor, third movement, mm. 1-16. The score is in 3/8 time and D minor. It features a piano introduction with a descending line in the right hand and a driving bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp*, *f*, and *p*. The tempo is *Presto con brio (à 5 battute)*. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the piano introduction with a descending line in the right hand and a driving bass line in the left hand. The second system shows the violin entering with a driving melody in the right hand and a driving bass line in the left hand. The third system shows the piano continuing with a driving melody in the right hand and a driving bass line in the left hand.

Figure 4-91. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 1-16. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Continuing the trend of active, yet rhythmically regular, secondary themes, the secondary theme in the third movement is the first truly declamatory idea of this movement, stated at m. 40 in the key of G major. The shift to the secondary theme is

reinforced by a change in key signature, a regular duple rhythm and forceful, thick chords in the piano part (Figure 4-92).

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of the Trio in D minor, measures 41-46. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The upper system, starting at measure 41, is marked with a circled 'B' and a box labeled 'Secondary theme'. It contains a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*). The lower system, starting at measure 42, is marked with a circled 'B' and a box labeled 'Secondary theme'. It features thick, block chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, marked with a fortissimo dynamic (*fff*).

Figure 4-92. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 41-46. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The effect is a dramatic, celebratory moment following the passionate introduction. The secondary theme is then passed between the instruments, granting a voice to each player.

The theme of the trio section is introduced by a rising arpeggio in the cello part. In the fifth measure (continuing the idea of five-measure phrases), the violin states the trio theme, which is also a five-measure phrase (Figure 4-93).

The image shows a musical score for the Trio section of the Trio in D minor, measures 80-90. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It is marked 'Trio' at the beginning. The upper system, starting at measure 80, shows a rising arpeggio in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). The lower system, starting at measure 81, shows a five-measure phrase in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). A box labeled 'Trio Theme' is placed above the right hand of the lower system, indicating the start of the theme.

Figure 4-93. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 80-90. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The legato arpeggios and distinctly thinner textures create the contrast expected of a trio. Unlike the *ländler*, the tension has not fully dissipated even with this calmer section.

Motivic design: Unlike the first two movements, this movement contains very few references to the motives of the first two movements. There is a five-measure interlude at m. 61 that uses PM2 just before the return of “phrase a” in the B section (Figure 4-94). The trio section hints at the opening motive from the first movement, PM1 with a truncated version of the original PM1, heard in m. 84-85. The motive PM2 can also be found in this Figure and throughout the trio (Figure 4-95). Even in the coda PM2 appears, driving the music to its close (Figure 4-96).

Figure 4-94. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 61-65. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-95. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 84-88. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The image displays a musical score for the Trio in D minor, third movement, measures 173-188. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems. The first system (mm. 173-178) features a piano part with a melodic line and a bass line with a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. The second system (mm. 179-184) shows a piano part with a melodic line and a bass line with a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. The third system (mm. 185-188) shows a piano part with a melodic line and a bass line with a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. The score includes performance markings such as 'PM2', 'cresc.', 'ff', and 'rit.'.

Figure 4-96. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 173-188. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Rhythmic design: The rhythmic character of this scherzo will become the model for the scherzos in Smyth's future sonatas and is a departure from the more moderate dance style of the *Sonata in C minor*. The tempo alone, *Presto con brio*, prescribes passion and vigor. The unrelenting sixteenth notes of the A section realize that marking (Figure 4-97). There are few moments in the Scherzo that do not maintain the almost constant sixteenth notes, such as the opening measures of the B section, where triplet eighth-notes announce a change in melody and character (Figure 4-98).

Figure 4-97. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 1-16. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-98. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 41-46. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

In the trio to the third movement, Smyth again adopts a lighter texture than the previous sections, as well as a slower rhythmic character. This theme takes on the style of Beethoven at the height of his classical style, such as the *Scherzo and Trio* from his *Sonata Op. 2, No. 3*. Leaping arpeggios rise in Smyth's work from the low cello register up to the violin and are then continued with the same arpeggiated pattern in the piano part (Figure 4-99). The dance-like nature of the movement is maintained even while the

simplified nature of the single eighth-note line releases some of the tension created by the Scherzo material. The slower trio section begins with an anacrusis, first on the third eighth note of m. 80, which is then reiterated on the second eighth-note of m. 85. Due to the triple meter of this movement, rhythmic propulsion is inherent in the style and thus not remarkable enough to warrant further discussion here.

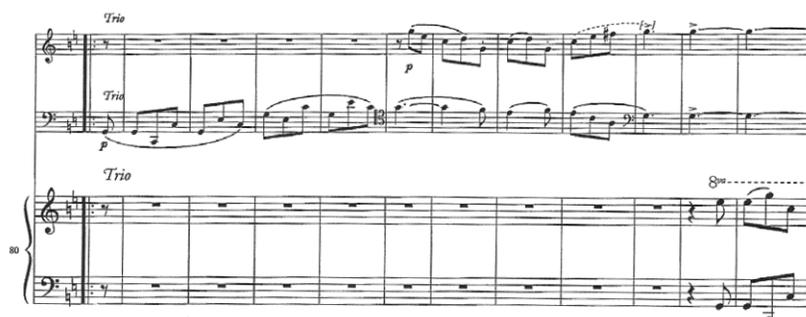


Figure 4-99. *Trio in D minor*, third movement, mm. 80-90. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The whole character of the trio is like a gigue, presenting a striking contrast to the driving rhythmic nature of the scherzo. Yet, the constant use of repeated rhythmic patterns creates a relentless quality that adds to the overall tension of the composition. The coda builds from a soft dynamic level to *fortissimo* and repetition of a musical idea that is motivically reminiscent of the first movement.

Allegro vivace

The final movement is also in sonata-allegro form (Table 4-8). Smyth defies tradition in this movement by placing the secondary theme not in the expected dominant or relative major, but in the unrelated key of C major. It is not until the closing theme that a modulation to the dominant occurs, which may account for the longer exposition than previously discussed sonata-allegro forms. In the recapitulation, the secondary theme is presented in the relative major of F, but then the closing theme is stated in the parallel

major rather than the tonic D minor. This move to D major is not unusual, and is frequently found in the works of her classical predecessors. It is the move first to F major that makes the final move to D major unexpected.

The *finale* also contains one of the only major revisions to the entire work, which is revealed in the sketches. The manuscript includes a grand introduction marked *Allegro Maestoso*, but this was crossed out entirely in the score. This section is filled with double stops in the strings and octaves with thirds in the piano part followed by sweeping arpeggios and tremolo-like sixteenth notes. The ideas presented appear again in the second transition area but only for a total of eight measures. The editors of the current edition included it, however, because it had not been completely removed from the score.²⁷⁷ The one recording of the work does not perform the introduction but instead begins at the *Allegro vivace*, as Smyth seems to have intended it. Furthermore, none of Smyth's other chamber works have a slow introduction, and the use of it here is out of character for a composer who conformed to standard formal models.

Thematic design: This movement, as seen before, presents examples of overlapping melodies, obscured cadences and a false return to the recapitulation. The principal theme of the *finale* proper is similar to the first movements of other Smyth sonatas in terms of its character: a soft melodic line, organic in nature, accompanied by a tremolo or repetitive pattern. It is also constructed in a manner more like the *Sonata in C minor* rather than the principal themes of this work. Like the principal theme of the first movement of *Sonata in C minor*, this theme can be thought of in terms of its smaller phrases or as one continuous idea.

²⁷⁷ Smyth, Trio in D minor for violin, cello and piano, preface.

Table 4-8. Formal diagram of fourth movement, *Trio in D minor*, sonata-allegro form.

	Exposition					Development				Recapitulation					Coda
Theme	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	CT	trans.	PT	ST	trans.	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	CT	trans.
Key	Dm		C		A	~	Bm~	Am~	Am	Dm		F		D	D
M. #s	1-20	21-50	51-92	93-108	109-28	129-48	149-92	193-213	213-28	229-48	249-78	279-20	321-36	337-58	359-97

However, if the theme is treated as a single idea, then the climactic moment occurs at the Classical proportion of 0.611, or on beat 11 of an 18-beat phrase, just like the second movement theme (Figure 4-100).



Figure 4-100. *Trio in D minor*, second movement, mm. 1-9. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

In this Classical sonata form, Smyth has created a Classically-styled theme on which to base the rest of the work. Yet the chromatic nature of the melodic line prevents the music from sounding traditional or overly diatonic. The secondary theme of the fourth movement is one of the most expressive melodies in the work, a beautiful example of romantic writing with long lyrical lines in the strings and arpeggios played by the piano, a pattern reminiscent of Brahms's music from 1880 (Figure 4-101).²⁷⁸

The secondary theme also bears a resemblance to the principal theme of the first movement. The melody, instead of descending the distance of an octave, ascends a ninth before returning to the original register (Figure 4-102). Both themes also avoid strong downbeats by tying notes across the bar lines. Although the theme in Figure B is several beats longer than the theme in Figure A, the inverse nature of each melody's

²⁷⁸ Brahms's *Op. 76, No. 6* (mm. 26-59) contains a comparable passage with an arpeggiated triplet bass line supporting a legato duplet melody. A similar passage is also found in Brahms's *Rhapsody, Op. 79, No. 1* (mm. 124-129). Primary sources suggest that Smyth knew both works intimately. The *Op. 76* collection of works was specifically mentioned in Smyth's memoir, *Impressions That Remain*, and in the Herzogenberg correspondence with Brahms as one of her copying assignments for the Herzogenbergs. *Op. 79* was composed in 1880 and dedicated to Elisabet von Herzogenberg; thus, it is highly likely that Smyth also knew this work.

shape is apparent. The melodic climax of the secondary theme is achieved on beat 10 of an 18-beat phrase. The moment of climax establishes a structural parallel with the principal theme of the fourth movement while also establishing a melodic parallel to the principal theme of the first movement.

Figure 4-101. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 51-64. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Figure 4-102. Comparison of themes. A) *Trio in D minor*, principal theme of first movement, mm. 1-4. B) *Trio in D minor*, secondary theme of fourth movement, mm. 51-57. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The closing theme of the fourth movement clearly returns the piece to a simple duple meter while also presenting a theme contrasting to either of the previous themes (Figure 4-103). It is marked *con spirito* with an added *giocoso* in the piano part. This section is also marked by oscillating sixteenth notes, a figure that allows for a smooth transition back to the beginning of the exposition.

Figure 4-103. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 108-112. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Despite three individual themes, the primary musical idea which unifies the movement is actually part of a transitional passage. The dotted thirty-second note figure at m. 21 is launched with an eighth-note octave jump followed by ascending minor thirds (Figure 4-104). This motive returns throughout the movement to connect the disparate sections. However, the transitional material is not a theme because it is constantly modulating instead of maintain a tonal center. The transitional passage is also longer than either of the main themes, expanding the form beyond traditional proportions, something not done in the *Sonata in C minor*. The result is a movement that defies and fulfills listeners' expectations.

Figure 4-104. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 17-28. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Motivic design: Like the previous movements, the subtle use of motives is integrated into the thematic material. The treatment of PM2 in this movement, however, relies much more on the idea of direction. In the example below, the motive appears almost immediately in the principal theme. PM1 is then presented in both conjunct and disjunct forms successively (Figure 4-105). In both of these motives, the interval of a minor second has great significance. With the exception of the Scherzo, all the principal themes (and many of the secondary themes) in this work are based on these motives, creating a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The second theme of the fourth movement is another such exception. It does not contain any of these motives, exhibiting one of the rare occasions where Smyth creates a theme that is not directly related to the themes and movements around it (Figure 4-106). The closing theme also

includes PM1 from the principal theme. In mm. 111 and 112, as well as mm. 118-122, the four-note descending motive is played by the cello and violin (Figure 4-107).



Figure 4-105. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-6. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.



Figure 4-106. *Trio in D minor*, secondary theme of fourth movement, mm. 51-57. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

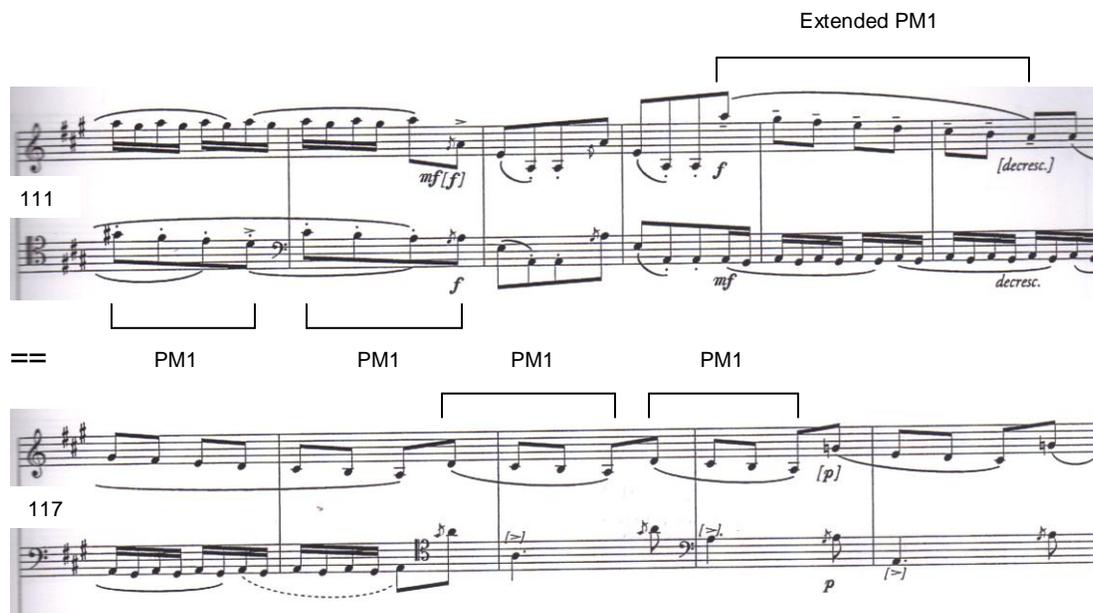


Figure 4-107. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 111-121. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Harmonic design: Smyth's harmonic language in this work incorporates the stability of Classical diatonicism and the mutability of Romantic chromaticism. The principal theme of this movement is not even fully stated before it modulates to the dominant. The first four bars present a simple progression establishing the key of D minor, but "phrase b" immediately moves away with the introduction of a B-natural in m. 6 and a secondary dominant harmony in m. 8 (Figure 4-108). This theme then cadences on the dominant harmony. The cello takes on the theme, but instead of a simple restatement, the phrase is extended an additional four measures. A tonic chord is finally reached in m. 21 with the introduction of the transitional material.

The image shows the first system of musical notation for the Trio in D minor, fourth movement, measures 1-11. It consists of four staves: Violin (top), Piano (middle), Cello (bottom), and a harmonic analysis line (bottom-most). The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivace'. The key signature is D minor (two flats). The time signature is 2/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *[p]*, *espress.*, and *cresc.*, and performance instructions like 'see ossia'. The harmonic analysis below the staves identifies chords in Roman numerals: *d: i (vii°) i V⁷ i ii* and *V⁷ [A: i^{6/4} V^{6/4}] V I I V/V I*.

Figure 4-108. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-11. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The transition is a series of abrupt harmonic shifts, rather than a clearly delineated harmonic progression. As Figure 4-109 demonstrates, D minor is first reaffirmed only to be undermined by a III harmony (F major) followed by a sudden V chord in m. 27. This pattern continues for several measures, finally leading to C major and the secondary theme area in m. 51.

d: V V^{4/2} i vii⁶/ii V/V V i ii

i V i III V

Figure 4-109. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 17-28. © Roberton Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Despite the diatonic quality of the secondary theme (Figure 4-110), the underlying arpeggios are somewhat unstable. The C major harmony is followed by an augmented triad that leads back to an acceptable harmonic progression. The harmonic implication of the G[#] is fulfilled by a modulation to E major later in the passage. The theme ends on the fifth of the C major chord in m. 59, but the cellist completely

undermines this cadence by playing F and D, which finally resolves to E in the next measure. What should have been a simple eight-measure phrase is extended by two measures and loses the strong sense of resolution. However, the dramatic move from F-D-E in the cello line appropriately prepares the shift to E major in the next measure.

C: I I⁺ ii:⁴/₂ ii:⁴/₂

vii:⁶/₅ I E: I⁶/₄ V⁷ I

Figure 4-110. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 51-64. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Smyth's highly modulatory harmonic language is most evident in the coda (Figure 4-111). A shift in the recapitulation to the subdominant G major foreshadows an even greater move to the flat side in m. 380 of the final movement. As the emotional tension builds, a brief move to D^b major sets up the modulation to A^b major. This key area is equally brief before sliding to A^{o7} and back to G^{#o7} (the enharmonic of A^b) and a return to the key area of D. The last several measures also present a harmonic

anomaly. The last A^7 chord occurred in m. 362, just prior to the above example. Another dominant chord is not heard for the rest of the piece. Once back in the tonic key in m. 384, Smyth uses augmented sixth chords and chromatic motion to create a sense of cadential resolution.

G: V^7 iv V bV/N^6 $N^{6/5}$ $ii^{+4/2}$ $vii^{+4/3}/ii$ $V^{6/5}/vi$ $vii^{+6/5}/IV$

D: $V^{6/5}$ $|6/4$ $|6/4$ $D: Ger^{6+}$

Figure 4-111. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 379-390. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

In fact, the grand finale gesture at m. 389 proceeds from tonic to Gr^6 to E^{+7} to D major (Figure 4-112). Thus, despite the absence of a perfect authentic cadence and the presence of chromatic harmonies, finality is still achieved through the diminished harmony and a rhythmic drive to the last three chords.

D: Ger⁺⁶ ii^{4/2} I [coll] 3rd-----

Figure 4-112. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 391-397. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Rhythmic design: As in earlier movements, tension is created partly through disparate rhythms. The use of 2-against-3 as a developing tool, the sudden appearance of dotted rhythms, and the use of hemiolas create a dramatic final movement. The themes of this movement, however, contain regular rhythms and lyrical melodies. Anxiety is created in the transition sections and the development, a standard tactic for composers of sonata-allegro form. Although the principal theme is straightforward rhythmically, the first transition section interrupts the narrative with dotted rhythms and syncopated accents. The goal of the entire transition section is to undo the narrative established by the principal theme, both harmonically (as discussed above) and rhythmically (Figure 4-113).

In the second half of the exposition, Smyth relies on the inherent rhythmic contrast of duple versus triple meters. The second theme is a straightforward duple melody but over a triplet accompaniment, not only creating contrast within itself but also against the principle theme (Figure 4-114). The second transition section assumes greater intensity and uses elements of the discarded slow introduction (discussed

above) specifically through the use of contrary motion in the piano and octaves with added thirds.

This musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 17-20) features a treble and bass clef staff with a piano part. The piano part has a *cresc.* marking. The second system (measures 21-24) includes a treble and bass clef staff with a piano part and a grand staff (treble and bass clef) with a piano part. The grand staff part has a *ff ben marcato* marking. The piano part has a *ff* marking. The third system (measures 25-28) includes a treble and bass clef staff with a piano part and a grand staff (treble and bass clef) with a piano part. The grand staff part has a *ff* marking. The piano part has a *ff* marking. The score includes various dynamics such as *cresc.*, *f*, *[p cresc.]*, *ff*, and *[cresc.]*, and performance instructions like *ben marcato* and *a tempo*.

Figure 4-113. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 17-28. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

This musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 51-54) features a treble and bass clef staff with a piano part. The piano part has a *pp molto espr.* marking. The second system (measures 55-57) includes a treble and bass clef staff with a piano part and a grand staff (treble and bass clef) with a piano part. The grand staff part has a *legato* marking. The piano part has a *pp* marking. The score includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *pp molto espr.*, and *legato*.

Figure 4-114. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 51-57. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Both the texture and use of hemiolas in m. 85 and 86 are especially reminiscent of the Brahmsian style. The whole movement is in 2/4, but several measures of triplets are employed allowing for a shift to a 3/4 metric quality, despite no actual change of time signature (Figure 4-115). It is partially Smyth's use of techniques such as this that has labeled her music "Brahmsian".

Figure 4-115. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 85-90. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

In the development section, rhythm is a factor only as it exists within the distinct themes and motives. The entire section is divided into smaller parts that focus on the first transition theme, the principal theme, and the second theme, respectively, and without combining melodic or rhythmic ideas. The transitional material from the exposition again serves to allow the music to modulate to a new key. After several exchanges of the opening motive, the violin turns the duple gesture into a triplet rhythm played over the continued cello eighth-note melody. This, however, does not last long and relents to the pervading eighth-note idea. Rather than combining with the second theme, the principal theme dies away and allows the second theme to take over. Rather

than use the second transition to lead into the recapitulation, Smyth rounds out the development with one more statement of the first transition.

The recapitulation primarily maintains the order and nature of ideas from the exposition, with one major exception: Smyth finally combines rhythmic ideas, pairing the principal theme with the theme from the first transition (Figure 4-116). The combination of these two ideas serves as a final reminder of the major events in the movement. In the coda, the duple, dotted rhythms triumph as the music crescendos to the final cadence.

229

Figure 4-116. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 229-233. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

The use of syncopation is as much of a factor in this final movement as the anacrusis. In the first theme, a tie to the downbeat of m. 2 establishes the syncopated nature of the melody. The repetition of this idea reinforces the forward momentum and carries through the first twenty measures. In the first transition section, an accent on the anacrusis in m. 34 launches a series of accented syncopated chords. The closing theme exhibits a strong emphasis on the anacrusis, as seen in Figure 4-117. The sixteenth-note just before rehearsal letter “D” the two sixteenth notes just before m. 111,

and the bass line in the piano part in mm. 110-112 all place an accent and greater dynamic level on the anacrusis. Not only does this create the rhythmic drive common to Smyth's works, it also subverts the downbeat, a technique preferred by Smyth as well as her contemporaries. Thus while polyrhythms and hemiolas create tension, it is the syncopation that creates the rhythmic drive in Smyth's works.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln), Cello, and piano. The score is for the fourth movement of the Trio in D minor, measures 108-112. The key signature is D minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The Violin part starts with a *con spirito* instruction and dynamic markings of *ff*, *p*, and *mf [f]*. The Cello part has dynamic markings of *ff*, *p*, and *f*. The piano part is marked *giocoso* and *ff*, with dynamic markings of *p* and *f*. The piano part features a bass line with syncopation and accents on the anacrusis.

Figure 4-117. *Trio in D minor*, fourth movement, mm. 108-112. © Robertson Publications. Reproduced by permission.

Summary

These two works represent some of the best writing of Smyth's student years in Leipzig. Her adherence to classical forms shows the prominence of these forms in the late nineteenth century and the traditions that were still being taught, while also revealing a naïveté in her approach. Her skill at navigating forms such as sonata-allegro and theme-and-variations after only two years of formal training reveals the extent of her studies, as well as Smyth's natural talent. The eclectic style of this young composer, influenced by the musicians of her day, is heard even in these works of juvenalia. Musical ideas and devices first developed in these two early works will reveal themselves to be significant in identifying Smyth's musical style as this study progresses. Phrasing of melodies, rhythmic treatment, and harmonic language of future

works build upon the foundation Smyth established with the two sonatas of 1880. Even motives found in the *Sonata in C minor* and *Trio in D minor* will resurface in later works, granting Smyth a recognizable, if subtle, musical voice.

CHAPTER 5
THE PUBLISHED SONATAS OF 1887:
SONATA IN A MINOR, OP. 5, FOR CELLO AND PIANO;
SONATA IN A MINOR, OP. 7, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

1887 was a year of triumph and despair for Ethel Smyth. She composed two of her best works, not just of chamber music, but of her entire *oeuvre*. Written seven years after the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor*, the *Sonatas Op. 5* and *Op. 7* represent a culmination of musical study and signify her transition from student to professional. Despite the high quality of these compositions and even a revival of the *Op. 7* in the 1920s and 1930s, the works have not been incorporated into the cello and violin repertoire.

Information on the works is scarce. In writing her memoirs Smyth made a conscious effort to not discuss her music, wanting the books to be enjoyable to everyone rather than musicians and others focused. Consequently, there are no primary sources available for the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, other than the published score.²⁷⁹ The dedicatee of the work was the cellist Julius Klengel and it is extremely possible, given the Röntgen's affinity for Smyth and her music, that Klengel and either Pauline Röntgen or her daughter Johanna - or possibly Smyth herself - premiered the work privately.²⁸⁰ It was published by C. F. Peters in Leipzig in 1887, although their catalogue does not list the work today. The only edition currently available for study is located at the Library of Congress; the manuscript is lost.

²⁷⁹ There may have been reviews in the German papers of the time, but these have yet to be found or translated, a project I plan to pursue in the future. As well, Smyth's personal scrapbook of reviews and newspaper clippings located at the Yale University Library does not include any related to the chamber works.

²⁸⁰ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 144. Biographical details about the Röntgens and Klengels can also be found in chapter four, pp. 101-103.

In relation to previous compositions, however, the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, for violin and piano (her last composition to receive an opus designation) is supported by more extensive primary sources. According to the autograph score, the work was completed on 22 March 1887,²⁸¹ during her last winter in Leipzig. The four-movement work was dedicated to Lili Wach (1845-1910), a kind supporter of the arts who Smyth first befriended in 1877. Originally published in 1887 through J. Reiter-Biedermann, the copyright for Op. 7 was renewed by Universal Edition in Vienna in 1923.²⁸² On 20 November 1887, Fanny Davies and Adolph Brodsky premiered the work at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concert Hall.²⁸³ Both of these works were published by reputable firms and premiered by highly successful musicians, demonstrating the esteem with which Smyth was held in the professional world.

Biographical Context

As Elizabeth Wood points out in her article “Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth’s Contrapuntal Arts”, the story of Smyth’s life and loves during the 1880s is a difficult one to navigate.²⁸⁴ The private letters between the parties involved were unfortunately destroyed except for those published in Smyth’s memoirs and a small number of letters published in the un-official biography of Henry Brewster.²⁸⁵ Other collections of correspondence from the 1880s, such as the letters of Julius Röntgen, Joseph Joachim, Clara Schumann, or Johannes Brahms, do not refer to the break between Smyth and

²⁸¹ London, British Library, Add. MS 45950.

²⁸² Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, 375.

²⁸³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 396.

²⁸⁴ Wood, “Lesbian fugue”, 169.

²⁸⁵ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, x.

the Herzogenbergs. Little information is known on the lesser-known figures, such as Lili Wach or even Elisabet von Herzogenberg, leaving the story admittedly one-sided.²⁸⁶ A brief overview of the events that transpired from Smyth's and Brewster's perspectives will provide a context for the analysis of the two works in this chapter.

The years immediately prior to the publications of these two sonatas were years of heartache and uncertainty for Smyth. Her success in Leipzig was in many respects due to the close relationships she had formed with members of the Leipzig musical elite (see chapter four). Although she had been a beloved friend of the Herzogenbergs since 1878, by 1887 Smyth was no longer under the tutelage of Heinrich von Herzogenberg, nor was she even a welcome guest. A series of personal events and conflicts led to the tarnishing of Smyth's reputation among the Leipzig musical circle and the dissolution of her relationship with the Herzogenbergs.

From the fall of 1878 to 1885, Smyth spent the majority of her time with the Herzogenbergs. She was considered, as she wrote in her memoirs:

a semi-detached member of the Herzogenberg family; wherever they were bidden I was bidden too; not a day passed but that one or other of my meals was taken with them; and though like horses I have always preferred getting Back for the night to my own stable, the little spare room, stocked for my needs, was always ready when required.²⁸⁷

She had moved away from the conservatory and had been taken in as Herzogenbergs's private student. Elisabet (Lisl) von Herzogenberg took on the role of best friend and mother, especially after Smyth fell ill and was under her care. Anecdotes and letters

²⁸⁶ In April of 2009, Dr. Antje Ruhbaum published the first biography of Elisabet von Herzogenberg, *Elisabeth von Herzogenberg: Salon – Mäzenatentum – Musikförderung*. However, the chapter discussing Ethel Smyth's part in Herzogenberg's life relies almost exclusively on Smyth's memoirs and does not reveal any new sources or insight. See pp. 235-260.

²⁸⁷ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 231-2.

from *Impressions That Remain* convey the closeness that grew between them during Smyth's illness: "And after I was in bed Lisl would come, comb and brush in hand, her hair streaming over a white dressing-gown . . . to make sure I had everything I needed."²⁸⁸ Both ladies acknowledged that without the forced time together, they might not have formed their bond. Lisl's first letter to Smyth after her return to England for the summer reveals this:

Schloss Wernsdorf, Bohemia: May 27, 1878

My dear, dear Ethel, - ... I cannot forgive myself for causing you so much agitation on the last day; any good I may have done seems to me nullified by this last action! But I know you won't agree, and that your loving heart magnifies what I did for you and underestimates the delight it was to me doing it. Surely one would have no heart in one's bosom were it not among the intensest of pleasures to be able to help someone dear to you; to begin with, how soothing to one's vanity to find oneself so important, so long for! ...

... Don't go on thanking me but let us both thank Fate that meant so well by us on that memorable birthday of Dr. Paul's! I confess I do not look upon it as a misfortune that you became so ill, that is to say that you had this acute attack; firstly because I don't think you would otherwise have been as careful as you will be now, secondly because I doubt if we should ever have got where we are now but for those fourteen days. ...

