



Theses and Dissertations

2012-12-07

Feminism and the New Woman in the Gilbert & Sullivan Operas

Heather Dawn Zurcher
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Music Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Zurcher, Heather Dawn, "Feminism and the New Woman in the Gilbert & Sullivan Operas" (2012). *Theses and Dissertations*. 3537.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/3537>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Feminism and the New Woman in the Gilbert & Sullivan Operas

Heather D. Zurcher

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Steven P. Johnson, Chair
Brian C. Harker
Geraldyn A. Giovannetti

School of Music
Brigham Young University
December 2012

Copyright © 2012 Heather D. Zurcher

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Feminism and the New Woman in the Gilbert & Sullivan Operas

Heather D. Zurcher
School of Music, BYU
Master of Arts

The operas by playwright W. S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan have been considered some of the most popular and successful pieces of musical theatre in the English language. While their joint creative output neared perfection, Gilbert and Sullivan's working relationship was fraught with conflict. The two men's opposing personalities led them to favor disparate styles and work towards different goals. However, the ability to balance contrasting tones, such as sarcasm and sympathy, resulted in their overwhelming success. I analyze this "winning formula" by looking at the influence of feminism, especially the "New Woman" literary movement, on the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. Gilbert frequently used common female stereotypes and gave his female characters humorous yet demeaning flaws that kept the audience from fully admiring them. Sullivan, on the other hand, countered Gilbert's derisive attitude by composing sophisticated music for the female characters, granting emotional depth and a certain level of respectability. The struggle between Gilbert's mocking tone and Sullivan's empathetic music led to the men's ultimate success. I examine Gilbert's female characters, explore the counteractive effect of Sullivan's music, and analyze *Princess Ida*—their opera most directly related to the New Woman—in depth.

Keywords: Gilbert & Sullivan, the New Woman, Victorian feminism, *Princess Ida*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my graduate committee chair, Dr. Steven Johnson, for allowing and even encouraging me to pursue my interest in a “lighter” musical genre and for opening my eyes to the possibilities for research and writing. I am also grateful to Dr. Brian Harker and Dr. GERALYN GIOVANNETTI for participating on my graduate committee and giving excellent advice on this thesis as well as influencing my education in countless other ways. Lastly, I must thank my wonderful husband and my parents for their constant support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: The “New Woman” Movement in Victorian England.....	1
Feminism in the Victorian Era.....	2
The New Woman Movement.....	13
Chapter 2: Gilbert’s Female Characters.....	23
The Elderly Spinster	25
The “Feather-Brain”.....	31
The Respectable but Flawed.....	35
Chapter 3: A Winning Formula: Sullivan’s Contribution.....	57
The Working Relationship of Gilbert & Sullivan.....	57
Characterization in Sullivan’s Music.....	66
Chapter 4: <i>Princess Ida</i>	82
Bibliography	104
Appendix A	108

1. The “New Woman” Movement in Victorian England

England’s Victorian Era, spanning from roughly the 1840s to the end of the century, exhibited an increased interest in women’s rights. While the issue of feminism had existed for centuries, it rose to the surface of England’s political and journalistic battles at this time. Victorian feminists fought against stereotypes and deep-rooted traditions. Moreover, men were not their only adversaries; most women remained neutral to the feminist cause, and some actively opposed it, including Queen Victoria. The issues surrounding the Victorian feminist movement provoked diverse responses in most forms of literature as well as from people of all different classes and occupations.

By the end of the nineteenth century, British playwright W. S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan had won fame and success with their fourteen collaborative operas. It is no surprise that most of their operas suggest influence from feminist issues. The chart in Appendix A shows a timeline of Gilbert and Sullivan’s active years alongside a timeline of political acts involving female issues. Gilbert’s and Sullivan’s formative years and years of collaboration coincide with a heavy period of activity for women activists. Women issues surely permeated newspapers, journals, and pamphlets as well as drawing room conversation among the middle class, to which both men belonged. Naturally, the artists drew from these social and political topics for material to fuel their creative ideas.

Studying the works of Gilbert & Sullivan through the lens of feminism reveals fundamental differences in the two men’s artistic styles, which stem from their contrasting personalities. Gilbert, the more sarcastic and satiric of the two, used feminist issues primarily to influence his plots and characters in a mocking or humorous way. Sullivan, who leaned towards

sympathy and emotion, frequently counteracted Gilbert's derisive tone by writing serious music for otherwise humorous female characters. I would argue that the balance between mockery and sympathy created by the two men is the very reason their works have endured with such lasting popularity. Gilbert provided the signature humor that characterized the duo while Sullivan provided the humanity, making the stories and characters more believable than most light operas.

It will be helpful to begin with an overview of the major issues surrounding women's rights in the Victorian Era. I will also discuss the New Woman literary movement, which shared many of the fundamental ideas of the woman's movement but had different goals and methods of spreading the opinions of its members. Although the women's movement had a more indirect influence than the New Woman movement, which provided literary material for direct satire, both movements heavily influenced the operas of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Feminism in the Victorian Era

One of the main issues for Victorian feminists¹ was the "sexual double standard." This term referred to the social assumption that women should be held to a higher moral standard than men. Eugenia Palmegiano described it well when she said, ". . . though judged inferior by physical and intellectual standards, women were considered morally superior, making sin

¹ Barbara Caine points out that the term "feminism" did not come into use until shortly before WWI. For this reason, the criteria for categorization as a "feminist" in Victorian England varies from author to author. Many historians call women active in the women's movement as well as all female activists and writers "feminists." However, women who fought for a change in women's "rights" may have been adamantly against women voting or women's equality with men. See Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4-5. For the purposes of this paper, "feminist" refers to all women activists who fought for issues dealing with women.

somehow more sinful for them.”² The “sexual double standard” affected many laws regarding women as well as social customs during the Victorian era. Women were expected to follow a higher law in regard to moral conduct and they often received greater consequences for neglecting their family responsibilities or violating moral codes. While most feminists agreed with the high moral expectations set for women, they did not agree with the disproportionate punishments for behaviors that also involved men.

The clearest example of this was the expectation of complete chastity for single women and fidelity for married women. A respectable woman with hopes of finding a suitable husband must have no sexual blemish on her character. Society dictated that Victorian women should be beacons of virtue, free from all inappropriate relationships, conversation, and even thoughts. For this reason, sexual education for women was virtually non-existent in an attempt to protect their innocence. Men, on the other hand, were free and even expected to engage in sexual relations before and outside their marriage. As long as their moral conduct at the time of the marriage had no flaws, they were considered suitable. A woman wishing to marry a man with no “past” was simply asking too much.

Divorce laws from the time illustrate the severity of the “double standard.” According to the Divorce Act of 1857, a man could sue for a divorce from his adulterous wife. A woman on the other hand could not sue for divorce on the grounds of adultery unless her husband had committed another serious offense. These offenses were limited to incest, bigamy, and severe cruelty. The expectation for complete female fidelity in marriage stemmed partly from the desire to ensure the legitimacy of children born in the marriage. However, the law clearly implied that male adultery was not as serious as female adultery and that a woman married to an adulterous

² Eugenia Palmegiano, “Feminist Propaganda in the 1850s and 1860s,” *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 4 (February 1971): 6.

husband should not expect to obtain a divorce, even if her husband abandoned her. Abandonment was not a cause for divorce under the 1857 Act. Additionally, because a married man and woman were legally one person, represented by the husband, taking legal action against one's husband was extremely difficult.³

The most notorious laws supporting the “double standard” were the Contagious Diseases Acts (C.D. Acts) of 1864, 1866, and 1869. The purpose of the C.D. Acts was to prevent the spread of venereal disease among soldiers and sailors. Because soldiers and sailors were rarely allowed to marry, prostitution was considered a necessary evil. This reveals the common belief that men, unlike women, could not be expected to live sexually virtuous lives. The C.D. Acts allowed law enforcement officials to detain, register, and check prostitutes for venereal disease. If they were infected, the women were kept in “lock hospitals” for up to nine months. First established in garrison towns and ports, the Acts later spread to several defined districts.⁴

The C.D. Acts enraged women's rights activists for many reasons. First, they targeted only women. Prostitutes could be detained for months on end while their male customers walked free. The creators of the C.D. Acts did not even allow for the examination and diagnosis of men, claiming that the examination would be “too degrading” for the men.⁵ Furthermore, the Acts did not address male seduction of young girls. In England at the time, it was considered a felony to

³ See Mary Poovey, “Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act,” *Feminist Studies* 14 (Autumn 1988), 467–85 for a case study of divorce and marriage rights at the time.

⁴ For explanations about the specifications of the Contagious Diseases Acts, see Judith R. Walkowitz, and Daniel J. Walkowitz, “‘We Are Not Beasts of the Field’: Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton Under the Contagious Diseases Acts,” *Feminist Studies* 1 (Winter – Spring, 1973): 74 and J. D. Roberts, “Feminism and the State in Later Victorian England,” *The Historical Journal* 38 (March, 1995): 87.

⁵ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 84.

seduce a child under the age of 10 and a misdemeanor to seduce a child under 12.⁶ Therefore, a 12-year-old girl might be detained in a lock hospital while her male seducer suffered no consequences. That same man might later infect his wife, who would have no protection whatsoever from venereal disease under the Acts.

While the C.D. Acts may not have specifically allowed it, enforcers of the Acts violated several human rights. These included searching the homes of suspected prostitutes without a warrant and with no legal consequence for the searcher, forcing illiterate women to sign documents they could not read, detaining women who were not actually proven prostitutes, and ignoring the specifications of the Acts for detaining and treating only women with syphilis or gonorrhoea.⁷ Circumstances in the lock hospitals where prostitutes were detained resembled prison conditions, including inadequate food, poor living conditions, and confinement to “dark rooms” for bad behavior. Additionally, in an effort to “reform” the prostitutes and cut them off from their lifestyle, lock hospital officials restricted mail, forbade visits from old acquaintances, and segregated the younger, more impressionable detainees from the older, hardened women who might provide a bad influence.⁸

In addition to the rights violations of the C.D. Acts, many feminists took issue with the matter of prostitution itself. They argued that many women were driven to prostitution because they could not find adequate work and because they could make in one day what it took a week

⁶ Ibid., 90.

⁷ See Judith R. Walkowitz, and Daniel J. Walkowitz, “‘We Are Not Beasts of the Field’: Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton Under the Contagious Diseases Acts,” *Feminist Studies* 1 (Winter – Spring, 1973): 92.

⁸ Ibid., 96–98. One of the complaints of repealers was that men did all of the “reforming” when it came to the women detained under the C. D. Acts. Men ran the hospitals, male police arrested the women, male magistrates decided the fate of the women, and so forth. This reinforced the idea that men were superior to women, even though the Acts did not punish men for the same “crimes” as the women.

to make as a domestic servant or seamstress. Besides, many of the women did not consider themselves prostitutes. Rather, prostitution was something they felt compelled to participate in for economic reasons, but they planned to (and often did) go on to different fields of employment as soon as possible. Activists suggested that the C.D. Acts originated from the societal view of prostitutes as the scum of humanity, as people who should be shunned and avoided.⁹ If the government truly wished to fight venereal disease, it should lessen the hostility of the working environment for women, and stop unofficially sanctioning prostitution as a necessary evil.

Another law bearing the mark of the “double standard” was the Infant Life Protection Act of 1872. The Act was meant to protect babies born out of wedlock and to lower the infant mortality rate. However, it did so by making regulations for mothers and baby nurses. At the time, many babies born to unwed parents were given or sold to baby nurses, who might take custody of several babies at a time. Often, the unspoken expectation was that the baby would die in the care of the baby nurse. While the desire to decrease infanticide was honorable, the law only targeted women. An unmarried mother, frequently abandoned by the child’s father, could rarely expect to provide for her child. However, she held all the legal responsibility for the child. The law required women to inform the State when they gave birth to a child and for baby nurses to register. The law required nothing of the father, placing an unequal amount of blame, stress, and responsibility on the woman.¹⁰

⁹ See Judith R. Walkowitz, and Daniel J. Walkowitz, “‘We Are Not Beasts of the Field’: Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton Under the Contagious Diseases Acts,” *Feminist Studies* 1 (Winter – Spring, 1973): 74.

¹⁰ For an explanation on the Infant Life Protection Act and other “double standard” issues, see Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 79–102. Prostitution, infanticide, and employment were all areas where laws were drastically slanted against women. The laws all centered on women’s reproductive abilities, which men felt directed the women’s proper place in society. The Contagious Diseases Acts (1864, 1866, and 1869, repealed in

Although the “sexual double standard” was the root of many Victorian feminism issues, not all women activists believed that the sexes were equal. Most feminists agreed that men and women should be held to an equal standard of morality and conduct, but many women activists did not believe that women and men were intellectually equal. Caroline Norton, an early Victorian feminist who fought for marriage and divorce rights for women, said, “The wild and stupid theories advanced by a few women of ‘equal rights’ and ‘equal intelligence’ are not the opinions of their sex. I, for one (I, with millions more), believe in the natural superiority of man, as I do in the existence of a God.¹¹” She was not alone in this belief. Even women who fought for female rights and opportunities were careful not to appear too aggressive or demanding. To be called “strong-minded” was offensive to most women.¹² Many women truly believed that they were inferior to men, that their intellectual ability was proportional to man’s as was their physical strength. However, they also recognized that not *all* men were superior and that women had the responsibility of raising male children and guiding their husbands’ behavior and conduct, all from the home.¹³ For the most part, however, women activists did not support the idea of male superiority. That opinion was reserved for the most conservative feminists as well as those uninterested in women’s rights. Nonetheless, differing views thrived among women activists.

1886), the Infant Life Protection Act (1872), and the Factory Acts (1874 and 1878) were the legal products of these issues. Prostitutes were treated unfairly by being detained and tested for venereal diseases while their customers were unaffected by the laws. Unmarried mothers were expected to follow certain rules while the fathers were left free with no legal responsibility or consequences. And the standards for working in factories and other professions were different for women and men, primarily because women were considered weaker and potential mothers (whether married or not).

¹¹ Quoted in Mary Poovey, “Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act,” *Feminist Studies* 14 (Autumn 1988): 473.

¹² Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850–1914* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 4.

¹³ See Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 42–46.

Some feminists believed women were innately different from men, with complementary strengths and abilities. They fought to allow women the opportunity to exercise their skills not just in the private world but also in the public sphere, believing that women could enhance public life. Other feminists vehemently fought against the idea that men and women were different. They strove to minimize the natural distinctions between the sexes and argued that women should enjoy identical rights and opportunities to those of men.¹⁴

Despite conflicting principles, women from both schools of thought tended to fight for the same issues. Among these issues were marriage rights, education for women, and equal rights for employment. All three were related. Because legislation barred women from most types of employment, female self-sufficiency was nearly impossible. Thus, unless a woman was lucky enough to be supported by a father, brother, or other male relative, marriage was an economic necessity. However, married women lost all their legal rights to their own property and money. And because women were expected to be in the home, they were discouraged and even banned from higher education. This meant they were not qualified for the higher-paying jobs, should they need to support themselves. Because of the inter-related nature of these three concerns, progress on any one issue was difficult and slow. Changes needed to occur in all three areas in order to bring women into an equal relationship with men.

The main blockade for marriage rights was the common law concept of “coverture.” Coverture meant that when a woman married, she, along with all her possessions, property, and money, became the legal property of her husband. Coverture caused major problems in cases of abandonment and cruelty. As discussed previously, a woman could not obtain a legal divorce from her husband on the grounds of abandonment or most cases of cruelty. Since all her property,

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

as well as any wages she might earn during the marriage, belonged to her husband, she had little other choice than to stay in the failed marriage. Even if a man abandoned his family for several years and his wife took a job in order to pay the living expenses, he could legally claim all of her wages if he returned. Feminists insisted that such situations could be prevented if women retained their property rights in marriage.¹⁵

Another issue regarding married women's rights was child custody rights. According to laws of the time, children born in a marriage were the sole property of the husband. If a married couple separated, the father could remove the children from their mother at any time and deny her the right to see them. He could even name a different testamentary guardian other than the mother after his death.¹⁶ This law stood in stark contradiction to other issues of the time. For instance, children born in marriage were the legal responsibility of the father, whereas children born out of wedlock were the sole responsibility of the woman. Furthermore, many opponents of women's rights used woman's natural ability for raising children as an argument against outside employment, insisting that woman's innate responsibility was motherhood. Nonetheless, laws dictated that the father, not the mother, should raise the children in the event of separation.

The laws regarding wives originated from the belief in women's intellectual inferiority and inability to make sound decisions. Some activists actually agreed that women had inferior intellectual abilities, but they blamed it on the lack of sufficient education rather than natural inadequacy. Education for girls consisted of basic reading, writing, and math as well as singing, dance, piano, painting, and fine needlework. All of these activities were believed to prepare a girl

¹⁵ For a discussion of the rights relinquished in marriage, see Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 8–10, and Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 38–39.

¹⁶ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 131–155.

to be married. In contrast, sons of middle class families usually received thorough (and expensive) educations preparing them for successful careers. Even as legislation improved schools for lower class girls, middle class families insisted on sending their daughters to boarding schools with selective pupilage, which cost much more and provided an inferior education.¹⁷

Thus, girls were prepared for their inevitable future: marriage. But not all women had the chance to marry. B. A. Crackanorpe, in her famous 1894 article titled “The Revolt of the Daughters” said, “Marriage *is* the best profession for a woman; we all know and acknowledge it; but, for obvious reasons, all women cannot enter its strait and narrow gate.”¹⁸ Herein lay the dilemma that girls were prepared only for marriage, even when a large percentage of women never married. Their education did not qualify them for anything else. Yet men could not be expected to assume financial responsibility for all of their unmarried female relatives. For this reason, some activists dedicated the majority of their time toward improving education for girls and expanding opportunities for higher education.

Not all feminists agreed with Crackanorpe that marriage was the “best profession” for women. In fact, some women argued that marriage was nothing more than glorified prostitution. They claimed that since many women married largely for financial stability, they were in effect acting as prostitutes for their husbands who more or less paid them for their services.¹⁹ Even these feminists usually supported the institution of marriage; however, they believed that women should be allowed to marry as equal partners with their husbands, rather than being forced into marriage for economic reasons.

¹⁷ Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850–1914* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 25.

¹⁸ B. A. Crackanorpe, “The Revolt of the Daughters,” *Nineteenth Century* 35 (1894): 25.

¹⁹ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 49.

The fight for women's employment opportunities was an uphill battle. Victorian social customs dictated that middle-class women should not work. Wives and daughters who did not have to work were status symbols, signifying a man's wealth. In fact, the term "lady," strictly speaking, did not apply to employed women, regardless of their social class. But if they needed to work, regulations and customs barred women from many types of employment. During the third quarter of the 19th century, feminists of the Langham Place Circle (named after the location of their headquarters) began publishing the *English Woman's Journal*. One of the central issues for the journal was the right to fair and equal employment for women.²⁰ Feminists argued that women needed to work because of the growing number of unmarried women and widows. In 1851 women outnumbered men in England by more than half a million. This number grew to 1.4 million by 1911.²¹ It was simply unrealistic for all women to expect to marry.

Despite the growing necessity for women's employment, many people continued to view working women with skepticism. Critics feared that women's independence would decrease marriages and undermine the family system that had dominated English culture for centuries. Feminists asserted that the ability to work would actually increase marriages because women would no longer be financial burdens. Instead of men postponing marriage because of insufficient wealth, they could rely on their wives to supplement the family income. Some men worried that women entering the work force would reduce the number of jobs and level of pay for men. Women argued that even if this were true, men would benefit overall by not having to

²⁰ As Eugenia Palmegiano points out, feminists fought for education and employment rights for women, but they were interested mainly in obtaining these rights for single women. Feminists did not, for example, fight for childcare centers for married women who needed to work. On many issues, the fight was for single women's rights, not women's rights in general. See Eugenia Palmegiano, "Feminist Propaganda in the 1850s and 1860s," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 4 (February 1971): 6-7.

²¹ Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850-1914* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 4-11.

support the women in their family. Women believed that an expanding economy would benefit everyone, as there was no limit on the level of productivity in the country.²²

As feminists fought against social stereotypes that discouraged women from working, they also battled governmental regulations. Labor restrictions for women were much more stringent than for men. Women were not allowed to work as many hours and were banned from certain types of positions. Many people wanted to ban women with infants and dependent children from working at all. Hour restrictions originated from the idea that a child's health was connected to its mother's health. Additionally, many people believed that women needed more time to take care of housework. Feminists came back with the argument that restricting a woman's hours did not actually limit her hours of work, and thus preserve her health, since she would be expected to put in as many hours at home if she was not at work. Furthermore, women activists combated the idea that a woman's economic identity should be defined by her ability to bear children. Most laws did not make exceptions to labor restrictions for single women or women without children. Instead, they limited the hours of all women in order to protect their children—even if they had none.²³

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, feminists scored several political victories, including the Married Women's Property Act of 1857 (amended in 1874 and 1882) and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in 1886. These and other events surely found their way into the drawing room conversations of middle class homes. Although feminists were certainly the minority among Victorian women, they shared their ideas loudly and made an unmistakable mark on political and cultural history.

