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Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women's Suffrage

Elizabeth Wood

To the large extent that music can organize our perceptions of our own bodies and emotions, it can tell us things about history that are not accessible through any other medium.

—Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*

These words reflect current thinking among some music sociologists and scholars of popular music about questions that scholars of Western art music history have only begun to explore and scholars of women's suffrage history until now have ignored.

The overarching question is this: How do people interested in music think about the relation between music and the body? Moreover, what can our sensory experience of sound in and through our bodies, as well as our experience of musical works, tell us about history? And history tell us about these experiences? How can we take the body into account in an aesthetics of music as well as in a history of performance? Since music is produced or sounded in and by bodies, what meanings and affective results can musical sound have in the somatic reality of the human body? And in the sonorous, cacophonous presence of the body politic? How can music embody, translate, or typify for us in sound our political struggles and histories as distinct from musical struggles, although these, too, can be political?

To think about questions like these I have devised the sonogram as my metaphor and mode of investigation.

A new interpretive art in medical practice and technique, the sonogram is a noninvasive tool that uses high-frequency sound waves to create pictures of the body's inner organs and record its echoes.¹ A sonogram that images to human eyes the invisible (and to human ears inaudible) interiority of the body, its organs and orifices, makes corporeal echoes visible to us, just as sonar detects, measures, and alerts its listeners to underwater shapes and presences. I use my metaphor of the sonogram, first, to investigate the constructed human body and its resonant interior to "tell us" about "our perceptions of our own bodies and emotions."

For women, the sonogram is also a sonic technology administered to the procreative body to detect fetal presence. For women, the productive body—pregnant or not—is also a site of abuse and repression. The metaphor of the sonogram connects the productive female body and images of female pregnancy to the body politic: to the “birth” of the women’s political movement as well as to male stories of the “birth” of civil and political society in the formation of the social contract.² As an alternative mode to the hegemonic invasiveness of “master” narratives, I use the sonogram metaphor, second, to investigate the body politic and its resonances to “tell us things about history” that are accessible through our sensory experience of musical sound.

My approach—the music critic and historian as sonographer—is compatible with several contemporary approaches to culture. First, as metaphor, sonography images the spatial presence, depth, modality, and pulse of “all that is not words,” or what Julia Kristeva has characterized as the semiotic: “Indifferent to language, enigmatic, feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical.”³ This is not the place to pursue the feminine in Kristeva’s semiotic as Suzanne Raitt has done: in the act of singing, in the urgency of music and the powerful body that produces it, as represented in John Singer Sargent’s portraits of the female singing body’s “uncontained, subversive desires.”⁴

Sonography resonates as well with Elizabeth Grosz’s “body-map” of the textualized body with its corporeal, interior inscriptions.⁵ Sonography images the body as a sound-text: a shaping, echoing receptacle that is inscribed or marked (as a page or a surface is marked) with sonic messages that in turn construct bodies as “networks of living social signification” (Grosz)—as social and musical texts, in other words, that are capable of being heard (or read) and interpreted.

Social power, Grosz argues (like others), marks bodies in more or less violent, brutal, and socially sanctioned ways through institutionalized cruelty and torture. That invasive inscription of women’s bodies, with its power to silence, is graphically represented in histories of women’s militant suffrage: for example, in the authorized abuses by prison doctors of forcible feeding as a response to prisoners’ hunger striking, and in the brutal patterns of repeated arrest, release, and rearrest under the “Cat and Mouse” policy enacted by law enforcers in the period I discuss, by which women’s bodies were invaded and branded.

Mary Poovey has also considered the ways the female body, especially in its reproductive capacity, has been politicized in the service

of medical interests.⁶ And Thomas Laqueur has explored how men have sought to immobilize, silence, and “petrify” the female body.⁷ My sonogram metaphor, a noninvasive imaging of women’s bodies as rhythmic, unfettered, productive, and powerful sound-texts, acts to recuperate women and our bodies from a medical discourse that has held that a woman’s body, and the suffrage body itself, is an unmarked and contradictory site of abjection, shame, and suffering, as well as moral superiority.⁸

Foucault, Grosz, and others have also emphasized the productivity of bodies, not just their marking or inscription by pain, abuse, and repression. They write of the latent or secret, private “depth” of the modern body, read symptomatically as to what it hides: a body within which resides an interiority. The identity is not, then, on the surface, but inward, and coded.⁹ How can we “hear” such coded interiorized inscriptions and their affect upon the suffrage body politic? How, too, did women themselves, subjected to such inscriptions, “hear,” record, and encode their sonic reverberations within their own bodies? How is “hearing,” which implies penetration of the listening body’s orifices and organs, related to, or different—for women *and* for men—from “seeing,” with its accompanying ideology of the gaze?¹⁰ Sonography helps to explore these questions.

The ways in which the body is enlivened and eroticized, as well as stilled and silenced, by sonic orderings and inscriptions offer an interesting way to think sonographically about music itself: as a sound map that, for Jacques Attali, “constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up human society” and thus simultaneously registers the changing vibrations in society and somatic organisms.¹¹ Because music is produced by, and as a mirror reproduces or echoes, the complexity and circularity of the movements of history, it reflects a fluid reality. Music is prophetic, argues Attali, for it can provide us with a “rough sketch of society under construction” and can prefigure social change, which may be inscribed faster in sound than it transforms society. Music is political, Attali continues, for its appropriation and control is a reflection of power and the political hierarchy that is inscribed with precision into social systems of power. Listening to music, then, and thinking through a musical organization or composition that bears the marks of its time, we ought to be able to theorize, in a sense to “hear,” the crisis of society in its sounds and noises and vibrations.

Since music is a somatic phenomenon—at once therapeutic, purifying, enveloping, and liberating, and rooted in a comprehensive conception and knowledge of the body—then a music that is both

prophetic and political will also be a fluid, resonating site of identity construction as well as social negotiation. I mean to implicate the “performing rights” of my title with a “performance model” of music and the body: with the notion that music “performs” in and on the body our rights and desires, our sense of who we are and may become, our negotiations with gender and sexuality, our relations to power.¹² Expressions of rights, desires, and identities, to adopt the terms proposed by Judith Butler, are “performative acts [or] forms of authoritative speech: statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power on the action performed,” “a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability” (emphasis added).¹³

My focus in this essay is the militant women’s suffrage movement and its performative struggles in Britain in 1910–14. My instrument of understanding is the musical work produced and performed in and upon the suffrage body politic by one of its members, Ethel Smyth (1858–1944), the honorary “Doctor” of music who was universally acclaimed as the most notable composer among women of her time. In the public and social contexts in the period I investigate, militant women performed persistent, repetitive actions and statements: in their massed marches, processions, pilgrimages, and demonstrations; arrests, legal trials, sentences, imprisonments, and hunger strikes; acts of civil disobedience (in arson and the destruction of public and private property and works of art); acts of interruption and disruption of public speech, and invasion of public sites and spaces; declarations (in pamphlets, newsletters, speeches, journals); theatrical representations (in plays and costumed pageants); extensive iconography (in banners, cartoons, costumes, posters, artworks); and weaponry.¹⁴ Together, in their exercise of repetitive, persistent, authoritative power, these performative acts and statements worked to channel order and violence (a violence both against and from the suffrage body), politicize and eroticize the female body, and consolidate and bond the feminist political community around the protracted struggle for the vote, particularly in the dramatically heightened crisis of 1910–14 for British militancy. To this familiar repertory I am adding the musical.

The suffrage body was never an *esprit de corps*—a unified single entity that sounded as one voice by figuring many individuals as a single collective—for all that the leaders of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) wished it would, especially Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) and her daughter Christabel Pankhurst (1880–1958). Christabel once compared the WSPU to “an orchestra,



Figure 1. Smyth in 1922, the year she was appointed dame commander of the Order of the British Empire

where each individual player was still heard, but subordinated her will to that of the conductor.”¹⁵ Her sister Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960), for one, claimed that an autocratic, middle-class-dominated WSPU, in loosening its bonds with the British Labour movement, had aban-

doned the bodies of working-class and poor women and men. By 1908, in means but not ends, the British suffrage movement had divided against itself: the body was fragmented, potentially disembodied, in its 400-odd divisions arrayed under two broad organizations. The one, a reformist body of Suffragists and Constitutionalists in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), held women's rights to conform with a policy of civil obedience. The other, the militant Suffragettes of the WSPU, *performed* women's right to civil disobedience and violent rebellion, or what one suffrage chronicler, Vera Brittain, then characterized as wilding.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, the repertory of music composed for the suffrage cause and performed by its supporters, both in England and elsewhere, reflects these divisions. On the one hand, and more numerous, are the orderly, conventional borrowings and arrangements of traditional song tunes, ballads, hymns, and patriotic or military march tunes, to which were attached new, mostly uplifting and devotional words penned by women and men in the movement. Many betray in earnestly didactic literary style their religious, middle-class origin and are not as easy to perform (or suited to the untrained voice) as the "barrack-room" ballad style of labor and strike songs.¹⁷ An exception is the suffrage ballad by WSPU member Laurence Housman, "Woman This and Woman That" (1916), which includes the verse:

We went before a magistrate, who would not hear us speak.
To a drunken brute who beat his wife he only gave a week.
But we were sent to Holloway a calendar month or more,
Because we dared, against his will, to knock at Asquith's door.¹⁸

To this repertory belongs a parallel, counteroffensive group of British and American contemptuous or satirical antisuffrage monologues and song texts that also borrow existing tunes.¹⁹

On the other hand, in a parodic, mocking, sometimes violently rulebreaking style, is a repertory that not only travesties traditional tunes and substitutes for their words subversive feminist texts but creates new, original music over a range of traditional formal structures and genres: operas; musical monologues and dialogues, and songs for acted "parlor dramas"; massed choruses for female voices; concert lieder; and even wordless chamber music.²⁰ It is to this end of the suffrage musical spectrum that Smyth's compositions belong, that she indeed originated.

