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Music and the Queer Body in *Fin-de-Siècle* Literature

Fraser Ian Riddell

This thesis examines the significance of the body in queer *fin-de-siècle* representations of music. It offers important new ways of thinking about how music challenges foundational accounts of identity, how music is recruited to psychic fantasies of masochistic self-divestiture, and how music acts to position queer bodies in both time and space. It draws attention to modes of queer musical consumption that are often unsettling or problematic, in order to move beyond critical accounts that focus solely on heroic queer self-assertion or the emancipatory potential of music. By charting ways in which marginalized subjects experience music in terms of shame and loss, it prompts enquiry into a broader range of embodied responses to music.

Chapter 1 investigates the significance of music, the body and emotionalism in *fin-de-siècle* sexological writings and in debates in Victorian musical aesthetics. Drawing upon the work of Leo Bersani, Chapter 2 examines the association between music and masochism in texts by Vernon Lee, Walter Pater, and Arthur Symonds. Chapter 3 focusses on the writings of John Addington Symonds, examining representations of the voice of the chorister in late-Victorian literature. Chapter 4 considers the significance of embodied tactile encounters between musicians, listeners, and musical instruments in texts by E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Vernon Lee and others. It demonstrates how interactions between instruments and bodies allow for the emergence of new queer experiences of space. Chapter 5 investigates texts by Robert Browning, E. F. Benson, and others, in which music subjects bodies to temporal flux or dislocation. By reading such texts in the light of both Victorian evolutionary thought and contemporary theory's concern with 'queer temporalities', the chapter demonstrates the significance of those tropes of retrogression that attach to embodied experiences of music.

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INTRODUCTION

On 18 June 1864, John Addington Symonds was at a concert at the St James's Hall in London. The New Philharmonic Society, conducted by Dr Henry Wylde, performed a programme that included Carl Maria von Weber's *Konzertstück* in F minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 79, Ludwig Spohr's 'Dramatic' Concerto No. 8 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 47, and Overtures by Mendelssohn and Rossini.¹ The concert culminated with a rendition of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67. Symonds recounted his experience of Beethoven's music to a friend the following day:

Every nerve seems as if it had been stripped of its integument & opened to the world [...] It is no exaggeration when I say that every note found a place here—in my heart. I was so weak and sensitive that he played upon me as an instrument. I never so heard music before & I was obliged to leave the concert.²

Three days earlier, Symonds had attended the home of the noted genito-urinary surgeon, William Acton. As Symonds was to recall some years later in his *Memoirs* (1893), he was at this time suffering from a debilitating 'nervous malady', which was 'expressed by a terrible disturbance of the reproductive organs'.³ Acton performed upon Symonds a procedure that he prescribed for all those suffering from what he called 'spermatorrhea' — the involuntary emission of semen: cauterization through the urethra. As described in detail in Acton's *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857), the procedure involved inserting a syringe 'down to the *veru-montanum*' and injecting into it a solution of 'nitrate of silver'. This 'caustic', Acton suggests, acts to 'modify the local condition' of the ejaculatory duct and allows the 'patient [to] succeed in obtaining a control over the will which he never had before': 'the morbid irritability of the

¹ *The Musical World*, 42 (18 June 1864), 386.

² John Addington Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, in *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, ed. by Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters, 3 vols (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967–69), I, 481 (19 June 1864).

³ John Addington Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Amber K. Regis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 256.

canal disappears — the emissions cease, and the health improves.’⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, this did little to improve Symonds’s fragile health. Writing many years later, it is clear to Symonds that his ‘malady’ was the result of his inability to ‘indulge [his] sexual instincts’. In seeking out such treatment, Symonds reflects, he ‘did everything, in short, except what nature prompted.’⁵ Following the procedure, Symonds felt both humiliated and acutely embarrassed. On the day he attended Acton’s surgery, he wrote to his closest friend, Henry Graham Dakyns, referring allusively to the treatment he had just endured, but insisting that Dakyns should ‘please be kind enough not to mention this even to my most intimate friends.’⁶

Symonds’s account of listening to Beethoven is notable in the extent to which it emphasizes the impact of this music on the material body. It is doubly fascinating for the way in which his sense of bodily vulnerability is so closely entangled with the embarrassment and shame that attaches to his pathologized same-sex desire. He appeals to the language of physiology — ‘nerves’, ‘integuments’ — to evoke the extent to which the force of this music has rendered his body passive, exposed and vulnerable. The notes of Beethoven’s music are figured as the aggressively piercing and intrusive arrows of Cupid’s bow, hitting their target *in* the depths of Symonds’s desiring heart. This ‘weak and sensitive’ body, painfully receptive to the emotional force of Beethoven’s music, has been rendered so by a humiliating medical procedure designed to eliminate his queer sexual desires.

In English literary texts of the *fin de siècle*, music is endowed by writers with a queer agency that acts to make and unmake the material body. Music brings some queer bodies into contact, whilst placing others out of reach. Music indulges queer fantasies of disembodiment, whilst leaving other bodies burning with shame. Music places some queer bodies out of temporal sequence, whilst drawing others into an affirmative future. This thesis explores these trends through stimulating new readings of texts by authors who have been central to

⁴ William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (London: Churchill, 1875), p. 162.

⁵ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 256.

⁶ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, I, 479 (15 June 1864).

discussions of queer identities in studies of *fin-de-siècle* literature: John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, Vernon Lee, and E. M. Forster. It also examines texts by more neglected figures such as Arthur Symonds, Richard Marsh, John Gambril Nicholson and E. F. Benson. At a time when these writers were shaping understandings of alternative sexual identities in Britain, their descriptions of intense, embodied engagements with music are an important site for their articulations and evasions of same-sex desires.

Recent studies of representations of music in Victorian literary texts have offered important new insights by situating such texts within the vibrant musical culture of nineteenth-century England. The readings offered in this thesis demonstrate the value of combining such an historical approach with one that responds to the provocations of contemporary queer theory. This thesis represents the first sustained application of contemporary queer theory — in its concern with negativity, temporality and phenomenology — to central issues in both queer musicology and studies of Victorian musical cultures. It draws upon such theoretical models in order to open up new avenues of inquiry into a diverse range of issues in Victorian musical culture: the body in aesthetic response, the child's singing voice, the phenomenological experience of touch, and the degenerate body.

Music, Homosexuality and Queer Musicology

What if music IS sex?

Suzanne Cusick⁷

The connection between musicality and homosexuality was firmly established in public discourse as an indirect result of the works of sexologists, beginning with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs's work on 'Uranism' in the 1860s and expanded by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Moll, and others. As explored in detail in chapter 1 of this thesis, a number of sexological studies of the 'invert' or the 'Urning' in English in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made

⁷ Suzanne G. Cusick, 'On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, 2nd edn, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 67–84 (p. 78).

similar comparisons, frequently drawing upon German sources. In recent decades, queer musicology has turned its attention to the manner in which musical culture represents and responds to non-normative sexual identities. Much of the earliest work in queer musicology, originating with Philip Brett's 'Britten and Grimes' (1977), was strongly influenced by gay and lesbian studies and the imperatives of identity politics. Influential studies by musicologists such as Susan McClary and Elizabeth Wood sought to rescue from historical erasure the lost pasts of gay and lesbian composers and examine the performative aspects of musical style in the staging of marginalized subjectivities.⁸ More recent studies have drawn upon queer theory to explore music as an extension of sexual and affective practices that serve to articulate non-normative subjectivities and erotic relations. Suzanne Cusick has theorized music as a privileged site of sexual pleasure that exists outside the phallic economy of power; Nadine Hubbs has explored the articulation of queer subjectivities through tonal composition in American musical modernism; and Judith Ann Peraino has demarcated a long cultural history of music as a Foucauldian technology that subverts normative identities.⁹

For the pioneering first wave of queer musicologists, such as Brett and Cusick, the linguistic indeterminacy of music and its alignment with formal autonomy saw it closely bound up with the regulatory dynamics of the 'closet', as influentially articulated in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).¹⁰ Music's apparent ability to powerfully articulate sexual desires whilst

⁸ Elizabeth Wood, 'Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 164–83; Susan McClary, 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', in *Queering the Pitch*, pp. 205–33; Maynard Solomon, 'Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini', *19th Century Music*, 12 (1989), 193–206; Gary C. Thomas, "'Was George Frideric Handel Gay": On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics', in *Queering the Pitch*, pp. 155–203; Ellen T. Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁹ Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Gender, Musicology, and Feminism', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 471–98; Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Judith A. Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, rev. edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

simultaneously remaining somehow unspecific or ambiguous about such articulation closely aligns with the complex process of revelation and concealment that define the negotiation of identity based on the in/out binary of homosexuality imposed by the closet. As Wayne Koestenbaum suggests, 'music has been defined as mystery and miasma, as implicitness rather than explicitness', with the result that 'in music we can come out without coming out, we can reveal without saying a word'.¹¹ For Brett, the expression through music of a desire which otherwise remained 'closeted' in inarticulacy led to an unfortunate form of political quietism. For queer subjects, music remained an essentially private forum for the exploration of their sexual desire, whilst leaving unchallenged the heteronormative assumptions of society more generally.¹²

In similar terms, much early work in queer musicology was pre-occupied with charting the ideological mechanisms through which music's associations with the spectre of queer sexuality were institutionally denied and effaced. Music became insistently dissociated from homosexuality through the work of what D. A. Miller calls an 'open secret', a process which functioned 'not to conceal knowledge, so much as to conceal the knowledge of the knowledge'.¹³ The self-styled 'virility' of European musical modernism; the masculinist misogyny of the music profession; the arcane seriousness of 'scientific' musical analysis; the insistence on music's social autonomy: all might be understood as a strategic response of twentieth-century musical culture to the taboo of homosexuality.¹⁴ While queer musicology has been closely attentive to disciplinary processes that seek to counter-act music's queerness, it has also done much to chart music's privileged place as a site of resistance to normative ideologies. Work in critical musicology by scholars such as Lawrence Kramer and Susan McClary has been instrumental in exploring the ways in which music by canonical Western composers performatively articulates queer subjectivities.¹⁵ Similar work in studies of popular music has

¹¹ Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), pp.189–90.

¹² Philip Brett, 'Music, Essentialism, and the Closet, in *Queering the Pitch*, pp. 9–26.

¹³ D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 206.

¹⁴ See *Queering the Pitch*, Hubbs, *Queer Composition*; Fred Everett Maus, 'Masculine Discourse in Music Theory', *PNM*, 31 (1993), 264–93.

¹⁵ See for example Lawrence Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

approached, from a sociological perspective, the place of music in expressing subjectivities that resist heteronormativity.¹⁶

Music and Homosexuality in *Fin-de-siècle* Literature

Despite this burgeoning interest in music and sexuality in musicology, the significance of the relationship between music and queer subjectivities in English literary texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has received only limited sustained critical attention. Such work as exists has done much to situate literary representations in the historical context of *fin-de-siècle* England's vibrant musical culture. Yet such an approach has often occluded modes of theoretical investigation that would more fully reveal the complexities and ambiguities of the texts under discussion. A brief overview of some of the principal contributions by recent scholars affords a sense of prevailing critical tendencies, whilst allowing for the identification of new points of departure.

Joe Law's 'The "Perniciously Homosexual Art": Music and Homoerotic Desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and other *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction' (2004) articulates the prevalence of the association between music and queer identities in late nineteenth-century texts.¹⁷ Law's interest in the queerness of music, although not stated explicitly, relates to its function within the dynamics of the closet. His discussion suggests that references to music in Oscar Wilde's writings function as a 'homosexual code' that signifies 'that which could not be named' — erotic love between men. Music, Law argues, becomes one of the central strategies in *fin-de-siècle* fiction for articulating prohibited same-sex desire. 'As an inarticulate medium with the power [...] to communicate some indefinite message', he suggests, 'music is an ideal emblem for that which could not be named but would be recognized by those who shared in it'.¹⁸ Focussing in particular on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Law addresses the central role played by music at key points in the novel, drawing particular attention to its association with the

¹⁶ Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga, eds, *Queering the Popular Pitch* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jodie Taylor, *Playing It Queer: Popular Music, Identity and Queer World-Making* (Bern: Lang, 2010).

¹⁷ Joe Law, 'The "Perniciously Homosexual Art": Music and Homoerotic Desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and other *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction', in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 173–98.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

transgression of normative gender expectations. Law's work also draws attention to the centrality of music in the work of other queer writers at the *fin de siècle*, such as Alan Dale, Count Eric Stenbock, E. F. Benson and Xavier Mayne (a pseudonym of Edward Prime-Stevenson). Such texts, he suggests, give 'a powerful indication of the significance of music in the formation of [homosexual] identity' as it emerges at the close of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Law suggests that the non-representational nature of music in Wilde's text sees it function as a 'discursive silence', which, as Foucault influentially argued, can be understood as a central strategy for the articulation of sexuality.²⁰

David Deutsch's recent work in *British Literature and Classical Music: Cultural Contexts 1870-1945* (2015) situates associations between music and queer sexuality in the context of English musical culture's broader connection with liberal aestheticism.²¹ Examining a range of texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Deutsch suggests that authors sought to legitimize and validate same-sex desire by portraying individuals in terms that emphasized their 'musicality'. Such texts, he observes, 'use music to portray contemporary, same-sex desiring individuals as talented, as sophisticatedly sensitive, and as culturally valuable'.²² In Deutsch's account, English musical culture is presented as closely aligned with an apparently humane late-Victorian liberal individualism, which facilitated the articulation of homoerotic subjectivities. Authors such as E. M. Forster, Beverly Nichols and Lord Berners, he suggests, purposefully associated 'socially alienated individuals' with music in order to 'promote their cultural value both to themselves and to society at large'.²³ To represent queer characters as innately musical, Deutsch contends, became an affirmative gesture that posited them as 'uniquely valuable'.²⁴ This, in turn, had the effect of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 195.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 27.

²¹ David Deutsch, 'Distinguishing a Musical Homoeroticism: Pater, Forster, and their Aesthetic Descendants', in *British Literature and Classical Music: Cultural Contexts 1870-1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 139-84.

²² Ibid., p. 142.

²³ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁴ Ibid.

bolstering queer musical sub-cultures that developed in the face of legal and social persecution.

Other studies of *fin-de-siècle* literature and culture have understood associations between music and queer identities in less affirmative terms. Emma Sutton's *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (2002) examines the manner in which musical experience — in particular, the affective intensity of Wagner's music — becomes associated in Decadent literary texts with pathologized homosexuality.²⁵ Sutton delineates the manner in which certain aesthetic sensibilities become understood as symptomatic of sexual deviancy. In her readings of Vernon Lee's 'A Wicked Voice' (1890), Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Beardsley's drawings on Wagnerian themes, she draws close attention to the manner in which music is represented as acting upon the bodies of listeners and instrumentalists. Sutton situates her readings within contemporary debates in Victorian aesthetics and psychology regarding the corporeal, embodied nature of aesthetic response.²⁶

This thesis builds upon the critical curiosity about music, sexuality and identity fostered by such work. It seeks to bring the important insights garnered from such scholarship to bear on recent theoretical questions, and in turn to suggest how such theory might refine or complicate aspects of historical understanding.

A Queerer Musicology

Such critical work located at the intersection of queer musicology and *fin-de-siècle* literary studies has, with a few notable exceptions, done little to respond to the provocations of recent developments in queer theory.²⁷ A closer engagement with the central concerns of such theory — negativity, shame, phenomenology, temporality — allows for the emergence of new perspectives on the queerness of

²⁵ Emma Sutton, 'The Pathology of Pleasure: Decadent Sensibility and Affective Art', in *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 57–87.

²⁶ James Kennaway identifies similar associations between Wagner's music, affective excess and pathologized homosexuality in European sexological writings in 'Modern Music and Nervous Modernity: Wagnerism as a Disease of Civilization, 1850–1914', in *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 63–98.

²⁷ See Judith A. Peraino and Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Colloquy: Music and Sexuality', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 66.3 (2013), 825–72.

music, both in *fin-de-siècle* literature and more broadly. The section that follows offers an overview of such developments, before proceeding to discuss the ways in which they can stimulate new ways of understanding the emergence of queer identities in the musical cultures of the *fin de siècle*.

Queer negativity finds its origins in the work of Leo Bersani, most influentially in 'Is the Rectum a Grave?' (1987) and *Homos* (1996).²⁸ Bersani's work called for a shift away from a queer theoretical project predicated solely upon redemption, reconstruction, restoration, and reclamation, instead articulating a theory of sexuality focussed on the antisocial, negative, and anti-relational. 'Useful thought', Bersani suggests, might result from 'questioning the compatibility of homosexuality with civic service'.²⁹ For Bersani, the sexual instinct, properly understood, is closely bound up with the self-destructive imperatives of the death drive. The sexual act — in particular, those sexual acts associated in the psychic order with humiliation, disempowerment and passivity — exists in opposition to 'the tyranny of the self'.³⁰ Drawing upon his reading of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, 1905), Bersani conceptualizes sexual pleasure as always already bound up with a masochistic urge to self-destruction:

[S]exual pleasure occurs [...] when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed by sensations or affective processes somehow 'beyond' those connected with psychic organization, [...] the sexual emerges as the *jouissance* of exploded limits, as the ecstatic suffering to which the human organism momentarily plunges when it is 'pressed' beyond a certain threshold of endurance.³¹

For Bersani, rather than affirming the value of survival, life and futurity, sex offers the pleasure of a self-shattering undoing, releasing the self from the fantasy of mastery and coherence. 'The value of sexuality itself', he concludes, 'is to demean

²⁸ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', *October*, 43 (Winter 1987), 197–222.

²⁹ Bersani, *Homos*, p. 113.

³⁰ Bersani, 'Rectum', p. 217.

³¹ *Ibid.* See also Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 38–39.

the seriousness of efforts to redeem it'.³² Bersani's contention is not that gays and lesbians are somehow unsociable: 'everyone knows', as Tim Dean playfully asserts, 'that homosexuals throw fabulous parties'.³³ The 'anti-social' force of what Bersani calls 'homo-ness' lies rather in its challenge to social forms predicated not only on sexual reproduction, but also on domination, assertion and control. 'Homo-ness', Bersani argues, 'necessitates a massive redefining of relationality', instancing 'a potentially revolutionary inaptitude, perhaps inherent in gay desire, for sociality as it is known'. If there is anything at all which can be said to be 'politically indispensable' in homosexuality, Bersani concludes, it is its 'politically unacceptable' opposition to community.³⁴ Only by embracing the negativity of the sexual, rather than tidying it up into pastoralist fantasies of the communitarian, might we then recognize new modes of sociality not grounded in the imaginary coherence of the self.

Amongst the most influential and controversial works in queer theory following Bersani's 'anti-social' turn is Lee Edelman's 2005 study, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.³⁵ In Edelman's Lacanian account of the place of the queer in contemporary society, the function of queerness is to disrupt heteronormative society's alignment with the final signifier by 'embodying the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order'.³⁶ Such disruption is achieved by refusing what Edelman calls 'reproductive futurism' — society's psychic investment in a perpetually deferred future that is figured through the abstract symbol of the Child. The figure of the Child, in Edelman's work, becomes emblematic of those forms of social legitimacy that are co-extensive with sexual reproduction. The Child stands in opposition to those subjects denied symbolic legitimacy on the grounds that their non-reproductive sexuality represents a *jouissance* of the present moment, rather than an imperative towards an imaginary future. In this resistance to the future, the queer constitutes a figure of the death drive, representing a 'queer negativity' whose 'value [. . .] resides in its challenge to

³² Bersani, 'Rectum', p. 222.

³³ Tim Dean, 'The Antisocial Homosexual', in Robert L. Caserio and others, 'The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory', *PMLA*, 121.3 (May 2006), 819–28 (p. 826).

³⁴ Bersani, *Homos*, p. 76.

³⁵ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

value as defined by the social, and thus in its radical challenge to the very value of the social itself.³⁷

Edelman's thoughts are further developed, in discussion with Lauren Berlant, in *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2014).³⁸ Queer negativity, Edelman and Berlant suggest, is not about existing outside of the social or in perpetual opposition to the possibility of sociality. Rather, in its quest to articulate 'more capacious social worlds', it exists as a form of resistance to the static fixity of social forms that seek to define the limits of relationality.³⁹ Such resistance finds its most powerful expression in the radical incoherence of the sexual act, where sex is understood not as an 'encounter with otherness that attains the stability of a knowable relation' but as aligned with that which 'exceeds and undoes the subject's fantasmatic sovereignty'.⁴⁰ Sex, for Edelman, is 'something to do with experiencing corporeality, and in the orbit of the libidinal, the shock of discontinuity and the encounter with nonknowledge', and it is in this that its queer promise lies. The negativity of sex arises from its resistance to a heteronormativity that aims to 'snuff out libidinal unruliness', 'drown[ing] out the subject's constitution by and attachment to varieties of being undone'.⁴¹

Alongside Edelman's articulation of queer negativity, a similar trend has shown renewed attention to the significance of shame, failure and loss in queer studies. Such work finds its origins in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's ground-breaking work on queer performativity, first published in 1993.⁴² Heather Love's *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007) and Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) are exemplary in this respect.⁴³ Love's study examines the construction of queer history, drawing attention to the manner in which negative

³⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁸ Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

³⁹ Ibid., p. xiii.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*', *GLQ*, 1.1 (1993), 1-16, repr. in revised form in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 35-66. See also the discussion in David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, eds, *Gay Shame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁴³ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

affects have been marginalized in accounts of queer subject formation. Focussing on literary texts written around the time that discrete sexual 'orientations' emerged, Love demarcates the centrality of loss and loneliness to texts that 'turn their backs on the future'.⁴⁴ In challenging those accounts of queer history that present it as the teleological march of progress from isolation and shame towards assimilation and pride, Love aims to draw attention instead to the centrality of abjection and degradation to queer life experience. Rather than shrouding the affective inheritance of loss in gay-affirmative triumphalism, queer history should acknowledge, she argues, that 'queer history is, in a sense, nothing but wounded attachments'.⁴⁵ Halberstam's project is directed, in similar ways, at recuperating the place of failure in queer studies. Utilising the tools of what she calls 'low theory', Halberstam examines texts that range eclectically from children's animated films, 'gross-out' comedies, and art photography. Like Love, she is interested in those aspects of queer history that cannot be reconciled with a triumphant narrative of emancipatory progress. Halberstam's playful analyses identify moments of failure that offer a critique of contemporary ideals of success defined by mastery, maturity, and the accumulation of wealth. 'Failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing', Halberstam suggests, 'may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'.⁴⁶

Such work by Halberstam, Love and Edelman might also be understood as part of a turn towards ideas of temporality in queer studies, explored in chapter 5 of this thesis, which has drawn attention to the way in which subjectivities are formed around certain experiences of time. Valerie Rohy has drawn attention to the significance of temporal 'misplacements' in discourses that construct queer identities.⁴⁷ Elizabeth Freeman has articulated a queer sense of 'temporal drag': the experience of 'retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past upon the present'.⁴⁸ A stubborn 'lingering of pastness' defined by anachronism, the

⁴⁴ Love, *Feeling Backward*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Halberstam, *Queer Art*, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality* (Albany: State University of New York, 2009).

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Freeman, 'Packing History: Count(Er)Ing Generations', *New Literary History*, 31 (2000), 727-44 (p. 728).

reappearance of bygone events, and arrested development has, Freeman suggests, long been a hallmark of queer style.⁴⁹

While such work has done much to interrogate the placing of the queer body in time, Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* has, in a similar way, investigated the idea that sexuality might have an impact upon 'how we reside in space'.⁵⁰ Ahmed appropriates for the study of queer bodies and sexualities ideas from phenomenology concerning how human perception relates to its objects through the intentionality of consciousness. Building upon the work of theorists such as Elizabeth Grosz, Ahmed's work articulates the modes of 'orientation' through which queer subjects come to experience their embodied subjectivity.⁵¹

Such work opens up a variety of new avenues for critical exploration in queer musicology. Rather than insistently recruiting music as a tool for the affirmation of queer liberal subjects — as recent work by scholars such as David Deutsch has maintained — an *anti-social* queer musicology might look instead to aesthetic encounters in which music is bound up with psychic masochism and the refusal of social connectedness. Instead of charting those encounters with music in which the desiring self is affirmed, strengthened and comforted, one might consider ways of articulating those listening experiences defined by shame, embarrassment, isolation or loneliness. As an alternative to accounts that enumerate examples of music's heroic ability to form communities of marginalized subjects, queer musicology might look instead to modes of aesthetic consumption defined by introspection, withdrawal and loss.

