

Richardson's pilgrimage in the European literary traditions

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ABSTRACT

This paper will provide an analysis of how Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* is firmly rooted in such mainstream European genres as the *Bildungsroman* and the *roman-fleuve*. These two genres become intimately linked in *Pilgrimage*. Thus, whereas the *roman-fleuve's* multivolume form provides an ideal medium for the development of Miriam's life-long journey and her process of *Bildung*, the *Bildungsroman* subject matter gives unity and coherence to *Pilgrimage* as a sequence novel. Moreover, in *Pilgrimage*, the *Bildungsroman* reflects the inward turning of the novel and takes on characteristics of the *Künstlerroman* because of the strong aesthetic component of the former. In the second part of the paper, the double function of the music motif as a vehicle of psychological exploration and a structuring device will be taken as an illustration of the close connection between the *Bildungsroman* and the *roman-fleuve*.

This paper will explore how Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* is firmly rooted in such mainstream European genres as the *Bildungsroman* and the *roman-fleuve*. Richardson situates her novel in the tradition of the prototypical German *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meister*, and the French *roman-fleuve* as represented originally by Balzac and later by Proust. In her Foreword to the 1938 collected edition of *Pilgrimage* Richardson quotes the following passage from *Wilhelm Meister* in order to explain her position in literary history.

In the novel, reflections and incidents should be featured; in drama, character and action. The novel must proceed slowly, and the thought-processes of the principal

figure must, by one device or another, hold up the development of the whole... The hero of the novel must be acted upon, or, at any rate, not himself the principal operator... Grandison, Clarissa, Pamela, the Vicar of Wakefield, and Tom Jones himself, even where they are not acted upon, are still retarding personalities and all the incidents are, in a certain measure, modelled according to their thoughts (Foreword 11).

Pilgrimage is thus inscribed in the purest streak of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Maurice Beebe (1964) argues that “Goethe deserves the major credit for initiating the vogue of the artist as hero, because a dominant theme of his work... is the conflict between art and life... [and] because he achieved a personal balance between the self and the world” (27). In *Pilgrimage* there is also an identification of the *Bildungsroman* with the *Künstlerroman* that has been pointed out by David Miles (1974): “the *Bildungsroman*, mirroring the autobiographical trend of nineteenth-century fiction as a whole, tends to become a *Künstlerroman*”. He holds that “the viewpoint of the hero in the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* shifts unerringly from the world without to the world within... by the transformation of the ‘picaro’ into the ‘confessor’”. Stendhal’s metaphor is also useful to describe the inward turning of the novel: “the novelist no longer wandered down life’s road with his magic mirror, but returned it to his cell, where he hung it directly above the writing desk, to catch every distortion of the world as mirrored first in his own consciousness” (989). This new way of seeing the world through the novelist’s mind is what Richardson describes in her Foreword to *Pilgrimage* as Proust and Henry James’s aim. She holds that Proust is “said to be producing an unprecedentedly profound and opulent reconstruction of experience focused from within the mind of a single individual”, and that Henry James keeps “the reader incessantly watching the conflict of human forces through the eye of a single observer” (Foreword 10-11). The passage from *Wilhelm Meister* quoted by Richardson in her Foreword can be taken as a precedent of Proust and James’s intention. Richardson openly acknowledges her identification with this citation, that for her is a “manifesto” that traces the origins of her novelistic technique, gladly including her fiction in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

From the eighteenth century the concept of *bilden* had been associated with “a religious, didactic process that was restricted to an individual sphere of activity and that had distinctly aesthetic connotations” (Cocalis 400). In fact, the hero of a *Bildungsroman* usually possesses a pronounced aesthetic sensibility that can easily develop into an artistic career. Thus, the strong aesthetic component of the *Bildungsroman* makes it evolve naturally into the *Künstlerroman*, where the protagonist’s process of formation and aesthetic education culminates with his becoming an artist. Marc Redfield considers the

Bildungsroman the genre of aesthetics. *Bildungsromane* are, thus, “the most pedagogically efficient of novels, since they thematize and enact the very motion of aesthetic education” (55).