I know of no documentary study of the art or concert music repertory composed for the international suffrage movement and have

found few references to original compositions by women.²¹ In the historical records of British women's suffrage, music barely rates the humble footnote usually given to an accompanist. By 1908 newsprint illustrations of regional or London marches and processions, or of massed crowds gathered in Hyde Park on summer demonstrations and rallies, may occasionally show one of the forty-odd uniformed drum and pipe marching bands of women who flaunted the purple, green, and white colors of the WSPU. A personal memoir may recall how Holloway's suffrage prisoners were exercised to marches played on combs and paper or roused from dark cells by the dim echo of a WSPU band playing outside the gates.²² Programs and flyers for fundraising exhibitions and pageants sponsored by the WSPU or the NUWSS between 1908 and 1911 may note the Mascottes Ladies Band in "The Women's Marseillaise," or a pre-speech concert by all-female groups of professional musicians and Royal Academy of Music students in the Ladies Aeolian Orchestra, Ellen Vannin Quartette, or English Ensemble. Concert items, mostly by male composers, might even include an art song written by a woman, such as Liza Lehmann, and performed by a professional soloist—a Marie Brema or Elsie Swinton.²³

For all the British suffrage movement's grand, spectacular vision of female accomplishment, this record suggests that music—for many educated middle-class women in Victorian and Edwardian times an amateur and domestic accessory or adornment, something borrowed, rarely new—meant little more to suffrage organizers than the flowers arranged on a speaker's platform or the feathers on her hat. In a society where women were trained in silence and good behavior to listen to men, where "silence was thought to be the great duty of all women," and a long history of male prejudice and exclusion had made music "the most conservative and recalcitrant of the arts [women] tried to practise," it was Vera Brittain's opinion that, when women finally do rebel and their voices break through, "neither music nor painting seems to be an appropriate medium for conveying the essence of a democratic revolution."²⁴

The voice of one musical rebel did break through, however, to convey in sound the "essence" of the suffrage struggle. On 15 September 1910 Ethel Smyth committed herself to two years in active service to Mrs. Pankhurst, promising to devote entirely her professional time and skills to the militant suffrage movement.

Then aged fifty-two, Smyth privately believed, as have her critics ever since, that in vacating music's "field of action" for political activism she had "queered her own pitch," and her music and career must

suffer.²⁵ As late as June 1910 she had delayed making a commitment urged on her by Constance Lytton, a militant friend. “Owing to a very busy and very fighting sort of life I have never paid much attention to the Suffrage question,” Smyth confessed, but on meeting Mrs. Pankhurst and hearing her speak she signed on at once, writing to her that “no one can be a more profoundly convinced Suffragist than I. I have always felt enormous admiration for the militants—absolutely approved of their policy and seen in it (as must, I think anyone who has read history) a supreme guarantee that the question is a real one, not a fad of visionaries but a practical need voicing itself in many ways, among others in this way.”²⁶

In 1911, soon after Smyth’s first suffrage “article of faith” was circulated, the Society of Women Musicians was formed,²⁷ and members of the WSPU hailed this “fighter and pioneer in the musical world” as “the eminent Bard for the Movement,” whose music would “translate into song,” “embody in melody,” and “typify . . . for the first time, the greatest movement the world has known.”²⁸

At the height of suffrage militancy, while on leave in Egypt to compose a new opera, in her letters to Mrs. Pankhurst Smyth—a soldier’s daughter and a lesbian—makes a connection unique, I think, in women’s music history and feminist politics between composing an opera and leading an army in battle. Finding common ground in her own musical career and Mrs. Pankhurst’s political career, Smyth discerns in the making of speeches and songs, written words and notated sounds, their shared creative and strategic manipulation of the material (“the game”) of life and art. Their reiterating and accumulative dramas, acts, campaigns, and performances are driven by, and derive from, a devouring passion, an erotic compulsion, for power. Two examples:

Tewfik Palace Hotel, Helouan, Egypt
Wed 3rd(?) March [1914]

My darling Em—It is Wed.night and the Suffragette has just come in time for me to read, ere the mail goes, your speech! What a speech!!
—It made my heart beat so, as I was eating my stuffed pigeons—at best an indigestible food—that I doubt whether my night will be a peaceful one! I can see you standing there . . . Oh! As you say—what joy I miss through being what I am! . . . Oh! to be in that crowd with an Indian club! . . .

Well—the more brilliantly you do your job the more will I try to pull off mine as well as I can. *I will succeed, too*; be sure of that.

But you are—I mean, of my doing all that in me lies, anyway—to succeed in it. I am at a most critical point of my Act II!—if only I can do

as well as the last duett I have told you about!—
Bless you—my wonder. E.

Tewfik Palace Hotel
7th March 1914

My darling Em. Your glorious letter “from the country” reached me today & gave me even greater thrills than your speech—but one is the complement of the other. If I did not happen to be *en veine* and working gloriously (have successfully pulled off the most difficult scene of the whole opera) I think I should break my heart at not being with your bodyguard—Oh those happy women—& happy you to be what you are. How you have been “led on” as the pious say—from step to step. I often think of the day in Holloway where I think you said, for the first time, you intended refusing punishment to be the next step. Do you know your career is very like the building up of . . . say an Opera. One knows exactly what the main trend is to be—& thinks out scenes—& begins. Then, as you work, come brilliant ideas . . . “that’s what I shall do”—you say with a thrill! Why—of course. And with joy unutterable you do it & that is the parent of the next thing—[. . .] Oh how I love this life—of work, golf, tennis, books & stars. No concerts. No friends [. . .] It is ideal & I feel that there’s an ease & flow, & fullness in my work . . . I had it in England before Suffrage days dawned—but today I could have it nowhere as I do here—because the sun, & the games, & the total lack of other distractions are part of it. Also my pride and joy in you & my feeling that you have made the game as you only could make it—& as it should be—& will manage to pull through somehow [. . .]

This I know—the thought of you & having you in my life, is like a glorious strength-giving draught always to hand—[. . .]

Goodnight my darling & thank you for your letters . . . Do you really know, I wonder, what they are to me? how I devour them . . . how I live on one, & all its wonderful news, till the next comes? Your E.

I’ve got a few bars—quite unpremeditated till I got there—(it came as I wrote . . . & I *underlined* it!) which you’ll like! Mrs Waters is telling the Bosun how she ran upstairs again . . . to look once more (having heard a noise) . . . “and there . . . hiding behind the door . . . *was a man . . .*” You should hear the phrase! the tolerant amused contempt . . . with which she repeats “was a man”! (a sort of “only that!!” nuance! It will amuse the house).

The opera Smyth was composing is *The Boatswain’s Mate*, whose hero, Mrs. Waters, as I discuss later, is modeled on Mrs. Pankhurst. As an example of Smyth’s manipulation of the material of life and art,

the “few bars” referred to in the postscript of 7 March are her operatic representation of Mrs. Pankhurst’s actual experience, told in a letter Smyth had just received (“it came as I wrote . . . & I *underlined* it!”). “If you’d been with me,” writes Mrs. Pankhurst, “. . . you would have realized vividly the feelings of someone creeping up or down stairs without being heard” at 1:45 A.M. to escape arrest while staying at a WSPU safe house at Glebe Place after making her speech. A member of her bodyguard held off the waiting detective with an Indian club. “It was a joy to defy them and watch their odious faces . . . and get away. You would have liked the meeting,” she adds, adapting in turn the phrase “laugh a defiance” from Smyth’s “March of the Women.”²⁹

To explore Smyth’s connection of the musical, the political, and the erotic with the struggle for women’s rights and with feminist negotiations with a society in crisis over questions of gender, sexuality, and power, I turn now to her music.

Smyth’s suffrage music, which I experience as political and prophetic acts of female embodiment, mirrors in organized musical contexts the seemingly improvised (or spontaneously conceived) but always strategically orchestrated statements and acts that suffrage militants performed in political and social contexts. 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.

I hear that voice in its compulsion and autonomy (implied in my title’s pun on “performing rights” as the professional composer’s legal copyright to her work) as Smyth’s powerful personal sonography: her sonic “study” of a performative movement that is rooted in the body, that bears the marks of the suffrage body for and within which it is produced—its noises, pleasures, sufferings, and liberating desires, whose movement in turn her music fuels—and that represents a sonic map both of a woman’s desire for rights and a woman’s right to desire—to have desires of her own, even “for” her own.

What is more, Smyth simultaneously composed in essays, speeches, letters, and reviews that are contemporary with her scores (the “one the complement of the other”), and subsequently also in books of memoir and portraiture that recycle and paraphrase her correspondence with suffrage sisters (including Elizabeth Robins, Constance Lytton, and Emmeline Pankhurst), an intertextual body of literary as

well as sound narratives. Together, these texts/sounds “perform” in multiple contrapuntal ways both the process of Smyth’s own self-invention or self-composition and her polyphonic (many-voiced) interpretation of a feminist community under construction. Slyly, and in code, I believe she also found ways to inscribe the pulse and presence—“this space underlying the written”—of what I hear as a lesbian “(sem)erotic.”³⁰

Smith’s sonography of suffrage, which I “picture” in the following set of “sonograms” of her work, is characterized by musical uses of reiteration and recycling, parody, punning, irony, autobiographical materials, fragmentation, hybridization, and doubled narratives, as strategies for women composers, performers, and listeners to subvert and transform music’s traditions and conventions. In the order of composition or publication, these works are: in 1910, works for all-female or mixed chorus: “The March of the Women,” *Hey Nonny No*, and in 1911, *Songs of Sunrise*; in 1912, chamber music: finale of the String Quartet in E Minor; in 1913, *Three Songs*, for solo female voice; and in 1913–14, the opera *The Boatswain’s Mate* and its instrumental overture.

“The March of the Women” (words by Cicely Hamilton)

Shout, shout, up with your song!
 Cry with the wind for the dawn is breaking.
 March, march, swing you along,
 Wide blows our banner and hope is waking.
 Song with its story, dreams with their glory,
 Lo! they call and glad is their word.
 Forward! hark how it swells,
 Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord (verse 1).³¹

“O, our army! I have seen your faces and know that the end is safe,” was Smyth’s greeting to WSPU militants.³² Years later she would claim she had delayed joining them (enraging Mrs. Pankhurst by saying so) because of her “almost insane impatience of [the] sentimentality and fluffiness of brain” she thought middle-class Suffragists had hitherto exhibited: “I scoffed at the square-jawed, white-robed, bewinged, St George-like females who waved olive branches all over the posters and periodicals . . . and wished they could be done away with.”³³ If a militant activism “has to find ways of authorizing its voice . . . [and] frequently does so by claiming special identity,” as Simon Shepherd claims, then performers of Smyth’s “March of the

Women,” with Hamilton’s fighting words, who heard it as a song “of tenderness, hope, faith, and the cheerful and triumphant thrill of victory,” voiced for the movement a more robust authority and feminist identity than any heard before.³⁴

Smyth formally presented the March to Mrs. Pankhurst on 21 January 1911 at a WSPU welcome to eighteen released prisoners in Holloway since 25 November 1910 after their arrest on “Black Friday,” 18 November.³⁵ After that first performance by a voluntary Suffrage Choir trained and conducted by Smyth, it was publicly launched in a flurry of rehearsals, publicity, previews, and ecstatic reviews. Within weeks words and melody were on sale at the Women’s Press: songcard (size of a postcard), one penny; with piano accompaniment, three pennies. From London to Edinburgh, in choir rehearsals, a “Society” concert of Smyth’s new and recent music, and solo performances by professional singers at the weekly WSPU meetings—with or without piano but always conducted by the composer—the March was soon on everybody’s lips. So, too, was its composer, for “a haunting melody that rings in the ears” . . . “at once a hymn and a call to battle,” and for her conducting, which “materially increased the effect by some terrific whacks upon cymbals which happened to be lying at her feet.”³⁶

On 23 March 1911, wearing her Durham doctoral robe and cap, Smyth processed with WSPU leaders Mrs. Pankhurst, Christabel Pankhurst, Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, and the already victorious Australian suffrage representative Vida Goldstein up the center aisle to the platform of the Royal Albert Hall, where Mrs. Pankhurst presented Smyth with an inscribed baton “in recognition of her great services in composing and presenting to the Union [this] song.” A trained chorus in the orchestra seats began the first verse. When Smyth “exhorted everyone in the audience who knew the Women’s March to join in singing it, ‘as well as those who do not,’ one recognized the born suffragette, who is out to attack every kind of ignorance with sublime confidence in the result”—“the entire audience joining in . . . an enormous volume of sound.” So grateful was a Mrs. Taylor of Chipchase Castle that she signed a check to the WSPU for £50 “as thanksgiving for Dr Smyth’s *Marching Song*.” The meeting raised a further £5,000, bringing the Union Fund to a total of £96,000.