²² Ibid., 10

²³ See J. D. Roberts, "Feminism and the State in Later Victorian England," *The Historical Journal* 38 (March, 1995): 94, and Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 96-100.

The New Woman Movement

While some feminists spent their energy on political battlegrounds, others turned to the pen and press to make their voices heard. In 1894, women's issues, which had previously been referred to in journalism as "The Woman Question," became known as the "New Woman." This change resulted from the novelist "Ouida" extracting the term from Sarah Grand's essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question." Although the term only came into use in 1894, the New Woman as a literary phenomenon had existed for more than a decade. Sally Ledger defines the New Woman as "a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet . . . a fictional construct."²⁴ The large number of women that fit under the category of New Women makes the movement difficult to summarize. While many actual women were labeled as "New Women," the movement primarily involved literary characters. Female authors who wrote in the New Woman genre were the most likely to be labeled New Women themselves, and while some of them did follow the ideals of New Woman characters, the main characteristics associated with the New Woman can be seen most clearly in the literary characters of the genre.

Ledger considers Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, published in 1883, to be the first New Woman novel.²⁵ Although written long before the naming of the movement, the book's heroine displays the common attributes of New Woman characters. The movement was strongest in the first half of the 1890s with its climax in 1894. Because the New Woman was associated with Decadence, Oscar Wilde's imprisonment in 1895 caused the movement to

²⁴ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

dwindle. However, many important works were published in the latter half of the 1890's, despite the decline in popularity.²⁶

New Woman writers shared many of the same goals as their sister feminists. Both groups of women wanted to eliminate stereotypes of women as innocent and naïve and to prove that women were strong, responsible, and intelligent.²⁷ But while women activists fought mainly for political freedom, New Woman writers sought social liberation. They believed that they must first change how men thought about women before they could successfully win equal rights. Most New Woman characters rejected some part of the traditional feminine role, whether it was marriage, motherhood, lack of education, or sexual purity. For this reason, these topics form the most common associations with the New Woman movement.

Before embarking on a discussion of the main issues associated with the movement, it is important to note that there were two sets of New Woman writers as well as a third group, their critics. The first group consisted of female writers, who used their works to propagate their opinions about women's liberation. The second group consisted of male writers who included New Woman characters in their writings but did not necessarily agree with the feminist goals of their female counterparts. Often, these writers showed the possible negative outcomes of certain New Woman goals. The third group, the critics, was responsible for exaggerating the negative characteristics associated with the New Woman movement. The distinction between the New Woman characters of male and female writers illustrates the different goals of the two groups.

²⁶ In 1895, *Punch* published an article called "THE END OF THE NEW WOMAN – The Crash has Come at Last." This announcement coincided with Oscar Wilde's imprisonment. See Sally Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, 153–168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 167.

²⁷ See A. R. Cunningham, "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890's," *Victorian Studies* 17 (December 1973): 179–80, and Eugenia Palmegiano, "Feminist Propaganda in the 1850s and 1860s," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 4 (February 1971): 7.

Female writers advocated for women's rights. Male writers responded to the movement from a (usually) neutral point of view. Therefore, their works did not function as active weapons in the women's movement. They took a much more passive stance that provided the impression of an objective commentator. All three groups contributed to the ideas, characteristics, and goals associated with the New Woman.

One of the attitudes associated with the New Woman movement was the belief in the superiority of women over men. The author most responsible for this idea was the well-known New Woman novelist and essayist, Sarah Grand. In "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," Grand labeled a certain type of man as the "Bawling Brotherhood."²⁸ She described the members of this group as possessing a "lord-and-master-monarch-of-all-I-survey attitude."²⁹ In her eyes, these were the men who fought against women's rights because they did not want to lose their power over women. She made the distinction between men who like subservient, unintelligent "cow-women" and men who like immoral "scum-women."³⁰ Both types of women were despicable and so were the men who associated with them. Grand ended her essay by declaring that men would not exist if it were not for women, alluding to a biological as well as a social necessity. From Grand's article, it is easy to see why critics labeled New Women as "man-haters." But Grand made an important, rather subtle, distinction in her essay. Her attack was not on all men but on men that are "fiends."³¹ Grand actually respected many men, more so than many of her female contemporaries. While her intention was to attack a small minority of men, her essay nonetheless contributed to the stereotype that New Women hated men.

²⁸ Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," *North American Review* 158 (1894): 270.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 270.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 270-71.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 270.

The prevailing issues in New Woman literature came from the parts of the traditional female role that the characters rejected. Marriage was one of the most controversial. Three distinct opinions regarding marriage existed among New Woman writers and characters. The first was that marriage was still sacred and still the best option for women. Sarah Grand supported this idea, acting as a strong advocate for marriage. The second idea was that marriage, an outdated institution, should be free, not a legal relationship. Mona Caird contributed the most to this option. The third idea was that women should not tie themselves to one man.³² They should be free to leave a mate at any time if they found another more suitable. Although this opinion was rarely propagated by women, George Egerton was an exception. Her writings served as fuel for the attack that blamed the decline of marriage on the New Woman.

Mona Caird, relatively unknown before her article, "Marriage," earned the position as one of the most outspoken female activists on the issue of marriage. In her infamous article, Caird condemned marriage as an unnatural relationship that originated in the teachings of Martin Luther. She claimed that before Luther's time, men and women joined in "free marriage," absent of legal ties and shifting rights. Marriage after Luther quickly became the only acceptable path for women. An unmarried woman was a failure to society. However, Caird considered married women to be a failure to their sex. She believed that women became boring and complacent after

³² Many anti-feminists claimed that the New Woman was against marriage and for free love. In most cases, women did not disagree with a monogamous relationship. However, they did not agree with marriage because it forced a woman to become a man's property. It was the political aspect of marriage and the loss of freedom that they rejected. Just like Victorian feminists, New Woman writers fought for the right to have a life, even if a woman was not able to marry. They should be able to travel, visit concert halls, gain an education, and work, if they remained unmarried. See A. R. Cunningham, "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890's," *Victorian Studies* 17 (December 1973): 181; Sally Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, 153–168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 154; and Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 11, 21–22.

marriage. She despised the financial necessity that drove most women to marry. If marriage was to be based on love, and love alone, it must be “free,” not legally binding. A woman should never be forced to marry or stay married because of economic need.³³

Ella Hepworth Dixon agreed with Caird on marriage. In her essay “Why Women are Ceasing to Marry,” Dixon argued that single women had more freedom than married women. Politically, this was certainly true, but single women did not possess the same social rights as married women in the late 1800’s. They could not attend concert halls and theatres, nor could they travel alone. By the end of the century, however, these rules had begun to shift. Dixon claimed that many of the privileges reserved for married women were now open to single women as well. A woman with a career and financial independence would be very hesitant to give up her political and economic freedom by marrying, especially if she already enjoyed the social privileges that came with marriage. Dixon declared that women would only desire to marry after they obtained political equality with men.³⁴

Although some women argued against marriage as it stood, many people feared the repercussions of a society absent of marriage. In “The Anti-Marriage League,” Margaret Oliphant expressed her concern for the manner in which writers treated children in anti-marriage situations.³⁵ Her main target was Thomas Hardy, whose 1895 novel, *Jude the Obscure*, described a situation in which unmarried parents caused the deaths of their children. Jude’s son from a former marriage believed that he and his two half siblings were a burden to their parents, so he killed the other children and then himself. This grotesque reaction to the absence of marriage was

³³ See Mona Caird, “Marriage,” *Westminster Review* 130 (1888): 186–201.

³⁴ Ella Hepworth Dixon, “Why Women are Ceasing to Marry,” *Humanitarian* 14 (1899): 391–96.

³⁵ Margaret Oliphant, “The Anti-Marriage League,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 159 (1896): 135–49.

more common among the male writers than the female writers. Even though Hardy did not support the marriage institution as it stood, neither did his novel appear to support anti-marriage sentiment. Female authors with similar opinions rarely portrayed such morbid outcomes in marriage-free relationships. This was partially because their grievance with marriage had to do with women's rights. In order to move their agenda forward, they needed to avoid depicting any negative consequences having to do with the absence of marriage. Rather, they focused on the problems with marriage. Hardy, who had little to win or lose from marriage reform, did not have the same restrictions as the women.

Another important issue in New Woman literature was female sexuality. Two distinct camps existed among female authors. One group, labeled social purity feminists by Sally Ledger,³⁶ upheld female virtue and chastity. They argued that men should be held to the same sexual standard as women. Heavily influenced by the Contagious Diseases Acts, this group published most of their works near the time of the Act's repeal in 1886.³⁷ Sarah Grand in particular advocated for the wives of unchaste men, who did not receive protection from the Act, nor from societal expectations. *The Heavenly Twins* (1895), her most popular novel, told the story of a woman who refuses to consummate her marriage after finding out on her wedding day that her husband has not led a chaste life prior to their marriage. He later dies of syphilis. The heroine is not free of sexual desire, but she chooses to repress her feelings in order to maintain her high moral standard and avoid supporting sexual deviancy.

³⁶ See Sally Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, 153–168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 153.

³⁷ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 20.

The other camp believed that women should behave more like men when it came to sexuality, including engaging in free love. George Egerton advocated for this opinion. Her short stories, titled *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), contained metaphorical descriptions of female desire and passion. Egerton showed enthusiasm for exploring female sexuality openly, without shame. Her characters freely changed partners and acted as the aggressors in relationships.³⁸ Critics seized the idea that the aggressive New Woman lacked the social virtues so highly favored in Victorian women. Perhaps the most representational of New Woman critiques was the “Character Note: the New Woman,” published in the *Cornhill Magazine* (not long after Sarah Grand’s essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question”). The anonymous author presented the New Woman as arrogant, cheaply educated, and masculine. The author described one Novissima who prides herself on discussing obscure political figures and complex literature. Novissima feels superior to all other women and most men, even if they have better educations than she. In the end, despite her best efforts, she is incapable of being deep, and she is also incapable of winning the true admiration of respectable and intelligent men.³⁹ The magazine *Punch* regularly published articles and cartoons with similar characters. Its anti-New Woman pieces criticized “feminine men and masculine women.”⁴⁰

Closely related to the topic of female sexuality was motherhood. When it came to politics, women were frequently defined by their ability to bear children. Motherhood was an expectation for most women and it was honored and respected by the majority of society. However, many of

³⁸ See Sally Ledger, “The New Woman and Feminist Fictions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, 153–168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159–60.

³⁹ “Character Note: The New Woman,” (1984). In *Fin de Siècle: A reader in Cultural History c. 1880–1900*, edited by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, 80–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁴⁰ Linda Dowling, “The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890’s” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979): 445.

the New Woman characters rejected their role as mothers. Created mostly by male authors, these women shared a desire to rid themselves of the ability to bear children. Some even practiced abortion and infanticide. Others simply did not take an interest in children.⁴¹ In Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), the main character embarks on a free love experiment in which she lives with her lover unmarried. When she unexpectedly becomes pregnant and her lover dies of illness, she faces many consequences due to the societal opinion of unmarried mothers. Even though she personally loves her child, the child is the cause of her lost freedom and respect.

Women wanted sexual equality, but they could only achieve this if it were possible to control their fertility. If a "free love" relationship resulted in an unexpected child, the woman bore the consequence, usually alone.⁴² Critics responded to this dilemma by claiming that the New Woman was against motherhood. By contrast, most female authors championed motherhood. Even the books of radical George Egerton were filled with themes of motherhood. She took an interesting stance, because most of her characters were not the biological mothers of the children they raised. Furthermore, motherhood did not come naturally to her characters, who lacked maternal instinct. They had to learn how to be mothers by observing others.⁴³ Egerton wanted to separate sexuality from motherhood. She celebrated female sexuality for itself, not for its outcome – children. Her focus on non-biological motherhood maintained that division without putting a taboo on an essential female matter.

⁴¹ See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 18 and Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979): 447.

⁴² Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979): 447.

⁴³ Sally Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall, 153–168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 161.

Mona Caird differed from most female New Woman authors, because she did not support motherhood as strongly. In her novel *The Daughters of Danaus*, the main character, Hadria, is disgusted by motherhood. She does not believe that women have an instinct for nurturing or special intuition for their own children. In fact, Hadria abandons her husband and children and does not seem to experience regret or guilt.⁴⁴ Caird may have created characters that behaved radically, but her personal life was rather moderate. Caird's husband supported her independence and allowed her more freedoms than most Victorian wives. Together they had a son, whom Caird loved, for all that we can tell. It is difficult to say whether she was truly satisfied with her life, and perhaps Caird used Hadria as a model for her secret desires. Or perhaps Caird was only representing, not advocating, a lifestyle option for women.

The last issue connected with the New Woman movement was education for women. The press associated the New Woman with the small minority of women that attended one of the women's colleges.⁴⁵ Many New Woman characters were more educated than the average Victorian woman. Critics of the New Woman and women's rights suggested that educated women became proud and refused to listen to anybody else's opinion or logic. Many New Woman satires contained characters whose self-confidence could not be shaken. They "exit fighting," even if they are clearly wrong.⁴⁶ This attitude can be seen in Novissima from the "Character Note" discussed above. Even though the other characters do not agree with her opinions, Novissima cannot imagine being wrong about something. She cannot believe that

⁴⁴ Ibid., see 165.

⁴⁵ See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 18 and Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979): 17.

⁴⁶ Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979): 143.

someone might disagree with her.⁴⁷ Of course, Novissima's attributes were grotesque exaggerations of the actual women who wrote New Woman novels.

Although the New Woman movement lasted scarcely two decades, it profoundly affected literature and most art forms. The Gilbert & Sullivan operas show clear influences from the movement as well as from Victorian feminism as a whole. Of their fourteen collaborative works, *Princess Ida* most directly relates to women's issues, as its central plot involves women's rights. The opera premiered a year after Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* and its main character is a clear prototype of the New Woman. Aside from *Princess Ida*, most of the Gilbert & Sullivan female characters hint at inspiration from feminism. In the following chapters, I will discuss several of the female characters in detail, explore the conflict and balance between the creative styles of Gilbert and Sullivan, and analyze *Princess Ida* in depth.

⁴⁷ See "Character Note: The New Woman," (1984). In *Fin de Siècle: A reader in Cultural History c. 1880–1900*, edited by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, 80–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

2. Gilbert's Female Characters

W. S. Gilbert has often been described as a satirist. His humor certainly contains elements of both parody and satire, but he is not a true satirist. Arthur Du Bois said:

The *satirist* is a witty romanticist. He will ridicule a truth seriously because he objects to it; he is less liable than the romanticist to a deep and real faith in other truths than those he rebels against. The *humorist* will set incongruous truths beside each other for the sake of incongruity; he will turn truth upside down for the sake of a new point of view. Of wits and ironists, he is the classicist.⁴⁸ [italics added]

By this definition, Gilbert is a humorist rather than a satirist primarily because of his motive in presenting incongruity. In his personal convictions, as far as they are known, Gilbert did not behave like a satirist. Robert Higbie suggested that although Gilbert resembles a satirist by making the main antagonist the social system or set of laws, he presented the conflicts to make the audience laugh, not to cause discomfort and suggest a need to take action.⁴⁹ This distinguishing point is important, because the Savoy, where most of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas premiered, was not a theatre where people went to learn about social and political issues. They went to laugh. Although Gilbert saw the humor in institutions, laws, and customs, he did not appear to have any personal problems with them. Instead, he manipulated the ironies to provide comic material for his plays.

It was as a humorist that Gilbert included elements of feminism in his plots. The only direct information we have on Gilbert's opinion of women's rights, an anecdote from Mrs. Clement Scott, reveals a detached attitude:

⁴⁸ Arthur E. Du Bois, "W. S. Gilbert, Practical Classicist," *The Sewanee Review* 37 (January 1929): 94.

⁴⁹ Robert Higbie, "Conflict and Comedy in W. S. Gilbert's Savoy Operas," *South Atlantic Bulletin* 45 (November 1980): 66

I supposed you remember Gilbert's remark when he read of the fanatics in petticoats who chained themselves to railings and shouted: 'Votes for Women'?
'I shall follow suit,' said he. 'I shall chain myself to the rails outside Queen Charlotte's Hospital and yell, "Beds for Men".'⁵⁰

Gilbert did not usually mention specific feminist issues in his librettos, but he allowed the women's movement to shape his female characters. Stories of Gilbert's personal life reveal some of his opinions on women. It is difficult to know what he actually believed, however, because his behaviors were often contradictory. He often treated women as intellectually inferior, and yet he preferred to associate with intelligent women, even spending several years in a business relationship with Helen Lenoir (who later married Richard D'Oyly Carte, producer of the Savoy Theatre). Gilbert's personality in general can be difficult to determine because most accounts give conflicting information. His earliest biographers sought to mask his less favorable traits, and his many friends, acquaintances, and enemies reported varying levels of truth. David Eden set out to expose Gilbert's true character three quarters of a century after his death, and Eden's research does seem to present a more realistic report than previous biographies. He lists the "unpalatable aspects of Gilbert's nature"⁵¹ to include the frequent persecution of women, especially spinsters. Regardless of Gilbert's unknown views on women's rights, he definitely did not respect most women. This comes across in the way he developed his female characters.

Perhaps the easiest connection between Gilbert's librettos and the women's movement is the way in which he utilized common female stereotypes—the very stereotypes feminists sought to eradicate. Most of Gilbert's female roles fit into a few categories. The traits of these stock characters sometimes mocked an aspect of the women's movement, but they usually mocked

⁵⁰ Harold Orel, ed., *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 49.

⁵¹ David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 5.

women in general. Gilbert despised elderly women who tried to act younger than their age, and he appeared to detest spinsters. His loathing for women who never married likely stemmed from the societal belief that all women should marry. Just as society viewed spinsters as failures, so did Gilbert. Similarly, Gilbert thought of women as naturally less intelligent. Despite the fact that he seemed to prefer intelligent women, Gilbert never supported education for women or suggested that women's inferior intelligence stemmed from their lack of opportunity. Rather, he seemed content with things as they were. Even his more respectable female characters have comical flaws that keep the audience from fully admiring them. Gilbert only created a few female characters⁵² that do not fit into one of the following three categories: the elderly spinster, the "feather-brain", and the flawed but mostly respectable. I will discuss each category in detail below.

The Elderly Spinster

One of Gilbert's most common stock female characters was the elderly spinster. Most of his collaborations with Sullivan had at least one.⁵³ These characters were middle-aged women whose beauty had faded. They were often in competition with younger women for the love of the leading male character. In some cases, they were after a younger man, as with Ruth and Frederic (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Katisha and Nanki-Pooh (*The Mikado*), and Lady Jane and Bunthorne (*Patience*). In all of these cases, their awareness of their age drove the women to be romantically aggressive. In his personal life, Gilbert openly despised elderly women who tried to act or dress

⁵² Characters that do not fit into these categories include Angelina in *Trial by Jury*, Ida in *Princess Ida*, and Casilda in *The Gondoliers*

⁵³ For instance, Mrs. Partlett in *The Sorcerer*, Buttercup in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Ruth in *The Pirates of the Penzance*, Lady Jane in *Patience*, the queen of the fairies in *Iolanthe*, Lady Blanche in *Princess Ida*, Katisha in *The Mikado*, Dame Hannah in *Ruddigore*, and Dame Caruthers in *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

below their age, often mocking them out loud in public. In one anecdote, Gilbert sarcastically suggested that a certain woman could remember the Boer War if she tried. The spinsters in his plays seem to be a conglomeration of the traits he abhorred in elderly women.

These characters filled a specific role in the drama. In almost all cases, they were comical. They were mocked by other characters for their age and fading charms. Gilbert even occasionally wrote lines in which the women made fun of themselves. For instance, in *Pirates*, Little Buttercup says, “Red, am I? and round – and rosy! May be, for I have dissembled well! But hark ye, my merry friend – hast ever thought that beneath a gay and frivolous exterior there may lurk a canker-worm which is slowly but surely eating its way into one’s very heart?” Little Buttercup is the pretend love of all the sailors on the ship, but no one takes her seriously as a romantic figure. When the captain falls in love with her in the end, the relationship is purely humorous from an audience perspective. In several cases, the spinster characters are antagonists. This is the case in both *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado*, where they get in the way of the leading couple’s love. Lady Blanche in *Princess Ida* is also antagonistic, although her motive is the desire for power, not love. Probably the only respectable character to fit in this category is the Fairy Queen in *Iolanthe*. She is older than her fairy sisters, although it makes little difference since they are all immortal. Unlike most of Gilbert’s other characters of her type, the Fairy Queen is respected by the other characters, both male and female. But she is an anomaly for Gilbert. It will be beneficial to consider two of Gilbert’s elderly spinster characters in more detail.