Such an approach also allows for a more complex understanding of music's relationship to the dynamics of the closet. Rather than emphasising music's function of strategically concealing a 'true' homosexual identity — as the work of Joe Law has done — the fact that music refuses the specificity of content means that it appeals in powerful ways to those subjects who wish to refuse those binary

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 8.

⁵⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, Durham, 2006), p. 52.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

identities that the closet would seek to impose upon them. Instead of understanding music as providing a means of expressions for desire that must otherwise remain unexpressed or unarticulated in a homophobic culture, music rather becomes a privileged site for the refusal of identity, of self-forgetting, or resistance to the idea of a 'self' that is bounded in the categorisation of 'homosexual identity'. Thus, rather than chiding those queers who refused to 'come out' because their affective experience of music allowed their desires to remain inchoate at the level of inarticulate emotional intensity, we might think instead about how music functions as a refusal to speak in terms of the closet. Such an approach eschews the sense that music functions as secret queer 'code' that passes between individuals, but turn instead to consider the alignment of music with experiences of an affective intensity that exceeds or exists outside of language — something that pushes up against or resists the disciplinary workings of discourse.

The 'negative turn' in queer theory also suggests new ways in which queer musicology might approach its task of historical recovery. Renewed attention to those aspects of queer musical history that might evoke feelings of unease in contemporary liberal queer communities allows for a more ideologically inquisitive form of queer musical history to emerge. Alternatively, it provokes new ways of telling queer music history, alert to those ephemeral and transient aspects of musical culture that find no place in the conventional historical archive. A queer musicology more concerned with phenomenological experience might allow for a more experientially dense account of interactions between bodies and musical instruments, the embodied nature of musical performance and listening, and the manner in which music is understood in terms of affective intensity. Such an approach opens up new ways of thinking about how marginalized subjects come to occupy space and experience contact and proximity in and through their encounters with music.

Queer + Bodies

I began writing this book by trying to consider the materiality of the body only to find that the thought of materiality invariably moved me into other domains [...] I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought. Not only did bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies 'are'. I kept losing track of the subject. I proved resistant to discipline. Inevitably, I began to consider that perhaps this resistance to fixing the subject was essential to the matter at hand.

Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*⁵²

What does it mean to talk of the 'queer body'? The term 'queer', as Judith Butler has put it, is 'never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage'.⁵³ While it would be churlish, then, to offer anything as systematic as an inflexible definition of the key concepts that this thesis engages, we might nevertheless acknowledge the latest 'twist' of 'queer' that it seeks to perform. The latest incarnation of 'queer' nourishes itself from, bounces off (or up against), and takes as its beginning the wide variety of theoretical approaches in contemporary queer theory discussed above. Just as Butler's own definition of the 'body', cited above, proves 'resistant to discipline', this thesis does not offer a single definition of the 'body'. Rather its separate chapters pursue a multiplicity of approaches to ideas of embodiment, accruing a variety of mutually illuminating perspectives as they proceed.

Where this thesis makes reference to the 'homosexual', it generally refers to a category of subject that emerged, as Michel Foucault suggested, somewhere around the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The term 'queer' refers to modes of desire, articulations of identity and concepts of embodiment that are occasionally co-extensive with 'homosexual' subjectivity, but are more typically resistant to the discursive modes that insist on the demarcation and

⁵² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. viii.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*.

categorisation of desires and identities along clear lines of sexual object choice. In some contexts, 'queer' is used in this thesis to gesture towards (often indeterminate) unorthodox sexual objects and gender arrangements, the sexually counter-normative, and the homoerotic. In others, the term 'queer' speaks of a much broader challenge to the coherence and stability of the subject, where the sexual is merely one site at which the subject is negated, effaced, transformed and remade. In this respect, the 'queer body' is not the pathologized 'homosexual body' measured, prodded (and sometimes cauterized) by *fin-de-siècle* sexologists. Rather it is a body that exists in awkward relation to its discursive interpellation by medicine and science: a body that refuses its materiality, or seeks out alternative modes of embodiment, or resists its elision with an emergent homosexual identity.

In articulating the 'queer body' in these terms, this thesis draws upon recent work in Victorian studies that has taken as its focus the nature of embodied experience. William Cohen's *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (2009) has illustrated the ways in which nineteenth-century literary culture responded to materialist accounts of embodied subjectivity in terms that presented often radical challenges to humanist accounts of the liberal Enlightenment subject. Cohen's readings of texts by Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, and others, trace the startling ways in which such authors respond to materialist science, re-casting the material body as the site at which subjectivity is formed and reformed through the processes of sensory perception.⁵⁵ As Cohen suggests, the anti-humanist implications of such modes of embodiment find close parallels with the concerns of contemporary queer theory with anti-foundational accounts of identity. In this respect, one important reason to have close regard to the material body in Victorian culture is that it so often allows for queer reconceptualization of the desiring self.

Nineteenth-century musical culture grapples in a similar way with the materiality of the human body. On the one hand, music is consistently understood in German Idealist philosophy as the metaphysical art *par excellence*, insulated from a

⁵⁵ William Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

materialism associated with mere bodily sensation. On the other hand, work in nineteenth-century physics, neurology and psychology increasingly focussed on the physical materiality of sound, music's somatic impact on the listeners 'nerves', and the role of the body in aesthetic response.⁵⁶ Recent scholarship in literature and the history of science, such as Benjamin Morgan's *The Outward Mind* (2017), has begun to unpack the wide-ranging influence of materialist theories of embodied aesthetic response in Victorian culture.⁵⁷ As John M. Picker has demonstrated in *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003), the emergent focus on the physiology of hearing by figures such as Hermann von Helmholtz over the course of the nineteenth century saw aural experience transformed from one of the transcendental sublime to become merely another quantifiable object, 'a sonic commodity'.⁵⁸ At stake in the debate about music and bodily materiality is also its apparent queerness: as chapter 1 of this thesis explores, it is music's effect on the 'emotional' and 'nervous' body that often sees it associated with queer sexual deviance.

Queer Body / Queer Corpus

When such a re-oriented mode of inquiry in queer musicology comes to intersect with literary studies, it presents an opportunity to afford renewed attention to literary genres and modes of textual production that have often been neglected in recent discussions of the representations of music in Victorian literature. Such work has typically taken as its focal point the rich tradition of the Victorian realist novel. Recent studies of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, and other non-canonical realist texts have done much to develop our understanding of the complex inter-relationship between Victorian literary and musical cultures, attending in a variety of ways to the manner in which literary texts on music respond to issues relating to gender, class, science and political commitment.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See James Kennaway, ed., *Music and the Nerves, 1700–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Alexandra Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds 1840–1910* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013).

⁵⁷ Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁵⁸ John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ See for example Mark Asquith, *Thomas Hardy, Metaphysics and Music* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860–1900: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000);

This thesis broadly eschews such an emphasis on the Victorian realist tradition, turning instead to genres that sit in awkward relation to realism: Gothic short stories, 'Imaginary Portraits', pornographic texts, impressionistic aesthetic essays, memoirs, and letters. It is also unusual in reading works in Victorian musical aesthetics not for their contribution to philosophical debates about the nature of musical beauty, but for what they might reveal about underlying assumptions relating to music, emotion and sexuality. By attending to such a heterogeneous range of texts on music, it becomes possible to delineate aspects of *fin-de-siècle* musical culture that remain obscured in studies limited to novelistic realism. It is perhaps unsurprising that texts which so often attend to the perverse, the uncanny, the ghostly, the intensely subjective and the deeply personal might better allow for the often-ephemeral traces of queer sexuality to find expression. Such an archive also allows for an exploration of a much broader range of modes of embodied experience. The texts under discussion are populated by bodies that find themselves in the sort of exertions or extremes that the novelistic realism of George Eliot, for example, could scarcely allow: collapsing backwards in evolutionary time, torn mercilessly limb from limb, or sexually molested by a goat.

Studies of representations of music in Victorian literature have also been defined by their commitment to a form of historicism that seeks to illuminate texts by placing them in the context of Victorian musical culture. While this thesis by no means rejects such an approach entirely, it takes a more wilfully diverse approach in embracing a variety of critical and theoretical methodologies, drawing in particular upon those psychoanalytic and phenomenological modes central to contemporary queer theory. In its queer commitment to reading against the grain, to dwelling on marginalized or failed identities, to accentuating the perverse or the unsettling, this thesis purposefully seeks out perspectives that are oblique to the version of Victorian musical history told by historical musicologists. For example, the queerness of music in Victorian culture might be better comprehended by having regard to representations of those mythical

Weliver, *The Musical Crowd in English Fiction, 1840–1910: Class, Culture and Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

figures of music — Marsyas, Dionysus, Pan — through which the Victorians narrativized their musical ideals in abstract terms. From John Ruskin's *The Queen of the Air* (1868), to Walter Pater's 1870s essays on Demeter and Dionysus, to James Frazer's compendious *The Golden Bough* (1890), Victorian writers frequently turned to myth as a means of articulating their conception of fundamental truths about human nature, art and society.⁶⁰ In this respect, texts such as Pater's 'Denys L'Auxerrois' (1886) or Vernon Lee's 'Marsyas in Flanders' (1900) might be understood as a privileged site for exploring those strange, anti-social or perverse beliefs about music that lurk on the edge of discourse in Victorian musical culture.

Thus, while this thesis frequently engages in acts of historicizing, it makes no claims to be a history. Much sophisticated scholarly work on Victorian literature and music has admirably illuminated the complexities of literary texts through a so-called 'New Historicist' approach, proceeding with a close regard to the context of their exegesis, the historically situated resonances of their metaphors and imagery, or the way in which they would have circulated within their cultural milieu.⁶¹ Such work often draws upon those historical materials that constitute the staple archive of the musicologist interested in Victorian musical culture: tomes on musical aesthetics, tracts on the science of hearing, reviews of concert performances, treatises on vocal technique, or guides to musical etiquette. Yet such materials offer little or nothing to the scholar interested in accounting for the significance of desire in literary texts that take music as their subject. All are broadly silent on the place of the desiring queer body as it engages with music. These discourses of Victorian musical culture lack the tools to explicate the significance of music, desire and sexuality evident in contemporaneous literary texts. Even those sexological tracts that do address directly something of the queerness of music do so in a language of classification and systemisation that,

⁶⁰ John Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air, Being a Study of the Greek Myths of Cloud and Storm* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869); Walter Pater, 'The Myth of Demeter and Persephone', *Fortnightly Review*, 19 (January 1876), 82–95; 19 (February 1876), 260–76; Walter Pater, 'A Study of Dionysus: I. – the Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew', *Fortnightly Review*, 20 (December 1876), 752–72, hereafter referred to in the text as ASD; James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1890).

⁶¹ See for example work by Weliver, Sutton, da Sousa Correa cited above.

as Judith Halberstam has suggested, entirely effaces the phenomenological complexity of desiring subject positions.⁶²

Slavoj Žižek draws a particularly useful distinction between what he calls 'historicity' and 'historicism'.⁶³ For Žižek, the project of 'New Historicism' is founded on a pathological need to overemphasize a text's particularity and difference, to the exclusion of other qualities that might also intervene in a text's meaning. The idea of 'history' that underpins this mode of 'historicism', Žižek suggests, is one that views it as a series of discrete local moments in time, each in some way autonomous, and each specific to itself. Such a view represents for Žižek a 'flattening' of historical work. In its place, he proposes an alternative mode of historical practice, which he terms 'historicity' — a mode of engaging with the past that acknowledges that history can only ever come to know itself by entering into a relationship with its 'Other(s)'. Historicity, in this respect, recognizes that the drive towards a density of historical detail, truth and facticity is motivated by the desire of scholars, writers and readers for the pleasure of forming a relational attachment with the past. In reflecting on the (conscious and unconscious) mechanisms through which such attachments are forged, one might open up the surplus and excess meanings generated in such encounters, rather than seek to deny their validity.

The strengths of such an approach have been shown by Ian Biddle's *Music, Masculinity and the Claims of History* (2011), which offers theoretically sophisticated readings of literary and philosophical texts in order to interrogate ideas of music, listening and male subjectivity in nineteenth-century Austro-German culture.⁶⁴ For Biddle, Žižek's notion of historicity presents a provocation to the claims of music-historicism by openly staging the 'dance of interpretation' upon which all historical claims are founded.⁶⁵ Such a staging, Biddle suggests, lays bare for examination 'the processes by which authors and readers make connections between different kinds of evidence, sift and order them and draw

⁶² See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 77.

⁶³ Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 101.

⁶⁴ Ian Biddle, *Music, Masculinity and the Claims of History: The Austro-German Tradition from Hegel to Freud* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

conclusions from them', thus opening up 'the reading of music history to a number of liberating and politically productive strategies that should make room again for the *activist* scholar [...], in which one's attachments to and investments in the discipline of historical musicology are played out as a site of both enjoyment (desire, habituation, ritual) and antagonism'.⁶⁶ This thesis invites Victorians to perform a 'dance of interpretation' with the Other(s) of contemporary queer theory. It embraces the status of queer theory as what Halberstam has called a 'scavenger methodology', drawing upon a multiplicity of theoretical approaches informed by psychoanalysis and phenomenology, whilst retaining an interest in how these might illuminate historical contexts in new ways.⁶⁷

An Overview

Chapter 1 provides important historical context for the discussion that follows. It demonstrates the centrality of ideas of 'emotionalism' in those sexological writings that consistently present the queer body as peculiarly responsive to music. The contentious issue of the place of emotion and the body in music likewise inform debates in Victorian musical aesthetics. In this discussion, an examination of John Addington Symonds's and Vernon Lee's respective stances on such questions allows for a demarcation of divergent attitudes towards music, embodiment and queer desire in late-Victorian culture. In particular, an examination of Lee's writings on music allows for the exploration of what might be called 'shameful listening'.

Drawing upon Leo Bersani's theorisation of the queer as 'anti-social', chapter 2 examines the significance of the association between music and masochism in texts by Walter Pater, Vernon Lee and Arthur Symonds. In these texts, music is variously figured as acting upon the body in a manner that resists the imposition of identity and refuses the coherence of the self, whilst turning instead to modes of self-abandonment and disembodiment. The role of music in Pater's 'Denys L'Auxerrois' is understood as dramatizing a broader oscillation in Pater's works between the denial and embrace of wilfully self-destructive masochistic violence.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 13.

Rather than affirming the individual self, music in 'Denys' ultimately allows for a joyous self-dispersal. Such self-abandonment can also be seen in the severe ascetic disciplinary force of music evoked in *Plato and Platonism* (1893) and 'Apollo in Picardy' (1893). In 'Marsyas in Flanders' (1900), Vernon Lee strategically embraces the figure of Marsyas — an emblem of musical masochism — as a means of resisting the categorisation of the queer body by *fin-de-siècle* sexology. When read in productive tension with Lee's writings on 'psychological aesthetics', in which the body emerges as the central site of aesthetic experience, 'Marsyas in Flanders' can be understood as articulating music's resistance to the inscription of identity on the body. The final section examines Arthur Symonds's 'Christian Trevalga' (1902), in which music becomes associated with a desire to abandon the materiality of the body, and affirm instead a form of subjectivity defined by 'disembodiment'. Symonds's essays on music and musical performance present the aesthetic autonomy of absolute music in a manner that articulates a form of dispersed subjectivity that can profitably be read in the light of contemporary queer theory. At the same time, his texts are notable for their negotiations of *fin-de-siècle* associations between music and homosexuality. In Symonds's work, music's refusal of the body represents a strategy to efface its queer sexual resonances.

Chapter 3 is similarly concerned with the place of desire and disembodiment in queer musical experience. Taking as its focus the writings of John Addington Symonds, this chapter examines the representation of the voice of the chorister in late-Victorian literature. The fetishization of the chorister in pederastic texts by Symonds and John Gambril Nicholson is understood as part of a broader eroticization of childhood innocence in Victorian culture. Importantly, by having regard to Victorian vocal treatises, it becomes possible to show how such vocal innocence is figured as arising from the renunciation of the body. In this respect, Symonds's desire for the singing voice can be understood in the light of psychoanalytic models proposed by Mladen Dolar and Michel Poizat, in which the voice is understood as a Lacanian 'lost object'. More generally, the pederastic listening practices engaged in by Symonds and his contemporaries invite a reassessment of the frequent idealisation in queer studies of the singing voice as a space in which sexual desire might be freely and unproblematically explored. In

taking such an approach, the discussion draws upon recent work in queer studies calling for closer engagement with those shameful and embarrassing aspects of queer history that many in the queer community today might prefer to forget.

Taking a more affirmative view of the place of music in queer *fin-de-siècle* literature, chapter 4 turns to consider directly the significance of embodied encounters between musicians, listeners and musical instruments. Responding to the recent phenomenological turn in queer studies, it takes as its focus the experience of touch in musical encounters, charting the sensory intensities and eroticism inherent in *fin-de-siècle* literary depictions of touching musical instruments and scores and in feeling the transmission of the material touch of music in performance. The opening section of the chapter examines encounters between bodies and musical instruments in Richard Marsh's 'The Violin' (1891), E. M. Forster's 'Dr Woolacott' (1926) and the anonymous pornographic novel *Teleny* (1893). It suggests that tactile intimacy between musician and instrument sees the musical instrument transformed into a technology for the transmission of touch, acting to close the physical distance between those queer bodies that might otherwise remain untouchable. The second section compares the experience of piano playing in Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908) with Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) to suggest that tactile interaction between the body and the musical instrument allows for marginalized subjects to more fully inhabit a sense of their desiring bodies. A final section examines tactile encounters with the musical score, focussing in particular on Vernon Lee's experiences with the archival remains of eighteenth-century music in *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880). In Lee's sensuous archival engagement, her affective connection with the historical past is articulated through a wish for restored tactile contact. The pervasive sense of loss that inhabits Lee's desire for tactile engagement is understood as characteristic of the queerness of her writing. In each of these texts, the tactile sense is recruited to those musical encounters that serve to provide alienated queer bodies with an experience of intimate contact.

The materiality of the desiring body is also the subject of chapter 5, which turns to consider those *fin-de-siècle* texts in which music acts upon queer bodies to

subject them to temporal flux or dislocation. By reading such texts through the lens of both Victorian evolutionary accounts of music's origins and contemporary theory's concern with 'queer temporalities', it becomes possible to better articulate the tropes of backwardness and retrogression that attach to those queer desires awakened by music. In Robert Browning's 'Charles Avison' (from *Parleyings* (1887)), music's association with both the evolutionary primitive and sexually abject presents a challenge to the teleological impetus underpinning Victorian ideals of progressive time. Similar motifs also emerge with particular prominence in stories relating to the figure of Pan, such as Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890), E. M. Forster's 'The Story of a Panic' (1902) and E. F. Benson's 'The Man Who Went Too Far' (1904). Here, the music of Pan unleashes queer desires that act upon bodies to subject them to the reverse flow of evolutionary time. In Forster's text, Pan's queerness is also made evident in the narrator's paranoid fixation with masturbation, revealed in the text's obsessive patterning of images invoking tactile contact. For Benson, Pan's music leads his protagonist towards a queer sexual encounter that is simultaneously alluring and horrific in its primitivism.

CHAPTER 1: Contexts: Music, Emotion and the Homosexual Subject

People have often cited the connection between music and sexual inversion and are still discussing it now. Without a doubt, some time soon, a scientist will once again skilfully and persuasively link all the facts, suppositions, and theories.

Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality* (1896)¹

Late nineteenth-century writers on musical aesthetics and sexology share a common fascination with the significance of music, emotion and the body. Sexological writings consistently emphasize the emotional and embodied nature of queer listeners' responses to music, distinguishing these from modes of listening based upon the perception of musical form. Debates in musical aesthetics similarly contrast modes of musical response based on subjective emotionalism with an apparently objective formalism. Such writings both inform, and are informed by, the literary texts and sub-cultures upon which this thesis focusses.

The chapter that follows explores a number of important contexts for examining the association between music and queer sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* literature. The first section takes as its focus those sexological writings that insistently draw a correlation between 'musicality' and homosexuality. Examining a number of theories for such correlation, it becomes possible to locate the centrality of the material body in such debates, in particular, those 'nervous' and 'effeminate' bodies consistently associated with pathologized homosexuality. The second section turns to debates in musical aesthetics. It sets in opposition writings on the nature of musical meaning that defend emotional responses to music — by John Addington Symonds and others — with those that focus on the perception of musical form, by Vernon Lee and Edmund Gurney. Doing so allows for a clearer demarcation of the queer sexual politics underlying such debates. This allows new perspectives to emerge on the embodied experience of music for queer

¹ Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality: A Study of the Different Manifestation of the Sexual Instinct*, trans. by Nancy Erber and William A. Peniston, ed. by Philip Healy (with Frederick S. Roden) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 164.

subjects, in which music not only functions to affirm queer subjectivities, but might also be experienced with the affective force of shame or embarrassment.

Ever since a concept of the homosexual subject emerged, it has been associated in some sense with music. Following Michel Foucault, critical studies of modern sexuality have typically taken as their starting point the development of sexology, a field devoted to the scientific study of sex that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century.² As historians of sexuality have shown, the shift from sexual acts (such as 'sodomy') to sexual identities (such as the 'homosexual'), identified by Foucault as marking the emergence of the modern sexual subject, was not the product of one transformative moment in nineteenth-century history, but rather the effect of a gradual process of articulating ideas about sexual identity in a variety of cultural and scientific discourses. Music, as one such discourse, is a central concern of *fin-de-siècle* sexological writing on the life experiences of 'homosexuals', 'inverts' and 'Uranians'. Sexological texts propose that modes of listening, musical tastes and forms of musical talent are all apparently closely connected to the sexuality of the subjects it examines.

Sexological accounts are almost unanimous in identifying the prevalence of 'artistic' types amongst their case studies of homosexuality. In Havelock Ellis's and John Addington Symonds's *Sexual Inversion* (1897), the first such study in English, an insistent connection is drawn between male 'inversion' and an interest in the arts, particularly music.³ As the authors note, 66 per cent of their subjects show some form of 'artistic aptitude'. Citing a study by Francis Galton, they note that the 'average showing [of] artistic tastes' in late nineteenth-century Britain is only around 30 per cent.⁴ Ellis developed his thoughts on the relationship between music and 'inversion' in later editions of *Sexual Inversion*.⁵

² See for example Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, eds, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); Lawrence Birken, *Consuming Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871–1914* (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1988); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981); Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality 1885–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³ Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, ed. by Ivan Crozier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume 2, Sexual Inversion*, 3rd edn (Philadelphia: Davis, 1915).

In the third edition of 1915, he notes that it 'has been extravagantly said that all musicians are invert', referring to a variety of estimates from European sexologists such as Paolo Celesia (60 per cent) and Magnus Hirschfeld (98 per cent).⁶ An examination of *fin-de-siècle* sexological texts allows for the demarcation of a homosexual musical 'type' in late nineteenth-century culture. In particular, it reveals a focus on the role of emotion in music, which intersects with closely connected discourses that associate certain forms of musical performance and consumption with effeminacy. The section that follows examines the significance of music in sexological treatises by John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis, Marc-André Raffalovich, Edward Carpenter and Edward Prime-Stevenson. It gestures also to the significant influence on these English accounts by European writers, especially Karl Ulrichs, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Magnus Hirschfeld.

The complex connections between music and same-sex desire suggested in the literary texts under discussion in this thesis draw upon, interact with and feed into late-Victorian sexological accounts of homosexuality. Recent work by Heike Bauer and Sean Brady has drawn renewed attention to the complex interplay of scientific, aesthetic and literary discourses in the formation of a *scientia sexualis* in late nineteenth-century Europe.⁷ The first English sexological treatises emerged from the same late-Victorian literary culture as the literary texts examined here. Writers of sexological works were closely engaged with English literary culture, and many literary writers were familiar with their work. During his years studying at Oxford, Marc-André Raffalovich, author of *Uranism and Unisexuality* (1896), made the acquaintance of, amongst others, Henry James, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symonds.⁸ Through Symonds, this social circle was also connected to Ellis and Symonds. In addition to Symonds's case study of himself, *Sexual Inversion* also included the examples of Symonds's 'very homosexual' acquaintance, Vernon Lee, and of Edward Carpenter, social

⁶ Cited in Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 3rd edn (1915), p. 295.