The March is a propaganda song, no less: cheap, portable, and pocketable, a multipurpose commodity for the mass market. Smyth prepared multiple editions and arrangements for any and every performance opportunity, site, and vocal resource to hand: whether indoors

and out, for solo voice, choir, wind band or brass, a capella or accompanied by orchestra, piano, percussion, or chamber ensemble, with even a sol-fa guide for the musically illiterate.³⁷ In Holloway prison, both inside and outside its formidable gates, the March cheered and exercised inmates and greeted their release. At WSPU feasts it replenished hunger strikers. At meetings it helped raise the Union fund. In city and countryside, as sung and heard in Union safehouses and nursing homes, the March restored the health and spirits of militants awaiting certain rearrest. In the composer's Woking cottage, Coign (which means "a forward looking-post"), where she hid and nursed Mrs. Pankhurst, Smyth herself trained the bodyguard choristers in the March and other new choruses she composed for women's voices.³⁸ Aileen Preston, the Union chauffeur to Mrs. Pankhurst in 1911, recalls: "Dr Ethel would improvise, and keep Mrs Pankhurst perhaps an hour or an hour and a half, perfectly happy just sitting in her drawing-room, playing to her. I used to wait outside on a little bench, under an open window and listen."³⁹

The March invaded London streets, upper-class drawing rooms, concert halls, and even No. 10 Downing Street, where Smyth, according to Prime Minister Asquith's daughter Violet, "got past the hall porter, ran upstairs, and thumped out her Suffrage March on the piano in our drawing room—just above the room in which the Cabinet was then in session down below. We caught her at it, flushed with triumph and achievement."⁴⁰ Arrested with some two hundred others for personally stoning and smashing the Berkeley Square window of the colonial secretary on 4 March 1912, in the *Black Maria* taking her to the Vine Street station to be booked Smyth sang the March through her locked cubicle's ventilation holes for unseen others inside, on hearing her voice, to join in.⁴¹

Smyth's well-known anecdote of her prison term in Holloway (where she served half of a two-month sentence), when she was forced to stand on her slop pail on an inverted chair to enable her to reach the bars of her cell window and "beat time in almost Bacchic frenzy" with her toothbrush for the cheering, lusty-voiced prisoners who marched to "their war-chant" in the exercise yard below, has been savored and embroidered by friends and readers ever since.⁴²

Legally, as well as figuratively, the March was no less a weapon of destruction than the militant's Indian club, bricks, and stones (the latter carried in muffs, deep pockets, or handbags) and the arsonist's matches and inflammatory substances. Smyth tells how she was wrongfully arrested and, in spite of a confirmed alibi, held for a day in Woking police station on suspicion of criminal acts after policemen

found a copy of the postcard March by “Dr E.M. Smyth” in an abandoned boat, along with other evidence of arson, at the scene of an intended crime. The arsonist, later arrested, was Norah Smyth, a distant relation.⁴³

While the March derives from folksong (an Abruzzi melody), like “La Marseillaise,” which it displaced, it appropriates for suffrage women the militarist symbols and sounds of imperial domination, warfare, and the military hunt.⁴⁴ Hamilton’s text embodies, in its active verbs (“cry,” “shout,” “march,” “swing,” “laugh”), alliteration, and insistent rhymes, the emblems and images of a community united in struggle—a breaking dawn, banners, victory wreaths, comrades shoulder to shoulder, the many as one. The music’s repeated melodic stanzas, swinging rhythm, emphatic beat, and arpeggiated fanfares act to arouse and permeate the body, infuse it with energy and desire, and fill the voice with strength and jubilation.

Some singers, loyal to a more familiar derivative, the “Women’s Marseillaise,” complained that it was hard to sing the middle stretch, where tonality shifts from F major into the dominant to raise the voice to a diminished seventh (at the words “call,” “voice,” “pain,” “hope,” in each respective verse) before relenting to the tonic key and recapitulation of the two last lines. Smyth defended this upward intervallic leap as “peculiarly British.” Whatever she meant by this, neither the crisis of the diminished seventh nor her approach to it via a short sequence of simultaneously rising and expanding intervallic steps is unique to British folk tunes or protest songs. But the effect Smyth achieves in lifting the voice to its highest note is one of openness, the unfolding power of “voice” that I experience physically and acoustically as the upward reach in music’s body that asserts the human body—the sonic “call” and “hope” of liberation by the sacrificial suffrage body from the marks of “pain,” suffering, humiliation, and torture it has endured.

The “voice” I indicate here that is produced by the human body and emerges from the throat and mouth is located at the point where the interior of the body becomes exterior, at the boundary between interior and exterior, private and public. In the metaphor of the sonogram the singing voice is the instrument that images, shapes, and projects corporeal inscription, the site at which the body’s interior shapes and presences emerge, resonate, and become audible.

Wayne Koestenbaum also considers the singing voice, the site at which music and body coincide most radically, to have a central role for the location of body, desire, and eroticism in culture and society.⁴⁵ I would add that it is central as well for the celebration of the body

politic and its desires in the form of collective voices joined and merged in unison and contrapuntal singing. It might be said of suffragettes performing Smyth's March, as Bruce Wood Holsinger proposes of the twelfth-century female religious communities who performed the music of Hildegard of Bingen, that " 'the words symbolize the body; the jubilant music indicates the spirit; the song of rejoicing softens hard hearts, and draws forth from them the tears of compunction' by permeating the whole body, filling it with melody, and rescuing the flesh from prolapsarian weakness."⁴⁶ As performed by massed voices and marching bodies in vast outdoor and public spaces, the sonic empowerment of danger and desire, jubilation and tears Smyth's March embodies, acts to unite (in "unison" or one sound) the individual with the communal, a somatic infusion of "the many as one."⁴⁷

Hey Nonny No

Composed shortly before the March and in the different context of an anonymous sixteenth-century Christ Church manuscript, *Hey Nonny No*, Smyth's chorus for mixed female and male voices and orchestra, is a powerful, muscular work that cannot be mistaken for, or assimilated into, a nineteenth-century musical aesthetic that equated a so-called "feminine" musicality and production with melodic lyricism, diatonic passivity, rhythmic regularity, and delicate or muted instrumentation.⁴⁸

On the contrary, this rarely performed and unjustly neglected chorus anticipates in its harshness and violence Stravinsky's radical, provocative ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, composed three years later. Percy Grainger, Gustav Holst, and Kathleen Dale were among composers who admired the work as "a rare phenomenon in English music of its type and period. Stark and strident, an audacious blend of primitiveness and modernity, a dare-devil of a roisterers' song, it is as exciting to perform as it must have been to compose," writes Dale. "The heavily accented waltz rhythm and the continual hammering-in of chords and melodic fragments containing bare augmented intervals create the musical atmosphere of utter abandon required by the words:"⁴⁹

Hey nonny no,
Men are fools that wish to die.
Is't not fine to dance and sing
When the bells of death do ring?
Is't not fine to swim in wine
And turn upon the toe?

Smyth's own performance of the work, at home rather than in concert and as heard by Sylvia Pankhurst and other Suffragettes, embodied both for and in suffrage history and memory the queer voice and presence of risk and wilding:

At the piano she could do with her voice and fingers most marvellous things—the work of a full choir and symphony orchestra . . . “Hey Nonny No” never was heard with such great power and weirdness as when she gave it, playing to some casual group of Suffragettes in that small cottage. Voices of sailors drinking in a tavern, rude rough fellows, wild, adventurous spirits . . . voices of women, foolish, fierce, merry, sad, and grieving; voices of horror; voices of Death—all these enwrapped in the rude, wild blast of the storm one heard in that chorus, given by that one magic being . . . A being only these islands could have produced.⁵⁰

Songs of Sunrise: No. 1, “Laggard Dawn”;
No. 2, “1910”; *No. 3, “The March of the Women”*

When Smyth placed and performed the choral and orchestral version of “The March of the Women” as the finale to her *Songs of Sunrise*, it played a more personal, autobiographical role in her suffrage sonography. Here, it is preceded by “Laggard Dawn,” a trio for women’s unaccompanied voices, and “1910,” a medley or dramatic scena, words and music by Smyth, “being a faithful chronicle of remarks frequently heard and liable to repetition *ad lib* on a current question.”

Of all Smyth’s suffrage music, “Laggard Dawn” is uncharacteristically pallid and was rarely performed, but over the course of her relationship with Emmeline Pankhurst it acquired for both women a private, erotically charged, and political significance. In part a memorial to those suffragettes who died after imprisonment, it is also Smyth’s representation of a shared experience in Emmeline’s bedroom at Lincoln’s Inn Hotel across the road from the WSPU office on Census night, April 1911:

when [Em] and I, standing in our dressing gowns at the window, watched the dawn rise beyond the river and fight its way through the mist. She was on the eve of some terrible venture that would end in rough usage and prolonged imprisonment, thinking perhaps of the inevitable hunger-strike, while I, for my part, was tasting the bitter anguish of one fated to look on powerless. Our foreheads pressed against the window pane staring silently into the dawn, gradually we realised that her love for down-trodden women . . . her hope of better things for them . . . my music . . . our friendship . . . that all this was part of

the mystery that was holding our eyes. And suddenly it came to us that all was well; for a second we were standing on the spot in a madly spinning world where nothing stirs, where there is eternal stillness. It was a curious experience. Not a word passed between us, but we looked at each other, wondering why we had been so troubled . . . Neither of us ever forgot that dawn.⁵¹

Whether or not Mrs. Pankhurst knew it, “Laggard Dawn” is a lesbian “double entendre” on a “triple entente.” The all-female trio embodies a second homoerotic subject and history that does double duty, for Smyth’s text is attached to a melody by Prince Edmond de Polignac, the gay French composer married to the lesbian princess, American heiress, and patron of new music Winnie (Winnaretta) Singer, for whom in 1904 Smyth had had a turbulent but unrequited passion, one that for Smyth had characteristically resolved into life-long friendship. The different history of Smyth’s passion for Mrs. Pankhurst suggests that, at least during 1910–12, it was reciprocated.⁵² On 9 April 1913, on a hunger strike in prison and believing she might die, Mrs. Pankhurst wrote two farewell letters to Smyth which she retained but later handed to her. In one, Mrs. Pankhurst writes, “You will smile to hear that during sleepless nights [title of another chorus Smyth composed in 1910 for women’s voices only] I sang ‘the March’ and ‘Laggard Dawn’ in such a queer cracked voice.” Smyth adds, “The rest of the letter is too sacred to quote.”⁵³

In a contrasting yet complementary position between “Laggard Dawn” and “The March of The Women,” Smyth’s “1910” is a witty, topical miniopereetta that entices its mixed four-part chorus, divided into Suffragettes and policemen (joined by a handful of male “antis”), to engage in a contrapuntal slanging-match over the dismembered fragments of a collage text culled from Lord Cromer’s antisuffrage speeches, nursery rhyme, and political slogans. Reconstituted in sound, the re-membered “chronicle” commemorates the bloody events, police brutality, and mass arrests of Black Friday.