The Mikado: Katisha

Katisha from *The Mikado* is an excellent example of this particular stock character. She is an old woman from the Mikado’s court who has claimed Nanki-Pooh (the Mikado’s son) in

marriage by means of an ancient law. Nanki-Pooh so wishes to avoid the unwanted wedding that he has gone into disguise as a traveling musician and run away from home. The following passage shows how Katisha feels about her relationship with Nanki-Pooh as well as her opinion of herself. She speaks to Ko-Ko, who she believes has recently executed Nanki-Pooh.

You have slain my love. He did not love *me*, but he would have loved me in time. I am an acquired taste – only the educated palate can appreciate *me*. I was educating his palate when he left me. Well, he is dead, and where shall I find another? It takes years to train a man to love me. Am I to go through the weary round again, and, at the same time, implore mercy for you who robbed me of my prey – I mean my pupil – just as his education was on the point of completion? Oh, where shall I find another?

Katisha understands fully that she is not romantically desirable, but she also seems to believe that she can teach a man to love her. She demonstrates her aggressive attitude by referring to Nanki-Pooh as her “prey.” And although she knows that he does not love her, she refuses to give up the hunt, apparently willing to force him to marry her if his “education” fails.

Shortly after being told that Nanki-Pooh has been executed, Katisha reveals her grief in a recitative and aria. She does not appear to be sad at all that Nanki-Pooh has died. Rather, her sorrow stems from her loss of hope that she will find love before the end of her life. In fact, she seems quite ready to die if she must be alone:

Alone, and yet alive! Oh, sepulchre!
My soul is still my body’s prisoner!
Remote the peace that Death alone can give –
My doom, to wait! my punishment, to live!

She then sings about the pain caused by prolonged heartache of someone who is tired of living. One can only imagine that Nanki-Pooh was not Katisha’s first victim. It seems though that he was her last hope and that she would rather die than try to find another “pupil” to train.

Katisha demands respect from those in her presence, but this does not stop the other characters from mocking her behind her back. Near the end of the play, Nanki-Pooh and Yum-

Yum convince Ko-Ko to marry Katisha so that Nanki-Pooh may reveal that he is still alive without Katisha sentencing him to death for marrying another woman. Ko-Ko is quite hesitant to go forward with the plan, even though refusing would mean his own death. He calls her “something appalling,” which Pitti-Sing assures him only applies to her face. She sarcastically praises Katisha’s left elbow, knowing that Ko-Ko really has no choice but to accept the plan. The most pathetic part of Katisha’s story is that Ko-Ko successfully tricks her into believing he loves her. For the woman who had never dreamed of a man freely admitting he loved her, this is almost more than Katisha can take in. They are married immediately, after which Nanki-Pooh and Yum-Yum reveal themselves. Katisha discovers that she has been but a piece in the game and that her marriage was Ko-Ko’s punishment. She would have married Nanki-Pooh, knowing that he did not love her, but it seems so much crueler to have believed for a moment that her husband loved her, only to learn that he despised her like everyone else. Even though it seems like she finally has what she wants – a husband, this is not a happy ending for Katisha. In her, Gilbert created a totally unlikeable character, and he ended by making her look like a complete fool. It is almost impossible to sympathize with Katisha, and we end up feeling more sorry for Ko-Ko, even though he has done nothing honorable in the entire play.

Patience: Lady Jane

Lady Jane, the stock spinster from *Patience*, has the unfortunate goal of attempting to win the love of Bunthorne, the aesthetic, who is loved by all the beautiful young maidens in the village. Lady Jane is much older than her competitors and has lost her beauty. Her character is intriguing because throughout the play she alone appears to be truly devoted to Bunthorne, unlike the other young maidens who switch their loyalty several times. Unfortunately, Bunthorne

has absolutely no interest in her. In fact, he clearly despises her affection and views her as an obstacle in his way of winning the affection of Patience, the only woman in the village who does not love him.

Throughout the play, several characters make fun of Lady Jane's age and of her insistence on attempting to win Bunthorne's love. Interestingly, only male characters make such comments. The Duke exclaims, "Good old Bunthorne!" when Lady Jane claims that Bunthorne has succeeded in idealizing even her. Bunthorne, on several occasions, articulates his desire that Lady Jane would give up the fight. He expresses his dismay in an aside when Lady Jane insists on buying a ticket in the raffle he has started to help him choose a bride. When he asks her to draw the first ticket, she exclaims joyfully, "He loves me best!" He replies in an aside with, "I want to know the worst!" After it is absolutely clear that Bunthorne has lost all his admirers, he desperately admits that Jane is a "fine figure of a woman!" But now it is his turn to be crushed. The Duke decides to marry Jane, and she immediately leaves Bunthorne to accept the proposal. However, the "happily ever after" does not come without a jab at Jane's appearance. The Duke delivers the following line just before deciding on Lady Jane:

I have a great gift to bestow. Approach, such of you as are truly lovely. (*All come forward, bashfully, except Jane and Patience.*) In personal appearance you have all that is necessary to make a woman happy. In common fairness, I think I ought to choose the only one among you who has the misfortune to be distinctly plain . . . Jane!

Jane apparently has no qualms about accepting a marriage proposal offered only out of "common fairness," which shows her dwindling sense of self-respect.

Gilbert treats Lady Jane differently from Katisha by giving her lines that reference her own age in a humorous way. For example, near the beginning of the play Lady Jane reveals to the other women that Bunthorne has fallen in love with Patience, the village milkmaid. The women all despair except for Jane, who seems to think the romance will be fleeting. In an aside,

she says, “Oh, Reginald, if you but knew what a wealth of golden love is waiting for you, stored up in this rugged old bosom of mine, the milkmaid’s triumph would be short indeed!” Not only is she aware of her age gap, but also she seems to believe it makes her more qualified to be Bunthorne’s Bride. Later on in the play, Bunthorne sarcastically refers to Jane as a “pretty damozel.” Fully aware of the mockery, she replies, “No, not pretty. Massive. Cheer up! I will never leave you, I swear it!” This line is particularly sad, because she does not seem to grasp that Bunthorne wants nothing to do with her. She thinks he will be happy that she will never leave. Although she realizes she is at a disadvantage in the competition for his love, she does not seem aware that he does not consider her a competitor at all.

It is clear that Lady Jane may treat her age lightly in public, but she is very concerned that her time is running out. At the beginning of the second act, Jane sits alone and reflects on recent events. The “fickle crew” has left Bunthorne, who still loves Patience, in order to flock around Grosvenor, another aesthetic who has recently arrived. Jane believes that Bunthorne will tire of Patience and then she will be the only one left to claim his love. But then she says, “. . . do not dally long, Reginald, for my charms are ripe, Reginald, and already they are decaying. Better secure me ere I have gone too far!” She follows this statement with a recitative describing the sad lot of the woman who each year watches her beauty fade and must resort to beauty tricks to mask her age. The recitative leads into the aria “Silvered is the raven hair.” The first verse of the song has a poetic tone and is more likely to stir sympathy in the listener, but the second verse seems like a jab on Gilbert’s part. It focuses entirely on her size and she seems to grow more and more desperate during it:

Fading is the taper waist,
Shapeless grows the shapely limb,
And although severely laced,
Spreading is the figure trim!

Stouter than I used to be,
Still more corpulent grow I –
There will be too much of me
In the coming by-and-bye!

The character of Lady Jane is more comical than Katisha, particularly because the story ends happy for her. Even though she shares Katisha's fate of marrying somebody who does not love her, Jane is a more likeable character than Katisha, so it is easier to cheer with her. But she is still a mockery of women on Gilbert's part; we may laugh with her, but we do not respect her.

The “Feather-Brain”⁵⁴

Another of Gilbert's stock female characters is the “feather-brain,” a term he used himself in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. This type of character is a young, naïve girl inexperienced in matters of love and lacking a sense of logic. It is difficult to find her male counterpart in Gilbert's librettos. Princess Ida's three brothers probably come closest, but these two types of characters play completely different roles in the story. Whereas Ida's brothers are slow-minded warriors who do not accomplish much nor hold respect with the other characters, the feather-brains are typically liked by the other characters for their sweetness and passivity. In fact, some of the lead females are feather-brains, such as Yum-Yum (*The Mikado*), Patience (*Patience*), and Phyllis (*Iolanthe*). In a time when society valued passive, obedient wives, these characters possessed some desirable traits, although exaggerated. But their comic quality shows that Gilbert did not prefer brainless women, however much he opposed women's rights. Characters that fit into this category also include Gianetta and Tessa from *The Gondoliers*, Constance from *The*

⁵⁴ Although the modern spelling is “featherbrain,” I have chosen to preserve Gilbert's use of the hyphen between the two words, as found in *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

Sorcerer, and Phoebe from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. We will look at Phoebe and Patience in more detail.

The Yeomen of the Guard: Phoebe

Phoebe is the stereotypical love-struck girl. The play begins with an aria about maidens in love. Phoebe describes the common symptoms, such as sitting and sighing, wandering, and experiencing unbidden teardrops. She sings, “Although she keenly feels the smart, She cannot tell what ails her heart.” Although the lyrics are sung with sincerity, they subtly mock young love, exaggerating the dulled senses and mental faculties commonly described in more serious poetry and literature. Taken alone, the lyrics could probably fit well enough in a serious dramatic work. However, Phoebe then reveals whom it is that she claims to love, and the song becomes humorous in hindsight. His name is Colonel Fairfax, he is a soldier imprisoned for practicing sorcery, and she has never actually met him. She believes that he is unjustly sentenced to death, and this, along with his youth and handsome face, justifies her devotion. She argues that Colonel Fairfax should not lose his head because “it’s the handsomest head in England!” Even though several other characters believe Fairfax should be freed, and for much more valid reasons, Phoebe sticks to her original argument throughout the story. She does all that she can to help free him, but she is motivated by his attractiveness, rather than his innocence.

Unlike some of Gilbert’s feather-brain characters, Phoebe has a strong independent streak. She makes no complaint when her father tells her she has a “feather-brain” to her face, but she does take a stand when her brother, Leonard, who has been away at war, is about to return home:

If Leonard is going to tell me that I may not do this and I may not do that, and I must not talk to this one, or walk with that one, but go through the world with my lips pursed up and my eyes cast down, like a poor nun who has renounced mankind – why, as I have *not* renounced mankind, and don’t mean to renounce mankind, I won’t have it – there!

She certainly is not a feminist character if she does not mind being called a feather-brain, but her insistence that her brother not control her behavior mocks the independence that feminists fought for. Phoebe fights for the right to flirt.

By disguising Colonel Fairfax as Leonard, whom the village has never met, Phoebe and her father succeed in freeing him from prison. However, Fairfax falls in love with a different woman, and Phoebe is forced to marry the man she does not love in order to hide her role in freeing the prisoner. When her father finds out about her promise of marriage, he says, “’Tis pity, but the Colonel had to be saved at any cost, and as thy folly revealed our secret, thy folly must e’en suffer for it!” Perhaps her father’s reaction mirrors Gilbert’s opinion of Phoebe’s type of woman. If they make a mistake, they must suffer the consequences, no matter how undesirable. It also seems interesting that the father believed Colonel Fairfax must be saved “at any cost,” even at the cost of his own daughter’s happiness. His dismissal of Phoebe’s plight gives the audience the right to look down on her with unsympathetic eyes. Her silliness may have allowed her to free an innocent man, but in the end, it will not reward her.

Patience: Patience

Although she falls in the same category as Phoebe, Patience is a very different character. Her mannerisms and actions place her firmly in the “feather-brain” category, but she is wise in some ways. Patience’s most distinct trait is her naïveté. She claims that she does not know what love is and that the only person she has ever loved is her great aunt. When Bunthorne expresses his love to her, she distraughtly says, “What on earth does it all mean? Why does he love me? Why does he expect me to love him? He’s not a relation!” Patience is also simple-minded. The other maidens in the village are probably close to her age, but they are intellectually far more

advanced, as proved by their obsession with aestheticism and poetry. Patience is content with running her dairy and leaving the thinking to others.

Patience also has the unfortunate habit of taking things too literally. When Lady Angela explains that love is completely unselfish, Patience takes this to heart. She feels that she cannot love Grosvenor because he is perfect in every way. She says, “I think he is the noblest, purest, and most perfect being I have ever met. But I don’t love *him*. It is true that he is devotedly attached to me, but I don’t love him. Whenever he grows affectionate, I scream. It is my duty!” She has decided that Grosvenor may love her because she has many flaws, but she cannot love him because there would be nothing unselfish about it. It is only after Grosvenor forsakes aestheticism, and therefore his perfection, that Patience decides she can marry him.

Despite her limited intellectual ability and lack of world experience, Patience proves to be more sensible than the other female characters. She never fully gets caught up in aestheticism like the other women, who have abandoned their fiancés to pine after Bunthorne. Although Patience considers aestheticism a necessary component of perfection (she only agrees to marry Grosvenor after he forsakes aestheticism), this belief seems entirely inspired by the other women. Patience never once admires Bunthorne, who is an unlikeable character from an audience perspective. She also does not change her mind about whom she really cares for, unlike the other women who switch their affection from their fiancés to Bunthorne to Grosvenor and back to their fiancés.

The most remarkable thing about Patience is that she is the only female character to “solve the problem” at the end of a Gilbert & Sullivan opera. Several of the stories end with a woman revealing a secret, as in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Gondoliers*, which sets things straight, but Patience is the only one to solve the story’s conflict. In the final scene, Patience is about to

marry Bunthorne because she believes her total disgust for him will allow for truly unselfish love on her part. Just before the wedding, Grosvenor appears dressed in common clothes and behaving as an “everyday young man.” He reveals that Bunthorne has forced him to forsake aestheticism so that he may no longer compete for the women’s attention. Unfortunately for Bunthorne, all of the women have followed suite and become “everyday young girls.” Patience is at first shocked to see Grosvenor in such a state of imperfection, but then she realizes that she may now love him unselfishly. They joyfully embrace. One might have expected that Grosvenor would have come to the conclusion that he was now worthy of Patience’s love. After all, in similar situations in other Gilbert librettos it is the man who sees the solution and shares it with the woman. But here, Patience, perhaps the most feather-brained female lead of all the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, makes the discovery on her own. We can only wonder what Gilbert meant by it. The most likely conclusion is that he meant nothing at all. It seems clear that he opposed aestheticism, not women, in this plot. Perhaps Patience needed to make the discovery because she was the only character who never embraced aestheticism.

The Respectable but Flawed

The last category applies to several of the lead female roles. These characters can be described as mostly serious and respectable but with one flaw. This flaw usually plays a significant part in the plot and contributes to the conflict in the plot. Consider Aline from *The Sorcerer*. Between Aline and her fiancé Alexis, she is the more rational character. Alexis causes the main conflict in the plot by going too far with his conviction that love should be blind of age and rank. He implores Aline to drink an elixir that will ensure their love lasts forever.

ALEXIS. . . . one thing remains to be done, that my happiness may be complete. We must drink the philter ourselves, that I may be assured of your love for ever and ever.

ALINE. Oh, Alexis, do you doubt me? Is it necessary that such love as ours should be secured by artificial means? Oh, no, no, no!

ALEXIS. My dear Aline, time works terrible changes, and I want to place our love beyond the chance of change.

ALINE. Alexis, it is already far beyond that chance. Have faith in me, for my love can never, never change!

ALEXIS. Then you absolutely refuse?

ALINE. I do. If you cannot trust me, you have no right to love me – no right to be loved by me.

In these lines, Aline has nobler intentions and more benevolent thinking than Alexis. She comes across as possessing independence and integrity. However, she soon gives in to Alexis and drinks the philtre. As a consequence of her lack of conviction, Aline accidentally falls in love with a different man under the influence of the philtre. If she had stuck with her resolution to refuse, she could have avoided this plot twist. Aline's flaw then, was her willingness to obey her fiancé's wishes, even when it went against her better judgment. The following character examples are presented in the order of least serious to most serious.

Ruddigore: Rose Maybud

As with most of the characters in this category, Rose Maybud has a very respectable introduction. *Ruddigore* begins with a chorus of professional bridesmaids speculating about when Rose will marry. They refer to her as the “queen of maiden-kind” and “the fairest flower that blows.” Zorah, one of the bridesmaids, declares that every young man in the village loves Rose. However, Rose's beauty and goodness intimidates the men, so they do not tell her of their love. As professional bridesmaids, the girls depend on frequent marriages for their livelihood.

They fear that there will not be any weddings until Rose is claimed and the young men can move on to other girls in the village.

When Rose first enters, she is about to deliver gifts to “deserving villagers.” She has obviously put thought into these gifts, which hints at her genuine concern for others, a trait that continues throughout the opera. She lives with her aunt, Dame Hannah, who considers her to be caring, unselfish, and levelheaded. When Dame Hannah asks Rose why she does not marry, Rose admits that many of the young men lack manners, which she finds very important. It appears that nobody is good enough for Rose, not because she is haughty but because she is truly a cut above the average.

Although Gilbert has quickly and effectively portrayed Rose as an admirable character, he wastes no time in introducing her flaw. As Rose and Hannah continue their conversation about marriage, Rose admits that there is one young man she is interested in. However, she knows of no proper way to express her feelings, according to her Book of Etiquette. Immediately, Rose’s respectability and seriousness come into question. It becomes clear that her obsession with etiquette is hindering her progress in life. As Rose attempts to explain her plight to her aunt, she sings:

If somebody there chanced to be
Who loved me in a manner true,
My heart would point him out to me,
And I would point him out to you.
But here it says of those who point,
Their manners must be out of joint –
You *may* not point –
You *must* not point –
It’s manners out of joint, to point!

She continues with three more verses in which she runs into similar problems with whispering, hinting, and speaking before being spoken to. For all her good attributes, Rose cannot correctly apply her rules of etiquette to everyday life.

Shortly after, Rose runs into Robin Oakapple, whom she loves. He loves her too, but neither is able to tell the other, Robin because he feels intimidated and Rose because she cannot find a proper way of doing it. After a very bland conversation, they are about to part ways when Robin desperately asks Rose for advice. He quickly explains that the advice is for a friend. Rose confesses that she too has a friend in need of advice. They each sing of their “friend’s” situation, which is coincidentally the same as their own. Rose encourages Robin’s friend to speak of his love, and Robin entreats Rose’s friend to meet the man halfway. The lovers then part, still no further in their relationship than when they started.

Robin decides to ask his foster-brother Dick, a sailor, for help. Dick offers to speak to Rose about Robin’s true feelings. However, when Dick sees Rose he instantly falls in love with her. He “can’t look at her unmoved.” Dick’s state of agitation causes Rose to feel concern for his wellbeing. When she approaches him, she does not give any reason to suggest she is attracted to him; she only wants to offer help. But Dick does not share Robin’s inability to express his feelings. He immediately proposes to Rose. Caught off guard, Rose does not recognize the absurdity of the situation; instead, she consults her Book of Etiquette. She considers his forthrightness to be inappropriate for a stranger, but her book says “always speak the truth,” so she lets it pass. Instead of considering whether or not she should accept the marriage proposal, she looks up *how* to accept a marriage proposal. The book states that it should be done with “apparent hesitation” and that she should “avoid any appearance of eagerness.” Accordingly, Rose agrees to marry Dick. In her defense, she has never encountered a man brave enough to

reveal his feelings to her, so she lacks experience with proposals. However, Rose fails to use her own discretion, relying instead on the book to guide her behavior and words.

Rose quickly regrets her hasty decision when Robin discovers that Dick has stolen his girl. Robin reveals that he had wished to marry Rose. She replies, “Oh, but, sir, I knew not that thou didst seek me in wedlock, or in very truth I should not have hearkened unto this man, for behold, he is but a lowly mariner, and very poor withal, whereas thou art a tiller of the land, and thou hast fat oxen, and many sheep and swine, a considerable dairy farm and much corn and oil!” Although her reasoning seems a bit shallow, Rose has apparently begun to consider the consequences of her choice. Even though she did not break any rules of etiquette, she got herself into a situation that requires her to marry a man whom she does not love. To make matters worse, he is not even rich! As Rose voices her concerns about Dick’s character, Robin pretends to defend his foster-brother’s virtue while giving subtle hints about Dick’s bad habits. One song later, Rose has abandoned her engagement with Dick and embraces Robin. Her actions may not have been as proper as before, but at least she appears to use her own judgment and follow her heart.

Shortly before the wedding, Rose encounters “Mad Margaret.” Rose shows her signature concern for Margaret, who is talking to herself. Margaret reveals that she is in love with Sir Despard Murgatroyd, the bad baronet of Ruddigore. Rose is horrified that Margaret could have feelings for such a man. Years ago, a curse was placed on Sir Rupert Murgatroyd for persecuting witches. One of the witches declared that each Lord of Ruddigore must commit one crime every day of his life or die. The curse has come true. Each baronet has committed a crime a day until, overwhelmed with guilt, he has refused and immediately died. The current baronet, Sir Despard, is no exception. Rose cannot imagine loving such a man. Ironically, she is unaware that her

fiancé is actually the older brother of Sir Despard. Robin's true name is Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, baronet of Ruddigore. As a child, he faked his own death in an attempt to avoid the family curse, and he has been living as a farmer ever since. His younger brother Despard has been forced to assume the title – and the curse – instead.