Since the *Bildungsroman* has been traditionally defined in terms of content rather than form (Cocalis 399), its pedagogical subject matter could be easily associated with the multivolume shape of the *roman-fleuve*. This form has proved to be suitable for the *Bildungsroman* educational contents because it favours the progressive representation of the formation process of the protagonist in a detailed way. Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* are examples of multivolume *Bildungsromane* that result from the productive fusion of this genre with the *roman-fleuve*. The characteristic features of the *roman-fleuve* that can be identified in Proust's novel were the reason for E. M. Forster's criticism in *Aspects of the Novel*, where he complains that *Remembrance of Things Past* “is chaotic, ill constructed, it has and will have no external shape; and yet it hangs together because it is stitched internally, because it contains rhythms” (151). Forster claims that a novelist must cling to expansion, not completion, and this aim of extension is precisely the goal of the *roman-fleuve*. The internal rhythms of the *roman-fleuve* are responsible for its ultimate unity, rescuing it from the chaos associated with lack of external structure. *Pilgrimage* has also been subject to the same accusations of not having an external structure and, then, redeemed of this failure by the identification of internal rhythms that are responsible for its unity. In fact, it could be said that the defects critics imputed to *Pilgrimage* when compared with the novels of other modernist writers could be attributed to its belonging to a different genre, the *roman-fleuve*.

In *Pilgrimage* the *Bildungsroman* genre is fused with the *roman-fleuve* in an intimate manner. This novel can be thus contemplated from the point of view of its subject matter as a *Bildungsroman*, and also from the point of view of its form as a *roman-fleuve*. These ways of considering it are complementary and they do not exclude each other. This confluence of two genres makes of *Pilgrimage* a complex text and is also responsible for the proliferation of meanings for which it is known. The *Bildungsroman* takes the form of the *roman-fleuve* and is expanded over a series of volumes where a sensitive young woman moves from innocence to experience, struggling to become independent and mature and finally coming to an understanding of herself and the world. *Pilgrimage* traces Miriam's progress toward mental maturity and self-esteem, expanding progressively as she develops. Eric A. Blackall has also explained the structure of *Wilhelm Meister*, Richardson's prototype of *Bildungsroman*, as an expansion from themes that were present already in the first books of the novel: “The novel expands; it does not divide” (382).

For Cocalis the *Bildungsroman*, like the Socratic dialogue, tends to “retard the external action by shifting the focus of the novel onto a highly theoretical

level." Thus, in a *Bildungsroman* there is a primarily ideological conflict, as the characters debate "the themes of *Bildung* such as the progress of the hero's development; criteria of aesthetic judgement; the nature of education; the laws, morals and political systems; utopian social reforms; or woman's role in society" (410). This retardation of the narration is also mentioned in the quotation from *Wilhelm Meister* that Richardson includes in her 1938 Foreword to *Pilgrimage* as the model for her literary technique. The protagonist's thoughts bring about the debate on the themes of *Bildung* in the form of Socratic dialogue. For Lynette Felber it is also the vastness of *Bildung* what makes it an appropriate subject for the *roman-fleuve* (12). Moreover, both the *Bildungsroman* and the *roman-fleuve* have in common a strong autobiographical tendency. Ausmus has pointed out that the majority of sequence novels are to a high degree autobiographical. They tell their authors' life-history, although with varying degrees of fictional disguise (61).

According to Ausmus, the characteristics that define the sequence novel as a genre are: its exploring a single major theme, its consisting of three or more separately published novels and its integrity by elements of setting, plot and character. The novels that form a *roman-fleuve* stand on their own as individual artistic entities, but when they are considered together, the separate volumes constitute a greater whole. "Various links between the plots of the separate novels [of a *roman-fleuve*] tie the entire sequence together to form an inclusive structure" where "character is as strongly a cohesive element as plot" (3, 4, 8-9). The *roman-fleuve* has its origin in nineteenth-century France, and Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine*, mentioned by Richardson in her Foreword to *Pilgrimage*, is an early example of this genre.

Felber's study *Gender and Genre in Novels Without End. The British Roman-Fleuve* offers the first theoretical study of the *roman-fleuve* as a genre. It articulates a poetics of this genre, which she perceives as feminine and links with the *écriture féminine* identified by French feminist theorists. Some of the defining features of the *roman-fleuve* she identifies are "its extraordinary length, the spatial and temporal gaps between volumes, and its problematic closure" (ix).

