

Eliza Flower: Composer and Radical

Kelly Norris

This paper examines the life and work of the early nineteenth century English composer and social radical, Eliza Flower. Flower is best known for composing the original setting of the hymn, *Nearer My God to Thee*. Other compositions include *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, *Songs of the Months*, a hymn setting of *Now Pray We for Our Country*, and *Songs of the Seasons*.

In contemporary context, much of Flower's work is obscure and unperformed. This paper considers several reasons why this is the case. Eliza Flower was not formally trained in music, most of her connections were with radical writers and political figures, and she struggled with publication of her work due to her involvement in an illicit relationship.

In addition to focusing on Flower's unconventional lifestyle, this paper analyzes several of Flower's compositions, and works to place them in their historical context and defend Flower's place as an early romantic composer.

Introduction

Eliza Flower (1803-1846) was an English composer of secular and sacred music best known for writing the original setting of the popular hymn, *Nearer My God to Thee*. Her sister, Sarah Flower Adams, wrote its text. The tune now associated with this hymn is *Bethany*, by the American hymnist, Lowell Mason. However, Eliza Flower and Sarah Flower Adams were the ones responsible for the hymn's inception. Flower's other compositions include *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, published in 1831, *Songs of the Months* (1834), a hymn setting of *Now Pray We for Our Country*, and music for *Hymns and Anthems*, a hymnal meant for the use of the South Place Unitarian Chapel in London.

Also notable are Eliza Flower's connections to prominent nineteenth century social and religious reformers. After the death of her parents, Eliza Flower and her sister, Sarah, became the wards of William Johnson Fox, the minister at South Place Chapel. In 1834, Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox were involved in a scandal, as Fox separated from his wife in order to live with Eliza. The Flower sisters and Fox were part of a social circle that included figures such as John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, and Robert Browning.¹

John Stuart Mill occasionally reviewed Eliza's music, and in his 1832 review of her *Songs of the Seasons*, he wrote, "Miss Flower's worst pieces... are superior to the best of many popular composers, and her best are such as, "will not willingly be let die."² This last

¹ Kathryn Gleadle, "Flower, Eliza (1803–1846)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9762, accessed 7 April 2016]

² John Stuart Mill, "Musical Review," *The Examiner*, April 8th, 1832, accessed April 8th 2016. <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1832-0408?newspapertitle=the%2bexaminer&basicsearch=musical%20review&exactsearch=false&county=london%2c%20england>, 6

half of Mill's statement now stands corrected, as Eliza Flower's compositions are neither well-known or frequently performed by contemporary musicians.

There are several reasons to why this is the case: Eliza Flower obtained little formal training in music, her musical connections were limited, and her social circle was a small group of progressive literary and political figures. The fallout from her illicit relationship with Fox damaged her public image, and as a result, she struggled with the publication and distribution of her work. After her death, Fox stopped promoting her music.

John Stuart Mill, however, clearly felt in 1832 that Eliza Flower's work should be remembered, and this belief was not unfounded. Eliza Flower should be recognized for her contributions to early Romantic Music in Britain, for her activity as a social radical, and for her unwillingness to live life in adherence to social norms.

The Obscurity of Flower's Music in Contemporary Context

There are several explanations as to why Eliza Flower's music has not made its way into the canon, one of the most prevalent being her lack of formal training. Richard and Edward Garnett touch on this in their 1910 biography of William Johnson Fox.

Of Eliza, they write, "Music came so naturally to her that she never realised the importance of strenuous study, and such a professional training as, indeed, it would probably have been beyond her means to procure."³ They go on to suggest, "How much higher Eliza Flower's place might have been with adequate training and the...influence of

³ Richard and Edward Garnett, *The Life of W.J. Fox, Public Teacher & Social Reformer, 1786-1864*. (London: J. Lane, 1910), 66

someone who might have been to her in the world of sound what Fox was to her in the world of thought..."⁴

Eliza, though she "early developed a rare talent for music, and surprised her music master, the village organist, with compositions of her own while still a child"⁵ does not seem to have received much further musical training following her childhood. Despite her talent, this would have limited her connections within the musical community. It was both circumstance and upbringing that led her to the social circle of literary figures and reformers she is now associated with.