Unfortunately, Dick knows Robin's true identity. He feels duty-bound to make sure that Rose knows the truth before marrying Robin, so Dick reveals the secret to Sir Despard. Eager to rid himself of the curse, Despard crashes the wedding and exposes Robin as Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd. Suddenly, Rose finds herself in the very situation for which she criticized Mad Margaret. With dismay, she admits that Robin has her heart, but she refuses to marry him now that he is a “bad” baronet. It does not matter that he has not done anything bad yet. She would rather marry Sir Despard, who has spent the past several years of his life committing daily crimes, but who is now good because the curse has transferred to his brother. Unfortunately, Despard feels obligated to marry Mad Margaret, leaving Rose alone. She must settle for renewing her engagement with Dick.

As with all Gilbert & Sullivan plots, the story must sort itself out before the end. Robin finds a way around the curse and reaches Rose in time to stop her marriage to Dick. Since Robin is no longer bad, Rose agrees to marry him. Amazingly, she still has not abandoned her Book of Etiquette. During the finale, she sings:

When a man has been a naughty baronet,
And expresses deep repentance and regret,
You should help him, if you're able,
Like the mousie in the fable,
That's the teaching of my Book of Etiquette.

Despite the trouble she has experienced from the erroneous application of etiquette rules, and regardless of the rude manner in which she has twice deserted Dick after promising marriage,

Rose continues to respect her Book of Etiquette. Although she ends up with the man she loves and the story ends happily, she never overcomes her character flaw. Robin defeats his timidity. Sir Despard leaves his life of crime. Even Mad Margaret is not quite so mad by the end. But Rose, despite her initial respectability, remains obsessed with etiquette. It is only through the actions of others that she progresses to the end of the play.

H.M.S. Pinafore: Josephine

Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore* has a more serious role than Rose Maybud. Her emotions are more sincere and her flaw is less comical. In fact, it is hardly comical at all. Josephine is described as beautiful and elegant. She has unknowingly won the love of one of her father's sailors, Ralph Rackstraw. In her opening ballad, Josephine reveals that she also loves Ralph. This ballad is very different from the love songs of Gilbert's "feather-brain" characters. The lyrics poetically portray sophisticated emotion rather than describing the irrational behaviors of a lovesick girl. Josephine describes the sorrow she feels because her love can never come to fruition. She sings ". . . love is alive and hope is dead!"

After the ballad, Captain Corcoran, her father, enters. He questions whether she is excited for the arrival of Sir Joseph Porter, who has agreed to marry Josephine, even though her status is lower than his. Josephine admits that, though she respects Sir Joseph, she cannot love him because she loves another. She confesses that her heart belongs to one of the sailors on her father's own ship. Embarrassed, Josephine says, "I blush for the weakness that allows me to cherish such a passion. I hate myself when I think of the depth to which I have stooped in permitting myself to think tenderly of one so ignobly born, but I love him! I love him! I love him!" She is obviously confused by her feelings and knows that her father will be disappointed.

When Captain Corcoran expresses alarm, Josephine assures him that, as his daughter, she is proud. She will never allow the sailor to know of her love. Despite her distress, Josephine concentrates on her father's peace of mind.

Josephine's flaw, then, is her concern with rank and class. But this is hardly a flaw, considering the time in which she lives. The fact that Josephine is capable of having feelings for someone as lowly as a sailor proves that she is actually more open-minded than most women of her kind. Although the importance she places on rank originates from the society in which she has been raised, it nevertheless leads her to suppress her true feelings and to treat others with contempt. During her first encounter with Ralph, Josephine attempts to act unaffected, even though his elegant words stir her heart. As he poetically confesses his love for her, she struggles to mask her emotions. With feigned derision, Josephine rebukes him for speaking so openly when her rank is far above his. She rudely rejects him, suggesting that he go after some village maiden and reminding him to keep his eyes lowered in her presence. In the duet that follows, Josephine repeats her refusal of Ralph's love during the first verse. In the second verse, however, she reveals her true feelings as an aside. She suggests that she would happily give up her high birth if it meant she could be with Ralph:

I'd laugh my rank to scorn
In union holy,
Were he more highly born
Or I more lowly!

Apparently, the issue is not Ralph's low class. She is only concerned with mixing ranks, which is not socially acceptable in her eyes.

A couple of scenes later, Ralph has decided to commit suicide because of Josephine's refusal. The rest of the crew as well as Sir Joseph's sisters, cousins, and aunts, attempt to stop him, but to no avail. He seems completely determined to end his sorrow. At the last second,

Josephine enters and begs him to stop, admitting that she loves him. Her action is interesting, because it proves that she truly loves him. If he were to die, she would be free of her dilemma. And in admitting her love, she risks her father's anger and ruins her act of indifference. But despite these factors, Josephine cannot bear the idea of Ralph's death, so she bravely admits her true feelings. The chorus hails Josephine's courage:

Let's give three cheers for the sailor's bride
Who casts all thought of rank aside –
Who gives up home and fortune too
For the honest love of a sailor true!

Josephine is certainly making a big sacrifice as she plans to secretly marry Ralph.

When Josephine is with Ralph, she can easily entertain such ideas, but she falters when she is alone. To marry Ralph would mean to give up everything she is accustomed to and to be cut off from her family and friends. In "The Hours Creep on Apace," Josephine reflects on her father's luxurious home, "Hung with ancestral armour and old brasses . . ." She then compares her current lifestyle to the life of a sailor's wife. She sings, ". . . a dark and dingy room, In some back street with stuffy children crying . . . and clothes are hanging out all day a-drying. With one cracked looking-glass to see your face in, And dinner served up in a pudding basin!" Josephine appeals to the "god of love" and the "god of reason," asking which one she should obey. Reason leads her to scorn a marriage with Ralph, but love directs her to follow her heart and forget her rank. The inner turmoil is easy to sympathize with.

Sir Joseph plays an important role in helping Josephine commit to her decision to marry Ralph. Captain Corcoran has suggested to Sir Joseph that perhaps the reason Josephine has appeared unresponsive to his wooing is because she feels inferior, he being of higher class than she. Sir Joseph says to Josephine, "Madam, I desire to convey to you officially my opinion that love is a platform upon which all ranks meet." After hearing this, Josephine says she will hesitate

no longer, although she secretly refers to Ralph, not Sir Joseph. This exchange confirms that much of Josephine's hesitation rests on the opinion of others. She wants some encouragement for what she is about to do.

At the climax of the play, Captain Corcoran discovers his daughter sneaking off the ship with Ralph to get married on shore. He directs his anger at Ralph, even though Josephine pleads for Ralph and asserts her share of the blame. The noise wakes Sir Joseph who discovers the plot and immediately sends Ralph to prison. At this point, Little Buttercup cannot stand her guilt anymore and confesses that she accidentally switched Ralph and Captain Corcoran as infants. Ralph is actually the captain, and the captain is a mere crewmember. Consequently, Josephine is actually lowborn. This creates a problem for Sir Joseph, who no longer wishes to marry her. Corcoran, still hoping his daughter can marry Sir Joseph, appeals to his earlier comment that "love levels all ranks." Sir Joseph replies, "It does to a considerable extent but . . . not as much as that." With the end of the would-be engagement between Sir Joseph and Josephine, Ralph is free to claim Josephine. He, of course, does not mind that he now outranks her.

Josephine differs from Rose Maybud because she overcomes her flaw. Even though Ralph ends up belonging to a higher class than she, Josephine was willing to marry him before she knew. Perhaps the ending is Gilbert's way of rewarding Josephine for her sacrifice. Or perhaps he wanted to satisfy his mostly upper-middle class audience, who might not have been content with an ending in which a wealthy girl gives up her entire way of life for love. Whatever the reasoning, Josephine's character is more respectable than Rose, but she is still fundamentally comical. Although she only has a minor flaw, and her behavior is mostly respectable, her comical lines limit the level of seriousness with which she can be perceived.

The Pirates of Penzance: Mabel

The character of Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* is the least comical of the characters discussed so far. Although she does have some lines with ironic humor, they serve more as an addition to the overall comedy rather than a mockery of her character. Mabel's flaw is more pronounced than Josephine's, but Mabel still comes across as more serious. Gilbert develops her character by showing the contrast between her and her more comical sisters. When they first enter, the sisters speak about mermaids, and they are forced to hop on one foot after Frederic startles them in the middle of taking their shoes off. Frederic admits that he is a pirate and begs the girls to have mercy on his condition. He wonders if one of them would be willing to forgive his past and marry him. The girls haughtily refuse, even after mentioning his good looks. They hardly consider the request, singing:

Alas! There's not one maiden here
Whose homely face and bad complexion
Have caused all hope to disappear
Of ever winning man's affection!

Apparently Mabel's sisters would only agree to pity a reformed pirate if they were ugly enough to have lost all hope of marrying a respectable man.

Mabel, who appears to have fallen behind, enters during her sisters' response to Frederic's plea. We can guess that the reason she was so far behind her sisters is because she had stayed with their father. The girls mention when they first enter that their father must be far behind them. Perhaps Mabel's compassionate heart led her to stick with her father longer than the other girls. Upon her entrance, Mabel immediately declares that she has pity enough to love poor Frederic. She reprimands her sisters for having no compassion. Mabel acknowledges that, as a pirate, Frederic has gone astray, but she argues that this is not a good enough reason to ignore his plea. Her sisters wonder if she would be so merciful if he were not so handsome. She

rebukes them for thinking her intentions are impure. In “Poor Wandering One,” Mabel encourages Frederic to repent of his piracy. She offers him her heart if it will help him in his recovery. Her sisters continue to look down on Frederic, making the contrast more extreme between Mabel’s sympathetic personality and her sisters’ arrogant behavior.

Mabel is also brave. Soon after she finishes her song, she and her sisters realize they are surrounded by pirates. The pirates make plans to marry the beautiful maidens. While her sisters cower in fear, Mabel comes forward and confronts the pirates. She warns them that the marriage will be against their will and that their father is a Major-General. Again, the distinction between her behavior and her sisters’ makes her character seem more serious. This distinction is strengthened by the language of the different characters. Mabel uses elevated language, both in her speech and in her singing. Consider the following lines that Mabel sings in the second act:

Dear father, why leave your bed
At this untimely hour,
When happy daylight is dead,
And darksome dangers lower?
See, heaven has lit her lamp,
The twilight hour is past,
And the chilly night air is damp,
And the dews are falling fast!
Dear father, why leave your bed
When happy daylight is dead?

Compared to the comical language of her sisters (“We shall quickly be parsonified, Conjugally matrimonified”), Mabel appears more refined.

One thing that sets Mabel apart from Rose Maybud and Josephine is that her flaw is not introduced until the second act. It plays only a minor role in the plot. We learn that Mabel places too much importance on fulfilling one’s duty. Her obsession with duty is similar to Rose’s obsession with etiquette, but it is not so drastic or essential to the plot. She betrays her fixation while singing to the police force that is preparing to go against the pirates. She sings:

Go, ye heroes, go to glory,
Though you die in combat gory,
Ye shall live in song and story.
 Go to immortality!
Go to death, and go to slaughter;
Die, and every Cornish daughter
With her tears your grave shall water.
 Go, ye heroes, go and die!

Clearly, Mabel does not expect or even want the police to return alive. The emphasis on honor in battle was common for the period, but it usually applied to more serious situations. Gilbert is mocking the emphasis placed on the glory of war. The police do not seem cheered by the fact that Mabel and the other girls expect them to die honorably rather than to fight honorably. And this is only a preview of the importance Mabel places on duty.

At the beginning of the play, Frederic had just been released from his apprenticeship to the pirates, because he had reached the age of 21. He discovers, however, that his indentureship was to last until his twenty-first birthday. And as he was born on a leap year, he will not reach his twenty-first birthday until 1940. When he tells Mabel, she grieves the fact that he must return to his life of piracy. At first she begs him to stay. However, Frederic also has a strong sense of duty, and he feels that he must go back. Mabel promises to be true to him until he returns. Later, she defends his decision to the police sergeant. She announces that Frederic will not be able to lead the police against the pirates because he has rejoined his old comrades. When the sergeant criticizes Frederic's choice, Mabel says, "You speak falsely. You know nothing about it. He has acted nobly. . . . Dearly as I loved him before, his heroic sacrifice to his sense of duty has endeared him to me tenfold. He has done his duty. I will do mine. Go ye and do yours." Even though Frederic abandoned her and returned to his objectionable lifestyle, Mabel actually loves him more. She is so enamored of doing one's duty, that she is blinded by what Frederic's duty requires. She actually seems more impressed with Frederic for doing his duty than with the

police for doing theirs, because Frederic's duty is dishonorable, and thus undesirable, but he does it anyway.

At the climax of the play, the pirates capture General Stanley and prepare to kill him. Mabel begs Frederic to save them, but he claims he cannot because of his duty. Mabel does not reveal whether she still agrees with his decision to go back to piracy, but she does not ask him again. The police arrive, but they are overcome by the pirates. When it appears that all is lost, Ruth reveals that the pirates are all noblemen who have gone astray. Everyone decides to show mercy and the pirates and girls marry. We never find out if Mabel overcomes her obsession with duty. It seems like she is moving in that direction when she realizes that Frederic might cause her father's death. However, the story resolves and Mabel is not faced with such a dilemma. It would be interesting to see whether she could forgive Frederic for murdering her father if it was in the name of duty. Of course, such a thing would never happen in a Gilbert & Sullivan plot. In contrast to Josephine, who behaves seriously but speaks comically, Mabel uses elevated language and demonstrates several good qualities, but her clear obsession limits her level of seriousness.

The Yeomen of the Guard: Elsie Maynard

Elsie Maynard from *The Yeomen of the Guard* is the most respectable and serious female character in all of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, perhaps because *The Yeomen of the Guard* is the most serious of their collaborations. The play still contains humor and comedic elements but has a more serious plot and even a moderately tragic ending. Elsie has the most realistic emotions while she faces a difficult problem. Her dilemma goes beyond simply finding a way to be with the one she loves. This makes her inner struggle more profound and easier to sympathize with.

Elsie is a roaming entertainer who travels with Jack Point, a jester. The two seem to be engaged, although perhaps unofficially. During her first scene, she and Jack sing to a village crowd. After the performance, several men in the crowd rudely grab at her. She bravely demands that they take their hands off of her. Even though other women in her profession may not care about their honor, Elsie demonstrates self-respect by denying the men. After another song, the same men joke about kissing her and try to get close enough to her to do so. She quickly pulls out a dagger and warns the men to leave her alone. It is clear that Elsie respects herself and will not allow men to take advantage of her.

Before violence breaks out, Sir Richard Cholmondeley, the Lieutenant of the Tower of London, arrives and commands his guards to take care of the crowd. In a previous scene, Colonel Fairfax, the man sentenced to death, asked the lieutenant to find a girl willing to marry him before his death. Fairfax knows the reason for his unjust sentence: one of the Secretaries of State is his next of kin and has charged him with sorcery in order to claim his estate. The only way to stop the treacherous cousin from gaining his wealth is to marry before his death. Fairfax asked the Lieutenant to find a girl who would marry him in exchange for one hundred crowns.

After breaking up the crowd, the Lieutenant questions Elsie and Jack about their situation. He discovers that they are traveling players who are not married and that Elsie's sick mother travels with them. Elsie seems like the perfect candidate to marry Fairfax. She is single and she needs the money. The Lieutenant explains the situation and asks if Elsie would be willing. Elsie is very hesitant to marry a man she has never met, even though she knows that he will die that day. She sings:

A strange proposal you reveal,
It almost makes my senses reel.
Alas! I'm very poor indeed,
And such a sum I sorely need.

My mother, sir, is like to die,
 This money life may bring.
Bear this in mind, I pray, if I
 Consent to do this thing!

Elsie truly could use the money and for an unselfish cause. And though the plan seems dubious, it comes from a respectable source. She consents to the marriage, knowing the money could save her mother's life.

During her decision making-process, Jack encourages Elsie to accept. His initial hesitation has nothing to do with the morality of marrying a stranger. Rather, he demands the Lieutenant's word that the man will definitely die that day. Jack seems interested in the money for the benefit of Elsie's mother, but his intentions seem more selfish: he hints that the reason he has not yet married Elsie is because he does not have enough money. Taking care of Elsie's mother seems to be soaking up his resources. Perhaps the money will allow him to finally marry Elsie.

Immediately after the marriage, Elsie is escorted out of the cell and left alone. The marriage turns out to be very emotionally difficult for her. Even though she was blindfolded during the ceremony and knows nothing of the man except that he will die innocently, Elsie feels bonded to him. She clearly takes marriage seriously and realizes that the money she has earned does not come without an emotional price. Her sensitive heart causes her to mourn her unknown husband's impending death. She sings:

'Tis done! I am a bride! Oh, little ring,
 That bearest in thy circlet all the gladness
That lovers hope for, and that poets sing,
 What bringest thou to me but gold and sadness?
A bridegroom all unknown, save in this wise,
 Today he dies! Today, alas, he dies!

The reflective, eloquent lyrics show her deep emotion and thoughtfulness. She goes on to sing that she is the saddest bride. Many girls would give anything to marry, no matter who the groom was. But Elsie has no joy because her husband will soon die. She remarks about the cruel reality that the gold she has been given will live on but love will die. She acknowledges ironically that many wives would rather be widows if they had the choice. She does not have the choice so she begs those women to be happy for the time they have with their husbands. This scene demonstrates Elsie's moral foundation. Some women might take the money and forget about the marriage, but Elsie does not take marriage lightly. Despite her conflicting emotions, she feels loyal to the husband she will never meet.

Soon after, Fairfax escapes prison, disguised as Meryll's son Leonard, whom nobody has met. When Elsie hears that he has escaped, she faints in anguish, knowing that she is married to a living man she does not know or love. Tower workers take care of her for the next two days. They disclose to Fairfax (disguised as Leonard) that through sleep-talking Elsie has revealed her recent marriage. Nobody knows who she has married but Fairfax realizes she is his wife. Fairfax begins to flirt with Elsie. Despite her feelings for him, she feels obligated to tell him she is married. He convinces her to tell him that she is married to Fairfax. Elsie confesses that she does not know or love her husband, and yet her heart is broken. Fairfax, as Leonard, then tries to convince Elsie to forget her husband and elope with him. He argues that, as an escaped prisoner, Fairfax cannot come out of hiding anyway. It is here that Elsie shows her true loyalty. She responds, "Master Leonard! I am amazed! Is it thus that brave soldiers speak to poor girls? Oh! for shame, for shame! I am wed – oh, sir! – thy words terrify me – they are not honest – they are wicked words, and unworthy thy great and brave heart! Oh, shame upon thee! shame upon thee!" Even though she would like to go with "Leonard," she does not even entertain the idea.

Soon after, Fairfax “dies” again. Jack and Wilfred have staged Fairfax’s death for personal reasons. Jack wants Fairfax dead so that Elsie will be free to marry him, and Wilfred, as head jailor, wants to be free of the shame he has suffered for allowing Fairfax to escape. When Elsie hears the news, she weeps at his death, even though it means she is free. Jack tries to convince her not to cry because she never even met the man. She replies, “Still, he was my husband, and had he not been, he was nevertheless a living man, and now he is dead; and so, by your leave, my tears may flow unhidden, Master Point.” Her respect for marriage as well as her respect for life motivates her sorrow. However, Elsie does not seem as emotional as when she found out that her husband had escaped. She realizes that her husband’s death brings her freedom, but she still grieves at the loss of a human life. Jack attempts to convince Elsie to marry him, but Fairfax (as Leonard) offers to teach Jack how to woo her. Elsie has already demonstrated feelings for him, and he successfully wins her love, leaving Jack alone.

Just when Elsie’s emotions have settled, the reprieve comes for Colonel Fairfax, allowing him to come out of hiding. On the day that Elsie is to marry Leonard, the Lieutenant, who first convinced Elsie to marry Fairfax, tells her that her husband is alive and has come to claim his bride. Shocked and horrified, Elsie begs the Lieutenant to say it is not true. However, Fairfax appears before she can escape. She refuses to look at him and so remains unaware that Fairfax and Leonard are the same person. Even though she pledges her unending love to Leonard, Elsie eventually submits to Fairfax. Only then does she look up and realize that the man she has fallen in love with was her husband all along.

Throughout the opera, Elsie demonstrates self-respect, courage, loyalty, and unselfishness. Gilbert does very little to make fun of Elsie. Her credibility as a respectable woman sets her apart from Gilbert’s other female characters. There is only one possible flaw on

Elsie's character—her dismissal of Jack Point. In a matter of days, Elsie goes from being Jack's performing partner and unofficial fiancé to ignoring him and falling in love with another man. Of course, she must follow her true feelings and remain loyal to her husband, and perhaps Jack's willingness to give her up for one hundred crowns has eliminated her feelings for him. Labeling her abandonment of Jack as a flaw is hard to justify besides the fact that it seems insensitive. The problem is that Jack is a very likable character. In many ways, he is more likable than Colonel Fairfax. It seems unfair that the audience's favorite character should be left alone at the end of the story. Gilbert rarely leaves anybody alone at the end. In *Patience*, Bunthorne ends up without a bride, but nobody likes him anyway, so it does not leave the same sense of dissatisfaction. If Gilbert provided somebody else for Jack, Elsie would not be to blame. However, his grief is directed at her, so the association mars her nearly perfect character.