⁷ Heike Bauer, *English Literary Sexology: Translations of Inversion, 1860–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁸ See Philip Healey, 'André Raffalovich (1864–1934): A Biographical Sketch', in Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality*, pp. 22–31.

reformer, poet and author of *Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society* (1894).⁹ The writings of Symonds, Ellis and Carpenter in turn drew extensively upon the work of European sexologists, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and, later, Magnus Hirschfeld.¹⁰ In August 1897, Arthur Symonds travelled with Ellis to Moscow, the latter carrying with him a French translation of Edward Carpenter's *Homogenic Love* to deliver to Tolstoy.¹¹ While Walter Pater certainly shared the fascination of Symonds — his Oxford contemporary — with the place of same-sex desire in Hellenic culture, it remains unclear whether he likewise pursued interests in developments in European sexology.¹²

Of a later generation, E. F. Benson was the nephew of philosopher Henry Sidgwick, and therefore indirectly acquainted with Symonds, who was one of Sidgwick's closest friends.¹³ His brother Arthur Benson — amongst other things, the biographer of Walter Pater — read Horatio Brown's censored version Symonds's *Memoirs*, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (1895), with a sense of 'vexed' fascination.¹⁴ In Bloomsbury circles, both Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster read and debated the sexological texts of Symonds and Carpenter.¹⁵ Forster infamously met Edward Carpenter in 1912, when an erotically charged touch from Carpenter's partner, George Merrill, apparently inspired the production of *Maurice* (1914).¹⁶ Reading Brown's edition of Symonds's *Memoirs* in 1912, Forster noted that he '[felt] nearer to him than any man I have read

⁹ Letter from Havelock Ellis to John Addington Symonds, 3 January 1893, cited in *John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) and Homosexuality: A Critical Edition of Sources*, ed. by Sean Brady (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 238–39 (p. 239); Edward Carpenter, *Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society* (Manchester: Labour Press Society, 1894).

¹⁰ See Ivan Crozier, 'Introduction: Havelock Ellis, John Addington Symonds and the Construction of Sexual Inversion', in Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, pp. 1–86.

¹¹ See Karl Beckson, *Arthur Symonds: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 168.

¹² See Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Heike Bauer, "'The Idea of Development': Decadence, Aestheticism and late-Victorian Notions about Sexual Identity in *Marius the Epicurean*", *Australasian Journal for Victorian Studies*, 9 (2003), 1–15.

¹³ For Symonds and Sidgwick, see Bart Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 335–508.

¹⁴ See Simon Goldhill, *A Very Queer Family Indeed: Sex, Religion, and the Bensons in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 99.

¹⁵ See Barbara Fassler, 'Theories of Homosexuality as Sources of Bloomsbury's Androgyny', *Signs*, 5 (1979), 237–51.

¹⁶ See E. M. Forster, 'Terminal Note', in *Maurice*, ed. by P. N. Furbank (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 219–20.

about'.¹⁷ In 1932, Forster eagerly received details from Christopher Isherwood of the work carried out by Magnus Hirschfeld at his Institute of Sexual Research (*Institut für Sexualwissenschaft*) in Berlin.¹⁸ In 1961, he finally gained access to the unexpurgated manuscript of Symonds's explicit autobiography in the London Library.¹⁹

Elaborating such points of contact between sexologists, literary writers and their respective readers serves, as Heike Bauer has suggested, as a 'useful reminder of how experiential reality intersects with discourse, and how ideas can be tracked textually as well as travelling in less readily-traceable ways'.²⁰ The literary texts examined in this thesis are in conversation with, respond to, and challenge the assumptions of musical queerness presented in these sexological works.

In *Sexual Inversion*, a preference for music is always implicitly about the nature of one's body. Case studies here and in other sexological works frequently associate an interest in music with both effeminacy and a dislike of conventionally masculine activities, such as team sports and other physical exercise. One subject admits that 'he has had no taste for field sports, but is fond of music, books, art, and the sea'; another 'effeminate boy' is described as 'shunning games for which he was not strong enough', whilst being 'fond of music, pictures and poetry'.²¹ In similar terms, Raffalovich suggests in *Uranism and Unisexuality* that 'music might provide an excuse for children with delicate constitutions, quiet tastes and sedentary habits to avoid rough, mocking and uncaring boys'.²² Given the frequent elision of music and effeminacy in *Sexual Inversion*, it is perhaps unsurprising that the connection between 'inversion' and music is dwelt on less insistently in case studies of female 'inverts', who are consistently presented by Ellis and Symonds as 'mannish women'.²³ Music is

¹⁷ E. M. Forster, *The Journals and Diaries of E. M. Forster*, ed. by Philip Gardner, 3 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), II, 35.

¹⁸ See Wendy Moffat, *E. M. Forster: A New Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 279.

¹⁹ E. M. Forster, *Commonplace Book*, ed. by Philip Gardner (London: Scolar Press, 1985), pp. 224–29.

²⁰ Bauer, *English Literary Sexology*, p. 7.

²¹ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 135–37.

²² Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality*, p. 165.

²³ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 167.

equated with bodily weakness, the refusal of physical exertion, and an introverted refusal of the 'team spirit'.

Edward Carpenter's study of the nature of the 'Urning', *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), similarly emphasizes the connection between music, homosexuality and the effeminate, emotionally receptive body.²⁴ Refuting Krafft-Ebing's influential theory that the male homosexual is a woman's soul trapped in a man's body, Carpenter emphasizes that the male 'Urning' is not necessarily effeminate. However, while the Urning might possess 'thoroughly masculine powers of mind and body', he combines with them the 'tenderer and more emotional soul-nature of the woman'.²⁵ The Urning possesses a 'delicate and subtle sympathy with every wave and phase of feeling', which makes him particularly successful as an artist.²⁶ 'As to music,' he concludes, 'this is certainly the art which in its subtlety and tenderness — and perhaps in a certain inclination to indulge in emotion — lies nearest to the Urning nature'.²⁷ It is the Urning's peculiar emotional sensitiveness, Carpenter suggests, that explains his attraction to music.

Those theories that seek to explain the prevalence of 'musicality' amongst homosexual subjects typically locate its origins in the somatic 'nervous' sensitivity of the queer listener's body. While Ellis is far from systematic in offering an etiology of 'inversion', he offers three hypotheses about the connection between music and homosexuality. In his first hypothesis, he emphasizes that he does not consider the relationship between music and inversion to be wholly causal: that is, performing or listening to music does not *cause* homosexuality. Following the work of German neurologist Hermann Oppenheim, Ellis holds that the 'the musical disposition is marked by a great emotional instability, and this instability is a disposition to nervousness'.²⁸ Such 'nervousness', Oppenheim suggests, is not itself caused by music. Rather the musician's nervousness and his musical aptitude both arise from the same innate

²⁴ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1908).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁸ See C. H. Hughes, 'Oppenheim on Music and Nervousness', *Alienist and Neurologist* (November 1910), 491–96.

disposition. It follows, Ellis concludes, that a disposition to be musical and a disposition to homosexuality share a common source.²⁹ Ellis's second hypothesis suggests that those individuals who possess a 'single hypertrophied aptitude' — that is, a highly developed talent for one specific activity — are more likely to suffer from 'neuropathic' conditions. Musicians, he suggests, are 'frequently one-sided in [their] gifts' and, as such, are more likely to be subject to psychiatric conditions such as sexual inversion.³⁰

Ellis's third hypothesis once again draws upon associations between music and emotionalism. Ellis suggests that musicians and artists are 'conditioned by their esthetical faculty [...] to feel and express the whole gamut of emotional experience'. The male homosexual is peculiarly capable of exercising an emotional and imaginative sympathy in order to enter into 'states of psychological being that are not his own'. His sexual abnormality is not the result of an innate 'constitution'. Rather it is stimulated by 'the exercise of sympathetic, assimilative emotional qualities' in their personalities, in the context of an environment in which they are 'more exposed to the influences out of which sexual differentiation in an abnormal direction may arise'. To be an artist is to expose oneself to an 'environment which [...] leads easily to experiments in passion'. The emotional nature of the artist and, in particular, his sympathetic ability to occupy alternative subject positions, makes him peculiarly vulnerable to abnormal sexual feelings.³¹

In contrast to Ellis's hypotheses, Raffalovich argues against those who posit a fondness for music as a cause of, or an effect of, homosexuality. He implicitly chastises Austro-German sexologists, such as Krafft-Ebing, who suggest that Wagner's music, for example, might have a causal impact. In Germany and Austria, he notes, 'a taste for music is so popular, so widespread, and so much part of the culture that people with little or no literary or artistic inclinations enjoy Wagner's music'.³² Given the prevalence of musical literacy in these

²⁹ Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (1915), p. 295.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

³² Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality*, p. 164–65.

countries, it is not surprising, he suggests, that so many of the subjects of sexologist's case studies report an interest in music.

Of *fin-de-siècle* writers on homosexual identity, Edward Prime-Stevenson has perhaps the most to say about music. 'Show me a musician and show me a homosexual', he asserts in *The Intersexes* (1908), his compendious defence of same-sex love between men.³³ Prime-Stevenson — an American-born journalist, writer and music reviewer who spent much of his life in Continental Europe — refuted the pathologizing accounts of sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing, arguing instead for a more sympathetic attitude towards homosexuality.

Prime-Stevenson's *Long-Haired Iopas: Old Chapters from Twenty-Five Years of Music Criticism* (1927) is prefaced with a character sketch of the character Iopas from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the 'long-haired bard' who merits passing mention in Book I as he 'strikes up his golden lyre' at the feast of Dido, Aeneas and the Trojans.³⁴ In Prime-Stevenson's imaginative elaboration, Iopas becomes representative of a homosexual musical type that has, he suggested, endured across the centuries:

Yours must have been a gentlemanly personality, Iopas; as you sat there at the honourable end of the hall, half-surrounded by those soldierly barbarians and bronzed seafarers. Doubtless an aesthetic, refined, temperamental kind of countenance looked out at the world from amidst those well-combed perfumed filaments; elegant attention to the toilet of a hirsute musician which has been by no means always his punctilious case. Likewise can we suppose embroidered shirtings, possibly silk underwear, gay robes, considerable jewellery — a tendency to pose to your physical advantage in public. Occasionally, too, that rapt look of the eyes, which can be imitated with success by the skilled, when it is not of genuine feeling. Altogether a personality less virile than poetic. Such you may well have been, Iopas, guessed at through immemorial types constantly met, without respect of nationality; perennials, however disguised by

³³ Edward Prime-Stevenson, as Xavier Mayne, *The Intersexes: A History of Simisexualism as a Problem in Social Life* (1908), p. 395.

³⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. by Robert Fagles (London: Viking, 2006), p. 72.

modernities. It is quite probable that those muscular chieftains, Iarbas and Bitias, often stared in great contempt at you.³⁵

Prime-Stevenson indulges in an act of historical conjecture — ‘you must have been’, ‘doubtless’, ‘we can suppose’ — in which he projects back into the ‘immemorial’ past the stereotypes of *fin-de-siècle* homosexuality. Such ‘types’, he suggests, can be decoded and discovered throughout all times and nations, despite the varieties of ‘disguise’ they assume in different contexts. In a gesture similar to that which motivates the homoerotic Hellenism of Symonds and Wilde, Prime-Stevenson turns to what Scott Bravmann has called a ‘queer fiction of the past’ to underwrite his sense of contemporary homosexual identity.³⁶ Prime-Stevenson’s project is underpinned by the desire for trans-historical queer community formation; his mode of address in the second person introduces an intimate tone of familiarity which acts to close the historical distance between him and his subject. He invokes familiar *fin-de-siècle* tropes of effeminate homosexuality: Iopas has a close regard for his visual appearance; his long, perfumed hair is delicately groomed; he loves fine, luxurious fabrics, bright clothes and jewellery. Like a Wildean Dandy, he takes a narcissistic pleasure in his beauty being observed, consciously cultivating his ‘pose’ for the consumption of his ‘public’, and expert in the projection of artificially contrived emotion. Prime-Stevenson’s text implicitly rebukes those who would deride the immorality, perversion or criminality of such a ‘type’: he is more ‘gentlemanly’ than the ‘barbarian’ soldiers who surround him, and sits rightfully at the ‘honourable end of the hall’. Yet Iopas remains pressingly conscious of his minority status, ‘half-surrounded’ by those from whom he is so obviously different. That he ‘look[s] out at the world’ from behind his ‘well-combed [...] filaments’ serves similarly to emphasize his sense of isolation.

Central to Iopas’s ‘type’ is his status as a musician. It is this, Prime-Stevenson suggests, that affords him a markedly adept sensitivity to emotion. ‘As a musician’, he asserts, Iopas ‘must have been a man of poignant sentiments,

³⁵ Edward Prime-Stevenson, *Long-Haired Iopas: Old Chapters from Twenty-Five Years of Music Criticism* (Privately Printed by the Press of The Italian Mail: Florence, 1927), pp. 3–4.

³⁶ See Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

refined emotions, a mortal quick to feel the joys, sorrows, loves, hates, fears longings, swifter and deeper than most other human creatures'.³⁷ His responsiveness to the minutiae of emotion underlies his success as a musician, yet it also renders him peculiarly vulnerable to extremes of feeling. His effeminacy sees him held in contempt by those 'muscular chieftains', whose aggressive militaristic masculinity, written visibly on their bodies, presents a stark contrast with his own delicate, 'aesthetic' personality and effeminate poise. Prime-Stevenson's *The Intersexes* insistently reinforces a similar connection between somatic, emotional sensitivity and a homosexual musicality. For Prime-Stevenson, it is the 'nervous fabric' of the 'Uranian' that is most striking: he represents the 'the most sensitive, fine-strung, exquisitely emotional [nature] yet known'. It is this that accounts for him being drawn 'most especially [to] music', 'that most neurotic' and 'most subtly nerve-disturbing' of the arts.³⁸

For sexological writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is such 'nervous' emotionality of the homosexual's body that makes it possible to generalize about the nature of his musical tastes. Sexological writers consistently identify composers whose music is apparently most intensely emotional as those particularly favoured by homosexual listeners. One of Krafft-Ebing's subjects in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) described himself as 'an inspired follower of Richard Wagner': he has, he suggests, 'noticed this preference in the majority of [Urnings]; I find that this music is perfectly in accord with our nature'.³⁹ Magnus Hirschfeld likewise suggests a particular homosexual preference for Wagnerian music.⁴⁰ For Prime-Stevenson, the 'neurotic character of music', which he suggests is most appealing to homosexual listeners, 'reaches its contemporary height in Wagner and Richard Strauss'.⁴¹

Most notable about Prime-Stevenson's account is the insight it gives into the interpretative listening strategies used by homosexual listeners at the *fin de*

³⁷ Prime-Stevenson, *Long-Haired Iopas*, p. 7.

³⁸ Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 396.

³⁹ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study*, trans. by Charles Chaddock (London: Davis, 1892), p. 291.

⁴⁰ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1914), pp. 510–11.

⁴¹ Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 395.

siècle, who heard within certain pieces of music a reflection of their marginalized sexual desire. Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32, Op. 111, he notes, 'is often called among German and Austrian Uranians, "The Uranian Sonata"', on account of some 'legendary "in-reading" of the work'. Homosexual hearers of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, the 'Pathétique', he observes, 'find in it such revelations of a sentimental-sexual kind that they have nicknamed the work the "Pathic" Symphony'.⁴² Such a response has an exact parallel in Forster's *Maurice*, where Risley's reading of the symphony as reflecting the composer's love for his nephew sees him teasingly refer to it as 'Symphonie Incestueuse et Pathique'.⁴³ Even Brahms and Bruckner were viewed by some listeners as 'the ultimate voices in a homosexual message by symphonic music' (though Prime-Stevenson concedes that this voice was only 'sub-consciously uttered').⁴⁴

Like most of the sexologists with whom he is in dialogue, Prime-Stevenson has little to say about music beyond the core of the Western art music tradition. An intriguing exception is his praise of the 'wonderfully beautiful [...] rhythms, melodies and harmonies' of 'Magyar' — that is, Hungarian — music. 'No music seems as directly sexual as the Magyar', he observes, before noting that 'the Magyar is a distinctively "sexual" racial type'.⁴⁵ Here, those discourses that associate sexual deviancy with musical emotionalism are supplemented by those which draw similar connections with the eroticized exoticism of the Orientalized body. Prime-Stevenson indulges his interest in this 'racial type' in his novel *Imre* (1906), in which the lover of the protagonist Oswald is a strikingly beautiful piano-playing Hungarian army officer.⁴⁶ The apparent sexual potency of Hungarian music is referenced more directly in the anonymous pornographic novel *Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal* (1893), which centres upon a same-sex love affair between an English aesthete, Camille Des Grieux, and a virtuosic Hungarian pianist of 'tsigane' (gypsy) heritage, René Teleny.⁴⁷ When Des Grieux first hears Teleny perform, he plays a 'tsardas' on the piano, 'a wild Hungarian

⁴² Ibid., p. 397.

⁴³ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 141.

⁴⁴ Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 397.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 396.

⁴⁶ Prime-Stevenson, *Imre: A Memorandum*, ed. by James J. Gifford (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2003).

⁴⁷ *Teleny; or, the Reverse of the Medal* (New York: Mondial, 2006).

rhapsody by an unknown composer with a crackjaw name'.⁴⁸ In similar terms to Prime-Stevenson, Der Grioux holds that 'in no music is the sensuous element so powerful as in that of the Tsiganes': 'These melodies begin by shocking us, then by degrees subdue, until at last they enthrall us. The gorgeous fioriture, for instance, with which they abound are of decided luxurious Arabic character'. To understand Teleny's character, he insists, one 'must begin by feeling the latent spell which pervades every song of Tsigane'.⁴⁹ The Hungarian 'tsardas' (more usually spelt *csardas* or *czardas*) was widely associated with the exoticism of gypsies in the nineteenth century culture.⁵⁰ In aligning Teleny's Hungarian and 'Arabic' lineage the text also invokes another Orientalist trope common in clandestine erotic fiction of the period: the Orient as the origin of sodomy. Teleny's 'Asiatic blood' places his ancestry in the 'Sotadic Zone' identified by Sir Richard Burton as the 'geographical and climactic' region where 'the Vice [of sodomy] is popular and endemic'.⁵¹

'Not a Man, but a Disease': Music and Effeminacy at the *Fin de Siècle*

The association between music, homosexuality and effeminacy insistently drawn in sexological texts is best understood as co-extensive with wider late nineteenth-century discourses addressing the relationship between music and masculinity. As David Halperin's influential account has suggested, ideas of effeminacy become central to articulations of the concept of homosexuality that emerged around this time.⁵² As such, any attempt to understand the association between music and homosexual identity must also account for its associations with effeminacy. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize the complex associations of such effeminacy at a historical moment in which existing categories for the understanding of sexuality were in a state of flux. Alan Sinfield has rightly warned against too readily assuming that portrayals of effeminacy in

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ See Anna G. Piotrowska, *Gypsy Music in European Culture: From the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2013), pp. 207–08.

⁵¹ Richard Burton, 'Terminal Essay' from *The Books of The Thousand Nights and a Night* (London: The Burton Club for Private Subscribers Only, 1885), in *Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850–1900*, ed. by Brian Reade (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 158–193 (p. 159).

⁵² David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 113–120.

late-Victorian culture are suggestive of same-sex desire, particularly before the Wilde trials. Before the watershed of 1895, Sinfield suggests, effeminacy in England was principally associated not with same-sex desire, but with a deviously 'unmanly' attempt to seduce women.⁵³ Nonetheless, it is precisely the perceived effeminate 'emotionalism' of musicality that leads to it becoming such a dominant marker of homosexual identity.

As a number of musicologists and historians have observed, music in Victorian culture was often associated with the threat of effeminacy.⁵⁴ Such fears have a long pedigree, reaching back to Classical antiquity: Plato proposed to ban the Lydian mode on the grounds that it would make men poor warriors, while Aristotle raised concerns about the place of music in the education of young men, opining that 'learning music must not be allowed to have any adverse effect on later activities' and that it was necessary to consider 'to what extent boys, who are being educated to discharge the highest functions in the state, ought to take part in music'.⁵⁵ In Victorian England, masculinity was closely connected with ideas of bodily vigour, physical strength and endurance — all aspects of the masculine body that musical activities apparently failed to nourish and promote. In educational institutions underpinned by an ethic of 'Muscular Christianity', schoolboys who engaged in musical activities, rather than team games and sporting activities, were often regarded with derision: 'A Harrow boy who went in for the study of music in those days,' noted one observer, 'would have been looked upon as a veritable milksop.'⁵⁶ Such concerns are part of wider debates in late nineteenth-century British society relating to masculinity, emotionalism and the inculcation of behaviours appropriate to the all-male realms of imperial service, military life, and national politics. As John Tosh has argued, while the

⁵³ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁵⁴ See for example Derek Scott, 'The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 119 (1994), 91–114; Kennaway, 'Modern Music'; Richard Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 223–27.

⁵⁵ Plato, *Republic*, trans. and ed. by Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 158–61; Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. by Trevor J. Saunders, trans. by Thomas A. Sinclair (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 311.

⁵⁶ See Walter Macfarren in the *Musical Times* (January 1898), cited in Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music 1844–1944*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), II, 625.

mid-Victorian years witnessed a rise in ‘masculine domesticity’, this was co-extensive with growing anxieties about masculine vulnerability.⁵⁷ According to a study of G. A. Henty’s work published in 1907, his influential boys’ stories evinced ‘a horror of a lad who displayed any weak emotion’, demanding ‘his boys to be bold, straightforward and ready to play a young man’s part, not to be milksops’.⁵⁸ Given the common elision of musical performance with indulgent emotionalism in late nineteenth-century culture, it is hardly surprising that certain forms of music came to be understood as a threat to such rigid ideals of masculinity.

The significance of *fin-de-siècle* debates about music, effeminacy and emotion can be well illustrated with reference to an episode of intense discussion that took place in the music periodical press. In August 1889, *The Musical Times* published an article that interrogated the nature of ‘Manliness in Music’. ‘Few things have contributed more effectively to perpetuate in this country the prejudice against the musical profession,’ the anonymous author noted, ‘than the impression that musicians are as a class wanting in the manlier qualities’.⁵⁹ Such is the emphasis placed on ‘devotion to athletics’ as a ‘cardinal tenet in the national creed’, that a man’s dedication to music is presented by its critics as detrimental to ‘moral and physical fibre’. Fears about such behaviour are sufficiently strong that people actively avoid association with musicians — their ‘feeling[s] amount to a positive repugnance and resentment’. The author seeks to argue that such associations are unfounded: effeminacy is not an ‘essential characteristic of all musicians’ but rather ‘only the accidental characteristic of some’. In fact, he insists, ‘the manlier an artist has proved himself to be, the better musician’. The popular impression is based not on the whole musical profession, but merely those than gain most coverage in the press, notably ‘capricious’ and ‘childish’ operatic singers, who are not representative of the temperament of musicians as a whole.⁶⁰ By way of example, the author proceeds to provide a list of wholly *unrepresentative*

⁵⁷ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁵⁸ George Manville Fenn, *George Alfred Henty: The Story of an Active Life* (London: Blackie, 1907), pp. 333–34, cited in W. J. Reader, *At Duty’s Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 28.

⁵⁹ ‘Manliness in Music’, *The Musical Times*, 30 (August 1889), 460–61.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

effeminate musical types (worthy, perhaps, of the Lord High Executioner in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885)):

There is the drawing-room *tenorino*, a mannikin who fully justifies in his own person Von Bülow's strictures quoted in a recent number of *The Musical Times*. He is, in truth, 'not a man, but a disease.' There are dusky warblers of erotic inanities, skilled in the use of the falsetto, whose fervid folly plays havoc with the heart-strings of gullible women. There are violinists who profane a beautiful instrument by imbecile buffoonery, and, if they ever condescend to play anything in the *cantabile* style, render their soapy tone still soapier by the constant use of the mute. And about these pests of the drawing-room congregates a swarm of pallid *dilettanti*, cosmopolitan in sentiment, destitute of any manly vigour or grit, who have never played cricket or been outside a horse [sic] in their lives. It is from contact with these nerveless and effeminate natures that the healthy average well-born Briton recoils in disgust and contempt; and, without pausing to inquire, he proceeds forthwith to label all male musicians as unmanly and invertebrate.⁶¹

The author associates musical effeminacy with the 'drawing-room' culture of intimate salon musical performance. Effeminate musical performance is marked by its conscious emotional manipulateness, its indulgent virtuosity, and sentimentality. But the target of his wrath is less these performers, and more the audiences they attract. Interestingly, these musical 'pests of the drawing room' act to manipulate the 'heart-strings of gullible women', whilst also enticing a 'swarm' of 'nerveless and effeminate' men. At a moment of conceptual flux, the article simultaneously recruits two competing discourses of effeminacy. It looks backward to earlier nineteenth-century conceptualisations in which, as Sinfield has shown, effeminacy was primarily associated with devious male attempts to seduce women.⁶² At the same time, it gestures towards an emergent sense of an effeminate homosocial sub-culture in terms that invoke familiar *fin-de-siècle* homophobic tropes. The paranoid fear of 'contact' with these queer bodies

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 461.