Lisl²⁸⁹

Smyth's love for Herzogenberg and the personal and musical connection she felt is one of the main themes in the memoirs of the 1880s: "In musical matters Lisl and I saw absolutely eye to eye, and it was a strange intoxicating thing to realize that in moments of musical ecstasy the heart of the being on earth you loved best was so absolutely at one with yours that it might have been the same heart."²⁹⁰ Smyth's relationship with

²⁸⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 232.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 232.

Herzogenberg was one of admiration and friendship formed on the basis of their mutual love for music. She continues, “meanwhile Lisl and I plodded away at our counterpoint in friendly rivalry, and used sometimes to wonder whether Brahms, given a *cantus firmus* to work in four parts, would turn out anything so very much better than our productions.”²⁹¹ There is not enough evidence to measure the degree of friendship between Smyth and Herzogenberg; the letters and Smyth’s writing do imply an unusually strong connection, but this is frequently described as a mother-daughter relationship.²⁹² Smyth had found a musical kindred spirit who, with the guidance of Heinrich von Herzogenberg, provided the environment in which her musical aspirations thrived.

With the encouragement of the Herzogenbergs, Smyth became a well-respected composer in Leipzig. The sketchbooks from her first years reveal a natural talent for composition despite a lack of training. Dozens of movements from unfinished works still exist, as well as several finished works from this period. Many of these unpublished works were performed in the salons of Leipzig’s musical elite and included several string quartets and chamber works with piano. Smyth’s *String Quintet Op. 1*, published in 1882, and the *Balladen und Lieder*, Opp. 3 and 4 for voice and piano, were also first heard in these settings.

Prior to 1887, Smyth had yet to experience gender prejudice in Germany. The Herzogenbergs and their friends appeared to not consider an intelligent musical woman anything unusual or abnormal. Clara Schumann is an obvious example of this, but

²⁹¹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 232-233.

²⁹² Vicinus, *Intimate friends: women who loved women, 1778-1928*, 126-134.

Elisabeth von Herzogenberg was herself an accomplished pianist and amateur composer whose views and criticism were sought after by Brahms. Smyth described Frau Herzogenberg as a “musical genius”,²⁹³ and Clara Schumann was an admired visitor to Leipzig. Smyth was only an anomaly in that she was English and a great deal more outspoken and energetic than her German friends. That her social circle appeared to approve of Smyth’s pursuit of a compositional career is an unusual factor that cannot yet be explained.

This idyllic world did not come crashing down all at once, but gradually eroded after winter visits to Florence, Italy in 1882-83 and 1884. There Smyth met Elisabet von Herzogenberg’s extended family: her sister Julia Brewster (née Stockhausen, 1839-1897) and Julia’s husband, Henry (Harry) Bennett Brewster (1850-1908). Within a few months, Brewster was infatuated with Smyth. No one could have predicted that Smyth would break up their marriage. In her memoirs the composer narrated this drama in multiple ways, each time returning to this affair, trying to explain as well as understand the events that transpired. The tragedy is also told from Brewster’s perspective in *The Cosmopolites: A Nineteenth-Century Family Drama*.²⁹⁴ Between 1882 and 1886, Smyth inadvertently forced her beloved musical family, the Herzogenbergs, to turn away from her forever. In order to understand not only how this happened but how the events were interpreted by Smyth, it is constructive to examine who she was at this point in her life.

Pictures of Smyth date from the 1890s onward, presenting a formidable, middle-aged woman, set in her course in life. At the age of twenty-four (in 1882), she was a

²⁹³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 170.

²⁹⁴ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 108-189.

blonde, athletic, attractive, articulate young woman. She was educated in French, Italian, and German, and was just beginning a successful career as a composer, a daunting feat for any one, but especially so for a woman at this time. Yet she was never afraid to speak her mind or to form new friendships. She was also full of energy and lived an active lifestyle, frequently going hiking and riding. She was the exact opposite of the quiet and philosophical Julia Brewster, and Henry Brewster became infatuated with her.

Henry Brewster was born to English and American parents and raised in a privileged household in Paris. His parents had a close relationship with the Stockhausens and Julia and Henry were childhood friends.²⁹⁵ He studied at Oxford, but was not interested in pursuing a career in law or business. At his mother's insistence he went to Germany for several years to prepare for examinations at Oxford. When he failed the exams, he decided to travel across the United States of America with his brother. Upon his return to Europe, Brewster renewed his friendship with Julia Stockhausen and they were married after a four-year "metaphysical courtship".²⁹⁶ In 1873 they married and moved to Florence where their very small social circle included Adolf Hildebrand and his wife Irene. He continued to travel to France and Germany, and their letters reveal a strongly philosophical but not passionate relationship.²⁹⁷ According to their grand-son, also named Harry Brewster, "Harry and Julia approached marriage with diffidence. Fully aware of the precariousness of the marital bond, they pledged

²⁹⁵ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 55.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55-85.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

themselves to part amicably should either tfo them with to go his or her own way.”²⁹⁸ In theory, their agreement seemed reasonable and their love appeared unfaltering. Ten years later, Ethel Smyth came to visit this Florentine ivory tower and inadvertently disrupted their world.

Smyth was initially attracted to Julia Brewster and disliked Henry, continuing a pattern of relationships from her girlhood. Furthermore, she believed that heterosexual love was impossible for her to have. Her anecdotes of infatuation were usually directed toward female friends, her “passions.” For both cultural and personal reasons, Smyth believed that she was incapable of having, and more, was unwilling to pursue the kind of relationship that exists between a man and a woman. Writing in 1919 of letters she had earlier sent to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, Smyth stated, “I again and again express a conviction [in the letters] . . . that the most perfect relation of all must be the love between man and woman, but this seemed to me, given my life and outlook, probably an unachievable thing.”²⁹⁹ This statement need not necessarily be interpreted as a reference to homosexual tendencies, as modern scholars argue, but as the realization of the impossibility of having a professional career and being a wife according to nineteenth-century Victorian standards. She explains the conflict between marriage and her “life and outlook” later in the same passage: “where should be found the man whose existence could blend with mine without loss of quality on either side? My *work* must, and would always, be the first consideration, and as I said elsewhere,

²⁹⁸ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 108.

²⁹⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 258.

the idea that men might think one wanted to catch them checked incipient romance.”³⁰⁰

Throughout her first memoir, dating to 1894, she disregards any relationships with men, including a brief engagement to Oscar Wilde’s brother, or the advances of Brewster.

She even wrote to her mother early on about marriage:

Every day I become more and more convinced of the truth of my old axiom, that why no women have become composers is because they have married, and then, very properly, made their husbands and children the first consideration. So even if I were to fall desperately in love with BRAHMS and he were to propose to me, I should say no! So fear not that I shall marry in Germany!³⁰¹

In this humorous remark, Smyth reinforces her belief that marriage was incompatible with her pursuit of a career in music. During her early years in Germany, Smyth had no way of knowing that a deep friendship and love affair would later blossom between her and a male companion, Henry Brewster.

In 1882, aside from her music Smyth’s strongest feelings were for Frau Herzogenberg, whose relationship to her was that of a surrogate mother and a friend in the broad manner of nineteenth-century female friendships. They loved, understood, and nurtured each other in ways that men and women in the 1880s could not. In fact, Smyth wrote decades later, in 1919, that she related better to women than to men:

Let me say that all my life, even when after years had brought me the seemingly unattainable, I have found in women’s affection a peculiar understanding, mothering quality that is a thing apart. . . . And further it is a fact, as H. B. once remarked, that the people who have helped me most at difficult moments of my musical career, beginning with my own sister Mary, have been members of my

³⁰⁰ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 258. Italics are added to emphasize the idea that it was Smyth’s music and not any homosexual feelings that influenced her decision to not choose marriage.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 190-1. Smyth did acknowledge that she did not have the attraction for boys she knew her sister possessed; nonetheless, she clearly stated that the conscious decision to not enter into marriage was a result of her professional and musical aspirations.

own sex. Thus it comes to pass that my relations with certain women, all exceptional personalities I think, are shining threads in my life.³⁰²

Ironically, it was the love of a man (and not another woman) that caused the breach with Herzogenberg.

Smyth traveled to Florence first in December of 1882. She was immediately attracted to the elusive Julia and gradually getting to know Henry. She had learned a great deal about them from Elisabet von Herzogenberg, but “face to face with them I soon found out that the real hermit was Julia, her husband being rather an embryonic lover of humanity, hitherto accustomed, owing to circumstances, to pay exclusive attention to abstractions.”³⁰³ Specifically of Henry Brewster, she wrote:

My acquaintance with the man destined to become my greatest friend began ... with a little aversion on my part, although his personality was delightful. Having for years had no real intercourse with anyone save his wife, he was very shy – a shyness like that of a well-brought-up child, which took the form of extreme simplicity, as though he were falling back on first principles to see him through. ... He seemed to have read all books, to have thought all thoughts; and last but not least was extremely good-looking – clean-shaven but for a moustache, a perfect nose and brow, brown eyes set curiously far apart, and fair fluffy hair. It was the face of a dreamer and yet of an acute observer, and his manner was the gentlest, kindest, most courteous manner imaginable.³⁰⁴

According to both Smyth’s memoirs and the biography of Brewster, he was also taken with Smyth. Julia saw this affection developing, and only a few weeks after Smyth arrived in Italy, Brewster departed for a hunting trip in Africa. During that spring Smyth came to know the Hildebrands and Julia Brewster quite well, and was accepted into their social circle. She returned to Germany before he came back from Africa.

³⁰² Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 259.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 313.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 312.

In January of 1884 Smyth again returned to Florence, where she spent the next seven months in the company of the Brewsters and the Hildebrands.³⁰⁵ In the chronological narrative of *Impressions That Remain*, Smyth avoids a description of her time with the Brewsters, preferring instead to regale the reader with tales of her hiking trips through Italy. In the subsequent section of *Impressions That Remain* titled, “In the Desert”, however, Smyth describes these complicated relationships and her breach with the Herzogenbergs. By the spring of 1884, Smyth’s affection for Henry was already developing into a bond that not even she anticipated. The following passage from that chapter summarizes her view, from a distance of thirty years, of what transpired that spring:

It may be remembered that the Brewsters held unusual views concerning the bond between man and wife, views which up to the time of my arrival on the scene had not been put to the proof of the touch of reality. My second visit to Florence was fated to supply the test. Harry Brewster and I, two natures to all appearance diametrically opposed, had gradually come to realize that our roots were in the same soil – and this I think is the real meaning of the phrase “to complete one another” – that there was between us one of those links that are part of the Eternity which lies behind and before Time. A chance wind having fanned and revealed at the last moment, as so often happens, what had long been smouldering in either heart, unsuspected by the other, the situation had been frankly faced and discussed by all three of us [Harry, Julia and Ethel]; and I then learned, to my astonishment, that his feeling for me was of long standing, and that the present eventuality had been not only foreseen by Julia from the first, but frequently discussed between them. To sum up the position as baldly as possible, Julia, who believed the whole thing to be imaginary on both sides, maintained it was incumbent on us to establish, in the course of further intercourse, whether realities or illusions were in question. After that – and surely there was no hurry – the next step could be decided on. This view H. B. allowed was reasonable. My position, however, was that there could be no next step, inasmuch as it was my obvious duty to break of intercourse with him at once and for ever. And when I left Italy that chapter was closed as far as I was concerned.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 115.

³⁰⁶ Smyth, *Impression that remain*, 366.

According to his biographer, though, Brewster proposed in a letter to Ethel that summer a three-way relationship of love and admiration, but ultimately a relationship where Smyth would legally be nothing more than a mistress:

My love I will never harm you. How can I marry you unless she joins us hand in hand – how can I give you that outward sign of respect if it were at the same time an outrage to her? The curse would be upon us... I don't want to love you unless I love nobly... She says I am deceiving myself and that a new love however excellent is not the reality I need, but general interests and the fight with men. I admit the second part but think that reality presents itself in a complex shape and that as I loved when I entered into solitary thought and found my mate, so must it be when I begin to set my thought in contact with those of others and gather in human atmosphere... Are you so tender-hearted my sweet Ethel that you [sic] needs must be married before the altar or cry your eyes out? I can admit it if you were to jump out of all social connections into nothing but one feeling – however strong; it is not your nature and I quite feel that. Do you think I would spoil the generous delicate machine?³⁰⁷

Smyth's Victorian upbringing and her concern for her family's reputation, however, prevented her from accepting Brewster's scenario. Yet Brewster continued to write Smyth letters trying to convince her to partake in "a quasi-bigamous arrangement whereby Ethel and Julia would each play a complementary role reflecting two different sides of [Henry's] personality and fulfilling the psychological needs of all three."³⁰⁸ That summer Julia Brewster visited her sister in Leipzig, and Elisabet learned of danger posed to the marriage. Brewster continued to write to both Smyth and Julia, trying to convince each that he could not live without the other.³⁰⁹

In October of 1884, Brewster secretly came to see Smyth in Leipzig and attend a performance of some chamber pieces.³¹⁰ Although the letters are unclear what

³⁰⁷ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 117.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 118-125.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

happened during that visit, and if Julia knew about it, Smyth's final letter to Brewster demonstrates the extent to which the situation had progressed:

Harry, it is all wrong – I am all wrong... You know I cannot care for or marry anyone else, that though you may never claim me I belong to you and to no one else. But otherwise what have I to wait for since I know the world will go the other way round before I could be yours with joy... And so for the sake of my work which is drowned in longing for you – for the sake of everything and because you love me, give me no further sign of your existence.³¹¹

This letter is significant because it defines Smyth's feelings for Brewster, but it is also an important for understanding Smyth's music. She wrote that her work was "drowned in longing" for Brewster; her music was directly related to her feelings for Brewster and the complicated situation in which she found herself. How these feelings manifest themselves in the music will be discussed in the analysis below.

Despite her feelings for Brewster, Smyth ceased correspondence with him by the fall of 1885.³¹² During the previous winter of 1884-1885, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg continued to believe Smyth's side of the story, that Smyth had not pursued Brewster nor had she any intention of breaking up their marriage. Herzogenberg wrote, "darling, have faith in my faith. I have a heavy heart and still I enjoy somehow the idea of having to fight for you, for my true loyal child," and later she ends a letter, "if I loved you less how little I should suffer!"³¹³ Yet rumors against Smyth grew in Leipzig, and the pressure from Herzogenberg's family (particularly her brother and her mother, the Baroness von Stockhausen) was too much to bear.³¹⁴ Despite Smyth's insistence that she and

³¹¹ Brewster, *The cosmopolites*, 123.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 124.

³¹³ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 368-9.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Brewster cease contact and that their friendship was not worth the dissolution of his marriage or her relationship to Frau Herzogenberg, Smyth could not in the end convince Herzogenberg that she had been innocent of the charge of adultery.

Regardless of her own feelings for Smyth, Elisabet von Herzogenberg could no longer be friends with the young woman who had almost destroyed her sister's marriage. In the spring of 1885, Heinrich von Herzogenberg accepted a position in Berlin and Smyth went to England as she usually did. In a final letter sent in June, after they had moved, Frau Herzogenberg wrote to Smyth "that our common life could not continue for the present."³¹⁵ By September the scandal had escalated to an extreme. By the fall of 1886 Lisl ceased all contact,³¹⁶ and Smyth was abandoned by her musical family in Germany. Lili Wach, a member of the Leipzig social and musical circle and one of Smyth's close Leipzig friends, suggested staying away from Germany, and convinced Smyth to spend the remainder of the year in England. She had difficulty composing there but did not think she would compose again, anyway.³¹⁷

As heartbreaking as the situation was for Smyth and as embarrassing as it was for Herzogenberg, the letters between the two women were never vicious on Herzogenberg's part or pleading on Smyth's part. Smyth wrote, "in fact it was a correspondence between two worn-out people, disputing as to which particular wave had cast the vessel on the rocks and whether shipbuilder, chartmaker, or captain was to

³¹⁵ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 369.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 384.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 373.

blame.”³¹⁸ All correspondence stopped, and Smyth lost the most important friendship of her young life.

May of 1885 was the last time Smyth actually saw the Herzogenbergs. A gulf between them had slowly developed between 1882 and 1885, as Smyth found herself the object of the affections of Brewster. Accusations were hurled by Frau Herzogenberg’s aristocratic relations, and reparations were frequently attempted by Smyth. Letters on the part of Smyth’s closest friends and relatives were even sent to Herzogenberg in an effort to clarify the misunderstandings. Smyth believed she had not consciously done anything to gain Brewster’s attention.

After a year in England, Smyth decided that she must go back to Germany. She had difficulty composing in England and believed she could only compose in a land that lived and breathed music; she also wanted to regain her good name and restore professional connections.³¹⁹ She wrote in her memoirs of her return to Leipzig, “more than a year had passed and Lisl had steadily refused to discuss the reasons of our now notorious breach with any of our common acquaintances.”³²⁰ Her first tasks then were to rebuild past friendships. Smyth visited some of her oldest Leipzig friends, including Conrad Fiedler and his wife, showing him letters which could prove her innocence, or at least her ignorance of the ramifications of her actions. Having initially won him over, she then turned to the Wachs. Smyth was fortunate because, once she told her side of the tale, her friends were supportive. She wrote, “the return to my old haunts taught me one

³¹⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 369.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 384.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

thing: that human nature is kindlier than pessimists would have one believe.”³²¹ To her surprise, she was not shunned or scorned by their mutual friends. She then found her own lodgings in Leipzig and spent weekends with friends in the country. With renewed friendships and a new independence, Smyth slowly rebuilt her life in Germany.

The narrative of her memoirs during this period between the fall of 1886 and the spring of 1887 quickly alternates between the bitterness and betrayal she felt as a result of the unwanted scandal, and her hopeful adventures in Germany and England with the reassurances of friends. Upon her return to Leipzig, her mother sent a final letter to Frau Herzogenberg. Of the reply Smyth described it as “singularly beautiful. . . . Gentle and implacable, it is mainly an entreaty to my mother to see, and help me to see, that not her [Lisl’s] own will and action but Fate stood between us.”³²² She also described the feeling of betrayal when the Fiedlers attempted to talk to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg on behalf of Smyth in 1886 only to be persuaded to Herzogenberg’s side of the situation, “a bitter disappointment” that Smyth felt she should have foreseen.³²³ Conrad Fiedler wrote to Smyth in January of 1887, to explain his perspective:

In our first interview [with Lisl] I at once gained a different picture of her attitude and state of mind to that based on impressions gathered from you, and I cannot deny that I was glad it was so; had it been otherwise it would have distressed me greatly . But do not think that for that reason I have lost imagination for your position, or weakened in the sense of justice that has prompted me from the first to defend your attitude and actions against misconstruction, and resent the imputation to you of unworthy motives, or points of view which are not yours.³²⁴

³²¹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 384.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, 385.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 405.

Despite the events in the winter of 1886-1887, Smyth later recalls “the wonderful kindness” that was shown to her by the Wachs and the Röntgens. Her indebtedness to Lili Wach especially, and perhaps the reason for the dedication of the violin sonata, is found in the following passage:

My great trouble was mentioned to no one except Lili Wach, and I am thankful to think that in after years I was able in some measure to make up for what must have been a painful spell of her life. If three people have been in closest alliance, and two of these are violently separated, each still clinging to the third, the situation of that third is not an enviable one – more especially in the case of a temperament so unwarlike, so delicate and shrinking as Lili Wach’s.³²⁵

Smyth also recalls the general efforts of others, writing that “many and many a sudden grip of a friendly hand do I recall – trifles light as air but which made all the difference.”³²⁶ In only a few pages she describes the lowest and highest emotional events of 1886, events that surely affected the composition of the two works.

Not all was melancholy and despair. In January of 1887 she was a bridesmaid in her youngest sister’s wedding, a delightful occasion in which she visited with family and friends far away from Germany. She also adopted a puppy in February, “a huge sprawling, yellow-and-white puppy of the long-haired kind. . . . Half St. Bernard and the rest what you please.”³²⁷ Marco became the first of many four-legged friends. After the winter of 1887, Smyth was able to piece together what she could of her former life. Although the Herzogenbergs no longer lived in Leipzig, that winter was still a period of transition and, to a degree, mourning for Smyth.

³²⁵ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 389.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 387.

A line from her mother's letter in the summer of 1888, written with the knowledge and hindsight of five years of emotional turmoil for Smyth, aptly demonstrates the weight of those events on Smyth's creative ability during this time. Mrs. Smyth wrote, "the ordeal of mind and nerves you have gone through the last two years is not calculated to qualify you for *light compositions*."³²⁸ The sonatas represent many strains in Smyth's life: the decay of her relationship with Lisl, the formation of a friendship with Henry Brewster (which only later would reveal its full significance), her "pluck, resolution, and healthy tone of mind"³²⁹ which would bring her success and fame throughout the rest of her life, the constancy of friends such as Lili Wach, and her newly discovered love of large dogs.

Reception

No contemporary criticism or reception can be found from the 1880s of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, for cello and piano. It is highly likely that the work was premiered by Julius Klengel in a private setting, but there is no evidence that a public performance occurred at that time. Many years later, the public premier was given in December of 1926, well after Smyth was established as a successful composer. It was performed by May Fussell and Kathleen Long, and a review was published in *The London Times* by a staff reporter. Of this performance forty years after its creation, the critic wrote:

Dame Ethel Smyth has reached the stage in her career when her youthful works gain luster from her subsequent fame, but quite apart from the personal interest this Sonata in A minor contains music which is worthy of the violoncellist's attention. The shapes of the themes of the first movement may be rather

³²⁸ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 411. [Italics are mine.]

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 408.

amusingly Brahms-like, but there is individuality too. The true Brahms disciple of the eighties would have developed those themes laboriously; Miss Smyth (as she was then) did nothing of the kind, but treated them with a rather wayward inconsequence which strikes the present-day listener as characteristic of her. The slow movement, too, beginning with a sort of basso ostinato, soon left for something else, has considerable charm, and two out of three themes of the finale have a light-hearted gaiety which foreshadows the style of the Boatswain's Mate.³³⁰

The perspective of *The Times* critic is quite optimistic and positive, with no allusion to gender as a stylistic factor. There is a distance from the music of Brahms which allows for greater knowledge of style, but there is also familiarity with Smyth's musical style that would not have been observable earlier in her career.

The premier performance of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, for violin and piano by Davies and Brodsky at the *Gewandhaus Kammermusik* concert hall was attended by many friends and admirers, including Smyth's brother Robert. She briefly described the event in the memoirs, a rare anecdote of a chamber work. According to her brother, a critic at the performance "unanimously [sic] said it was devoid of feminine charm and therefore unworthy of a woman."³³¹ No other sources can corroborate or identify the critic, but this anecdote serves as an example of the gender bias and double-standard that Smyth was beginning to experience and that female composers often faced in the late nineteenth-century.

During the following March of 1888, she also sent the work, along with her *Trio in D minor*, to the violinist Joseph Joachim. Her friendship with him extended back to her early years in Leipzig, but their acquaintance was not enough to get him to perform the work. He wrote back, "in spite of talent here and there, many a clever turn and a certain

³³⁰ Quoted by Rolton, liner notes for *The Chagall Trio*.

³³¹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 396.

facility, candour compels me to say that both works seem to me failures – unnatural, farfetched, overwrought, and not as to sound good.”³³² In her typical, headstrong way, Smyth responded by accusing him of playing pieces that had no musical quality but instead might garner him patronage and monetary rewards.

Smyth also met Tchaikovsky that winter, and his opinion of the composer and her music counters the previously negative assessments. In his diary from 1888, Tchaikovsky wrote:

Miss Smyth is one of the comparatively few women composers who may be seriously reckoned among the workers in this sphere of music. She had come to Leipzig a few years before and studied theory and composition very thoroughly; she had composed several interesting works (*the best of which, a violin sonata, I heard excellently played by the composer herself and Mr. Brodsky*), and gave promise in the future of a serious and talented career.³³³

For Smyth’s composition and her playing to impress Tchaikovsky, who was also a critic of Brahms, speaks to her quality and originality as a musician. This letter also supports the prevailing thought that Smyth often performed her own works in the homes of her friends with other excellent musicians.

Later critics agreed with Tchaikovsky, at least regarding the composition. Unfortunately, these did not come until almost fifty years later. A 1934 review published in *The Musical Times* by a staff reporter said of Op. 7 that the listener is “surprised not by its Brahmsian turns of expression, but by the already recognizable independent nature of Ethel Smyth in a time and scene where Brahms was all powerful.”³³⁴ The similarity between this description and the critique of Op. 5 is undeniable, in particular

³³² Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 407.

³³³ Quoted by Newmarch, *Tchaikovsky: his life and works, with extracts from his writings, and the diary of his tour abroad in 1888*, 194 [emphasis is mine].

³³⁴ “Chamber Music”, 174.

that her music possesses an audible originality. As in many of the articles on Smyth's works, the reviewer does not elaborate on this so-called independent musical voice.

One scholar who did expound upon her ideas about Smyth's music was Kathleen Dale, a British music critic and historian who was named the musical executor of Smyth's works. Dale focuses her discussion on the development of Smyth's contrapuntal writing during the years in Leipzig, as well as her lack of tutoring in orchestration.³³⁵ She also adds that "It was only through developing a natural instinct for the picturesque presentation of her musical ideas that she gradually found her way in investing her orchestral scores with apt and beautiful coloring."³³⁶

Specifically regarding Op. 7, Dale wrote that the work has a "sure sense of form"³³⁷ compared to previous works. She also discussed the failure of these early works to conform to the model of sonata form. However, she did not view this as a hindrance to the work. "[Smyth's] compositions in sonata form make the impression that she had to force herself into following accepted traditions. The two sonatas are not free from structural uncertainty, but they atone for it by melodic and rhythmic expressiveness, by beautiful colour-effects and interesting give-and-take between the soloists."³³⁸ Smyth's formal structures during the entire Leipzig period demonstrate a nonconformity that actually has its roots in the approach taken by such figures as Brahms. Like other scholars in the 1950s, Dale separates Smyth's vocal and

³³⁵ Dale, "Ethel Smyth's music: a critical study", 289.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid., 292.

³³⁸ Ibid.

instrumental works into two separate categories: those with programmatic meaning and those without.

Even the composer's absolute works have a dramatic element in them, drawing upon events and emotions in her personal life which she then tried to communicate to the listener. Smyth rarely wrote about her music in the memoirs, but in one instance she described the *Piano Sonata No. 2* as inspired by one of her passions, the actress Marie Geistinger. Smyth's described her first meeting with the actress in the memoirs and these events are also found in the composition.³³⁹ Her tendency toward the dramatic (in her life and her music) was not constrained simply because she was engaged in composing non-programmatic music. It is therefore possible to believe that her works without text may be just as dramatic as her texted works.

Analysis

The prevalence of primary sources (examined above) presents the first opportunity to examine the extra-musical aspects of Smyth's chamber music, especially the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*. As these sources have shown, several biographical details influence a critical interpretation of this work: Smyth's falling-out with the Herzogenbergs, her exile from (and return to) Leipzig, her friendship with Lili Wach, and the budding relationship with Henry Brewster. The dedication of the work to Wach instead of a fellow musician and a reference to a poignant passage from Dante's *Inferno* suggest a direct connection between these personal events and the high level of expression in the work. By association, Op. 5 also acquires a level of musical meaning

³³⁹ Smyth, *Impressions that remain*, 197-198.

not only because it was composed in the same year but because it also contains similar musical constructs and evokes similar emotions.

The analysis presented in this chapter has similar goals and yielded similar results as the previous chapter. Just as similarities existed between the two works of 1880, so too do similarities appear in these two works from 1887. Principal and secondary themes are distinguished by the rhythmic contrast of duple versus triple. Smyth's melodic style follows the same trends of the earlier works, while also increasing in complexity in terms of phrase structure. The phrasing is more elusive than that heard in the earlier works, with irregular phrase lengths and unexpected climactic moments. Pitch and rhythmic motives unify the movements and the works. The pieces contain Smyth's propensity for chromatic harmonies and Romantic harmonic techniques, such as Neapolitan harmonies, enharmonic respellings, and mode mixture. Finally, the rhythmic element of propulsion is more apparent than in the earlier works, especially because Smyth consciously avoids it in one of the slow movements. The lack of rhythmic drive helps create one of Smyth's most poignant musical moments.

Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, for Cello and Piano

Unlike Smyth's other chamber works, Op. 5 has only three movements. It is missing the standard dance movement, although the main theme of the *finale* has a dance-like character. Because the work is never mentioned in letters, diaries, or the memoirs, there is no way of knowing why Smyth chose in this one instance to compose a three-movement work instead of a four-movement one. She may have been experimenting with the shorter form or she may have simply felt that a fourth movement was not necessary. Harmonically, the movements progress from A minor to E minor and back to A minor by the end of the third movement, thus completing the most basic

harmonic progression of tonic to dominant and a return to tonic. The work's three movements also fit the fast-slow-fast construct of a prototypical multi-movement composition. This condensed version also captures the same dramatic mood as Smyth's other chamber works.

Allegro moderato

The most significant difference between this treatment of sonata-allegro form and the earlier treatments is that the exposition does not repeat. The movement instead is a ternary structure that still follows the parameters of exposition, development and recapitulation. Thematic key relationships are governed by the third as the principal theme moves from A minor to the relative C major (see Table 5-1). Smyth relies on the fragments of themes to navigate the development, modulating to closely related keys. Thus the two themes engage in a dialogue of equal partners, also akin to the earlier works. Similar to the *Sonata in C minor*, the first movement, *Allegro moderato* of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, is well-balanced; the development is the same number of measures as the exposition and the recapitulation is a transposition of the exposition to the tonic with a slightly extended transition (Table 5-1). The coda adds a mere twelve measures. Within this strict adherence to structural parameters, Smyth begins to experiment with her themes, harmonies, and rhythms.