Elsie does show some sympathy in the midst of her joyous reunion with Fairfax. As the happy couple embraces, Jack stumbles on stage and sings of his misery for losing her. Elsie leaves Fairfax for a moment and sings:

“It's the song of a merrymaid, nestling near,
Who loved her lord – but dropped a tear
At the moan of the merryman, moping mum,
Whose soul was sad, and whose glance was glum,
Who sipped no sup, and who craved no crumb,
As he sighed for the love of a ladye!”

Elsie has been on an emotional rollercoaster, twice believing her husband has died and twice discovering that he is still alive. She finally has some stability and she feels happy. It is hard to blame her for trying to maintain that stability by suppressing her usually tender heart and disregarding Jack's emotional state.

In a truly un-Gilbertian ending, the closing stage directions read, “FAIRFAX *embraces* ELSIE as POINT *falls insensible at their feet.*” Point's terrible condition overshadows the usual

gaiety of a Gilbert & Sullivan finale. We feel so sad for him that it is difficult not to wish Elsie had chosen him instead of Fairfax. For all of the respectability Gilbert put into Elsie's character, he seemed intent on leaving a bad last impression. Her "flaw" did not surface until the end of the story, but Gilbert ensured its impact by making it the cause of the emotionally mixed ending. Why did Gilbert insist on treating Elsie this way? She is the only female character that comes close to earning the audience's full respect. Gilbert did not mock her, as he did his spinsters and feather-brains. He did not give her a more obvious, comical flaw like his other semi-respectable female characters. She has a truly serious role, and yet Gilbert chose to lead the audience to dislike her.

Perhaps Gilbert's personal disrespect for women subconsciously kept him from making a heroine out of her. Obviously as a writer of comedy, most of his characters would not be serious, including his male roles. However, his male characters are not as stereotyped, and he did create at least one serious male role—Ralph Rackstraw from *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Although initially low class, Ralph speaks eloquently and his only flaw is wishing to die rather than live without Josephine's love. He delivers comedic lines, but they do not demean his character. Gilbert allowed the audience to like Ralph, because, although Ralph does steal Josephine from Sir Joseph, Sir Joseph ends up with cousin Phoebe. Unlike Elsie, Ralph does not cause anyone's lasting loneliness. In their level of seriousness, Elsie and Ralph both measure at the top, but ultimately Elsie falls below because of Gilbert's choice to blame her for the unhappy ending.

Gilbert's use of stock traits for female characters illuminates his opinion on the women's movement. He chose to exaggerate the negative stereotypes that feminists detested. His contralto roles belittled unmarried women and portrayed them as failures. Additionally, these characters

demonstrate the importance Gilbert placed on physical attraction. If a woman aged past the point of beauty before marrying, she might as well give up. Gilbert seemed to find humor in the desperation with which women sought after marriage, even though the pressure to marry originated from strong societal customs. Gilbert could have aided the feminists in their endeavor to diminish the idea of marriage as the only viable option for women by creating unmarried female characters with motivation for something other than finding a husband. However, he chose to mock his spinsters and exaggerate their humorous qualities. The fact that he included a spinster in almost every opera shows just how little he respected unmarried women.

Gilbert's "feather-brain" characters correspond to another of the feminists' key issues: female inferiority. Not only do these characters possess less intelligence than the men, but they are also more submissive. Gilbert represented the value that Victorians placed on female passivity. Most of Gilbert's feather-brains are very likable, contrasting the antagonistic or pitiful spinsters. Additionally, they seem to be admired and liked by other characters. Although we know that Gilbert preferred to associate with intelligent and witty women, he sent mixed messages with his feather-brains. On the one hand, he mocked women who lack a sense of logic or who take things too literally. On the other hand, he portrayed sweetness and naivety as admirable qualities. Perhaps Gilbert did not know where he stood on this issue. His controlling personality may have led him to prefer passive women while his quick wit led him to favor clever women. At any rate, Gilbert did not help the feminist cause with his feather-brain characters.

This leaves his semi-serious female characters. Gilbert's disrespect for women was not so strong as to prohibit him from creating mostly serious female roles. However, his habit of giving each one a flaw that caused or contributed to the conflict in the plot shows his reluctance,

whether conscious or not, to create completely respectable female characters. Gilbert's attitude towards women did not stray far from most men of his time. Male writers who supported the women's movement were the minority. Certainly in the field of comedy, an endorsement for feminism would have been out of place. And even though Gilbert did occasionally publicly mock women in his personal life, he usually behaved more politely. It is important to remember that Gilbert's main motivation was creating comic stories. As stated previously, he was a humorist, not a satirist. Although his humor suggested possible beliefs, it was not his intention to influence audience opinion about social issues. Rather, Gilbert used feminism and female stereotypes for comic material. And most would argue that he did it well.

3. A Winning Formula: Sullivan's Contribution

Gilbert and Sullivan were as opposite as possible in character and personality. Arthur Sullivan had a charm that led people to describe him as a “natural courtier.” One man, whose wife attended school with Sullivan, wrote that the “secret of his charm” was “the tact with which he flattered one’s vanity by treating one as if of paramount and exclusive interest to Arthur Sullivan.”⁵⁵ Gilbert, on the other hand, was known for belittling and offending people he actually admired and respected. He criticized everyone and everything, but would not tolerate a single word of criticism towards his own work. And yet, these two men worked together to create the most successful pieces of musical theatre in the English language. The two artists came from different backgrounds and brought distinctive abilities and values to the table to create a “winning formula” that outshone their competitors a hundredfold and left a legacy that continues today.

We will first explore the working relationship of Gilbert & Sullivan, with its various influences. We will then look at that relationship in the context of Sullivan’s music and how it led him to treat the female characters differently than Gilbert.

The Working Relationship of Gilbert & Sullivan

The “winning formula,” that is, the Gilbert & Sullivan team, consisted of a set of perfectly balanced contrasting elements: simplicity and sophistication, fantasy and realism, comedy and emotion, mockery and empathy. While both creators contributed to both sides of each scale, they tended to hover more often on one side than the other. It is interesting to note the

⁵⁵ Harold Orel, ed., *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 67.

initial meeting of the two composers. Gilbert's first words to Sullivan were a challenge—a sort of musical riddle, which he presented to Sullivan, suggesting that such an esteemed musician might be able to at last answer the puzzle. Gilbert later recalled the meeting:

I said to Sullivan (. . . to whom I had just been introduced): “I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Sullivan, because you will be able to settle a question which has just arisen between Mr. Clay and myself. My contention is that when a musician, who is master of many instruments, has a musical theme to express, he can express it as perfectly upon the simple tetrachord of Mercury (in which there are, as we all know, no diatonical intervals whatever) as upon the more elaborate disdiapason (with the familiar four tetrachords and the redundant note) which, I need not remind you, embraces in its simple consonance all the single, double, and inverted chords.”⁵⁶

The riddle was not the type that had an answer, and Sullivan understood it as a joke. However, this encounter foreshadowed their relationship: Gilbert constantly challenging Sullivan and demanding that his expectations be met.⁵⁷ Sullivan was quite capable of delivering excellence, and he in turn expected flawless lyrics from Gilbert. The two pushed each other to produce their best work.

Gilbert and Sullivan had very different backgrounds and educations, which influenced their creative goals and styles. Gilbert grew up privileged and well provided for. He began his education at King's College London with plans to proceed to Oxford. However, the start of the Crimean War aroused in him a desire to become an officer. He immediately began to study for the exam, but the war ended before he could take it, and he apparently lost interest. Instead, he earned his B.A. in 1857 and enrolled at inner Temple 11 to study law. Meanwhile, Gilbert became a clerk for the Education Department of the Privy Council Office, where he worked for four years, earning one hundred pounds per year. He hated the position and left the instant he was able when he received a capitol sum of three hundred pounds. Of this unexpected event,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁷ Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 88.

Gilbert wrote, “With £100 I paid my call to the Bar . . . , with another £100 I obtained access to a conveyancer’s chambers and with the third £100 I furnished a set of chambers of my own, and began life afresh as a barrister-at-law.”⁵⁸ However, Gilbert did not prove to be successful at law, averaging five clients per year over the next five years. He labeled himself a “clumsy and inefficient speaker” and unable to control his nerves when presenting a case.⁵⁹

During this time, Gilbert began to pursue his interest in writing. After numerous failed attempts at publication, he submitted a selection and drawing to a new magazine called *Fun*. The editor, H. J. Byron, not only accepted the submittal but also asked Gilbert to submit a column of writing and a half page drawing each week for the rest of his life. This opportunity gave him the confidence and experience he needed to continue improving his writing skills. Although journalism provided an easy means for publication and income, Gilbert really wanted to write for the stage. He had already completed dozens of burlesques, which had been turned down. Byron, however, felt that Gilbert had potential in the theatre and recommended him to a woman in need of a Christmas play in 1866. For this commission, Gilbert wrote *Dulcamara, or The Little Duck and the Great Quack*. The play was decently successful and Gilbert began to write regularly for the stage. Over the next several years, he wrote dozens of burlesques, which were performed in theatres all over London.

Sullivan’s childhood and growing up years differed from Gilbert’s in two important ways. First, Sullivan’s family, unlike Gilbert’s, was not wealthy. Second, in contrast to Gilbert’s rough and winding path to writing, it was apparent at a very young age that Sullivan’s future lay in music. Thomas Sullivan, Arthur’s father was the Sergeant Bandmaster in Sandhurst and Arthur

⁵⁸ William Schwenck Gilbert, “William Schwenck Gilbert: an Autobiography,” in *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections*, edited by Harold Orel (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

spent his childhood immersed in the sounds of British military music. He often accompanied his father to rehearsals and learned how to play all of the band instruments. Although finances were always tight for the family, Sullivan's parents sacrificed everything they could in order to help him achieve his potential.

When Sullivan was fourteen, it was announced that a new Mendelssohn scholarship would be awarded to a young English musician, chosen by competitive examination. For the impoverished Sullivan family, this scholarship offered the only hope for young Arthur to continue his formal music education. Although younger than all the other sixteen applicants, Sullivan won the scholarship. This afforded him one year of study at the Royal Academy of Music with all expenses paid. He immediately began intense study of the piano, violin, harmony, and composition. Sullivan impressed his teachers as well as the scholarship committee who decided to renew the scholarship for another year and send him to the Conservatory of Music in Leipzig, founded by Mendelssohn himself. At first Sullivan continued studying piano, but he soon switched his focus to conducting, all the while continuing his composition lessons.

Sullivan's scholarship was renewed for a second year at Leipzig. After the completion of that year of study, Sullivan packed his bags, expecting to go home, despite his professors' desire that he remain for another year. However, his father decided to take on extra teaching positions so that Arthur would be able to complete his studies in Leipzig. Overjoyed and filled with gratitude, Arthur promised his parents that he would try to make their last years as comfortable as possible. He then set to work so that he might have the ability to do so. Sullivan's incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, was his final work as a student. He left school after a successful performance and returned home to England.

Now that he was no longer a student, Sullivan attempted to make a living in a harsh musical environment. Composing was rarely lucrative, despite Sullivan's fame as the first Mendelssohn scholar. He was forced to take on numerous teaching and performing jobs throughout London. Additionally, he wrote nearly one hundred popular songs called "royalty ballads." His most famous was *The Lost Chord*. However, Sullivan felt a strong desire to compose more serious works, even if they did not pay as well.

Sullivan turned thirty-five before he became interested in theatre music. In 1867, F. C. Burnand, future editor of *Punch* magazine, asked Sullivan to write music to his libretto of *Cox and Box*. Sullivan accepted the offer and the short musical production premiered not long after. The show earned unexpected success, holding a long run at the Reeds' Royal Gallery of Illustration (where several of Gilbert's burlesques premiered). Gilbert even wrote a criticism on *Cox and Box*, in which he said, "Mr. Sullivan's music is, in many places, of too high a class for the grotesquely absurd plot to which it is wedded. It is very funny, here and there, and grand or graceful when it is not funny; but the grand and the graceful have, we think, too large a share of the honors to themselves."⁶⁰ Little did Gilbert know that he would end up collaborating with Sullivan and that his criticism for *Cox and Box* would foreshadow the main conflict between the two artists.

Clearly Gilbert and Sullivan came to comic opera through different paths. Financially, Gilbert had no trials, but he struggled to find a career in which he found interest and excelled. Sullivan, despite apparent talent and encouragement, fought the need to make a living while striving to write serious, influential music. Additionally, the two men's personalities caused a stark contrast in their output. Gilbert sought to use his sarcasm and cleverness to make people

⁶⁰ Quoted in Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert & Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

laugh. Sullivan rather hoped to inspire his audiences with the beauty of his music. Uniting these different goals proved to be a challenge, but it also contributed to their success.

Before analyzing their creative relationship, a consideration of their personal working relationship can be quite informative. It took a very particular personality to be able to work with such a man as W. S. Gilbert. Both Sullivan and their producer, Richard D'Oyly Carte, appeared to have the gift, although contentions still arose on occasion. David Eden's list of "unpalatable aspects of Gilbert's nature,"⁶¹ mentioned in a previous chapter, also included his habit of nursing vanities, domineering and humiliating actors and actresses, and stubbornly refusing to forgive people who did nothing directly to cause offense.⁶² Gilbert even said of himself, "I am an ill-tempered pig, and I glory in it." Most people who came into contact with Gilbert actively tried to avoid his anger, partially out of respect for his success and partially because most people were at least a little afraid of him.

Sullivan, on the other hand, was the perfect model of kindness and charm. He had a winning smile that made most people feel comfortable and important. Sullivan displayed unusual humility for a man of his position; it was not uncommon to find him playing the piano for some young, amateur singer at a dinner party. Because he had nothing in the way of rank and status by birth, he never put on airs of superiority and disdain. Sullivan and Gilbert were opposites then, in many ways, but they did have something in common: a desire for precision and an expectation for flawless work on the stage. Walter J. Wells, who acted in several of the Savoy productions, claimed that the men worked well together because their thoughts were one and the same. Although both were very strict, Sullivan's unending kindness helped keep the cast in good spirits.

⁶¹ David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, see chapter 2, "Gilbert's Personality," 51–83.

Wells said Sullivan's "tact was wonderful."⁶³ So although Gilbert has been described as completely tactless, the two apparently balanced each other out most of the time.

Their working relationship on the creative side was laden with problems. Because the Savoy operas fell somewhere in between light and serious opera, the classic conflict regarding the relative importance of text and music constantly plagued the writers. Although Gilbert understood the subordinate role of the librettist in grand opera, having frequently attended operas since his childhood, he was also familiar with the subordinate role of *music* in comic opera and burlesque. The light genres usually did not even have original music and consisted mostly of songs interspersed with spoken dialogue. The Gilbert & Sullivan operas were unique because they were written by a composer who, by all standards of prestige, should have been the dominating creator, but who allowed the words to dictate the music to a high degree. However, Sullivan's reputation encouraged Gilbert to improve his craft and to include more serious operatic moments like prolonged periods of continuous music for finales.

The progress was slow and winding, and Gilbert often regressed in order to reassert the importance of the words over the music. After *Princess Ida*, which was an obvious step backwards from *Iolanthe*, Sullivan had had enough. His letter to Gilbert illuminates many of his artistic values:

"I will be quite frank. With *Princess Ida* I have come to the end of my tether—the end of my capability in that class of piece. My tunes are in danger of becoming mere repetitions of my former pieces, my concerted movements are getting to possess a strong family likeness and I have rung all the changes possible in the way of variety of rhythm. It has hitherto been word-setting, I might almost say syllable-setting, for I have looked upon the words as being of such importance that I have been continually keeping down the music in order that not one should be lost.

⁶³ Harold Orel, ed., *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 144–145.

And this very suppression is most difficult, most fatiguing, and I may say most disheartening, for the music is never allowed to rise and speak for itself. I want a chance for the music to act in its own proper sphere—to intensify the emotional element not only of the words but of the situation.

I should like to set a story of human interest and probability, where the humorous words would come in a humorous (not serious) situation, and where, if the situation were a serious or tender or dramatic one, the words would be of a similar character. There would then be a feeling of reality about it which would give a fresh interest in writing, and fresh vitality to our joint work.”⁶⁴

Sullivan valued variety in music, rather than music that all sounded similar. Additionally, he wanted the music to play a larger role in the drama instead of merely providing a vehicle for the words. He felt that music’s greatest power was to carry the drama emotionally. Perhaps most importantly, Sullivan tired of writing music for plays based on Gilbert’s humor. He tired of writing music for ridiculous characters that were being made fun of. As a highly empathetic man, Sullivan insisted on adding emotional depth to the characters and only creating believable characters with whom the audience could relate.

This of course caused a problem, because Gilbert, being the cynic that he was, loved to laugh at others’ expense. Though undeniably gifted with comedy, his type of humor, especially at the beginning of the collaboration, was more appropriate for the burlesque stage. Unlike Sullivan, Gilbert did not have a desire to write something great or influential. His main motivation seemed to be money, as proved by his willingness to delete material that had any potential of offending audience members and decreasing ticket sales. Gilbert refused to meet Sullivan’s requests for more realistic librettos. On multiple occasions, he presented the “lozenge plot,” which involved a magical lozenge and resembled *The Sorcerer* in many ways. Sullivan had grown tired of Gilbert’s fantastical and implausible stories. He wanted realistic plots that

⁶⁴ Arthur Sullivan, as quoted in David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 184.

might actually take place in real life. Gilbert saw no problem with his own style, and indeed there was nothing inherently wrong with it. His fantastical plots had brought him much success over the years. However, his stubbornness in refusing to acquiesce showed how little he was willing to compromise for the sake of the collaboration. Gilbert finally did concede a little with *The Mikado*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and *The Gondoliers*, whose plots do not contain anything “impossible,” as Sullivan put it. This change of characteristic behavior on his part allowed the pair to continue writing together and produce some of their greatest works.

Sullivan’s other bane was the subordinate role of the music. Gilbert insisted that every syllable be heard from any seat in the house. Additionally, he purposefully wrote lyrics that contained important plot information, even if unnecessary, so that Sullivan would feel responsible for making sure the music did not distract from the words. Gilbert certainly had a talent for text rhythm, and Sullivan always wrote complementary music. In fact, Sullivan usually began his compositional process by deciding on several different rhythmic options and then choosing the best. He never wrote a melody until he had settled on the rhythm.⁶⁵ The complexity of the rhythms hindered Sullivan’s freedom in writing beautiful melodies, but he obviously succeeded nonetheless. However, he frequently complained about the tiresomeness of constantly making sure the music did not overpower the words. Gilbert seemed to take this effort for granted and never sympathized with Sullivan when he complained.

Despite growing tensions, the two continued to write together until near the end of Sullivan’s life. Gilbert supplied humorous characters and plots, while Sullivan created atmosphere and emotional depth. Both creators had a desire to raise the status of the genre. Theatre at that time was not always considered a proper pastime for respectable middle class

⁶⁵ David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 164.

citizens. By avoiding inappropriate dialogue, cross-dressing on stage, and gags, as well as a myriad of other common practices in burlesque, Gilbert helped to cut out much of the questionable material often found in the genre. Sullivan also assisted in elevating the genre by adding more elements of serious musical interest and depth. The Gilbert & Sullivan operas are often considered the precursors of modern and musical theatre. Many of their changes actually helped to create the hybrid genre of serious and light opera, which has evolved into one of the most popular forms of entertainment today.

So although the two men had countless differences in personality, style, and ambition, Gilbert and Sullivan formed one of the strongest partnerships that exist in musical history. Their opposing artistic values and styles mixed together to produce uniquely balanced operas, which have served as models for thousands of productions since. Partly because of the necessity to earn a living and partly because of Sullivan's patience, the two were able to preserve their collaboration despite arguments, health problems, and conflicting goals to create some of the most successful and enjoyable operas from the 19th century.