The medley employs rhetorical devices common to suffrage plays and theatrical performances that use parody, analogy, caricature, farce, hyperbole, and reversal “to demythologize the dominant ideology of Edwardian femininity, fill out its absences, and exploit its contradictions.”⁵⁴ Snatches of phrases sung in foursquare march rhythm—such as, “You are putting back the clock twenty years,” “I know Mrs Humphrey Ward” (the antisuffrage novelist), “sounds of the battle raging around us,” “move on, ladies, move on,” “up and defy them, laugh in their faces”—intercut and disrupt Smyth’s mock parody of a

children's rhyme, "Nelly Bly shut her eye when she went to sleep, but when she wakened up again . . . we/she knew that we/she shall get it" (that is, the Vote).

Suffragettes heard the work with "tears of laughter," and "rapturously encored" it as "the militant spirit at its best: determined, but too genial to be malicious . . . Virile, gay, full of movement, splendidly rhythmic, the music was what might be expected" of Smyth's "varied and versatile genius." Following "1910" in performance, the orchestral and choral "March of the Women" was heard not as "mere propagandist" in spirit but as leaving an "eloquent," "electric," "victorious," indelible mark on the flesh.⁵⁵

String Quartet in E minor, fourth movement

In 1912 Smyth returned to a score begun in Berlin in 1902 but abandoned as a two-movement torso, the String Quartet in E minor.⁵⁶ It is interesting to speculate why *now* she chose to complete an incomplete body with its third and fourth missing parts, the last of which is arguably the finest abstract instrumental movement she ever wrote, and her most radical composition associated with the suffrage movement. Having fulfilled her political duty and two-year pledge to Mrs. Pankhurst, Smyth was eager to reclaim music, her career, and her status as a leading British composer. How better prove, both to herself and the musical establishment, a woman's equal rights in *music's* body politic, and the power of female desire and creativity to conquer male prejudice and exclusion, than to demonstrate "mastery" of the supremely mainstream classical string quartet tradition of Beethoven and Brahms in which she was trained?

Before Smyth arrived in Egypt she heard her quartet premiered by the Rosé Quartet in Vienna in 1913. When Mrs. Pankhurst planned to attend a London performance that December, Smyth wanted to prepare her for the experience:

Tewfik Palace Hotel
18 December 1913

My dear one.

When you hear the String Quartet, you'll probably be sad and lost, because I always think a string quartett sound is almost . . . an abstraction—or perhaps like an outline—no, more like a scaffolding. It's awfully purified of all helps to assimilation—by no means "reading without tears"—a habit. 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. As it might in a plum pudding. A string quartet is an exquisite omelette.

The last movement, *allegro energico*, makes an almost shocking rupture with the culinary protocol of Western classical string quartet cuisine. Much of Smyth's music written in sonata form characteristically avoids having a conventional second subject. Here, in what appears to be a sonata-form movement, she blends two apparently opposite, contradictory ingredients: sonata, a goal-driven, heroic, so-called virile narrative that resists any distraction from its agenda; and fugue, a call-and-answer procedure of seamless, seemingly improvised counterpoint that weaves an episodic, transformative narrative web (in its elaborations on an expository subject and its imitative counterparts) among "voices" or parts that travel far, in often distracting and invigorating ways, before returning "home" to the original statement and key.

On the following day, Smyth bragged to Mrs. Pankhurst that this movement had astonished the critic of Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse*, "a really big, stern, wide-minded critic, whose opinion counts, even for me."

Tewfik Palace Hotel,
19 December 1913

. . . Mountains of male quartets could be buried under mine and look like a pinch of dust. As regards the rather brutal and "cap over the mill" last movement, he says I have gone to the colonies apparently. I suppose he thinks it cake-walk or ragtime or Tango—none of which horrors I know. If it is anything, it is . . . "Suffragette!"—or as Rosé said, "the people"—and it does rather suggest hilarity in the streets—a crowd laughing—with a jeering nuance. Well, bringing things home to them is the only way.⁵⁷

While this letter, among others written in Egypt, reveals an unexamined racism "buried" under Smyth's politics, her characterization in it of the quartet's last movement gives us an extraordinary clue to her personal sonography of the noises, pleasures, sufferings and desires of the suffrage body politic as it negotiated and sought to change entrenched hierarchies of gender and power. It enables us to hear her exquisite, innovative musical acts as performative sites and statements of identity transformation and social construction.

For in her finale Smyth has effectively “scrambled” the binary and oppositional gendered conventions of sonata form (with its patterns of control and dominance by a so-called masculine first theme over the so-called feminine secondary theme) and the rules and proprieties of tonal harmony. By voiding the assumption in sonata form of thematic duels and tonal certainties and closures, she liberates the form from its rigidly defined and performed identities and roles by superimposing upon and around and about them the fluid, provisional inscriptions and inclusive metaphors of “equal” (“Suffragette!”) fugal voices performing their democratic rights.⁵⁸

Three Songs: No. 3, “On The Road: A Marching Song”
(words by Ethel Carnie); No. 2, “Possession” (Carnie)

Smyth transposed fragments and echoes of “The March of the Women” in other of her suffrage compositions, a recycling process she ironically termed “recooking” for a series of repeated feminist expressions and performances that fellow suffragettes immediately recognized and greeted with appropriate hilarity, mockery, or delight.⁵⁹ Fragments echo, for instance, in the piano accompaniment’s linking passages between verses and instrumental coda to another marching song, “On the Road,” that Smyth dedicated to Christabel Pankhurst, “like me, a born bachelor.”⁶⁰

The four-verse poem is by the Suffragette Ethel Carnie:

O the beat of the drums and the sheen of the spears
And red banners that toss like the sea.
Better far than the peace that is dungeon and death
To the wild rebel soul set in me.
Better pour out the blood in a swift crimson flood
As to music we march to the grave,
Than to feel day by day the slow drops ebb away
From the chainbitten heart of a slave! (verse 1) . . .

We have waited so long we can wait now no more
But are marching our freedom to meet.
Keeping time to a tune that is brave as our hearts
While the stones clatter loud to our feet . . .⁶¹ (verse 4)

I hear echoes of “The March of the Women” along this sonic road as a mnemonic “signature” or symbolic navigation mark on pathways connecting feminists otherwise separated by national boundaries and spatial distance to the international struggle. It links in *sound* and memory the suffrage singer-marcher tuned to Smyth’s bardic voice on

the home battlefield with the expatriate leader and strategist, Christabel, who, like the Duke of Plaza-Toro, issued marching orders behind the lines from her distant Paris “war-room” while her mother suffered frontline martyrdom. Smyth’s Schubertian funereal rhythm, and the persistent triadic-contained rise and fall of the low female voice (as if imitating the beat of a drum), provides an elegiac, somber ground for Carnie’s sacrificial image of the wild rebel, like Christabel, who abandons traditional femininity (home, motherhood, marriage) and patriarchy (“fathers long dead”) for the open road and the “light ahead.”⁶²

Smyth may have encoded other messages in “On the Road” as well. By the time she composed it, Mrs. Pankhurst’s relations with her daughters Sylvia and Adela were conflicted by separations, departures, and ideological disagreements. The mother’s intimate friendship with Smyth, “the wooing of the volatile musician” which so baffled and irritated Sylvia, appears to have brought friction to Smyth’s relation with Christabel, the closest daughter, probably also a lesbian, and as possessive and demanding as Smyth was of the mother’s affections.⁶³ Smyth was a formidable, very visible rival.

Her transposition of fragments of the collective “March of the Women” to “On The Road”—to my ear, its domestication by enclosure in a solo song in and for the genteel concert-hall milieu of Anglo-European art song, a site and audience utterly remote from the open road or battlefield of women’s liberation—strikes an ironic, even confrontational note. For it reminds me, as it may have Christabel, of Smyth’s presuffrage credentials: that it was *she*, in the first place, who introduced the Pankhursts to the wealthy, aristocratic, predominantly lesbian set of French feminists who had inspired Smyth’s passion and songs, and who promoted concerts of her music in Parisian art-music salons several years before she joined the movement. Largely thanks to Smyth, these same women artists and musicians had now provided Christabel with her apartment, which also served as a safe house for British escapees and the WSPU deeds and documents, in the aptly named avenue de la Grande Armée.⁶⁴

It is in her art songs, the intimate vocal tradition of the lied, that Smyth encodes a *lesbian* right to desire. “Possession,” which in publication sequence precedes “On the Road,” is a frankly personal love song dedicated to “E.P.” and performed in Smyth’s own mezzo voice range. The song may also be her tribute to Mrs. Pankhurst’s seductive speaking voice, “like a stringed instrument in the hand of a great artist,” which Smyth likened to Schubert’s “natural” musicality

and irresistible allure.⁶⁵ The song's mood of tranquil introspection and renunciation links it with the two all-female choruses of 1910, "Laggard Dawn" and "Sleepless Nights," which Mrs. Pankhurst sang to herself in her "queer cracked voice" when locked in a prison cell. Carnie's parable on the perils and pleasures of possessive desire, one that resonates both with Smyth's lesbian experience and knowledge of the liberated body and Mrs. Pankhurst's experience of the protesting, refusing body that is forcibly restrained, reveals in its parting lines that the singer-lover has learned to her shame and sorrow that a plucked rose will wither, the caged bird will not sing. It ends:

There came to my lonely soul
 The friend I had waited for long,
 And the deep chilly silence lay stricken and dead,
 Pierced to death by our love and our song.
 And I thought of the bird and the flower
 And my soul in its knowledge grew strong.

 Go out when thou wilt, o friend,
 Sing thy song, roam the world glad and free,
 By the holding I lose, by the giving I gain,
 And the gods cannot take thee from me.
 For a song and a scent on the wind
 Shall drift in through the doorway from thee.⁶⁶

What *did* Mrs. Pankhurst represent to Smyth? How can we know? A freely given and received passion, as ideally and romantically represented in "Possession," may be a thematic key to their relationship and to the "common ground" Smyth discerned in her own musical career and Mrs. Pankhurst's political career.