Although the *roman-fleuve* is a subtype of the novel, some of its features are a hyperbolic intensification of it. Some of the distinguishing traits of the *roman-fleuve* such as the lack of closure, the extreme length and the apparently dispensable plot lines and characters are usually considered defects in a conventional novel. Each volume of the *roman-fleuve* supplies both a new beginning and a provisional ending within the whole series. For Felber both "the *roman-fleuve* and *écriture féminine* are often associated with the modern period, [as] they exemplify a modernist aesthetic de-emphasizing linear plot, eschewing closure, and privileging synchronic development." The *roman-fleuve*'s narrative progresses through a nonlinear movement. It develops

through reiterations and parallels and it has a synchronic way of moving, rather than a diachronic one. Thus the conventional forward movement of a major plot is underprivileged in favour of an extended development of characters and subplots (Felber 1, 4).

It could be said that the *roman-fleuve* has most of the characteristics of what David Mickelsen calls the spatial-form novel. He differentiates between this type-characterized by lack of development and traits such as replacement of action by characterization, slow pace, lack of resolution and repetition- and the *Bildungsroman*. He considers the *Bildungsroman* and the spatial-form novel polar opposites: whereas the former minimizes the temporal dimension and the main impetus is forward, the latter maximizes the temporal dimension and the impetus is backward or sideways (64-65, 67). However, this rigid differentiation could be interpreted in a more dynamic way that takes into account that the concept of *Bildungsroman* cannot be established once and for all, as the constant evolution of literary genres makes it impossible to have a complete and fixed account of all their features. Thus, it could be said that Mickelsen's strict division between the space-form novel and the *Bildungsroman* could perhaps be applied to an early stage of the development of the latter as a genre. However, his theory does not completely apply to some novels such as Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, two *Bildungsromane* that clearly show some characteristics of the spatial-form novel because of their belonging to the *roman-fleuve* genre.

Hayden White's reflections on our desire to have even real events display the traditional values of narrative fiction suggest why the uncanonical form of the *roman-fleuve* has been rejected by critics as unsatisfactory despite its similarities with life and, consequently, its more adequate 'realism'. Traditional criticism of Richardson's *Pilgrimage* as a triumph of life over art can be inscribed in this frame.

Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning? Or does it present itself more ... either as mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude? (27)

The influence of traditional narratives on our conception of life and literature makes us look at novels trying to apply to them the conventional and expected structure of beginning, middle and end, that turns them into a coherent unity. For Susan Winnett the structure of traditional narratives is not adequate for the expression of women. She claims that "the meanings generated through the dynamic relations of beginnings, middles and ends in traditional narrative

and traditional narratology never seem to accrue directly to the account of the woman" (516). This incompatibility of women's writing with the traditional Aristotelian definition of an artistic whole as formed by a beginning, a middle and an end is suggestive of Felber's identification of the *roman-fleuve* with *écriture féminine*. Thus, it seems that both the *Bildungsroman* and the *roman-fleuve* have been identified by feminist critics as useful vehicles for the expression of women and their representation in literature.

The second part of this paper will illustrate how the music motif can be taken as an example of the close connection between the *roman-fleuve* and the *Bildungsroman*. The same as in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, in *Pilgrimage* music has a double function as a structuring device that creates rhythm and pattern in the *roman-fleuve* narrative and as a vehicle of psychological exploration and expression that serves the *Bildungsroman* purposes.

As an adolescent Miriam experiences music as an expression of her inner world, and her reactions to it are usually of an epiphanic nature. In *Pointed Roofs*, when she is in the German school, she discovers that German people have a different way of playing the piano that transforms her English ideas of music: "Her playing [Emma Bergmann's] [. . .] had prepared Miriam for the difference between the performance of these German girls and nearly all the piano-playing she had heard" (*Pointed Roofs* 35). The importance of this change in Miriam's conception of music is emphasized later: "The first evening at Waldstrasse there had been a performance that had completed the transformation of Miriam's English ideas of 'music'" (*Pointed Roofs* 36).

Miriam understands the German need of giving expression to beautiful things and assumes that English people cannot penetrate into this secret. Artistic manifestations like music and poetry increase the beauty of objects and make them appear to reflect light and be connected with her mental states of bliss and happiness. Music inspires in Miriam a joyful mood that helps her ignore darkness and gloom.

