Introduction

For two weeks in the winter of 1879, the former prime minister, William Ewart Gladstone, took to the campaign trail, spearheading the Liberal Party attempt to regain power. The "Grand Old Man" of British politics travelled the length and breadth of Britain by rail with his wife, Catherine, and thirty-two-year-old daughter, Mary, as the most prominent members of his entourage. In what was one of the first "whistle-stop" tours in modern politics, Gladstone tirelessly waved from his carriage and even spoke on station platforms to enthusiastic crowds to spread his party's election message of "Peace, Retrenchment & Reform".[1] His destination was the Midlothian constituency – seven Scottish districts surrounding and including Edinburgh.

Nearing seventy, Gladstone's decision to emerge from retirement and return to front-line politics paid off handsomely as the Liberals stormed to a landslide victory, putting Gladstone back in No. 10 Downing Street (for the second time) in April 1880. "His popularity now is quite boundleß + indescribable", Gladstone's niece, Lavinia Talbot, noted in her diary, adding that his London home "is thronged ceaseleßly, crowds cheer him everywhere, the illustrated papers have separate 'supplements' – each member of the family is described, ~~almost~~ photogr."[2]

The public expression of enthusiasm for Gladstone and his humanitarian message during the winter journey was unequalled in Victorian Britain and only increased exponentially during the campaign. "Fervid crowds at every station", Gladstone commented in his diary on 4 December. "The torchlight procession at Glasgow was a subject for Turner."[3] Two days later he perceived: "The departure from Glasgow was *royal*."[4] His daughter, Mary, observed that the newspapers "can give you no real idea of the spontaneous outburst of feeling: we are told the Queen has never had anything approaching to it – the surging crowds at the stations, (even when the train does n't stop), the illuminations + decorations + gifts."[5] Toward the end of the

[1] Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, 408; Midlothian Liberal Association letterhead, Ralph Richardson to WEG, 28.11.1879, GP/44461, f 183; "Midlothian Election Result of Poll," GP/44463, f 155. See also Rhodes James, *Rosebery*, 97.
[2] LT, 10–30.4.1880, Diary, LC/705:104.BA15492/231/1, f 94.
[3] WEG, 4.12.1879, *Diaries*, 9: 464. [4] WEG, 6.12.1879, *Diaries*, 9: 464.
[5] MG to LT, [1.12.1879], MGP/46236, f 49.

journey, the Gladstones had realized the necessity of scheduling a special train so that they could make longer stops at some platforms.[6] At the end of the campaign, Gladstone estimated that he had addressed 86,930 listeners.[7]

Gladstone sought to reach the people with his message of reform, and the masses communicated their enthusiasm through a sensuality that Gladstone associated with Turner, a painter whose art was widely understood to carry the religious gloss bestowed by John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3).[8] Mirroring the Midlothian's gorgeousness ("torchlight procession[s]", "illuminations + decorations"), church appointments made during Gladstone's second premiership usually went to clergy who used sumptuous ritual to appeal to the poor, or who did not oppose those who did. Ceremonial practices attracted to the Christian fold those who most needed assistance to alleviate physical and moral depravation – support provided by the church or charities in the years before the welfare state. A successful advocate with Gladstone for these appointments was his middle daughter, Mary, an outstanding amateur pianist who, at age nineteen, had played at Franz Liszt's request in 1867, performed for Arthur Sullivan in 1870 and was thrilled to receive virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim's invitation "to play with my accompaniment" in 1876.[9]

Of course, the church was the traditional avenue for ameliorating the conditions of poverty before the state interventionism of the new liberals in the early twentieth century, but clergy were appointed by the government and the appointments made by Gladstone beginning around 1880 furthered a political stance. Mary championed those candidates who shared her beliefs in aesthetics, idealist philosophy and social theology. She and her father also believed in the principles of the voluntarist Charity Organization Society (est. 1869) which helped the people to help themselves.[10] In line with this individualist stance, Mary desired social justice legislation that would remove hindrances to people being able to achieve their best selves, sometimes taking a more interventionist line than her father. She tackled Gladstone on land nationalization (land taxes to raise money to address the Condition of England, or the effects of industrialization on the working classes), and more especially social purity and women's suffrage. (Although, she remained silent on sexual abuse issues because her parents would worry about an unmarried daughter contemplating such a campaign.)[11]