Characterization in Sullivan's Music

Many people wonder why Arthur Sullivan never gained status as a great serious composer. Despite his excellent musical education, Sullivan's serious music never flourished. Sullivan had so much success in the light genres that he had less time to devote to writing more serious works. This is partly why he has never been considered a master composer. But the cause may run deeper than that. David Eden believes that Sullivan's personality and musical style kept him from gaining a place with the great composers. First, Sullivan came from humble beginnings. Although he was trained to think like a Beethoven, that is, to consider his ability a gift that must

bless humanity, he could never really embrace the mindset. Partially because he needed money more than he wanted glory, and partially because he lived in a country that did not typically churn out that type of composer, Sullivan remained too humble to gain the necessary attitude of a master. Secondly, Sullivan simply was not an intellectual. He had too large a sense of humor and spent too much time surrounded by the mockery of Romanticism to ever fully embrace it. Lastly, Sullivan had a great love for sound. He gloried more in musical sounds than in musical form. Although his opera music had built-in plot and forward motion, his instrumental works do demonstrate a lack of direction. All these elements made him succeed as a popular instead of a classical composer.⁶⁶

While he may have struggled with musical form and direction, Sullivan had several other talents that made his music stand out. Gayden Wren considered these abilities to include: 1) a talent for melody, 2) the ability to use complex and subtle rhythmic and harmonic devices rare in most theatre music, 3) a “musical sense of humor”, 4) a “flair for the dramatic,” and 5) the ability to portray deep emotion.⁶⁷ The ability and desire to portray emotion led Sullivan to enhance and sometimes even contradict the lyrics. His first comic opera, *Cox and Box*, illustrates this trait. Even though he used a lighter approach than the later Savoy works, he still wrote good music, even for silly lyrics. Sullivan gave emotional depth to the characters, even during the most comical parts of the story. For instance, one of the most beautiful songs in the show is the lullaby sung by Mr. Box to a piece of bacon. If the word “baby” were substituted for the word “bacon,” the music would be just as suitable. Sullivan wrote the music to express how the character felt, even though the situation itself was purely comical.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁶⁷ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert & Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18.

This ability carried with him into his operas with Gilbert. Martin Yates said, “Time after time [Sullivan] ensures that his musical settings remain sympathetic to the characters themselves, giving them a degree of dignity even while embracing their sometimes unpleasant Gilbertian features.”⁶⁸ In nothing is this clearer than the female characters. Little is known about Sullivan’s political beliefs regarding women’s rights. He certainly appreciated and flattered women more than Gilbert. The lyrics for Sullivan’s popular song, *The Lost Chord*, were actually written by the poet and women’s rights activist Adelaide Procter, who helped found the *English Woman’s Journal* and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women.⁶⁹ Sullivan’s willingness to use the poem of a known feminist suggests, if not support, neutrality towards the woman’s movement. Sullivan, then, may not have shared Gilbert’s bias against women. He did, however, seem to treat the female characters more respectfully than the male characters. The music he wrote for the female characters frequently contradicted the mockery imbued in the lyrics. On many occasions, his elegant melodies and emotional settings softened the derisive tone of Gilbert’s lyrics, elevating the dignity of the female roles.

Sullivan did not agree with Gilbert’s treatment of the spinster characters. Through his music, he often expressed realistic emotion that increased their likability. The role of Katisha in *The Mikado* is completely comedic and antagonistic. Sullivan, by the time he composed this music, may have been tired of making fun of elderly women. His empathy led him to regard Katisha as a lonely, aging woman. Instead of comically dramatizing her music to add to the

⁶⁸ Martin T. Yates, “Musical Contexts II: Characterisation and Emotion in the Savoy Operas,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, ed. David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, 136–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136.

⁶⁹ Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850–1914* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 6.

humor, he created emotional depth with his treatment of the lyrics for her recitative “Alone, And Yet Alive!” and song “Hearts Do Not Break.”

In the recitative “Alone, And Yet Alive!” the lyrics are overly dramatic. If they are read in the context of the script, they seem comical and exaggerated. Without overdoing it, Sullivan’s music matches the dark tone, making it sound more serious than the lyrics imply. In the recitative, the orchestra and soloist alternate parts. The first two orchestral sections feature rapid string lines ending with a sharp, repeated chord. The weightiness makes the music sound like something from a serious opera. The recitative is harmonically turbulent, beginning on A major but moving to a D-sharp diminished seventh and then to E major during the first two measures of the orchestra. The next segment begins on a C-sharp diminished seventh but continues to modulate, finally landing on a C-sharp minor chord in second inversion and then ending on a G-sharp at the end of the recitative. This leads into the key of the song, C-sharp minor. The chaotic nature of the harmonic structure resembles serious opera without parodying it. Additionally, Sullivan decreased the sense of meter in the rhyming lines of the recitative by varying the rhythm of the paired lines and using the orchestra to break up the vocal part. This also adds to the resemblance.

Although he matched Gilbert’s dramatic mood in the recitative, Sullivan diverged from the tone of the song lyrics. The words themselves have potential for portraying realistic emotion, but the overall effect is parody. In the first section in C-sharp minor, labeled *Andante Moderato*, the lyric has a rhyme scheme of AAAB CCCB. Each line only has four syllables, causing the lyric to feel choppy. Furthermore, the close proximity of the rhyming words makes the lyrics sound cheap and comical. Sullivan diminished the effect by changing the rhythmic emphasis among the phrases. Some of the phrases start on the beat and others come as pickups. He also connected the third line with the fourth to create a longer sounding line (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1 “Hearts Do Not Break” mm. 3-11

Hearts do not break! They sting and ache For old love's sake, But do not die! Though with each breath They
 long for death, As witnesseth the living I! the living I!

By not stopping on the third rhyming word, he eliminated its effect. Sullivan continued the harmonic interest from the recitative and created a beautiful melody that does more than just hold the words. He even included some word painting. The line “Though with each breath They long for death, As witnesseth the living I!” has a downward melodic line that symbolizes the descent into the grave.

For the second half of the song, Gilbert has continued the four-syllable lines, although he changed the rhyme scheme. Although the short phrases are difficult to work with melodically, Sullivan succeeded in creating a memorable melody that portrays Katisha’s loneliness and resignation. He continued to vary the text rhythm of the lines. The first two begin on the beat and the middle two begin on the pickups. The last two lines, which are the weakest textually (“Why linger here, Where all is drear?”), link together to create a longer line that diverts attention away from the words (Ex. 2).

Ex. 2 “Hearts Do Not Break” mm. 12-19

Oh living I! Come, tell me why, When
 hope is gone Dost thou stay on? Why linger here, Where all is drear?

Sullivan also varied the spaces between the lines. The first two lines take up two measures each

while the last four have one measure each. This creates an eight-measure phrase even though there are six equal lines of text. After this, the first four lines repeat with some variance in the melody. Then a new line of text (“May not a cheated maiden die?”) is sung twice. The first repetition leads up with some chromaticism in anticipation and the second falls downward in resignation.

The nature of the rhyme and short phrases in this lyric makes it difficult to create a beautiful melody. Sullivan succeeded by breaking up the meter of the poetry, often following the natural stress of the words rather than the artificial stress of the meter. By doing this, he created longer, smoother lines. The melody is beautiful and moving, giving Katisha dignity, despite her ridiculous traits. With this song, Sullivan effectively counteracted some of Katisha’s negative aura.

The case of Lady Jane in *Patience* is more difficult. Jane’s character is so completely comical that Sullivan had little to draw from. The lyrics to her recitative, “Sad Is a Woman’s Lot,” and song, “Silvered Is The Raven Hair,” do not have any emotional depth, unlike Katisha’s. The only possible emotions to extract are desperation and vanity. The song is completely about her bodily appearance. Moreover, Jane only sings about herself; she does not even mention Bunthorne, to whom her affections are aimed. It may have been impossible to increase her emotional depth, but Sullivan at least did not add to the problem.

There is nothing subtle about Jane’s role as comic relief. The male characters, especially Bunthorne, overtly make fun of her, and she even makes fun of herself. Sullivan could not salvage her respectability because there is none to begin with. So he plays along in her recitative. The music is very dramatic. It contains accented chords, a violent, stormy low string line, numerous diminished chords, and even several sforzandos. Jane is supposed to be accompanying

herself on the cello during this scene, so it makes sense that Sullivan wrote overly dramatic music to match. She obviously feels like her situation is severe, and she would accompany herself likewise.

During the song, Sullivan switched tactics. Instead of complementing the tone of the lyrics, he wrote music that had nothing to do with the words. The accompaniment is purely harmonic with the bass note on beats one and three and a chord on beats two and four. The harmony is elegant but conservative so as to avoid adding drama to the words. Jane sings a simple, rather unexciting melody, which does not connect with the words. There is no text painting in this song. The musical choice to separate the music from the text greatly diminishes the effect of the mocking words. It would be hard for Jane to sound desperate, as the lyrics suggest, while singing this melody. Sullivan's orchestration is beautiful, as always, with no "comic effects." His choice to essentially ignore the lyrics makes the song seem more reflective and less frantic—Jane notices that she is aging, but she seems to come to terms with it, even though the lyrics imply otherwise.

Sullivan also added an emotional dimension to the feather-brain characters. Although these characters usually come across as empty-headed and incapable of real feelings, Sullivan's music deepens whatever emotion they may be feeling at the time and validates the reason for their feelings. In the beginning of *The Sorcerer*, we are introduced to Constance, a girl of seventeen. She sings the song "When He is Here, I Sigh with Pleasure," in which she discusses her feelings for the local vicar. The lyrics alone create the image of a lovesick teenager, completely occupied with romance. Gilbert's use of clichéd phrases does not help her case as an emotionally deep character. The rest of her spoken lines make her seem immature and a bit whiney.

Despite limited help from the lyrics, Sullivan composed a moving song that greatly adds to Constance’s respectability. The introduction begins with a lone oboe line leading upward in what sounds like a d minor scale. The other woodwinds enter to form a D-sharp diminished seventh, which moves to a second-inversion A minor chord. The inner voices descend to B-natural and A-flat, which enharmonically creates the dominant of A minor. However, instead of resolving to the expected chord, the inner voices keep moving down, creating a first inversion C major chord, which resolves to F major, the key of the song (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3 “When He is Here” mm. 1-4



The ambiguous, almost nonfunctional harmony demonstrates Constance’s troubled thoughts. The introduction’s cadence is feminine with a 4–3 suspension, which also adds to the unsettled feeling. This orchestral segment comes back as the interlude between verses although it features a melody line from the vocal part, which is less ambiguous than the oboe part. However, it still has the vague harmonic progression at the cadence. The song closes with a repeat of the interlude, meaning that the unsettled cadence is the last thing we hear.

The first measure of the vocal part does a lot to express Constance’s emotional state. It begins with repeated eighth note thirds in the high strings. This figure hints at anticipation or anxiety. It is like a quickened heart rate, though the imagery is gentle. Sullivan did not exaggerate the figure to avoid making a caricature of Constance’s feelings. The vocal line does not begin until halfway through the measure as if she is breathless and entering late. The

unevenness of the melody continues, because the sustained notes keep changing position within the measure (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4 “When He is Here” mm. 5-9

When he is here, I sigh with pleasure, When he is gone, I sigh with grief. My

As usual, Sullivan has varied the text rhythm, starting some of the phrases as three eighth note pickups and some as single eighth note pickups. This rhythmic variety gives the vocal line an unsettled, anxious quality that conveys Constance’s emotional unease.

Harmonically, the song is simple yet elegant. There is just enough harmonic interest to avoid predictability without distracting from the singer or exaggerating the level of drama.

Although the poetic meter for the second half of the verse is identical to the first half, Sullivan has changed the melody and rhythm of the second half. Avoiding melodic monotony helps to show that Constance has emotional capacity, that she is not dull.

The music for this song increases Constance’s emotional depth by expressing realistic emotion. The ambiguous harmonic progressions in the orchestra sections demonstrate her anxiety while the text setting and melodic rhythm adds to her restlessness. The orchestration does not distract from the singer but helps to set the mood. This composition validates Constance’s emotions because the music is so moving. Even if the lyrics are bit trite, Constance still comes across as a serious, relatable character.

In *The Gondoliers*, Sullivan increased the emotional depth of the new wives Giannetta and Tessa, in their song “Now, Marco Dear, My Wishes Hear.” It is a difficult job, because the girls are singing this song to their husbands of less than an hour who chose them blindly out of a crowd. The level of real attachment they can have attained in such short time seems insignificant. But now Marco and Giuseppe must leave their wives to find out which of them is the king of Barataria. In the song, the wives make ridiculous requests of their husbands for the sake of fidelity, such as “[you] will not glance by any chance on Womankind!” and “If you are wise, you’ll shut your eyes till we arrive, and not address a lady less than forty-five.” The lyrics make the ladies appear overly jealous with too high of expectations, but the music leads the audience to sympathize with the new brides who now must part with their husbands.

Giannetta sings first. The accompaniment for her section is staccato, but it sounds dainty rather than comical. It helps that the vocal line is legato. If Sullivan had made the singing staccato too, it definitely would have drawn attention to the absurdity of Giannetta’s requests. The orchestral staccatos hint at the humor but subtly enough to suggest that Giannetta is not oblivious to the fact that what she asks is unreasonable. Instead, she seems worried which leads her to be over protective. When she reaches the end of her list of “don’ts,” her vocal line ascends while the orchestra swells to create an impact on her last words: her request that he not forget that he married her. Even this line is quite humorous, because she does not ask him to not forget *her*; instead she is worried that he will forget he *married* her, perhaps because the marriage was so impulsive. However, Sullivan’s treatment of the line ignores the irony and imbues the words with sincere concern. Giannetta then sings the “O my darling, O my pet,” portion, where her melody switches from sixteenth notes to eighth notes. Slowing the rhythm amplifies the emotional impact of her plea. Her real desire, that he remember her, sticks with us more than her

laundry list of rules, partially because we can hear it better at the slower rhythm and partially because she repeats the text.

When Giannetta finishes, Tessa sings to Giuseppe. The melody, harmony, and orchestration for her section are not as delicate. This emphasizes her anxiety—she may be asking a lot, but she is simply worried that she will be forgotten. Her verse has a gloomier sound, almost as if she is about to cry. The harmonic instability adds to the feeling of distress. Interestingly, Sullivan displaces the “O my darling” refrain so that it comes halfway through the measure, instead of half a beat after the downbeat as when Giannetta sang it. Tessa’s section leads into a quartet where the two couples sing to each other. The music allows the pleading in their voices to come across, confirming that their true concern is the fact that they have to part, not that they do not trust their new spouse to be faithful.

Yum Yum’s case is different in *The Mikado* because her song “The Sun, Whose Rays” suddenly introduces a new (still negative) side to her character. She has been presented as a naïve schoolgirl who relies on men to tell her what is socially acceptable. Up to this song, she seems empty-headed, without an opinion on anything. In the monologue just prior to the song, she betrays a previously hidden self-absorption: “Yes, I am indeed beautiful! Sometimes I sit and wonder, in my artless Japanese way, why it is that I am so much more attractive than anybody else in the whole world. Can this be vanity? No! Nature is lovely and rejoices in her loveliness. I am a child of Nature, and take after my Mother.” She then sings the following verse:

The sun, whose rays
Are all ablaze
 With ever-living glory,
Does not deny
His majesty—
 He scorns to tell a story!
He don’t exclaim,
‘I blush for shame,

So kindly be indulgent.
 But, fierce and bold,
 In fiery gold
 He glories all effulgent!
 I mean to rule the earth,
 As he the sky—
 We really know our worth
 The sun and I!

Without the knowledge that she is comparing herself to the sun and the moon, the lyrics seem poetic and a bit abstract. However, Yum Yum’s previously innocent demeanor takes on a new, egotistical twist.

Sullivan chose to convey this song differently than he did Yum Yum’s others songs. Instead of the light, almost patter quality of “Three Little Maids from School,” “So Please You, Sir, We Much Regret,” and “Here’s a How-de-do,” or the excessive cheerfulness of “Brightly Dawns Our Wedding Day” and “The Flowers that Bloom,” he decided on a melodic Andante commodo for “The Sun, Whose Rays.” This choice reveals his focus on the intrinsic poetry of the lyrics, rather than on the vain arrogance of the context.

The text setting does not follow the meter of the poem, thus avoiding monotonous stresses. Sullivan has grouped the first twelve lines into sets of three to make the melody more continuous. The last four lines of the verse repeat but with very different text rhythms. The first repetition has a slower rhythm and longer breaks. The second repetition strings the words together to create a flowing eighth-note line (Ex. 5).

Ex. 5 “The Sun, Whose Rays” mm. 11-18

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first staff, labeled '1.', shows a melody with long note values and significant rests, corresponding to the lyrics: "I mean to rule the earth, — As he the sky— We really know our worth, — The sun and I!". The second staff, labeled '2.', shows a more rhythmic melody with many eighth notes, corresponding to the lyrics: "I mean to rule the earth, As he the sky— We really know our worth, The sun and I!".

The variety in the text setting enhances the elegance of the poetry, as does the harmony. The song begins with a tonic pedal tone for the first two phrases, ending on the dominant. For the third phrase, the harmony shifts to the minor dominant. The last phrase moves to the subdominant, which has been tonicized. Putting half of the section in minor adds more emotional depth to the song. It is definitely not cheery like her other numbers. The gentle accompaniment with woodwind interludes adds to the graceful simplicity.

This is arguably one of Sullivan's most beautiful female solos. The music never alludes to the rather shocking egotistical nature of the lyrics. Rather, the depth of emotion and sophistication conveyed in the music serves to elevate Yum Yum's character, despite her apparent arrogance. Of course, the effect is limited, because this song occurs near the beginning of the second act, and she seems to go back to her old, empty-headed self afterwards. Nonetheless, Sullivan's music helps contradict, at least temporarily, the negative side of Yum Yum's character.

Sullivan had perhaps the most success in elevating a character's emotional status with *Patience*. As one of Gilbert's "feather-brains," Patience is too naïve to understand love. In her second-act solo "Love is a Plaintive Song," she seems to have made a breakthrough in her understanding of love. Reading the lyrics alone somewhat negates that feeling. The ideas she sings describe a definition of love that could only be believed by somebody inexperienced. Her idealistic beliefs come out in phrases like "Everything for him, Nothing at all for her!"

The organization of the two verses suggests a potential division within the lyrics.

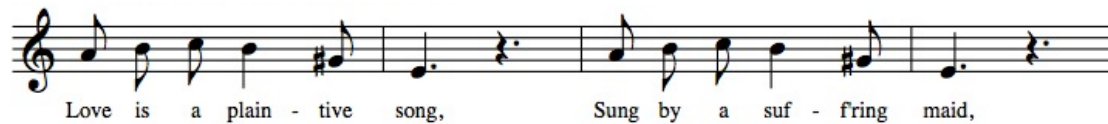
Consider the first verse:

Love is a plaintive song,
Sung by a suffering maid,
Telling a tale of wrong,
Telling of hope betrayed;

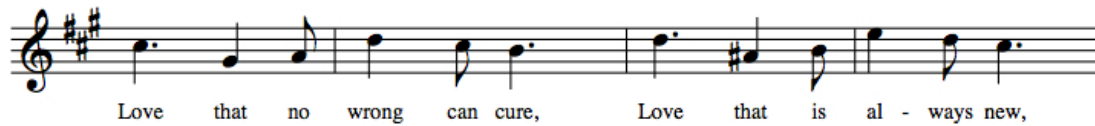
Tuned to each changing note,
 Sorry when he is sad,
 Blind to his ev'ry mote,
 Merry when he is glad!
 Love that no wrong can cure,
 Love that is always new,
 That is the love that's pure,
 That is the love that's true!

The first eight lines seem more unrealistic and naïve whereas the last four lines seem more sensible. However, in the lines “That is the love that’s pure, That is the love that’s true” it is unclear whether “that” refers to the entire verse or only the last four lines. The layout of the poetry implies a possible separation, but it remains ambiguous, especially if hearing rather than reading the poem. To remedy this confusion, Sullivan set the first eight lines in A minor and the last four in A major. He also changed the text rhythm, even though the meter of all twelve lines of text is identical (Ex. 6 & 7).

Ex. 6 “Love is a Plaintive Song” mm. 3-6



Ex. 7 “Love is a Plaintive Song” mm. 21-24



These simple choices show a clear distinction between the different tones in the lyrics. It is as if Patience knows the lyrics in the minor section are idealistic while the lyrics in the major section describe true, unselfish love.

The ends of both sections of the text have musical elements that help to strengthen the distinction between the parts. At the end of the first section, the last line of text is repeated during which the orchestra briefly rests on a diminished seventh of the dominant. Simultaneously, the

vocal line contains an augmented second. The mysterious sound produced strengthens the feeling that Patience does not actually agree with what she is singing. It also reinforces the contrast between the minor and major portions of the song. At the end of the verse, the music ends confidently in major. But there is no transition back to minor—the song simply starts over. This diminishes the feeling of certainty, suggesting that Patience does not think she has figured everything out. She realizes there is much to learn about love. She has made some progress, but she still feels confused and uncertain.

Sullivan also helped deepen Patience’s emotionality by validating her confusion. He wrote emotionally stirring music instead of comic music that might draw attention to the unrealistic suggestions in the first part of the verse. He matched the music to her actual feelings rather than the potential comedy of the text. The meter and rhythm helped him achieve this. The song is in 6/8 time and the vocal line for the first part of the verse has more activity at the beginning of the measure. This creates a halting feeling and lack of flow, just as her confused thoughts do not flow easily. Gentle chromaticism in the vocal line and brief non-functional harmony add to the feeling of perplexity. These musical devices fortify the potential emotion of the text, adding dimension to Patience’s character.