No English person would quite understand -the need, that the Germans understood so well- the need to admit the beauty of things . . . the need of the strange expression of music, making the beautiful things more beautiful, and of words when they were together in the beauty of the poems. Music and poetry told everything -whether you understood the music or the words- they put you in the mood that made things shine -then heartbreak or darkness did not matter (*Honeycomb* 374).

Miriam's self-forgetful way of playing the piano is also considered in *Remembrance of Things Past* as the ideal way of playing.

So with a great musician (it appears that this was the case with Vinteuil when he played the piano), his playing is that of so fine a pianist that one is no longer aware that the performer is a pianist at all, because ... his playing has become so

transparent, so imbued with what he is interpreting, that one no longer sees the performer himself -he is simply a window opening upon a great work of art (*Remembrance of Things Past* II 44).

In *March Moonlight* a mature Miriam that has evolved from her adolescent self is able to have a reaction to music that is sympathetic with that of the audience that accompanies her. When she plays the *Sonata Pathétique* for some people at the Brooms in the middle of a storm, she realizes that the people around her are sharing with her the wonder of existence. This is due to the influence of the storm, that causes a heightened awareness in her audience and stimulates a special state of perception of reality.

[...] my fling at the thunderous last movement of the Pathétique [...] Playing accompaniments, I felt all about me an awareness, conscious in the few, shared, like an infection, to some extent by all, of the strangeness of the adventure of being, of the fact of existence, anywhere, of anything at all. No need, I felt, in this foreign country created by the storm, to inquire of these girls, as so often I had been tempted to do in strange surroundings shared with people who seem to take life for granted: 'Do you realize' (*March Moonlight* 638).

Proust's Marcel, like Miriam, also projects his own life and feelings on the music he is playing, that he also associates with light and brightness. Thus, when he plays Vinteuil's sonata he applies his love of Albertine to his performance:

Taking advantage of the fact that I still was alone, and drawing the curtains together so that the sun should not prevent me from reading the notes, I sat down at the piano, opened at random Vinteuil's sonata which happened to be lying there, and began to play; seeing that Albertine's arrival was still a matter of some time but was on the other hand certain, I had at once time to spare and peace of mind. Lulled by the confident expectation of her return escorted by Françoise and by the assurance of her docility as by the blessedness of an inner light as warming as the light of the sun, I could dispose of my thoughts, detach them for a moment from Albertine, apply them to the sonata ... in the latter, the combination of the sensual and the anxious motifs corresponded more closely to my love for Albertine, ... (*Remembrance of Things Past* III 155).

The performance of Chopin's *Fifteenth Nocturne* provokes in Miriam a heightened state of being that is associated with light and brightness. Her perception of reality is changed and the effect of light seems to be progressively increased. She is carried on and on by an overwhelming feeling of freedom. During the performance a memory comes to her mind of a mill-wheel she had seen as a child. Not only does she see the image of the wheel, but also its scent and sound and she is so overwhelmed that she almost cries.

Emma Bergmann was playing. The single notes of the opening *motif* of Chopin's Fifteenth Nocturne fell pensively into the waiting room. Miriam, her fatigue forgotten, slid to a featureless freedom. It seemed to her that the light with which the room was filled grew brighter and clearer. She felt that she was looking at nothing and yet was aware of the whole room like a picture in a dream. Fear left her. The human forms all around her lost their power. They grew suffused and dim ... The pensive swing of the music changed to urgency and emphasis ... It came nearer and nearer. It did not come from the candle-lit corner where the piano was ... It came from everywhere. It carried her out of the house, out of the world.

It hastened with her, on and on towards great brightness ... Everything was growing brighter and brighter ... (*Pointed Roofs* 42-43).

Chopin's *Fifteenth Nocturne* appears several times in the novel and it brings Miriam memories of the first time when she had heard it played by Emma Bergman. This repetition of a piece of music functions as a structuring device that creates rhythm and pattern in the *roman-fleuve* narrative of *Pilgrimage*. When Miriam arrives in Oberland the sound of a piano playing a familiar theme increases her feelings of renewal and freedom. The theme is not initially identified and it reminds her of her stay in Germany. She then reflects that her life in Germany had been always accompanied by music, that never fails to bring to her mind happiness and joy.