Thematic design: Smyth's style is immediately apparent in the principal theme, a six-measure phrase that begins without an introduction (Figure 5-1). It is characterized by an opening dotted-quarter note that spins out into the melody, ascending to a minor 9th above the original pitch. The F in m. 3 is the highest point in the melody and the climax of the theme. It is necessary to refer again to Macarthur's method of using a

Table 5-1. Formal diagram of first movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, sonata-allegro form.

	Exposition				Development				Recapitulation				Coda	
Theme	PT	trans.	ST	CT	PT	CT	ST	PT	PT	trans.	ST	CT	PT	CT
Key	Am	~G	C	C	Am-E		F#		Am		A	A	A	
Mm. #s	1-10	16-25	26-40	41-48	49-72	73-74	75-86	87-96	97-107	108-23	124-38	39-46	147-50	151-58

melodic analysis in order to discuss Smyth's melodic structure. This climactic moment does not happen at the Golden Mean but much earlier, only half-way through the melody (or a proportion of 0.50). Half-notes in the cello line delay the cadence and extend what could have been a four-bar phrase to six measures, thus also altering the overall structure of the melody.



Figure 5-1. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, first movement, principal theme, mm. 1-6. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Smyth's decision to extend the first phrase of the work may have been due to the repetition within the melody. In the second, third, and fourth measures, the same groups of notes are repeated. This incessant repetition combined with the range of a tritone between mm. 2 and 4 creates an urgency and anxiety in the music that Smyth may have been trying to express.

The secondary theme is more resigned, stated in C major (Figure 5-2). A suggestion of the theme, identified by an opening leap of a fifth, first appears embedded in the piano part in m. 26. "Phrase a" is a three-measure idea that begins on the highest note and descends, thus avoiding the sense of a melodic climax. In m. 27, the melody also repeats itself as it did in the principal theme, delaying the forward motion of the line. The idea is incomplete, and the following three bars are merely elaborations of the harmony. Only when the cello enters in m. 31 is the full theme stated. The three-bar "phrase a" is again stated and followed by what should be a consequent phrase of equal proportion. It is here that the music takes an unexpected turn. "Phrase b" is also a three-

measure idea, but it does not cadence. Instead, the melody is held on an E^b in the cello for two measures over secondary harmonies that move farther from the tonal center. When the melody resumes in m. 37 (what might be called “phrase a¹”), it presents a straight forward answer, descending $A^b-G^b-F-E^b-D^b$, and it should cadence in m. 39 on C^b . Instead, the melody descends to C over an augmented sixth chord and finally cadences back in C a full two bars later. If the theme is analyzed as a continuous idea from m. 31 to m. 41, then the climax clearly appears in m. 37 on an A^b , and at the Classical proportion of 0.625. The harmonic nature of this passage, explained on page 238, supports a melody that is calm yet elusive, sliding around the pitch E^b but never settling on a tonal center. This detailed analysis of the secondary theme demonstrates finesse with the interworking of melody and harmony that Smyth had not previously exhibited. Although the music finally cadences in the tonal center where it began, every note and harmony along the way suggests an alternate tonal center. It is this ambiguity in such a subtle manner that keeps the listener engaged, but the expression of ambiguity in the music may have been the influence of her personal life.

A brief closing theme in a character similar to the secondary theme serves as a transition to the development. This melodic structure is only slightly closer to the Classical model. The climax occurs in the third measure, at a proportion of 0.563, and the entire phrase is four bars long (Figure 5-3). Unlike the secondary theme, however, this phrase has a distinct arch-like shape, rising to the original tonic pitch, A, before a return to the primary tonal center..

Figure 5-2. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, first movement, secondary theme, mm. 23-41.* © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Figure 5-3. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, first movement, closing theme, mm. 45-49.* © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Motivic design: Motives continue to play a role in the coherence and consistency of Smyth's works. In Opp. 5 and 7, however, Smyth has gained efficiency in motivic treatment while also relying more on the themes as entire structural units, effectively combining what she learned while writing the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor*. Fewer motives are used in a given movement, but these motives also

appear in almost every movement. The result is a cyclical work identifiable as a complete unit. Four basic motives unify the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*; two are pitch-related and two are rhythmic, and all four appear in the first movement (Figure 5-4). The first motive of significance is the same motive from earlier works; PM2 is the group of scale degrees $\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ (see pgs. 187 and 217). This motive is found frequently throughout the first movement. The other pitch-related motive was also found in earlier works: the use of scale degrees $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ (PM1). The two pitch motives also contribute to the character of the secondary theme but in a more subtle fashion. For example, PM1 occurs on the second and fourth beats of mm. 24, 26, and 29 (Figure 5-5). PM2 only makes one appearance at the beginning of “phrase b” in m. 33 (See Figure 5-2). The same two rhythmic motives discussed in chapter four – that of $\text{♩} \cdot \text{♩}$ and $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} -$ influence the melodies and rhythms of the entire sonata.

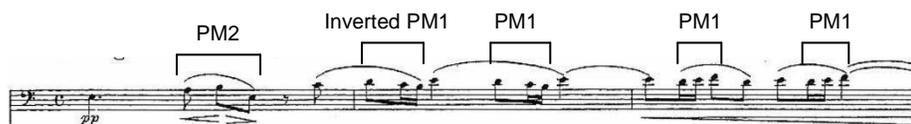


Figure 5-4. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, first movement, mm. 1-3. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.



Figure 5-5. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, first movement, secondary theme, mm. 23-32. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Harmonic design: Harmonic ambiguity has already been alluded to in the discussion of the two main themes. The harmonies Smyth employed in the first movement support the different characteristics of the two main themes and contribute to the particular moods evoked by the music. The principal theme does not venture away from its tonal center completely, but Smyth begins the transition process immediately after the cadence in m. 7 (Figure 5-6). The theme is restated in the piano part but is shortened to only five measures, enhancing the feeling of anxiety through the unexpected early cadence.

Smyth continues to express a sense of the unknown in the transition section. The passage beginning in m. 11 quickly moves to a N^6 harmony followed by a typical progression back to I (this time in A major), shown in the Figure 5-7. The N^6 harmony then returns frequently over the following two bars, but so does a ^{b}ii ; the constant alternation of the pitch D and $D^b/C^\#$ creates the harmonic ambiguity that allows Smyth to defy the listener's expectations. Despite the chromaticism, the transition cadences on G, and this new tonal center prepares the move to the related key of C major for the secondary theme, exhibiting a tendency toward "subdominant-side progressions," similar to Keays's findings in her analysis on the *Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano*.³⁴⁰

By contrast, the secondary theme appears quite diatonic and predictable and therefore initially serves as an antidote to the tension of the previous passage. "Phrase a" progresses very clearly from I to V to I (Figure 5-8). The entrance of the cello continues this trend during its statement of "phrase a" but, as I previously mentioned, "phrases b and c" challenge the tonal possibilities of C major. "Phrase b" cadences on a

³⁴⁰ Keays, *Tooting her own horn*, 26-27.

vii/V in m. 35 followed by V^{4/2}/ N⁶ in m. 36. Smyth then modulates to the N⁶ chord with the beginning of “phrase c”, tonicizing D^b major for the entire phrase. The V of D^b is then reinterpreted as a German-sixth chord in C and the progression finally cadences in that key. Although the secondary theme remains in C major for a majority of the passage, the frequent seventh-chords and secondary harmonies create harmonic confusion.

The image shows a musical score for Violoncello and Piano, measures 1-12. The Violoncello part is in the bass clef, and the Piano part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, and *decresc.*. Harmonic analysis labels are provided below the piano part: *a: i*, $[C:I^{6/4}] V$, $I^{6/4}$, V , V^7 , i^6 , iv , $i^{6/4}$, $V^7/V I$, vii^7/V , V , I , i^6 , V , VI , VI .

Figure 5-6. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, first movement, mm. 1-12.* © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

13 *p* cre - scen - do *ff*

16 *ff* *sempre ff*

20 *f* *pp* *decresc.* *pp* *rit.*

iv N⁶ V⁷/vii VII V i N⁶ I N⁶

i⁶ bii VI bii VI⁶ III⁶ V/iv iv⁶ i^{6/4}

V III⁶ VII

I G: I ii° I vii°⁶ vi^{4/2} V IV^{6/4} I IV^{6/4} vii° I

Figure 5-7. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, first movement, mm. 13-22. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

The development section begins in the dominant but is harmonically unstable, allowing Smyth even more harmonic opportunities. The music modulates by fourths around the sharp side of the circle of fifths to C[#] minor and F[#] minor, eventually leading back to the tonic A minor and the recapitulation. The statement of second theme material in F[#] major in the development not only demonstrates Smyth's incorporation of Romantic harmony and key relationships, but it also foreshadows the modulation to A major in the recapitulation. By changing key signatures in the development to E major, and then proceeding on to F[#] major, Smyth is preparing the listener for this modal shift.

Figure 5-8. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, first movement, mm. 23-41.* © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Rhythmic design: Several rhythmic elements combine to create the character and propulsion of this movement. The rhythmic motives of ♩ and ♪♪♪ that influence the principal theme are naturally two major forces. Accompanying the principal theme is a sixteenth-note pattern in the piano that sounds like a rumbling perpetual-motion machine, adding another rhythmic element. The third rhythmic element is that of the triplet, which first appeared in the secondary theme as an embellishment of the melody. The triplet soon takes on greater significance, as it becomes the accompaniment rhythm

for the cello's statement of the secondary theme. Thus in the narrative of this sonata-allegro form, the two characters might not be thought of as the principal and secondary themes but as the duple and triple rhythms which drive the themes.

The sense of propulsion that exists in this movement as it did in the previous works can be heard in the first measures. The dotted rhythms, the anacrusis to strong beats (though not always to first beats), and the driving accompaniment have the greatest effect. In addition, throughout the movement measures with only quarter or half notes are rare. This persistent activity adds to the harmonic sense that the music does not stop, or even pause, until the final measure.

Adagio non troppo

The second movement comprises three thematic sections (Table 5-2). The sections are repeated in order but with more physically demanding accompaniments, departing from her previous method of repeating a section measure for measure. Instead, she expands or varies the sections, developing the ideas within each. With this movement, Smyth has moved farther from the strict formal practices of variation form to more loosely defined ideas of variation.³⁴¹ In addition to formal experiments, an unusual key relationship also exists in this work. The first theme is stated in E minor. The second theme then begins in E minor, but modulates to the key of D major. The third theme is then set entirely in the key of D major. When the sections are repeated, the A and B sections are presented in E minor, but the third theme occurs in the dominant of B major. E minor is finally reaffirmed in the coda.

³⁴¹ In the *Sonata in C minor*, the slow movement was a clearly labeled theme-and-variations. The labels were then dropped in the slow movement of the *Trio in D minor*. With Op. 5, Smyth has maintained the idea of variation while doing away completely with the formal nature of theme-and-variations.

Table 5-2. Formal diagram of second movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, repeated ternary form.

	A	B	C	Codetta	A	B	C	Coda
Key	Em	Em ~ D	D	Dm	Em	Em	B	Em
Mm. #s	1- 19	20-32 33-37	38-53	54-65	66-76	77-94	95-116	117-132

Thematic design: The second movement is the most plaintive of Smyth's slow movements. Its dark, tragic character conveys despair and loss. A single-voice introduction begins in the deep register of the piano, moving by fifths through an E minor tonal center (Figure 5-9).



Figure 5-9. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 1-4. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Over the ostinato, the first theme contains a descending antecedent-consequent pair of phrases (Figure 5-10). “Phrase a” is four bars in length with a melodic climax on the sixth beat, about half-way through the phrase (a proportion of 0.462), followed by a descent to E. “Phrase a¹” dovetails with the end of “phrase a”. This phrase cadences on the new tonic, C, but a leap of a seventh and a fragment of the ostinato extends the phrase to a stronger cadence in the original tonic of E minor in m. 20. As a result, “phrase a¹” is seven bars in length and the climactic moment was the leap to B^b exactly half-way through the phrase (beat 11 out of 22 beats or a proportion of 0.50). Without the extension in mm. 16-19, the climax would have happened at the Golden Mean, on the sixth beat of a 10-beat phrase. By extending the phrase, Smyth continues to avoid the Classical ideal of phrase structure while exhibiting her own voice and delaying the emotional release of the theme.

A second theme appears in m. 20, a modal idea with a lowered $\hat{2}$ (Figure 5-11). This theme is more transitional in nature than the principal theme, with quicker rhythmic ideas and increasing chromaticism. The active rhythms combined with large leaps in the piano part evoke more passionate emotions than the first theme. The theme lands briefly on an E minor harmony in m. 23, but this is followed by a cadence in the relative

Adagio non troppo.

Phrase a

10

Phrase a¹

18

A

decresc.

decresc.

p

mf

cresc.

col 8

6982

Figure 5-10. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, principal theme, mm. 1-24. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

A

2nd Theme

18

2nd Theme resumed

25

decresc.

decresc.

p

mf

cresc.

espress.

Figure 5-11. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, secondary theme, mm. 18-30. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

major in m. 27. Because of the brevity of the first cadence, this theme is heard as one eight-bar phrase with a climax in the fifth measure. The proportion of this phrase is closer to the Golden Mean than previously examined phrases by Smyth, with a proportion of 0.591, but the modulation away from the tonal center prevents the theme from existing as a distinct unit. In fact, this passage continues to move away from E minor as this thematic idea developed, undermining the harmonic stability suggested in the A section and serving as a precursor to the third theme.

A third theme in the unrelated key and the brighter mode of D major is then passed between the pianist and the cellist (Figure 5-12). Another continuous eight-bar phrase that begins and ends in D major, the theme's climax surpasses the Golden Mean for the first time in the movement, occurring on an accented off-beat in m. 43 at a proportion of 0.708. Thus with each theme in this movement, Smyth delays a little more the expected climax of the themes, creating an increasing sense of anticipation and unpredictability. The delayed cadence also prevents the relaxation of any emotional tension that has been building in the music.

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, by John Field. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano and cello. It shows the 3rd Theme in D major, starting in m. 36 and ending in m. 46. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'decraso.', 'pp', 'p', 'cresc.', and 'f', and performance instructions like 'poco rit.', 'B a tempo', 'espress.', and 'legato'. The 3rd Theme is highlighted with boxes and arrows.

Figure 5-12. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 36-46. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Harmonic design: In order to support the tension created in the themes, Smyth leads the music to harmonically unexpected areas, modulating away from the tonal center of E minor. The first theme is stated in the tonic E minor, but the second phrase modulates by a third to C major (Figure 5-13). Despite the strong push to C major, the expected cadence is obscured by a four-measure extension that returns the music to E minor. This passage is another example of Smyth's unresolving cadential style.

The composer then continues to toy with the musical expectations of the listener in the second theme. This theme appears to also exist in E minor, but dominant-tonic motion frequently occurs on weak beats, thus subverting the sense of a return to the tonic key area (Figure 5-14). The theme first cadences on G major, but the bass line in the piano part resumes the theme and passes it to the cello on the third beat of m. 28 over an E minor harmony. As the theme is developed further, the progression modulates to D major followed by the introduction of the third theme (Figure 5-15). The returns of each of the sections either generally stay in the tonic or move to the dominant.

This harmonic practice allows Smyth to create variety in the return by altering rhythm and texture in the accompaniment and by adding chromaticism to the prescribed diatonic tonal centers. Only the third theme is governed almost entirely by tonic to dominant movement. Furthermore, Smyth reinforces the stability (and therefore the finality) of the theme through a regular length of eight bars and an imperfect authentic cadence.

Adagio non troppo.

E: i V i
C: V I ii V⁷ I IV I^{6/4}
V vii[°]/V V⁶ VII | E: V⁷ i

Figure 5-13. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 1-24. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

i i V vii^{°7} I vii^{°7}/iv
vii^{°7}/iv iv — iv III V^{4/3} i V⁶ ii^{4/2} VI⁶ III⁶

Figure 5-14. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 18-30. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

31

VI Vi V^{6/5} i D: I V^{6/5}/V V^{4/2} I⁶ V⁶ I ii

36

I^{6/4} V⁷ I

Figure 5-15. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 31-41. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Rhythmic and harmonic variations: Despite an overall adherence to tonic and dominant tonal centers, each theme of the second movement returns with significantly more intricate accompaniments, often as the result of increasingly complex rhythms and unstable harmonies. The first theme is accompanied by chromatic octaves in a triplet rhythm beginning at m. 66, off-setting the 3/4 pulse. This figure then increases to a sixteenth-note figure that incorporates octaves and tenths (Figure 5-16).

Flourishes of arpeggios combined with an enharmonic modulation create excitement in the second theme. Both melody and accompaniment are embellished with sixteenth-note passages, alternating between the two instruments. At m. 90, a sixteenth-note octave pattern becomes sextuplets of B^{°7} chords. It is also at this point in the harmonic progression that Smyth respells the B^{°7} as an E^{#°7} to shift directly to a new key, in this case modulating from E minor to B minor (Figure 5-17).

Figure 5-16. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 62-76. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Figure 5-17. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 90-93. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Enharmonic equivalents also allow for brief tonicizations of distant or unrelated keys. The third theme appears in B major before modulating to E (Figure 5-18). After a

cadence in E minor in m. 101, the progression quickly continues to a dominant F major harmony and a brief tonicization of B^b major.

95

99

B: I IV^{6/4} E: V⁷

I V ii[°] V I vii^{4/3}/vi iv V⁷/iv N⁷ | B^b: V⁷ vi V⁶

Figure 5-18. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 95-101. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

The move is only a brief diversion, though, for an enharmonic shift in m. 102 and 103 respells the pitch E^b as D[#] (Figure 5-19). The respelling of this pitch plus a chromatic step from the pitch G to G^b in the cello, respelled as the pitch F[#], facilitates the modulation back to the tonic key of E minor.³⁴²

These unusual harmonic motions are followed by a release of tension through pizzicato arpeggios in the cello part and *portato* repeated chords in the piano part (Examples 5-19 and 5-20). There is a gradual *ritardando* for the remainder of the movement, creating an emotional close that parallels the quiet, solemn introduction.

³⁴² Smyth's penchant for enharmonic spellings may have been influenced by Grieg. His Album Leaf, Op. 28, no.4, for example, modulates from C[#] to D^b by way of enharmonic spelling.

102

$G^b = F^\sharp$
 $E^b = D^\sharp$

i^6 IV $E: V$ i VI^6 vii^7/V $i^{6/4}$

Figure 5-19. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 102-106. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

102

107

Figure 5-20. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, second movement, mm. 102-110. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Allegro vivace e grazioso

The final movement, *Allegro vivace e grazioso*, is a rondo presented in the style of a gigue, yet even this rhythmically brighter movement portrays the sense of anxiety that has overshadowed the entire work. Each section represents a new theme or theme group, as well as a contrasting character. The A section is stated in the key of E minor in every return except the final one in the coda, where it is finally heard in the actual tonic of A (Table 5-3). Yet traits also link this movement to sonata-allegro form. The B

section modulates to C major, a key related to both E minor and A minor. This section returns later in the tonal center of A. The C section, which would either present a new theme in a different key (rondo form) or develop the previous themes while modulating through various keys (sonata-allegro form), actually does both. A new theme is presented, but it quickly modulates through various keys. In a true sonata-allegro form, the return of the principal theme in m. 83 would stay in the relative key. In this case, the theme has returned to the tonic, a standard technique for rondo form. Even more unusual, the true tonic is not E minor but A major; the final statement of the principal theme in the coda is in A major, whereas the E minor tonal center heard earlier functions as a large-scale dominant that resolves to tonic in the recapitulation. The return of the B section is stated in A major in the recapitulation and finally in the coda the principal theme is stated in A major. Despite this unusual harmonic structure, it is similar to the *ländler* from the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Scherzo* from the *Trio in D minor*. In both of those works, the dance movements also began on the dominant and ended with a return of material on the tonic. This dance movement, although not specifically labeled as such, also follows this harmonic pattern.

Thematic design: Smyth's melodic style is again apparent in the opening theme. Entering on the second beat, the principal theme of the A section is marked by octaves and staccato articulation (Figure 5-21). The theme is eleven measures long with the climactic highpoint occurring in m. 7 (a proportion of 0.619). This is the first phrase examined thus far that is almost the exact proportion of the Golden Mean (0.618), yet the phrase is an irregular length, extended by two measures.

Table 5-3. Formal diagram of third movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, sonata-rondo form.

	A	B	A	C	A	B	A	Coda
Theme	PT	ST	PT	Development	PT	ST	PT	PT
Key	Em	C	Em	F ~	Em	A	Em	A
Mm. #s	1-48	49-82	83-112	113-70	171-218	219-64	265-84	285-311
Harmonic Motion	v	III	V	VI	v	I	v	I

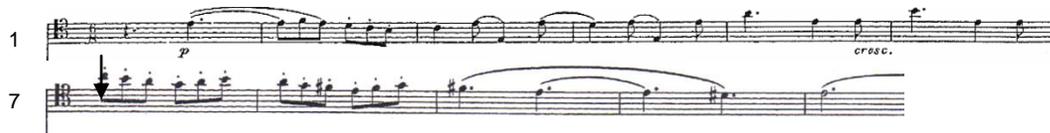


Figure 5-21. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 1-11. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

It is also important to note that all of the final movements examined thus far have had themes that adhere more closely to the Classical ideal than the themes of the other movements and forms. This structure combined with clear cadences creates finality in works that avoid decisive endings. It is possible that in the final movements Smyth is attempting to clarify the ambiguity established in earlier movements by writing expected phrase structures and clear harmonic progressions.

The B section, *poco piú moderato*, is more songlike than the A section (Figure 5-22). It is also set in 2/4 time instead of the original 6/8 time signature, opening up the possibility for 2-against-3 polyrhythms. The secondary theme contrasts with the first through its duple meter, legato articulation, and a range of almost three octaves (compared to less than two in the principal theme). It is also rhythmically irregular, beginning on an offbeat and continuing with notes tied across the bar line. The structure of the phrase, however, is similar to the principal theme. In the principal theme, the first four measures assert the tonic E and the following seven measures, while still diatonic, contain most of the melodic movement and the climax. In the same manner, the first five measures of this 14-bar idea reassert the tonal center of C. The remainder of the phrase is eight bars long, descending from the climax in m. 57 and moving away from the tonal center. Thus, both themes are comprised of phrases of irregular and unequal lengths. Only the point of climax differentiates between these two theme structures. In

the secondary theme, the climax in m. 57 is at a proportion of 0.536, a significant and audible difference.

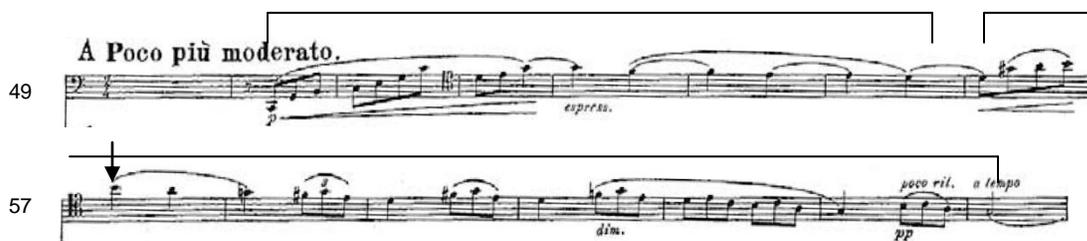


Figure 5-22. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 49-63. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

The classical theme of the C section and its harmonically simple opening phrase clearly demonstrate the juxtaposition of chromatic and diatonic harmonies in Smyth’s music. This theme is quite different from the earlier themes in this work, as well as themes discussed in the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor*. The theme is scalar in nature punctuated by leaps of a sixth and an octave (Figure 5-23). The running sixteenth notes supported by diatonic harmonies help convey its classical character. The phrase structure, however, is more like Smyth’s structures than those of the Classical masters.

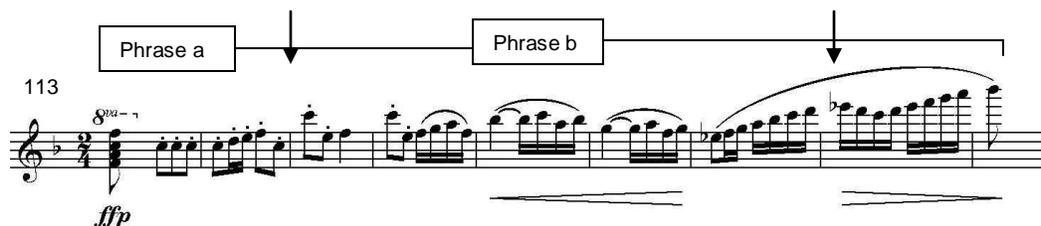


Figure 5-23. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 113-121. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

The highest note of the theme is the last one in m. 121. However, if the theme is broken down into two smaller phrases, one that cadences on the tonic of F major and a second that modulates to B^b, the proportions shift. In “phrase a”, the climax occurs on the first

high C in m. 115 at a proportion of 0.625 or very near the Golden Mean. “Phrase b”, however, has two climaxes (a possible feminist trait as described by Macarthur³⁴³). The first happens in m. 120 and the second is the highest note of the entire theme. Neither of these climaxes fits the ideal, but instead demonstrates Smyth’s compositional voice through delayed and multiple climactic moments.

Harmonic design: The large-scale harmonic structure of this movement is unusual compared to Smyth’s other works. The principal theme of the third movement is always presented in the minor dominant, creating instability throughout the whole work. However, in the A section the smaller harmonic events are diatonic with frequent subdominant, dominant, and secondary harmonies that are easily analyzed with Roman numeral analysis. Thus, the overall harmonic character is elusive and unsure of itself as the details appear to make logical sense but the larger tonal area is functioning “incorrectly.”.

The B section takes advantage of this harmonic ambiguity. It is first set in C major, a harmony that exists in both E minor and in A minor, allowing for the possibility to modulate in either direction. The flats that appear after m. 70 represent a tonicization at the Neapolitan tonal level that prepares the dominant in m. 74 (Figure 5-24). Again, the small-scale harmonic events are clearly diatonic. Only the N⁶ harmony stands apart from the surrounding tonic and dominant harmonies. The sudden appearance of the D⁶ major harmony foreshadows the harmonic events in the development.

³⁴³ Macarthur, *Feminist aesthetics in music*, 70.

Figure 5-24. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 70-75. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Quite separate from the surrounding sections, the C section is set in F major. If E minor is the tonal center of the movement (as it would be to the listener), then the C section is large-scale move to a Neapolitan harmony, an event foreshadowed in the B section. This section is a straightforward, diatonic respite from the harmonic instabilities of the A and B sections (Figure 5-25). The eighth-note remains constant, creating an immediate, quicker tempo change. Like the other sections, however, this part also becomes harmonically unstable, moving to other key areas, such as the tonal center of B^b in m. 119. The stability of the C section is quickly undermined by frequent key changes through enharmonic respellings.

F: I I V^{4/2} | V^{4/2} | V⁷ — B^b: IV⁶ IV V⁷ I

Figure 5-25. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 113-121. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Another enharmonic modulation treats the pitch D^b as C^\sharp and B^b as A^\sharp , and the tonal area shifts briefly again to B major (see mm. 124-28) before modulating back to B^b major with another enharmonic modulation where D^\sharp is respelled as E^b (Figure 5-26). If the passage is thought of in terms of the B^b tonal center, then the B major passage (respelled from C^b) is a large-scale move to the Neapolitan harmony, acting as dominant preparation. Further chromatic alterations and a *ritardando* bring about a return to the A section with the effect of a recapitulation. The coda, *Presto*, combines the ideas of the A section and the C section as it surges toward the closing cadence in A major.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the third movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, mm. 120-132. The first system (mm. 120-126) features a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes an annotation 'Enharmonic modulation' with a downward arrow pointing to the transition between measures 124 and 125. Below the staff, harmonic labels are provided: $B^b: IV$ (mm. 120-121), I (m. 122), $B: V$ (m. 123), and $I^{6/4}$ (m. 124). The second system (mm. 127-132) features a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and includes another annotation 'Enharmonic modulation' with an upward arrow pointing to the transition between measures 128 and 129. Below the staff, harmonic labels are provided: V^7 (m. 127), $I^{6/4}$ (m. 128), $B^b: V^7$ (m. 129), $I^{6/4}$ (m. 130), and I (m. 131). The score also includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, and *cresc.* (crescendo).

Figure 5-26. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 120-132. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Rhythmic design: Propulsion is an obvious component in this dance movement, but the metric shifts and polyrhythms create the real excitement and drive. Each of the main themes is preceded by an anacrusis. In the principal theme, the anacrusis is tied across the bar line, but it is no less effective than an anacrusis to an articulated

downbeat. This theme in particular has rhythmic drive as a result of the triple meter and gigue-like character. The transition following the A section shifts to a 3/4 time signature, but the piano's eighth-notes stay the same, creating the effect of a 2-against-3 rhythm (Figure 5-27). In this passage, the metric shift in m. 23 from 6/8 to 3/4 sounds more like triplet quarter notes in a duple meter than an actual change to triple meter. This is partially the result of the constant eighth notes in the piano part, but it is also due to the overpowering rhythmic quality of the first theme. A shift back to 6/8 is skillfully executed through the descending triplet eighth-note groupings at m. 31.