[6] James Watson to WEG, [n.d.].12.1879, GP/44461, f 199. [7] WEG, 11.12.1879, *Diaries*, 9: 466.
[8] See Landow, *Aesthetic Critical Theories*, 56–7, 109.
[9] MG, 1.1.1867, Diary, MGP/46254, f 60; MG, 28.5.1870, Diary, MGP/46255, f 42; Joseph Joachim to MG, [20.3.1876], MGP/46251, f 42.
[10] See Matthew, Introduction, xxxvi. [11] Houseman, "Mary Gladstone," 141, 174.

Mary's lack of success with the prime minister on these policies is less important than her attempt to sway him and, not unrelated, her support of the arts as a means to perform and advance liberal ideas. This liberalism can be defined as a behavior (humanist, unselfish, optimistic) rather than exclusively as the party for which one votes. The granddaughter to whom Gladstone was closest (Mary's daughter, Dorothy) made exactly these resolutions at age seventeen, wrote them down and placed the note in her bible where they still remain: "To be more unselfish + to do things for others [. . .] To look only for the good in people + not for their faults."[12] Appropriately, these words also rest in Gladstone's personal bible, for Dorothy inherited it on the day that he died.[13] These resolutions – this liberal legacy – were guiding lights in Mary's life, too, as the following pages explore in terms of Mary's role as Gladstone's ecclesiastic secretary and political hostess. In particular, Mary introduced top-drawer chamber music into the socializing that occurred at the home of the great Liberal leader. Focusing on Mary Gladstone and her circle, this book reveals the role of music in Victorian liberalism, explores the intersections of this musico-liberalism with literature and recovers what the high Victorian salon was within a wider intellectual and cultural history.

My stance that liberals found beauty to be helpful in addressing social problems tempers the conventional academic association of liberals and liberalism with a critical-rational, optimistic approach, rooted in solitary study and divorced from real-life problems. When the Rev. W.H. Lyttelton advised Lucy Cavendish (his and Gladstone's niece) on the utility of imagination, he spoke about the ethical use of aesthetic response whereby strong emotion, experienced first through poetry, could be rigorously applied to improving real lives. He articulated what was essentially an extended Gladstone family creed:

> you have one gift unusually strong; that is, Imagination, + the fancy that leads to poetry. With that naturally comes excitement + enthusiasm. . . . The great danger [of such powers] I believe, is to learn to disconnect thoughts + practise_ to live in times of thought + reading in a dreamland which does not colour even, common life + action. [. . .] novel-reading often accustoms people to go through all manner of intense feelings without ever acting upon them at all; + so when the same feelings are excited in real life no action follows, [. . .]
>
> But on the other hand, Imagination may be infinitely useful. There is poetry enough in every human life; + just in proportion as God may be pleased to give us

[12] Dorothy Drew, 4.11.1907, Baptismal Vow Resolution card from The Mission, St. Martin's Scarborough, in WEG's personal bible, *The Holy Bible*, King James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.), private collection.

[13] CG to Dorothy Drew, inscription, in ibid., flyleaf.

imagination, we can enter into the lives of others, + the poetry that is in them, + so know how to act towards them so as to comfort them, or to give them right + high views of their life + of the events that meet them. [. . .]