Her father, Benjamin Flower, was a radical journalist and editor of *The Cambridge Intelligencer*.⁶ It was after his death in 1829 that his daughters, Eliza and Sarah, were entrusted to the care of William Johnson Fox.⁷ Eliza and Sarah's circle of close friends included Robert Browning, John Stuart Mill, and Harriet Taylor Mill. John Stuart Mill published positive reviews of Eliza Flower's music in his journals, and some of Eliza's music was published in Fox's journal, *The Monthly Repository*.

However, it is important to note that these figures, though close friends with Eliza Flower, were not associated with the musical community. They were writers, and sociopolitical reformers. Fox's *Monthly Repository* was predominantly a journal focused on religious and political reform.

⁴ Garnett, *The Life of W.J. Fox*, 67

⁵ Garnett, *The Life of W.J. Fox*, 64

⁶ Richard Garnett. "Flower, Benjamin (1755–1829)", rev. Adam I. P. Smith, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9760>, accessed 8 April 2016]

⁷ H. W. Stephenson, *The Author of Nearer, My God, to Thee (Sarah Flower Adams)*. (London: Lindsey Press, 1922), 11 <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89098526049;view=1up;seq=88>

As a publication, it advocated for policies considered radical at the time, such as divorce and women's suffrage. In 1832, articles published in the journal such as "A Political and Social Anomaly" were advocating for the enfranchisement of women through suffrage and improved education.⁸ Other radical positions in the journal included the abolition of the death penalty, as expressed by G. E. Eachus in the article, "On the Propriety of Totally Abolishing Death-Punishment."⁹

It is apparent from this that *The Monthly Repository* was meant to exist as an outlet for radical intellectuals to express their social and political opinions at a time when they believed the Whigs and Tories in the House of Commons were not progressive enough.¹⁰ This journal was a means of promoting a specific sociopolitical platform. While it received artistic contributions, such as the music of Eliza Flower, the nature of the publication suggests that these were more for the intellectual enjoyment of its readers, rather than a part of the political agenda it promoted. The radical political nature of *The Repository* also suggests that its readership was predominantly of a distinct liberal persuasion, which would not have made it the best vehicle to promote Eliza Flower's music amongst the common population.

Eliza, herself, reached a point where she found it difficult to have her work published and further distributed. In a letter written to Sarah Fox in the late 1830s, Eliza Flower expresses her disappointment with this:

⁸ William Johnson Fox, "A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ANOMALY." *Monthly Repository* 6, no. 69 (09, 1832): 637-42,

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/4579959?accountid=14604>.

⁹ G. E. Eachus, "ON THE PROPRIETY OF TOTALLY ABOLISHING 'DEATH-PUNISHMENT!'" *Monthly Repository* 8, no. 85 (01, 1834): 332-6,

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/4563015?accountid=14604>.

¹⁰ Francis Edward Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 261

A sad misgiving has been coming over me about the sale of this music of mine. Of the twelve copies sent...as he thought best, to musical people, not one single acknowledgement have I received. It may be neither rudeness nor inattention, it may be the usual way of commonplace people, but it proves one thing, or looks like it, that it has not taken root in any of those places, and 'tis possible a prejudice against my name may exist in many quarters so as to seriously damage the sale.¹¹

Eliza, in this letter seems to suspect that the affair between herself and Fox affected her ability to be published as a composer. It is also suggested that *Hymns and Anthems (1841)*, the last publication for which Eliza composed music, did not receive much publicity outside of its use at South Place Chapel. This is expanded upon in *The Life of W. J. Fox*:

Nearly a thousand copies of the text of *Hymns and Anthems* were promptly disposed of. "If," said Fox, "people would have bought the music too, it would have been something." Here however, they disappointed the composer's expectations...There were certainly impediments to the circulation of compositions adapted for so exceptional a congregation, and requiring to be executed by a professional choir."¹²

The music for *Hymns and Anthems* did not have the public appeal or enough utility outside of South Place Chapel to sell widely. This publication fitted the nature of the South Place congregation, but was less suited to more typical religious contexts. "It was its distinctive characteristic that the text was seldom derived from the founts...of professional hymn writers, but from the wide open ocean of poetry, wherever sufficiently inspired with spiritual feeling."¹³ A collection of hymns with this broad a set of authors and composers, and with several texts of a more secular nature, would not have had the same value outside of South Place Chapel.