Sullivan’s insistence on portraying the true emotion of the character, despite the humorous nature of the text, greatly elevated many of the female roles. In the letter to Gilbert previously quoted, Sullivan said, “I want a chance for the music to act in its own proper sphere—to intensify the emotional element not only of the words but of the situation.”⁷⁰ Even when the “emotional element” of the situation was only implied, Sullivan used the music to add another

⁷⁰ Arthur Sullivan, as quoted in David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 184.

dimension to the characters and plots. His sympathetic personality led him to humanize the most comical female characters, making them more respectable and realistic.

Gervase Hughes draws attention to an interesting change in the revised version of *A History of Music in England*. In the original 1907 version, Ernest Walker wrote, “The comic operas written to the libretti of W. S. Gilbert made his [Sullivan’s] reputation and indeed form his chief title to fame; though we cannot forget how enormous a share of the success they enjoyed was due to the brilliant sparkling wit of his collaborator.” In the 1952 revised version, J. A. Westrup amended the passage to read, “Though we cannot forget that a considerable share of the success they [the comic operas] achieved was due to the brilliant sparkling wit of his collaborator, it has become increasingly evident that they survive by virtue of the music.”⁷¹ Gilbert’s talent for humor, satire, and parody certainly drew audiences, but Sullivan’s musical sympathy for the characters, as well as his persistence in composing serious music despite ridiculous situations, elevated the operas to a level above common burlesque. The mixture of comedy and beauty has allowed the operas to endure for more than a century.

⁷¹ Gervase Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc, 1960), 5.

4. *Princess Ida*

Princess Ida is the only Gilbert & Sullivan opera directly related to the women's movement. In fact, it can be classified as part of the New Woman genre, because Ida is a New Woman character. The opera premiered in 1884, a decade before the movement received its name and only a year after the publication of Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, which is considered the first New Woman novel. However, *Ida* is a definite prototype for the New Woman, even if the opera is a parody. It may seem strange that Gilbert would already be writing a parody of a genre still in its infancy. However, the movement was based on feminist principles that had been around for decades, and Gilbert most likely was parodying feminism as well as the New Woman.

The plot of *Princess Ida* comes from Gilbert's earlier burlesque, *The Princess*, which is based on Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem of the same title, published in 1847. *Princess Ida* was a definite step backwards from their most recent opera *Iolanthe* in terms of realistic, respectable characters and plot. The dialogue is also less natural because Gilbert wrote it in blank verse rather than prose. But it also contains some of Sullivan's best music. *Princess Ida* demonstrates the degree to which the two collaborators worked against each other. While Gilbert's words mocked the female characters and the New Woman movement, Sullivan's music counteracted the effect by expressing sincere emotion. Sullivan did not write comical music for the female characters, despite their unquestionably bizarre ideas, but he did write comical music for some of the male characters. The balance between Gilbert's humorous book and Sullivan's emotional and elevated score gave the opera that unique element that allowed it to run for 246 performances (a substantial number though inferior compared to their other operas), despite its plot failures.

Before analyzing *Princess Ida*, let's look at the opera just previous to *Princess Ida*, *Iolanthe*. *Iolanthe* is arguably one of Gilbert's and Sullivan's best collaborations and more Romantic than all but *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Although it has a fantastical plot involving fairies, the characters are more relatable and the conflict evokes a more sympathetic response. However, many elements of the plot bear similarities to *Princess Ida*, especially in regards to the relationship between the male and female characters. This suggests that *Iolanthe* was a more conservative predecessor to *Princess Ida*.

One of the central claims in *Princess Ida* is the superiority of women. In *Iolanthe*, a similar issue exists between the fairies and the mortals. Fairy law forbids any fairy from marrying a mortal man. Although the fairies' superiority comes from their immortal status rather than their sex, the fairies hold many of the same views as the women in *Princess Ida*. The play seems to be an allegory for the feminist movement with the immortal characters (all female) representing women and the mortal characters (all male except Phyllis) representing men. However, in *Iolanthe*, there is no strong female character like *Ida* to encourage the women in their superior attitudes towards men. Even the fairy queen, who is responsible for punishing any fairy that marries a mortal, admits her susceptibility to a particular mortal man's charms. In reference to Private Willis, she says, "Now here is a man whose physical attributes are simply godlike. That man has a most extraordinary effect upon me. If I yielded to a natural impulse, I should fall down and worship that man. But I mortify this inclination; I wrestle with it, and it lies beneath my feet! That is how I treat my regard for that man!" Assuming that fairies are inferior to gods, the fact that the queen calls Private Willis "godlike" means that she considers aspects of him to be not just equal but superior to herself. She admits that her natural instinct would be to worship the mortal. This dialogue suggests that women defy their nature when they hold

themselves equal to men. The queen's attempt to prove that she has mastered her desire for the Private sounds desperate and exaggerated, as if she will not be able to control her yearning for much longer.

Because the rules forbidding marriage come from fairy law, as opposed to *Princess Ida*, where abstinence from men is self-imposed, the fairies appear more fickle and weak than Ida's women. They do not necessarily agree with the resolution to avoid marriage, and they certainly did not choose it. These characters perhaps represented Gilbert's opinion of followers of the feminist movement. Apart from a few loud leaders, most women were only along for the ride and had no conviction for the messages they represented. This, of course, points to the fact that women's superiority over men was not a claim of the feminist movement at all. However, for Gilbert anti-feminist rhetoric was a good source of humor in *Iolanthe*, and he did not seem to care whether the accusations were true.

The law forbidding fairies from marrying mortals states that a fairy shall be put to death if she disobeys. At the beginning of the play, we learn that Iolanthe, who married a mortal more than twenty years previously, was not put to death. The queen loved her so much that she banished her instead. Although the queen speaks forcefully about the importance of the law and the danger of disobeying it, her inability to follow through with the prescribed punishment betrays her true feelings about the law. She is merely the messenger and enforcer. It seems obvious that she would not have written such a law herself.

Although the fairies may not be resolved to avoid marriage with men, they show no discontent with the belief that they are superior to mortals. When they discover that Iolanthe's son, Strephon, who is fairy from the waist up and human from the waist down, is a "mere shepherd," they express indignation at his lowly position, believing that his half-fairy status

qualifies him for something more prestigious. Consequently, they encourage and facilitate Strephon's entry into parliament. In an effort to defeat the powers of the House of Lords, the fairies compel members of parliament to pass all of Strephon's bills, including a bill to open the House of Lords to "competitive examination." Frustrated with this latest legislation, one of the peers, Lord Mountararat, states, "This comes of women interfering in politics. It so happens that if there is an institution in Great Britain which is not susceptible of any improvement at all, it is the House of Peers!" Here, Gilbert pokes fun at both men and women, betraying man's negative attitude towards women in politics as well as pointing out the stubbornness of men.

As the fairies become more and more interested in the peers, their ability to stand by their laws falters. In the song "In Vain to Us You Plead," the fairies display their disdain for the men while simultaneously begging them not to leave. "Don't go!" follows every line of scornful lyric. It is here that the fairies really begin to look weak and pathetic. They clearly have no willpower to deny the attractions of the mortals, even if the men are an inferior race. And there is little Sullivan could do musically to counteract such a lyric. Although the fairies attempt to appear derisive, it becomes obvious that they are unable to withstand the temptation to align with the mortals.

Only a few scenes later, the fairies reveal to their queen that they have each married a member of the House of Lords. In response to the queen's astonishment, Lord Mountararat says, "It's our fault. They couldn't help themselves." Despite their "superior" status, the fairies cannot control their desires enough to obey the laws placed upon them. Iolanthe also reveals that the man she married twenty years earlier was none other than the Lord High Chancellor. As the queen faces the prospect of sentencing her entire sisterhood of fairies to death, the Chancellor proposes a solution:

“Allow me, as an old Equity draftsman, to make a suggestion. The subtleties of the legal mind are equal to the emergency. The thing is really quite simple – the insertion of a single word will do it. Let it stand that every fairy shall die who doesn’t marry a mortal, and there you are, out of your difficulty at once!”

The queen replies that she likes his humor and instantly accepts the change. Without losing a breath, she asks Private Willis to marry her so that she may avoid death under the new law. This ending bears striking resemblance to the conclusion of *Princess Ida*. With little hesitation, the fairy queen instantly abandons the old law in exchange for a law that requires the exact opposite of what she has spent her immortal life defending.

In the end, the fairies may have power to fly or to appear out of nowhere, but the men have power to persuade the women in almost any way. The most insulting aspect for the feminist movement is that the members of the House of Lords were not intelligent men. They received their positions in parliament because of their ancestry, not because of their ability. Yet, the men have more strength of mind than the fairies.

Princess Ida’s conflict and ending continues the strain from *Iolanthe* but now the battle is between women and men rather than immortals and mortals. Tennyson’s poem, which served as the source for the story, was written in 1847, the same year that Queen’s College, London opened. The story reflects on feminist goals, especially women’s education, but Tennyson does not pass direct judgment on the ideas, as in *Princess Ida*. Although quite forward for its time, the ending is considered conservative by modern feminists.

The poem is narrated by an unnamed prince who was betrothed by proxy to Princess Ida from the neighboring kingdom at the age of eight. When the time comes to fulfill the marriage compact, Ida does not show up. The prince and his father visit Ida’s father, King Gama, and learn that she has left her father’s castle and started a woman’s university in one of his summer castles. Ida’s mother died when she was young, and a widow, Lady Blanche, raised her. Lady

Blanche, who despised her late husband, fed Ida ideas about the inferiority of man and the importance of women's education. Lady Psyche, also a widow, encouraged Ida in her ideas, eventually resulting in Ida's desire to found a women's university. After much begging, Gama allowed Ida to start a university in one of his summer castles. Gama has not seen her since. He wishes Ida would marry the prince and clearly disapproves of Ida's ideas, although not enough to do anything about it.

The prince and his two friends, Cyril and Florian, decide to go to the university and attempt to convince Ida to fulfill her agreement. When they arrive, they find that the university is very hostile towards men. An inscription on the gate reads "LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH." The men decide to disguise themselves as women in order to gain access to the castle. Princess Ida welcomes the new students, and the prince learns that Ida is aware of the marriage agreement but has no intentions of going through with it. She is very arrogant and considers her work to be of the utmost importance. She takes pride in her intelligence and independence. Florian recognizes Lady Psyche as his sister who left the kingdom years earlier. Psyche is frightened but promises not to betray them. However, Ida eventually discovers that her new students are men. Outraged, she interrogates the other students and professors and punishes everyone who knew about the deceit.

Ida learns that the prince's father is making preparations to attack the castle. He is holding her father as a hostage. Ida and the prince's father agree to allow a battle between her three brothers and the prince, Florian, and Cyril to determine the outcome of the war. The prince is defeated and he and his friends lay close to death. Ida decides to turn the castle into a hospital for the wounded men. The women become nurses for the men, Ida personally taking care of the prince. Through the course of his recovery, Ida learns to love the prince. She realizes that they

agree on many aspects of the correct relationship between husband and wife. The prince says to her:

For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;

The poem ends with Ida agreeing to marry the prince.

The plot of *Princess Ida* (taken largely from Gilbert's earlier play, *The Princess*) very closely follows Tennyson's poem. Gilbert did make a few changes. He moved the betrothal age from eight to one for Ida and two for the prince. He also named the prince Hilarion and his father Hildebrand, both having been unnamed by Tennyson. It is in the battle and ending that Gilbert strayed extensively from Tennyson. More significantly, Gilbert changed the tone towards women in the story. Although Tennyson's poem is considered a serio-comic style, he did not overtly make fun of the women, and the serious element of the tone seems to dominate over the comic element. The opposite is true in *Princess Ida*. But Gilbert did not target just the women. Neither the female nor male characters in *Princess Ida* are very likable. Perhaps this is the reason *Princess Ida* was not as successful, despite the brilliant score, as the other Gilbert & Sullivan operas. There is not a character for which the audience can cheer.

The female characters, though largely intelligent, have irritating traits that overshadow their good qualities. Princess Ida is arrogant and proud. She believes woman, especially she, is better than man. She has extensive knowledge although she seems to lack common sense. Her goal is educational equality, if not superiority, for women. Her idealistic ambitions convince her that women can do everything that men can—and better. Ida's convictions and qualities mimic the New Woman, but Gilbert has exaggerated the negative aspects, leaving her a caricature of the

more serious literary figure. However, musically she is a quite serious character. In Ida's first song, "Oh, goddess wise," Sullivan's music does much to contradict the comical nature of her role. This is the first we see of or hear directly from Ida, although she has been introduced through other characters' dialogue in the first act. Despite the negative impression provided by the other characters, Sullivan's music sets the tone for Ida. In the song, Ida appeals to Minerva, the virgin goddess of poetry, medicine, and wisdom, to help her lead her students to Minerva's sacred shrine. The lyrics are essentially neutral, meaning Sullivan could have gone either way with the music. He could have given the words a sarcastic spin by writing overly dramatic or comical music. Instead, he wrote an aria fit for a serious opera. The neutrality of the words made this option possible without the danger of parody. The moving bass line adds an academic feel to the accompaniment, as does the relatively fast harmonic rhythm of a change every measure. The melody is interesting and beautiful, drawing attention to her intentions rather than mocking her sincerity. The song has a complex harmonic scheme that utilizes frequent chromaticism and several augmented sixths (French and German), helping to increase the solemn nature of Ida's plea. The harmonic progression that leads to the end of the song involves a striking series of V-I progressions that lead from A-flat to B-flat to C, including a French sixth. The chromatic tones of these chords inject a quality of drama, sustaining Ida's status as a serious musical character. Although Sullivan could not undo what had already been said about Ida, his music could at least plant a seed of doubt, suggesting that there is more to Ida than it may seem.

Lady Blanche is a bitter widow who wants Ida's power and place of authority. She serves as the professor of abstract sciences at Ida's university. She is conniving and a bit eccentric. Blanche does not seem to have the same goals as Ida. While Ida wants women to rule over men, Blanche appears to want herself to rule over everyone, men and women. Her character differs

greatly from Tennyson's version. In Tennyson's poem, Lady Blanche is not jealous of Ida's power. Rather, she is jealous of Ida's relationship with Lady Psyche. Blanche raised Ida after her mother died, and Ida used to admire her. When Psyche came on the scene, Ida switched her affection from the woman who had raised her to Psyche, a foreigner. Blanche believed Ida was born for something great and she wanted to help her achieve her potential. Blanche's jealousy in Tennyson's poem is easy to sympathize with while her power-hungry ambition in Gilbert's play makes her antagonistic.

Lady Psyche is probably the most likable of the female characters, but she still has her faults. For instance, she does not seem at all committed to Ida's plan for female domination, but she goes along with it anyway. Psyche gives flawless answers to her brother's questioning about the purpose of the university and the inferiority of man, but she does not seem to believe what she is saying. She even helps her brother (Florian) and his friends with their plan to infiltrate the castle. She comes across as irresolute and brainwashed. Even more so than Ida, Psyche has book smarts but lacks the ability to apply her extensive knowledge in real life settings. Away from her professor duties, she seems like a weak, feeble woman who does what she is told without argument.

Melissa is Lady Blanche's daughter and, having been raised in the castle, is the most indoctrinated of all. Her naivety stems from the fact that she has never seen the outside world. In fact, she has never seen a real man before. When she overhears Psyche talking to Hilarion, Florian, and Cyril, she discovers that they are not women, as they have dressed to appear, but men. She realizes that she quite likes how they look and act. They are nothing like her mother described. Tennyson's Melissa is described as sweet and courageous with self-respect and good sense. Gilbert's Melissa behaves like a boy-crazy teenager experiencing her first crush. She

realizes that she is not at all committed to life without men, suggesting that all the education in the world cannot keep women away from men. Melissa was the perfect pupil, untainted by past experience with men, and she folded with the first opportunity.

Although the female characters all have negative qualities, they are not much worse than the male characters. King Hildebrand is an arrogant chauvinist whom Gama accuses of being all muscle and no brain. He is unmerciful, insisting that Ida marry Hilarion even though she clearly does not want to. He does not even like Ida, but his pride forces him to insist that the bargain be upheld. King Gama is quite a different king. He supports Ida's endeavors (unlike Tennyson's Gama) but he is cynical and "disagreeable." He may be more intelligent than the other male characters, but his irritating personality overshadows his good qualities. Hilarion is the most likable male character, but he is somewhat effeminate in his romanticism. He likes Ida despite her wild convictions. With Hilarion, Gilbert has drawn attention to the widespread opinion that the New Woman movement would lead to masculine women and feminine men. Hilarion's friends Cyril and Florian seem like troublemakers who lack goals for the future and only have insincere emotions. And Ida's brothers Arac, Guron, and Scynthius are the closest male comparisons to Gilbert's feather-brain characters. It would appear that Ida took all the smart genes in the family, leaving three brothers who only care about fighting but are so clumsy and bumbling that they cannot even do that well. So although Gilbert did not support the New Woman, he did not show much respect for men either.

In *Princess Ida*, there are three distinct male opinions of women, of Ida in particular. King Hildebrand represents the first. At the beginning of the play, King Hildebrand's kingdom awaits the arrival of King Gama, who is supposed to be bringing his daughter to marry Hilarion. Hildebrand asks his men if they can see Ida with King Gama, who is approaching in the distance.

One of his men suggests that Ida is probably not with Gama unless she is six feet tall, smokes cigars, wears a mustache, and rides *en cavalier* in a full suit of armor. Hildebrand replies, “One never knows. She’s a strange girl, I’ve heard, and does odd things!” He embodies the opinion that the New Woman is odd and peculiar. He would not put anything past her, even dressing up as a warrior. Later, Prince Hilarion explains about Ida’s university to Hildebrand:

Alas, my liege, I’ve heard,
That Princess Ida has forsworn the world,
And, with a band of women, shut herself
Within a lonely country house, and there
Devotes herself to stern philosophies!

To this, Hildebrand replies:

Then I should say the loss of such a wife
Is one to which a reasonable man
Would easily be reconciled.

According to Hildebrand, any “reasonable” man would be lucky to avoid such a woman. He represents the enemy of the New Woman. He considers her endeavors a waste of time, he has no respect for her, and he thinks men would be better off if they just avoided her altogether.

King Gama represents the second opinion of the New Woman. Gama supports Ida’s ideas and considers her intelligent and accomplished. His “progressive” thinking leads him to believe he is better and more enlightened than most men. When Gama attempts to explain to Hildebrand why he does not have Ida with him, he suggests that it would be rude for a wealthy man to flaunt his riches before a pauper. This is precisely why he did not bring beautiful, virtuous, witty, graceful, humorous, wise, charitable Ida with him. Yes, Gama supports Ida, so much so that he has become arrogant and proud of her accomplishments. Gama explains that Ida rules a woman’s university in one of his many country houses with one hundred female students. They are very intelligent and disdain men. He sings that only with humble and polite begging will these women

condescend to look on men. He portrays the women as haughty, putting too much stock in their own accomplishments to speak to ordinary people, especially men, of lesser education. Gama seems to value intelligence, be it male or female. Ida is intelligent, so he likes her. Hildebrand is not (or so Gama believes), so he disdains and mocks him. Gama's annoying personality does not reflect well on the New Woman, as if the only men who support her are irritating and smug.

The third male opinion of the New Woman is represented by Prince Hilarion. Hilarion agrees with Ida on some aspects of her beliefs. He is not the chauvinist that his father is. Ida is a woman, so he likes her. Even though they were engaged when he was only two years old, he feels attached to her. He explains that Ida, as a twelve-month-old, cried at their engagement. He was sad that she would cry at the thought of marrying him. His memory suggests that, even as an infant, Ida hated the idea of marriage. She was born different from most women. But Hilarion does not seem to mind. He has the attitude of a rescuer, saving her from her own foolish ideas. Hilarion harbors romantic notions that conventionally accompany female characters. For instance, he daydreams about his baby bride in the same manner that Gilbert's "feather-brain" characters dream about their unknowing suitors. Apparently, only unmanly men can love a New Woman. This attitude was popular in anti-New Woman literature, especially in the magazine *Punch*. But part of it can be blamed on Tennyson. In Tennyson's poem, the prince also daydreams about Ida. He has heard rumors of her beauty and he has a picture of her that he wears by his heart. However, Tennyson's prince was betrothed to Ida at the age of eight, meaning he could realistically remember the event. The baby betrothal in *Princess Ida* fuels the comical nature of Hilarion's attachment to Ida. This too reflects badly on the New Woman: only strange men like Hilarion could love the New Woman.