Figure 5-27. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 19-36. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

A metric shift reinforces a complementary rhythmic ambiguity to the harmonic instability. Following this transition the meter shifts again, this time to 2/4. A *poco piu*

moderato marking slows the tempo. In addition, the piano plays a chord on the second beat that is tied across the bar line. The anacrusis to the theme thus has an arrhythmic quality that is not clarified until the fifth measure. Consequently, the B section not only contrasts with the A section in terms of melody and harmony, but also in terms of rhythm. This section also introduces the first actual 2-against-3 rhythms in the movement, witnessed in mm. 58-63 (Figure 5-28).

The image shows a musical score for the third movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 5, measures 49-63. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano part with various dynamics and articulations. The tempo marking is *A Poco più moderato*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 49-56) includes dynamics *P* and *dolce*, and articulation *espress.*. The second system (measures 57-63) includes dynamics *m.s.*, *m.d.*, *dim.*, and *pp*, and tempo markings *poco rit. a tempo* and *poco rit. a tempo*. The piano part consists of chords and single notes, often with ties across bar lines.

Figure 5-28. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 49-63. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

The C section also shifts from 6/8 to 2/4, but the duple meter this time is strongly asserted through a fortissimo-piano chord on the downbeat and a clearly articulated anacrusis in m. 113. The constant eighth- and sixteenth-notes have a persistent character punctuated by frequent accents on the offbeats (Figure 5-29). These metric shifts, polyrhythms, and the use of the anacrusis contribute to the rhythmic vitality of the movement and create a dramatic finale to the work. This movement, in particular, also demonstrates the experiments in rhythm that Smyth was beginning to undertake. The next work provides further evidence of this turn in her creative development.

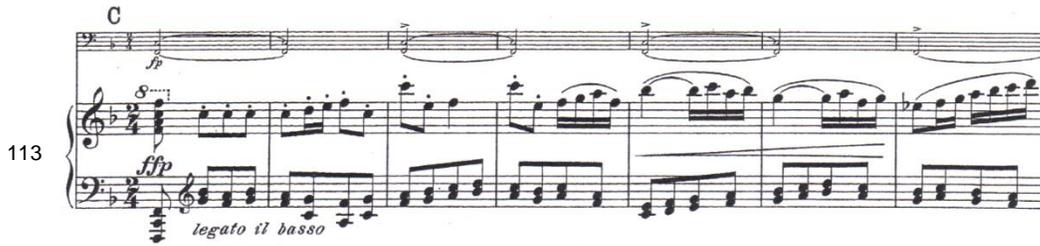


Figure 5-29. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, third movement, mm. 113-119. © C.F. Peters Edition, 1887.

Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, for Violin and Piano

Compared to the previous works, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* demonstrates an increased knowledge of form and harmony, of the instruments themselves, and a continued development of a personal melodic style. It is unfortunate that she only composed one work for violin and piano. This work is overflowing with a passion and diversity of ideas not found in the works discussed in the previous chapter. Her compositional style has matured, and the writing for the instruments is more virtuosic and coloristic.

The work, however, does not merely reveal the ways in which Smyth has evolved as a composer; it also embodies the experiences she endured between 1880 and 1887. Analysis of this composition illustrates the strictly musical elements of form, melody, harmony, and rhythm, but it also reveals how the music conveys ideas of mourning, loss, and fear of the unknown. The work may not have been a conscious expression of the composer's emotions. Nevertheless, it is possible to hear these moods in the music; this analysis seeks to realize how the music is creating the possibility for this interpretation.

More so than previous sonatas by Smyth, *Sonata Op. 7* is ambiguous in several ways. Frequent modulations, mode mixture, and enharmonic spellings of chords create

harmonic instability. Thematic elusiveness in the sonata-allegro movements, the unusual brevity of the *Scherzo* (with no trio), the sectional and fantasia-like nature of the third movement, and the highly chromatic rondo *finale* lead to structural ambiguity. The endings of the first and third movements and the penultimate section of the fourth movement present distinctly slower tempos, upsetting the rhythmic flow of the work and thwarting any sense of finality. Even some of the themes create a sense of uncertainty through deceptive cadences and overlapping or irregular phrases. Personal upheaval at the same time that the work was composed opens up the possibility of an expressive interpretation.

Allegro

At a structural level, the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* is the most experimental of the works discussed thus far. Although the first movement is clearly in sonata-allegro form, the number of themes is unclear until the end of the movement, when only the principal theme and the theme from m. 64 return in the tonic. The material presented in m. 44-63, while melodic in nature, is also extremely unstable harmonically, briefly tonicizing several different key areas, and assuming a transitional role (Table 5-4). As in the *Trio in D minor*, the proportions of this sonata form are not equal; the development is several measures shorter than the exposition. Smyth is able to balance the weight of the exposition with a significant coda, drawing on a tradition established by Beethoven.

Thematic design: Although previous chapters have avoided a discussion of extramusical connections, this work has strong parallels with events in Smyth's memoirs, *Impressions That Remain* and *As Time Went On ...*. The absence of the third in the opening harmony creates a sense of ambiguity under the pleading melody played by the violin. As well, the sparse, thin texture conveys a lack of warmth in the music.

Table 5-4. Formal diagram of first movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, sonata-allegro form.

Period	Exposition					Development			Recapitulation					Coda
Theme	PT	trans.	PT	tr.	ST	ST	tr.T	PT	PT	trans.	PT	tr.	ST	ST
Key	Am	E	Am	Em/Gm/Bm/Em	E	F#~A#~Eb~Am			Am			Cm	A	E(V)-Am
Mm. #s	1-17	17-32	33-43	44-63	64-81	82	-	145	146-62	163-77	178-87	188-207	208-22	234-268

In fact, she wrote that the weather in the winter of 1886-1887 was “arctic,” an adjective which evokes a harsh, bitter, or icy feeling. Although Smyth does not say that this is the character of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, the possible parallel is apparent.

More specifically, the principal theme itself is elusive. The first two bars establish the opening A minor harmony, but the melody, reinforced by bowings in the violin line, indicates a continuous melody that does not cadence in m. 3. The next two bars emphasize A minor with the addition of a G[#] in the melody, but the line has once again returned to the opening pitch, A. This static melody uses a circular paradigm instead of the expected linear model, a stylistic feature that distinguishes her music from that of her contemporaries (Figure 5-30). The legato line continues again, but there is no returning to A minor this time. Chromatic pitches push the melody higher and farther away from the tonic. If the first four measures, embodying a similar structure, constitute “phrase a”, then the remaining twelve measures must be labeled as “phrase b” (Figure 5-31). The result is an exaggeration of the short-long phrase structure witnessed in the *finale* of *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*. The climax of this entire thematic passage seems to occur on the first beat of m. 13, but this is undermined by a leap to E in m. 15, a similar tactic as in the second theme in the first movement of the *Trio in D minor*. The effect, again, is like an after-shock or echo, reinforced by the *diminuendo* on the same beat. The original climax, however, is the farthest from the classical ideal of the Golden Mean of the music discussed thus far, occurring at the late proportion of 0.755.

The secondary theme is reached after a long transitional passage and could not be more distinct from the principal theme. The dissimilarity between the themes is due largely to the accompaniment, which has relaxed to a lilting, triadic idea with a fifth

droning on the downbeat (Figure 5-32). The theme has a much narrower range than the principal theme, spanning only an octave and presenting a folksong-like quality. An irregular seven bars in length, the climax occurs very early in the phrase at m. 67; a proportion of 0.476. More significantly, the phrase and its supporting harmonies are clear and distinct, an obvious contrast with the principal theme. Like the principal theme, the secondary theme does not cadence in its tonal center. In the first ending the cadence finally occurs in the original tonic of A minor, while in the second ending begins the modulation to the distant key of F# major.

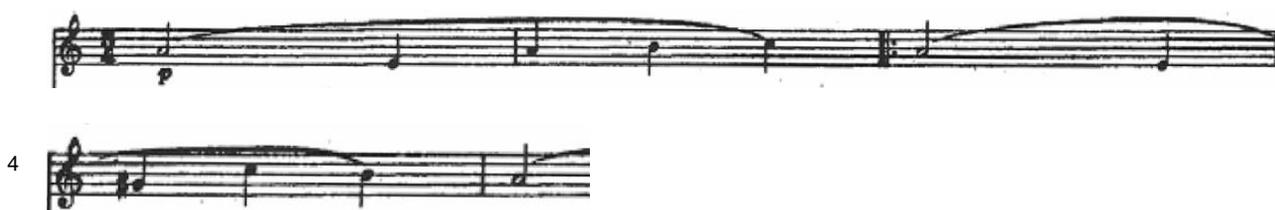


Figure 5-30. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 1-5. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

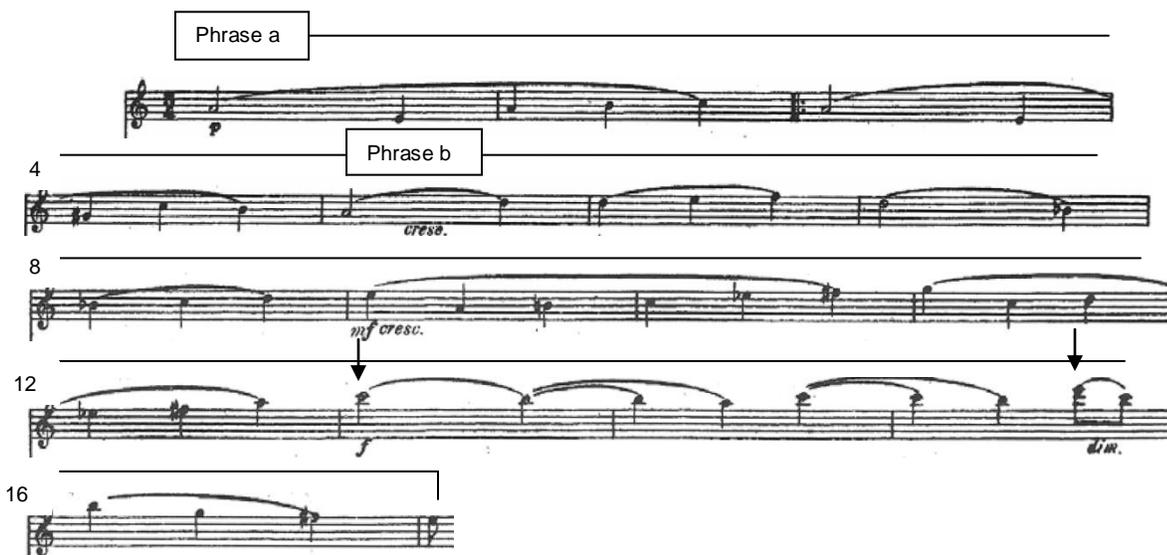


Figure 5-31. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 1-17. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

ST

60

65

71

Figure 5-32. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 60-76. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Motivic design: The motives used in Op. 7 reveal further evidence of a Smythian style. Two of the pitch motives from the previous works appear in almost all of the movements, with the scale degrees of $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}-\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ (Figure 5-40). The rhythmic motives are not as prominent in this movement as in subsequent movements. Unlike the earlier works, this movement relies less on motivic development than on thematic development. This trend continues in the later *String Quartet in E minor*, to be discussed in chapter six. Consequently, any further motivic analysis will occur within the context of thematic analysis rather than as a separate discussion.

Figure 5-40. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 1-7. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Harmonic design: Harmonic ambiguity allows the two themes to either evade or fulfill the expectations of the listener. The principal theme is a sustained linear melody in the violin, reaching from the low register of the instrument (E on the staff) up to two octaves above that (Figure 5-33). A cadence on the tonic harmony is never achieved. Although the melody outlines an A minor triad, the expected authentic cadence is subverted by a deceptive cadence in m. 5. Then, a move to a N^6 chord creates an expectation of the dominant in m. 9, but instead Smyth begins the modulation process to a new key. Instead of E major, though, we hear V^7/IV , followed by a V/V . E major is the intended harmony in m. 11, but this is actually a C major chord. More chromaticism leads to another deceptive cadence, and the climactic height of the theme, in m. 13. The theme gradually shifts through these various harmonies, and it is only in the last four measures that the new key of E major/minor is established.

Allegro moderato.

Violine.

CLAVIER

p

a: i

col & sempre i

cresc.

cresc.

4

V VI iv⁶ iv⁶ N^{4/3}

mf cresc.

mf cresc.

8

N^{4/2} V/IV E/e: V⁶ vii^{-4/2} vi⁶ V/III⁶

dim.

dim.

12

ii⁻⁷ VI^{6/5} N V^{6/4} VI^{4/3} I⁶

pp^{allegro}

pp

16

V i

Figure 5-33. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 1-17. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Uncertainty in tonality, as well as in structure, is only heightened by the transition to the tonal center of the dominant. The transitional theme is characterized by an *arpeggio* that alternates between violin and piano; it is supported by quickly changing harmonies, shifting from E minor to G major to B minor and then back to E minor (Figure 5-34).

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, measures 42-55. The score is in E minor and features complex harmonic progressions and dynamic markings. It includes three systems of music with piano and bass staves, and Roman numeral chord symbols below the piano staff.

System 1 (mm. 42-45):
 - Measure 42: *sf* V, *p* *legatissimo*
 - Measure 43: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*
 - Measure 44: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*
 - Measure 45: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*

System 2 (mm. 46-50):
 - Measure 46: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p* *semplice*
 - Measure 47: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*
 - Measure 48: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*
 - Measure 49: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*
 - Measure 50: *sf* V, *sf* V, *p*

System 3 (mm. 51-55):
 - Measure 51: *pp*
 - Measure 52: *pp*
 - Measure 53: *pp*
 - Measure 54: *pp*
 - Measure 55: *pp*

Chord symbols below the piano staff:
 - System 1: i, iv, i, vii, I, V, [G: I], V, IV, I
 - System 2: i, iv, i, vii, I, V, [G: I], V, IV, I
 - System 3: [b: i], V, I, iv, I, iv, I, V^{6/4}, I, ii⁷

Figure 5-34. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, mm. 42-55.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Despite its thematic nature, this section cannot be labeled as a secondary theme because the entire section is harmonically unstable; it begins solidly in E minor, but a confirming harmonic progression (V to i in E) only occurs with the beginning of the third thematic section. Each new key in this transitional area avoids a confirming harmonic progression. In m. 48, a common tone modulation shifts the music from B major to G major. The modulation plus the textural change to a solo chorale in the piano line highlights the shift to a new key area. Yet a sudden modulation back to B avoids the expected authentic cadence. In the next phrase, there are two dominant harmonies in the key area of B minor, but both are weakened tremendously. In the first instance, where the harmony should be E major, it is instead E minor in second inversion; in the

second instance, the F^{#7} chord proceeds to a Bm^{6/4} chord. That chord then serves as the pivot chord back to E minor and an eventual cadence seven bars later. Thus, while this section has a melodic quality, the ever-shifting harmonies distinguish it as an area of transition.

The secondary theme is then stated in E major, further characterized by an abrupt transformation in mood. The combination of the song-like melody, the waltz accompaniment, and the slower harmonic rhythm helps achieve this. It is also the only theme in the exposition to have clear dominant-tonic progressions, although this occurs over a drone pedal point (see Figure 5-35).

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, measures 60-76. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part has a waltz-like accompaniment. The vocal line is characterized by a song-like melody. The score includes dynamic markings such as *decresc.* and *p dolce molto*. Chord symbols are provided below the piano staff, including I, vii°, ii, I, ii, I, V, V, I, V, vi, I, I^{4/2}, vi⁷, I^{4/2}, I, I^{4/2}, vi⁷, A/a: V^{4/2}, vii^{°6/5/iv}, and vii^{°4/2}. The score is divided into three systems, with measure numbers 60, 65, and 71 indicated on the left.

Figure 5-35. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 60-76. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Between these two themes, Smyth creates tension and excitement through active transitions, development of the principle theme, and harmonic ambiguity. The entire

transition from the A minor principle theme to the E major secondary theme is forty-seven measures in length, almost 50% longer than the two themes combined.

The development draws upon all of the material from the exposition, combining thematic elements with tonally unstable structures. It is also the most chromatic section of the movement and is both difficult to analyze and to perform. The dramatic transitional theme appears in the key of F# minor only to modulate five measures later to F# major. In m. 104, the music suddenly appears in Bb major (Figure 5-36).

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled '102', covers measures 102-106. It features a piano part with a complex chromatic bass line and a treble part with a more melodic line. Dynamic markings include *ff* and *largo e sost.*. The harmonic analysis below this system is: F#: IV | I | I⁷ | IV iii | A#/Bb: i | iv | I | vii⁷/V | vii⁷.

The second system, labeled '107', covers measures 107-112. It continues the chromatic texture with a *pesante* marking. Dynamic markings include *ff* and *largo e sost.*. The harmonic analysis below this system is: vi⁶ | i^{6/5} | vii^{4/3} | vi^{6/4} (f# = g^b) | Eb: V' | i.

Figure 5-36. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 102-112. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

An enharmonic analysis of this passage and the immediately preceding measures clarifies the passage, for B^b is simply the enharmonic equivalent of A[#] major. Modulation by thirds was not uncommon in the late nineteenth century, and this passage demonstrates Smyth's ability to reconcile the problematic sections of her music. A similar obstacle is overcome only eight measures later. In m. 108, the music has

returned to F[#] minor (or G^b minor), but Smyth has not left the flat side and a B^b harmony reappears at the cadence. The new B^b major harmony becomes V in the new key of E^b minor. On the one hand, Smyth is merely avoiding the use of double-sharps and double-flats by switching to the enharmonic equivalent, but the enharmonic shifts have also led to a tonicization of the tritone, E^b, in m. 111.

The recapitulation emerges out of the chromatic quagmire of the development (Figure 5-37). Over a D⁷ chord (IV⁷ in tonic major) and then a D^{#°7} (vii^{°7}/V in tonic) chord, the violin plays a long A to D, then repeats A to D[#], and then finally, in m. 146, the opening theme of A to E returns over a i^{6/4} chord in A minor. The accompaniment continues the arpeggiated triplets of the brief transition, further masking the onset of the recapitulation. This ambiguity of structure, obfuscating the return of the principal theme, only lasts for eight measures, at which point the sixteenth note accompaniment in the piano affirms the official return.

The coda summarizes Smyth's ideas regarding codas of first movement forms in general (Figure 5-38). As she did in the *Sonata in C minor*, the *Trio in D minor*, and the *Sonata Op. 5*, Smyth creates a slower, ephemeral ending to a passionate movement by invoking the secondary theme and decelerating the tempo. Bar lines are ignored and an emphasis is placed on the half-note as the main pulse despite the triple meter. The effect is a harmonically and rhythmically calm, yet uncertain, conclusion. Even at the end, however, Smyth avoids an authentic cadence. There is a definite move from E major to A minor, but the modulation occurs several measures before the end, rather than at the final cadence. At m. 242, Smyth clearly writes an E⁷ chord and sustains it for six measures until the cadence to A minor in m. 248. Three more instances of

dominant-tonic resolutions occur, further clarifying that this is the end of the movement. The last one occurs in m. 258. After this follows ten measures of embellishing the tonic; the end is a N^6 chord to i to ii^6 finally to tonic. Despite a clear resolution, this added harmonic area leaves the listener without the expected authentic cadence (Figure 5-39).

Figure 5-37 shows measures 138-147. The piano staff includes dynamics such as *p*, *pp poco sost.*, and *calando*. The bass staff includes dynamics such as *pp poco sost.* and *calando*. Harmonic analysis labels below the piano staff are: $a/A: V^6/V$, $V^{6/5}/V$, $vii^{4/3}$, $vii^{\circ}7/iv$ chr., $V^{4/3}/V$, $V^{4/3}/V$, $i^{6/4}$, and V . The tempo marking *a tempo* appears in measure 147.

Figure 5-37. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 138-147. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Figure 5-38 shows measures 242-248. The piano staff includes dynamics such as *decresc.* and *pp*. The bass staff includes dynamics such as *dec.*, *m.s. decresc.*, and *pp*.

Figure 5-38. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, first movement, mm. 242-248. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Figure 5-39 shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 249, consists of a treble and bass staff with a piano accompaniment. Below the bass staff are the following chord symbols: VI⁶, ii⁶, V, I, IV, VII, V, I, V. The second system, labeled 258, also consists of a treble and bass staff. Below the bass staff are the following chord symbols: I, iv, V, iv, I, IV⁶, IV, vii^{7/6/4}, N⁶, i, i^{6/4}, ii⁶, i.

Figure 5-39. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, mm. 249-268.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Rhythmic design: More so than earlier works, this first movement exhibits strikingly different characters or moods in the different sections. The principal theme, for example, is set in a triple meter with a constant sixteenth-note accompaniment. The mood is one of anticipation and excitement, as well as longing. The transition continues the triple meter, but a triplet accompaniment is now paired with a duple melody in a textbook example of 2-against-3 rhythms. This rhythmic tension creates excitement in the transition, akin to an emotional outburst, which is suddenly dissipated by the secondary theme. The duple division, heavy downbeats, and slower harmonic rhythm create the feeling of a single pulse per measure and a calming emotion. Thus, Smyth manipulates the rhythms of each section to express different emotions.

The various emotions that Smyth invokes through contrasting rhythms are enhanced by the “Smythian gusto”, a rhythmic propulsion that has been found in earlier works. In this movement, the treatment is more subtle. In the principal theme, the triple meter allows for a frequent push across the bar line, but Smyth also ignores the bar line

through tied notes and note groupings. Conversely, the transitional melody has a set of grace notes as an anacrusis (Figure 5-41). In the chorale melody at m. 48, the anacrusis feels more like a downbeat in a duple meter, and this hemiola continues until the dotted rhythms in m. 50-51 (Figure 5-42). In the secondary theme, the rhythm ♩ ♩ is the primary rhythm in the melody with the quarter-note pushing the melody across the bar line. Although the principal and secondary themes do not begin with an anacrusis, the rhythmic idea of a pick-up note is apparent within the melody itself (Figure 5-43).



Figure 5-41. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, m. 45.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

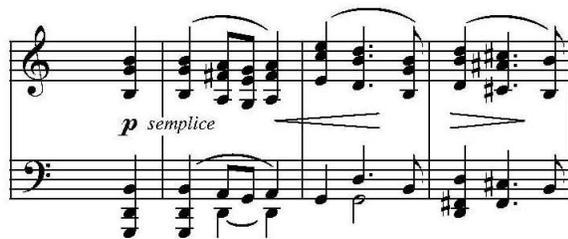


Figure 5-42. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, mm. 48-51.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Figure 5-43. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, first movement, mm. 60-76.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Scherzo

The second movement, a *Scherzo* with no trio in C major, is a repeated binary form (Table 5-5). The basic structure of this movement is A-B-A-B¹-codetta. Section A is significantly longer and more harmonically stable than section B, a reversal of Smyth's treatment of principal and secondary themes. At each return, themes retain their original lengths, further demonstrating Smyth's practice of economical writing. The brief transitory movement invokes an intermezzo style. Most interesting is Smyth's key relationships; the first time through sections A and B it appears as though Smyth trying to reach the dominant, G major, but by way of the distantly-related key of B^b. Smyth then reinterprets that minor third relationship to emphasize the tonic by moving between E^b and C in the reprise. Through this technique, Smyth is able to delay the listener's

expectations of certain harmonies while also ensuring that the work closes on the tonic without additional musical material.

The *Scherzo*, heard possibly as an interruption in the unrelated key of G, is a needed respite from the heavy emotion of the first movement. Similar to the *ländler* in the *Sonata in C minor*, the *Scherzo* from the *Trio in D minor*, and the finale from Op. 5, this dance movement opens on the dominant harmony. The movement finishes in C major, and the key signature is C major, but the piece begins with open G octaves in both parts; the key of C is affirmed when tonic is reached in m. 3, much earlier than in her previous works.

Thematic design: The two main themes in the scherzo continue to support a Smythian style. The first theme is comprised of two phrases of four bars plus seven bars, revealing further evidence of a consistent approach to phrasing that involves unbalanced and irregular phrases. “Phrase a” is an instrumental melody with numerous leaps and arpeggios (Figure 5-44). This diatonic melody is also closest to the model of the classical ideal or the Golden Mean (0.618). The highest note in the melody occurs on the fifth beat in an 8-beat phrase, a proportion of 0.625. The composer’s other classically-styled melodies also came closest to this proportion. This further demonstrates that Smyth’s compositional decisions may be influenced by the style she is invoking, whether that is the Classical stereotype or her own Romantic voice.



Figure 5-44. *Sonata in A minor*, Op. 7, second movement, mm. 1-4. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Table 5-5. Formal diagram of second movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, repeated binary form.

Period	A	B					trans.	A	B					trans.	codetta
Key	C	B ^b	G	B ^b	G	~	C	E ^b	C	E ^b	C	C	C	C	
Mm. #s	1-29	30-34	35-38	39-43	44-47	48-70	71-99	100-04	105-08	109-13	114-17	117-28	128-143		

The composer's voice reasserts itself in "phrase b" (Figure 5-45). This phrase is seven measures in length. It has triplet embellishments and numerous double-stops, the first example of virtuosity in Smyth's writing. The climax of this melody occurs on the first note of the phrase in m. 11, a structure found previously in the third movement of the Sonata Op. 5, the scherzo of the *Trio in D minor*, and the final movement of the *Sonata in C minor*. Thus in this overtly Classical movement, the melodies present new musical techniques for Smyth while also demonstrating a style that has remained consistent through the years.

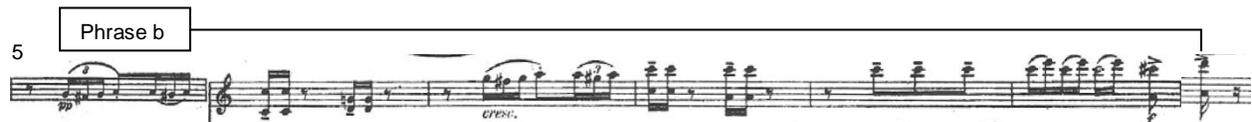


Figure 5-45. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, second movement, mm. 5-11. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The second theme is one of the few to actually incorporate the anacrusis. Like the second movement of the *Trio in D minor*, this anacrusis is also a dotted rhythm. Smyth, however, also adds in a triplet rhythm in the penultimate bar of each phrase, as shown in Figure 5-46. This theme is also unusual in its phrase lengths. In previous themes, the first phrase was the shorter of the two. In this theme, "phrase a" is four bars long and "phrase b" is only three bars long. Although "phrase b" does not have a climactic highpoint, the climax of "phrase a" occurs on the sixth beat of a 9-beat phrase (not counting the anacrusis). Thus Smyth somewhat continues the Classical ideal with the second theme of this movement while altering the second half of the theme

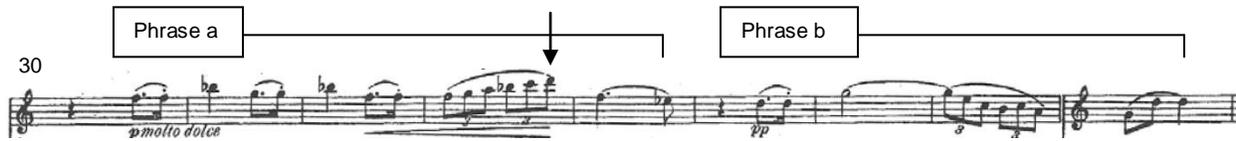


Figure 5-46. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, second movement, mm. 30-38.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Harmonic design: Many of the harmonic progressions in this movement are diatonic, as seen in the first eight bars (Figure 5-47). At m. 9, the broken C major chord becomes a IV^7 by half-step motion from E to F. In the next measure, the F moves up to F^\sharp and then G^\sharp while the pitches C and E in the figure remain. To call these chords F^\sharp or C^+ serves no purpose in the analysis.³⁴⁴ They are chromatic steps which create tension in the music but do not have a harmonic function. Even in m. 10, the G-sharp, while indicating a C^+ chord, is acting as a leading tone to the A major harmony (V/ii), which leads directly to the returning progression, $ii-V$ in C major and a restatement of the theme. In fact, mm. 8-10 are harmonically static, but the chromaticism in the bass line gives the illusion of a harmonic progression.

The second theme, a quick triplet melody to contrast the first theme, actually occurs in two key areas (Figure 5-48). The antecedent phrase is in the unrelated key of B-flat major over an F octave pedal in the piano part; the harmonies vacillate between dominant and tonic. The consequent phrase drops down a third to G major, repeating the same progression. The third relationship of this passage is reaffirmed when the piano states the same two phrases in the same key areas, B^b and G major. A transition leading back to the principle theme follows, again starting on the dominant G major but existing in C major. The return of the B section largely remains in the tonic key area,

³⁴⁴ Once again, precedent for chromatic chords based on voice-leading can be found in the music of Grieg, as in the *Norwegian Dances, No. 2*.

moving to E^b major to satisfy the third relationship between the antecedent and consequent phrases. The codetta of this movement flirts briefly with C minor before pressing on to C major.