She [...] listened, and for a moment could have believed that the theme was playing itself only in her mind, that it had come back to her because once again she was within the strange happiness of being abroad. Through all the years she had tried in vain to recall it, and now it came, to welcome her, piling joy on joy, setting its seal upon the days ahead and taking her back to her Germany where life had been lived to music that had flowed over its miseries and made its happiness hardly to be borne.

For a moment she was back in it, passing swiftly from scene to scene of the months in Waldstrasse and coming to rest in a summer's evening: warm light upon the garden, twilight in the saal (*Oberland* 35).

In *Remembrance of Things Past* music also contributes to create a pattern that gives rhythm to the narrative structure of the novel. The little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata also brings Swann memories of his love for Odette that he cannot control.

And before Swann had had time to understand what was happening and to say to himself: 'It's the little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata -I mustn't listen!', all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded until that moment in keeping invisible in the depths of his being, deceived by this sudden reflection of a season of love whose sun, they supposed, had dawned again, had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears, without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten

strains of happiness ... He now recovered everything that had fixed unalterably the specific, volatile essence of that lost happiness ... (*Remembrance of Things Past I* 375-76).

The repetition of certain musical phrases and pieces that reach Miriam's centre of being contributes to connect different parts of the novel by means of her memories, so that the overall pattern of the novel is enhanced by the music motif. Thus, when she arrives at St John's Wood lodging house after leaving the Dimple Hill farm she is greeted by the sound of the Chopin ballade that she had heard when she arrived in Oberland: "Somewhere the sound, through an open window, of a piano: firm hands skilfully pounding out the final complete crescendo of the Chopin ballade that welcomed me in Oberland" (*March Moonlight* 654). The sound of Chopin's last sonata every day since her arrival is said to have a positive effect on her.

Above the passageway alongside the sculptor's studio, some large room whence daily the tremendous last movement of the Chopin's last sonata encompasses me. Joining forces with my silent lime tree it sets aside all personal problems. Abolishes [...] even tragedy (*March Moonlight* 656).

On an occasion when Miriam attends a concert with Michael Shatov only a musical phrase of the performance makes her responsive. She stops listening to the rest of the music in order to recreate in her mind this little musical phrase, which has a renewing effect on her. She is even able to visualize it and impersonates it as an intruder, who appears impetuously.

[...] a single flute-phrase, emerging unaccompanied, dropped into her heart.

Oblivious of the continuing music, she repeated in her mind the little phrase that had spread coolness within her, refreshing as sipped water from a spring. A decorative fragment, separable, a mere nothing in the composition, it had yet come forth in the manner of an independent statement by an intruder awaiting his opportunity and thrusting in, between beat and beat of the larger rhythm, his rapturous message, abrupt and yet serenely confident, like the sudden brief song of a bird after dark; and so clear that it seemed as though, if she should turn her eyes she would see it suspended in the air in front of the orchestra, a small festoon of sound made visible (*Dawn's Left Hand* 298).

In *Remembrance of Things Past* Swann's reaction to the little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata is also presented as genuine and exquisite and it gives meaning to his life. For both Miriam and Swann the musical phrases that call their attention are a means of renewal and refreshment where they focus their minds to give shape to their desires and ideals. The little phrase from Vinteuil's sonata gives meaning to Swann's life.

This time he had distinguished quite clearly a phrase which emerged for a few moments above the waves of sound. It had at once suggested to him a world of inexpressible delights, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing else could initiate him; and he had been filled with a love for it, as with a new and strange desire ... Indeed this passion for a phrase of music seemed, for a time, to open up before Swann the possibility of a sort of rejuvenation. He had so long ceased to direct his life towards any ideal goal, confining himself to the pursuit of ephemeral satisfactions, that he had come to believe, without ever admitting it to himself in so many words, that he would remain in that condition for the rest of his days (*Remembrance of Things Past* I 228-29).

The phrase Miriam singles out from the whole composition makes the music from the orchestra stop being just a pattern for her and it becomes meaningful. Music becomes from this moment a medium of connection with her inner being.