¹¹ Garnett, *The Life of W.J. Fox*, 218

¹² Garnett, *The Life of Fox*, 221-222

¹³Garnett, *The Life of Fox*, 219

It is also known that not all of Eliza Flower's sacred music for *Hymns and Anthems* was ever published, and what was went out of print only decades later. "Of five parts, three, *Adoration, Aspiration, and Belief*" comprising all the pieces designed for congregational use, were published in 1841; *Heaven on Earth* was kept back until 1846; and *Life in Death* has not hitherto appeared."¹⁴

From this, it can be judged that some of the music was not published until 1846, the year of Eliza Flower's death, and some was never published. Even *Adoration, Aspiration and Belief*, the earliest three of the four parts to be published, went out of print later on in the century as stated in an 1872 issue of *The Universalist Quarterly and General Review*. "They are now out of print; and perhaps we are the only possessor in this country of what appeared from 1840-1846, when the sweet singer died."¹⁵

The music Eliza Flower composed in her later life seems not to have garnered much publicity, particularly after her death, and William Johnson Fox's unwillingness to promote her work and his decline as a public figure would have hindered its further publication. Moncure Daniel Conway, who succeeded Fox as the minister at South Place Chapel, touches on this in his autobiography, documenting his meeting with Fox in 1864:

In talking of our South Place hymn-book, I ascribed a tune to the wrong composer. "It was not by him," said Mr. Fox, but did not give the true name, which I afterwards found was Eliza Flower. Jealousy of Eliza Flower had caused a separation between Mr. and Mrs. Fox, and I concluded that her name was not now mentioned by them.¹⁶

¹⁴ Garnett, *The Life of Fox*, 222

¹⁵ "ARTICLE XVII." *The Universalist Quarterly and General Review (1844-1891)*, 07, 1872. 293, <https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/126376051?accountid=14604>.

¹⁶ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography, Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co, 1904), 54

In his writing, Conway also notes that Fox had ended his career in journalism, and by the time of his death was no longer a familiar figure. “In 1864, ten years after his public career had closed, the people generally who had idolized him hardly knew that he was living, and the new generation had no knowledge of him.”¹⁷

Conway’s experiences with Fox suggest that after Eliza Flower’s death in 1846, Fox may have stopped speaking of her publicly. In the conversation documented by Conway, Fox refuses to name Eliza as the composer of one of the hymns found in *Hymns and Anthems*. This is unfortunate, as the music for *Hymns and Anthems* was one of Eliza’s greatest accomplishments as a composer. Eliza’s setting of *Nearer My God to Thee* was part of this collection.

If Fox was no longer speaking of Eliza Flower, even amongst his congregants at South Place or in front of Conway, his successor, then it is hardly surprising that Eliza Flower’s name and music did not become widely known. And, if, as Conway says, Fox no longer enjoyed his own publicity, even if he had chosen to promote Eliza’s music, he would have lacked the outlets and support needed to do this adequately.

Eliza Flower’s music was also slighted by its historical context. “Britain’s contribution to the early Romantic movement in music was reluctant and patchy”¹⁸ and “Only in the 1830s did a recognizable early Romantic school emerge, with younger composers like Barnett, Sterndale Bennett, and McFarren.”¹⁹

None of these composers exhibit the same contemporary popularity as early German Romantics, such as Mendelssohn, Liszt, or Schumann, so it can be concluded that

¹⁷ Conway, *Autobiography, Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, 54

¹⁸ Iain McCalman. *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.) 249

¹⁹ McCalman. *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture*, 249-250

even the male British composers active during Eliza Flower's lifetime are often historically overlooked. Their music is not considered refined enough. As Mendelssohn notes from his experience in Britain, "there is more competition, and unlike the craftsmen this makes them not better, but more mistrustful and intriguing. In general they have everything that can be cultivated by external means, practice, money, formulas and the like...but everything spiritual is lacking."²⁰

Eliza Flower did not have these same external means as her male counterparts to cultivate her development as a musician, and when they were regarded as mediocre, despite her talent, her music would have been simply overlooked outside of Britain.

Misfortune in historical circumstance, lack of formal training, and lack of promotion and publication are all factors that inform contemporary obscurity of Eliza Flower's music.