The movement ends with a plagal cadence, further defying convention. There is no trio, and, in fact, the movement is the shortest of all her works, lasting only three minutes. Why she chose to not include a trio is a mystery that may never be solved. The effect is that of an idea interrupted, or that the movement itself was an interruption of the work as a whole. According to the sketches, Smyth composed this movement as the third movement but decided to switch the order with the *Romanze*. The energetic nature of the scherzo also provides contrasting material between the first movement and the *Romanze*, a change of mood that would not have been as profound had the *Romanze* been placed as the second movement.

Allegro grazioso.

C: V I I V I IV

6 I V I V I IV I IV II I V/ii ii V

Figure 5-47. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, second movement, mm. 1-11. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

30

p molto dolce

pp

p

pp

B^b: V⁷ I V⁷ I V⁷ I V⁷ | iii | G:v I IV V⁷

38

p senza espress.

dolce

I vi | III^{6/4} | B^b: I^{6/4} V⁷ I IV I V⁷ I vi vii^o VI | G: I I V

Figure 5-48. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, second movement, mm. 30-45. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Rhythmic design: Smyth's experiments with rhythms through hemiolas and metric shifts are evident in the second movement. The unique feature about the rhythmic design of the *Scherzo* is the interjection of bars of 3/4 time in an overall 2/4 meter. This meter change only occurs three times in the entire movement and the shift ushers in the transition to the second theme. The first metric shift arrives at the end of the second statement of the theme. The added beat is a continuation of the musical idea on the first and second beats, and the second beat of the next measure is emphasized so that the metric shift is not noticed by the listener until at least m. 24. The same metric shift occurs at the corresponding moment in the restatement of the theme. In the final example, Smyth interjects two bars of a 3/4 meter in the codetta at m. 133 (Figure 5-49). Although the time signature is 3/4, the rhythmic groupings and the accent on every third eighth-note creates the effect of a 6/8 time signature. As a result, the

music pushes forward at a seemingly accelerated pace. When the 2/4 time signature returns with accented offbeats in the accompaniment, it creates a thrust to the final bar.

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, measures 133-143. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems. The first system, starting at measure 133, shows a melody in the right hand with constant sixteenth-note patterns and an accompaniment in the left hand with accented offbeats. The second system, starting at measure 137, continues the piece, showing a dramatic shift in the accompaniment with quarter and half notes. The score is published by Universal Edition, 1923, with the number U. E. 7296.

Figure 5-49. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, second movement, mm. 133-143. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The above analysis has alluded to that elusive rhythmic quality in Smyth’s music that has appeared in several of the works discussed thus far: propulsion in her works. In this work, constant sixteenth-notes paired with accented offbeats help create the energy and drive in the first theme. The second theme marked *piano* and *molto dolce* is, however, characterized by quarter- and half-notes in the accompaniment, a dramatic shift from the quick pace of the first theme. Smyth is able to maintain the sense of forward motion in the melody through the use of an anacrusis that is itself a dotted rhythm. The end of “phrase a” is also syncopated, as seen in Figure 5-50 below. The result of the incorporation of metric shifts and accented offbeats is a work that changes character but never loses the drive and energy expected of a scherzo.

Figure 5-50. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, second movement, mm. 30-45.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Andante grazioso

Designated a *Romanze* by Smyth, this movement offers a great deal of extramusical material. The published score and the manuscript provide evidence for the emotions suggested by the music. The score discreetly has “Dante, Inf. V. 121” printed at the top right side of the third movement only, alluding to a verse in Dante’s *Inferno*. In the manuscript, Smyth wrote her paraphrase of this particularly poignant and relevant verse: “But the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come again.”³⁴⁵ The actual verse is thus:

*Nessun maggior dolore/
che ricordarsi del tempo felice/
ne la miseria.../*

No sadness/
is greater than in misery to rehearse/
memories of joy...³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ London, British Library, Add. MS 45950.

³⁴⁶ *The inferno of Dante*, 43.

The fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno* tells the story of Francesca da Rimini (1255-1285) as Dante interpreted it. Francesca was married by proxy to a hunchback Italian nobleman and fell in love with her brother-in-law. The two were allegedly reading of the fateful kiss between Guinevere and Lancelot when her husband saw them and murdered them. As Dante tells it, Francesca is a sympathetic character whose only fault was her "gentle heart," and her adultery was not a conscious or purposefully malicious act.³⁴⁷ Like Francesca, Smyth argues that she did not realize the consequences of her actions until it was too late, and the composer may have found a kinship with her story.³⁴⁸ With this small piece of evidence, it becomes very clear that this movement, and perhaps this entire sonata, expresses the tumult in Smyth's life in the years prior to its composition. It was a dark winter for her, and it is possible that she was remembering happier times in Leipzig while she was composing this work.

The third movement is sectional but in the *quasi una fantasia* style that harkens back to Beethoven (Table 5-6).³⁴⁹ The first section, *Andante grazioso*, is a melancholic idea set in E minor. The B section, an *Allegro* dance in triple meter, alternates with a cadenza-like passage. The material in the cadenza becomes the main focus of the developmental C section. A brief reminder of the *Allegro* occurs before the return of the A section.

³⁴⁷ *The inferno of Dante*, 314, n. 65

³⁴⁸ The story of Francesca da Rimini has been set to music by several composers, including Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Arthur Foote. The popularity of this story and of Dante's *Inferno* in the late 19th century is a topic that has been explored by numerous authors, most recently Allison Milbanks, whose text *Dante and the Victorians* discusses the phenomenon in detail. Smyth's allusion to Francesca's tale may be the first by a female author in the nineteenth century.

³⁴⁹ Beethoven's two sonatas, Op. 27, no. 1 and no. 2, both demonstrate the *quasi una fantasia* style characterized by modified formal structures.

Table 5-6. Formal diagram of third movement of *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, sectional form.

Period	A	B cadenza B cad.	C (B)	A	Coda
Key	e G e C e	E E	B E	E G e	e
Mm. #s	1-17 18-25 26-32 33-46 47-64	65-78 78-89 90-102 102-13	114-38 139-62	163-179 180-188 189-228	228-55

Thematic design: The two themes reflect the emotional concepts expressed in Dante’s verse: regret and despair contrasted with the memory of joy. Two phrases again constitute the first theme (Figure 5-51). “Phrase a” is four bars in length, but there is no climax. The melody begins on a high B and descends, expressing the melancholy that Smyth was experiencing. “Phrase b” is also a four-bar phrase that has been extended two bars. It, too, descends from the highest pitch, which also happens to be the seventh, D[#], a pitch that normally wants to ascend to E. The conflict inherent in this moment, an upward-leading tone that is forced down, parallels the conflict Smyth felt. She still cared deeply for Lisl and valued their friendship, yet the situation was wrenched out of her control by Lisl’s rejection. A less intense climax is felt in m. 12 on the C[#], which is also forced down to the pitch B.

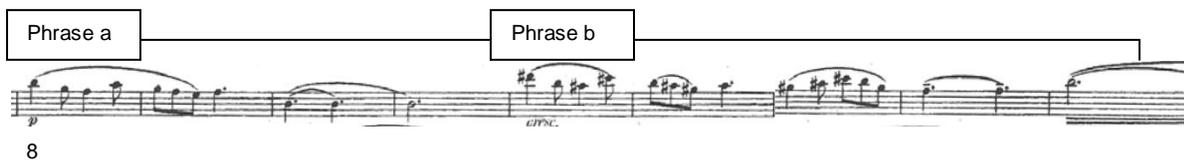


Figure 5-51. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, third movement, mm. 8-16. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The second theme suggests a joyful but fleeting memory from the past. It is set in the parallel major and is diatonic in nature. Only six measures long, this theme feels cut short (Figure 5-52). The first four bars are a complete idea over a I-V-I progression. The structure of this portion of the melody also fits the classical idea with the climax occurring at a proportion of 0.625. However, the melody is extended by two bars of an ascending B major arpeggio that is interrupted by the violin and a return of the theme.

The image shows a musical score for the violin part of the third movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, mm. 65-70. The score is in 2/4 time and features a secondary theme starting at measure 65, marked 'p grazioso' with a triplet. The theme is interrupted by a chromatic cadenza. The score is annotated with 'Secondary Theme' and 'Extension' boxes, and a downward arrow points to the beginning of the cadenza.

Figure 5-52. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, third movement, mm. 65-70. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The violin's statement of the theme is also interrupted by a chromatic cadenza based on the minor mode, marked *piu mosso, quasi fantasia*. This interchange of a major diatonic theme and a minor chromatic cadenza occurs once more before the cadenza, and the feelings associated with it overpower the happier second theme. Brief echoes of the second theme return but with lowered sixth and seventh scale degrees just before the reprise of the A section in E minor.

Harmonic design: At the beginning of this simple, tragic song, Smyth does not complicate the setting with overly chromatic harmonies. Rather, it is unusually diatonic, modulating by thirds to other tonal areas. The opening section in E minor moves briefly to G major, the median, before sliding back into the minor key. Another venture into major tonalities takes the music to the submediant C major, but augmented harmonies and chromatic voice leading create the first sense of ambiguity.

After two movements of harmonic uncertainty, this brief respite in diatonicism, even with its ventures to related keys, conveys solemnity and a sense of quiet misery (Figure 5-53). The simple harmonies continue for twenty measures, an exceptionally long period compared to the earlier works. Still, Smyth alters the harmonic color of the passage by tonicizing the dominant tonal area in m. 12.

e: i V i V V i ii v i vii⁷/V
 i i ii° i ii° i V i B: I vii° I V
 IV V I V⁷/iv e: i V⁷ i G: I vii° I vii°

Figure 5-53. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, third movement, mm. 1-19.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Growing chromaticism eventually undermines the stability of the opening section, transforming quiet sadness into passionate despair (Figure 5-54). The passage begins subtly in m. 35 with a definite cadence in C major. A C⁺ chord at the end of m. 38 signifies the change in harmony and emotion. In the next four measures, the C chord continues to be augmented with the G[#] acting as a leading tone to A minor. This is similar to the treatment and resolution of the harmonies C⁺ to A major seen in the *Scherzo* movement (p. 296). A cadence on A minor in m. 42 is denied closure by the C⁺ chord that accompanies the final note of the phrase. This harmony, however, also prepares the next section. The next six measures increase the tension felt in the music by combining repeating pitches with chromatic motion. In m. 44, a Ger⁶⁺ chord hints at a B^b harmony that is then realized in m. 45. The next two measures make the actual shift

up to B^b major, with a brief move to N⁶ (B major). This hint at B major is then affirmed and finally transformed into a dominant chord in E minor. After twelve measures of harmonic ambiguity, the music reaches a climax in the tonic key and the emotion is released.

39

46

C: vi I⁺ IV I⁺ ii vii/Vi vi I⁺ VI⁶ VI^{4/2} Ger⁶⁺ VI^{6/5} Bb: I I^{4/2}

IV N⁶ I e: V i i V i

Figure 5-54. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, third movement, mm. 39-51. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The elements described above reflect the quoted verse from *Inferno*. The minor *Andante grazioso* section is analogous to the present state of misery Smyth felt. The ascending violin line is embellished by chromatic turns leading to a sustained high B over the opening theme in the piano part by m. 49. The chromatic motion is paired with a crescendo to *forte*, creating an emotional climax. A gradual *decrescendo* and descending melodic line release the tension one note at a time. The descending line in thirds that follow in the piano part is punctuated by *pizzicato* harmonies and concludes simply with octave E's in the lower register of the piano.

The experience of emotional pain portrayed in the A section is interrupted by “memories of joy”,³⁵⁰ displayed in the *Allegro* dance section, set in the parallel major. The triplet rhythm that conveyed longing in the first section takes on a jovial quality through tempo and the shift to the parallel major (Figure 5-55).



Figure 5-55. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, third movement, mm. 64-70. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Another way that Smyth may have portrayed these conflicting emotions is through frequent and prominent mode mixture. At the C section in m. 113, a development based in B major/minor takes the *Allegro* melodic idea and alters it. The chromatic and emotional tension of the A section is combined with the fast tempo of the B section. Measures 113 -121 are set in B major with a brief interlude in G major, the lowered submediant, or a borrowed chord from B minor. The alternation between B major and the tonal area of G major continues until the plagal cadence to B major at m. 131 (Figure 5-56). Although Smyth has set the material in B major, she sees no need to stay in that exact key area, drawing upon the submediant from the B minor chord bank as an alternating key area. The modulation is easily accomplished, as the F# (dominant) of B major also serves as the leading tone to G major. This section, in particular, seems to convey the emotional variances Smyth was experiencing.

³⁵⁰ *The inferno of Dante*, 43.

107

Tempo I.
(del Allegro.)
pp leggiero

Tempo I.
(del Allegro.)
pp leggiero

B: I V^{6/4} G: I vi I vii/V I⁶ B: V⁶ I V I⁶ I^{6/4}

115

p poco a poco cres - cen - do

poco a poco cres - cen - do

V VVI VI I^{6/4} iv I D:[V⁷ I⁶ V I⁶ V] iv

122

f cresc. cresc. pesante ff

V⁶ iv V⁶ I⁷ iv I

Figure 5-56. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, third movement, mm. 107-127. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The movement concludes with a return of the *Andante grazioso* section and a codetta. The ending of this movement is one of the few places in Smyth's chamber music where coloristic qualities are the focus of the music (Figure 5-57). The lilting rhythm of the *Andante grazioso* relaxes and the syncopated bass line gives way to a held octave E as the violin plays a low B^b.

Figure 5-57. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, third movement, mm. 226-232.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

As the violin melody reaches up into its high register, the piano part slowly comes down to an Am⁶ chord over an E octave pedal point (Figure 5-58).

Figure 5-58. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, third movement, mm. 233-238.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

At m. 239, the violin has reached a high C3 at a *pianissimo* dynamic level. In the next measure, the piano sounds the most ethereal chord in the whole movement: a D^{#:9} chord with the E as the root and quietly rolled across the keys (Figure 5-59).

A trilled D[#] finally resolves to E in m. 243 while the piano part falls calmly through harmonies leading to the tonic E minor. The final measures, a simple E minor harmony spanning six octaves, are soft, delicate, and tragic.

Figure 5-59. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, third movement, mm. 239-255.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Rhythmic design: A dance-like quality permeates this movement, even in its slowest and most tragic moments. The 6/8 meter creates a lilting rhythmic character that is enhanced by the rhythm . This syncopated rhythm with an emphasis on the dotted-eighth-note is a prominent feature that prevents this lament from plodding along.

The second theme, with its *Allegro* tempo and contrasting 2/4 time signature, transforms the movement, if only momentarily. The use of triplets, trills, and a scotch-snap rhythm (discussed in detail below) imitate the stereotypical traits of a jig. Smyth knew this dance style from her travels to Scotland and Ireland and also through the musical stylizations of her contemporaries. The brevity of this passage supports the interpretation that it is a memory surfacing during a darker time, here represented by the surrounding *Andante* sections. There is a rhythmic connection between the two middle

sections that distinguishes them from the surrounding A sections. In both sections B and C, a triplet on the second beat propels the music forward. Yet section C, while still in the *Allegro* tempo of the jig, is marred by minor keys and chromaticism. Thus, while the rhythmic nature of the B and C sections are consistent, the emotive qualities could not be more different.

The Scotch snap first heard in the *Sonata in C minor* also reappears in this section B. As before, it is a dotted rhythm that functions as a cadential pattern, adding two measures to a four-measure phrase (Figure 5-60). Each time the *Allegro* dance melody appears it is concluded with this rhythmic figure.



Figure 5-60. *Sonata in A minor*, Op. 7, third movement, mm. 64-70. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

As in the *Sonata in C minor*, this is the only appearance of this rhythm in the entire work, which in turn draws attention to it. One might suggest that the dance-like quality of the *Allegro* section combined with this Scotch-snap rhythm is a musical memory of Smyth's sister's wedding in the midst of feelings of loss for Lisl.

Allegro vivace

The final movement, *Allegro vivace*, is in rondo form, but even in that genre it expands the standard model into A-B-A-C-A-B-A(C-A). The A section appears in some form five times throughout the movement, truly serving as the unifying device (Table 5-

7). The B section serves as a large dominant preparation, as well as a secondary thematic section. In both statements of the B section, the harmonies are either iv/IV or VI/#VI. The second B section might even be thought of as preparing the B major tonal area that announces the return of the C section. By using v as the goal of the C section, Smyth is able to lead the music back to tonic with the return of section A without creating a sense of finality that E major would create. Then, when the C section returns, the modulation to E major through its dominant has an ever greater effect as a resolution to tonic.

Thematic design: As in the *Trio in D minor* and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, the *Finale* begins quickly and softly (Figure 5-61). The themes of this final movement continue to demonstrate Smyth's tendency to contrast a duple principal theme with a triple secondary theme (Figure 5-62). The principal theme is made up of two phrases. "Phrase a" is an eight-bar idea that ends on a half-cadence. Similar to many of the phrase structures already discussed, the high point appears early, in this case at the end of the first measure and at the same point in m. 5. The effect is very similar to the first theme of the third movement of the *Trio in D minor* and the finale of the *Sonata in C minor*.



Figure 5-61. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 1-8. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Table 5-7. Formal diagram of fourth movement, *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, sonata-rondo form.

	A	B	A	C	A	B	A	C	A(coda)
Theme	PT trans.	ST chorale ST	PT trans.		PT trans.	ST chorale trans.	PT		PT
Key	Am	D F Dm	Am	Cm ~ Em	Am	F#	Am	B E	Am
Mm. #s	1-30 31-37	38-50 51-67 68-81	82-115 116-20	121-69	170-99 200-202	203-14 214-30 231-245	245- 253	254-290	291-311

“Phrase b” is introduced in m. 9 and continues until a return of “phrase a” in m. 23. In this phrase, the melodic climax occurs on a high F[#] at a proportion of only 0.392.

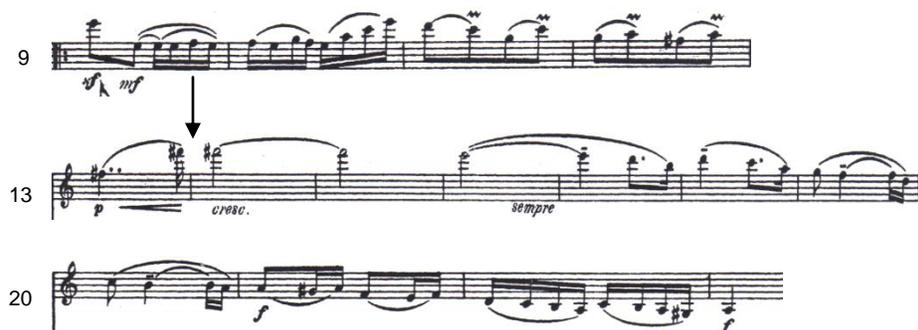


Figure 5-62. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 9-23. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The theme of the B section also has an early climactic point in the melody. Opening with an octave leap, this theme circles up to F twice before landing on F[#] in m. 41 (a proportion of 0.304). The theme itself never cadences. Instead, the melody descends, the rhythms slow down, and the music eventually pauses on G (Figure 5-63). Consequently, the music creates a mixed message of forward motion through the triplet rhythm and yet has no linear direction because the melody and the harmony do not reach a climax or a cadence.

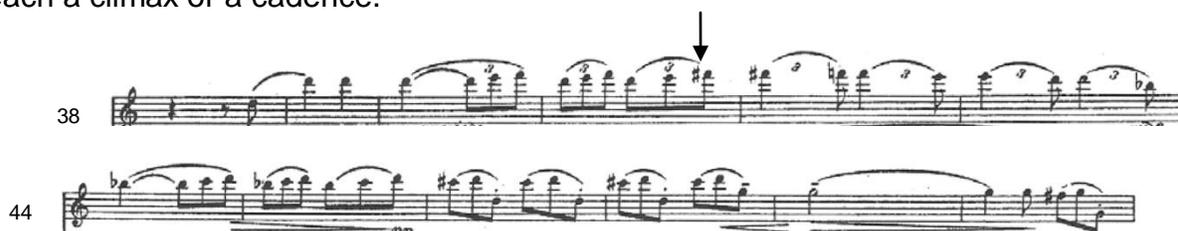


Figure 5-63. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 38-49. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The phrase does not resolve; it instead segues into a chorale melody at m. 51 (Figure 5-64). Smyth continues to place climaxes early even in the chorale melody. As the example below shows, the melody ascends to C by the third measure and then

descends. This climax is only a proportion of 0.304, partially because the phrase is extended an extra two bars.

Figure 5-64. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 50-59. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

In the C section, the B theme is developed rather than a new theme presented. Because of the fragmentary nature of this section, it is difficult to analyze the phrase structure within it. Even the distinct melodic lines are circular in nature, beginning and ending on the same (and highest) note of the phrase or descending to an octave below that, as in mm. 125-128 (Figure 5-65). The nature of this idea avoids a climax.

Figure 5-65. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 121-132. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

In fact, the entire development avoids a climax or resolution up to the point of the return of the A section. The themes return without significant alterations in the recapitulation of this sonata-rondo form. Similar to the other final movements, the principal theme closes the work.

Harmonic design: This two-theme system, combined with a developmental C section, implies a sonata-rondo structure, but harmonically and structurally the movement conforms more to the model of a rondo than sonata-allegro form. The exposition is centered in the tonic area of A minor with both A sections in the tonic key and the B section modulating to the subdominant rather than the expected mediant or dominant. The B section is set in the key areas of D major, G major, and then an ambiguous passage that vacillates between F major and C major. The C section travels through various related and unrelated harmonies, presenting the earlier themes in assorted combinations.

The return of A-B-A would seem to signal a recapitulation, but the three sections are not all in the tonic key: the B section has this time modulated to the submediant of F major. After the return of the A section, the C section comes back, again in various keys, followed by another, abbreviated version of the A section to finish the movement. The key area of the C section follows the theoretical model, moving to the submediant F major, but Smyth is unable to stay in one mode and harmonies of F minor also add to the color of the passage. Harmonically, this is one of the few passages that is a strict tonic-dominant motions, moving quickly from F major to C⁷, clearly establishing the key area of this section. A chromatic motion in the piano bass line to F[#] and G[#] (indicated by

the arrow in Figure 5-66) anticipates the modulation back to an a/A tonal center and the return of the A section.

The movement continues with a complete return of the A and B sections. The B section is presented this time not in D major but in F[#] major with no secondary tonal area, and the chorale passage is restated in the key of A major, the parallel tonic of the movement. The B section is followed by a nine-measure transition based on the A theme and a shorter restatement of the C section, also maintaining a basic sense of A major. In fact, the entire last half of the rondo after the first C section behaves like a recapitulation, staying in the tonic key. It is one of the few last movements that does not end in the parallel major.

158

164

Figure 5-66. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, fourth movement, mm. 158-169.* © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Rhythmic design: One of the driving forces of this movement is the use of syncopated rhythm. As in the *Sonata in C minor*, hemiolas and metric shifts are prominent, creating a rhythmic complexity not found in the other movements. Sixteenth-note runs and an eighth-note figure punctuated by trills characterizes the main theme of

the A section, set in 2/4 time. The triplet rhythm introduced in the B theme foreshadows a metric shift to 6/8 in m. 116 (discussed further below). The introduction of this triplet figure alters the mood from anxious and agitated to dance-like and somewhat relaxed.

A respite from the dance-like nature of the B section is introduced in m. 50. A chorale melody (an ambiguous passage in the tonal center of C) returns the music back to a duple meter, but the mood is not like either the A or B themes (Figure 5-67), yet the passage is too brief to qualify as the C section. Instead, it is like a supporting role in a play: the mediator between the two opposing themes. At m. 68 Smyth continues this chorale melody, but only as the piano accompaniment supporting a slight variation on the B theme. After a return of the A section in the tonic, the meter finally shifts to 6/8.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 44, features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a complex accompaniment. The treble clef part includes a triplet of eighth notes and is marked with *pp*. The bass clef part also includes a triplet of eighth notes and is marked with *pp*. The second system, starting at measure 50, continues the melodic line in the treble clef, marked with *mf* and *espr.*, and the accompaniment in the bass clef, marked with *mf espress.* and *pp cresc.*. The score is published by Universal Edition, with the number U. E. 7293.

Figure 5-67. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 44-59. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The first return of the A section is a tumultuous and rhythmically diverse passage. In the transition, a three-measure passage at m. 116, Smyth's use of hemiola creates the illusion of 3/4 meter in a 6/8 time signature through an emphasis on every other eighth-note in the bass line. The triplet nature of the 6/8 meter returns for the theme in m. 119 (Figure 5-68).

The image shows a musical score for the fourth movement of the Sonata in A minor, Op. 7, by John Field. It covers measures 112 to 120. The score is in 6/8 time. The piano part (bottom two staves) is marked with dynamics such as *mf*, *cres*, and *p*. The vocal line (top staff) has lyrics "cen - do" and "cen - do". The score includes various rhythmic notations, including hemiola and triplet figures. The publisher's information "U. E. 7298" is visible at the bottom of the score.

Figure 5-68. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 112-120. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

The C section also has a short passage with unusual rhythmic notation. Still in 6/8 time, Smyth creates a duple sixteenth-note figure while maintaining the triplet pulse through groupings of eighth-notes with a “4” bracketed over them (Figure 5-69). This notation is normally reserved for the use of triplet eighth notes in a duple meter, but here it creates the sixteenth notes in a triple meter. After four bars the standard triple meter resumes. This unusual passage does not reappear even in the return of the C section at m. 261.

139

145

U. E. 7298

ff largamente
marc. largatissimo

Figure 5-69. *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, fourth movement, mm. 139-150. © J. Reiter-Biedermann, 1887. Renewed by Universal Edition, 1923.

Summary

These two works demonstrate the creative and personal growth which Smyth experienced between 1880 and 1887. She continued to experiment with harmony and form while also staying within her own musical parameters. Uncertainty and ambiguity in Smyth's life are expressed in her music in the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5* and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*. Through modifications of form, chromatic harmony, and irregular phrasing, Smyth expressed an overwhelming apprehension of the unknown in her personal life. Autograph scores and published editions revealed this strong connection between her music and the crises in her life during the 1880s. Smyth's developing musical style continued into the twentieth century, and her treatment of form, harmony, and melody maintained a traditional element while exploring the new musical language of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, superficial traits such as her frequent use of minor keys or *Meno mosso* endings that have been shown to exist in her four romantic works will also be significant characteristics in the *String Quartet in E minor* and her final

chamber work. With each work discussed, Smyth's style as well as an understanding of her as a person becomes more apparent. The *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* stands apart from its predecessors through its greater emotional content and expressivity; yet Smyth is able to evoke striking affects without focusing on a program. It is this aspect that grants the work a universal quality and places the composition alongside her contemporaries' works for violin and piano.

CHAPTER 6
STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR (1912)

A discussion of the *String Quartet in E minor* plays a unique role in this dissertation. Thus far, this study has examined Smyth's compositional style as it pertained to the chamber works, and it has explored the biographical connections to this music. Detailed analyses of the previous four works have never before been published. The *String Quartet*, on the other hand, has received considerable scholarly attention. Elizabeth Wood briefly mentions the work as representative of the struggle for women's rights occurred in her article "Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women's Suffrage." This article, as well as a later article by Wood that discussed lesbian ways of listening, served as the basis for a thesis by Jennifer Gwynn Hughes, *Sapphonic Listening: Ethel Smyth's String Quartet in E minor*. She argued that the *String Quartet in E minor* represented Smyth's discovery of her lesbian voice. In 2001, the *String Quartet* also served as an example of Smyth's chamber music in the Glickman and Schleiffer collection, *Women Composers: Music through the Ages*. The analysis presented in this chapter counters some of the previous analytical and interpretive arguments and establishes a connection between this work and its predecessors.

Contextually, the *String Quartet in E minor* is related more to Smyth's politics than to her sexuality. Several primary sources have influenced this interpretation, including the Smyth memoirs from 1902 to 1908 (when the memoirs end), personal letters directly related to the piece, and the reception the work received. The *String Quartet* is an expression of Smyth's belief that women were just as capable as men in their endeavors, even if women were different, and that this capability applied as much to politics as to music composition. This chapter also offers an expansion of (or

alternative perspectives on) the analyses presented by Mercier and Pickett and by Hughes. Contrary to the arguments for a lesbian inspiration, Smyth was more concerned with expressing the rights of all women than her personal sexual orientation.

Biographical Context: 1887-1912

After 1887, Smyth concentrated on generating interest for her music in her native England. She premiered her two orchestral works, the *Serenade* for orchestra and the concert overture *Anthony and Cleopatra*. A sudden interest in Catholicism inspired her to write the *Mass in D*, one of her most famous and most performed works. The *Mass in D* convinced conductor Herman Levi that Smyth's true talent was in the dramatic arts, and he encouraged her to compose an opera. Between 1893 and 1902 she wrote two operas, both of which were performed at major houses to mixed receptions. By 1902, musicians and conductors from London to Prague knew Ethel Smyth as a formidable composer of operas and orchestral works and as a businesswoman.

By the mid 1890s, Smyth had also renewed her relationship with Henry Brewster. For reasons that will become clear as this chapter progresses, Smyth and Brewster formed a relationship that was both personal and professional; he became her librettist and confidante. She was the exuberant and indomitable woman his wife never was. The letters between them reveal a love that was able to accommodate their unconventional lives and beliefs. If Lisl was Smyth's first love, then Brewster was perhaps her soulmate.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ Smyth included several personal letters in her memoirs. See Smyth, *As time went on . . .*, 41-43, 72-82, 126-128, 147-165, and *What happened next*, pp. 135-145, 151-153, 177-184, and 250-253 to read letters between Henry Brewster and Ethel Smyth. For an alternative view of the Brewster-Smyth relationship, one can also consult Brewster's *The cosmopolites: a nineteenth-century family drama*.