⁶² Sinfield, *Wilde Century*, p. 37.

prompts in the writer a visceral, reflexive reaction of ‘disgust and contempt’. The author’s disdain for these ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘pallid *dilettanti*’ clearly gestures towards the perceived affectations of Wildean aestheticism. As Richard Hibbitt has shown, ‘*dilettantisme*’ was associated in the 1880s with a self-consciously cultivated aestheticist attitude defined by contradiction, paradox and scepticism.⁶³ By 1889, ‘pallid’ was practically a short-hand term for evoking the delicate, lethargic sensitivity of the aesthete’s feminized body. The character of Bunthorne in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Patience* (1881), for example — associated with Wilde after his tour of America in 1882 — poses as a ‘a pallid and thin young man’.⁶⁴ For the readers of the often-insular *Musical Times*, to be ‘cosmopolitan in sentiment’ would suggest, in essence, having a suspiciously close interest in anything too French. The masculinity of the ‘*tenorino*’ is rendered compromised not just by his high voice, but also his status as a ‘mannikin’ (a ‘little man’). The ‘mannikin’ is both a warbling song bird, but also a *mannequin* — an emblem of the hollowness and superficiality of the Decadent aesthete, who, like a shop dummy, might assume any pose at will.

The hyperbolic terms in which the author of ‘Manliness in Music’ proceeds to defend the masculinity of some of Western art music’s pre-eminent composers suggest something of his paranoid determination to efface any association with effeminacy: Beethoven’s character ‘showed no lack of virility’, Handel was not only ‘made of sturdy stuff’ but ‘capable of volcanic explosions of fury’, Mendelssohn was a ‘wonderfully good all-round man’, the ‘robust individuality’ of Brahms’s music is the product of a ‘thoroughly masculine nature’. Turning to Greek mythology, the author notes that Apollo — the patron god of musicians — was also a ‘considerable athlete in his way’, while the ‘redoubtable warrior’ Achilles was also ‘well versed in music’. Citing Biblical precedent, the author asks, ‘what better evidence can we find anywhere in support of our position than is afforded by the case of David?’.⁶⁵ Curiously, in doing so, he implicitly reasserts the conventional masculinity of three notable models of intense ‘romantic

⁶³ Richard Hibbitt, *Dilettantism and its Values: From Weimar Classicism to the Fin de Siècle* (London: Legenda 2006).

⁶⁴ W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan*, ed. by Ian Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 417.

⁶⁵ ‘Manliness in Music’, p. 461.

friendship' frequently invoked by writers who wished to affirm the validity of same-sex desire: Pater's 'Apollo in Picardy' takes as a model Ovid's myth of Apollo and Hyacinthus; Symonds's 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' (1884) celebrates the 'passionate relation' of Achilles and Patroclus; Wilde cited the 'great affection' of David and Jonathan in his second trial.⁶⁶

'Manliness in Music' prompted responses from a number of correspondents to *The Musical Times* and other periodicals. One correspondent suggested that the association between music and effeminacy arises because of a disjunction in the 'English mind' between 'what a man ought to be' and 'what a musician is or appears to be': 'The ideal of a man, as has been pointed out, embraces courage, endurance, and still more the power to *hide one's feelings*. Now the object of a musician is to *express emotion* [...] It is the object of a musician to make people *feel* [...] which some *naturally resent*'. The Germans and French, he suggests, do not harbour the same desire to hide their feelings, and thus do not share the English prejudice against music. Nevertheless, the emotional nature of music makes it a threat to balanced character: the man who is a professional musician has a duty to engage in other activities in order to guarantee his 'virtue and moral courage', lest he become too self-absorbed in the task of his music-making.⁶⁷ Another response, from a minor poet named Lennox Amott, similarly dwelt on the dangers posed to masculinity by the self-indulgent emotionalism of musical expression: 'Nothing wears [sic] a man more than excess of feeling.' The responsible musician should take care to counter-act his artistic pursuits with more conventionally manly activities, in order to bolster his reserves of hearty, ruddy healthiness: 'My own experience has taught me that immediately after that excess of feeling which has of its own force taken shape in the poem or tone-picture, the gun, the bicycle, the football or cricket ball, the rod and line, or the gloves are the best possible antidotes to the poisons of sedentary occupation and passions that alternately feed and waste the energies of life.'⁶⁸ The danger of music, he suggests, lies in the manner that it moves the listener between states

⁶⁶ Walter Pater, 'Apollo in Picardy', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 87 (1893), 949–57; Symonds, 'A Problem in Greek Ethics', in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 41–121 (p. 43–44); H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 2nd edn (New York: Dover, 1962), p. 201.

⁶⁷ *Musical Standard*, 37 (5 October 1889), 288.

⁶⁸ Lennox Amott, 'Manliness in Music', *Musical Times*, 30 (1 October 1889), 620.

of passivity and activity, exhausting the mechanism through which masculine emotional equilibrium is sustained.

Musical Aesthetics: Queer Negotiations

The place of emotion and the body in the understanding of music has broader implications in debates within *fin-de-siècle* musical aesthetics. In *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (*Homosexuality in Men and Women*, 1914), the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld proposed that typical homosexual listeners ‘experience music only as an aspect of mood, a purely sensory impression’. Lacking the ‘intellectual engagement’ to follow the complex formal structure of ‘older, classical music’, they naturally prefer the ‘more colourful or sensual music’ of nineteenth-century musical Romanticism. Unable to appreciate abstract musical form, the homosexual listener, he suggests, requires the dramatic immediacy of music ‘in which the succession of musical structures is determined by clearly defined images, ideas, by a text’. They dislike ‘classical opera’ — ‘in which the music itself is the ultimate purpose’ — because the artificial ‘closed forms, arias, ensembles, etc.’ distract from the ‘dramatics of feeling’ that they demand from music. It is for these reasons, he suggests, that homosexual listeners love, above all, the music dramas of Richard Wagner. The success of such music, Hirschfeld suggests, depends not on its formal ingenuity, but purely upon its emotional force. These works emotionally overwhelm listeners through the ‘piling up of ecstasies’, the music operating principally to ‘illustrate’ and ‘accompany’ the dramatic action, with ‘long passages existing only to heighten the action on stage’.⁶⁹ Hirschfeld’s model of homosexual listening contrasts the intellectual appreciation of musical form with an embodied indulgence in musical emotion. In reinforcing associations between musicality, homosexuality and emotionalism, Hirschfeld participates in wider debates in nineteenth-century musical aesthetics relating to music’s ability to express emotion.

Debates at the *fin de siècle* as to how and whether music can express emotions were just as fraught with concerns around same-sex desire as the sexological

⁶⁹ Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität*, pp. 510–11. Unpublished translations by Tom Smith.

works that music theorists were so closely engaged with. In the early 1880s, the queer writer Vernon Lee engaged in a debate about the nature of musical meaning with John Addington Symonds, a literary writer perhaps more famous for his sexological work with Havelock Ellis. Unpacking Symonds's and Lee's opposing views allows for the delineation of some central debates about music, meaning and emotion in Victorian culture, whilst also affording an opportunity to consider the place of desire and identity in the listening experiences of Victorian queer subjects. Symonds's defence of music as an art that discloses new modes of feeling insists upon the validity of musical experiences that affirm queer desire. Conversely, Lee's severe musical formalism seeks to disavow those emotions awakened by music that are felt to be embarrassing or shameful. More broadly, a system of musical aesthetics that privileges a supposedly objective and disinterested appreciation of musical form over a subjective emotional response can be understood as a strategic response to the alignment of music with effeminacy (and thus implicitly homosexuality) in late-Victorian culture. Insisting upon music's formal autonomy — that is, its separateness from social or personal commitments — acts as an attempt to insulate it from accusations of queerness.

In the early years of the 1880s, Symonds and Lee engaged in a heated exchange of letters in which England's pre-eminent cultural historian of the Italian Renaissance took the younger writer to task for what he viewed as her erroneous historical suppositions, philosophical misunderstandings, and apparent stylistic infelicities.⁷⁰ Their dispute touched also upon their divergent attitude towards a central point of debate in musical aesthetics in late nineteenth-century England: whether music's meaning inheres within the form of the music itself, or whether music's significance lies in its ability to express emotion. In May 1883, Lee wrote to her close friend Mary Robinson that she had received a 'delightful ill tempered letter from Mr Symonds', prompted, she suggests, by the fact that she had 'discussed more freely than [Symonds] liked' his recent essay 'Cherubino at The

⁷⁰ See Sally Newman, "'Bizarre Love Triangle': Tracing Power and Pedagogy in the Letters of John Addington Symonds, A. Mary F. Robinson and Vernon Lee, 1878–90', *English Studies*, 94.2 (2013), 154–170; Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 66.

Scala Theatre' (1882).⁷¹ Symonds's essay, Lee notes, is 'a tacit onslaught on me', and her intemperate exchange with Symonds a result of his 'rather indignant [...] mode of frowning down [her] technical knowledge as "heartless criticism connoisseurship"'.⁷² Symonds's essay offers a riposte to Lee's own essay on Mozart's page-boy, 'Cherubino: A Psychological Art Fantasy' (1881), and to her positions on musical aesthetics set out in a number of other contemporaneous articles.⁷³

In 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', Symonds recalls his experience of a performance of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*, 1786). His account is followed by a discussion over dinner with a group of fellow opera-goers about the place of emotion in the experience of music. He recounts that the opera performance they attended was generally lacklustre, with the notable exception of Pauline Lucca's realisation of the young page-boy, Cherubino. Lucca (1841–1908) — described by George Grove as 'one of the most brilliant operatic artists of a brilliant epoch' — was fêted for her performances of this role at London's Theatre Royal, Covent Garden and elsewhere, in the 1860s.⁷⁴ Her rendition of Cherubino's aria 'Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio' was, for Symonds, an emotionally transformative experience: 'it seemed to me that a new existence was revealed'. 'For the first time,' Symonds reflects, 'I understood what love might be in one most richly gifted for emotion'.⁷⁵ Symonds's feelings find a close parallel with those of the character of Cherubino himself: his arias express the thrilling and disorientating effect of the awakening of adolescent desire. Yet Symonds's principal concern is with articulating broader aesthetic principles about the nature of music. Music, he insists, allows one to realize the depths of inner subjectivity; its power lies in an ability to instigate new and profound emotions: 'What a wonder-world music creates! I have lived this evening in a

⁷¹ John Addington Symonds, 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', in *Italian Byways* (London: Smith, Elder, 1883), pp. 282–311.

⁷² Vernon Lee, Letter to Mary Robinson, *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee, 1856–1935*, ed. by Amanda Gagel, 3 vols (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 1, 407 (8–9 May 1883).

⁷³ Vernon Lee, 'Cherubino: A Psychological Art Fantasy', in *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: Satchell, 1881), pp. 129–95.

⁷⁴ George Grove, 'Pauline Lucca', in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by George Grove (London: Macmillan, 1900), p. 170.

⁷⁵ Symonds, 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', p. 259.

sphere of intellectual enjoyment raised to rapture. I never lived so fast before!’⁷⁶ Symonds pits his own Hegelian, idealist aesthetics (‘what is music but emotion, in its most genuine essence, expressed by sound?’) against the formalist aesthetics of, amongst others, a German biology professor and the wife of a celebrated English dramatist: ‘it is wiser to believe [...] that these are sequences of sounds, and nothing more’.⁷⁷

Symonds’s essay concludes with a section that paraphrases Hegel’s aesthetic philosophy, without ever openly acknowledging the influence of Hegel himself. Symonds’s commitment to Hegel’s aesthetics can, as Whitney Davis has convincingly argued in the context of his writings on the visual arts, be understood as part of a broader ‘homoeroticist cultural politics’ that allows the queer subject a ‘way to regard *itself* as a more — even the most — advanced stage of modern consciousness’.⁷⁸ For Symonds, the intense homoerotic desires that underpinned his aesthetic responses — whether to nude classical sculpture or to Cherubino’s arias — might, when understood through Hegel’s aesthetics, be idealized in a manner that allows for the development of a higher state of self-consciousness. Symonds’s interest in Hegel dates from the mid-1860s, when he was introduced to philosophical idealism by his Oxford contemporary — and eventual brother-in-law — Thomas H. Green. As Symonds told his correspondents, he read Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 1835) ‘with great pleasure and profit’, for it was ‘very like reading poetry: it is so fascinating, so free & so splendid’.⁷⁹ In Hegel’s aesthetics, the primary role of art lies in the disclosure of truth. Art becomes ‘the supreme means of unifying necessity with freedom, the particular with the universal, the sensuous with reason’. Art and music function not merely to beautify or sanctify those aspects of our experience that have already been discovered, but rather as means of self-discovery through which a higher state of consciousness might be achieved. ‘Art gives form’, Symonds paraphrases, ‘to human consciousness;

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 259.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 261–62.

⁷⁸ See Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 99–134 (p. 99).

⁷⁹ Symonds, Letter to Horatio Forbes Brown, *Letters*, II, 288 (2 November 1875).

expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man'.⁸⁰ Music, for Hegel, is the most subjective of the arts, allowing for the direct expression of the inwardness of subjectivity, effacing those dimensions of space that characterize sculpture and painting. 'Emancipated from external reference', music can reach the highest 'inwardness of self-consciousness'.⁸¹ Music expresses, and moves us to, various different feelings, such as love, longing and joy.⁸² Despite placing music below poetry in his aesthetic hierarchy, Hegel praises music as dealing most directly with the 'concrete inner life'.⁸³ Instrumental music, Hegel suggests, is 'empty and meaningless' because it 'lacks a principal feature of all art — spiritual content [*geistiger Inhalt*] and expression'.⁸⁴ Yet through rhythm, harmony and melody, music allows the soul to hear its own inner movement and to be moved in turn by what it hears. It is 'spirit, soul which resounds immediately for itself and feels satisfied in hearing itself [*in ihrem Sichvernehmen*]'.⁸⁵ 'In spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness,' as Symonds puts it, 'emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self'.⁸⁶ 'Music', Symonds concludes:

[...] transports us to a different region. It imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly artificial kind. [...] The domain of the spirit over which music reigns is emotion — not defined emotion, not feeling even so defined as jealousy or anger — but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling.⁸⁷

In his defence of music's ability to 'transport us to a different region', to stimulate 'those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring', Symonds tacitly argues for music as a queer space in which a listener might experience the affirmation of their emergent same-sex desire. By placing Symonds's account in the context of his other writings on the figure of Cherubino, it becomes clear that

⁸⁰ Symonds, 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', p. 270.

⁸¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. by Thomas Malcolm Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), II, 626.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 940.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 904.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 911.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 939.

⁸⁶ Symonds, 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', p. 269.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 277–78.

the revelation of love afforded to him by listening to Mozart's music is decidedly queer. At stake, then, in Symonds's defence of idealist musical aesthetics, is the validity of a Romantic approach to music that understands it as a privileged site for the realisation of new emotions, desires and subjectivities.

Symonds's essay can be placed in a long tradition in which Cherubino — a love-struck male adolescent sung by a mezzo in drag, who in turn cross-dresses as a woman in Act II of the opera — becomes a figure of queer erotic potential. Marc-André Raffalovich notes in *Uranism and Unisexuality*, that the Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) was inspired by a performance of the role to write 'completely sexually ambiguous' verses that 'shocked him later in life'.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Raffalovich describes 'effeminate uranists' who 'exaggerate their feminine tendencies' as 'old Chérubins' — 'for they are often old and resemble the character Chérubin in their cross-dressing'.⁸⁹ Symonds himself recounts that his homoerotic poem the 'Cretan Idyll' was in part inspired by the performer who played Cherubino in a performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro* that he attended in London in November 1866.⁹⁰ In a letter to his close friend Henry Graham Dakyns, he writes, perhaps jokingly, that the words of Cherubino's aria 'Voi che sapete' will form a 'lyrical intermezzo' between two parts of the poem.⁹¹ The letter concludes with another allusion to Mozart's opera: 'Il padre e la madre di Cecilio non lo sanno' ('The father and the mother of Cecilio don't know'). 'Cecilio' is Cecil Boyle, a thirteen-year-old school pupil of Dakyns at Clifton School. The Italianate transformation of his name sees him assume a place akin to Cherubino in the shared sexual fantasies of Symonds and Dakyns. Cecil was, it seems, the subject of Dakyns's pederastic desires and was, at this time, staying with him during the school holidays.⁹² Symonds's Italian consciously imitates the patter of Lorenzo da Ponte's recitative: in the farcical comedy of the Act III sextet in *Le Nozze di Figaro* much humour arises from the ignorance of Figaro's father and mother, amidst the gradual revelation of Figaro's parentage. Here, Symonds playfully

⁸⁸ Raffalovich, *Uranism and Unisexuality*, pp. 256–57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹⁰ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, in *Letters*, II, 828–29 (29 July 1868).

⁹¹ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, II, 686 (6 December 1868).

⁹² Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, I, 682 (1 December 1866).

draws an analogy between this and the accepting trust that Cecil's parents have placed in their son's teacher.

Elsewhere, Cherubino's arias function for Symonds as a sort of musical shorthand for his intense homosexual desire. When he encountered a 'singularly magnetic youth' whilst travelling in Normandy, Symonds reports that he 'hummed to [himself] "Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio"'.⁹³ Conversely, if Cherubino's arias speak of emotional awakening and erotic possibility in Symonds's letters, he invokes the Contessa's aria 'Dove sono' in order to signal to Dakyns the intensity of his feelings of nostalgia for his past relationship with his school pupil, Norman Moor. 'I sing that sad aria of Mozart to myself,' Symonds laments, 'as I think of [...] the former summer three years since with Norman.'⁹⁴ In *Sexual Inversion* (1897), he notably refers in his own anonymous 'case study' to Cherubino as a figure of eroticized gender fluidity. While he rarely finds women sexually attractive, he notes, he concedes that 'he might have brought himself to indulge freely in purely sexual pleasure with women if he made their first acquaintance in a male costume'. Symonds admits that it is only ever women clothed as men, such as Cherubino, that he has found sexually exciting on stage.⁹⁵

Music, Romanticism and Queer Subjectivities

Symonds's Hegelian defence of music's ability to stimulate higher modes of self-consciousness thus also provides for him a discourse through which he can defend the validity of music as a space for the exploration of queer sexual desire. In this respect Symonds's stance is representative of a broader alignment in queer literary texts of the *fin de siècle* with the claims of Romantic musical aesthetics. While Symonds and Lee are unusual amongst English writers of the *fin de siècle* in taking such a close interest in debates in musical aesthetics, the grand claims made for music in the Idealist tradition of German Romanticism nevertheless provide a useful context for understanding the broader cultural *Zeitgeist* of those texts in which music acts to affirm queer identities. Music, for many queer writers, becomes a horizon of utopian possibility, an ineffable that

⁹³ Symonds, Letter to Catherine Symonds, *Letters*, II, 718 (9 December 1881). See also Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 297.

⁹⁴ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, II, 237 (3 August 1872).

⁹⁵ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 144.

speaks the unspeakable, or an affective space for the exploration of new desiring subjectivities. Indeed, as Ian Biddle has noted, in its visionary fascination with excess, hyperbole and exaggeration, ‘romanticism *is* a kind of queer’.⁹⁶

The complexities of the Romantic tradition in musical aesthetics can best be characterized in general terms by what Mark Evan Bonds has identified as a commitment to music’s ‘disclosiveness’.⁹⁷ As Andrew Bowie has noted, in early nineteenth-century German Romantic thought, the role of music was central to debates about the relationship between aesthetic experience and subjectivity: music facilitates the disclosure of aspects of self that would otherwise remain hidden or inarticulate.⁹⁸ For Friedrich Schlegel, the self is constituted through language, yet such language remains fundamentally deficient in expressiveness, and must be supplanted by music for the self to be most fully realized.⁹⁹ At the apex of this philosophical tradition stands Arthur Schopenhauer, whose *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*, 1819) presents a metaphysics of music in which music alone allows access to the noumenal realm of the Will, revealing the essential universal truth of existence.¹⁰⁰

Some brief literary examples usefully illustrate the manner in which this intellectual tradition sees music afforded a significant ‘disclosive’ agency in queer *fin-de-siècle* literature. In Edward Prime-Stevenson’s *Imre*, music plays an important role in bringing the narrator to consciousness of what he calls the ‘passion of friendship which could so far transcend the cold modern idea of the tie’. Before meeting another man who reciprocates his queer desire, he ‘had half-divined’ the nature of his desire ‘in the music of a Beethoven and a Tschaiowsky before knowing facts in the life-stories of either of them — or of an hundred other

⁹⁶ Biddle, *Music, Masculinity and the Claims of History*, pp. 19–20.

⁹⁷ Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 112–26. See also Enrico Fubini, *The History of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. by Michael Hatwell (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 261–89; Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 203–320.

⁹⁸ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 221–300.

⁹⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke*, 35 vols (Munich: Schöningh, 1958–), XII: *Philosophische Vorlesungen (1800–1807)*, ed. by Ernst Behler (1964), p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 359.

tone-autobiographists'.¹⁰¹ In H. G. Wells's *The Wonderful Visit* (1895) music functions to articulate the possibility of an aesthetic utopia — an 'Angelic Land' — in which the 'Angel of Art' who is persecuted throughout the novel might freely express his queer individuality.¹⁰² As Yoonjoung Choi has shown, Wells's text specifically alludes to the Wilde trials in its protest against the persecution of societal 'eccentrics'.¹⁰³ The Angel's delicate Italianate beauty, long, flowing hair, peculiar bright clothes and naively innocent demeanour see him branded 'rather a "queer customer"' by those narrow-minded Philistines who populate Wells's satire on Middle England's moral censoriousness.¹⁰⁴ The Angel's rapturous violin playing is but another aspect of the effeminacy that renders him, in their eyes, so suspect. Only for Wells's Vicar, who is alert to this music's transcendental power, does it offer a vision of the 'land of Beauty': a 'great and spacious land', of 'incredible openness, and height, and nobility', implicitly contrasted with the cramped oppressiveness and petty vindictiveness of his own intolerant society.¹⁰⁵

As well as allowing for the visionary disclosure of queer-affirmative societies, music in *fin-de-siècle* literature also acts to facilitate the emergence of queer subjectivities. In E. F. Benson's novels, for example, music frequently instigates a form of psycho-sexual awakening in which emotionally repressed queer subjects are brought to fuller consciousness of their desiring selves. In Benson's *Mike* (1916), for instance, the eponymous protagonist is a 'queer, awkward, ill-made' young man, unable to form friendships with 'normal English boys', who quits the army to devote himself to his piano playing.¹⁰⁶ Only on a trip to Bayreuth, where he attends a performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* (1883) with his new-found friend Hermann, does he truly come to understand himself: 'In all his life he had never experienced so much sheer emotion [...]. He had enjoyed his first taste of liberty; he had stripped himself naked to music; he had found a friend.'¹⁰⁷ Here, the emotionalism of Wagner's music prompts an epiphanic experience of self-

¹⁰¹ Prime-Stevenson, *Imre*, p. 84.

¹⁰² H. G. Wells, *The Wonderful Visit* (London: Dent, 1895), p. 35.

¹⁰³ Yoonjoung Choi, 'The Wonderful Visit and the Wilde Trial', *The Wellsian*, 31 (2008), 43–55.

¹⁰⁴ Wells, *The Wonderful Visit*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁶ E. F. Benson, *Mike* (London: Cassell, 1916), pp. 86–87.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

discovery, whilst facilitating also an act of self-revelatory 'outing' — figured in conspicuously homoerotic terms — through which Benson's Mike achieves a closer homosocial bond. Music becomes, for Mike, 'the key that unlock[s] all the locks'. Devoting himself to the pleasures of musical performance, he discovers a community 'almost entirely of men', bound together by the 'freemasonry of art [...] [which] passed like an open secret among them, secret because none spoke of it, open because it was so transparently obvious'.¹⁰⁸ Benson's novel offers the most clearly homoerotic example of how experiences of listening are used in literature of the period to affirm queer desires, as well as relating these desires directly to the Romantic musical tradition of Wagner.

In Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament' (1905) — effectively a character sketch of a 'typical' young, male homosexual in early twentieth-century America — the 'peculiar stimulus' of music similarly becomes the means through which marginalized queer subjectivity can find affirmation.¹⁰⁹ Weighed down by the mundane, repressive drudgery of his life in the Pittsburgh suburbs, it is only when listening to music that he 'really lived'.¹¹⁰ Orchestral music acts to 'free some hilarious and potent spirit within him': Paul's closeted desire — this 'something' that 'struggled' inside him — is compared in Cather's text to the 'Genius in the bottle found by the Arab fisherman', waiting to be released by the 'sudden zest of life' that music affords to him. His 'vivacious and animated' anticipation of an orchestral performance is so intense that it is marked by the 'the color [that] came to his cheeks and lips'.¹¹¹ Even listening to the orchestra tuning up renders his receptive body 'twanging all over', seemingly resonating with the stringed instruments that he hears. The emotional intensity of music — the way it renders his 'senses [...] deliciously, yet delicately fired' — sees it attain for Paul 'the allurements of a secret love'. Uniquely sensitive to the 'spark' of music

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁰⁹ Willa Cather, 'Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament', in *The Short Stories of Willa Cather*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Virago, 1992), pp. 89–111 (p. 92). For queer readings of Cather's text see Larry Rubin, 'The Homosexual Motif in Willa Cather's "Paul's Case"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12 (1975), 127–31; Claude J. Summers, '"A Losing Game in the End": Aestheticism and Homosexuality in Cather's "Paul's Case"', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 36.1 (1990), 103–19; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Across Gender, Across Sexuality: Willa Cather and Others', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88.1 (1989), 53–72.

¹¹⁰ Cather, 'Paul's Case', p. 92.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 93.

that renders his 'imagination master of his senses', music becomes for him a forum for the elaboration of the 'plots and pictures' of his queer erotic fantasies. While other young men turn to 'garish fiction' to 'tempt or corrupt' their 'youthful mind[s]', Paul finds that he 'got what he wanted much more quickly from music'.¹¹² Only when he flees to New York, indulging his taste for beautiful, expensive things with stolen money, does Paul feel himself 'entirely rid of [the] nervous misgivings' that have marred his constricted life. Sitting in a box at the Metropolitan Opera, he finally feels 'that his surroundings explained him'.¹¹³ As in the examples by Wells and Benson, music here is understood, in the tradition of Romantic aesthetics, as a source of emotion that allows for expression of unarticulated aspects of the self. Yet Cather combines vivid descriptions of Paul's self-affirmation through music with a sense of the *shamefulness* of his experiences of music. Music is not simply a forum for the unproblematic exploration of alternative desiring subjectivities, but a mirror in which one might be confronted with aspects of the self that one would wish to disavow. In these texts, the disclosure of such proscribed desires is doubly shameful because it is the product of an embodied form of aesthetic response associated with the 'emotionalism' of queer and female subjects. Such 'shameful listening', as will be argued below, might be understood as underlying the *denial* of emotional experience that underpins the musical aesthetics of Vernon Lee and Edmund Gurney.

Musical Formalism: Vernon Lee, Edmund Gurney and Shameful Listening

Symonds's 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre' was not the last word in the battle between him and Lee over musical aesthetics: Lee returned fire in 'Prosaic Music and Poetic Music' in 1887, before restaging Symonds's conceit of a post-opera symposium in her own terms in 'Orpheus in Rome' (1889).¹¹⁴ 'Prosaic Music and Poetic Music' offers a tacit response to Symonds's Hegelianism, tartly warning any pedantic reader that they 'are [...] requested to expect in the following

¹¹² Ibid., p. 100.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹⁴ Lee, 'Prosaic Music and Poetic Music', in *Juvenilia: Being a Second Series of Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions*, 2 vols (London: Fisher Unwin, 1887), I, 151–64; 'Orpheus in Rome: Irrelevant Talks on the Use of the Beautiful', *Contemporary Review*, 55 (June 1889), 828–49.

remarks neither logical sequence nor aesthetic principles'.¹¹⁵ Such 'sequences' and 'principles' are, she implies, the preserve of those dry-as-dust German idealists, far removed, at least in style, from disciples of Paterian impressionistic aestheticism. Lee offers a defence of her beloved Italian eighteenth-century opera: it may not aspire to the spiritual profundity of 'poetical suggestion' (or 'what the Germans call *Inhalt*'), but succeeds instead on the grounds of its formal beauty. By examining Lee's writings on musical formalism alongside those of another reputedly queer English formalist critic, Edmund Gurney, it becomes possible to understand formalism as a response against 'effeminising', subjective accounts of musical response that implicitly associate music with the an embodied emotionalism associated with queer sexuality. In Lee's writings, a preference for a disinterested appreciation of 'aesthetic emotion' can be understood as part of her reaction against music that provokes feelings of shame. For Gurney, formalist discourses perform an act of closeting, in which the intense emotional experiences afforded by music are acknowledged, but must nevertheless remain always 'undefinable' or 'indescribable'.¹¹⁶

Lee's own essay on Mozart's page-boy, 'Cherubino: A Psychological Art Fantasy', provides a point of departure for considering her own commitments in musical aesthetics. Lee's essay praises a performance of 'Voi che sapete' by a 'strange solemn little Spanish singer'.¹¹⁷ She sings Cherubino's Act II aria not within its dramatic context in Mozart's *Figaro*, but in an impromptu concert, accompanied only by a piano. What strikes Lee in this performance is the singer's ability to completely efface from the music its dramatic content: she 'leav[es] out the page most completely and entirely'.¹¹⁸ Apparently uninterested in portraying the psychological interiority of Cherubino, this singer concerns herself only with the 'exquisite proportions' of Mozart's music. Her exclusive attention to the 'mere music of Mozart's air' allows her 'to make its beauty more real, more complete'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Lee, 'Prosaic Music', p. 151.

¹¹⁶ Edmund Gurney, 'The Psychology of Music', in *Tertium Quid: Chapters on Various Disputed Questions*, 2 vols (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, 1887), I, 251–302 (p. 272); Gurney, *The Power of Sound* (London: Smith, Elder, 1880), p. 119.

¹¹⁷ Lee, 'Cherubino', p. 152.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

By ignoring entirely the dramatic context of Cherubio's aria, Lee suggests, this singer succeeds in better communicating the purely formal beauty of Mozart's music. By divorcing Mozart's music from its dramatic context, Lee allows herself to enjoy an aria performed by a character she otherwise abhors: the Cherubino that Mozart inherits from Beaumarchais is, she argues, despite his apparent innocence, 'a professed lady-killer'.¹²⁰ The dramatic scenario in which he appears is marred by an 'indefinable sense of impropriety', 'a hidden audacity of corruption'.¹²¹ Cherubino himself is ultimately revealed as an 'impertinent, effeminate, fondled, cynical little jackanapes' — 'externally a splendid, brilliant, triumphant success, internally a miserable, broken, unmanned failure'.¹²² Indulging her propensity for Puritanical hyperbole, Lee concludes that this 'child initiated into life by cynicism', this 'youth educated to love by adultery' represents 'the most miserable type of demoralisation ever brought into literature'.¹²³ Given Symonds's powerful erotic identification with the character of Cherubino, it is perhaps unsurprising that he felt obliged to respond to Lee's essay with a defence of Mozart's opera that argues for its success on both musical *and* dramatic grounds. What is most striking in Lee's essay is the manner in which musical formalism is recruited as a strategy for cleansing Mozart's music of any associations with sexual desire. An aria about the stirrings of adolescent desire becomes, for Lee, an exercise in the expression of abstract musical form. Symonds's musical aesthetics allow him to find his queer desire affirmed in Mozart's music. Lee's aesthetics become a means through which the possibility of such desire might be denied.

Lee's formalism is part of a broader trend in European musical aesthetics, now most closely associated with Eduard Hanslick, whose *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*The Beautiful in Music*, 1854) argues that the essence of music lies in the autonomous and specifically musical manifestation of beauty.¹²⁴ Music's content inheres in its form and, in this respect, musical beauty should be considered non-representational. The goal of music, Hanslick argues, is not to arouse emotion,

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 137.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 137–38.

¹²⁴ Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, trans. by Gustav Cohen (London: Novello, 1891).

but to engage the imagination in the appreciation of abstract musical form. Hanslick does not deny that music can produce feelings, but these are merely a secondary product, not the essence of what constitutes musical beauty. An emotional response to music should be considered 'pathological', because such 'subjection to the natural power of tonal sensations' distracts from the contemplative delight to be found in the specific formal beauty of the work itself.¹²⁵

Lee's writings on musical aesthetics are structured around often rigid oppositional categories that favour the appreciation of 'musical form' over the evocation of 'musical emotion'. In the light of Lee's relentlessly self-scrutinising attitude towards the intellectual positions she assumed, it is in some respects surprising that her views on musical aesthetics changed very little over her long career. In 'Musical Expression and the Composers of the Eighteenth Century' (1877), Lee expounds those positions on music that come to define her attitude throughout her life. Firstly, a persistent preference for the music of the eighteenth century, such as Handel, Bach, Mozart, and Gluck, over that of the nineteenth-century Romantics (in particular, Wagner). Secondly, a Classicist defence of music that moves the listener through 'beautiful form', rather than by 'exciting passion'. Thirdly, a formalist commitment to aesthetic autonomy that defends the ideal of music as 'non-imitative'.¹²⁶ In similar terms, 'Hoffmann's Kreisler: The First of Musical Romanticists' (1878) presents a critique of those writers, such as E. T. A. Hoffmann, for whom music is understood as akin to a language of the emotions.¹²⁷ In 'Impersonality and Evolution in Music' (1882), Lee finds her own views vindicated by the conclusions drawn by Edmund Gurney in *The Power of Sound* (1880). Symonds's Hegelian view of music as 'the most romantic of all non-literary arts', whose 'interest is purely emotional', is revealed as a 'complete myth'. Rather, Lee argues, music should be understood as the art-form 'most exclusively interesting in form, most independent of non-artistic interests, most isolated from real life — in short, the very archetype of self-

¹²⁵ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, p. 124. See Bonds, *Absolute Music*, pp. 141–83.

¹²⁶ Vernon Lee, 'Musical Expression and the Composers of the Eighteenth Century', *New Quarterly Magazine*, 8 (1877), 186–202 (p. 187, p. 196).

¹²⁷ Vernon Lee, 'Hoffmann's Kreisler: The First of Musical Romanticists', *Fraser's Magazine*, 98 (1878), 767–77, repr. as 'Chapelmaster Kreisler', in *Belcaro*, pp. 106–128.

concentrated art, the very standard of a classic art'.¹²⁸ The fullest exposition of Lee's musical aesthetics is found in 'The Riddle of Music' (1906), which once again sets in contrast a preference for 'musical form' over 'musical expression'. 'Musical expression', Lee suggests, is personal and solipsistic; the source of its power lies in its associative awakening of memory, or its capability to elicit 'nervous excitability'; it draws one away from the music itself to a narcissistic dwelling on the self; its effect on the listener is 'enervating' and 'demoralising'. 'Musical form', in contrast, is 'essentially impersonal'; its appeals to a specific faculty in the listener that responds to 'purely aesthetic delight'; its appreciation is contingent not on the subjective emotions of the listener, but on the perception of the 'unchanging [...] form-quality of the composition'; it provokes a 'forgetfulness of self and interest in the not-self'; its effects 'a braced heightening of nervous tone' which 'disciplines, restrains and purifies'.¹²⁹

Lee's determined commitment to a rather severe musical formalism can best be understood as a response to her intense discomfort about the emotionalism of musical Romanticism. While other late-Victorian queer writers wilfully embrace music's apparent ability to evoke intense subjective emotion, Lee's writing is notable for the intense anxiety it expresses about music's capabilities to disclose aspects of the self. Lee's accounts of her experience of German Romantic music — in particular, that of Wagner — can be understood as recounting a form of embodied 'shameful listening', in which Lee is forced to painfully confront those queer aspects of her desiring self that she would rather repudiate. In her commitment to formalism, Lee not only indicates her aesthetic preference for pre-Romantic music, but also refuses the validity of forms of listening in which her shamed queer subjectivity is brought to the fore.

To talk of 'shameful listening' is to consider forms of musical experience in which the embodied self becomes confronted with an acute sense of its own self-exposure. While the philosopher of music Jerrold Levinson has identified those forms of shame and embarrassment that attach to musical performance, composition and appreciation, he fails to acknowledge the possibility of

¹²⁸ Vernon Lee, 'Impersonality and Evolution in Music', *Contemporary Review*, 42 (December 1882), 840–58 (pp. 841–42).

¹²⁹ Vernon Lee, 'The Riddle of Music', *Quarterly Review*, 204 (January 1906), 207–27 (p. 226).

experiencing shame in the act of *listening* to music.¹³⁰ Axiomatic in countless recent studies is the assumption of music as *the* privileged site in nineteenth-century culture for the exploration of sexual dissidence.¹³¹ Yet few scholars have considered what it would mean to discover disclosed in the music one hears a sexuality of which one is ashamed. To do so is not necessarily to argue that the music itself *expresses* shame, but rather that a feeling of shame arises from the listener's confrontation with their own core self in the act of listening. As Sara Ahmed has suggested, shame can be understood 'as an intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body'. Shame is felt on and through the body — the lowered eyes, the blush, the broken gaze — as an intense feeling of the subject 'being against itself'.¹³² For Charles Darwin in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), shame is experienced as an intense feeling of exposure and accompanied by a 'strong desire for concealment'. The shamed subject wishes to turn inwards on itself in its attempt to hide.¹³³ Amongst the most influential theorists of shame in recent decades has been the psychologist Silvan Tomkins.¹³⁴ For Tomkins, shame is pre-eminent as the only affect marked by 'the experience of the self by the self'.¹³⁵ Shame, he suggests, occurs as a result of the subject's interest in the other. Shame, in this sense, requires a witness. But even when alone or unobserved, the subject can be overcome with a sense of shame contingent on *imagining* that they are being watched. As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, recent work in queer theory has done much to draw attention to the constitutive experience of shame for queer subjects.

¹³⁰ Jerrold Levinson, 'Shame in General and Shame in Music', in *Musical Concerns: Essays in Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 88–98.

¹³¹ See for example Adrian Daub, *Tristan's Shadow: Sexuality and the Total Work of Art After Wagner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹³² Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 103–04.

¹³³ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1872), I, 321–22.

¹³⁴ See Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Lee's accounts of musical listening are marked by recurring motifs that play out on the surface of the listener's body: the revelation of that which was secret or hidden; the removal of layers to leave exposed something abject or disgusting; an intense sense of 'violation'; a heightened focus on the fleshly materiality of the self. In 'Beauty and Sanity' (1895), Lee attacks those forms of 'unwholesome aesthetic self-indulgence' that represent a 'constant quest for violent artistic emotion'.¹³⁶ In particular, she derides the 'languishing phrases and passionate intonations' of German musical romanticism. Such music, she suggests, provokes:

[V]iolations of our innermost secrets, revelations of the hidden possibilities of our own nature and the nature of others; stripping away all of the soul's veils; nay, so to speak, melting away of the soul's outward forms, melting away of the soul's active structure, its bone and muscle, till there is revealed only the shapeless primaeval nudity of confused instincts, the soul's vague viscera.¹³⁷

Here, music acts to expose those shameful, abject aspects of the self that should have remained undisturbed. The 'possibilities' music exposes are implicitly those that are most morally corrupting. In removing the stability of 'bone and muscle' it weakens moral resolve. Lee's text renders visible the 'viscera' — the internal organs — of the psyche. Those 'veils' which signify the sexual modesty of the self are cast aside. Lee's evocation of the 'stripping away [...] of the soul's veils' to reveal a 'primaeval nudity' purposefully invokes Salome's dance of the seven veils, a moment emblematic of Decadent sensual excess, rendered notorious both by Wilde's *Salome* (1891) and Des Esseintes's pre-occupation with the same scene in *A Rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884).¹³⁸

Recalling her experience of 'some wonderful singing of modern German songs', Lee attests to the 'remembrance of the sense of — how shall I call it? — violation

¹³⁶ Lee, 'Beauty and Sanity', *Fortnightly Review*, 64 (August 1895), 252–68 (p. 259), repr. in *Laurus Nobilis: Chapters on Art and Life* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909), pp. 115–60.

¹³⁷ Lee, 'Beauty and Sanity', pp. 260–61.

¹³⁸ See Oscar Wilde, 'Salome: Tragedy in One Act', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000–), v: *Plays I: The Duchess Of Padua; Salomé: Drame en Un Acte; Salome: Tragedy In One Act*, ed. by Joseph Donohue (2013), pp. 703–31; Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, ed. by Nicholas White, trans. by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 44–45.

of the privacy of the human soul which haunted me throughout that performance'.¹³⁹ Performances of such music, she notes, recalling Plato, make her think that 'Greek legislators were no so fantastic in considering music a questionable art, which they thought twice before admitting into their ideal commonwealth'.¹⁴⁰ Such is the corrupting insidiousness of this music's emotional power, that it threatens the moral health of society. In 'The Riddle of Music', Lee similarly derides the emotionalism of music that 'speaks to many of us the secrets of our very heart and life', 'secrets only the more precious that they *are* our own and told to us in the terms of our own desires and needs, with the imagery of our own joy and suffering'.¹⁴¹ In both instances, music acts to betray those most private aspects of the self, forcing one to confront the deepest and most embarrassing aspects of one's fears and desires.

In 'Signor Curiazio' (1887), Lee evokes the intense affective power of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1858) as 'sending streams of anguish through the bare nerves of our soul'.¹⁴² Once again, music acts to prompt a feeling of exposure, of the inner self rendered naked. In 'The Religious and Moral Status of Wagner' (1911), Lee complains that Wagner's music presents the 'inner motions of the soul [...] left visible like the chemistry of the organs of an animal whom the vivisector has paralysed with his drugs and turned inside out'.¹⁴³ Proceeding with the cruel, conscious sadism of a scientist that targets the most vulnerable, Wagner's music renders transparent to the listener the deepest recesses of their psyche. Wagner's art, she argues, is fundamentally solipsistic: to attend to one of his operas is to indulge in 'hours of uninterfered-with communing with one's own moods and feelings', in which listeners becomes deluded into believing that the music has 'told you the secrets you have really been telling yourself'.¹⁴⁴ The mirror that music holds up to the self in this act of self-indulgence prompts the

¹³⁹ Lee, 'Beauty and Sanity', p. 260.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Vernon Lee, 'The Riddle of Music', p. 216.

¹⁴² Vernon Lee, 'Signor Curiazio', in *Juvenilia*, I, 317–94.

¹⁴³ Vernon Lee, 'The Religious and Moral Status of Wagner', *Fortnightly Review*, 89 (May 1911), 868–85 (p. 873).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 882–84.

listener to confront those elements of the self that they might prefer to remain uncovered.

Lee's repeated recourse to imagery of exposed or wounded bodies signals the extent to which such shameful listening is an intense bodily experience. Admittedly, such examples are lacking the classic shameful 'tell' of the blush. Yet shame's affective force might mark itself on the body in other ways. The posture of the body as it listens to music might already be close to that which marks the shamed subject. To paraphrase Eve Sedgwick on the act of reading, it is not coincidental that 'the attitude of shame' — manifest in 'the lowering of the eyelids, the lowering of the eyes, the hanging of the head' — is also that of an introspective musical listener.¹⁴⁵ In Aubrey Beardsley's drawing *Les Revenants de Musique* (*The Ghosts of Music*, 1892), for example, a pallid young man in a state of nervous exhaustion stares blankly into the space before, his head bowed and eyes lowered to avoid the gaze of the spirits of music that surround him.¹⁴⁶ As both Simon Wilson and Emma Sutton have suggested, the drawing can be understood as a record of Beardsley's response to listening to Wagner's music.¹⁴⁷ More specifically, one might look to Lee's other works for instances where the embarrassment of an aesthetic encounter becomes vividly inscribed on the surface of the body: Lee's novel *Miss Brown* (1884) is a catalogue of its protagonist's 'blushing' and 'flushed' responses to art and literature that leave her 'giddy and sick' with a sense of 'shame'.¹⁴⁸

As Emma Sutton has noted, accounts that present the overwhelming eroticism and affective intensity of Wagner's music in pathological terms are far from unusual in *fin-de-siècle* literature.¹⁴⁹ However, what distinguishes Lee's writings is the sense of uncomfortable *self-revelation* that this music provokes. In Lee's writings, this music's revelations of desiring selfhood are experienced not as an

¹⁴⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Field: Reading Silvan Tomkins', in *Shame and its Sisters*, pp. 1–28 (p. 20).

¹⁴⁶ See Simon Wilson, *Beardsley*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Phaidon, 1983), plate I.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson, *Beardsley*, note to plate I; Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley*, pp. 61–62.

¹⁴⁸ Vernon Lee, *Miss Brown*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1884), III, 88.

¹⁴⁹ Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley*, pp. 57–87.

affirmation of queer subjectivity, but rather as presenting aspects of the self of which it is ashamed.

Edmund Gurney: Musical Formalism and the Closet

The musical aesthetics of Edmund Gurney — Lee's greatest influence — perform the repudiation of those 'shameful' queer desire associated with musical emotion through the mechanics of the closet. Gurney and Lee shared a mutual admiration for their respective work on music. In July 1881, Gurney commented to Mary Robinson, Lee's close companion throughout the 1880s, that 'he read all [Lee's] things with great interest & that [Lee] was the only writer on music whose career he watched with interest'.¹⁵⁰ Even in 1897, by which time Lee had immersed herself in a wide range of contemporary European aesthetic theory, she still referred to Gurney as the one 'whom I admire above all other writers on aesthetics'.¹⁵¹

For philosopher Jerrold Levinson, Gurney's *The Power of Sound* is 'doubtless the most important work of its kind in the latter half of the nineteenth century'.¹⁵² Here, Gurney argues that music's 'primary and essential function is to create beautiful objective forms', not to 'induce and support particular subjective moods'.¹⁵³ Gurney retains a Romantic commitment to the ineffable nature of musical emotion, whilst upholding the principle that music does more than simply express subjective emotion. The value of music lies not in its capability to represent other pre-existing emotional states but rather to 'stir up its own indescribable emotions' through its realisation of 'beautiful objective forms'.¹⁵⁴

Gurney's work emphasizes the emotional force of music — 'the perpetual production in us of emotional excitement of a very intense kind' — but insists that this arises not from the personal associations of the listener, but from the

¹⁵⁰ Vernon Lee, Letter to Matilda Paget, in *Selected Letters*, I, 320 (26–28 July 1881).

¹⁵¹ Vernon Lee, Letter to Mary Costelloe Berenson, in Amanda Gagel, 'Selected Letters of Vernon Lee (1856–1935)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 2008), p. 590 (4 November 1897).

¹⁵² Gurney, *The Power of Sound*; Jerrold Levinson, 'Edmund Gurney and the Experience of Music', in *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 1–12 (p. 1).

¹⁵³ Gurney, *The Power of Sound*, p. 119.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

perception of ‘beautiful objective forms’.¹⁵⁵ Gurney affords to music a striking, disclosive power: it can ‘stir up its own indescribable emotions’; it can ‘impress us with otherwise unknown things’; it can ‘convey [...] an impression [...] independent of any emotion now conceivable outside the musical sphere’; it promotes ‘pleasurable impressions that are otherwise unknown’.¹⁵⁶ Yet such emotion remains abstract, reflecting only the music itself, rather than working to ‘induce and support particular subjective moods’.¹⁵⁷ The ‘objective’ nature of musical emotion leads Gurney to present it in terms that repeatedly render it beyond that which can be otherwise articulated: it is ‘indescribable’, it expresses ‘unknown things’, it ‘cannot be defined’; it ‘def[ies] all attempts to analyse the experience or to define it’.¹⁵⁸ Gurney’s aesthetics are part of a tradition, as identified by Philip Brett and discussed in the introduction to this thesis, in which music’s ineffability performs the function of the closet. The ‘indefinable’ nature of musical emotion works as one of those ‘speech acts of silence’ which, as Sedgwick has suggested, constitute ‘closetedness’.¹⁵⁹

Gurney’s mode of thinking about music does not so much hide some sort of queer reality of the emotion expressed by music, as it does partake in a wider network of silences, elisions, and unspeakables through which the boundaries of sexual knowledge are negotiated in the fraught cultural moment of late-Victorian England. More broadly, the urge to defend intense musical emotion as ‘objective’ — associated with aesthetic disinterestedness — might be understood as a strategic response to discourses that increasingly pathologized musical emotion as subjective, effeminate and aligned with homosexuality. The queerness of Gurney’s musical aesthetics resides both in his own speculations about the connection between musical pleasure and sexual desire, and in the context of the complex negotiations of his own intense same-sex relationships.