No longer a pattern whose development she watched with indifference, the music now assailing her seemed to have borrowed from the rapturous intruder both depth and glow; and confidence in an inaccessible joy. But she knew the change was in herself; that the little parenthesis [...], had attained her because in that movement she had gone part of the way towards the changeless central zone of her being. The little phrase had caught her on the way.

But from within the human atmosphere all about her came the suggestion that this retreat into the centre of her eternal profanity, if indeed she should ever reach it again, was an evasion whose price she would live to regret [...] the joy of a secret companionship restored; a companionship that again and again [...], had turned her away from entanglements by threatening to depart, and had always brought, after the wrenching and the wreckage, moments of joy that made the intermittent miseries, so rational and so passionate and so brief, a small price to pay (*Clear Horizon* 299).

Miriam's changeless central zone of her being is related to her moments of joy, "her profanity", that is identified in some parts of the novel with her creative power. The price she has to pay in order to "retreat into the centre of her eternal profanity" will be mentioned again in that passage of *March Moonlight* where Miriam says: "To write is to forsake life. Every time I know this, in advance. Yet whenever something comes that sets the tips of my fingers tingling to record it, I forget the price; eagerly face the strange journey down and down, to the centre of being" (609). Miriam's inner self is responsible for her loneliness, it is the inner companion that is always with her when she is on her own and it makes her reject other relationships.

Miriam's music performances are for her a means of representing herself either as she really is, or as conforming to the traditional standard of femininity. Other characters' ways of playing and understanding music are

also a vehicle for their psychological representation. There is a passage in *Interim* where she is contemplating a piano and simultaneously imagining a very feminine female who is playing it. This woman conforms to the patterns of femininity that Miriam is always aware of not fulfilling. Her elaborate dress recalls “the frilled lady” praised by Mr Hancock in Daguerre’s lecture.

[...] a lady sitting, tinkling and flourishing delicately through airs with variations; [...] “A little music.” But chiefly the seated form, the small cooped body, the voluminous draperies bulging over the stool and spreading in under the keyboard and down to the floor, the elegantly straying arms and mincing hands, the arch swaying of the head and shoulders, the face bent delicately in the becoming play of light (*Interim* 332-33).

In *Remembrance of Things Past* there is a passage where Albertine is described in a very similar way to this ideal feminine lady imagined by Miriam.

Her [Albertine’s] shapely legs, ... now rose and fell alternately upon those of the pianola, upon which Albertine, who had acquired an elegance which made me feel her more my own, ... pressed her shoes of gold. Her fingers, ... now rested upon the keys like those of a St Cecilia. Her throat, the curve of which, seen from my bed, was strong and full, at that distance and in the lamplight appeared pinker, less pink however than her face, bent forward in profile, ... (*Remembrance of Things Past* III 389).

In *The Tunnel* when Miriam plays the piano in public she is conscious of her pose and her attitude. She plays in a way calculated to make an eligible young man think that she would be a perfect wife for him. She impersonates a very feminine and traditional woman who fits perfectly into the roles of wife and mother.

Opening a volume of Mendelssohn she played, from his point of view, one of the Songs without Words quietly into the conversation. The room grew still. She felt herself and Mr Tremayne as duplicates of Harriett and Gerald, only that she was a very religious, very womanly woman, the ideal wife and mother and he was a bad fast man who wanted to be saved. It was such an easy part to play. She could go on playing it to the end of her life, [...] She felt all these things expressing themselves in her bearing. At the end of her piece she was touched to the heart by the look of youthful adoration in his eyes, the innocent youthfulness shining through his face (*The Tunnel* 27).

After this impersonation of the womanly woman type, Miriam realises that Mr Tremayne could not be happy with a woman unless he could despise her and that music is for him just a bourgeois commodity. This makes her alter her way of playing to make him change his mind about her. Thus, Miriam starts to

play Beethoven in a rather different way, shattering Mr Tremayne's expectations. Her previously adequate pose is broken and the position of her arms is not elegant, she consciously declines to fit in the pattern of the feminine woman playing the piano described in a passage of *Interim* as a delicate lady, dressed in an elaborate dress, who adopts a fragile and elegant pose and is conscious of her role of affected delicacy. This second performance is not a fake display, but an expression of her real self.