The Music of Eliza Flower

Though, in its time, the music of Eliza Flower did not receive the promotion and publicity needed to survive in contemporary context, it is worth study and restoration. While Eliza Flower lacked the external resources such as training and money, her music, has, to a degree, survived through reviews, periodicals, and in the digitization of her *Musical Settings of the Waverley Novels*. This suggests that it has a distinct quality that set it apart from the music of the more prevalent, English male composers. Perhaps this quality was the spirituality that Mendelssohn suggested was so lacking in the British music of the time.

²⁰ McCalman. *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture*, 250

Eliza Flower's music can be seen as an early example of Romantic music in Britain at a time when Britain had not yet embraced or cultivated such music. The relationship to English Romanticist and Victorian literature in Flower's music is particularly noteworthy and its aesthetics are reflective of the early Romantic movement in music. Furthermore, it is a music that cultivates national identity.

Flower's music has a distinct connection to literature, and all of her known works are musical settings of texts. This could be due, in part, to her personal connections with authors and poets of the time, and her reverence for their art.

Eliza's sister, Sarah, was a poet. She is now best known as the author of the popular hymn, *Nearer my God to Thee*, and known for her authorship of the epic poem *Vivia Perpetua*, written in blank verse "about the martyrdom of a Christian woman in AD 204."²¹ The two sisters had a close relationship during their lives, and, after their respective deaths in 1846 and 1848 their tombstone read, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their deaths were not divided."²²

Eliza and Sarah collaborated on several projects throughout their lives, including *Hymns and Anthems*. Several of the poems set to music for Eliza's *Songs of the Months*, published in the 1832 edition of the *Monthly Repository*, had text written by Sarah, such as the song for the month of March.²³ Below are images of the work:

²¹ Isobel Armstrong, Joseph Bristow, and Cath Sharrock. *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

²² Stephenson, *The Author of Nearer, My God, to Thee*, 68

²³ Armstrong, Bristow, and Sharrock, *Nineteenth Century Women Poets*, 269

Example 1. Eliza Flower, *Songs of the Months*, March, mm 1-2²⁴

The image shows the beginning of a musical score. The top staff is labeled "VOICE." and contains a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The bottom two staves are grouped under a brace labeled "PIANO-FORTE." and contain a treble and bass clef, the same key signature, and common time. The tempo marking "ALLEGRO." is placed above the piano part. The piano part begins with a forte dynamic marking "f" and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets in the bass line. The voice part has a few rests.

Example 2. Eliza Flower, *Songs of the Months*, March, mm 34-40²⁵

The image shows a vocal and piano score. The top staff is a vocal line with the lyrics "Harm not the buds! Harm not the buds that dare to". Above this staff is the tempo marking "espress:". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The bottom staff has the tempo marking "lento." above it. The lyrics "peep, Lest April a-way her sweet life weep -" are written below the piano part. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with some triplets and dynamic markings like accents and "f".

²⁴ Eliza Flower, Sarah Flower, "MARCH." *Monthly Repository* 8, no. 85 (01, 1834): 1, <https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/4556230?accountid=14604>.

²⁵ Flower, "MARCH.", 4

In observing these examples, some characteristics of early romantic music immediately emerge, the most prevalent being the existence of contrasting tempos in a single piece of short length. In the first example, the initial tempo of “March” is clearly indicated as Allegro, and the left hand, bass clef triplets suggest that the music is heavy in quality. In the second example, near the end of the piece, the tempo is denoted as Lento, suggesting that the music has taken on a slower and more somber quality. In example two, the use of chromaticism and diminished chords is also seen to accompany this slower tempo.

“March” exhibits that the music of Eliza Flower, coupled with the poetry of her sister, Sarah, is indicative of the Romantic movement. Sarah’s poetry, with its clear focus on the natural world, is reflective of the values of English romantic literature, and Eliza’s music, with its elasticity of tempo and emotional connotation, is reflective of the aesthetic found in early Romantic art song.

The Flower sisters developed friendships with other literary figures during their lives, most prominent among them the Victorian poet Robert Browning. While, as far as is known, Eliza Flower never set any of Browning’s work to music, the friendship was of considerable value to both parties. Browning clearly had deep affection for Eliza’s music, as depicted in his 1841 letter written to her. He is anticipating the publication of *Hymns and Anthems* and writes, “How can I thank you enough for this good news- all this music I shall be so thoroughly gratified to hear?”²⁶ In this letter, he clearly values her friendship and looks forward to the performance of her music.