There are several connections between the New Woman and Ida and her women. Just like the New Woman, they have rejected certain aspects of the traditional female role. Their first conviction is education for women. In *Princess Ida*, the Castle Adamant, where the university is housed, is run by women, for women. They claim to study only the most academic of topics. There is no needlework or dancing at this university. The male characters contradict the academic purpose of the university. When Hilarion, Florian, and Cyril gain entrance to the castle, they sing that they have already learned a lot just by getting inside. However, their knowledge has been completely practical. For instance, “We learnt that prickly cactus Has power to attract us When we fall.” They believe the practical knowledge they have learned is far more important than anything the women could teach inside the walls. Florian says:

A Woman’s college! maddest folly going!
What can girls learn within its walls worth knowing?

Hilarion sings of their perception of the far-fetched goals the girls must have, like finding perpetual motion and turning the circle into the square. Clearly his love for Ida is not unconditional—he certainly does not agree with women’s education. Cyril suspects that the walls around the university are not for keeping intruders out but for keeping the girls inside. His line suggests that the New Woman phenomenon is clearly against nature, or people would not try to escape it. He also suggests that the girls are somewhat brainwashed, kept in the university by force until they fully embrace the new way.

Another aspect of the New Woman that Gilbert used in *Princess Ida* was the belief in the superiority of women and the hatred for men. In the beginning of Act II, which is set at the university, Lady Psyche, professor of humanities, lectures her students. One girl asks, “What is man?” Psyche responds by describing men as donkeys, geese, coarse, plain, insane, ribald, of no use, and nature’s sole mistake. The students accept her answer without question. Although the

university boasts of having open-minded, enlightened students, the students never question what is being taught. Furthermore, they prove to be hypocrites: while they may consider men to be stupid and useless, they incessantly pour over academic writings authored almost solely by men. This hypocrisy was a common theme among New Woman critics.

After Psyche's lecture, Lady Blanche makes her daily announcements, including several punishments for students who have not exhibited appropriate levels of hatred for men. For instance, Sacharissa is being expelled for bringing in a set of chessmen even though she clearly knew that no man is allowed within the walls. Chloe will lose three terms for sketching a perambulator in her drawing-book, and worse, a *double*-perambulator. The fanatical manner with which the school authorities avoid men draws attention to the ridiculous nature of the university rules.

After making her grand entrance and singing "Oh Goddess, Wise," Princess Ida further discourses on the nature of man. She says, "And, Man, whose brain is to the elephant's as Woman's brain to Man's . . ." Ida seems thoroughly convinced that the intelligence of women is far greater than that of men. Her arrogant attitude resembles that of Novissima, the New Woman character from the Character Note discussed in an earlier chapter. Like Ida, Novissima can only "tolerate" literary men, and she avoids unlearned men completely. She considers any man inferior who has not studied precisely what she has studied, regardless of the number of things he has studied that she has not. Similarly, Ida claims that women excel in every subject over men, including mathematics, diplomacy, logic, and social qualities. However, her claims have faulty evidence. For instance, she says:

Logic? Why, tyrant Man himself admits
It's a waste of time to argue with a woman!

This only makes her appear more foolish, even in her attempt to elevate women's status. Ida scorns men so much that she encourages her students to stop caring about how they look, even suggesting that they wear mismatched clothes. In her mind, the expectation that women maintain their appearance originates from man's tyranny over women.

When Ida admits the disguised men into her university, she sings "The World is but a Broken Toy." The lyrics betray her pessimistic view of the world as it is—a world that includes men. Sullivan's melancholy music shows more than negativity; it also communicates Ida's desire to make a change. The sensitive clarinet solo at the beginning of the song sets the tone as downhearted, rather than comical. Even though the men only pretend to agree with Ida in order to gain her trust, the overall feeling of the music mirrors Ida's, not the men's, emotions. When Hilarion enters with his response to Ida's opening verse, the music does become a bit more comical with a detached, dotted rhythm that matches his words. However, the subtlety of the humorous gesture does not detract from Ida's serious tone. A quartet with all three men and Ida follows, in which the mellow, chromatic nature of the music suggests that the men at least recognize Ida's plight, even if they do not agree with her.

Lady Psyche is the first to discover that the prince and his friends are not actually women. She recognizes her brother Florian and realizes that the other two were her childhood friends. The men greet Lady Psyche by recalling her childhood behavior. They ask, "Are you that learned Psyche . . ." who scared people by knowing the scientific name of a buttercup, who explained the magician's tricks to everyone before he performed them, who bragged about the random trivia she knew to anyone who would listen, etc. Surprisingly, Lady Psyche seems flattered rather than offended. This sequence parodies the same place in Tennyson's poem. However, the mood is quite different. Instead of slyly making fun of Psyche, the men in Tennyson's poem attempt to

make her recall her former gentle nature and her loyalty to her kingdom by asking, “Are you that Psyche,” (leaving out the “learned” part) and recollecting past experiences in which she exhibited mercy and a willingness to help others. They hope to convince her not to turn them in to Princess Ida. In the Gilbert version, Psyche is so excited to see her brother and childhood playmates that she forgets all about her theoretical hatred for men and, with little hesitation, agrees to help them reach Ida.

Lady Psyche teaches the men what the women believe at the school. She says, “We are all taught, and, being taught, believe that Man, sprung from an Ape, is Ape at heart.” The sarcastic humor makes fun of the New Woman for believing women are superior to men when they are genetically quite similar. Furthermore, Psyche suggests that the women believe this simply because they have been taught it. Again, the women do not question their beliefs, suggesting that they might have a lot of knowledge but lack critical thinking skills. Psyche sings a song to explain how an ape once loved a woman. In order to win her love, the ape became more humanlike in appearance and behavior. She seems to believe that men originated from apes, while women did not. As the song concludes, Psyche and the men realize that Melissa has been listening to them. As the child of one of the professors, Melissa has apparently never seen a man before. She is amazed that Florian does not look hideous and deformed, as she has always been taught. Her reaction suggests that the second generation of New Women will forsake their mothers’ convictions at the first sight of man. The hatred of man is clearly unnatural, and most women will not be able to ignore their innate admiration for men.

The last connection to the New Woman is the avoidance of marriage. The central conflict in *Princess Ida* originates from Ida’s refusal to marry Hilarion, and marriage plays an important role in the story. When Ida explains the rules for matriculation into the university to the

disguised men, she says that students must leave distinction of rank and nobility behind.

Additionally, they must promise never to marry a man. They must prefer the other students to all men. Obviously, the men have no problem with the rules. Princess Ida's probing questioning proves that she realizes not all women are capable of abandoning men. Not only does she regard herself and her pupils as above men, but she also considers them to be above most women. Her conviction to avoid marriage is greatly exaggerated from Tennyson's poem. His parallel dialogue says:

“ . . .when we set our hand
To this great work, we purposed with ourself
Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks, which make us toys of men, that so,
Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-styled our lords ally
Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with scale.”

In fact, the rules in Tennyson's version include that the students must not speak to any men for three years. The women do not plan to separate from men forever. Rather, they want the chance to improve their minds away from the degrading influence of men. Once they have achieved their great potential, they may choose to marry as equals, not inferiors.

It is in the ending of the story that Gilbert strays the farthest from Tennyson's plot. King Hildebrand, fulfilling his true role as the enemy of the New Woman, comes to attack the castle and avenge Hilarion. Ida declares that her women will fight against his army. At the beginning of Act III, the women are busy preparing for war. They begin with the frightening song “Death to the Invader!,” which turns into the pathetic “Please You, Do Not Hurt Us.” This number slaps the New Woman movement in the face. It turns out that the students may be enthusiastic about studying like men, but they are not ready to fight like men. Sullivan's music shows the contrast of true emotions. The girls want to be brave but they really are very scared. Even though their

ideal woman would bravely face the foe without fear, the girls clearly have reservations.

Sullivan's music validates the girls' conflicted emotional state. His orchestration makes the intensity of the beginning of the song come across. The moving baseline, violent, striking chords, and coloristic chromatic harmony give the music a fierce, warlike nature (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8 "Death to the Invader" mm. 16-19

1st Soprano
Death to the in - va - der! Strike a dead - ly blow,

2nd Soprano
Death to the in - va - der! Strike a dead - ly blow,

f

The musical score for 'Death to the Invader' (mm. 16-19) features two soprano parts and piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The piano part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a driving, chromatic bass line. The vocal lines are in a similar rhythmic pattern, with lyrics: 'Death to the in - va - der! Strike a dead - ly blow,'.

Melissa begins the confession part of the number by describing what she would rather say to the men. The vocal line changes to a soft, detached melody that contrasts the feigned ferocity of the opening but remains delicate enough not to seem comical (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9 "Please You, Do No Hurt Us" mm. 50-53

Melissa
"Please you, do not hurt us." "Do not hurt us, if it please you!"

Timidly.

1st Sop.
"Do not hurt us, if it please you!"

2nd Sop.
"Do not hurt us, if it please you!"

The musical score for 'Please You, Do No Hurt Us' (mm. 50-53) features three vocal parts: Melissa, 1st Soprano, and 2nd Soprano. The key signature is B-flat major. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Please you, do not hurt us.' 'Do not hurt us, if it please you!'.

When the women return to the “Death to the Invader” music, the knowledge that they are really afraid shows that the music is really communicating their frantic terror rather than their want for blood.

Princess Ida arrives and announces, “Women of Adamant, we have to show that Woman, educated to the task, can meet Man, face to face on his own ground, and beat him there.” But as she calls on each woman, they admit that they are willing to perform their tasks “in theory” but unable to perform them “in practice.” The surgeon is happy to cut off arms and legs in theory, but not in practice, not “for a thousand pounds!” At this point, Princess Ida realizes that her women have been feeding off of her own determination and strength, but that she cannot carry them all at the moment of crisis. She claims that her women have deserted her and sends them away. Now, all of the women except Princess Ida (and perhaps Lady Blanche) have been exposed as weak, fragile, and incapable of keeping their convictions.

Ida, still determined not to give in, sings “I Built Upon a Rock.” She has been deserted by all her women and watches her goals and hopes fail. The lyrics are actually quite moving—Gilbert must have let his guard down. Sullivan, of course, seized the chance to strengthen Ida’s emotional respectability. Through all of her music, Sullivan has molded Ida into somebody quite serious, despite the ridiculous nature of her character. His beautiful melody here is full of pathos. The chromaticism adds to her internal torment as she contemplates her conflicting desire to save the castle while still reaching her goal for female superiority. The ambiguous harmonic structure, including frequent secondary harmonies and turbulent progressions, adds to her agony. The use of brass in the accompaniment makes the tone heavy and dark. Sullivan struggled with composing in the minor mode and tended to end his minor songs in major. While this song is no different, the unstable harmony in the major half of the song continues the unsettled feeling

created by the use of minor in the first half. The melody frequently moves chromatically and sometimes clashes with the orchestral accompaniment, further communicating Ida's inner turmoil. Regrettably, the ending is not his strongest. It comes abruptly and the harmonic progression is a bit cliché. Nevertheless, Sullivan created even more emotional depth with this song, making it easy to sympathize with Ida as she watches her dreams fall to pieces.

Even though the rules strictly forbid any men from entering the castle, Ida allows her father and brothers to enter. They have come to fight for her and she realizes that she needs their help. Ida's brothers fight against Prince Hilarion and his friends, but unlike Tennyson's poem, the brothers lose. As her brothers lay on the ground about to die, Ida stops the battle and quickly questions whether Lady Blanche will take over leadership of the school if Ida submits and marries Hilarion. Blanche happily agrees. Ida realizes that she must give in or her brothers will die. This resolution contrasts Tennyson's poem. Instead of winning the battle and then having a change of heart and willingly choosing to marry Hilarion, Ida is forced to give up her convictions. It is as if Gilbert is saying that the New Woman is so stubborn that only violence will make her come to her senses.

Even though the battle is over, Ida is not completely resolved to the marriage. As she reflects one last time on her great dreams and ambitions for womankind, Hilarion says:

Madam, you placed your trust in Woman – well,
Woman has failed you utterly – try Man,
Give him one chance, it's only fair – besides,
Women are far too precious, too divine,
To try unproven theories upon,
Experiments, the proverb says, are made
On humble subjects – try our grosser clay
And mould it as you will!

Ida realizes that Hilarion has a better attitude towards women than most men. But she cannot help giving one last voice to her dreams of raising the status of women and ruling with her posterity. In a suggestion that resembles the end of *Iolanthe*, King Hildebrand, the enemy of the New Woman, points out the fact that, without man, there could be no posterity. Ida's ridiculous reply is that she had "never thought of that!" This line alone does a lot to damage the serious status Sullivan imbued her with through his music. Despite her apparent knowledge and even wisdom, she has not realized that posterity would require man. With this realization, Ida happily abandons her dream and unites with Hilarion. Now even Ida, who has outlasted all the other women in the play, appears fickle in her desires.

The frequent references to women's rights and the New Woman movement show that Gilbert was familiar with Victorian feminism. He did not seem to believe that women were capable of sticking to their resolves. He also suggested that women's education would not improve their ability to reason. But Gilbert never spoke out against women's rights, at least not directly. He merely used the views of critics of the New Woman to create humorous situations and characters. Sullivan, on the other hand, yearned to compose music for stories involving "human interest," as he put it in his letter that almost ended their partnership forever. It is no coincidence that *Princess Ida* triggered the conflict that led to his writing the letter. Despite the fantastical nature of *Iolanthe*, Sullivan at least felt that the characters portrayed more realistic emotions. *Princess Ida* was a definite step backwards. Although Sullivan wrote excellent music and did much to counteract the mocking treatment of the female (and male) characters, he ultimately could not undo such an absurd plot. It is no wonder that *Princess Ida* is performed less often than the other Savoy operas. And yet it still is performed.

Although the partnership may have struggled, and Sullivan at least did not feel that the Savoy music represented his greatest potential, it cannot be argued that the products of the Gilbert & Sullivan collaboration are masterpieces of their genre. The very conflict between humor and weightiness that caused so much tension in their working relationship resulted in the reason for their success. Gilbert's marvelous wit and insistence on near perfection, as well as Sullivan's brilliant orchestration and emotional melodies helped elevate light opera to a respectable genre. And that perfect balance, that winning formula of contrasting styles that made them popular in their own time, has won Gilbert and Sullivan success that continues to today.

Bibliography

- Ainger, Michael. *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Anonymous (One Who Was There). "The Contagious Diseases Act." *The British Medical Journal* 2 (November 1869), 572.
- Baily, Leslie. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Their Lives and Times*. New York: The Viking Press, 1973.
- Burdett, Carolyn. *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001.
- Caine, Barbara. *Victorian Feminists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Caird, Mona. "Marriage." *Westminster Review* 130 (1888), 186–201.
- "Character Note: The New Woman." *Cornhill Magazine* 23 (1984), 365–68.
- "Contagious Diseases Act, 1866." *The British Medical Journal* 1 (January 1868), 38–39.
- Crackanthorpe, B. A. "The Revolt of the Daughters." *Nineteenth Century* 35 (1894), 23–31.
- Cunningham, A. R. "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890's." *Victorian Studies* 17 (December 1973), 177–86.
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth. "Why Women are Ceasing to Marry." *Humanitarian* 14 (1899), 391–96.
- Dowling, Linda. "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (March 1979), 434–53.
- Du Bois, Arthur E. "W. S. Gilbert, Practical Classicist." *The Sewanee Review* 37 (January 1929), 94–107.
- Dunhill, Thomas F. *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation*. New York: Oxford University Press: American Branch, 1928.
- Eden, David. *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Creative Conflict*. London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986.
- Eden, David and Meinhard Saremba, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Forrey, Carolyn. "Gertrude Atherton & the New Woman." *California Historical Quarterly* 55 (Fall, 1976), 194–209.

- Gilbert, William Schwenck. "William Schwenck Gilbert: an Autobiography." In *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections*, edited by Harold Orel. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994.
- Grand, Sarah. "The New Aspect of the Woman Question." *North American Review* 158 (1894), 270–76.
- Hauger, George. "Offenbach: English Obituaries and Realities." *The Musical Times*, 121 (Oct. 1980), 619–21.
- Hayter, Charles. *Gilbert and Sullivan*. Macmillan Modern Dramatists, edited by Bruce and Adele King. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1987.
- Higbie, Robert. "Conflict and Comedy in W. S. Gilbert's Savoy Operas." *South Atlantic Bulletin* 45 (November 1980), 66–77.
- Holcombe, Lee. *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850–1914*. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973.
- Hochschild, Adam. *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914–1918*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.
- Hughes, Gervase. *The Music of Arthur Sullivan*. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1960.
- Kuykendall, James Brooks. "Musical Contexts I: Motives and Methods in Sullivan's Allusions." In *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, 122–35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Lamb, Andrew. "Offenbach's Conquest of London." *About the House* 5, no. 12 (1980), 35–39.
- Ledger, Sally. "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, edited by Gail Marshall, 153–168. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- _____. *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Ledger, Sally and Roger Luckhurst, editors. *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880–1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Marshall, Gail, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Matz, Mary Jane Phillips. "Verdi and the 'Total Theatre' of Our Time." In *Atti del III Congresso internazionale di studi verdiani*, 303–11. Milano: Piccola Scala, 1972.

- Mearns, Stan. "An Investigation into the Reputation of Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842–1900): Man of Contrast: Man of Theatre." *British Music* 22 (2000), 52–66.
- Milnes, Rodney. "Two Centenaries . . . and a link: Rodney Milnes on Sullivan, Weill and . . ." *Opera* 51, no. 11 (2000), 1308–11.
- Moss, Arthur and Evalyn Marvel. *Cancan and Barcarolle: The Life and Times of Jacques Offenbach*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1954.
- Nelson, John C. "Tonal and Structural Design in the Finales of the Savoy Operas, with Some Suggestions as to Derivation." *Indiana Theory Review* 13 (1992), 1–22.
- Noske, Frits. "Ritual Scenes in Verdi's Operas." *Music & Letters* 54 (October 1973), 415–39.
- Oliphant, Margaret. "The Anti-Marriage League." *Blackwood's Magazine* 159 (1896), 135–49.
- Orel, Harold, editor. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Interviews and Recollections*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994.
- Palmegiano, Eugenia. "Feminist Propaganda in the 1850s and 1860s." *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 4 (February 1971), 5–8.
- Poovey, Mary. "Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act." *Feminist Studies* 14 (Autumn 1988), 467–85.
- Purdy, Claire Lee. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Masters of Mirth and Melody*. Illustrated by Eric Godal. New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1946.
- Roberts, J. D. "Feminism and the State in Later Victorian England." *The Historical Journal* 38 (March, 1995), 85–110.
- Rosselli, John. *The Life of Verdi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Saremba, Meinhard. "Popular Misconceptions of 'Gilbert and Sullivan.'" In *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, 36–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Senf, Carol A. "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman." *Victorian Studies* 26 (Autumn, 1982), 33–49.
- Shanley, Mary Lyndon. *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Summers, Anne. "Militarism in Britain Before the Great War." *History Workshop*, no. 2 (Autumn, 1976), 104–33.

- Taylor, Benedict. “Resituating Gilbert and Sullivan: The Musical and Aesthetic Context.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, 36–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- “The National Anti-Contagious Diseases Act Association.” *The British Medical Journal* 2 (December 1870), 633.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. and Daniel J. Walkowitz. “‘We Are Not Beasts of the Field’: Prostitution and the Poor in Plymouth and Southampton Under the Contagious Diseases Acts.” *Feminist Studies* 1 (Winter – Spring, 1973), 73–106.
- Whelan, Lara Baker. *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010.
- Wren, Gayden. *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert & Sullivan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Yates, Martin T. “Musical Contexts II: Characterisation and Emotion in the Savoy Operas.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba, 136–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Appendix A

Year	Act	Year	Event
		1836	Gilbert is born
1839	Infant Custody Act		
		1842	Sullivan is born
1850	Factory Acts		
1857	Divorce Act		
	Obscene Publications Act		
1859	Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Act		
1861	Conjugal Rights Act (Scotland)		
1864	Contagious Diseases Act		
1866	Contagious Diseases Act		
1869	Contagious Diseases Act		
1870	Educational Endowments Act		
	Married Women's Property Act		
		1871	<i>Thespis</i>
1872	Infant Life Protection Act		
1873	Contagious Diseases Act		
	Infant Custody Act		
1874	Married Women's Property Act Amendment		
	Married Women Act		
	Factory Acts		
		1875	<i>Trial By Jury</i>
		1877	<i>The Sorcerer</i>
1878	Matrimonial Causes Act	1878	<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i>
	Factory Acts		
		1879	<i>Pirates of the Penzance</i>
		1881	<i>Patience</i>
1882	Married Women's Property Act Amendment	1882	<i>Iolanthe</i>
1884	Matrimonial Causes Act	1884	<i>Princess Ida</i>
		1885	<i>The Mikado</i>
1886	Infant Custody Act		
	Contagious Diseases Act Repealed		
		1887	<i>Ruddigore</i>
		1888	<i>Yeomen of the Guard</i>
1889	Act for the Better Prevention of Cruelty to Children	1889	<i>The Gondoliers</i>
1891	Something about conjugal rights		
		1893	<i>Utopia Limited</i>
		1896	<i>The Grand Duke</i>