The ardor and faith Smyth invested in "darling Em" may be key to her connection, during the suffrage struggle, of the musical, the political, and the erotic with women's changing perceptions of gender, sexuality, power, and desire. Aware of her own conflicted nature and attracted both to women's violence and duty-driven self-sacrifice, Smyth aspired to an ideal of a same-sex love freely exchanged, mutually passionate, freed of destructive and domestic bonds. Married or widowed women she desired, who were also mothers like Mrs. Pankhurst, represented for her a different sexual security and social status: an illusory, unattainable, yet ideal "feminine" self with the passport to power that marriage and maternity appeared to have granted these strong, successful women. Of course, Smyth recognized

and laughed at the ideal as sheer fantasy, but a fantasy of possessing and being possessed never lost its allure for her and would form the central theme and romantic conflict of her fourth opera, *The Boatswain's Mate*.

The Boatswain's Mate, "Comedy in One Act and Two Parts"

"The March of the Women" and "1910" are together differently reiterated as Smyth's personal as well as collective sonography of suffrage in the overture to her fourth opera, *The Boatswain's Mate*, composed in Egypt in 1913–14.⁶⁷ An opera overture tradition typically announces, up front, themes from the ensuing work itself. Here, Smyth's citation—as an afterthought, moreover, for she composed the overture last of all—of both tunes in her overture as a kind of first and second subject, neither of which reappears in the body of the work, simultaneously hijacks and reverses operatic convention to create not a musical but a political context in and for which the opera—as a comic opera *for suffragettes*—may be imagined and received. The two brisk, martial themes of the overture establish a social and political reality, as distinct from an operatic one, for the opera's hero, Mrs. Waters, who is modeled on Emmeline Pankhurst herself.⁶⁸

On the surface the story appears to be a conventional British domestic comedy for an adroit, well-paced intimate opera "symphonically constructed around folksongs," according to Stephen Banfield's summary:

Harry Benn (tenor), the ex-boatswain, is continually proposing to Mrs Waters (soprano), the attractive widowed landlady of "The Beehive." Having struck up company in the pub with the young ex-soldier Ned Travers (baritone), he enlists Travers in a plan to win Mrs Waters' hand: Travers will pretend nocturnal burglary and Benn will be on hand to tackle him, thus earning the landlady's gratitude. The plan misfires when Mrs Waters locks Travers in the wardrobe, discovers the plan, and gets her revenge on Benn by pretending to shoot the burglar. Benn, terrified at the apparent murder, calls a policeman (bass), and once both of them have been sent packing Mrs Waters' attraction to Travers and its likely outcome become clear.⁶⁹

But both the score and libretto, which Smyth adapted from "Captains All," a story by W. W. Jacobs (whose wife was a Suffragist), carry multiple textual, musical, and autobiographical messages and codes whose "outcome" is far from clear.

The opera's title is a pun on mateship. Various references to "Ben" allude to the bells of Big Ben; the character and Bosun, Harry

Benn; and maybe, too, to the nickname Ben for Smyth's once-beloved maternal mentor, the wife (then widow) of the antisuffrage Archbishop of Canterbury, Minnie Benson. The female lead is the feisty, self-sufficient landlady of that all-male domain, the English pub—queen bee of “The Beehive,” also the name of a weekly newsletter published by the Labour movement in the 1860s. Mrs. Waters, the boss “on top” in a man's world, is vocally “over the top” of the opera's three male roles, men who are stripped (by the presence of a strong woman? by their “retirement,” like the composer herself, from active service?) of their former institutionalized authority and (vocal) self-assurance.

The score is also punctuated with operatic puns and parodic allusions that mock the musical rhetoric of High Art and masculine Genius. For example, the quotation of the first bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony at the policeman's knocking on Mrs. Waters's door, a male invasion of female space, both mocks the rhetoric and shows how masculine rhetoric is both aesthetic and political. In “Contrari-ness,” the orchestrally accompanied recitative sung by Mrs. Waters before her aria “What If I Were Young Again?,” filagreed string passages echo ironically those in Strauss's lesbian-erotic opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, which Smyth reviewed for the *Suffragette* in 1912. As a countervoice to Strauss's aging, soon-to-be-abandoned Marschallin, in Mrs. Waters Smyth represents a mature woman's contradictory desires as nothing but decadent nostalgia and sentimentality, a regressive but thankfully only temporary slide to a more traditional femininity. Smyth “tops” and demythologizes the sexual ironies of *Der Rosenkavalier* with moments of raucous, raunchy hilarity. For example, where Strauss dismisses Baron Ochs and his confused desires (for the woman disguised as a man disguised in female drag) by rushing onstage a crowd of screaming children claiming his paternity, Smyth orchestrates an offstage male chorus of drunken louts and uncastrated cats to disrupt and ridicule Benn's unwanted, pathetic vocalization of desire for Mrs. Waters.⁷⁰

Unlike then-contemporary suffrage plays, parodies, and farces by Elizabeth Robins, Christopher St. John, or Cecily Hamilton, as performed by Edith Craig's Pioneer Players, these are operatic gestures of high lesbian camp. They not only sweeten the opera's propaganda pill but appropriate the convention of the opera aria—for Mrs. Waters's self-centering, introspective, retrospective, and “traditional” song in Smyth's arrangement of the folksong “Lord Rendal”—in order to ridicule male desire and hypermasculinity as irrelevant and silly, and to affirm in the final lines of Mrs. Waters's aria (which seem to dispel her residual ambivalence) the New Woman's “right to desires” of her

own, even for her own sex, if Smyth meant the parlormaid's smirk behind Mrs. Waters's back to have that coded meaning.

The pairing, as if shoulder to shoulder, of "The March of the Women" and "1910" in the overture sets Smyth's two by now familiar, newly traditional marching tunes in an unfamiliar, newly subversive, and feminist opera context. For the two marches signal even before the action begins the arrival of a new operatic form: a hybrid comedy suited as equally to the music hall and vaudeville as to an elitist opera house. Smyth's hijacking of opera tradition and protocol produces a structural and stylistic fusion of two disparate, class-crossing operatic "acts": in the first act, the spoken dialogue form of British ballad opera; in the second, a through-composed continuous instrumental texture in the style of heroic romantic opera.

Martha Mockus reasons, "If one perceives the opera as a symbol of the contrast between convention and reality, or traditional and rebellion (or even the male view and the female view) then the change in musical style (from traditional ballad-opera to *unconventional music-drama*) is completely appropriate . . . and far from an 'aesthetic blunder.'" ⁷¹

This hybridization in *The Boatswain's Mate* of class, gender, and genre, invariably criticized and misread by critics as Smyth's ignorant mistake (Beecham called it a "blunder"), acts to deconstruct operatic tradition and its role-playing stereotypical constructions of gender and class by aiming its feminist message simultaneously at a popular audience (via comic routines and vernacular patter) and an elite opera-knowing audience.⁷² And what is Smyth's message? That a strong woman (and the female singing voice in opera) assumes a powerful autonomy when she takes over male and mainstream musical institutions and sites, operatic structures and roles, discourse, and space to assert her rights. As Smyth promised Mrs. Pankhurst, this new opera would perform the comic absurdity of "male fatuousness" so familiar to Suffragettes—the male fear of being outmaneuvered, caught in its own self-serving strategies, fooled in its invasive fantasies of female conquest and possession—when "Mister Wrong," the male intruder, is discovered and dismissed by the woman he desires. Male bonding in *The Boatswain's Mate* is literally arrested, shut up in a closet, and when released shown to be a lie, trick, and hypocrisy. Men betray men, in Smyth's operatic suffrage-ship of fools.

If in opera Smyth blurs generic boundaries between convention and innovation, "recooking" her own march tunes for an opera overture had unforeseen repercussions. When she listed for critics the "real" folk tunes she borrowed for *The Boatswain's Mate*, including

“Lord Rendal,” “The Keeper,” and “Bushes and Briars,” which she heard and notated herself as sung by workhouse women in Ireland, critics heard instead her own original music as borrowed, the borrowed as new. “The March of the Women,” in its progress from folk song to collective political song to art song to instrumental overture, reverted in the opera house to a “borrowed” traditional song.⁷³

While composing *The Boatswain’s Mate* in Egypt, Smyth adopted Mrs. Waters’s Lesbian Avenger style of persuasion-by-confrontation with antisuffrage members of the drab British colonial expatriate community. There is something of an ACT UP audacity, as well, in her “scientific” attempt to examine, interview, and photograph a hermaphrodite camel driver met in the desert, and in her intention to write about it for the *Suffragette* and give her field notes to the British Medical Society.

Her encounter with the hermaphrodite is crucial to our understanding and interpretation of Smyth’s creative response to the crisis of gender and sexuality among militant New Women like herself who were defying social, cultural, constitutional, legal, and medical convention—women who were “different” from feminine norms but nonetheless *were* women. Although no notes and only one photograph from this expedition survive Smyth’s departure from Egypt and the onset of the First World War, in letters to her family and Mrs. Pankhurst Smyth appears to have “read” the enigma of the hermaphrodite—“if not a complete man, still less was she a complete woman”—as some in turn seem to have “read” Smyth: as Amazon warrior, the lesbian “pagan” and “law unto yourself” who is sensibly opposed to women’s “sentimental bosh about sex.”⁷⁴

Impressed by the hermaphrodite’s riding skills, popularity, and smile, and “moved also by the compassion I always feel for women who have been up against the prejudices of their world,” after her examination Smyth “pressed a sovereign into her hand” and they embraced. Mrs. Pankhurst may well have remarked, “How very like you to have been so thorough and business-like about the hermaphrodite,” but others were appalled by Smyth’s behavior.⁷⁵ Her sister Nellie thought it was “beastly” but “part and parcel of your nature as mirrored in your music . . . that the mind behind these things is absolutely outside convention and pagan at heart. I wonder,” continued Nellie, “if that extraordinary duality so many artists seem to have—the combination of beautiful and purely hideous things in their nature—is part of what one calls genius?”⁷⁶



Mohammed the Hermaphrodite in war panoply.