²⁶ Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Philip Kelley, Ronald Hudson, Scott Lewis, Edward A. Hagan, Joseph Phelan, and Rhian Williams. *The Brownings' Correspondence*. (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 1984), v. 5, 1

Browning's correspondence also reveals that Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox played a valuable role in cultivating his work as a poet. In a letter written to Richard Hengist Horne dated 1848, shortly after the death of Sarah Flower, Browning describes this relationship:

I knew the Flowers when I was five or six years old, -earlier I do think- ...when I got older, perhaps at twelve or thirteen, I wrote a book of verses which Eliza read and wrote to me about...in a few months I saw the proper way and put my blessed "poems" in the fire- I lost...sight of Eliza- years after I began again, and printed..."Pauline",- I could not but send it to Fox...thence fresh generosity from him and reacquaintance with the Flowers...one day Eliza told me to my amazement...that she still had...all the letters I had written to her... a sort of album book in which were..."poem" this & "poem" the other.²⁷

This incident depicts with clarity the extent to which Eliza Flower valued poetry. The poems Browning wrote during his childhood, he later burned, believing that these works were inadequate and juvenile. Eliza Flower cared enough about Browning's development as a poet that she saved even these works that he found so dreadful.

It is this deep-seated relationship with literature that informed Eliza Flower's approach to musical composition. This is clear in *Songs of the Months* and true of her other pieces as well.

One of her works that can be seriously examined within the context of early Romanticism is her work, *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, published in 1831. This work is comprised of fourteen pieces, each depicting scenes and characters from Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley Novels*. Flower's work draws on material from Scott's novels

²⁷Browning, *The Browning's Correspondence*, v. 15, 168

Waverley, Bride of Lammermoor, Guy Mannering, Ivanhoe, Woodstock, Heart of Midlothian, The Pirate, The Abbott, Heart of Midlothian, and Legend of Montrose.

Scott's novels were particularly popular subjects for Italian and French Romantic operas. Rossini adapted *Ivanhoe* for the stage in 1826, Donizetti adapted *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and Bizet adapted *The Fair Maid of Perth*.²⁸

These novels were also featured in German Romanticism. Schubert composed a song cycle based off of Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*. Schubert's famous *Ave Maria* is from this song cycle.²⁹

While all of the examples above are indicative of Scott's prevalence within the realm of Romantic Music, none of their texts are in the English language. From this, it can be deduced that Eliza Flower's 1831 composition was one of the earliest English language settings of the Waverley Novels that was also of commendable quality.

In the October, 1831 edition of *Westminster Review*, John Stuart Mill had pages of tremendous praise to offer the work. "There are not only indications of genius as indisputable as could have been displayed in the highest walks of art, but there is also a new ascent gained, a new prospect opened, in the art itself, which we welcome as a pledge of its keeping pace with the progress of society."³⁰ Mill continues describing the work by writing, "The peculiarity of these compositions is not merely in the original combinations which their harmonies so frequently present; nor in the pure taste and poetical feeling which they continually display; but, in the extent and systematic manner in which a

²⁸ Roger Fiske and George Biddlecombe. "Scott, Sir Walter." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25256>.

²⁹ Fiske and Biddlecombe. "Scott, Sir Walter."

³⁰ John Stuart Mill, "ART. II.1. Substance of several Courses of Lectures on Music, Read in the University of Oxford, and in the Metropolis." *Westminster Review, Jan.1824-Jan.1836* 15 (10, 1831): 324, <https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/8104817?accountid=14604>.

practical knowledge... of the philosophy of the human mind is applied to the production of an appropriate musical setting.”³¹

Here, Mill touches on an important aspect of Eliza Flower’s music, particularly in this setting of the Waverley novels. While it utilizes harmonies and poeticism that can be considered Romantic, it still places its focus on the rationale of the mind. This balance between the two captured in Eliza Flower’s music is more indicative of Scott’s nature as an author than other settings of his work. “His poetry and fiction shared the same thematic core: the chafing interaction between an archaic...culture and a modernizing , civilized one.”³² While Scott employed Romanticist themes in his novels, he also embraced ideals of civility. It is hardly shocking then, that Mill describes Eliza Flower’s setting of the Waverley novels as “simple and scientific, classical and romantic.”³³

One of the songs from *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels* that best seems to depict the Romantic aspect of both Flower’s music and Scott’s writing is “Meg Merrilies’ Chant,” which is the fifth in the series of songs, and comes from the novel *Guy Mannering*. Mill writes that “it works more strongly upon the feelings; it has more of human interest; it appeals to the heart as well as, like that, to the imagination.”³⁴ This touches on the Romanticist nature of the piece.