In speculating on the origins of ‘melodic pleasure’, Gurney considers Darwin’s theory that music became ‘transfused with highly exciting emotional elements’

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 119 and p. 486.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 437–38 and pp. 118–19; Gurney, ‘The Psychology of Music’, p. 272.

¹⁵⁷ Gurney, *The Power of Sound*, pp. 484–86.

¹⁵⁸ Gurney, ‘The Psychology of Music’, p. 297.

¹⁵⁹ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 3.

due to its 'primeval use [...] under conditions of sexual excitement'.¹⁶⁰ The 'undefinable' nature of musical emotion is attributed by Gurney particularly to the fact that the passage of time has worked a 'gradual fusion and transfiguration' of the 'overmastering and pervading passions' that defined primitive music pleasure.¹⁶¹ Musical emotion, in this respect, is understood through the dynamics of the closet, its 'strongly emotional' force attributed to a sexual impulse that must remain controlled, hidden or suppressed. Gurney's text admits that the silence that attaches to speaking about musical emotion is accounted for by the fact that beyond the silence exists the paranoid secret of sexual possibility.

The imperative of Gurney's musical aesthetics to disavow the subjective and to 'transfigure' the sexual passion that lies at the root of musical pleasure might be understood as a function of Gurney's fraught negotiations of his own sexual desire. Following his untimely death, possibly by suicide, in 1888, Gurney was rumoured to be implicated in some form of homosexual scandal.¹⁶² On 24 April 1895, in the wake of the first Wilde trial, the social purity campaigner Josephine Butler wrote to her son Stanley, lamenting that 'the Oscar Wilde madness is spread like a plague thro' London fashionable & artistic society' and observing that 'London upper society is simply *rotten* with this vice'. The 'sensitive youth' Edmund Gurney, she notes mournfully, 'died by his own hand, in despair because of being so corrupted' by his close friend Frederic Myers.¹⁶³ As a number of scholars have noted, there are good reasons to doubt the veracity of Butler's rather melodramatic account.¹⁶⁴ However, there is nevertheless significant evidence of Gurney's close involvement in communities notable both for their intense homosociality and their interest in same-sex desire. As Bart Schultz's authoritative biography of Henry Sidgwick has suggested, Gurney's closest circle

¹⁶⁰ Gurney, 'The Psychology of Music', p. 296–97.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 296–97.

¹⁶² See, for example, H. Montgomery Hyde in *Yorkshire Post*, 12 November 1964; and *Punch*, 24 February 1965, both cited in Trevor H. Hall, *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney* (London: Duckworth, 1980), p. xv. Hall's speculations on the nature of Gurney's death have been the subject of much debate: see Gordon Epperson, *The Mind of Edmund Gurney* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), pp. 137–42.

¹⁶³ Josephine Butler, Letter to Stanley Butler (24 April 1895), 3JBL/34/20, Josephine Butler Letters Collection, London School of Economics, The Women's Library.

¹⁶⁴ See Trevor Hamilton, *Immortal Longings: F. W. H. Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009), pp. 23, 181 and 184.

of friends, all associated with the Society for Psychical Research, were men who were 'not simply prone to the standard passing phase of schoolboyish same-sex behaviour', but 'devoted to a life of Uranian activity and philosophizing'.¹⁶⁵ H. G. Cocks has similarly begun to explore the significance of queer sexual desire in the work of the Society for Psychical Research. The experiments in hypnosis that Gurney and his friend Frank Podmore carried out on working-class telegraph boys in Brighton Hotels, Cocks notes, seem surprising in the light of such boys' notorious willingness to accept payment for sexual favours.¹⁶⁶ The men's activities are placed in a more suspicious light by the fact that some years after Gurney's death, in 1907, Podmore was forced to resign his job with the Post Office without pension, following allegations relating to his homosexual activities.¹⁶⁷ Another of Gurney's closest friends, the Liberal politician Cyril Flower, Lord Battersea, narrowly escaped the disgrace of such homosexual scandal: George Cecil Ives, who in 1897 founded the secret homosexual society, the Order of Chaeronea, noted in his diary of 1902 that it was only through the intercession of King Edward VII that a court case involving Battersea's homosexual activities was avoided.¹⁶⁸

Josephine Butler was not the only contemporary observer to raise concerns about the nature of Gurney's relationship with Frederic Myers. In 1888, Alice James wrote to her brother William with her recollections about the strained nature of Gurney's marriage to Kate Sibley.¹⁶⁹ Alice suggests that Gurney was persuaded to marry by Myers, motivated not by any genuine romantic affection towards his prospective wife, but rather by an idealistic humanitarian urge to provide 'a woman much beneath him' with a 'rise in life & larger opportunities'. Gurney, Alice reports, wrote to his friends to tell them that he 'wasn't in the least happy' at the prospect of the marriage, but defended his decision, noting that

¹⁶⁵ Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick*, p. 410.

¹⁶⁶ H. G. Cocks, 'Religion and Spirituality', in *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, ed. by H. G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 157–179 (pp. 173–74).

¹⁶⁷ Alan Gauld, 'Frank Podmore (1856–1910)', *DNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35552>> [accessed 25 July 2017].

¹⁶⁸ George Cecil Ives, 'Diary', XLII, 5 November 1902, p.23, cited in Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, p. 69

¹⁶⁹ Alice James, Letter to William James, in *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yazell (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 146–47 (21 August 1888).

'happiness wasn't in the least in his line, so that didn't matter'. Alice's letter recounts a particularly odd episode, in which Frederic Myers joined Gurney and his wife on their honeymoon in Switzerland:

When Mr. G. wanted some pruning done he got Mr. M. to do it. Apart from the cruelty, can you imagine anything so ludicrous? — She poor soul, as she said, had given her all & got a stone in return! His snubbing of her in public was proverbial.

Presumably the 'pruning' here refers to the grooming of Gurney's hair or moustache, though quite why Myers's involvement should seem so 'ludicrous' or 'cruel' to James is harder to discern. It may be the case that in 'pruning' Gurney, Myers performs a task that in its domesticity — and intimacy— is ordinarily performed by one's wife, not one's close male friend. Myers renders himself effeminate in a way that casts him as 'ludicrous', but in doing so he marginalizes Kate's role within the marriage in a manner that reflects Gurney's 'cruelty'. It is particularly telling that Alice proceeds to contrast Gurney's closeness with Myers with his apparent 'stone'-like disregard for Kate. Her letter concludes that Gurney was '*distinguished* for his fidelity & devotion to his friends & was high-minded in all ways, but not meant by nature for a husband.' There are, of course, many reasons why a man may be unsuited for marriage, and many reasons too to doubt the recollections of the famously gossipy Alice James. It is unlikely that evidence will emerge to clarify how Gurney understood the nature or objects of his sexual desire, or how he negotiated the troubled boundaries that distinguish intense masculine friendship from suspect 'homosexual' desire. Gurney's only modern biographer, Gordon Epperson, notes that his surviving writings are 'extraordinarily reticent concerning personal matters', observing that he 'maintained an almost total silence regarding his personal life'.¹⁷⁰ Yet Epperson is surely incorrect to assert that Gurney's 'highly developed ethical sense' necessarily precludes the possibility that he 'might have cultivated a taste for sensual indulgences'.¹⁷¹ Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1889) surely attest to the

¹⁷⁰ Epperson, *The Mind of Edmund Gurney*, p. 13.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

contradictions of those late-Victorian gentlemen who maintain a front of perfect respectability whilst simultaneously pursuing covert sexual liaisons.¹⁷²

Gurney's closeted formalism represents, at its most extreme, a disavowal of the embodied materiality of musical experiences. As this chapter has suggested, in late nineteenth-century scientific and aesthetic discourses those musical experiences that are understood to engage the 'nervous' and emotionally responsive body become associated with both effeminacy and pathologized homosexuality. Debates in musical aesthetics between writers such as John Addington Symonds and Vernon Lee can profitably be read in this light as negotiating opposing attitudes not only to the nature of musical beauty, but also to the place of queer sexual desire in musical response, and to the capability of music to articulate new desiring subjectivities. Renewed attention to the representations of the body in accounts of musical experience also allows for the emergence of new perspectives on less affirmative modes of listening, such as those that provoke in queer subjects a sense of exposed shamefulness. In the chapter that follows, music's agency over the materiality of the body similarly sees it recruited by texts that challenge music's affirmation of homosexual subjectivity. Music is aligned with a startlingly anti-humanist impetus to refuse foundational accounts of identity, embracing instead a queerly masochistic pleasure in bodily self-abandonment and self-destruction.

¹⁷² *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Russell Jackson and Ian Small, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), III: *The Picture of Dorian Gray: The 1890 and 1891 Texts*, ed. by Joseph Bristow; Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

CHAPTER 2: Music, Masochism and the Queer Body

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it.

Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione'¹

In Walter Pater's famous dictum, music's '*aspiration*' sees it acquire the ideal of breath-like immateriality. In its search for music's 'condition' of complete aesthetic autonomy, art must become breath — continually exhaled from the material body to be dissolved into the incorporeal. Yet this dissolution of form into content is characterized not solely by the delicately ethereal departure of air from the lungs but also by a more forceful urge to 'obliterate' such a distinction. In this respect, Pater's conception of music speaks powerfully to articulations of 'anti-social' queer subjectivity that emphasize the possibilities of the dispersed and de-centred self, embracing a masochistic impulse to resist and refuse those identities inscribed on the body. For queer subjects, music's associations with self-abandonment see it become an important tool for strategic refusal of the discursive processes through which they are marginalized. By reading the works of Walter Pater, Vernon Lee and Arthur Symonds alongside each other, it becomes possible to articulate within English aestheticism the significance of music and the body in masochistic articulations of queer subjectivity.

While critics have typically aligned Pater's interest in music with a defence of liberal individualism, such approaches have failed to account for the complex multiplicity of music's associations in his texts. The discussion that follows suggests that masochism in Pater's texts can be understood as a form of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called 'queer performativity'. An examination of Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' 'Denys L'Auxerrois' (1886) reveals the manner in which Pater moves between the denial of and embrace of wilfully self-destructive masochistic violence. Significantly, Pater turns to the figure of Dionysus as an

¹ Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 124, hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically as *SHR*.

emblem of music's masochistic potential, while in *Plato and Platonism* (1893), music is associated with an ascetic form of self-abandonment. Vernon Lee's short story 'Marsyas in Flanders' (1900) is more directly concerned with the manner in which modes of power act to inscribe identity on the body. Lee's text strategically embraces the figure of Marsyas — an emblem of musical masochism — as a means of resisting the categorisation of the queer body by *fin-de-siècle* sexology. When read in productive tension with Lee's writings on 'psychological aesthetics', in which the body emerges as the central site of aesthetic response, 'Marsyas in Flanders' can be understood as articulating music's resistance to the imposition of identity on the body. By drawing attention to the refusal of 'lesbian' identity performed in Lee's text, it becomes possible to articulate a more nuanced view of her commitment to the politics of queer community formation. The final section of this chapter examines Arthur Symons's 'Christian Trevalga' (1902), in which music becomes associated with a masochistic desire to become inhuman — to abandon the materiality of the body, and embrace instead a dispersed subjectivity defined by disembodiment. Symons's essays on music and musical performance present the aesthetic autonomy of absolute music in a manner that articulates a form of dispersed subjectivity that can profitably be read in the light of contemporary queer theory. At the same time, his texts are notable for their negotiations of *fin-de-siècle* associations between music and homosexuality. In Symons's work, music's masochistic refusal of the body represents a strategy for effacing its association with sexual deviance.

The works of Pater, Lee and Symons form a mutually illuminating triumvirate. Pater's influence on Vernon Lee and Arthur Symons has been explored by a number of critics.² The young Symons held a similar enthusiasm for Vernon Lee's works. In a letter to his friend J. Dykes Campbell in October 1886, Symons enthused that he 'admire[d] her vastly', admitting that when he wrote the introduction for the 'Shakespeare Quarto Facsimile' edition of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in 1885 he 'imitated her style so conscientiously' that the

² See for example, Laurel Brake, 'Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle', in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham, pp. 40–57; Edwin F. Block, 'Walter Pater, Arthur Symons, W. B. Yeats and the Fortunes of the Literary Portrait', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 26.4 (1986), 759–76.

distinguished Browning scholar Frederick J. Furnivall could have sworn the piece was written by Lee herself.³ As Nicholas Freeman has suggested, ‘Christian Trevalga’ — and the other fictional studies collected in *Spiritual Adventures* (1905) — can be understood as Symons’s response to Walter Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits*.⁴ As an example of ‘gods in exile’ literature, Lee’s ‘Marsyas in Flanders’ might similarly be understood as responding to Pater’s mythologizing of music in ‘Denys L’Auxerrois’ and ‘Apollo in Picardy’.

Music and Masochism: Nietzsche, Freud, Bersani

The queerness of the association between music, violence and self-abandonment in English aestheticism can be understood both in the light of Leo Bersani’s psychoanalytic theory of masochism and through Nietzsche’s articulation of music’s Dionysian violence. More broadly, in recent years, critical musicology has increasingly considered the connections between music and forms of social and psychic violence.⁵ In focussing on the associations between masochism and music, this discussion follows recent work by John Hamilton exploring depictions of ‘torture as an instrument of music’, and Robert Scholl, who examines examples of the ‘traumatic pleasure’ of masochistic listening practices in the early twentieth century.⁶

Leo Bersani’s influential conception of masochism is developed from Freud’s essays on this topic — ‘Triebe und Tribschicksale’ (‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes’, 1915) and ‘Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus’ (‘The Economic Problem of Masochism’, 1924). In ‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes’, Freud posits a division between the ‘self-preservation (or ego) instinct’ and the ‘sexual instinct’ in an attempt to theorize the relationship between painful and pleasurable sensations. One such ‘vicissitude’ of the sexual instinct is ‘sadism

³ Arthur Symons, Letter to J. Dykes Campbell, 4 October 1886, cited in *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters, 1880–1935*, ed. by Karl Beckson and John M. Munro (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 74–76, hereafter *Symons: Selected Letters*.

⁴ Nicholas Freeman, ‘Introduction’, in *Spiritual Adventures* by Arthur Symons (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017), pp. 1–25.

⁵ Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1, italics added.

⁶ John T. Hamilton, ‘Torture as an Instrument of Music’, in *Thresholds of Listening: Sound, Technics, Space*, ed. by Sander van Maas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), pp. 143–52; Robert Scholl, ‘Stop It, I Like It! Embodiment, Masochism, and Listening for Traumatic Pleasure’, in *Thresholds of Listening*, pp. 153–74.

turned round upon the subject's own ego'.⁷ From this, Freud develops the idea that the pleasure of the sadistic act arises from a sense of masochism directed towards the subject:

[O]nce the suffering of pain has been experienced as a masochistic aim, it can be carried back into the sadistic situation and result in a sadistic aim of inflicting pain, which will then be *masochistically enjoyed* by the subject while inflicting pain upon others, through his *identification of himself* with the suffering other.⁸

The enjoyment of pain is indelibly bound up with sexual excitement, and the primary aim of such enjoyment — even when achieved through the spectacle of another's pain — is masochistic. Freud returns to this issue in 'The Economic Problem of Masochism' (1924).⁹ The titular 'problem' is the challenge presented to the idea of the pleasure principle by 'pain and unpleasure [as] *actual aims*'. Once again Freud dwells on the manner in which the 'instinct of destruction' inherent in sadism can be 'introjected' and 'turned inwards'.¹⁰ 'Even the subject's destruction of himself', Freud concludes, 'cannot take place without libidinal satisfaction'.¹¹ Such a connection between self-destruction and sexual pleasure is key to Bersani's reading of Freud. Bersani proposes that Freud:

may be moving towards the position that the pleasurable excitement of sexuality occurs when the body's normal range of sensation is exceeded and when the self is momentarily disturbed (deranged) by sensations somehow 'beyond' those compatible with psychic organization.¹²

That Freud never quite reached this position can be explained by his dualistic opposition of the pleasure principle and the death drive. For Bersani, it is clear

⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), XIV (1957), 109–40 (p. 137).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), XIX (1961), 159–70.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 169.

¹² Leo Bersani, *Baudelaire and Freud* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 77.

that desire and death are not opposed but, in fact, inseparable.¹³ In *The Freudian Body* (1986), Bersani develops from this a theory of the aesthetic: art exists in order to ‘make visible’ our masochistic desires for ‘a shattering (or psychically traumatizing) pleasure’.¹⁴ Narratives of violence are inescapably bound up with the libidinal pleasure of masochism — the ‘self-shattering pleasure’ that Bersani identifies in, for example, the Marquis de Sade’s *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (*120 Days of Sodom*, 1785).¹⁵ As set out in the introduction to this thesis, Bersani’s subsequent work, which forms the basis of the so-called ‘anti-social turn’ in queer studies, has suggested that masochism is the defining feature of the sexual experience. In ‘Is the Rectum a Grave?’, Bersani reads Freud’s ‘Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie’ (‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’, 1905) as a ‘reluctant speculation that sexual pleasure occurs whenever a certain threshold of intensity is reached, when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed by sensations or affective processes that go “beyond” those connected with psychic processes’.¹⁶ In his most recent work Leo Bersani has turned to explore forms of masochism defined by ‘the *ascesis* of an ego-divesting discipline’.¹⁷ In the discussion that follows, the masochism of music takes the form of both violent Dionysian self-destruction and an *ascetic* self-denial in which music speaks of a self that might abandon the materiality of the body.

The central role that Bersani ascribes both to the experience of the aesthetic and to the sexual act in the masochistic pleasure of psychic ‘self-shattering’ finds close parallels in Nietzsche’s articulation of the Dionysian violence of music. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian aesthetic experience does not deliver one from suffering, but rather subsumes one within ‘eternal, primal pain, the only ground for the world’.¹⁸ The Dionysian aesthetic embraces the *brutality* of the Schopenhauerian Will, celebrating the ecstasy of pain and destruction. The Apollonian surface of a unified, stable self (what Schopenhauer and Nietzsche call

¹³ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁴ Bersani, *The Freudian Body*, p. 111.

¹⁵ Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, trans. by Will McMorran and Thomas Wynn (London: Penguin, 2016).

¹⁶ See Bersani, ‘Is the Rectum a Grave?’, p. 217.

¹⁷ Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), p. 35.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. by Raymond Guess and Ronald Speirs, trans. by Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 26.

the ‘*principium individuationis*’) is obliterated, prompting ‘subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting’ and ‘all memories of personal experience [to] dissolve’.¹⁹ This ‘breaking-asunder of the individual’ is a fundamental aspect of aesthetic experience because ‘the only subjective artist we know is the bad artist and the prime demand we make of every kind and every level of art is the conquest of subjectivity, release and redemption from the “I”, and the falling-silent of all individual willing and desiring’. The true Dionysian artist — always for Nietzsche a musician in some form — has become ‘entirely at one with the primordial unity, with its pain and contradiction’. Nietzsche describes music as ‘a copy of this primordial unity’; it is ‘the image-less and concept-less original pain’. The creation of the Dionysian artist-composer is ‘a dream scene which gives sensuous expression to the primal contradiction and pain, along with its primal lust for pleasure and semblance’. Liberated from the requirements of the sculptor or the poet to deal in the ‘pure contemplation of images’, the Dionysian musician ‘is nothing but primal pain and the primal echo of it’. Nietzsche’s works make explicit the connection between aesthetic experience, sexual desire and masochistic self-disintegration. In their savage rituals, the Dionysian Barbarians reveal the manner in which ‘nature achieves expression as art’ by way of their ‘repulsive mixture of sexuality and cruelty’.²⁰ The fragments of Nietzsche’s final thoughts, published in *Der Wille zur Macht* (*The Will to Power*, 1910) make this sadomasochistic element of aesthetic response yet more explicit: the Dionysian is defined as ‘sexuality and cruelty’; it allows one to revel in ‘the most excruciating suffering’; it allows access to ‘states in which pain is willed, is transfigured, is deified’.²¹

Walter Pater, Music and Violence

Pater’s subjects — so peculiarly attendant to the force of aesthetic beauty — frequently find their material bodies the site of such Dionysian masochistic violence. ‘We might read all of Pater’s writings’, Heather Love has suggested, ‘as

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17, p. 40.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 29, p. 30, p. 20.

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollindale (New York: Vintage, 1968), pp. 415, 421 and 291.

dedicated to the figure of the victim.’²² Since the critical turn towards ‘queer Pater’ in the 1990s, Pater’s victims have typically been identified as homosexual (or proto-homosexual) martyrs.²³ Jacques Khalip argues that the figure of the beautiful youth in Pater’s work inevitably becomes ‘the victim of a genocidal impulse that visits [...] both him and the entire sexual minority that he represents’.²⁴ For Richard Dellamora and Linda Dowling, works such as ‘Denys L’Auxerrois’ and ‘Apollo in Picardy’ are allegories of homophobic persecution, in which Pater protests against the oppressive strictures placed on same-sex desire by Victorian society.²⁵ Recent work on Pater and music is similarly motivated by a desire to affirm Pater’s evidently queer-friendly defence of individualism. Placing Pater’s writings on music in the context of late-Victorian liberalism, David Deutsch argues that Pater ‘uses music as an ennobling subject [...] to encourage an enlightened, liberal, and more tolerant society’. ‘Denys L’Auxerrois’, he argues, ‘fictionalizes the liberating influence of music on society’, while ‘Apollo in Picardy’ reflects ‘individual struggles to live according to Hellenic musical principles’. *Plato and Platonism*, he suggests, ‘promotes the moral, intellectual, and even sexually subversive benefits of a Platonic musical education’. Yet in insistently positing music as a force that facilitates a ‘more liberal morality’, Deutsch overlooks those aspects of Pater’s texts in which music refuses to affirm the certainties of the liberal subject. Music, for Pater, promotes not simply a conventionally liberal individualism, but also a Dionysian brutality, masochistic self-abandonment, and a severe Platonic *ascesis* associated with self-denial and chastisement.²⁶

²² Heather Love, ‘Forced Exile: Walter Pater’s Queer Modernism’, in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. by Rebecca L. Walkowitz and Douglas Mao (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 19–43 (p. 26).

²³ The term ‘martyr’ is apposite: in ‘Diaphanéité’ (*SHR*, pp. 136–40), Pater’s ‘basement type’ is characterized as consisting of those whom ‘humanity might choose’ as ‘some human victim [to] be sent down into the grave’ (*SHR*, p. 139). For readings of ‘Diaphanéité’ that see in it a coded expression of homosexual identity, see Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, pp. 58–68; Michael F. Davis, ‘Walter Pater’s “Latent Intelligence” and the Conception of Queer “Theory”’, in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. by Lesley Higgins, Laurel Brake and Carolyn Williams (Greenboro, CA: ELT Press, 2010), pp. 261–85.

²⁴ Jacques Khalip, ‘Pater’s Body of Work’, in *Walter Pater*, ed. by Higgins, Brake and Williams, pp. 236–49 (p. 248).

²⁵ Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, pp. 167–92; Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, pp. 138–40.

²⁶ Deutsch, *British Literature and Classical Music*, pp. 42 and 44–45.

Such critics have done little to account for the simultaneity of Pater's condemnation of violence and his recurrent depictions of extreme bodily pain. In Pater's works, the function of the aesthetic — and, in particular, music — oscillates between the assertive affirmation of individuality and the forceful obliteration of it. Such abandonment of the individual psyche manifests itself in masochistic gestures that take two different forms: a self-shattering *jouissance* in which such psychic violence is written on the surface of the torn body, and in an ascetic self-abandonment in which the subject is entirely negated by its self-willed disciplinary effacement. Pater's movement between these positions represents a form of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called 'queer performativity'. Sedgwick's posits 'queer performativity', in her reading of Henry James's 'The Art of the Novel' (1909), as 'the name of a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and the related fact of stigma'.²⁷ Sedgwick's concept is a useful one for accounting for the manner which marginalized subjects construct their sense of self through the complex discursive negotiation of social taboos and sexual transgressions. Heather Love has convincingly used Sedgwick's formulation to argue for the 'queerly performative' nature of Pater's 'indecisive, shrinking and transparent' characters.²⁸ She observes in Pater's work 'a combination of reticence and virtuosic stylistic performance'; a dual movement of 'solicitation and self-effacement'; 'a gesture of approach followed by blushing withdrawal'.²⁹ Love's praise for Pater's political passivity, refusal of domination and stylistic diffidence is a nuanced response to those earlier critics determined to read Pater's texts as presenting an encoded defence of homosexual desire.³⁰ Pater's obscure style does not purposefully disguise the 'truth' of his homosexual desire; rather, he *performs* his homosexual desire through his stylistic obscurantism. Shame — aligned with blushing withdrawal, shyness, lowered eyes — is paradoxically writ

²⁷ See Sedgwick, 'Queer Performativity', in *Touching Feeling*, p. 61.