Figure 2. From *Beecham and Pharaoh*, London, 1936

The gender essentialism and sexual conservatism upheld by the “white-robed, bewinged, St George–like females” in the reformist suffragist movement whose peace offerings and “sentimentality” Smyth so deplored—as much as the inflammatory, socially unsanctioned, ambiguously sexed messages the militant suffrage body politic represented for its most virulent critics—were oppositional dualities and strategies with particular resonance for a lesbian militant like Smyth. Her reading of gender and sexuality in the figure of the hermaphrodite as incomplete or flawed may seem on the surface to play into or across multiple oppositions, including a discourse then current among British sexologists that held female sexuality to be either passive or perverse. The discourse is exemplified in the extreme by the medical villain Sir Almroth Wright, detested by suffrage feminists for his diagnosis of Mrs. Pankhurst’s followers as unnatural, unsexed madwomen whose militant acts were “the sexual embitterment of warped and abnormal female minds.”⁷⁷

But the Muslim hermaphrodite so literally interrogated, rewarded, and embraced by the English suffragette is a figure drenched in the long cultural history of Western European domination, exploitation, and appropriation of the racially different Other. An alternative reading of Smyth’s encounter, then, “sees” the hermaphrodite as a hybrid, specularized figure, marked only by its difference, that must always inhabit and exhibit for the gaze of the spectator its own detested yet desired otherness.

Occupying spaces between genders and sexualities, races and cultures, the hermaphrodite human being Smyth met, as distinct from “her” virtual reality (can “she” ever be?), may nevertheless represent, at least for Smyth, a visible lived identity, a corporeal site of knowing and being that eludes the physical body’s bounded categories constructed by biology and medical science or the photographic lens.

I wonder, did Smyth believe the hermaphrodite body held a clue—and not just or either to the suffrage movement’s embodiment of sexual difference, ambivalence, and transgression, or her own sense of the fluidity and provisionality of gender categories in her understandings and recompositions of her self as a subject—to the mysterious dualities in musical and artistic creativity? It is in this sense that my reading of Smyth’s account of the hermaphrodite in her literary narrative, like my listening to Smyth’s hybrid vocal and instrumental figures and fluid structures in her music—as neither a betrayal (with a kiss) nor censorious appropriation (with the loss of “evidence”) but as a *consensual* embrace of the female body’s made and remade mysteries—performs its own utopian and lesbian imaginary act: a sonographic imaging for consenting listeners and readers to “hear” the pulse,

potentiality, and presence—the embodiment of mystery—in “all that is not words.”

Is it, then, as a “pagan” lesbian-avenging composer of *The Boatswain’s Mate* that Smyth next instructs Mrs. Pankhurst that the time has come for militants to destroy “great” works of art? Even today, her words have a stunning resonance. It is *because* she is an artist, the voice of and for ordinary people, she writes, that she can imagine and sanction acts of mutilation against public art in a moment of social crisis and in the service of political change. As a musician, she had learned strategically to manipulate, violate, and forcibly change musically sanctioned properties and their rules and protocols to gain for women like herself a place and voice in the music profession. As a lesbian, for Smyth it was the suppressed violence in women’s bodies, and the expectation of passionate conflict, that fired and fueled homoerotic desire. As a suffrage prisoner, a witness to the ways that a socially sanctioned violence left indelible, deadly marks on women’s bodies and consciousness, she had come to understand the usefulness, the necessity, of violence. Smyth could sanction violence as a performative act by the disenfranchised “to bring things home” to those who continued to hold political power and the possession of public property and women’s bodies as an exclusive right.

Within a week of her letter to Darling Em, on 10 March 1913 the “Rockeby Venus,” Velázquez’s representation of the female body stripped for the male gaze, was slashed.⁷⁸

Smyth performed her last official (and for her the most ironic) musical service to women’s suffrage on 6 March 1930 at the unveiling of the memorial statue of Mrs. Pankhurst in Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster, the bronze effigy of the militant suffrage body which gestures toward the nearby Houses of Parliament and Big Ben. Then *Dame Ethel*, aged seventy-two and wearing doctoral robes and Holloway medal (the suffrage prisoner’s barred brooch), conducted the uniformed men of the Metropolitan Police Band, her former jailers, in “The March of the Women.”⁷⁹

There stood Dame Ethel Smyth, dominant and triumphant, the white satin robes of a Doctor of Music billowing around her, and, most delicious contrast of all, a force of policemen responding subserviently to the wave of her baton. Dame Ethel at least can feel that her struggle has not been without avail.⁸⁰

Notes

An earlier draft of this work was read at the Body Politic Symposium of feminist historians organized by Susan Magarey for the Research Center for Women’s Studies and *Australian Feminist Studies*, University of Adelaide, Sept. 1994, to commemorate the

centenary in South Australia of the first legislation passed in Australia (1894) to enfranchise women and enable women to stand for election to parliament. I thank those participating Australian scholars for their lusty chorus, my colleagues at the Conference on Re-theorizing Music sponsored by the University of California Humanities Research Institute at Irvine, Dec. 1994, David Doughan and the Fawcett Library, Diana Freeman for Woking materials, Shelley Kolton, M.D., and Barbara Sullivan for her invaluable comments.

1. Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves* 2d. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 356.
2. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Body Politic," in *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Weed (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). I thank Barbara Sullivan for this observation.
3. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 89–136.
4. Suzanne Raitt, "The Singers of Sargent: Mabel Batten, Elsie Swinton, Ethel Smyth," (paper presented at the Conference on Music and Gender, King's College, University of London, June 1991).
5. Elizabeth Grosz, "Inscriptions and Body-Maps: Representations and the Corporeal," in *Feminine, Masculine, and Representation*, ed. Terry Threadgold and Anne Cranny-Francis (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), 62–74; and "Notes Towards a Corporeal Feminism," *Australian Feminist Studies* 5 (summer 1987): 1–16.
6. Mary Poovey, "'Scenes of an Indelicate Character': The Medical 'Treatment' of Victorian Women," in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 137–68.
7. Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," in Gallagher and Laqueur, 1–14, and Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Among feminist studies of the women's suffrage movement that track contemporary inscriptions of medical discourse on the female body, see Vera Brittain, *Lady into Woman: A History of Women From Victoria to Elizabeth II* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1953); Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 266–73; and Jane Marcus, Introduction to *Suffrage and the Pankhursts*, ed. Dale Spender and Candida Lacey (London: Routledge, 1987) 1–17.
8. A musical-theoretical model for this kind of sonic recuperation of female embodiment and the female body politic I am proposing is suggested in the writings and compositional practices of the twelfth-century nun composer, Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard was an early music theorist as well as medical theorist and clinician in her knowledge of women's anatomy and reproductive mechanisms, and used medicinal analogies in her writings alongside musical metaphors for women's bodily experiences. Her work articulates the corporeality of a music that gives voice to the body and flesh to the voice. I am indebted here to Bruce Wood Holsinger, "The Flesh of the Voice: Embodiment and the Homoerotics of Devotion in the Music of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)," *Signs* 19, no. 1 (autumn 1993): 92–125.
9. Grosz, "Inscriptions and Body-Maps," pp. 63, 66. See also Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (New York: Indiana University Press, 1993); Janet Wolff, "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and

Elizabeth Dempster, "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances," in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1988), 35–54.

10. I thank Michael P. Steinberg for raising this question and for editorial suggestions.

11. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 4–9.

12. A somatic performance model, one that might apply to both musical and medical discourses and critical investigation of the text of the body/the body as text, is raised by Bruce Clarke, "Introduction," and William Monroe, "Performing Persons: A Locus of Connection for Medicine and Literature," in *The Body and the Text: Comparative Essays in Literature and Medicine*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Wendell Aycock (Lubbock: Texas Technical University Press, 1990), 1–2, 25–40.

13. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 225.

14. Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907–1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987); Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (1928; reprint, London: Virago, 1978); and Julie Holledge, *Innocent Flowers: Women in Edwardian Theatre* (London: Virago, 1981), among other studies.

15. Christabel Pankhurst, *Unshackled: The Story of How We Women Won the Vote* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), as quoted in Vicinus, 252.

16. Brittain, 33–37.

17. "Bread and Roses," the mill girls' marching song in the Lawrence, Mass., textile strike of 1912, is a case in point: a rousing march but hard for amateur voices to sing; see Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance, and Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 100, 110. Contemporary American suffrage samples, all set to familiar popular or patriotic tunes (such as "Yankee Doodle," "John Brown's Body," "The Red White and Blue," "Comin' thro' the Rye," or gospel tunes such as "Hallelujah Song" and "Hold the Fort") were collected by Suffragists L. May Wheeler, *Suffrage and Temperance Melodies* (Minnesota, 1884); Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ed., *Suffrage Songs and Verses* (New York: Charlton, 1911); and Eugenie Raye-Smith, ed., *Equal Suffrage Songsheaf* (New York: published by author, date unknown); also see Irwin Silber, "Singing Suffragettes Sang for Women's Votes, Equal Rights," in *Sing-Out!* 6, no. 4 (winter 1957): 4–12. Modern collections that reprint assorted suffrage songs include Kathy Henderson, Frankie Armstrong, and Sandra Kerr, eds., *My Song Is My Own: One Hundred Women's Songs* (London: Pluto Press, 1979); and Hilda E. Wenner and Elizabeth Freilicher, eds., *Here's to the Women: 100 Songs for and about American Women* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), 58–62. Contemporary British anthologies and single-sheet suffrage songs representative of this repertory print the new words, but rarely the traditional music, for hymns, inspirational, and marching songs for use by the Movement—e.g., "Song of the Suffrage Pilgrims (to the tune of 'The Song of the Western Man')" and "'Marching for Love of the Homeland' (Emily H. Smith; Tune—'Marching Through Georgia' from *The Scottish Students' Song Book*, p. 300)" were chosen by the Watling Street Route Committee of the "law-abiding, non-party" National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies "to be sung on the Route" of the Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage, July 1913 (Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic).

18. Housman, in Henderson, et al., 172–74.

19. This repertory awaits documentation. An offensive American example is “The Day That the Ladies Take Power: It’s a Nightmare!” by Buck Murphy (1912). A male soloist, with a female chorus singing the refrain “Come, the girls are marching” and a Tin Pan Alley brass band ensemble, scornfully depicts the New Woman (his wife) stalking the streets, smoking, driving an auto, working in an office, and refusing to bring his breakfast, yet demanding the Vote (BBC Sound Archives). The song is similar to U.S. antiwar songs on popular tunes, such as “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier: A Woman’s Plea for Peace,” by Alfred Brian and Al Piantadosi (1915), sung by a male tenor with male chorus in the refrain accompanied by a parlor-style chamber ensemble. An anecdote tells how President Teddy Roosevelt snorted that the song should have been titled, “I Didn’t Raise My Girl to Be a Mother.”

20. Of these, but outside the British tradition, perhaps the best known is the post-suffrage, postmodernist opera, *The Mother of Us All*, words by Gertrude Stein, music by Virgil Thomson. An American acted musical dialogue contemporary with Smyth’s dramatic musical medley “1910” is “Winning the Vote,” with choruses of girls and boys, words by Mrs. A. B. Smith (Wisconsin, 1912).