Now dear Locket, when you pray [~~unintell~~] that God will help you to become what He means you to be, pray that you may have strength to do hard stern work, + to make your imagination too work upon real things.[14]

Similarly, Lyttelton asked Lucy to select hymns for his church services:

It is pleasant to have them from you, + keep such a pretty link of music, + prayer to God, between us; for what should we be without such blessed links with Heaven above, + between us, in God, in this fleeting world of ours? But thank God Almighty, we have such links, Locket dear.[15]

Imagination honed by novels and relationships fostered by music prepare people to sympathize with others; with divine guidance and hard work, men and women can learn to act upon intense feelings in order to benefit society. Mary Gladstone's lived experiences enact precisely these beliefs in the social usefulness of beauty. Her centrality to Gladstone's second administration as one of the prime ministerial private secretaries urges us to rethink liberalism. It is more than platform politics, or the mask of power that Marxists, Foucauldians and poststructuralists would have.[16] Rather, high Victorian liberalism as it was practiced in daily life was feelingly interpersonal, aesthetic and sympathetic.

As a notable musician, salon hostess and prime ministerial private secretary, Mary Gladstone was more than her father's administrative assistant. Peter Clarke observes that Mary's role marked a change from her father's quiet "appeal to conscience".[17] Clarke describes the daughter as a "moral regenerationist" with "a more combative view of the evils of the world."[18] She believed that the "battle with sin" (as Mary put it), was essential to improve an imperfect society.[19] Rather than making "a moral argument for structural reform" and state responsibilities as would a "moral reformist",[20] Mary agreed with a group of Oxford Idealists that "society is imperfect" and assigned the responsibility to "defects in individual conduct and character". Clarke continues: "the remedy here is the remoralisation of character."[21] Because Mary often convinced her father of the candidates for preferment,[22]

[14] WHL to Lucy Cavendish, 7.8.1857, LC/705:104.BA15492/189/5, pp 4–8; original square brackets around "of such powers". Original ellipses shown without square brackets. Lucy's nickname references the nursery rhyme, "Lucy Locket had a pocket," and the character in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728).
[15] WHL to Lucy Cavendish, 11.2.1878, LC/705:104.BA15492/189/5, pp 76–7.
[16] Anderson, "Postwar Aesthetics," 418. [17] Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 14.
[18] Ibid. [19] Ibid.; MG to Barbara Hammond, 13.9.1923, cited by ibid.
[20] Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 15. [21] Ibid., 14.
[22] Houseman, "Mary Gladstone," 6, 75–122.

there was an active partnership between philosophical Idealism and Gladstonian politics whereby music, color, oratory and other rituals were used to appeal to the masses and, through their consequent desire to participate in Christian and Liberal programs, to raise the people's consciousness to the point where they would be able to make better lifestyle choices. The state was not attempting to control individual agency through legislation; it sought to persuade individuals to choose to improve themselves, which in turn would benefit the nation. Clarke expresses how this approach, influenced by the philosopher T.H. Green, eschewed "the rationale of collectivism" and instead urged "[t]he common good [. . .] as an ethical criterion to spur on a more strenuous individualism."[23] Closely associated with her concern for the Condition of England, Mary helped the forward trajectory of modernity because she was her father's charismatic hostess, a gifted conversationalist, prolific correspondent and talented pianist who was perspicuous about the role that sociable music could play in moral life. In her home, statesmen gathered with prominent Anglican clergy, Oxbridge intellectuals and artistic geniuses – illustrious men (mostly) who believed that the finest music, literature and visual art could directly transmit a God-created sensual world.[24]

The lack of scholarship on the London salon of the late nineteenth century has had profound consequences for our understanding of political, intellectual and social history. The following pages, by telling the story of how a British and a European cultural history informed elite politics during the fifth decade of Queen Victoria's reign, thus have significance for several areas of enquiry. Recovering the full impact of Mary Gladstone's contributions to British culture and music's role within the semi-public Victorian salon requires telling the intersecting stories of social theology and the part played by women in furthering liberalism. Therefore, while my argument's center of gravity is Mary and the salon, the British school of Idealist philosophy and Gladstonian liberalism are also cohesive elements, sometimes taking center stage and more often underpinning the exploration of the salon, musical performance and aesthetic criticism.