Romantic elements to be found in “Meg Merrilies’ Chant”, are similar to those seen in *Songs of the Months*. “Meg Merrilies’ Chant”, like “March” from *Songs of the Months*,

³¹ Mill, "ART. II.1. Substance of several Courses of Lectures on Music, Read in the University of Oxford, and in the Metropolis." 324

³² McCalman, *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture*, 692

³³ Mill, "ART. II.1. Substance of several Courses of Lectures on Music, Read in the University of Oxford, and in the Metropolis." 325-326

³⁴ Mill, "ART. II.1. Substance of several Courses of Lectures on Music, Read in the University of Oxford, and in the Metropolis." 328

exhibits drastic tempo alterations, as well as dynamic contrast. Examples of both are depicted below:

Example 3. Eliza Flower, *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, Meg Merrilies'

Chant, mm 31-35³⁵

The image displays two musical systems for the 'Meg Merrilies' Chant. The first system is marked *lent^o* and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'wa..... king.' and a piano accompaniment with a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking. The second system is marked *Presto..Met* and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'Haste thee, haste thee haste thee to be gone!' and a piano accompaniment with a 'Presto.' marking. The score is written in a key with two flats and a common time signature.

³⁵ Eliza Flower, "Meg Merrilies' Chant," *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, (London: Jos. Alfred Novello, 1831), 23 <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015080932158;view=1up;seq=31>

Example 4. Eliza Flower, *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, Meg Merrilies' Chant, mm 19-24³⁶

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line in treble clef with the lyrics "ring..... ing." and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *sf* and *p*, and a tempo marking of *lento*. The second system begins with the tempo marking "MAJORE. Andante. Met. ♩ = 66." and the lyrics "Fear not snow drift dri..... ving fast Sleet nor hail, nor". The piano accompaniment continues with a *p* dynamic marking. The key signature is B-flat major throughout.

Example three clearly denotes contrasting tempi. In measures thirty-one through thirty-three, the written tempo is *lento*, and there is a *diminuendo* into measure thirty-three. This music is slow and soft in nature. In thirty-four, after the key change, there is a dramatic shift in tempo to *presto*, with the vocalist accenting on beats one and three.

Example four, like example three, includes contrasting tempi, as measure twenty-one is marked *lento*, and measure twenty-two *andante*. This example also includes sudden, contrasting dynamic changes, another common characteristic of early Romantic music. In

³⁶ Flower, "Meg Merrilies' Chant," 22

measure twenty, the first and third beats are marked subito forte, and measure twenty-one is marked piano. It is clear that there is a dramatic contrast between these two measures.

In “Meg Merrilies’ Chant,” Eliza Flower’s use of contrast in both tempo and dynamics is an aesthetic characteristic of early Romantic Music. The composer’s reasoning for such contrast in the embodiment of the character Meg Merrilies also is indicative Romantic ideals. In this scene, Meg Merrilies is holding a dying person, and rocking back and forth whilst chanting, “which, in some parts of Scotland, and the north of England, are used by the vulgar and ignorant to speed the passage of a parting spirit.”³⁷

Meg Merrilies is characterized in the novel as a Gypsy, and from the description above, is representative of a primitive Scotland. In this scene, her character exhibits marked emotion that manifests itself in a physical sense. Eliza Flower’s music, with its tempo and dynamic alterations, in addition to key changes, effectively captures Meg Merrilies’ character in the emotional sense, which is at the essence of Romantic Music.

Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels can be examined as a nationalist work as well, suggesting that it can be considered a precursor to the rise of nationalist music in the later half of the century. Sir Walter Scott’s work, particularly that set in Scotland, aims to “represent the evolution from the earlier society to the later one.”³⁸ Scott uses elements of feudalism and Celtic mythology to appeal to the past, and to entice readers, but promotes ideals of representative government and socioeconomic equality as essential to the growth of a modern nation.