²⁸ Love, 'Forced Exile', p. 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27, p. 28.

³⁰ See Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*; Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*; Thais E. Morgan, 'Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Culture: Swinburne and Pater', in *Sexualities in Victorian Britain*, ed. by James Eli Adams and Andrew H. Miller (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 140–56. For an astute analysis of Pater's 'muted' desire, see Kate Hext, *Walter Pater: Individualism and Aesthetic Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 116–18.

large in this quiet, shrinking, awkward style. Sedgwick's concept of 'queer performativity' illuminates the manner in which Pater's texts present his marginalized queer identity through their movement between self-affirmation and masochistic self-destruction.

An approach that presents Pater's wounded youths simply as the victims of homophobic oppression overlooks the apparent masochistic pleasure inherent in the spectacle of Pater's violence, by failing to acknowledge his characters' willing desire for joyful self-destruction. At the heart of Pater's works lies a tension between beauty and violence. On the one hand, Pater defends a Platonic system in which observation — *enthusiastic* adoration — of the beautiful male body becomes a means by which one gains access to eternal beauty, to spiritual truth. On the other, he displays a sense of masochistic pleasure in wounded and disfigured flesh, revelling in the sensuous abandon of bodies torn limb from limb. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* insists throughout on the elevating capacity of dwelling upon the spectacle of the beautiful body. In his account of the thirteenth-century courtly love romance, 'Aucassin and Nicolette', Pater recounts how the 'mere sight' of Nicolette's 'white flesh [...] healed a pilgrim stricken with sore disease' (*SHR* 12). It is through the Neo-Platonism of Pico della Mirandola that Pater turns to the example of Diotima's 'ladder of love': 'the grades or steps which the soul passes from the love of a physical object to the love of unseen beauty' (*SHR* 27). In 'The Poetry of Michelangelo', Pater recounts that the masters of the Florentine fifteenth century were 'saved' from the 'morbid and grotesque' of Northern European art by their refusal to look upon the decay of the human corpse: they 'paused just in time, and abstained with a sentiment of profound pity' (*SHR* 53). There is no place in this Platonic system for the spectacle of pain. The wounded, dismembered, perverse body allows for no ascent to spiritual truth. Yet Pater's texts return repeatedly to such a spectacle. In 'Hippolytus Veiled' (1889), the titular character is 'entangled in the trappings of [his] chariot', dragged over 'murderous stones'; his mother '*count[s] the wounds, the disfigurements, telling over the pains*, which had shot through that dear

head'.³¹ One way to make sense of Pater's demand that — like Hippolytus's mother — his readers 'count the wounds' is through a psychoanalytic framework of masochism.

A number of critics have touched upon the masochistic elements in Pater's writings and aesthetics.³² If, as Bersani has argued, masochism is central to aesthetic experience, the infamous summation of Pater's manifesto for the aesthetic life might be read as a masochistic image of exalted pain: 'To *burn always* with this *hard* gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life' (*SHR* 120, italics added). A perpetual flame that blazes forever but does not consume. The image is, apparently, taken from an article by John Tyndell in the *Fortnightly Review* of February 1866: 'On the Relations of Radiant Heat to Chemical Constitution, Colour, Texture' (see *SHR* 178). But it is as evocative of the corporeal tortures of Dante's *Inferno* as of the experiments of the Victorian laboratory. Sensuous experience in the 'Conclusion' is repeatedly presented in terms that gesture towards the medieval torture chamber: 'experience seems to *bury us under a flood* of external objects, *pressing upon us* with a *sharp* importunate reality' (*SHR* 118, italics added). The observer is buried alive, drowned, held down, pierced. This is sensation acting not just on the 'narrow chamber of the individual mind', but also on the 'delicate fibres [of the] human body' (*SHR* 118). In 'Diaphaneité' (1864), Pater celebrates the 'diaphanous' aesthetic type whose 'moral nature[s] refine themselves to the *burning point*' (*SHR* 136, italics added). 'Within its severe limits,' Pater tells us of Winckelmann's aesthetic zeal, 'his enthusiasm *burns like lava*' (*W* 84, italics added). In *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* alone, for example, we find the masochistic cognates of: 'flicker', 'pulse', 'throb', 'beat', 'sharp', 'cut', and 'press'. As Freud, Bersani and Sedgwick would no doubt note, it is no coincidence that many of these descriptors of pain are also suggestive of sexual excitement. The aesthetic pleasure felt so intensely on the material body of Pater's embodied subjects

³¹ Walter Pater, 'Hippolytus Veiled: A Study from Euripides', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 60 (August 1889), pp. 294–306 (p. 306), italics added.

³² Linda Dowling understates the case when she identifies a 'delicate sadism [...] that runs through Pater's *oeuvre*,' in 'Nero and the Aesthetics of Torture', *The Victorian Newsletter*, 66 (1984), 1–5 (p. 4); Carolyn Williams speaks of 'masochistic sexuality' as a 'recurrent strain' in Pater's 'romanticism' in *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 255.

hovers on the precipice at the limits of pain, shrinking from the possibility of a masochism too openly acknowledged — but teasingly hinting at it nevertheless.

Pater's Musical Conditions

Before proceeding to look specifically at Pater's musical masochism, it is useful to inquire into his engagement with Victorian musical culture more generally. Music, it seems, was not one of Pater's great passions. Symonds's letters return repeatedly to his rapt experiences of musical performance; Vernon Lee retained a life-long fascination with the dynamics of musical listening; Wilde's Dandies are often found at the piano or in a box at the opera. Pater's works and letters, in comparison, suggest scant musical enthusiasms. Aside from isolated references to Bach, Mozart and Wagner, his works never admit sustained engagement with the composers or performers of the Victorian musical scene; he never explicitly indicates a preference for one style of music over another. His infamous declaration in 'The School of Giorgione' (1877) that '*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*' has prompted the speculations of a multitude of philosophical source-hunters. Yet it remains entirely unclear what *style* of (absolute) music Pater had in mind. 'Of music itself', Patricia Herzog wryly notes, 'Pater tells us nothing.'³³ One might be inclined to agree with Angela Leighton, for whom Pater's *dictum* is perhaps knowingly playful: 'It is provoking, memorable, possibly nonsense, but Walter Pater is good at memorable nonsense.'³⁴

David Deutsch's work provides a convincing overview of musical culture in Pater's nineteenth-century Oxford.³⁵ Yet while brief anecdotes from F. W. Bussell, Pater's colleague at Brasenose, and Vernon Lee point to Pater's interest in the religious music performed in Oxford's chapels and Cathedral, there is little documentary evidence to suggest that Pater was engaged with music in Oxford more broadly.³⁶ Pater's extant letters give no indication that he regularly attended concerts or the opera. Following his death in 1894, biographies by

³³ Patricia Herzog, 'The Condition to Which All Art Aspires: Reflections on Pater on Music', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36 (1996), 122–34 (p. 122).

³⁴ Angela Leighton, 'Pater's Music', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 14 (2005), 67–79 (p. 67).

³⁵ Deutsch, *British Literature and Classical Music*, pp. 17–54. See also Susan Wollenberg, *Music at Oxford in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁶ See Deutsch, *British Literature and Classical Music*, pp. 32–33.

Ferris Greenslet (1903), A. C. Benson (1906) or Thomas Wright (1907) similarly fail to suggest any great interest in music. Wright presents a twenty-year-old Pater who was sufficiently lacking in musical knowledge to require another student to explain to him the significance of Browning's 'musical poems' in *Men and Women* (1855): 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha' and 'A Toccata of Galuppi's'. Wright suggests that Pater's ignorance about music — or, at least, music as presented in Browning's poetry — continued into maturity: in Pater's review of Arthur Symonds's *An Introduction to the Study of Browning* (1886) he 'contents himself with [a] very safe remark' on Browning's treatment of music. 'The poems on music', Wright concludes, 'always remained much of an enigma to Pater.'³⁷ Neither Benson nor Greenslet dwell on Pater's musical experiences. Benson attempts to counteract the frequent accusation that Pater became dour and humourless as he grew older with an anecdote about Pater's 'whole-hearted and childlike enjoyment' of a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* (1887).³⁸ Greenslet discusses at some length the aesthetic implications of comments on music in 'The School of Giorgione', but never suggests any broader interest in musical performance.³⁹

Pater's engagement with musical culture, like many of his formative experiences, seems more likely to have taken place vicariously through his reading. A distinction can be drawn between his interest in musical aesthetics and his interest in Victorian musical culture more generally. Pater's engagement with the aesthetics of music has been well documented. He was well-versed in Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1794) and Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*.⁴⁰ When writing to Vernon Lee on her aesthetic studies in *Belcaro*, he particularly praised the 'sound and wholesome truth' of her essay on musical aesthetics, 'Chapelmaster Kreisler: A Study of Musical Romanticists' — perhaps because, in privileging musical form over emotional 'content', it broadly matched his own thoughts in 'The School of

³⁷ Thomas Wright, *The Life of Walter Pater* (London: Everett, 1907), p. 172. For Pater's review of Symonds's *An Introduction to the Study of Browning*, see *Essays from 'The Guardian'* (London: Macmillan, 1901), pp. 39–50.

³⁸ A. C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 189.

³⁹ Ferris Greenslet, *Walter Pater* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1903), pp. 46–49.

⁴⁰ See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Hegel, *Aesthetics*.

Giorgione'.⁴¹ Perhaps surprisingly, there is no record of him having read other later influential works on 'formalist' musical aesthetics such as Eduard Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, or Edmund Gurney's *The Power of Sound*.

There is less evidence to suggest wide reading on Victorian musical culture more generally. Pater knew George Grove — who published the first volume of his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1879 — through Grove's work as an editor at Macmillan. In December 1878, he wrote to Grove that he heard 'in conversation among some musical people' about Grove's work on the dictionary, prompting him to 'put his article on Beethoven down among things to read'.⁴² As is noted in Billie Andrew Inman's study of Pater's reading and library borrowings, Pater withdrew all four volumes of Grove's *Dictionary* from Oxford's Bodleian Library on two occasions, in March 1884 and October 1886.⁴³ Yet Inman identifies no other books in Pater's borrowings or personal collection that deal specifically with music. To seek details of Pater's own musical enthusiasms is, then, to be frustrated by an archival silence. What this silence invites is a manner of reading music in Pater's works that turns not to the immediate contexts of his Victorian musical culture, but attends more closely to the paradoxes and strangeness of his literary texts.

'Denys L'Auxerrois'

Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' 'Denys L'Auxerrois' enacts at a narrative level the queerly performative oscillation between beauty and violence that characterizes Pater's masochism.⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly for a text that stages the reincarnation of Dionysus, it is also notable for its alignment of music with a joyfully masochistic self-shattering. At the opening of Pater's text, the narrator introduces his story in terms that disguise the text's fixation with violence, yet as it proceeds the text gradually reveals the narrator's masochistic intent.

⁴¹ Walter Pater, Letter to Vernon Lee, in *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. by Lawrence Evans (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 35 (26 March 1882).

⁴² Walter Pater, Letter to George Grove, in *Letters*, p. 35 (4 December 1878).

⁴³ Billie Andrew Inman, *Walter Pater and His Reading, 1874–1877: With a Bibliography of His Library Borrowings 1878–1894* (New York: Garland, 1990), p. 459.

⁴⁴ Walter Pater, 'Denys L'Auxerrois', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 54 (October 1886), 413–23, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *DA*.

'Denys' recounts the apparent return of 'a denizen of old Greece' (DA 413) — Dionysus — to the French town of Auxerre in the Middle Ages. Pater's story is narrated by a modern-day visitor to Auxerre who discovers the fragment of a stained-glass window depicting the eponymous character and then proceeds to 'piece together' his story. 'Denys' reflects Pater's conception of the deity as presented in 'A Study of Dionysus' (1876): a 'twofold [...] *Döppelgänger* [sic]', who encompasses in his character both joy, fertility and excess, and melancholy, destruction and violence (ASD 768).⁴⁵ As in a number of *fin-de-siècle* stories — Arthur Machen's 'The Great God Pan' (1890), for instance — an anarchic force of erotic desire is unleashed by the excavation of a buried artefact: Denys's return is preceded by the discovery of a 'finely-sculptured Greek coffin of stone', his spirit distilled in 'a flask of lively green glass' found therein (DA 416). Denys first manifests himself at a solemn ecclesiastical ceremony, which, through his youthful exuberance, he transforms into a delightful game. Child-like and playful, he awakens in the town's inhabitants a sense of Schillerian 'aesthetic free play', reconciling the opposed imperatives of reason and feeling.

Initially, Denys promotes fecundity, rejuvenation, drunken ecstasy, but as time progresses his mood grows darker. He becomes associated with 'strange motiveless misdeeds' (DA 419) — maternal infanticide and a murder in the vineyards. In an attempt to 'remedy [...] this evil time' (DA 420), the local clergy exhume the body of the cathedral's patron saint. Pater's gruesome evocation of a 'battlefield of mouldering remains' (DA 420), a 'dwindled body, shrunken inconceivably' (DA 421) shares much with Thomas Browne's description of decaying corpses in 'Hydriotaphia' (1658) — a text Pater praised in an essay on the Renaissance scholar, which he wrote and published contemporaneously with 'Denys'.⁴⁶ The spectacle of decaying flesh sends Denys into a fit of physical shock,

⁴⁵ For an insightful study of the *Doppelgänger* figure in Pater's works see Anna Budziak, *Text, Body and Indeterminacy: Doppelgänger Selves in Pater and Wilde* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008). For an overview of the parallels between 'A Study of Dionysus' and 'Denys', see Steven Connor, 'Myth as Multiplicity in Walter Pater's *Greek Studies* and "Denys L'Auxerrois"', *Review of English Studies*, 34 (1983), 8–42 (p. 36). For an alternative perspective on Pater's treatment of the Dionysus myth see Stefano Evangelista, 'A Revolting Mistake: Walter Pater's Iconography of Dionysus', *Victorian Review*, 34.2 (2008), 200–18.

⁴⁶ Walter Pater, 'Sir Thomas Browne', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 54 (1886), 5–18. See Thomas Browne, 'Hydriotaphia', in *The Major Works*, ed. by C. A. Patrides (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 261–315.

leaving him 'a subdued, silent, melancholy creature' (DA 421). Henceforth he turns away from the world and devotes himself to the production of art — painting, weaving, sculpture and, above all, music. Under the cover of night, he gradually constructs within the cathedral a grand organ. Eventually, the organ is 'ready to blow' (DA 423); its music 'roll[s] over [the congregation] [...] with various feelings of delight' (DA 423). But when, in the civic ceremony that follows, Denys carelessly scratches his lip on his haircloth garment, the mood of the townsfolk turns violent:

It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage, and suddenly revealed to them the truth. The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions. The soul of Denys was already at rest, as his body, now borne along in front of the crowd, was tossed hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb. The men stuck little shreds of his flesh, or, failing that, of his torn raiment, into their caps; the women lending their long hairpins for the purpose. (DA 423)

The text's violent conclusion is occluded by the narrator's introduction, which initially cloaks the text's violent intent. The tone of Pater's narrator at the opening of the text is academic and aloof. In eschewing the narratorial 'I' in place of an appeal to what 'we know', Pater's narrator appeals to an objective standard of knowledge unquestionably shared with his readers. In the paragraphs that follow, the narrator draws the reader into events whilst disguising his own presence through use of the second person pronoun ('you find it', 'you have before you', 'you might fancy'). This detached narrator appears to play no role in the events he narrates: he is, in Gérard Genette's terms, heterodiegetic.⁴⁷ It is only later in the text — '*I found my way to the shop*' — that the narrator openly acknowledges his personal involvement in the events recounted (all italics added). This revelation of the narrator's homodiegetic status coincides with the text's close focus on the subjective process through which the narrator constructs his narrative of Denys's life. The broader significance of this change in narrative

⁴⁷ See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 50.

tone from objective aloofness to subjective engagement is that the certainties of the text's opening are modified through the process of sensuous, subjective reflection. The assertions of the text's opening paragraph are subsequently undermined: the text is not content to dwell on 'surfaces', and the reality of the events recounted is far from 'golden'. The narrator ends up telling a story that breaks the rules he has initially set for himself.

Thus, there is a tension in 'Denys' between the aesthetic pleasure of the 'surface' and the impulse to reconstruct the broken 'fragment' or to 'unearth' and 'exhume'. At the opening of the text, Pater's narrator posits a mode of appreciation in which the 'value of things [...] lie[s] wholly on their surfaces'; a light-hearted 'childish consciousness' happy to take pleasure in sensuous impressions (DA 413). Something akin to Susan Sontag's 'erotics of art', such a method shares a wish to 'reveal the sensuous surface of art without mucking about in it'.⁴⁸ Yet the narrator is soon engaged in acts of interpretation that inevitably require him to look beyond the sensuous surface of the artefacts he discovers. He desires to re-assemble Denys's story by weaving together historical fragments into a coherent narrative.

The narrator repeatedly takes macabre pleasure in going beyond the 'surface': the unearthing of anarchic relics; the exhumation of decaying bodies; a child found hanged in an underground cellar; the discovery of a child's skeleton in the foundations of a bridge; Denys's obsessive grave-digging. This desire to look beyond the surface likewise extends to the skin of the human body. Smitten by Denys's beauty, the men of the town are determined to discover 'what kind of powers [are] hidden under the white veil of [his] youthful form' (DA 417). Yet when Denys's body is ultimately 'torn [...] limb from limb' — the text's bloodiest refusal to dwell upon the sensuous surface — no deeper truth is revealed in the process. The text first insists on the sensuousness of surface, only then to dwell on the pleasure of macabre excavations.

If the narrator ultimately fails in his project to find value on the 'surface' of things, he likewise fails to accurately summarize the narrative he subsequently presents.

⁴⁸ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961), p. 14.

Only a reading that entirely overlooks the duality of Pater's Denys — his oscillation between joyfulness and sorrow, tenderness and cruelty — could suggest this narrative is simplistically about the 'return of a golden or poetically-gilded age'. Vernon Lee's 'Dionysus in the Euganean Hills' (1921) suggests that 'Denys' begins with a utopian impulse akin to the 'pre-Raphaelite mediaevalism' of William Morris, but soon becomes '[more] akin to the Bacchae than to the Earthly Paradise'.⁴⁹ Pater's texts thus set up principles of aesthetic conduct and narrative expectation, only then to revel in the failure to abide by them. His narrator takes masochistic pleasure in prying beyond surfaces, presenting a story that seems far detached from the innocence of 'childish consciousness' which he first demands.

'Ready to Blow': Music and Self-Destruction

Music and the masochistic are especially elided in Pater's figures of Denys and Dionysus. The final scene of Denys's dismemberment enacts the masochistic pleasures of psychic self-divestiture. The culmination of Denys's artistic activities is the building of a grand organ in the cathedral at Auxerre. Denys progresses from those arts 'which address themselves first of all to sight' — sculpture, drawing, tapestry — to the more abstract art of music: his aspiration towards the condition of music is also an advancement towards his masochistic self-destruction. Denys aims to invent 'a freer and more various sacred music'; 'a music that might express the whole compass of souls now grown to manhood'. In contrast with earlier rustic modes, capable of expressing just one emotional state, his organ will become 'like the book of life', its music revealing 'the full compass of his nature, in its sorrow and delight' (DA 422). Initially, Denys's musical project appears to offer an affirmation of liberal individualism. His organ functions as a mechanism for the promotion of self-realisation — liberating, perhaps, the expression of desires that an oppressive society has previously proscribed. Yet the agency that Pater affords to this music ultimately presents a more complex situation. In describing the organ as 'ready to blow' (DA 423), Pater purposefully elides the motion of air through the instrument's pipes with a process of

⁴⁹ Vernon Lee, 'Dionysus in the Euganean Hills: W.H. Pater in Memoriam,' *Contemporary Review*, 120 (September 1921), 346–53 (p. 346).

explosive, shattering destruction that will be visited not on the pipes of the organ itself, but on Denys's flesh.

Despite the story's setting in medieval France, the musical aesthetics underpinning Denys's project are decidedly nineteenth-century: this 'fuller tide of music' encompassing 'all the instruments then in use' is more redolent of a Romantic Wagnerian orchestra than a Renaissance broken consort (DA 421-22). Denys's music is repeatedly evoked through water imagery: a 'fuller tide', 'rolling over' its listeners. The trope of drowning in the experience of music is one evoked throughout decadent art, its most notably source being the so-called *Liebestod* that concludes Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, where Isolde drowns ('ertrink[t]') in the surging swell ('[i]n dem wogenden Schwall') of music.⁵⁰ Indeed, in Nietzsche's elaboration of the Dionysian force of music in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he specifically quotes the closing lines of Wagner's libretto as an example of the 'primal joy' of self-negation.⁵¹ Denys, likewise, will ultimately be destroyed by waves of the enthusiastic 'mad rage' that overcome the listening crowd.

As discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, music is frequently afforded a privileged function in the articulation of subjectivity in nineteenth-century thought. Throughout Pater's texts, the emergence of new expression in various artistic media present opportunities to re-conceive the self through sensuous experience. Music is assigned a particularly prominent power to prompt such change. In *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), for example, the 'new range of sound' in Flavian's verse is attributed to his having gleaned such 'novel accents' from 'a new musical instrument'.⁵² An alternative source of inspiration for Flavian's 'mystic hymn' is the music issuing from 'the lips of the young men, singing because they could not help it, in the streets of Pisa'.⁵³ Flavian's verse — distilled from the spirit of music — provides to Marius a 'foretaste' of the spiritual renaissance yet to come:

⁵⁰ Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde: Handlung in drei Aufzügen*, WWV 90 (Mainz: Schott, 2013), p. 378.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 105.

⁵² Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 114.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

There was in his work, along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn [...]. It was as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed-of and renewed condition of human body and soul: as if he saw the heavy yet decrepit old Roman architecture about him, rebuilding on an intrinsically better pattern.⁵⁴

There are clear parallels between the 'new instrument' that inspires Flavian, and the 'building of the first organ' undertaken by Denys. However, the outcome of Denys's musical project is presented in a more ambivalent light. In the medieval tapestry upon which Pater's narrator bases his story, those listening to Denys's music appear 'as if transported, some of them shouting rapturously to the organ music', inspired to a 'mad vehemence'. At the conclusion of the text, the 'various feelings of delight' prompted in the people of Auxerre by Denys's music soon mutate into the 'mad rage' that will see them tear him apart (*DA* 413). In *Marius*, music awakes a utopian impulse of 'un-dreamed of' subjectivity, conceived through architectural imagery of the solid, concrete and systematic: the 'body and soul' will be 'rebuil[t]', underpinned by the rigorous structure of a 'better pattern'. Music in 'Denys' offers no such promise of architectural stability. It is associated rather with the dispersed breath of Marsyas — his 'aspiration' — as it animates the pipes Denys has gathered from across the countryside. In Pater's mythic system — like Nietzsche's — the music of Dionysus and Marsyas exists in opposition to that of Apollo. In 'A Study of Dionysus', Pater recounts:

There is one element in the conception of Dionysus, which his connexion with the satyrs, Marsyas being one of them, and with Pan, from whom the flute passed to all the shepherds of Theocritus, alike illustrates, his interest, namely, in one of the great species of music. One form of that wilder vegetation, of which the Satyr race is the soul made visible, is the reed, which the creature plucks and trims into musical pipes. And as

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

Apollo inspires and rules over all the music of strings, so Dionysus inspires and rules over all the music of the reed (*ASD* 756).

Denys's construction of an organ that attempts to see 'the various modes of the power of the pipe, *tamed, ruled, united*' sees him assume a disciplinary stance akin to Apollo: he constrains something of the wayward exuberance of Pan and Marsyas. Yet his construction of the organ entirely from well-chosen reeds is, at the same time, a wilful provocation to Apollo. It is this opposition between the reed and the lyre which is re-enacted on the 'painted shutters of the organ-case' in Pater's text: Apollo 'look[s] askance on the music of the reed, in all the jealousy with which he put Marsyas to death so cruelly' (*DA* 413). This grand organ of reeds becomes the Marsyan instrument *par excellence*, and it is little surprise, then, that Denys faces a similarly brutal fate.