My study of Mary Gladstone is not a traditional life and works, organized chronologically and attentive solely to a principal figure. In this intellectual history, rather, the liberal person's relational beliefs about larger society are informed by and revealed through family life and values, friendships, systems of thought and the fine arts. This book could be called a study of a life during a period when ideas of self-actualization were relational and

[23] Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 15.
[24] For divine presence in art, see Dowling, *Vulgarization of Art*, 29.

when socializing within salons, clubs and societies proved vital for political change. Such an approach has begun to be of academic interest, as seen in recent books about two major Conservative prime ministers who politically opposed the Gladstones, and whose time in office bookended Gladstone's second administration (1880–5). Daisy Hay's *Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli: A Strange Romance* (2015) examines the life stories of the Disraelis in order for "a different kind of story" or "alternative [narrative]" from the usual biography or political history to emerge by "listening to things not said."[25] Nancy W. Ellenberger's *Balfour's World: Aristocracy and Political Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (2015) takes a "braided" approach, examining the friends closest to Arthur Balfour to uncover previously hidden details about the rise of the modern British politician in the late 1880s and 1890s.[26] In my case, studying Mary Gladstone recovers her significant contributions, while also presenting a more complex view of elite political culture in the 1880s and a new understanding of her father; both Gladstones were frequently together in work and family life, but wrote about different things in their respective diaries and letters.

As a whole, this book tells a focused narrative of the landmark years leading up to and immediately following the formation of Gladstone's second administration. It begins in Part I with crucial contextual information about philosophical foundations, liberalism, salon history and the Gladstone salon in particular. These sections build toward the fourth chapter, which focuses specifically on the musical elements of Mary's salon hostessing. Part II is then structured as a series of in-depth case studies that return repeatedly to Mary Gladstone. In this second part, the political elements of music-making and aesthetic criticism thread through each chapter, with each exemplar concentrating on a different genre of writing (Mary Gladstone's life writing and the Royal College of Music, Alfred Tennyson's poetic recitations and W.E. Gladstone's politics, and Mary's political actualization of critically reading George Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda*). While my exploration embraces public presentations of social visions (e.g., through publications, the political platform and high church ritual), it ultimately concentrates on the realm of the semi-private salon in order to explore how an aesthetic liberalism was embedded in Gladstone family life.

By the mid-1870s, the weekly Gladstone salon comprised a meeting place for people who conversed about current events and expressed Romantic, humanist ideals through music-making, either during the salon proper or in an afternoon extension. This period of British salon history (the third

[25] Hay, *Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli*, xii. [26] Ellenberger, *Balfour's World*, 11.

quarter of the century) has been almost totally neglected. Recovering this site of sociability in terms of the perceived transformative power of music in high society and in the "social" sphere (an emergent site of activism existing between family-only issues and the purely governmental) ultimately does more than recover only Mary Gladstone's leadership in the musical community or her father's proto-feminist support of his capable daughter – although it does that, too. Rather than only an impersonal theory, liberalism infused ideas about what socially experienced music was thought to be. Likewise, the importance of felt response laced through elite gatherings and religious services for humanist, liberal purpose. Understanding the role of the *salonnière* [female hostess] shows the important role played by women in high Victorian liberalism. Through their aesthetic experiences, Mary and her friends enacted their belief in an interconnected humanity, and assisted and shifted aspects of Gladstone's social theologic work.

Part I
Intellectual History

1 Idealist Philosophy, Culture and the Gladstones

The Midlothian is usually seen as the first modern political campaign because of how it was conducted as well as its emphasis on humanitarian concerns over local interests. Unremarked, however, is the vital role played by women and the family in liberalism, attested to in the Midlothian campaign by the presence of wife and daughter alongside Gladstone during his speeches. Political historians recognize that Catherine Gladstone was among the first of political wives habitually to appear on the platform with her husband and sons.[1] The importance of Mary Gladstone's public appearances at her father's side, however, remains critically overlooked despite the fact that she was probably the first daughter to appear on stage while a prime minister stumped for public office.