21. Among references I have found are songs and incidental dances by San Francisco composer Elsa (Elsie?) Maxwell written for a suffrage operetta by Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, *Melinda and Her Sisters*, performed at the New York Waldorf Astoria on 18 Feb. 1916 as a suffrage fundraiser and social event of the winter season (it raised \$8,000). The cast of Society debutantes, opera singers, and professional actors included Marie Dressler; a plainly attired militant Suffragette, Melinda, is depicted as the “skeleton in the closet.” The text is reprinted in Bettina Friedl, ed., *On to Victory: Propaganda Plays of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987). Mabel Daniels (1879–1971), in 1915 an active supporter of suffrage in Boston and of the Society of American Women Composers, composed *Song of Jael*, op. 37 (1940), which represents a Jewish feminist heroine. Another American composer, Helen Hopekirk (1856–1945), is described as “an ardent suffragist” in Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 90. American women musicians who supported the movement include the Hutchinson Family Singers, who took part in the Independent Celebrations for Women’s Suffrage at the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia organized by American suffragists on 4 July 1876; the international pianist Teresa Carrëno; and the opera diva Lillian Nordica, who established a “Suffrage Singing School” to coach Suffragists in New York in 1911 and lectured for the League of Political Action in New York in 1913; see “Progress of Women as Nordica Sees It,” *Musical America* 17, no. 12 (25 Jan. 1913): 35. In London, composer and violist Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979), with her longtime companion and touring accompanist, the cellist May Mukle, and May’s sisters, founded an all-woman chamber group while still a student of the Royal College of Music. Called the English Ensemble, the group performed at suffrage fundraising concerts in 1910 and also performed Smyth’s suffrage songs with chamber ensemble in 1911 (see my n. 36).

22. See Vicinus, chap. 7, 266–73.

23. “The Women’s Marseillaise” was a pirated version of the French revolutionary anthem. Details of what precisely was performed are often sparse or missing. Brema, for example, sang “an ‘International Song’ specially written for the Working Women’s Procession of the Suffragist International Congress” to the Albert Hall in April 1909, where a Miss Robinson performed “an organ solo” before speeches by Mrs. Millicent

Fawcett and the American suffrage leader Dr. Anna Shaw; as reported in *Morning Leader*, 28 Apr. 1909. The song referred to was possibly Lady Strachey's text, but the tune is unknown. On 11 Dec. 1906, both the Aeolian Ladies Orchestra and the Mascottes Ladies Band played an all-male program of music, conducted by Rosabel Watson, at a banquet for Suffragists chaired by Mrs. Fawcett (Fawcett Library).

24. Brittain, 149, 212.

25. Ethel Smyth, *As Time Went On* . . . (London: Longmans, Green, 1936), 297.

26. Ethel Smyth to Emmeline Pankhurst, 15 Sept. 1910, Ethel Smyth Letters, Walter Clinton Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, N.C.; henceforth unless noted otherwise ES, EP, and ES Letters. Smyth's letters to Lady Constance Lytton are in Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.

27. Announced on 15 July 1911 by the chief organizers Marion Scott, a Haydn scholar, and Miss Douglas Smith, its office was in the Women's Institute at 92 Victoria Street, SW1. Smyth became honorary vice president of this society from 1925 until her death and held benefit concerts for its funding, e.g., on 28 May 1932, as reported in the *Royal College of Music Magazine* (June 1934); see also Brittain, 212. Prior to this, musicians for suffrage marched with the Actresses Franchise League and carried one of the many "heroine" banners—singer Jenny Lind with laurel-crowned lyre—designed for the NUWSS demonstration of 13 June 1908 by Mary Lowndes and the Artists' Suffrage League; Tickner, 257, and reproduced top left, 61. (The index to this wonderful study has no reference to music.)

28. Quoted in *Votes for Women* (31 Mar. 1911): 427, (7 Apr. 1911): 443; (Fawcett Library). Smyth's first published suffrage article, "Better Late Than Never," appeared on the infamous "Black Friday," the day 115 women and 4 men from a WSPU delegation of 300 to Prime Minister Asquith were brutally beaten by police and arrested in what became known as the Battle for Downing Street; *Votes for Women* (18 Nov. 1910): 99.

29. EP to ES, London, 29 Feb. 1914, as quoted by Smyth in her *Female Pippings in Eden* (London: Peter Davies, 1933), 224–25.

30. Elizabeth A. Meese, (*Sem*)*Erotics: Theorizing Lesbian : Writing* (New York: New York University Press, 1992). The pulse and presence of lesbians in women's suffrage movements remains in feminist study an untold story, but see Emily Hamer, *Britain's Glory: A History of Twentieth-Century Lesbians* (London: Cassell, 1996) 15–39.

31. Ethel Smyth, Mus. Doc, "The March of the Women, dedicated to the Women's Social and Political Union"; words by Cicely Hamilton (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, for Woman's Press, 1911, unison song with optional piano accompaniment, 4 verses (ms. lost). Other versions of the same work are: (1) arr. for piano solo, published in *King Albert's Book* (for Belgian Relief; 1914); (2) arr. for orchestra by F. Collinson (ms. in BBC); (3) arr. by ES for military band (ms. lost); and (4) arr. and published in *Songs of Sunrise*, as no. 3, for orchestra, (only parts survive in ms.), (Breitkopf & Härtel for the Woman's Press, 1911; reprint Curwen, 1929).

32. Smyth, as reported in *Votes for Women* (20 Dec. 1910): 213.

33. Ethel Smyth, *Beecham and Pharoah* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1935): 89–90, 106.

34. Shepherd claims “we need a theory of the performed body which shows how conventions of performance produce ostensions and readings; and how the performer is expected to be specularized”; *Textual Practice* 7, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 505, 509. Reception of the first concert performance on 24 Jan. 1911 of the March as a solo song by Edith Clegg, with harpsichordist Violet Gordon-Woodhouse at the piano and Smyth herself conducting the audience in the final verse, is reported in *Votes for Women* (27 Jan. 1911).
35. This was also its first performance, by a suffrage choir, at Suffolk Street Galleries; reported in *Votes for Women* (20 Jan. 1911): 254.
36. For the record, the chronology of its first performances is: 21 Jan. 1911: Suffrage Choir, cond. ES, Suffolk Street Galleries; 24 Jan. 1911: Edith Clegg, solo; a concert of Smyth’s work, including *Songs of Sunrise*, which comprises “The March of the Women,” “Laggard Dawn” (1910), for three-part female chorus, and “1910,” (1910), a dramatic sketch for SATB chorus or soloists, directed by Edith Craig, founder of the new Pioneer Players; four *Songs* on French texts, composed 1907, including “Odelette,” “La Danse,” “Chryssilla,” and “Ode Anacréontique”; *Sleepless Dreams*, for chorus and orchestra, (1910), and *Hey Nonny No*, chorus and orchestra, (1910), cond. ES, with the English Ensemble (including Rebecca Clarke, viola, May Mukle, cello, and Marjorie Hayward, violin); this concert concluded with the March, Edith Clegg, solo, with Violet Gordon-Woodhouse, piano. 13 Feb. 1911: Edith Clegg and voluntary choir, cond. ES, Queen’s Hall. 27 Feb. 1911: ES, piano, with Sybil Smith, solo, on Mrs. Pankhurst’s speaking tour in Edinburgh, Ayr, and Glasgow. 3 Mar. 1911: Suffrage choir practice, Steinway Hall, cond. ES. 17 Mar. 1911: same, Queen’s Hall, cond. ES. 23 March 1911: Suffrage Choir, and audience, cond. ES, Royal Albert Hall. 1 Apr. 1911: Concert of ES music: London Symphony Orchestra, cond. ES, Edith Clegg, and singing pupils of Blanche Marchesi; the program comprised the overture to *The Wreckers*, act I, and “On the Cliffs of Cornwall” from act 2; Chorus, “Spirits of the Forest,” from *Der Wald*; the choruses *Hey Nonny No* and *Sleepless Dreams*, *Songs of Sunrise* and the Benedictus from the Mass in D; see program announcements and reviews in issues of *Votes for Women* (variously dated 20 Jan.; 21 Jan.; 27 Jan.; 10 Feb.; 17 Feb.; 27 Feb.; 3 Mar.; 17 Mar.; 31 Mar.; and 21 Apr. 1911, Fawcett Library).
37. An “Inventory of Works” in Smyth’s hand claims five different versions of the March in her possession in 1938: (1) for string quartet in F; (2) for processional use (wind parts); (3) for male quartet in G; (4) unison in F (“popular edition” printed on a card) for soprano; and (5) full score orchestral version (for the overture to *The Boatswain’s Mate*). But other editions were printed and mostly available until the late 1930s, e.g., the “popular” edition in F was also printed in two other versions for two (SA) or three (SSA) female voices (although Curwen announced the latter was going out of print, 17 July, 1935); also in A flat and in G. The arrangement for male quartet in G (no. 3 above) was also set for mixed voices (SATB). A concert edition of the orchestral version for the opera was arranged for a smaller ensemble of four woodwinds, two horns, trumpet, tuba, and strings. Thousands of copies were prepared for sale in these various editions; in 1938 Curwen informed Smyth they still held stocks in the hundreds, long after the cause was won; as Smyth reports in her inventory.
38. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (1931; reprint, London: Virago, 1977), 377–78.

39. Quoted in Antonia Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes* (London: Michael Joseph, 1973), 163.
40. Violet Bonham-Carter, "Life in Number 10 Downing Street," broadcast on BBC Home Service, 31 May 1944, BBC-LP 15807.
41. Leslie Baily and Charles Brewer, "Scrapbook for 1912," with the voices of Smyth and Vera Brittain, BBC broadcast (9 Mar. 1937).
42. As quoted here by Thomas Beecham, *A Mingled Chime: Leaves from an Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1944), 85. On Smyth's prison experience and defence of militancy, see her interview at Coign after her release, "Woking Suffragist's Prison Experiences: Dr Ethel Smyth's Story," in the *Woking News and Mail* (26 Apr. 1912), which states she served five weeks. Louise Collis claims it was three weeks in *Impetuous Heart: The Story of Ethel Smyth* (London: William Kimber, 1984), 112–15.
43. Smyth, as quoted in Christopher St. John, *Ethel Smyth: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green, 1959), 158–59. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*: 402–3.
44. Smyth's personal score library contained a volume of Abruzzi tunes arranged by Tosti (1879), popular in British drawing-room revivals in the 1880s of forgotten folk music or "arie antiche" and used by singers as warm-up exercises. Both Smyth and Hamilton had military and hunting backgrounds. Throughout her career, in works such as "Hot Potatoes" (a fanfare for military band) and her operas *Der Wald* and *Entente Cordiale*, Smyth adapted army bugle calls, fanfares, and hunting signals that encode musical messages of desire, chase, pursuit, and conquest; I explore these in "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Study*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1913), 164–83. See also Lis Whitelaw, *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton: Actress, Writer, Suffragist* (London: Women's Press, 1990), and Sheila Stowell, "Drama as a Trade: Cicely Hamilton's 'Diana of Dobson's,'" in *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850–1914*, ed. Vivien Gardiner and Susan Rutherford (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 177–88.
45. Wayne Koestenbaum, "The Queen's Throat: (Homo)sexuality and the Art of Singing," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 205–34.
46. Holsinger, 97–98.
47. As noted by performers and listeners, "We all stood at the last verse. We couldn't help it. I'm proud of her, because she's a woman first, and because she's so . . . so magnificent"; in *Votes For Women* (7 July 1911): 662; "Set an electric current going" (*Pall Mall Gazette*); "The surging roll of the orchestra tossed in foaming billows the white horses of freedom" and "fanned the enthusiasm of the crowd;" "genius itself set the audience singing" (*T.P.'s Weekly*), as reported in *Votes for Women* (21 Apr. 1911): 471.
48. As discussed by Eva Rieger, "'Dolce Semplice'? On the Changing Role of Women in Music," in *Feminist Aesthetics*, ed. Gisella Ecker, trans. Harriet Anderson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 139–40. *Hey Nonny No* for chorus and orchestra, dedicated to harpsichordist Violet Woodhouse, was first performed by the London Choral Society and Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fagge, 26 Oct. 1910 at Queen's Hall. Smyth herself conducted it with the Crystal Palace Choir and London Symphony Orchestra at her Queen's Hall concert, 1 Apr. 1911. Critics admired its "Elizabethan, almost Rabelaisian character" and the way Smyth's choral lines are part

of its orchestration, not “a cold, heavy, and separate mass on the top;” in *Votes for Women* (7 Apr. 1911): 443.