Although there is no mention of the *String Quartet in E minor* in her memoirs and biography until 1914, she wrote the first two movements in 1902 and finished the work in 1912. Smyth began composing the quartet at the same time that she was securing performances of her second opera and writing her third opera. This unusual return to the genre of chamber music while in the midst of operatic activities was an attempt to place herself among the great male composers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, and to show other female composers that it could be done. In 1902 Smyth was actively seeking performances of her opera *Der Wald*. She and Brewster argued over the merits of a production in the New York City. In a letter to Brewster dated from 1902, the same year that she wrote the first two movements of the *String Quartet in E minor*, Smyth argued that:

I felt I must fight for *Der Wald* ... because I want women to turn their minds to big and difficult jobs, not just to go on a hugging the shore, afraid to put out to sea. Now I am neither afraid nor a pauper, and in my way, I am an explorer who believes supremely in the advantages of this bit of pioneering.³⁵²

Smyth even admits that this was one of the few moments where she wrote of her desire to help other composers such as herself, and it may have also been part of the inspiration behind her return to the genre of the string quartet.

The memoirs do not specifically mention the *String Quartet in E minor*. Unlike her operas, which were collaborative projects with Brewster and involved numerous other persons, the string quartet seems to have been a private affair, a means of exploring her craft and her musical expression alone. In a letter to Emmeline Pankhurst, Smyth described the sparseness of the quartet as a composition, and her difficulty composing the work. She wrote in 1913:

³⁵² Smyth, *What happened next*, 210.

When you hear the String Quartet, you'll probably be sad and lost, because I always think a string quartett [sic] sound is almost . . . an abstraction – or perhaps like an outline – no, more like a scaffolding. . . . For me the most exquisite form of art and the hardest. An orchestral work is almost child's play in comparison because there are so many ingredients that a rotten egg can pass undetected. . . . A string quartett is an exquisite omelette.³⁵³

Performances may have been private, as well. In 1908 she gave a concert of her chamber music in Paris, which included the first two movements the *String Quartet in E minor*. The first public performance of the whole quartet was in Vienna by the Rosé Quartet, and the first London performance took place on December 3, 1914, by the London Quartet.³⁵⁴ As this was a smaller ensemble, these performances were less costly and required fewer negotiations than an opera production. The *String Quartet* was largely an endeavor of and for musicians, and Smyth may not have considered it interesting enough to share with her readers. This fact alone may account for the lack of storytelling related to the *String Quartet*, as the memoirs are often a recounting of the hurdles and bitter negotiations associated with her operas.

Reception

Smyth's *String Quartet* was published and premiered at the height of her career and just prior to World War I. Although the compositional process of this work is undocumented, the life of the work after its premiere is noted in reviews, her first biography, anecdotes from her diaries, and the liner notes of recent recordings. Because of its relevance to her Suffragette period, this work has also been the focus of feminist musicological research.

³⁵³ Wood, "Performing rights", 623-4. Quoted in a letter dated 13 December 1913.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 641.

Christopher St. John's 1959 biography provides many details about the quartet. The biography also includes excerpts from Smyth's diaries that offer her perspective on this piece. She wrote on 6 November 1920, "my quartet played by the Philharmonic *String Quartet*. A glib surface rendering. They do their best, but have not the remotest idea of what the music stands for."³⁵⁵ This last statement is tauntingly ambiguous, possibly implying that there is an underlying extramusical meaning, but she could also have meant that they did not interpret the music itself in a satisfactory manner. Two years later, she heard a more satisfying performance: "23 April 1922: . . . Besides the Investiture at Buckingham Palace in February, there was a concert by the Bohemian *String Quartet* who played my quartet divinely. It was played again last month at a party at the Czecho-Slovak Ministry."³⁵⁶ Then on 20 February 1923, "The Bohemians again played my Quartet,"³⁵⁷ she wrote without additional commentary. These diary entries demonstrate the high number of performances for a work by a living composer of a genre that was not of the popular style. St. John also proposed a theory for why Smyth did not continue to write in the genre, stating that she chose to promote the works she had already written rather than "strike out a new line" because of her increasing deafness and age:

It is unfortunate that the success of her songs with chamber-music accompaniment, both in Paris and Vienna, did not inspire her to write more chamber-music, for her *String Quartet in E minor* supplies a good deal of evidence that with more practice she could have done beautiful and original work in this branch of her art. But as she became aware through her increasing deafness that her time for any sort of musical composition was limited, it is not surprising she did not strike out a new line, but concentrated her energies on a fight for recognition of

³⁵⁵ St. John, *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, 175.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

what she had already achieved. 'I have spent years fighting abroad. I have given that up as hopeless. Now I mean to fight for my place in my own country, a place which everyone knows I deserve. But it must be proved.'³⁵⁸

After the war, Smyth's deafness continued to limit her ability to compose but by no means deterred her from securing performances of her works.

In the appendix to St. John's biography, Kathleen Dale offered an overview of Smyth's musical oeuvre. Dale wrote:

The most important item among her chamber music, the String Quartet in E minor, composed in two instalments [sic] between 1902 and 1912, is strikingly original in conception and workmanship. A greater contrast between two pieces of chamber music from the same pen can hardly be imagined than that between the facile Quintet of 1883 and the closely reasoned Quartet, the composer's finest piece of abstract music. The contrapuntal element predominates throughout the first and last movements, the intricacy of the texture being thrown into strong relief either by occasional passages more purely harmonic in interest or by short stretches of expressive recitative. All four movements are notable for rhythmic vitality and distinctive form. In the Finale, an interesting blend of sonata form and fugue which the composer considered one of her best movements, she maintained an even balance between form and content such as she had not succeeded in achieving in the loosely-constructed quasi rondo finales of the Sonatas for violin and cello.³⁵⁹

The above description summarizes the work as well as any articles and essays written since then. These elements which Dale highlights – the counterpoint, harmonic interest, rhythmic vitality, and vocal quality – are not unique to this one work but can be found in all of Smyth's works.

The reviews of the work are not as numerous as one would hope. The most detailed published account appeared in the *Musical Times* after a chamber concert at the Broadcasting House in honor of Smyth on 6 January 1934. The program included the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, the *String Quartet in E minor*, and two trios for flute, oboe, and piano. The *String Quartet* specifically was described as "of a stronger calibre" than

³⁵⁸ St. John, *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, 133-34.

³⁵⁹ Dale, "Ethel Smyth's music: a critical study", 292-293.

the earlier Op. 7.³⁶⁰ The dates of composition are clear but the motivation for finishing the work may not be. According to this article, which may be the earliest proof of the compositional dates, it is unclear for whom she completed the work:

the opening *Allegro lirico* and the *Scherzo* were written in 1902 and then laid aside – as the announcer told the audience in the hall and on the ether – to be resuscitated in 1912 and the Quartet finished on the instigation of Prof. Rosé, of Vienna. Everyone is only too happy that such a result was achieved, for the new slow movement and final fugue complete a work which is one of the most beautiful things by its distinguished composer; but if any members of the Society of Women Musicians were listening that night, they must have gasped at finding what they fondly hoped was one of their own services to music thus reft from them by Prof. Rosé. Will they darkly suspect him of male jealousy? Will it be a case of pistols for two and coffee for one? For in the archives of the Society is a programme of their chamber concert given at the Small Queen's Hall on January 25, 1912, at which the two movements of this Quartet in E minor by Ethel Smyth were produced by the London String Quartet – 'having been put away, and rediscovered in the winter of 1911, when the composer was asked for a chamber work for the first public concert of the newly-founded Society of Women Musicians,' says a writer in Cobbett's 'Cyclopaedia of Chamber Music.'

The great thing, however, is that the Quartet exists not in part, but in whole. It was well played by the Kutcher organization, who understand its lyric style. None the less one rather sighed for the big tone of the London String Quartet, or the burly strength and marked rhythms of the Bohemian Quartet.³⁶¹

The last sentence supports Smyth's own views of the varying quartets who had performed her composition. Although the critic appears to be instigating an argument, his account shows that the Society of Women Musicians revived the two-movement version in 1911-1912. The work was then finished after prompting by Professor Rosé of the Rosé Quartet, sometime in early 1912, presumably after January of that year. As a result of the efforts of both female and male musicians, Smyth completed her greatest chamber work.

³⁶⁰ "Chamber music", 173.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

More recently, liner notes to several recordings have offered another perspective on the work. While Smyth has been criticized for a style that is not as innovative as other composers of the period, authors recognize an individual voice. Smyth's unique harmonic ideas still draw the most attention. Eckhardt van den Hoogen wrote:

Ethel Smyth wrote a string quartet that almost seemed like a historical study of old masters of the genre. . . . Despite its obvious retrospective orientation, the composition is not at all something that one would place under the rubric of 'epigonal.' Admittedly, one does not recognize this fact until the fugato finale . . . here we may have traces of Smyth's own unique tone, something that she was denied as having in older encyclopedia entries. . . . the extraordinarily compelling section of the first movement. . . . the work ranges far and wide over the tonal gamut.³⁶²

Again there is acknowledgement of Smyth's individual voice, but no statement as to what that is other than unusual tonalities.

In the online review of Smyth's chamber works, Robert Barnett also addresses the *String Quartet in E minor*. According to Barnett:

The 1902/1912 String Quartet breaks from the Dvořák-Brahms axis and strikes out in a more severe direction. The romantic era is still there but this is disrupted or lent savour by an expressionistic element which reminded me of early Weill, of Reger and of Pfitzner. It reaches outwards towards the haunted world of Karl Weigl. The last movement seems to step into unknown regions occasionally pointing towards Bartók in its brusque, gusty and jerky dance quality.³⁶³

This review is the first such article to note Smyth's originality and development away from the late Romantic style of Brahms's music. Barnett's assessment that the last movement hints of knowledge of Bartok's music, in particular, demonstrates the evolution of Smyth's style.

Odaline de la Martinez divided Smyth's music into four periods, placing the *String Quartet* between the second and third periods, 1892-1908 and 1908-1920s. She

³⁶² Van den Hoogen, liner notes for CPO Digital recording (999 352-2), 12-13.

³⁶³ Barnett, "Review", <www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2002/May02/Smyth.htm>.

described the two periods as a “stylistic development into a more chromatic musical style” and a period of experimentation with varying styles, respectively. Of the *String Quartet*, Martinez writes:

The first movement is lyrical but powerful, intricate and ‘horizontally’ conceived. The independence and interweaving of the voices creates a myriad of dialogues and conversations amongst the strings. The writing is at times like filigree, but accompanied by a deep understanding of the instruments’ capabilities. The second movement is light-hearted, playful and very much like a scherzo in character. It finishes with a sudden quickening of the tempo and a flourish. The slow movement is unashamedly heartfelt. It begins gently and quietly, with a melody that seems to grow from the opening harmonies. It is as beautiful a slow movement as I’ve ever heard. The energetic final movement opens with a fugue. The initial idea is transformed and modified. In this instance she gives birth to a joyful second theme – one that covers a wide emotional range to include playfulness, delight and a triumphant finish.³⁶⁴

De la Martinez’s description of the dialogue and exchange of ideas between the instruments is a trait that is addressed by scholars examining the relationship of this work to Smyth’s suffrage activities. This summation accurately captures the character of this work, but how does the music convey these ideas?

Motivation and Inspiration for the *String Quartet in E minor*: An Examination of Secondary Sources

Elizabeth Wood was the first scholar to draw attention to this composition. She argues in her article “Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women’s Suffrage” that Smyth returned to complete the string quartet after her Suffragette experience in order to “prove, both to herself and the musical establishment, a woman’s equal rights on music’s body politic, and the power of female desire and creativity to conquer male prejudice and exclusion, [by demonstrating] mastery of the supremely mainstream

³⁶⁴ De la Martinez, liner notes for Lorelt CD LNT114.

classical string quartet tradition of Beethoven and Brahms in which she was trained.”³⁶⁵

Smyth’s need to establish her place in music history may be a likely reason behind its composition. Wood here uses the more encompassing term “woman” yet in later articles and theses, scholars shifted from the idea that Smyth was inspired by her experience as a woman to the idea that Smyth was inspired by her experience as a lesbian.

One example from Wood’s article “Sapponics” clearly demonstrates the all-too-easy tendency to superimpose a preferred idea onto Smyth’s words and life. At the conclusion of her essay, Wood writes:

If that knowledge was largely hidden, shared only by a few singers, writers, and musical friends, Smyth could still be true to lesbian experience, yet use musical tradition and operatic convention as a way publicly to express her theme of the social and cultural oppression of homosexual desire and difference, and her lesbian vision of desire as ‘something yet unvoiced [that] lies at the bottom of the sea, where we are at home.’³⁶⁶

Reading this statement alone and without previous knowledge of Smyth’s writings, her musical works, or her biography, one would be inclined to agree with Wood’s argument. The statement would be as true if *lesbian* and *homosexual* were replaced simply with *female* or *woman*, leaving open the interpretation of Smyth’s music and prose to the listener/reader. Furthermore, the passage which Wood quotes has been taken out of context. In *Female Pippings in Eden*, published in 1933, Smyth discusses “the case of an incipient girl-composer” as a possible career path for young women at that time. She writes:

But perhaps what women are called upon to pass on, that *quality* I spoke of, cannot be found on the road up and down which every one is tearing; perhaps it lies at the bottom of the sea, where we are at home; and perhaps our fate, not an

³⁶⁵ Wood, “Performing rights”, 623.

³⁶⁶ Wood, “Sapponics”, 55.

ignoble one, is to bring it up to the surface. A great woman writer of to-day has said of her books that they are all experiments. That is what I mean, only put in another form; I have always felt it must be, for women, a question of something yet unvoiced, unless in flashes of Shakespeare or Donne.³⁶⁷

This passage is clearly referring to all women artists, writers, and musicians and calling to them to be creative in their own way, and with their own voices.

Three years later, in *As Time Went On*, Smyth continues the argument, writing not about lesbian desire but about the creative value and the originality of women's musical compositions, novels, paintings, and other forms of art. The composer argued that women, not necessarily lesbians, have something unique to say that other women will recognize and that "ordinary men" may find "antagonizing."³⁶⁸ In Smyth's passage, the argument is the hegemony of men over women, not the oppression of homosexual women. In fact, in all of Smyth's writings she argues against the oppression of women, not homosexuality. Unfortunately, Smyth does not demonstrate what can be identified in her music as "antagonizing."³⁶⁹

Wood also presents evidence that supports the argument that the *String Quartet in E minor* is politically based. In her brief discussion of the *String Quartet*, Wood quotes

³⁶⁷ Smyth, *Female pipings in Eden*, 55.

³⁶⁸ Smyth, *As time went on ...*, 298-299.

³⁶⁹ The following provides the full context of Smyth's use of the word *antagonizing*: "But a fact far more important than any other has yet to be mentioned – one of which the majority of gifted women must be aware, though perhaps classing it among truths it is wisest not to drag out in to the open. *There is a bottomless cleft between man's way of feeling and woman's*, and it come out in their work. On certain fields a man of ordinary caliber will at times be conscious of something that antagonises him, and leave it at that. But if it is a question of a feminine work *in music*, remembering that so far women have done nothing great in that art he will decide *a parti pris* that his discomfort cannot possibly be due to his own limitations, nor be caused by anything as creditable to the woman as originality! Now if anybody thinks that herewith a reproach is levelled at men, that person (forgive me) is being rather stupid. On the contrary it is a tribute to male fineness of skin as well as a bouquet offered, left-handed, to the peculiar quality – the originality – of woman's mind, which, unless accompanied by 'sex appeal' and all sorts of funny things like that, is apt to antagonise ordinary men." Smyth, *As time went on ...*, 298-299. [Italics are Smyth's.]

two letters from Smyth to Emmeline Pankhurst, the leader of the Militant Suffragette movement in which Smyth was a participant. In a letter dated 19 December 1913, Smyth wrote of the final movement, “if it is anything, it is . . . ‘Suffrage!’”³⁷⁰ This statement clearly indicates that Smyth was inspired by not only the movement and its activities but by the women involved. The dialogue and democratic nature of the musical work, noted by scholars and musicians, is clearly expressed by the fugal nature of the last movement. This statement also clearly indicates that Smyth’s music was not an expression or subversion of her lesbian tendencies as described by either Wood or Hughes but instead demonstrates that the music may represent all women.

Rather than further exploring how the *String Quartet* may represent the Suffragette experience, Hughes narrows her interpretation to a specifically personal one. She argues in her thesis that “the way we listen to music has been limited by our failure to create listening strategies that reflect a lesbian feminist perspective.”³⁷¹ The goal of her paper is to apply Elizabeth Wood’s theory of *Sapphonics* to Smyth’s *String Quartet in E minor* as a way to understand the work and as an example of a lesbian mode of listening. She draws upon the lesbian theory of Adrienne Rich and Sue-Ellen Case, applying Rich’s idea of a “lesbian continuum”³⁷² and Case’s theory of the “butch-femme aesthetic,”³⁷³ both of which promote the lesbian perspective as a means of creating political and social change in society. She attempts to create a paradigm shift in the way we listen to and analyze music by applying these ideas to an absolute

³⁷⁰ Quoted by Wood in “Performing rights”, 624.

³⁷¹ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 4.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid., 5.

instrumental work. In order to be used as a mode of interpreting and listening to music, however, the theory depends upon a lesbian listener. Although Hughes's theory is a valid perspective, it is also a highly subjective one, offering a narrow interpretation of a piece of music. As I am not a lesbian, it would be difficult for me to apply this mode of listening in my own research.

There are, however, specific elements in Hughes' analysis which can be applied to Smyth's music regardless of one's sexual orientation. For example, Hughes describes the overall motion of Smyth's music – its tendency for cadences that do not fully resolve or melodies that build and die away without reaching a successful climax – as successive “climactic plateaus.” She notes in the *Kyrie* of Smyth's *Mass* that there “is a sense of climax when all the parts are present. But the music keeps going. The bass does not allow the music to rest at this crest, but begins another wave and continues. In the *Mass*, the wave-like, circular motion can be heard as leading to the climactic plateau at the beginning of the *Christe* music.”³⁷⁴ Hughes argues that this “multi-climactic material” is indicative of its “Sapphonic” qualities.

This representation of Smyth's music and its cadential motion as multi-climactic waves can also be applied to the musical motion in the earlier chamber works. The previous two chapters showed that Smyth avoided or undermined authentic cadences. Phrases would approach a climactic point only to back away before reaching a sense of finality; or, the climax would be undermined a few beats later by a higher pitch. Applying the theory to Smyth's earlier chamber works, in particular the first movements of the *Sonata in C minor*, the *Trio in D minor*, and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* reveals such

³⁷⁴ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 18.

“multi-climactic”³⁷⁵ material. I propose that what Hughes has described is perhaps not a means of interpreting music through lesbian experience but instead through female sexual experience (see Macarthur’s discussion of this on p. 32).

Hughes’s thesis, unfortunately, also reveals a superficial study of Smyth’s life and works. As part of her argument that Smyth wrote the string quartet specifically as an expression of “her desire and ambition to play with a masculine role,” Hughes stated that this work was Smyth’s only attempt at the string quartet genre.³⁷⁶ During Smyth’s student years in Leipzig, however, she completed (yet never published) at least two full string quartets and several movements of unfinished string quartets. Thus, it cannot be argued that the effort of composing a string quartet represents Smyth’s newly empowered butch personality or lesbianism. It merely demonstrates her desire to write a string quartet, which is a traditionally masculine genre. Simply wanting to do something masculine, however, does not make Smyth a lesbian.

Later in her analysis of the *String Quartet*, Hughes attempts to correlate the unconventional nature of the first two movements to the way “heterosexual society reacts to the butch woman ... Perhaps when Smyth wrote these first two movements, just as her own sexuality was condemned in the public’s view, she felt intensely self-conscious of her butch personality.”³⁷⁷ Hughes does not support this statement with evidence from diaries, memoirs or letters because there is none. This statement is speculation about what Smyth was specifically thinking, based upon assumptions of Smyth and the society in which she lived. A thorough reading of Smyth’s prose writings

³⁷⁵ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 19.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

reveals that Smyth was rarely self-conscious about anything, including her music or her own personality.

I also disagree with Hughes's argument that the *String Quartet in E minor* is better understood from the viewpoint of a lesbian because Smyth may have had lesbian tendencies.³⁷⁸ Arguing that the use of a *fugato* in the last movement is an indication of Smyth's newly discovered "butch" personality³⁷⁹ only demonstrates Hughes's lack of knowledge of Smyth's early studies in counterpoint, specifically canons and fugal writing.³⁸⁰ The fugue does not demonstrate her lesbian tendencies, but merely her contrapuntal tendencies and her knowledge of the compositional procedures. No less significant, Hughes's argument ignores the very real and very significant heterosexual relationship in Smyth's life, thus negating her conclusions.

Hughes's essay provides an interesting perspective not only on the *String Quartet* but on her, as well. It is the highly subjective element that detracts from her conclusions. She writes in her introduction that she fell "in love" with two pieces "upon first hearing them." She then connects that to her personal experience as a lesbian: "this particular response to music feels so similar to what being a lesbian does for me, to me, that I experience them as the same thing."³⁸¹ The remainder of the essay argues that "certain types of sounds, musical textures, and effects" demonstrate lesbian desire in music. Unfortunately for the analysis, hearing lesbian desire in the music depends

³⁷⁸ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 39.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁸⁰ There is a strong precedent for the use of fugues in the string quartet genre. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Bartok all incorporated fugal elements into their string quartets.

³⁸¹ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 11.

entirely on Hughes' personal experience. It is conceivable that another person who is not homosexual might experience the same musical elements with as much passion but with a different interpretation.

While allowing for the validity of Hughes's personal reading as an alternative understanding, her research ignores a vital component: Ethel Smyth's companion, Harry Brewster. As described in previous chapters, Smyth and Brewster had a long and unusual friendship. Their relationship, which began in 1882, rose and fell with the events in their lives, most notably the deaths of Lisl in 1892 and of Julia in 1894. After Lisl's passing Smyth refused to adhere to Julia's rules,³⁸² agreeing to meet with Brewster in London, Paris, and various cities in Germany.³⁸³ After Julia died, Brewster was no longer legally bound and asked for Smyth's hand in marriage;³⁸⁴ time and again she refused, citing their respective independent lives and her lack of talent for marriage. He eventually saw the value of a relationship that was not hindered by society's predetermined roles and responsibilities. Each was allowed to pursue affairs provided that it was not someone they knew or who was of their social stature. Smyth does not indicate in her memoirs if either one consummated such an affair. Although the relationship was an unconventional one, it was still the most meaningful relationship in Smyth's life during this time.

While beginning composition of the *String Quartet in E minor* in 1902, Brewster and Smyth were not only friends but collaborators, working together on her opera, *The Wreckers*. It is unfortunate that there is no mention, in the letters or memoirs, of the

³⁸² Smyth, *As time went on ...*, 44. See also Smyth, *What happened next*, 3.

³⁸³ Smyth, *As time went on ...*, 56 and following.

³⁸⁴ Smyth, *What happened next*, 18-22.

String Quartet at this time. She seems to have put the work aside to focus on *The Wreckers*, the composition and subsequent performance of which required her full attention. Smyth was at the time also traveling extensively while Brewster resided in Rome. Yet the depth of their mutual feelings is evident in the letters Smyth published.

In 1908, almost immediately after a performance of *The Wreckers* in London, Brewster died of cancer. Smyth was heart-broken, composed very little, and took a long sabbatical from music. She wrote:

I felt then like a rudderless ship aimlessly drifting hither and thither. In 1908 I drifted to Venice. There I was quite content to idle away my time as the guest of my sister Mary Hunter. . . . My recollections of that idle time are extremely hazy, but I seem to remember that there was a fine string quartet in Venice just then and that they were engaged by Mary to play at a musical party she gave at the Palazzo. Some of my own compositions, among them my String Quartet in E minor, were included in the programme, and had an enthusiastic reception. Suddenly I realized how wrong I had been to abandon my musical career when Harry died. I resolved to go back to London at once and resume it. I knew that in this lay my sole hope of being ultimately healed.³⁸⁵

Neither Hughes nor Wood acknowledged this relationship and the watershed event of his death in their discussions of the quartet. Smyth finished the work because she wanted to prove to herself and the world that she could compose in such a *masculine* medium, but as the above quotation demonstrates, she also finished it as a tribute to Brewster.

I do not doubt that Wood and Hughes experience the *String Quartet* in the respective ways that they have each described. When I read their interpretations, however, and after having listened to the pieces multiple times, I cannot help but strongly disagree with their conclusions. In fact, I believe the passages of Smyth's prose can be interpreted in a different way. I hear the *String Quartet* as a masterwork by a

³⁸⁵ St. John, *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, 131-132.

seasoned composer. The movements flow seamlessly despite the ten year lapse between the first two and last two movements. Based on Smyth's writings and her life during those ten years, I believe that the *Quartet* does not represent the repression and expression of a "butch" personality or even of Smyth's supposed "lesbianism" (a term created in today's culture and often carelessly applied to Smyth's life and culture). I offer, instead, an additional interpretation. I believe the *Quartet* represents Smyth's struggles as a woman and the power she recognized within herself, first as a composer and later as a member of the Suffragette community. The emphasis in the previous sentence is specifically on the term and idea of *woman*, designating and embodying the entire spectrum of female experiences, both hetero- and homosexually.

Summary of Analysis by Mercier and Pickett

An analysis based upon melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic ideas within the music itself is the first step to providing Smyth's *Quartet* with an interpretation. Mercier and Pickett's article in the Glickman and Schleiffer collection presents a formal analysis of the *String Quartet in E minor*. A brief review of their findings will serve as a starting point for a detailed analysis of the work. I intend to address those elements that will further illuminate Smyth's style, as well as particular traits that connect this work to the earlier works and thus afford a greater overall understanding of Smyth's music.

Mercier and Pickett credit the major differences between the first two movements and the last two movements with the passage of time and the death of Brewster. Unlike the articles by Wood and Hughes, Mercier and Pickett acknowledge the significance of Henry Brewster in Smyth's life, writing that Smyth "credited the quartet with helping her overcome a paralyzing depression after the death of her beloved friend and collaborator

Harry Brewster.”³⁸⁶ The authors quote Smyth as having said that the inspiration to finish the *Quartet* had more to do with the grieving process than it had to do with finding her lesbian voice.

Mercier and Pickett argue that the first two movements “are engaging and self-assured while remaining rooted in conventional tonality.” The second two movements “display a more adventurous tonality.”³⁸⁷ Yet, the analysis focuses on motivic developments as well as the ways Smyth interweaves her various themes rather than on harmonic analysis. Each movement is in sonata form or harmonically resembles the sonata principle (the second movement is, in fact, a *scherzo*). For purposes of clarity, a summary of the structure of the work will be presented, largely based on the analysis by Mercier and Pickett. I will clarify elements that I have found in addition to their research.

Several statements in the analysis by Mercier and Pickett demonstrate the characteristics which I have established as part of the Smythian style. In the first movement, the authors note that the 3/4 time signature “is negated by duplet rhythms. Furthermore, the C-theme is accompanied by syncopated rhythms in violin 2, viola, and cello. The aural effect is striking: the listener loses the strong-beat pulses.”³⁸⁸ Similar examples exist in earlier works of hemiolas and “lost beats”. Rhythm, however, is not the most compelling element for the authors. The focus of the analysis is on structure and harmonic language. The authors observe that in the first movement’s secondary

³⁸⁶ Mercier and Pickett, “String quartet”, 305.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid. Smyth was not, of course, the first composer to avoid a key signature. One Figure of this from the Classical period is Haydn’s String Quartet, Op. 76, no. 6. The second movement opens with no key signature, but the music is, in effect, set in the key of B major. Upon the repeat of the first half, the key signature of B major is added, thus eliminating the many accidentals in the opening of the movement.

theme, Smyth changes key signatures instead of using accidentals. She also does this during the development, switching from B major to C major, “most likely to facilitate excursions through several keys throughout the rest of the development section.”³⁸⁹ In the second movement, the second section is “harmonically transitional” and Smyth again changes key signatures. Further “nebulous key areas” are cited in section four of the scherzo, and “only in the final Presto is the key of A minor firmly re-established.”³⁹⁰ These seemingly arbitrary key changes were also found in the earlier chamber pieces.

The motives that Mercier and Pickett identify in the first movement, as well as other melodic and rhythmic ideas throughout the quartet, are similar to motives from the earlier sonatas. The opening bars of the first movement contain the two primary motives of the work, a dotted motive labeled RM1 with the rhythm , demonstrated in Figure 6-1. A descending motive with the scale degrees $\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{2} - \hat{1} - \hat{7}$ is also a significant motive, labeled below as PM1.³⁹¹ Immediately following the pitch motive are two pitches that finish the first brief phrase. The reader may recognize that the direction of the last three pitches exhibits a small leap followed by a larger leap in the opposite direction. It is not an exact replica of PM2, $\hat{2} - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$, found in the *Sonata in C minor* or even its modified form, $\hat{4} - \hat{5} - \hat{1}$, found in the *Trio in D minor*. Nonetheless, the directional nature of the motive, its early appearance, and its frequency throughout the work confirm its significance to the composition and in identifying Smyth’s style.