³⁷ Walter Scott and Peter Garside. *Guy Mannering*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.), 144 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=9741>>.

³⁸ McCalman, *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture*, 692

It is the juxtaposition of these ideals that led to the nationwide popularity of Scott's novels, and in composing *Musical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels*, Eliza Flower was able to assemble these British ideals into a work of music.

A further example of nationalism in Eliza Flower's work is seen in her setting of *Now Pray We For Our Country*. The text and the music are a blatant promotion of English Nationalism.

Example 4. Eliza Flower, *Now Pray We For Our Country*, mm 1-8³⁹

The image displays a musical score for the song "Now Pray We For Our Country" by Eliza Flower. It features four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenore (Sv. Lower), and Basso. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The lyrics are: "Now pray we for our coun - try, That Eng - land long may be The ho - - ly, and the hap - - py, And the glo - ri - ous - ly free!". The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte), and various musical notations like slurs and accents.

³⁹ Eliza Flower, "Now Pray We For Our Country," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 1, no. 20/21 (Jan 1- Feb 1, 1846), 2, accessed April 13, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3369834.pdf?_=1460560340198

This four part choral setting has a sound quality similar to many national anthems, and the specification of England within the text suggests that this work was written specifically to celebrate English national identity.

Despite her place in a circle of radical religious and political dissenters, Eliza Flower's music presents a clear affection for her country. It is this element of British nationalism, coupled with aesthetic indicators such as tempo elasticity and written dynamic contrast that places Eliza Flower's music into the context of the early Romantic era.

Eliza Flower as a Social Dissenter

Eliza Flower was a gifted composer whose work can be classified as early British Romantic and Nationalist music. In addition, she was a social dissenter whose life did not embody the conventional behavior required of a nineteenth century English woman. She was never formally married, though she set up a household with William Johnson Fox in 1834, after his separation with his wife.⁴⁰ She never had any children of her own, though she did help care for Fox's children, Florance and Eliza.⁴¹ Eliza Flower defied social conventions surrounding matters of marriage and divorce, and encouraged others to do the same.

When Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox set up their household in 1834, their relationship fell under suspicion within Fox's congregation. In order to justify this "Fox placed his decision in the context of his feminist views concerning marriage, and referred

⁴⁰ Garnett, *The Life of W. J. Fox*, 166

⁴¹ Garnett, *The Life of W. J. Fox*, 168

them to specific articles in the *Monthly Repository*.⁴² Fox argued English law prevented him from divorcing his wife and ought to be more lenient on the matter.

This sentiment was also expressed in the *Monthly Repository*. William Bridges Adams, the husband of Sarah Flower, published an article in the *Repository* on this subject. Adams wrote under the pseudonym Junius Redivivus⁴³ and the article is entitled, "On the Condition of Women in England." This is what Adams writes about divorce:

We cannot fetter human beings to love those who are incompatible with their tastes...This must be evident to all who are capable of reasoning. The virtual prohibition of divorce, the entire prohibition except in the case of adultery...is a premium upon immorality. It is the promoter of illicit intercourse, and the cause of numerous children being born, upon whose very birth a stigma is thrown which more or less tends to inflict unjust pain upon them.⁴⁴

It is clear from Adams' description that English divorce law in the early nineteenth century would be considered draconian by contemporary standards. In England, "divorce for reasons of adultery by either party was first made available in...1857."⁴⁵ This means that until 1857, over ten years after Eliza Flower's death, the only justification for divorce was a married woman committing adultery.

In the case of Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox, Fox could not legally divorce his wife as she had not committed adultery. It is not known for certain whether Fox committed adultery, but had he done so, under the law that would not have been grounds

⁴² Kathryn Gleadle. *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movements, 1831-51*. (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 35

⁴³ Stephenson, *The Author of Nearer, My God, to Thee*, 36

⁴⁴ JUNIUS REDIVIVUS. "ON THE CONDITION OF WOMEN IN ENGLAND." *Monthly Repository* 7, no. 73 (01, 1833): 217-31,

<https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/4580518?accountid=14604>.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6

for his wife to divorce him. However, the option of private separation was available⁴⁶ and, though scandalous, was what Fox and his wife chose to do.