She found the Beethoven and played the first movement of a sonata. It leapt about the piano breaking up her pose, using her body as the instrument of its gay wild shapeliness, spreading her arms inelegantly, swaying her, lifting her from the stool with the crash and vibration of its chords. [...] The Largo came with a single voice, deep and broad and quiet; the great truth behind the fuss of things. [...] Daylight and gaiety and night and storm and a great song and truth, the great truth that was bigger than anything. Beethoven. She got up, charged to the fingertips with a glow that transfigured all the inanimate things in the room. The party was wrecked ... a young lady who banged the piano till her hair nearly came down. Mr Tremayne had heard nothing but noise ... His eyes smiled, and his uneasy mouth felt for compliments (*The Tunnel* 28).

This "great truth" mentioned in this passage is related to Beethoven's music and her inner being because it makes her be "charged to the fingertips with a glow". The reference to Miriam's fingertips has to do with her experience of writing. This inner state transforms her vision of the things that are in the room. However, she is aware that the rest of the people have a different impression and that they consider her performance inadequate.

Hypo Wilson is another character who is described by means of his piano performance. His way of playing the piano and his choice of a musical piece by Beethoven is for Miriam an expression of his inner world. Miriam wonders if Hypo is also able to appreciate the "solitary human soul" present in Beethoven's music. However, the part of the musical piece that Hypo seems to like best is not appreciated by Miriam. Even though he is alone when he is playing Miriam knows that he is displaying his inner state of being so that the other people in the house can have a glimpse of him while he is alone.

Through the house-stillness sounded three single downward-stepping notes ... the first phrase of the seventh symphony. Perfect. Eternity stating itself in the stillness. He knew it, choosing this thing to play to himself, alone; living in space alone, at one with everybody, as every one was, the moment life allowed. Beethoven's perfect expression of the perfection of life, first thing in the morning. Morning stillness [...]

He was revealing himself as he was when alone, admitting Beethoven's vision of life as well as seeing the marvellous things Beethoven did with his themes? But he liked best the slamming, hee-hawing rollick of the last movement. Because it

did so much with a theme that was almost nothing. . . . *Bang*, toodle-oodle-oodle, *Bang*, toodle-oodle-oodle, *Bang*, toodle-oodle-oo. A lumpish phrase; a Clementi finger exercise played suddenly in startling fortissimo by an impatient schoolboy; smashed out with the force of the orchestra, taken up, slammed here and there, up and down, by a leaping, plunging, heavy-hoofed pantaloon, approving each variation with loud guffaws. The sly swift dig-in-the-ribs of the sudden pianissimos.

To watch a shape adds interest to listening. But something disappears in listening with the form put first. Hearing only form is a kind of perfect happiness (*Revolving Lights* 365).

Significantly Miriam says that Hypo likes the last movement of Beethoven's seventh symphony best because "it did so much with a theme that was almost nothing." This can be taken as a suggestion that Hypo himself is similar to this theme, an empty person who makes a lot of noise to cover up his emptiness.

When Miriam is at the opera with Hypo and Alma after coming back from Oberland she links Wagner's megalomaniac music with Hypo and opposes it to the more intimist music of Beethoven and Bach.

[...] No one can see and hear to perfection at the same moment. And the wonder of Wagner is that through your ears he makes you see so hugely. All humanity pouring itself into space. A huge, exciting world-party. *Your* musician, by the way. Beethoven and Bach are experiences and adventures of the solitary human soul. In all its moods. Wagner is everybody speaking at once" (*Dawn's Left Hand* 170).

There is an occasion when Miriam condenses her opinion on the difference between Beethoven and Wagner in a sentence: "[. . .] Wagner writing down the world in sound [. . .] Beethoven speaking to one person" (*Interim* 346). It is clear that Miriam identifies with Beethoven and Bach, because of their more intimist music. They seem to be more related with "being", with the sense of the wonder of existence, than Wagner, whose music deals with worldly affairs.

[...] here he [Hypo] was, gladly back in London after his years of seclusion, [...] seated in a box at the opera, between wife and lover elect, with Wagner expressing the world in sound, restoring his confidence in the proportions of the human spirit, rousing and blessing his emotions and the emotions of the young lady at his side (*Dawn's Left Hand* 171).