³⁸⁹ Mercier and Pickett, “String quartet”, 306.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ This motive is remarkably similar to PM1 in the first movement of the Trio in D minor. In that example, the motive was comprised of the scale degrees $\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{2} - \hat{7} - \hat{1}$ (see p. 188). Twenty years later Smyth used the same group of scale degrees but reverses the last two pitches.

Figure 6-1. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, mm. 1-5. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Just as the opening of the *ländler* in the *Sonata in C minor* had a confusing harmonic presence (C minor but with a F minor key signature), the authors state that the third movement “is in C major, but initially sounds like A-flat major due to chromaticism”.³⁹² This initial A^b tonal center, however, only lasts for two measures, as Figure 6-2 shows. Further analysis reveals heavy chromaticism and “fleeting key areas,” all of which appeared in the string sonatas. The third movement also contains an example of Smyth’s use of enharmonic spellings, as in the recapitulation, “which begins in m. 163, in the surprising (and transitory) key center of B major (enharmonic [to C^b]).”³⁹³ This particular example is discussed in further detail on p. 367.

Figure 6-2. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 1-6. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

³⁹² Mercier and Pickett, “String quartet”, 306.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

Smyth's most radical harmonic experiment occurs in the fourth movement. Mercier and Pickett argue that "the interjection of F-naturals in m. 50 gives the passage a fleeting bi-tonal sound." This passage is illustrated in Figure 6-3. Horizontal arrows mark the F-naturals in mm. 49-50. However, the example also shows that the F-naturals are a continuation from the previous accompanimental figure in mm. 47-49. A close examination of the vertical writing in this passage, however, reveals that the passage is not bi-tonal. Instead, Smyth uses augmented intervals and tritones to unsettle the diatonic melody in the first violin part.



Figure 6-3. *String Quartet in E minor*, fourth movement, mm. 47-52. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

In all the movements, Smyth makes the key centers ambiguous, and she frequently changes key signatures and employs a significant amount of chromaticism. This ambiguity occurs more frequently in the third and fourth movements. In the development of the fourth movement, a lack of key signature "facilitates the nebulous

key areas and highly chromatic writing.”³⁹⁴ The harmonic language described by Mercier and Pickett in this last sentence is a trait of Smyth’s that has developed over the course of her career and culminates with this work. The authors also note moments of both major and minor tonality, describing the recapitulation of the last movement with the “B themes in E major/minor.”³⁹⁵ Such tonal freedom is also found at significant points in the first movements (in the closing section before the development) and the second movement (at the end of the B section before the return of the A section). My discussion of the *String Quartet* below will supplement that of Mercier and Pickett, Wood, and Hughes, and place the work in the context of Smyth’s earlier chamber writing. My analysis will also explore how the music conveys the emotions described by earlier critics and scholars.

Analysis

Allegro lirico

The first movement is in sonata-allegro form with a clearly constructed exposition, development and recapitulation. Similar to the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, the exposition is comprised of a principal theme, a transitional theme, and a secondary theme. However, this work also adds a closing theme to the exposition, expanding the structure slightly. The development section then works through the thematic material in varying ways, as Table 6-1 illustrates. The recapitulation follows the exposition measure for measure until the coda is reached in m. 213, whereby both the principal and closing themes return. Almost in accordance with a textbook definition of Smyth’s music, the

³⁹⁴ Mercier and Pickett, “String quartet”, 306.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

end of the movement is marked *Poco meno mosso*, one of the most easily recognizable traits in Smyth's compositions.

The first movement retains the German-Romanticism of the early chamber works while also exploring the new compositional ideas that were developing in fin-de-siècle Europe. It must be remembered that Smyth composed these two movements around 1902. The movement's lack of lyrical melodies, explored below, and its use of an increasingly chromatic yet still tonal language demonstrates an evolution of her style that may have been influenced by the musical developments of the time.

Thematic design: The themes of this work and this movement fit into the models Smyth used in works from the 1880s. The principal theme is twelve measures in length with the climactic moment (on a high E) occurring in m. 9, a proportion of 0.739 (Figure 6-4). The ensuing measures extend this climax to a pseudo-cadence on the same pitch in m. 12. This event resembles a cadence through quicker rhythms, higher pitches, a V chord, and a crescendo to the *sforzando* chord in m. 12 followed by the first full rest. The final chord in m. 12, however, is not the expected I or VI chord; the *sforzando* chord is instead a $\text{vii}^{6/5}$ in the key of B with no subsequent resolution. The chord in m. 12 is actually the chord farthest from a harmonic resolution, yet the music stops and begins again with an anacrusis into the next bar. In fact, this cadence demonstrates that Smyth's melodic and harmonic language have developed in such a way that allows her to manipulate the listener's expectation in more creative ways than she could fifteen years before.

Table 6-1. Formal diagram of first movement, *String Quartet in E minor*, sonata-allegro form.

Exposition				Development						Recapitulation				Coda		
PT	Trans.	ST	CT	PT	Trans.	PT+tr	CT	ST	Trans.	PT	Trans.	ST	CT	PT	CT	PT
1-14	15-36	37-53	54-66	64-71	72-79	80-102	103-115	116-136	137-153	154-167	168-185	186-202	203-212	213-221	221-227	227-234
e		B	B	B	B	C	C	C	B~	e		E	E	E	B	B-E

Allegretto lirico

B: .. V

Figure 6-4. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, mm. 1-14. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The secondary theme, as in the *Trio in D minor* and other works, is quite active and relies on very different rhythms than the principal theme, the result of which creates an angular and disjunct melody. Similar to previous secondary themes, it is three measures plus four measures in length (Figure 6-5). Once again, climaxes are elusive and occur early in the phrase. The melodic highpoints appear in mm. 38 and 41, but this is only a proportion of 0.444 in “phrase a” and a proportion of 0.320 in “phrase b”. Smyth has continued her style of a short-plus-long phrase structure with early climaxes, as in the earlier works.

Smyth adds a closing theme to this sonata structure, completing her compositional evolution from the earliest works. It has already been shown that the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor* used only the required principal and

Figure 6-5. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, mm. 34-44. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

secondary themes, while the *Sonata in A minor*, Op. 7 and the *Sonata in A minor*, Op. 5 included transitions that were almost thematic themselves. Finally, in this work Smyth composes three complete themes plus transitional themes, thus expanding the structure to its full melodic potential. The closing theme itself is the most regular, straightforward, and melodic of the themes in this movement. Its range is just over an octave, but large leaps are less frequent than the previous two themes. While the accompaniment maintains the 6/8 time signature, the melody has switched to a duple meter by the third measure of the phrase (Figure 6-6). The melody is eleven bars long with the climax falling on the downbeat of m. 60. Of all the themes, only this one has a structure that comes closest to the Golden Mean with a proportion of 0.619.

Closing Theme

The image shows a musical score for the 'Closing Theme' of the first movement of the String Quartet in E minor, measures 51-66. The score is written for four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is E minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The music begins at measure 51 with a trill in the first violin. Dynamics include *pp*, *pp esp. molto*, *cresc.*, *simile*, and *mf*. The piece concludes at measure 66 with a first ending bracket.

Figure 6-6. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, mm. 51-66. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

In this first movement, Smyth has presented her three styles of thematic treatment. The principal theme is organic and motivic, and has a late climax. The secondary theme was a combination of two phrases, a short phrase followed by a larger phrase, both of which contained early climaxes. The closing theme demonstrates her knowledge of the Classical style with a climactic proportion that achieved the Golden Mean. Each theme also contains widely different rhythmic structures and harmonic characteristics, which will now be discussed in further detail.

Harmonic design: From the earlier chamber works to the *String Quartet*, Smyth moved from highly chromatic, but still functional, harmony to chromatic harmony that cannot be described in terms of traditional functional harmony. The two published

analyses of this work do not label chords using terms such as tonic, dominant, submediant, etc., but instead simply label the harmony as B major or E°. Smyth's *String Quartet* often cannot be labeled in traditional terms because she does not always adhere to the rules of functional harmony. Roman numeral analysis can be applied, but the progressions and cadences are unconventional. The harmonies in her music are the result of linear writing and her contrapuntal training. This voice leading frequently results in harmonies that evade traditional key areas. In this movement, harmonies are highly chromatic but often still tonal with some resemblance to functional harmony.

Smyth's instrumental music continues to be harmonically unstable through a compositional style that relies almost entirely on voice-leading rather than harmonic function. For example, the opening theme is ambiguous from the very beginning with a modal effect that is the result of a lack of half-step motion. The first three measures are framed by a move from the pitch B to the pitch E, implying a dominant-tonic move which reinforces the prescribed key of the piece. Like her treatment of earlier chamber works, the suggested key area is not maintained but quickly moves to the dominant, suggesting the key area of B major by m. 7 but withholding a dominant-tonic cadence. The move to the dominant is then strongly heard in mm. 10 and 11, but the music halts on an A^{#°7} chord in m. 12 (Figure 6-7). The transition to the second theme is just as elusive, suggesting C major, D major, and finally returning to B major without ever settling on a distinct key area.

The closing theme demonstrates Smyth's affinity for Neapolitan harmonies, not just as single chords, but as tonal centers themselves. In mm. 54-66, the music quickly traverses several harmonies and such distant key areas as C major and B major without

ever establishing a tonal center until the cadence in B major at the end of the passage (Figure 6-8). Smyth has again used the Neapolitan harmony and applied it to several measures of music (mm. 58-60), similar to the third movement of *Sonata Op. 5*. The result is a large-scale harmonic motion from the tonic (B major) to the Neapolitan harmony (C major) that prepares the dominant-tonic motion in mm. 62-64.

Allegretto lirico

e: V i V i ii V vii⁷

[6] IV^{4/3} V B: I^{6/4} ii^{6/5} I^{4/3} ii⁷ vii⁷/V V⁶/V

[11] V^{6/5} vii^{6/5} ii I (sus 6)

Figure 6-7. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, mm. 1-14. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

rhythmic motive as a recognizable shift to a duple rhythm in the closing theme while the accompaniment continues the 6/8 time signature, again demonstrating the use of 2-against-3 rhythms. Each rhythm is distinct from the others, creating an interesting contrast. Smyth also combined the rhythmic ideas and tied together disparate sections in the development. Also, the dotted rhythm in Figure 6-9A and the polyrhythm in Figure 6-9D will reappear in later movements.

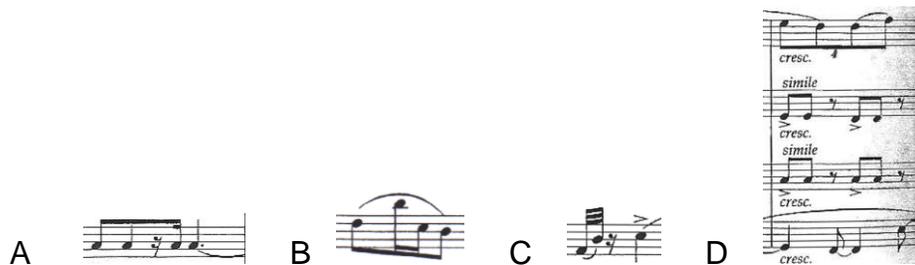


Figure 6-9. Important rhythmic ideas in the *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Allegretto molto leggiero

The second movement was also composed in 1902. It is the dance movement of the work, although Smyth has combined the principles of scherzo, sonata, and rondo forms. The work comes across as an intermezzo or an interlude, distracting the audience from the serious nature of the previous movement, yet preparing the audience for the very somber character of the movement to come. This scherzo jumps and skips, jolting the listener and continually presenting the unexpected. It never settles on an idea, but turns the many ideas upside down and inside out. It draws back in tempo at the end, even marked *Andante* at the coda, rather than accelerating to the final cadence.

According to Mercier and Pickett, the thematic development in the second movement is similar to sonata form while the sectional nature of the structure relates the

work to a rondo.³⁹⁶ This quasi-rondo structure is not unlike the finales of Op. 5 and Op. 7. The obvious oddity of this “scherzo-like” piece is the lack of a trio, although a precedent occurred for that in the *scherzo* movement of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*.

Structurally, the movement depends on the development and symbiotic nature of the intervallic and rhythmic motives. This piece is not built in themes so much as short melodic or rhythmic devices. These vary depending on the basic overall melody as well as the time signature. The tempo, or the basic pulse, of the movement is constant even when the meter shifts from 2/4 to 6/8. Rather than maintaining the eighth-note value, Smyth evokes a greater change in the rhythmic vitality by keeping the large pulse consistent.

Thematic design: The two basic themes in this second movement appear in varied form or in different modes throughout the movement. Section A, or the principal theme, is comprised of two phrases (Figure 6-10). “Phrase a” is introductory in nature and is an irregular length of five measures. The climax has a low intensity and occurs early, on the second beat of the second measure (a proportion of 0.4). “Phrase b” is more melodic and classical in nature with four bars and a climax on the first beat of m. 8 (a proportion of 0.625). “Phrase a” returns in order to lead the music back to the beginning or on to the next section. The succeeding passage then develops the principal theme. This theme also contains suggestions of PM2 from earlier works, shown in the example below (Figure 6-10). This particular motive is a trait of Smyth’s music in general.

³⁹⁶ Mericer and Pickett, “String quartet”, 305.

Table 6-2. Formal diagram of second movement, *String Quartet in E minor*, rondo form.

A		B		C		A		B		A		Coda
PT	trans.	ST	trans.	PT	tr.	PT	trans.	ST	trans.	PT+ST	PT	PT
1-14	15-39	40-53	54-73	74-112		113-126	127-151	152-165	166-189	190-208	209-229	230-238
a		F		F, various		a		a		a		a

Figure 6-10. *String Quartet in E minor*, second movement, mm. 1-15. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Section B presents the secondary theme, a series of melodic fragments set in the key of F major. Consequently, there are no phrases or melodic structures to analyze. If the entire fourteen-bar section is analyzed as a complete theme for a climax, the proportion of the section is revealed to be exactly 0.5, creating a balanced structure for a fragmentary theme (Figure 6-11). The motives PM1 and PM2 from earlier works are especially apparent in this theme.

Section C presents the same material from Section A but in the key of F major. The theme is treated in various tonal centers, but no new material is presented here or

in the remainder of the movement. Thus, this section acts as a development in this rondo form. The thematic material from this entire movement is extremely disjunct. Melodies are interrupted and passages are built on fragments. The texture is focused on the dialogue between the various instruments.

Figure 6-11. *String Quartet in E minor*, second movement, mm. 40-54. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Harmonic design: Possibly because of its fragmented melodic nature, this movement was written within a diatonic framework. The diatonic language places it in the category of Smyth's earlier dance movements, such as the scherzo from the *Sonata in A minor*, *Op. 7* and the *Trio in D minor*. The *Scherzo* begins with immediately analyzable harmonies. Clearly set in A minor, the melody does not cadence in tonic, but finally reaches a dominant-tonic cadence in the relative major of C. However, the

harmonies used here are straightforward tonics, subdominants, dominants, etc.

Modulations are also clearly indicated through pivot chords (Figure 6-12). This harmonic language is different from the first movement, where modulations largely occurred by half-step motion in the individual lines. In fact, in this movement it is not the harmonies but the melodic fragments and the rhythms that create the overall structure.

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello

pp delicatamente

a: I vi ii III V⁷/VI VI V

pp delicatamente
pizz
pp delicatamente
pp

pp
arco
pp
pp

i-6/4 V *i-6/4* VI
I IV *i-6/4* V I

cresc. *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*
f *dim.* *p*
f *dim.* *p*
f *dim.* *f* *mf*
cresc. *mf* *pizz.* *mf*

ii vi vi *a: IV* V/V V I

Figure 6-12. *String Quartet in E minor*, second movement, mm. 1-20. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Rhythmic design and instrumentation: Throughout this movement, one can also observe the manner in which Smyth trades motives, themes, and rhythms among the instruments. In the first fourteen bars, the two phrases are traded between the viola, the first violin, and the cello (Figure 6-13). The B section, mm. 40-53, truly demonstrates

the dialogue in this piece, as well as the difficulty of rehearsing the work as instruments play on different parts of the beat (Figure 6-14). The almost hocket-like quality creates a sparse, minimal texture that showcases the timbre of each instrument as fragments of the melody are passed between instruments. The austere quality of the movement, partially due to the individuality of the parts, is maintained from the first measure to the last.

Figure 6-13. *String Quartet in E minor*, second movement, mm. 1-15. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The image shows a page of a musical score for a string quartet. It contains three systems of music, each with four staves. The first system (measures 40-44) is marked 'sempre delicatante' and includes dynamics like 'sfz', 'arco', 'p', and 'pp'. The second system (measures 45-49) features a 'cresc.' marking and dynamics 'mf' and 'p'. The third system (measures 50-54) is marked 'dim.' and 'mf'. The score is in E minor and 6/8 time.

Figure 6-14. *String Quartet in E minor*, second movement, mm. 40-54. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Andante

It is unclear when Smyth turned back to the string quartet. Shortly after her return to composition, sometime between 1908 and 1909, she joined Emmeline Pankhurst in the Suffragette movement. Her two years of service had a profound impact on her life, as described in her memoirs and diaries. Around 1912 she resumed work on the string quartet, producing the final two movements. Ten years had passed, yet the movements are not as disparate as one might expect. The slow third movement is a necessary antidote to the frivolity and disjointedness of the second movement.

The solemn nature of this movement is initially conveyed through the chorale-like opening, begun in the first violin part. The stoic effect is created through slow rhythmic

and harmonic movement and by the relatively stable harmonic language, especially in comparison to the first two movements. It is a reflective work that Hughes argued is a representation of Smyth's experience in the Suffragette movement with Emmeline Pankhurst. It may also be a reflection on her love with Brewster, who had died four years prior to the composition of this movement. The passage could also be a more generic reflection of a solemn nature, for Smyth does not specifically discuss the movement and its meanings (Figure 6-15).



Figure 6-15. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 1-6. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The opening to this movement also bears a slight resemblance to Mozart's *String Quartet, K. 465*, also known as the “Dissonance” quartet (Figure 6-16). The slow addition of instruments, suggesting harmonies rather than stating them, occurs in both Smyth's work and the popular piece by Mozart, which she likely would have known.



Figure 6-16. Mozart's *String Quartet, K. 465*, third movement, mm. 1-8.

The structure of the third movement is sonata-allegro form without a repeat of the exposition. The key of A^b major suggested in the opening becomes the tonal area of the second and closing themes. Smyth's manner of mode mixture is also demonstrated in this work, for the movement is set in C major, yet frequent E^b pitches and A^b pitches in the opening passage suggest the key of C minor. It is only in the recapitulation that the key of C major is affirmed.

Thematic design: This slow movement is the most poignant of Smyth's chamber works discussed in this study. In both of the works from 1880, the slow movements were classically oriented and emotionally restrained, reflecting a compositional style that was not yet developed and a life not yet lived. After the events of 1885 and 1886, Smyth used the slow movements as vehicles for expressing the still-raw emotions that she was experiencing. If it is true that Smyth finished this slow movement almost four years after the death of Henry Brewster, then it is possible to interpret the languid opening as an elegy for him.

The principal thematic area of this movement is not defined by phrase structures or harmonic progressions. Of the twenty-one opening measures, only one eight-bar phrase emerges beginning in m. 7 (Figure 6-17). This idea occurs entirely in the key of A minor, further undermining any sense of a tonal center for this movement. It is also the only distinct melodic line, with a climactic moment in m. 10 at a proportion of 0.478.



Figure 6-17. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 7-14. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Table 6-3. Formal diagram of third movement, *String Quartet in E minor*, sonata-allegro form.

Exposition				Development	Recapitulation				Coda	
PT	trans.	ST	CT	Transitional	PT	trans.	ST	CT	trans.	ST
1-21	22-38	39-56	57-64	66-97	98-118	119-135	136-153	154-162	163-171	172-180
c/C	c-F	A ^b	A ^b	Various keys	C		C	C	C ^b	C

The secondary theme is eleven measures long with two smaller phrases and more closely resembles the Classical ideal. “Phrase a” is five measures in length with a climactic highpoint in m. 42 and a proportion of 0.684. “Phrase b” picks up on the next beat and concludes in m. 46; its climax occurred in m. 45 with a proportion of 0.667. Despite the frequent harmonic modulations, the phrases of the secondary theme closely resemble the Classical stereotype, providing further evidence for a Smythian thematic style (Figure 6-18).

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled '43', contains 'Phrase a' which spans five measures. It begins with a *mf cantabile* marking and a *cresc.* marking. A downward arrow points to the peak of the phrase in measure 42. The bottom staff, labeled '39', contains 'Phrase b' which spans eight measures. It begins with a *mf* marking and ends with a *ff dim.* marking. There are triplets in measures 40, 41, and 42. A downward arrow points to the peak of the phrase in measure 45.

Figure 6-18. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 39-46. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Although Mercier and Pickett label only two themes, a final melodic section can be labeled as the closing theme, even as it runs counter to a fragment of the secondary theme. In keeping with the sonata principle, this closing theme stated by the first violinist returns in the original key of C in the recapitulation although it is first presented in the key of A^b (Figure 6-19). A distinct climax in occurs early in the melody at m. 59, a proportion of only 0.25.

Closing Theme

IAC

Figure 6-19. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 57-66. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Harmonic design: Of the three themes in this movement, only the principal theme begins and ends in the same tonal center. Both the secondary and closing themes modulate to another key, creating instability and reinforcing the overall trope of the unknown in Smyth's compositions. The secondary theme, for example, modulates from A^b to F minor to C minor and only returns to A^b at the beginning of another statement of the secondary theme (Figure 6-20). Even greater chromaticism is exhibited in the closing theme (Figure 6-21) as the pitch A^b is respelled as $G^\#$. Her use of chromaticism allows Smyth to compose two measures in the distant key of A major, which is also the enharmonic equivalent of B-double flat, the Neapolitan harmony in the

key of A^b. The F[#] minor chord can be thought of instead as G^b minor, which is a borrowed vii from A^b minor. The move is not a modulation but is followed instead by a plagal cadence in A^b. This brief harmonic shift to a sharp key signature allows Smyth to emphasize a chromatic melodic line in the violin part.

con moto

A^b: V I V I IV vi | f: i V

mf mp cresc. ff

I i^{6/4} ii⁷ V vii⁷ V/V

senza rit.

mf dim. p pp

V | c: iv v v i i i

Figure 6-20. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 39-46. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

A^b=G[#]

57 *espr.* *mf* *mf* *mf* *molto espr.* *mf*

58 *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

59 *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

60 *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

61 *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

62 *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

63 *rit. molto* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

64 *a tempo* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

65 *espress.* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

66 *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

A^b: I⁶ IV | I⁶ ^bvii | N^{6/4} | N^{6/4} V^{4/3} N | I^{6/4} V | iv | I | I | I | c: i

Figure 6-21. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 57-66. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The recapitulation follows the model of sonata form, with the themes all returning in the tonic key. In the coda, however, there is an unusual shift to C^b/B major. As Figure 6-22 shows, Smyth sets three of the four parts in C^b but places the second violin part in B major in m. 165. After two measures, the second violin joins the others in C^b major. This passage eventually returns to the tonal center of C just before the *Poco meno mosso* ending. The most plausible explanation for this entire harmonic shift is that these

seven measures serve as a large-scale diminished-seventh harmony before the final return to the tonal center of C major in m. 172.

163

c: $bVII^6$ iv $iv^{\circ 6}$ VII^6

166

VII^6 $V^{6/5}/VI$ VI $V^{6/5}/VI$

169

$VI^{4/2}$ $I^{6/4}$ V $VI^{4/2}$ $I^{6/4}$ V $vii^{b4/2}/VI$ $VI^{6/4}$ V I N^6 I

Figure 6-22. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 163-172. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Cadences in this movement are determined as much by the rhythmic ending of a phrase as they are by the harmonic motion to a tonic. For example, during the first

transition the harmonic progression briefly hints at F minor (the given key signature) before moving on to B-flat major/minor. The cadence to this phrase, however, rests on C major, premeditated by two B-naturals, one very briefly in the violin part and one in the viola part in mm. 34-35 (Figure 6-23). This same idea recurs in the recapitulation.

Harmonic analysis for mm. 31-38:

mm. 31-32: f: i IV

mm. 33-34: Bb: iv⁶ |^{6/4} |^{6/4} iv⁶ |^{6/4} i⁶ C: I

mm. 35-38: C: I bVII^{6/4} | | | rit. poco

Figure 6-23. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 31-38. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Rhythmic design: Even in this work with its more traditional harmony, the rhythm still serves as the driving force of the phrases. Similar to other works by Smyth, the figures and motives found in the transitions serve a greater place in the development than the principal and secondary themes. For example, the dotted-eighth-sixteenth-note pattern first heard in m. 28 in the above example (6-23) is emphasized throughout the entire development section. This rhythm continues into the recapitulation as an accompaniment to the principle theme. In this way, Smyth is able to unify the

movement without relying on the obvious use of the two major themes. The transitional material becomes the thread that ties the section together.

The melodies alone are not strong enough or distinct enough to dictate the structure of this movement. Instead, Smyth relies on rhythm and melodic fragments to create a unified structure, combining separate ideas in the recapitulation. The resulting movement is an expression of the disparate emotions that can be experienced successively and simultaneously, and possibly an expression of Smyth's grief and mourning.

Allegro energico

Following Smyth's previous pattern of treatment of sonata form, the last movement is extremely balanced. The exposition and recapitulation are almost identical. There is a principal theme, a transitional theme, a secondary theme, development and recapitulation. As Table 6-4 shows, the harmonic choices are, on the surface, typical of sonata form. Except for brief changes between the major and minor modes, the movement begins and ends in E minor. This is the first example of the close of a work maintaining the original mode. With this modal balance, the overall structural balance is further reinforced.

This movement follows a different sonata tradition than her previous works by also treating the fourth movement as a fugue. In 1912, Smyth may have known Max Reger's string quartets, the first string quartet by Bartok, and Schoenberg's *String Quartet No. 2* from 1908, all of which employ fugal techniques. She would, of course, have been familiar with the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Her use of fugal techniques was not unusual to the genre or in her previous compositions.

Table 6-4. Formal diagram of fourth movement, *String Quartet in E minor*, sonata-allegro form.

Exposition					Development				Recapitulation					Coda	
PT	tr. ¹	tr. ²	ST	C T	ST	PT	trans.	ST+PT	PT	tr.1	tr.2	ST	CT	PT+ST	PT
1-25	26-37	38-49	50-73	74-81	82-93	94-115	116-122	123-152	153-175	176-187	188-199	200-223	224-232	233-255	256-268
e			A	A	a			e	e			E/e	E	e	e

The climax of the subject occurs in m. 3 at a proportion of 0.75 and therefore does not adhere to the Classical model. However, if Smyth's goal is to create a Baroque-styled fugue, then her subject would not need a Classical structure.

Like the earlier chamber works discussed above, Smyth's principal themes often avoid Classical structures and the Golden Mean, and the secondary themes frequently exhibit a proportion approximating that of the Classical ideal (0.618). The secondary theme in this movement follows this technique (Figure 6-25).



Figure 6-25. *String Quartet in E minor*, first movement, secondary theme, mm. 50-52. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

The climax occurs across the barline between mm. 51 and 52 with a proportion of 0.636. The secondary theme, too, does not fit the expected feminine character of a lyrical, legato, and soft theme; it is instead an energetic and light-hearted theme, with a different type of power than the principal theme: that of optimism. The active, regular nature of the secondary theme is similar to previous secondary themes.

In this movement, Smyth chooses to not compose a closing theme, but the final eight measures of the exposition clearly present a codetta. The rhythmic nature has quickened and accents are shifted to the second and fourth beats (Figure 6-26). This syncopation, plus a dramatic crescendo and a rise in pitch, creates an exciting rush to the development without ever needing a separate theme.



Figure 6-26. *String Quartet in E minor*, third movement, mm. 75-77. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

All of these sections demonstrate strength and power from beginning to end that have not been demonstrated in previous works. But the equality with which Smyth treats each section suggests the democratic goals of the women's movement. Thus, the composer's own statement that the movement is "Suffrage!" is directly supported by an analysis of the music itself.

Harmonic design: One of the key arguments in Hughes' essay is that the fourth movement represents, more than the previous movements, Smyth's new-found "butch personality." She writes that, "the listener is confronted with an extremely powerful subject who has energy . . . Because the harmony is fairly stable in E minor, the thematic direction is not interrupted by constantly modulating harmony."³⁹⁸ In fact, the subject and its supporting harmony become increasingly unstable; the music becomes more chromatic with each answer (see Figure 6-27). Augmented triads add dissonance, as well as ambiguity. Subsequent answers do not remain in the key of E minor. In fact, the answer on tonic E in the viola is supported by A^b and C in the violins, which could be reinterpreted as G[#], but the augmented 5th would remain. There is no spelling of this chord that does not render it a chromatically altered triad. Although Hughes is correct in

³⁹⁸ Hughes, *Sapphonic listening*, 38.

arguing for the movement's energy and power, her omission of further harmonic details undermines her argument. The fugue subject and its subsequent chromatic treatment reveal a "strong personality," but also one that is open to experimentation and new ways of looking at a situation.