At the time, Mary Gladstone was a celebrity in her own right. She was the home daughter who facilitated her legendary father's travels (he was considered the embodiment of liberalism), appeared with him and was widely represented in newspaper cartoons in the 1870s and beyond. Likewise, Mary had previously joined her mother at prominent charity events such as the opening of the London Hospital's new wing in 1876; Mary joined her mother and Lady Salisbury for the carriage ride along crowded, festooned streets and then onto the dais.[2] On the Midlothian platform, Mary's presence symbolized Gladstone's paternal style of leadership, suggested the ladies' social work and hinted that Mary had her own role to play. The ruling elite of the day knew the last. They recognized Mary as a talented musician who became her father's secretary in 1876 and, subsequently, one of the five prime ministerial private secretaries in 1881. She was probably the first woman to hold this office.

In fact, the Gladstones' inner circle understood the Grand Old Man's (GOM) second administration as in part a family effort, showing that

[1] Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister*, 242.

[2] For the London Hospital, see MG, 5–8.3.1876, MGP/46257, f 25. For cartoons, see, for example, "Gladstone on the Stump," *The New Gladstone Cartoon* [1880]; "The Braemar Gathering: A Royal Greeting to Mr. Gladstone on the Terrace, Braemar Castle," *The Penny Pictorial and Family Story Paper*, XV.368 (13.9.1884); "Mr. Gladstone and Party Ascending Ben Madhui, the Second Highest Mountain in Scotland," *The Penny Pictorial News and Family Story Paper*, XV.369 (20 September 1884; illustrated front page), GG/1721. See also "Portraits of Celebrities," 297.

politics were in some ways inseparable from the domestic sphere. Early in Gladstone's second premiership, Tennyson's eldest son, Hallam, wrote to Mary: "Yes. we think of you all in the midst of your whirl & worry & 'laborious days,' but the place of power is the place of care. Still with that power _ to do such noble work as your father and mother are doing! What a blessing for you that you all have the strength for the labour!"[3] Hallam implies a contrast with his own family, where his mother's illness led to Hallam's abrupt departure from Cambridge in order to assume, in her stead, secretarial duties for Tennyson.[4] The comment shows Hallam's awareness of the Gladstone women's roles, and also a wider cultural assumption of the family's responsibilities. "[T]he place of power is the place of care" because of Gladstone's attention to the people and also because of the family's literal presence in "the place of power".

The heart of the Liberal Party message was enhancing quality of life and protecting liberties, including the creation of meaningful social relationships. Humanitarian civic bonds began not with capitalism or old feudal power structures, but rather with thoughtfulness expressed among kin. Thus Herbert Gladstone expressed to his sister, Mary, in 1911:

> Now a family is like a Cabinet. So long as it has a ruling head it is or ought to be influenced into keeping incompatibilities + weaknesses in the background + by each contributing ~~th~~is when best to produce the best collective result. When the head dies each member becomes more of an individual_ looking at things from the personal point of view. Family loyalty + affection remain but in the ordinary affairs of life the very fact of familiarity ~~me~~ has a tendency to make each member somewhat disregardful of the others [*sic*] feelings.[5]

Herbert awkwardly sought to address how, thirteen years after their father had died, he thought "there is too much 'interference' in the family. [. . .] In the whole course of my life I only remember Father lecturing me twice. H.D. [Harry Drew, Mary's husband] never did. Yet the value of their example, life, + methods in life was incomparable."[6] Leading by example, Gladstone inspired his family (and, by implication, his Cabinet) to work collectively for the best result.

G.W.F. Hegel, W.E. Gladstone and Thomas Hill Green (Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford) all espoused "paternal principles" regarding national rule.[7] Green is especially relevant here because of Mary

[3] [HT to MG], 6.6.1880, MGP/46244, f 93.
[4] For the link between ET's and MG's overwork, see [HT to MG], December 1882, MGP/46244, f 113.
[5] HJG to MG, 17.4.1911, box 1, private collection. [6] Ibid.
[7] WEG, *The State in Its Relations*, 37.