Wagner fits perfectly in Hypo's view of the world. It brings him self-assuredness and helps him achieve his intentions by influencing Miriam's mind. Hypo is here using music to represent and justify his life, the same as when he played Beethoven to show what he was like when he was on his own.

The tremendous ado [...] was emphasizing for her, in her detached coolness, all that it left unsaid, all that is said by the music of Bach -which would have been quite unsuited to his purpose: stillness, dailiness, the quiet, blissful insight whose price is composure. The deep, quiet sense of being -what he called 'turnip-emotion'- was more, even to these protesting people, than all of which they were raving and shrieking. Perfect in itself (*Dawn's Left Hand* 172).

When Miriam is with the Wilsons, her ideas about music still show the influence of her stay in Germany. Alma's performance of Chopin drives Miriam into a rage, as the essence of Chopin's music is for her in opposition to Alma's playing.

Alma played her piece at her audience, every line of her face and body proclaiming it fine music, the right sort of music, and depreciating all the compositions that were not 'music'. It was clear that her taste had become cultivated and she *knew* now, that the scales had fallen from her eyes as they had fallen from Miriam's eyes in Germany; but the result sent Miriam back with a rush to cheap music, sentimental 'obvious' music, shapely waltzes, the demoralizing chromatics of Gounod, the demoralizing descriptive passion pieces of Chaminade, those things by Liszt, [...]

Her mind went on amazed at the rushing together of her ideas on music, at the amount of certainty she had accumulated (*The Tunnel* 125).

Miriam thinks herself qualified to judge the musical tastes of other people and their way of playing the piano.

[...] what *was* this wrong thing about music in all English people? [...] But why are the English so awful about music? They are poets. Why are they not musicians? [...] Perhaps English people ought never to play, only to listen to music. They are not innocent enough to play. They cannot forget themselves (*The Tunnel* 126-27).

In *Remembrance of Things Past* aristocratic people consider music just another frivolous affair. This banalization of music by aristocratic women is cruelly satirized by the narrator: "... finally the Marquise wiped away with her embroidered handkerchief the tidemark of foam in which the memory of Chopin had steeped her moustaches" (*Remembrance of Things Past* II 845-46).

Miriam's understanding of music is what makes her be more at ease than the Baileys, who cannot interpret what they hear and just pretend to be listening. "They knew something important was going on; sitting close round the piano surprised and attentive, busily speculating, in scraps, hampered by the need to appear to be listening" (*Interim* 345). After a while the Baileys are tired and Miriam is aware that they have become "strangers in their own dining-room" (*Interim* 346). They intuit that something important is taking place in the room and they struggle to behave accordingly. In *Remembrance of*

Things Past the Cottards have the same reactions to music. They do not understand it, but they pretend to enjoy it.

Both he [Dr Cottard], however, and Mme Cottard, with a kind of common sense which is shared by many people of humble origin, were careful not to express an opinion, or to pretend to admire a piece of music which they confessed to each other, once they were back at home, that they no more understood than they could understand the art of 'master' Biche (*Remembrance of Things Past* I 232).

Miriam and Marcel's feelings of superiority over people who do not understand music elevate them over the mass of unilluminated humanity. Marcel's epiphanical experience of music, like Miriam's, is related to his descent to the centre of being.

Music, very different in this respect from Albertine's society, helped me to descend into myself, to discover new things: the variety that I had sought in vain in life, in travel, but a longing for which was none the less renewed in me by this sonorous tide whose sunlit waves now came to expire at my feet. A twofold diversity. As the spectrum makes visible to us the composition of light, so the harmony of a Wagner, the colour of an Elstir, enable us to know that essential quality of another person's sensations ... Whence the plenitude of a music that is indeed filled with so many different strains, each of which is a person ... Even that which, in this music, is most independent of the emotion that it arouses in us preserves its outward and absolutely precise reality; ... (*Remembrance of Things Past* III 156).

The reiteration of their experiences with music helps Miriam and Marcel to achieve a communion with their inner selves that furthers their *Bildung* and contributes to their process of formation as writers. The music motif is thus central both in the *Bildungsroman* portrayal of their becoming artists and in the *roman-fleuve*'s creation of patterns and rhythms.

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