While the secondary theme (Figure 6-28) itself is clearly in A major (the subdominant rather than the dominant or relative major), it is supported by unusual and chromatic harmonies, again drawing upon augmented intervals (see the D^{b+} triad). The D^b from the preceding section is reinterpreted as a C^\sharp in the violin part. It would be tempting to merely reinterpret this enharmonic spelling as C^\sharp to maintain the basic key idea.³⁹⁹ As Smyth later spells the harmony using C^\sharp exclusively, it would appear that the D^b in the cello part is a continuation from the previous section and simply a courtesy to the performer. Here, the harmony functions as a chromatically altered VI chord moving to I and acting as a dominant preparation; the end of the phrase is actually marked by V to vi, deceptive but theoretically correct. A restatement of this theme at m. 67 maintains the basic tonal idea of A major and prepares the listener for the expected development.

The F-A- C^\sharp idea returns in the coda. In this case, it is best interpreted as an augmented N^6 chord serving as a dominant preparation (Figure 6-29). In m. 265 there is finally a solid authentic cadence, one of the most decisive cadences Smyth ever composed, possibly because of the sheer amount of chromaticism which preceded it but also because of the rhythmic determinedness of the passage. A more resolute *finale* is not found in her chamber music.

³⁹⁹ The D^b/C^\sharp relationship and its multiple interpretations is not new to the sonata tradition. Rosen, for example, cites Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 130, in which the pitch is treated in a similar manner. See Rosen, *The classical style*, 27.

IV

Allegro energico

e: i V V

4

V/V B: V I V V

7

V ii° i

10

I I I I⁺⁵ vi⁶

p
p marc.

Figure 6-27. *String Quartet in E minor*, fourth movement, mm. 1-12. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Instrumentation: The development draws upon several elements, including both phrases of the secondary theme, the fugue subject and its motives, and the transitional theme, in that order. Unlike other movements that Smyth has written, frequent silences or thinning textures and fermata, exploit the various techniques of the string instruments. This use of the idioms of the individual instruments is rare in Smyth's chamber works and demonstrates the development of her compositional style. These techniques include *pizzicato* notes and chords and tremolos marked with *sforzandos*, heard in mm. 95-96 and 120-124 (as seen in Figure 6-30 and in Figure 6-31). These added effects, along with the chromaticism, create a great amount of tension that is finally resolved with the return of the fugue subject in E minor.

Figure 6-30. *String Quartet in E minor*, fourth movement, mm. 84-99. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Figure 6-31. *String Quartet in E minor*, fourth movement, mm. 119-126. © Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

Summary

This work presents a culmination of ideas and compositional techniques that Smyth had only begun to explore in 1880. Several traits can be found with increasing frequency in Smyth's works. These include the use of harmonies that challenge accepted ideas of tonality while strictly adhering to the principles of traditional form. She also frequently exchanges the dance movement with the slow movement (found in six out of nine multi-movement works by Smyth). A pervading lyricism, even in rhythmically charged situations, is heard throughout the music. Smyth's sense of lyricism, however, is often disturbed by irregular phrase lengths or unexpected climactic points, which allowed the music to defy or at least delay expectations. Finally, the duality of duple and

triple rhythms and the manners in which they can be combined has been established in each composition. A common character or affect is expressed in the works thus far examined. Naturally, this emotion is somewhat elusive of description. Her works are framed in a melancholic atmosphere, but within that atmosphere, elements of dance, song, and elegy abound. From the *Sonata in C minor* to the *String Quartet in E minor*, her works improved in craft, inspiration, and artistry. Although this trend took a decidedly different turn after World War I, the elements of Smyth's style remained.

CHAPTER 7 CODA AND CONCLUSIONS

Three simultaneous themes in Smyth's life and career account for the events at the end of her life and the choices she made regarding her compositions. After World War I, Smyth shifted from traditional genres to more popular genres intended for a broader audience, just as her prose writings were meant for the lay reader.⁴⁰⁰ The works from this period include the two light operas *Fête Galante* (1921) and *Entête Cordiale* (1925); the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin" (Ophelia's Song)* for flute, oboe, and piano (1928); the *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra* (1928); and her last large work, *The Prison* (1930), a cantata for soloists, chorus, and orchestra based on the metaphysical writings of Henry Brewster.⁴⁰¹ At the same time, Smyth was also arranging many other large orchestral works for smaller ensembles in an effort to secure more performances and achieve broader success and appeal. *Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies* and the *Concerto for Violin, Horn, and Orchestra* both became piano trios with the possibility for alternate instrumentation. It was also during the aftermath of the war that Smyth's deafness became increasingly debilitating. These changes in compositional style and physical health directly influenced the creation of her last original published chamber work, *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin" (Ophelia's Song)* for flute, oboe (or violin, or viola) and piano (1928).

⁴⁰⁰ Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, 13.

⁴⁰¹ Harry Brewster's writings were primarily philosophical. The published works are *The theories of anarchy and of law: a midnight debate* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1887); *The statuette and the background* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1896); *L'anima Pagana* (Napoli: F. Perrella, 1908); and the posthumous, *The prison: a dialogue* (London: W. Heinemann, 1931), which Smyth set the same year. Smyth also wrote that she hoped his letters and diaries would one day be published, and this is a large reason for the inclusion of many of his letters in her memoirs.

The *Variations on “Bonny Sweet Robin”* is unlike those that came before it, and yet it is significant to an understanding of Smyth as a composer in her last fruitful years. Similar to the earlier chamber pieces, primary sources related to the *Variations* are limited, especially in the writings by Smyth. Two primary sources (in addition to reviews) inform the context and significance of the work. First, Smyth’s personal music catalogue, which she compiled in 1936, lists many but not all of her compositions and clearly indicates the significance of her later works by their inclusion.⁴⁰² Several of the early chamber works and all of the unpublished works are missing from the list. Smyth does include what might be thought of as her most important or successful chamber works, including the *String Quartet in E minor*, the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, the *Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano* [arranged from the concerto], and two trios for flute, oboe and piano: the *Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies* and *Variations on “Bonny Sweet Robin”*. Second, Smyth also kept several diaries over the course of twenty-five years, beginning in the midst of World War I.⁴⁰³ The diaries relate many of her experiences and thoughts during the war as well as the interwar years, but provide little information on her compositions.

History of the Variations on “Bonny Sweet Robin” (Ophelia’s Song)

The war was as much of a catalyst in Smyth’s life and career as the break with Elisabet von Herzogenberg twenty-five years earlier and the death of Henry Brewster in 1908. The tragedies of war made it difficult to compose, and like so many of her female

⁴⁰² London, British Library, Add. MS 49196.

⁴⁰³ Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan, Hatcher Graduate Library, *Ethel Smyth Collection, 1910-1962*. Six diaries were written from 1917 to 1942. These diaries chronicle both world wars as well as events in her personal life, ranging from the trauma of war to complications with the architect building her home to her ear “disturbances,” as she called them.

companions Smyth joined in the war effort, serving as a radiographer in a hospital near Vichy.⁴⁰⁴ Immediately following the war and the publication of her first memoir, *Impressions That Remain*, she turned to works either intended for specifically British audiences or works with highly personal agendas. She was intent on reviving the English ballad opera tradition and gaining what she believed to be her rightful place in music history as an English composer. She continued tirelessly to promote her works. In the late 1920s Smyth also accepted the proposition put forth by Aubrey Brain, the greatest British French horn player of the time: that there was not enough demanding horn music.⁴⁰⁵ As a result, Smyth composed her *Concerto for Horn, Violin and Piano*, her only concerto and the only composition written after the *String Quartet* to incorporate multi-movement classical forms.

Among these last works, all originally intended for orchestral performance, is a small set of variations based on the tune of “Bonny Sweet Robin” for flute, oboe (or violin, or viola), and piano. In the published writings on and by Smyth, the work is practically ignored. There is no mention of it in the St. John biography except in the index of published works, and it appears too late to be mentioned in the memoirs. Other volumes, such as *A Final Burning of Boats (1928)* or *Female Pippings in Eden (1933)*, did not include the work presumably because those writings focused on the issues that challenged a woman musician in the early twentieth century.

Reviews published in *Music & Letters* and *The Musical Times* provide information on the facts of the work. The *Variations* received its premier at Wigmore Hall, 11

⁴⁰⁴ Smyth’s experience in the war and the war’s affect on her career is too large a topic to be discussed here. The effect of war on Smyth is one of the many segments of her life that deserve greater study.

⁴⁰⁵ Keays, *Tooting her own horn*, 1.

February 1928, paired with the premier of the trio, *Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies*.⁴⁰⁶ The performers at this concert were Albert Fransella, flute (to whom the variations is dedicated)⁴⁰⁷; Helen Gaskell, oboe; and Bertram Harrison, piano. According to the reviews, critics and audiences admired Smyth and enjoyed her compositions. In October of 1928, *Music & Letters* published a highly favorable review on the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"* and the *Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies*:

Ethel Smyth knows more about display [than Arthur Somervell, also the subject of this article], and can use it, though able to curb its exuberance. In 'Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies' and in 'Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"' for flute, oboe (or violin, or viola) and pianoforte (O.U.P.) there is more ease and grace than generally is the case. These works have sounded well on the concert platform. They should be attacked only by experienced players who can allow the delicate writing to have its full effect. Both scores are well written, and their admirable balance of parts ought certainly to be given full expression if the works are to sound adequate.⁴⁰⁸

These pieces were also revived during her seventy-fifth year, 1934, as were several of her other works including the *Mass in D* and her *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, performed by May Fussel, violin and Kathleen Long, piano.⁴⁰⁹ *The Musical Times* published an article, also by an unidentified critic, after the concert given at the Broadcasting House on 6 January 1934:

⁴⁰⁶ Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, 380.

⁴⁰⁷ Albert Fransella (1866-1935) played with the Royal Philharmonic Society from 1900-1925 and the Royal Opera Company from 1924-1929.

⁴⁰⁸ "Solo instruments with pianoforte", 397-98.

⁴⁰⁹ Smyth, *The memoirs of Ethel Smyth*, 375, 380-1. Kathleen Long also played piano at the performance of *Sonata Op. 5* for cello and piano in 1926.

Two Trios for flute, oboe and pianoforte, which ended the programme displayed Dame Ethel's extraordinary flair for getting the maximum effect out of simple tone combinations, and they were delightfully played by Robert Murchie, Terence MacDonagh, and Kathleen Long.⁴¹⁰

These two critiques demonstrate the prominence that Smyth had achieved among critics and audiences alike by the close of her career.

The situations of these performances also reveal the methods Smyth (and her influential friends) used in order to secure performances of her works. *The Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"* was dedicated to the flutist who first performed it along with the other trio for flute, oboe, and piano in 1928. Then in 1934, several of Smyth's close friends raised money to put on a Jubilee performance of her works.⁴¹¹ Both situations involved people who were directly connected to Smyth and were personally interested in the composer and her music.

But why did Smyth compose the *Variations* at all? At first glance, the composition appears to be another example of Smyth's inherent entrepreneurial streak. Even the choice of the tune, "Bonny Sweet Robin", seems geared toward the general English audience, with its allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and a musical history dating back to the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* from the first British musical renaissance in the sixteenth century. Smyth's diaries, however, provide a timeline for the composition of the work and reveal her true motivation for its inception. By April of 1924, her hearing loss was beginning to have a real impact on composition. She wrote, "my ears have got very, very bad. If they don't get better, I must give in and say goodbye to music."⁴¹² Unlike

⁴¹⁰ "Chamber music", 174. Robert Murchie had played with the BBC Symphony from 1930-1938 and was one of the most prominent flute players in London in the 1930s.

⁴¹¹ Smyth, *As time went on ...*, 284.

⁴¹² St. John, *Ethel Smyth: a biography*, quoting from Smyth's personal diaries, 188-89.

other known composers who continued to work after the onset of deafness, such as Beethoven and Smetana, Smyth needed to hear her music in order to enjoy it and to work on it. Once she lost her hearing, Smyth felt she could no longer compose, as demonstrated in the above diary entry.

The *Variations*, composed between 1925 and 1926, were, in fact, composed as an experiment to test if she could still write for a small instrumental setting, one that was devoid of words, singers or a large orchestra. On New Year's Day 1925, she wrote the following entry in her diary:

Three days ago I began Variations on Bonny Sweet Robin – just to see if I can master the ear-disturbances. I compose at the piano so as to not hear them. Today I have actually got as far as end of first-variation [sic]! Worked about 1 ½ hours each day – and purposely chose a nakedly musical job like variations for piano, flute and oboe as the sternest discipline. It is a very beautiful tune – am not sure if my composing days are, or are not – over. It is desperate work – but beginning again always is torture.⁴¹³

The manuscript was completed over a year later, on 8 February 1926, the date underlined in the autograph score. Each page of the score has a revision or a crossed-out passage, demonstrating how difficult the work was for her to compose.⁴¹⁴ She revisited the *Variations* in her diary in March of 1926, admitting further trouble composing:

All the same with sizzling ears and no inspiration I determined at all costs to compose again. It seemed too absurd that in eight months all this began. So I began writing Bonny Sweet Robin (Variations on) [sic] for Piano, Flute, and Oboe. Ludicrous! Sometimes one line produced in one day. . . . The odd thing is that the Variations which I have twice heard are rather good.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan, Diary II, 105-106.

⁴¹⁴ London, British Library, Add. MS 45946.

⁴¹⁵ Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan, Diary II, 108.

The experiment turned out to be a positive one, yet it was also Smyth's last venture into chamber music.

The *Variations* demonstrates a continuation of her instrumental style. The work is virtuosic, full of thick textures and intricate rhythms. The presence of a pre-determined melody, however, negated any tendency toward the motives of her past works.

Kathleen Dale addresses this composition briefly in her critical study of Smyth's music, describing the trios of the 1920s as "unpretentious in scope but subtle in treatment."⁴¹⁶

Of the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin" and the Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies*, she wrote the following:

The [Bonny] Trio is a model of discreet and artistic elaboration. The whole piece is developed on a more intellectual plane than the Interlinked French Folk Melodies, in which the robust Burgundian vintage-song and the wistful Breton folk tune, once they have imprinted themselves upon the listener's memory, are easily recognizable, whole or in sections, throughout the openwork instrumental texture.⁴¹⁷

Dale's description of the variations as a "model of discreet and artistic elaborations" as well as their development on a "more intellectual plane" than the arranged trio immediately places the work among her earlier chamber works, all compositions that exhibit high artistry and craftsmanship.

This work, despite several early performances, was recorded only once and exists as part of the sound archives at the British Library, London; it was never released commercially. It has not been performed since the 1930s, and Oxford University Press no longer lists the piece in its catalogue. The composition can now only be acquired through lending libraries. Consequently, this fascinating set of variations, full of virtuosity

⁴¹⁶ Dale, *Ethel Smyth*, 293.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

and charm, may never have the chance to be assessed by present-day listeners and performers.

Conclusion

As the review of literature has shown, the majority of Smyth research has focused on her music with text: her operas, her mass, and her choral works. This particular type of music has allowed scholars to investigate a part of Smyth's life that was simultaneously at the forefront of her personality and yet hidden in her own writing: her sexuality. Yet, I believe the scholarship has now gone too far in this latter direction, and it has become all too common to project onto Smyth's music the agenda(s) of the scholar. I, too, find it easy to be seduced by Smyth's words, and to want to hear autobiographical tales in the music. Her biography and the question of gender in music are extremely compelling, but I also found myself simply wanting to *hear* the music, and to judge it on its own. In my study of Smyth's music, and of the scholarship about her music, I found myself asking two specific questions: what was her musical style, and does her instrumental music also express or represent autobiographical elements?

To answer these questions, I chose select chamber compositions from four distinct periods in her life in order to compare her musical style over time. The two early works, the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Trio in D minor* from 1880, were not published in Smyth's lifetime and represent the foundation of her compositional style. The two later works, the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5* for cello and piano and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* for violin and piano from 1887, were published by major firms and frequently performed during Smyth's career; these compositions represent a late-Romantic style. The *String Quartet in E minor* was composed over a ten-year time frame at the height of her professional success; this work was also published by a major firm, performed by

excellent players of her day, and captures Smyth's view of early twentieth-century musical developments. The *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"*, written during her waning years, represents her late style, a combination of her love of melody and an unusual amalgamation of Classical, Romantic, and twentieth-century techniques.

The analysis of the music alone and within its historical context relied on two methodologies. The first method was tonal formal analysis, the type of analytical tool with which most musicians today and in the late-nineteenth century would be familiar. This analysis identified significant musical factors, in particular the structure and organization of the pieces, including form, melodic style, harmonic language, and motivic development. The second method of analysis was influenced by Peter H. Smith's strategy of expressive interpretation, whereby the biographical details and the structural analysis coalesce to discern the expressive content of the work and to suggest the communicative intentions of the composer. I found that Smyth's music portrays a sense of ambiguity mixed with intense emotion by constantly changing the harmonies and key centers while avoiding resolution of harmonic and melodic tension. In support of the two primary methodologies, Sally Macarthur's methodology corroborates the finding that Smyth's phrases are predictably unpredictable.

The analysis revealed that Smyth approached the chamber music genre in a consistent and somewhat conservative manner for most of her career. Her lessons in form, counterpoint, and harmony from Reinecke and Herzogenberg, and her study of Brahms's scores, established the conservative foundation for her work. Only the last piece, a set of variations, was not a multi-movement composition. In the other works, the first movements were all in sonata form, although the structure within them was

sometimes slightly modified. The second movements in a majority of the works surveyed reversed the usual order of the slow movement and the dance movement, a trait that can be found in the music of Mendelssohn and Schumann. Although one is a *ländler* and the other a *scherzo*, the early dance movements of 1880 had a dance-and-trio form with a *da capo-coda* repeat. In the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* and the *String Quartet*, however, Smyth omitted the trio from both dance movements (one is labeled a *scherzo*, the other is simply given a tempo indication).

The slow movements vary considerably, although an observable development in creativity with the form is also apparent. Smyth began in 1880 with a defined variation form; she then experimented with the concept of *variation* in subsequent works. In the *Sonata in C minor*, the third movement is a clearly identified theme-and-variations form. The second movement of the *Trio in D minor* is also a theme-and-variations, but the variations are not labeled. Seven years later, the slow movement of the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, is a ternary form, wherein the three themes are repeated successively but the accompaniments are increasingly chromatic (ABCA¹B¹C¹). The *Romanze* of *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, is also sectional, but the order is circular rather than linear (ABCBA as opposed to the ABCABC of the Op. 5), and brings the listener back to the main theme. Almost twenty-five years later, Smyth abandoned the variation form for sonata form in the *String Quartet in E minor*. In an ironic twist, Smyth's last chamber work was only a set of variations, revealing her life-long interest in the form.

The last movements vary among rondo, sonata-rondo, and a modified sonata form. The *Sonata in C minor* is the only finale that is actually in a textbook sonata-rondo form. The sonata-form finale of the *Trio in D minor* not only has principal and secondary

themes but also transitional and closing themes, all of which are developed and reiterated. In both Opp. 5 and 7 the rondos could be classified as a *quasi-rondo*, for the basic sectional idea of a rondo applies, but Smyth does not always adhere to harmonic or thematic principles. The final movement of the *String Quartet*, however, is the most inventive; it opens with a full fugue acting as the principal theme of a sonata form. Even in the recapitulation, the fugue subject is granted the same four statements as in the exposition.

All of the chamber works examined in this study (including the *Variations on "Bonny Sweet Robin"*) are in a minor key. A minor and E minor are the most common followed by C and D minor. Several of the movements, however, close in the parallel major, such as the first movement of the *Sonata in C minor* and the *Variations*.

Melodically, Smyth's treatment is so consistent that the music gains familiarity after a minimum number of listenings. The principal themes of each of the first movements are characterized by a rhythmic emphasis on the opening note. In four of the five sonatas, this is a note with the longest duration of the measure and even the phrase. In the *String Quartet*, the first measure is one repeated pitch, creating a similar aural effect. From this opening pitch, the theme spins out until it ends with an appoggiatura cadence. This unfolding quality is one of the elements that Smyth uses to express ambiguity and a nervous tension in her works. The secondary themes balance against the principal themes, either through a triplet rhythm or lighter character, and often serve as an antidote to the chromatic, dark nature of the opening melodies. However, the secondary themes often cannot be described as subservient to the principal theme because they are more balanced, structured, and more rhythmically

active. Only eight of the twenty individual movements contained a closing theme. These were often short and rhythmically active, serving as a transitional passage to the development.

The placement of climaxes of the themes, however, was quite different from piece to piece, ranging from a proportion of 0.88 in the *Sonata in C minor* to 0.25 in the *String Quartet in E minor*. Yet in each of these themes, the climaxes were often difficult to determine as lines overlapped or phrases competed for importance. More importantly, of the forty-two distinct themes in these five works, only seventeen themes exhibited a phrase structure similar to the Golden Mean. The remaining themes evenly fall above or below that proportion, indicating that Smyth's themes vary in phrase structure between early climaxes, a Classical proportion, and late climaxes. Furthermore, more themes had a phrase structure that did not achieve the ideal proportion, a total of twenty-five out of forty-two themes. Smyth's themes, and likewise the music built on those themes, exhibit a Romantic aesthetic.

With each piece, Smyth's treatment of harmony grew increasingly chromatic. She frequently borrowed chords from parallel keys but then did not maintain the 'correct' mode of major or minor. To put it succinctly, C major contains seven possible diatonic harmonies, each one built on a scale degree using only the pitches in C major. If harmonies are borrowed from the parallel mode of C minor, twelve total harmonies are available to the composer (one of which might be E^b major, for example). Smyth, conversely, borrowed harmonies but did not maintain the mode, allowing for nineteen possible harmonies, including such far-reaching chords as E^b minor. Rather than reaching these harmonic decisions deliberately, Smyth instead created many of her

chromatic harmonies through her penchant for counterpoint and linear writing. Several of the unusual harmonic areas in the pieces discussed in this study were often the result of chromatic motion, especially by half-steps leading to a harmonic destination or a necessary modulation. In at least three instances Smyth recontextualized the same chord in a new key area, as in the *Sonata in C minor* or the *String Quartet in E minor*, or in a new movement as in the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, an unusual technique not frequently found in the works of her contemporaries. In particular, Smyth's harmonic language treats small-scale movements at the large-scale level as well, such as modulating to a Neapolitan harmonic area in addition to progressing to a Neapolitan chord. She relies on enharmonic spellings, both as a courtesy to the performers and as a means of modulating to unusual key areas. Her music is highly chromatic on the surface but a reliance on basic diatonic functions such as leading tones and movement by 5ths and 3rds prevails. Although the *Sonata in C minor* only hints at these practices, the *String Quartet* used them fully.

Four significant motives and rhythmic devices complete her recognizable style. In all the works an appoggiatura motive occurs whereby a step (or small leap in the case of the *String Quartet*) in one direction is followed by a leap in the opposite direction. A scalar motive of three conjunct pitches in one direction, spanning a minor or major third, is also frequently heard. The dotted rhythm  and all its permutations is a primary factor in the "Smythian gusto" attributed to her compositions. Quite apart from the issue of rhythmic drive, yet no less significant, the Scotch snap is an unusual rhythmic device simply because it is the opposite of the other primary rhythmic ideas, and because it only appears in two movements of these six compositions. The character of each of

these movements (or sections within), however, conveyed a rustic peasant-dance quality rather than the refinement of a minuet or the velocity of a scherzo.

Of the six works surveyed, the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, and the *String Quartet in E minor* are distinguishable from the other works as exceptional compositions. Instrumentation is the obvious trait that makes them stand out, as the other works involve either cello or the use of the piano. Through manipulation of form, harmony, and melody, in addition to instrumentation, Smyth created works that are particularly captivating. These works were also either the subject of letters or specific mention in the memoirs: where the *Sonata in C minor* gets a passing mention, but the *Trio in D minor* and the *Sonata in A minor, Op. 5*, receive no mention whatsoever in the primary source material.

The *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7*, for violin and piano offers the same opportunity for speculation, debate, and interest as the *String Quartet in E minor*. This work, as the analysis here has shown, directly expresses the tragic and catastrophic events that shaped Smyth's early career. The markings in this work, specifically the dedication and the inscription on the third movement, point toward an interpretation of loss and grief. Letters from Smyth's mother, as well as anecdotes from the memoirs, provide further evidence of Smyth's state of mind and its affect on her compositions. The music itself conveys Smyth's emotions through structural ambiguity, melodic and thematic uncertainty, and mercurial mode mixture. More significant, however, is the addition of this piece to the nineteenth-century repertoire. In the late nineteenth-century few composers were writing violin sonatas, and those who did were not writing many of them. Grieg composed three violin sonatas (1865, 1867, and 1887), Brahms composed

three sonatas between 1880 and 1889, and Saint-Saëns composed two between 1878 and 1896. Fauré, Franck and Dvôřák each produced single violin sonatas between 1877 and 1886. With this limited representation of repertory from this period, Smyth's *Sonata in A minor, Op. 7* not only adds to the breadth of music from this period, it also serves as a representative of British chamber music in the late Romantic style and should be included in any survey or comparison of Romantic works for violin and piano.

In recent years, the *String Quartet* has received more scholarly attention than any of the other chamber works because it was performed frequently during her lifetime, it was composed during a well-known period in her biography, and the last movement was described by Smyth herself as "Suffrage", thereby providing a direct reference to the composer's intentions. Even as I disagree with the findings of previous scholars with regard to the interpretation of the work, I applaud their efforts in bringing this work to the attention of the greater musical world. The *String Quartet*, even more than the other works discussed here, plays a vital role in the history of Britain's presence in the musical world, especially prior to World War I. Performed at the same time as Stravinsky's ballets in Paris and Schoenberg's experiments with atonality, Smyth's *String Quartet* perhaps represents a British musical style in comparison to the avant-garde composers on the continent, one that is chromatic and modal but that also incorporates Classical forms and the dance-like qualities associated with British folk music. According to this basic definition, it might be instructive to view the work as an example of Neo-classicism.

Despite Smyth's significant musical contributions and popularity in her own lifetime, recent studies on the composer have focused more on the life she lived and

less on the music she composed. Many of the articles published on Smyth focus disproportionately on her involvement with the suffrage movement and her possible lesbianism. In an article published in the lesbian magazine *Curve*, Liane Curtis speculates that Smyth's 1903 opera *The Wreckers* was an expression of the composer's repressed lesbianism.⁴¹⁸ Yet Smyth alludes to no such connection, and given her letters and essays on the struggle for women's rights as a whole, it is more conceivable that the heroine in *The Wreckers* represents the emerging archetype in the twentieth century of the independent woman. The movement to label Smyth as a lesbian is so prevalent that even the recent publication of MGG changed its label of Smyth from that of a minor British composer with nothing new to say in 1965⁴¹⁹ to that of a "composing and lesbian woman" in 2006.⁴²⁰ This focus on Smyth's sexuality, a focus which has now lasted for thirty years, detracts from a study and appreciation of Smyth's music without boundaries or labels. In fact, definitive proof of Smyth's orientation has not yet been found, while evidence of a relationship with Henry Brewster cannot be denied. The point is that her sexuality has no bearing on the quality of her music.

This study has only begun to explore the unique style of her instrumental works and the role of these works in her career. Most significantly, the findings presented here reveal that Smyth's music was influenced by the broad spectrum of events in her life. The details of her life and the tragedies and triumphs she experienced directly impacted the music she created. Ironically, the loss of her two strong relationships, Herzogenberg

⁴¹⁸ Curtis, "Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*".

⁴¹⁹ Hurd, "Smyth, (Dame) Ethel Mary", 814.

⁴²⁰ Unseld, "Smyth, Ethel (Mary)", 985.

and Brewster, first prevented her from composing and then inspired her two greatest chamber works. Further research into Smyth's oeuvre might compare the conclusions of this study with works as yet unexplored, specifically the unpublished string quartets from the Leipzig years. Likewise, the deaths of her father and her mother may have also affected her creativity; thus, a study of the works composed before and after these years is needed. It will also be productive to compare the findings of my analysis with works that have already been studied, such as the *Mass in D* and the *Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra*, and to compare the findings with works that have yet to receive analytical study, such as the four-movement *Serenade for Orchestra* (1892), performed just one year before Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*. In addition, thorough comparisons of Smyth's music with that of her contemporaries will further illuminate the quality of her art and offer new perspectives on British music. The methodologies incorporated in this dissertation, which included a focus on biographical and cultural context and style analysis, may serve as a useful approach for future examinations of Smyth's music. As research on Smyth continues, issues of gender and sexual orientation will be seen as interesting but peripheral aspects of a fascinating musical personality. By focusing on analysis and interpretation, the intrinsic merits of the compositions will be more clearly defined and, therefore, allow for a more solid basis on which to establish her place in the history of western music.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amy Elizabeth Zigler received her Ph.D. in music from the University of Florida in the fall of 2009. She received a Bachelor of Music in piano performance from the University of Alabama and a Master of Music in piano performance from Belmont University. Since 2003, Dr. Zigler has presented research papers and lecture-recitals at international, national, and regional conferences, including *Performing Romantic Music: Theory and Practice* in 2008 and the *College Music Society National Conference* in 2005. In 2008, her article, "Four Romantic Chamber Works by Dame Ethel Smyth," was published in the *Journal for the International Alliance of Women in Music*. In addition to the music of Smyth, Dr. Zigler's research interests include nineteenth and twentieth century styles, piano and music history pedagogy, and the study of cultural influences on composition and performance. Ms. Zigler maintains an active performing and teaching career as pianist for the Gainesville Chamber Orchestra and as a private instructor.