49. Dale, in St. John, 298. Published Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911; on the last page of the original full-score manuscript, Smyth writes, “a ripping little work!”

50. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, 377–78.

51. Smyth, *Female Pipings in Eden* (London: Peter Davies, 1933), 194. On the first performance of *Songs of Sunrise* at Queen’s Hall, 1 Apr. 1911, *Votes for Women* finds “‘Laggard Dawn’ is simply the cry of people who are waiting for the sun to rise. Its meaning Suffragists will understand at once. It contains a verse in memory of those who died through their devotion to the cause” (31 Mar. 1911): 427. Presumably this refers to the “first woman martyr,” Mary Clarke, Emmeline Pankhurst’s sister, who suffered a stroke after her imprisonment and died shortly before Christmas 1910, as reported in *Votes for Women* (6 Jan. 1911).

52. For that history and its ending, see Smyth’s portrait written 23 July 1933 of “Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928)” in her *Female Pipings in Eden*, 187–288.

53. EP, quoted by ES in *Female Pipings in Eden*, 213.

54. Tickner, 152.

55. See *Votes for Women* (7 Apr. 1911): 443, and (7 July 1911): 662. “Evidently written in high spirits, the scene of action [in ‘1910’] is a battlefield, and its first words give the keynote: a collection of remarks such as are constantly heard in connection with the suffrage question, the dramatis personae consisting of four speakers: Suffragist (S), Anti-Suffragist (A), Friendly Men (T), Unfriendly Men (B); it ends with the triumph of the Suffragist. We hear Policemen give the order to ‘Move on!’ and men who complain of militant methods boast of their distinguished acquaintance (‘I know Mrs. Humphrey Ward’). Towards the end, women are heard singing softly but with ominous emphasis ‘Nelly Bly’ (but an American woman in the audience complained that ‘Nelly Bly’ doesn’t really finish like this!)”; *Votes for Women* (31 Mar. 1911): 427.

56. String Quartet in E Minor, movements 1 and 2 (1902), 3 and 4 (1912). Its first British performance was by the London Quartet (to which it is dedicated), 3 Dec. 1914, in the Aeolian Hall. Published in Vienna by Universal Edition in 1914, this was Smyth’s tenth and last attempt at string quartet writing, but other earlier parts and movements dating from the early 1880s remained unfinished at her death.

57. For the unnamed “German” critic and review in the *Neue Freie Presse*, see ES to EP, 18 Dec. 1913, ES Letters, and Smyth, *Beecham and Pharoah*, 115.

58. In all her music written in sonata form, Smyth rarely obeyed the convention of a second subject, but, interestingly, her arrangement of the two marches in the overture to *The Boatswain’s Mate* gives the effect of having a two-subject sonata structure; see following text.

59. In terms of recooking as a strategy for pouring old wine in new bottles, Smyth draws another connection between Mrs. Pankhurst and herself, writing from Egypt to tell her of the problem she was having with the overture to her new opera, “perhaps because I’m tired of the themes (taken of course from the opera). But how *you* recook old, old themes!—ever a new turn, a fresh inspiration, and that’s the artist in you coming out.” ES to EP, 6 May 1914, ES Letters.

60. "On the Road: A Marching Tune," for mezzo or baritone, is the only one of this group with optional orchestral setting similar to Smyth's song cycle, *Three Moods of the Sea* (text by Arthur Symons), also composed in 1913; both song sets published Vienna: Universal Edition, 1913. "On the Road" was first performed by Herbert Heyner and the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Artur Nikisch, in Queen's Hall, 23 June 1913.
61. Carnie, "A Marching Song," first printed in *Votes for Women* (21 Apr. 1911): 472.
62. "On the Road" evokes the rhythmic patterns in Schubert's setting, from Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, of "Norman's Gesang," D. 846, op. 52, no. 5.
63. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst* (1935; reprint, New York: Kraus, 1969), 106, 132.
64. Early in 1911 Smyth took Emmeline to Paris to meet her lesbian feminist friends, the writers Anna de Noailles and Augustine Bulteau and the Princesses de Polignac ("Winnie") and Caraman-Chimay (Hélène, Anna's twin sister), and to solicit funds; *Votes for Women* (27 Jan. 1911): 278. Smyth's English friends who were suffrage activists include her neighbour Lady Betty Balfour (sister of Lady Constance Lytton), her music sponsor Mary Dodge (who donated the Union car), Mary's partner Lady Muriel de La Warr (née Brassey), and the Irish writer Edith Somerville. Smyth's rocky friendship with Christabel and Sylvia, mostly over her homoerotic relation with their mother that Sylvia unkindly mocked in her *Life of Emmeline Pankhurst* ("the one member of the Union who addressed the leader familiarly as 'Em,' " 106), is hinted at in Smyth's posthumous portrait of Mrs. Pankhurst in *Female Pipings in Eden*: 187–287. In December 1933 Christabel forced Smyth's publisher to withdraw this book prior to sale for alleged breach of copyright in citing Emmeline's letters without Christabel's permission, but she later withdrew her objection and allowed the publication to proceed. Christabel may have had reservations about the letters' homoerotic messages, but, as Smyth told Virginia Woolf (who believed Smyth and Emmeline had "shared a bed"), "I've tried to avoid any hint that she really loved me as few people have. I hope it's not perceptible. And anyhow she cut the cable, with my connivance it is true, but really Christabel was (and probably is) mad," ES to Virginia Woolf, quoted in Collis, 194.
65. That Schubert's "natural" voice happens to be queer adds camp relish to Smyth's instant infatuation on first hearing Mrs. Pankhurst speak. Smyth, *Female Pipings in Eden*, 195–96, and ES to EP, 4 Jan. 1914, in *Beecham and Pharoah*, 117.
66. Words by Ethel Carnie, with optional piano or chamber ensemble, published Vienna: Universal Edition, 1913.
67. Smyth, *The Boatswain's Mate* (London: Universal Edition/Forsyth, 1915, and Vienna: Universal Edition, 1921). Libretto by Smyth also published in "A New Departure in Comic Opera," in Smyth, *A Final Burning of Boats* (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), 200–233.
68. This is my interpretation, not Smyth's, who struggled over the overture after finishing the opera, writing to Emmeline of her "grand idea about the overture. I've scrapped all I had written and am writing a quite short but very cheerful piece with never a theme from the opera in it, but as chief tune . . . *The March of the Women!* Mrs. Waters gave those two men 'what for' in such splendid style, that I think the opera deserves that touch. Not that such was my idea. I simply stuck in the March

because, as you know, I like the tune!" ES to EP, 9 May 1914, ES Letters. In my longer study of Smyth, I untangle in her letters from Egypt musical and dramatic tactics with which she battles opera convention while composing it.

69. Stephen Banfield, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1992), 1:509.

70. On seeing *Der Rosenkavalier* performed, Smyth experienced "spasm upon spasm of physical delight" until, satiated, she felt "suddenly weary of these orchestral caresses." What troubled her in Strauss's representation of a lesbian erotic was his "vulgarity," "lack of humor," and commercialization of sex, or what Smyth termed "the Selfridge's commodity" of women's bodies in the opera; Smyth's review in the *Suffragette* (21 Feb. 1913).

71. Martha Mockus, "A Source Study of the Original Version of Ethel Smyth's *The Boatswain's Mate*," (M. Mus thesis, King's College, University of London, 1988), 14.

72. Critics of the opera include Beecham and Dale, the latter "for the glaring inconsistencies of its musical treatment, for the indeterminateness of its type, and for its unabashed 'borrowings' of folk music," yet this is the most often performed, best known, and probably best loved, of Smyth's works; see Dale, "Ethel Smyth's Music: A Critical Study," in St. John, 301.

73. Smyth tells how she confused her critics in *A Final Burning of Boats*, 12–13.

74. Smyth, *Beecham and Pharoah*, 130, 131, and ES to EP, ES Letters. For a fascinating reading of this episode and other revelations of Smyth's obsession with gender, sexuality, and self-invention (for like the hermaphrodite, she herself is "a riddle that can never be solved"), see Suzanne Raitt, "The Tide of Ethel: Femininity as Narrative in the Friendship of Ethel Smyth and Virginia Woolf," in *Critical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1988): 3–21. In Smyth's loss of the evidence, Raitt observes, "the actual anatomy of her protégée remained a mystery and only Ethel held the clue . . . [she] appoints herself the curator of sexual difference, becoming her own censor" (5).

75. Smyth, *Beecham and Pharoah*, 131, 132.

76. Nellie Eastwood to ES, 14 Mar. 1914, in *Beecham and Pharoah*, 152.

77. Wright (1913) as quoted in Brittain, 31. Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880–1930* (London: Pandora, 1985), 89, 128–46.

78. Mary Richardson was the slasher; when her autobiography was published in 1953, its title was *Laugh a Defiance*, Richardson's quotation of a line from "The March of the Women." In 1934 another young feminist, Winifred Holtby, dedicated her new book, *Women in a Changing Civilization*, to both Cicely Hamilton and Ethel Smyth, "who did more than The March of the Women."

79. Robert Walser suggests that the police or military band in the U.S. labor movement was used as an instrument or machine to impose hierarchy and order and mediate disputes, in "The Harmony of Our Sphere: Nations, Peoples, and John Philip Sousa" (paper read at the American Musicological Society meeting, Minneapolis, 1994).

80. Undated, unidentified press clipping pasted in Smyth's diary near the announcement of her third honorary degree, an L.L.D conferred by St. Andrew's University, Edinburgh, July 1928, her seventieth year; Smyth Papers, Ann Arbor, Michigan.