Eliza Flower, in setting up a household with Fox, disregarded the public opinion that dictated that unmarried women should be chaste and well behaved. She exhibited her own dissent towards divorce law, and in a sense, her actions can be seen as a direct protest of such law.

Eliza Flower's disdain for divorce law, and her activism for the enfranchisement of women are made clear by her actions, particularly with regard to the relationship she had with Fox. These beliefs, present in the life of Eliza Flower, were also, with her influence, transferred to the lives of her friends, chief among these the author and women's rights activist, Harriet Taylor Mill.

Eliza Flower and Harriet Taylor Mill shared a close friendship, one Harriet Taylor Mill wrote of frequently in her diary. She writes, "Getting to know Eliza and Sarah has been a delight. They are my best friends. Their lively discussions of music and books entertain and instruct me."⁴⁷ Harriet Taylor Mill clearly held the Flower sisters in high regard, and they played an important role in her life.

Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox in particular, were instrumental in encouraging Harriet Taylor Mill's relationship with John Stuart Mill. After Harriet Taylor Mill contracted a sexually transmitted disease from her first husband, John Taylor,⁴⁸ Fox assured her that it was not her fault. Not long afterwards, Fox introduced her to John

⁴⁶ Stone, *Road to Divorce*, 149

⁴⁷ Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002) <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=130886>, 5

⁴⁸ Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*, 11

Stuart Mill, and with the encouragement of Fox and the Flower sisters, she began writing for *The Monthly Repository*.⁴⁹

When the scandal between Eliza Flower and Fox began to leak, Harriet Taylor Mill was quick to defend Eliza. She writes of this in her diary:

Mrs. Fox is threatening to expose the romance between Eliza and Mr. Fox in front of the entire congregation... Again how strongly I feel that marriage should be dissolvable! Why should two who love be apart? Why should two who do not love not separate? I cannot blame Mr. Fox and Eliza, and I don't believe they should receive the blame of others, but blame they will receive... I do know that I am sick of living in a society so ready to blame anyone who differs in the smallest way from "society."⁵⁰

Harriet Taylor Mill's experience with John Taylor as her first husband, along with her stance on the relationship of Eliza Flower and William Johnson Fox, were both factors that determined her views on marriage and divorce, two subjects she wrote about frequently.

Her knowledge of Flower and Fox's relationship caused Harriet Taylor Mill to become more cautious in her relationship with John Stuart Mill. Eliza Flower, however, still encouraged this relationship. She delivered a letter from John Stuart Mill that caused Harriet Taylor Mill to reconsider breaking off their relationship. Upon reading this letter, Harriet Taylor Mill writes, "How can I order him away? I love him. Perhaps I should reconsider."⁵¹

In delivering this letter to Harriet Taylor Mill, Eliza Flower encouraged the relationship between Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill. She and William Johnson Fox

⁴⁹ Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*, 12

⁵⁰ Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*, 17

⁵¹ Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill*, 31

were also among the first people to encourage Harriet Taylor Mill to write, the profession for which Harriet Taylor Mill is best known today.

Conclusion

Eliza Flower should be recognized for both her music and for her activism. Through her relationship with William Johnson Fox, and her life as an unmarried woman without children, she protested against conventional marriage and unjust divorce law that disproportionately discriminated against women.

She influenced some of the most important thinkers and writers of her time. She helped cultivate Robert Browning's growth as a poet. She encouraged Harriet Taylor Mill to write for *The Monthly Repository*, which marked the beginning of Harriet Taylor Mill's career as a writer, and she helped persuade John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill to pursue their relationship despite social constraints.

Amidst all of this, she actively composed music and was considered among the best English composers of the time.⁵² This renders her more remarkable, as she did not have the resources available to her male counterparts. Her only formal study of music was as a child, and she had to fight for the publication of her work, particularly after her relationship with Fox ended in scandal. She continually had to compensate for the disadvantages that came with being a woman in nineteenth century Britain, yet she was still publicly recognized as a talented composer. To compensate for the disadvantages she faced, Eliza Flower likely worked harder than most male composers of the time, and deserves recognition among their ranks as a composer at the forefront of the rise of early Romantic music in Britain.

⁵² McCalman, *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture*, 770

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