At the story's conclusion, Denys is 'torn *at last* limb from limb' (italics added). The narrator, it seems, has been seeking the narrative closure of brutal dismemberment from the outset and it has finally arrived. Pater's text is purposefully ambiguous when it notes that Denys's soul is 'at rest': it is unclear whether he is dead or in a state of spiritual calmness. In its opposition of resting 'soul' and elevated 'body', the text seems to suggest that Denys's death precedes his dismemberment. If this is indeed the case, the narrative sequence passes over the moment of Denys's death to focus instead, with sadistic zeal, on his bodily mutilation. Steven Connor asserts that 'Pater's syntax conducts us directly from horrified expectation to sad aftermath, and from the bloodiness of immediate action to the coolness of marmoreal representation'.⁵⁵ However, Pater's syntax in fact diverts focus intentionally towards the bloody act of dismemberment. There is nothing 'marmoreal' about Denys's corpse as it is 'tossed' energetically around the crowd like a football. Denys, it seems, is reconciled to his death, impassive even as he desires his own violent destruction.

As such, the text strongly implies that, if Denys is indeed a victim, he might nevertheless be a willing one. Several pieces of evidence support this contention. First, as Pater's narrative progresses, Denys dwells with an increasing obsession

⁵⁵ Connor, 'Myth as Multiplicity', p. 37.

on the idea of death. The only way he can ‘cure’ himself of his fits — seemingly prompted by his realisation of his own mortality — is through the act of ‘digging, by choice, graves for the dead’ (DA 422). Denys, like the narrator, becomes obsessed with excavations. Second, at the point of his death, Denys has achieved two forms of closure: the burial of his mother in consecrated ground, and the completion of his grand organ-building project.⁵⁶ As Peter Brooks might observe, the two forms of ‘desiring machine’ that have sustained the text’s narrative momentum — the Oedipal and (through sublimation) the aesthetic — have ground to a halt.⁵⁷ To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, Pater’s story awaits only the sanction of death.⁵⁸ Third, parallels can be drawn between Denys and the protagonists of Pater’s other ‘Imaginary Portraits’: Duke Carl of Rosenmold fakes his own death in order to observe his funeral, while Sebastian van Storck harbours a desire for ‘disintegration’ and ‘self-effacement’ that leads him to apparent suicide (though, like Denys, the precise circumstances of his death remain unclear in the text).⁵⁹

That Denys’s death is a willing one is likewise supported by the text’s repeated gestures to parallels between Denys and Christ.⁶⁰ The green flask that prompts Denys’s arrival is akin to ‘the wondrous vessel of the Grail’; it is used at the mason’s ‘supper’, and Denys arrives in Auxerre on Easter Day. For Gerald Monsman, this Eucharistic imagery means that the story’s conclusion is ultimately redemptive: Denys’s death ‘stands as the guarantee of the renewal of

⁵⁶ Pater dwells upon the Oedipal dynamics of the relationship between Dionysus and Semele in ‘A Study of Dionysus’. Semele, he notes, died in shame, having been shunned for her impiety; Dionysus descends to Hades in order to ‘bring her up from hence’ (ASD 769). Denys’s relocation of his mother’s body to consecrated ground is clearly meant as a parallel to Dionysus’s descent to the underworld.

⁵⁷ See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Reading and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 39. Brooks’s concept of a ‘desiring machine’ is derived from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁵⁸ ‘Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell’, in Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller’ (‘Der Erzähler’), in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 83-107 (p. 94).

⁵⁹ Walter Pater, ‘Sebastian van Storck’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 53 (March 1886), 348–60 (p. 357).

⁶⁰ Parallels between Christ and Dionysus were drawn frequently in the nineteenth-century German myth criticism that formed the basis of Pater’s mythological studies (as detailed in Connor, ‘Myth as Multiplicity’). See George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

life'.⁶¹ Richard Dellamora argues that such an approach overlooks the critique of homophobia implicit in Pater's text. Monsman's interpretation is, he suggests, 'an attempt [...] to appropriate Pater's writing for an erotophobic academic discourse'.⁶² The queerness of Pater's text in fact lies in its oscillation between these two positions: Denys is the victim of a violence that he himself has desired. The eroticism of Pater's text lies as much in its masochistic violence as its affirmation of the sexual freedom of the individual. Denys's death is a Pagan re-imagining of the Eucharist, in which the essence of Hellenism is diffused through the community in his torn flesh.

In *Intimacies*, Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips propose a form of masochism in which 'a potentially catastrophic self-shattering is replaced by an ego at once self-divesting and self-disseminating'. Bersani's earlier model of psychic divestiture is rethought in terms of 'self-expansiveness': 'something like ego-dissemination rather than ego-annihilation.' 'Ego identity, the individual personality', they suggest, 'could then be sacrificed not to biological or psychic death but, rather, to the pleasure of finding ourselves inaccurately replicated everywhere in the world.'⁶³ That Denys's killers affix to their caps 'little shreds of his flesh [and] torn raiment' suggest the value of such a dispersal of selfhood: the townsfolk have incorporated within themselves something of his Dionysian spirit.

Music and the Disciplined Body: 'Lacedaemon'

Whereas music in 'Denys' is recruited to a psychic fantasy of joyful masochistic self-dispersal, Pater's final works — such as *Plato and Platonism* (1893) — align music with a masochistic self-denial bound to stern, ascetic self-discipline.⁶⁴ 'Music' here is the *mousikē* of Ancient Greece, encompassing the arts of the Muses in general, from singing and dancing, to the recitation of poetry and drama. In this respect, Pater's writings on Hellenic 'music' reflect upon questions about the relationship between society and the aesthetic more broadly. In 'Lacedaemon' (1892), Pater describes the role of this 'music' in upholding the 'strenuous and

⁶¹ Gerald Monsman, *Pater's Portraits: Mythic Pattern in the Work of Walter Pater* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 112.

⁶² Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p. 181.

⁶³ Bersani and Phillips, *Intimacies*, p. 56.

⁶⁴ Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism* (London: Macmillan, 1893).

taxing habit of life' that defines the 'organized [...] discipline' of a Dorian city-state.⁶⁵ The text is perhaps most striking for the challenge it presents to the conventional view of the humane beneficence of Pater's aestheticism. As Charles Martindale has noted, the text is 'unlikely to be many readers' favourite essay by Pater': 'How can the retiring, liberally minded, and unbellicose Oxford aesthete', he asks, 'come to express so positive a view of the warlike, isolationist, and helot-abusing Spartans?'⁶⁶ Yet 'Lacedæmon' openly indulges those desires for masochistic aesthetic self-obliteration that lie below the surface of Pater's more ostensibly liberal works.

For Pater's Spartans 'music', in 'the larger sense of the word', was 'everywhere'. Its purpose lay not merely in the 'alleviation' of suffering, but rather in 'promoting' and 'informing' a system of rigid legal order and regularity, in which individuals are ready to 'sacrifice' their 'ease' and 'enjoyments' for the better good of the state.⁶⁷ The Lacedæmonians, Pater notes, are a people 'the reverse of indulgent to themselves', their Dorian temperament 'enforced' by the 'reformed music' that forms a central part of their everyday lives.⁶⁸ In Pater's text, the music of Sparta finds its fullest expression on and through the body. The 'proportion' of 'Pythagorean music' is embodied in the homoerotic spectacle of the naked athlete. 'It was a Lacedæmonian', Pater reminds his readers, 'who, at Olympia for the first time threw aside the heavy girdle and ran naked to the goal'.⁶⁹ In 'Plato and the Doctrine of Number', he notes that, for Plato, the 'order' and 'temperance' of 'musical harmony' finds its 'visible presentiment [...] in the faultless person of the youthful Charmides'.⁷⁰ The 'perfect visible equivalent' of the refining force of Hellenic musical rhythm is seen in the 'portrait-statues of the actual youth of Greece'.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Walter Pater, 'Lacedæmon', *Contemporary Review*, 61 (June 1892), 791–808 (p. 795).

⁶⁶ Charles Martindale, 'Introduction: Pater and Antiquity', in *Pater the Classicist: Classical Scholarship, Reception, and Aestheticism*, ed. by Charles Martindale, Stefano Evangelista, and Elizabeth Prettejohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1–27 (p. 8).

⁶⁷ Pater, 'Lacedæmon', pp. 792–93

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 795.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 801.

⁷⁰ Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p. 49.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Indeed, it is the ‘austere music’ of the Dorian state, Pater suggests, that is central to the ‘mastering, remoulding, [of] men’s very bodies’.⁷² For Pater, this aesthetic education aims to make the ‘good musician’ indistinguishable from the ‘good soldier’, underpinned as it is by relentless ‘attention’, ‘patience’ and ‘fidelity to detail’ that instils ‘personal dignity’ and ‘self-command’.⁷³ The ‘orderly’ young men of Lacedæmon, Pater recounts, ‘made the best music in the world’. They were the product of a severe aesthetic education founded on the infliction of bodily pain with ‘whips and rods’, a ‘monitorial system’ in which the use of corporal punishment ‘refined them’, so that they became ‘observant of the minutest direction in [...] musical exercises’. This experience of ‘pain [...] by dignified rules of art’ served to produce aesthetic expression purged of all those ‘superfluities’ that threaten to ‘annihilate music’.⁷⁴

Music, in Pater’s Lacedaemon, thus becomes a means through which ‘history and law’ — ‘actually set to music’ — become internalized through repetition by the youth of the city-state. Pater implicitly contrasts the ‘strictly selfish’ pursuit of aesthetic pleasure of 1890s England with the stern functionality of aesthetic discipline in Ancient Greece. The singing through which the ‘Lacedaemonian learned by heart’ finds its closest parallel in contemporary society, Pater suggests, in the chanting of Psalms heard in the choral services of ‘our own old English schools’ and ‘Gothic cloister[s]’. Catching a ‘glimpse’ of a suggestively homoerotic tableau of ‘youthful beauty and strength in perfect service’, Pater hears an ‘echo’ of ‘true and genuine Hellenism’ in Oxford’s choristers as they ‘sing [...] the law and its praises’.⁷⁵ The body of the pliant musician is transformed, in the ‘severe schools of Sparta’, into a ‘perfect musical instrument’ that is ‘perfectly responsive to the intention, to the lightest touch, of the finger of law’.⁷⁶ Through music, the disciplinary force of the law is written into the taut, muscular flesh of the idealized Greek body. Deutsch identifies this passage as celebrating ‘the inherent, natural, and moral “harmony” of [...] same-sex physical attraction’.⁷⁷

⁷² Ibid., p. 36.

⁷³ Pater, ‘Lacedæmon’, pp. 799 and 803.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 795–97.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 804.

⁷⁶ Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Deutsch, *British Literature and Classical Music*, p. 39.

Yet this 'lightest touch' speaks not of the momentary homoerotic frisson of bodily contact, but rather the transformation of the material body into a mechanism that resonates perfectly with societal demands for erotic self-denial. This disciplinary music — indeed, the aesthetic more generally — affords another strategy through which the liberal self is vacated from the body. Whereas Pater's 'Denys' achieves through music his own bodily obliteration, his Lacedaemonian youths engage in a similar process of musical self-abnegation, in which their vibrant individual flesh is subsumed within and effaced by a collective desire for masochistic self-abandonment. Music's queerness in Pater's texts speaks not of the affirmed, desiring homosexual subject, or of the beneficence of queer community formation, but rather of a queerness that challenges foundational accounts of identity and attests to the psychic desire for the loss of self.

Vernon Lee: Music, the Homosexual Body and Queer Identity

For Vernon Lee, like Pater, the queerness of music lies in its function as a solvent of the self. In 'Marsyas in Flanders', Lee strategically turns to sympathize with Marsyas as an emblem of music's anarchic masochistic potential. Marsyas's flayed skin becomes emblematic of a dispersed subjectivity that refuses the labelling of the 'homosexual' body. Rather than insistently reading Lee's works as supporting an ideal of same-sex identity or same-sex community formation that Lee herself seems unlikely to have embraced, it is more profitable to consider the manner in which such texts respond implicitly to the processes through which the homosexual subject emerges in the late nineteenth century. Lee's short story can profitably be read alongside her writings on musical aesthetics and the embodied phenomenology of aesthetic response to reveal the complexities of her engagement with music's queer masochistic agency.

Lee's theorisation about the significance of the body in the aesthetic response to music is best understood in the context of her writings on musical aesthetics, explored in chapter 1 of this thesis, structured around often rigid oppositional categories that favour the appreciation of 'musical form' over the evocation of 'musical emotion'. Tellingly, the former is associated by Lee with the 'rapture and anguish' and 'orgiastic madness' of Marsyas and Dionysus, the latter with an

Apollo who acts to ‘tame the beasts of the wilderness’ and ‘win the lost soul back from the shades’.⁷⁸ Yet while Marsyas is damned as morally poisonous in ‘The Riddle of Music’, he is evidently the object of Lee’s sympathy in her short story. The apparent incongruity between the Decadent excesses displayed in many of Lee’s fictional works and the staunch moralism that underlies her concern with spiritual and moral ‘healthiness’ shown in her non-fiction prose presents difficulties for those critics who wish to argue for Lee’s affirmation of the validity of same-sex desire. Margaret Stetz suggests that ‘Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady’ (1896) expresses covert ‘sympathy’ for the imprisoned Wilde, ‘a fellow aesthete [...] and sexual dissident’, while Patricia Pulham’s influential reading of ‘A Wicked Voice’ (1890) views it as a fable of ‘lesbian empowerment’.⁷⁹ But such readings sit in awkward relation to those essays collected in *Gospels of Anarchy* (1908) that reflect a pervasive concern with the individual’s need to moderate ‘impulse’ and regulate ‘peculiar instincts’.⁸⁰ Far from presenting a radical defence of sexual deviancy, Lee in fact insists that individual wants and desires should be tempered by an awareness of one’s duties to society as a whole.

In Richard Dellamora’s reading of Lee’s ‘Deterioration of Soul’ (1896), for example, he argues that Lee ‘not only passes judgment on the legal destruction of Wilde but also defends sexual dissidence as necessary to the very existence of reason’.⁸¹ Her essay, Dellamora suggests, is an ‘affirmation of loving friendship between members of the same sex as both virtuous and rational’.⁸² While Dellamora’s work does much to bring into sharper focus Lee’s contribution to late-Victorian debates surrounding individualism and the value of friendship, his contention that Lee offers a covert defence of communities formed around shared same-sex desire cannot be sustained. Central to Dellamora’s argument is

⁷⁸ Lee, ‘The Riddle of Music’, p. 226.

⁷⁹ Margaret Stetz, ‘The Snake Lady and the Bruised Bodley Head: Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde in the *Yellow Book*’, in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 112–22 (p. 113); Patricia Pulham, ‘The Castrato and the Cry in Vernon Lee’s Wicked Voices’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 30 (2002), 421–37 (p. 434).

⁸⁰ Vernon Lee, *Gospels of Anarchy and Other Contemporary Studies* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908), pp. 30 and 20.

⁸¹ Vernon Lee, ‘Deterioration of Soul’, *Fortnightly Review*, 59 (June 1896), 928–43; Richard Dellamora, ‘Productive Decadence: “The Queer Comradeship of Outlawed Thought”: Vernon Lee, Max Nordau, and Oscar Wilde’, *New Literary History*, 35 (2004), 529–46 (p. 531).

⁸² Dellamora, ‘Productive Decadence’, p. 531.

his interpretation of a single phrase in Lee's essay: 'the queer comradeship of outlawed thought'.⁸³ The term 'queer', he argues, connotes sexual deviancy. Lee's reference to 'comradeship', he suggests, invokes 'an emergent homosexual code', referring to 'the same-sex couple in works such as Whitman's "Calamus" poems'.⁸⁴ However, when situated in the context of Lee's wider argument, Lee's evocation of the 'queer comradeship of outlawed thought' in fact forms part of a warning about the dangers of social non-conformity and rebellion. Lee warns that those 'noble' individuals who challenge the moribund moral standards of the majority, even with the best of intentions, risk being drawn into moral 'deterioration' through their exposure to 'fanatics and criminals'.⁸⁵ Far from being an evocation of benevolent same-sex community formation, 'queer comradeship' in fact describes a process through which those who dare to resist normative moral standards find their 'psychic healthiness', the 'health of the soul', placed at risk by their exposure to 'the egotism and depravity of decadents'.⁸⁶ '[The] herding together of various kinds of nonconformity', Lee concludes, leads to the 'consequent pollution of the superior eccentric by the inferior'.⁸⁷ Indeed, Dellamora's contention that Lee refers covertly to a Whitmanian ideal of same-sex 'comradeship' sits uneasily with Lee's rejection of what she calls Whitman's 'theology of anarchism' — the indiscriminate acceptance of 'all parts of man's nature' — in 'Gospels of Anarchy' (1898).⁸⁸

While Lee's moralism presents obstacles for those who wish to read her works as presenting an encoded defence of homosexual subjects, so too do those aspects of her works that deride the reductive intellectual systems that rigidly categorise individuals and their bodies. In both her social and aesthetic criticism, Lee repeatedly criticises what she calls 'the mania for reducing a heterogeneous thing to a very simple formula'.⁸⁹ In Lee's writings on music, it is often the singing voice that most forcefully resists the impetus to label and classify. In 'The Art of Singing

⁸³ Lee, 'Deterioration of Soul', p. 938.

⁸⁴ Dellamora, 'Productive Decadence', p. 543.

⁸⁵ Lee, 'Deterioration of Soul', p. 938.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 930, 932 and 938.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 939.

⁸⁸ Vernon Lee, 'Gospels of Anarchy', *Contemporary Review*, 74 (July 1898): 75–90 (p. 87).

⁸⁹ Vernon Lee, 'Perigot: Random Notes on the Dramatic and Undramatic', in *Juvenilia*, II, 19–64 (p. 47).

Past and Present' (1880), for example, Lee praises the pedagogical techniques of eighteenth-century vocal teachers: in contrast to the 'complicated classificatory of the various sorts of voice' typical of the nineteenth century, the 'eighteenth century', she suggests, 'never guessed that such nomenclature could exist'.⁹⁰ Rather than being forced to sing in a manner that best suits a specific vocal category, Lee's idealized voices of eighteenth-century Venice emerge organically through the disciplined cultivation of their own unique individuality. In 'A Wicked Voice' — a story that revels in the pleasure of vocal indeterminacy — Lee's narrator gently mocks those 'learned in music' who determinedly seek a 'nomenclature' for Zaffirino's 'mysteriously downy, veiled notes':

[T]here was no agreement on the subject of this voice: it was called by all sorts of names and described by all manners of incongruous adjectives; people went so far as to describe whether the voice belonged to a man or a woman: every one had some new definition.⁹¹

Here, the singing voice prompts the relentless efforts of those determined to identify it by reference to the indeterminable sex of the singer. The urge to categorize prompts the emergence of a profusion of descriptions and terminologies, yet the character of the voice nevertheless succeeds in frustrating definition. Lee's text offers a *de facto* riposte to attempts by sexologists to label her queer body in the 'incongruous adjectives' of *fin-de-siècle* sexology.

'Marsyas in Flanders'

Lee's short story 'Marsyas in Flanders' — written in 1900, though not published until 1921 — is also a story about the labelling of identity on the body. It recounts the fate of a mysterious effigy washed ashore in Northern France in 1195, and mounted on a crucifix in a church.⁹² The effigy is later discovered in a variety of 'violent contortions' (78), as if in an effort to break loose from the cross to which it had been attached. Meanwhile, the 'miracle' of the contorting effigy begins to

⁹⁰ Vernon Lee, 'The Art of Singing Past and Present', *British Quarterly Review*, 144 (October 1880), 318–42 (p. 329).

⁹¹ Vernon Lee, 'A Wicked Voice', in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2006), pp. 154–81.

⁹² Vernon Lee, 'Marsyas in Flanders', in *For Maurice: Five Unlikely Stories* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1927), pp. 71–92, hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically.

attract the attention of passing pilgrims, bringing wealth to the village — and necessitating the construction of a chapel to guard the precious relic against theft. After the effigy smashes the crucifix upon which it is mounted, a new cross is ‘consecrated [...] in the presence of an immense concourse of clergy and laity’, and ‘it was now supposed [the effigy] would be satisfied’ (80). At the close of the story, the antiquary admits that ‘the crucifix at present [...] is not the one miraculously cast up by the storm of 1195’ (91). Leading the narrator into the cellar of an outhouse, he reveals the effigy: ‘buried beneath this vault [...] they had run an iron stake through his middle, like a vampire, to prevent his rising’ (91). The narrator describes the scene before him:

The Effigy was erect against the dark wall, surrounded by brushwood. It was more than life-size, nude, the arms broken off at the shoulders, the head, with stubbly beard and clotted hair, drawn up with an effort, the face contracted with agony; the muscles dragged as of one hanging crucified, the feet bound together with a rope. The figure was familiar to me in various galleries. I came forward to examine the ear: it was leaf-shaped [...] this supposed statue of Christ is an antique satyr, a Marsyas awaiting his punishment (92).

The text invokes from its outset the music of Marsyas — his flute, reed or pipe — as a disruptive force of moral anarchy and sensual licentiousness. Indeed, the spectral presence of Marsyas’s music gestures towards the truth of the effigy’s obscure identity long before the revelation at the text’s conclusion. When the antiquary first meets the narrator he explains cryptically to him that ‘this church has witnessed things like no other church in Christendom [...] and it still remembers them’ (74). The narrator recalls: ‘And as he spoke there suddenly mingled with the sough of the wind and the groans of the weather-vane, a shrill quavering sound as of pipers inside.’ ‘The organist trying his vox humana for tomorrow’, the Antiquary prosaically explains. Such ‘shrill quavering’ clearly evokes Marsyas’s pipe (or ‘aulos’). As in Lee’s other supernatural tales — most notably ‘A Wicked Voice’ — this music attaches to the built environment as a spectral historical trace: that the church at Dunes ‘remembers’ the violent fate of

Marsyas's effigy is witnessed by this musical haunting, just as, in 'A Wicked Voice', Zaffirino's ghostly voice haunts the stones of eighteenth-century Venice.

The 'extraordinary stories [...] about the goings-on in the church' (81) recounted by local villagers (and narrated by the antiquary) similarly make evident the musical aspect of Marsyas's demonic activities: 'they had heard strange noises come from the church of nights [...] During storms, particularly, sounds had been heard which were variously described as howls, groans, and the music of rustic dancing' (81). Likewise, the testimonies included in the records of the inquest — translated, we are told, by the narrator from Latin into English — emphasize the musical nature of Marsyas's disruption in the church. Upon interrogation, the 'burgers of Dune' attest that 'the noises from the Church of the Holy Cross [...] were very various, such as terrible rattling, groans, howls as of wolves, and occasional flute playing' (85). This catalogue of Gothic clichés is wilfully playful: 'occasional flute playing' — so seemingly innocuous — is surely bathetic when contrasted with 'terrible' groans, rattles and howls. Nevertheless, Lee expects the reader to recognize the reference to Marsyas's music, and to understand the association of such flute playing with unbridled and anarchic licentiousness.

Lee's story bears certain similarities with Pater's 'Denys L'Auxerrois'. Like Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait', the story is narrated from the perspective of an inquisitive visitor who scrutinizes historical artefacts in order to decode their unsettling hidden identity. Both 'Denys' and 'Marsyas in Flanders' are responses to Heinrich Heine's 'Die Götter im Exil' ('Gods in Exile', 1853).⁹³ Pater's essay 'Pico della Mirandola' (1871) opens with his translation of Heine's account of Apollo's return to Austria in the Middle Ages, in which Apollo is tortured and executed by superstitious country-folk before apparently rising from the grave to escape further persecution (*SHR* 18-19).⁹⁴ In this sub-genre, as Evangelista has observed, characters from antiquity typically reappear to participate — either as

⁹³ For an account of Pater's engagement with Heine and the figure of the exiled god see J. S. Harrison, 'Pater, Heine and the Old Gods of Greece', *PMLA*, 39 (1924), 655–86.

⁹⁴ See Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. by Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 322.

perpetrator or victim — in scenes of violence and trauma.⁹⁵ Such violence emerges from the tension between modern ethical codes (usually represented through oppressive Christian moralism) and Classical systems of value. Antiquity represents a liberating, if often terrifying, disruption of moral certainties, ultimately suggesting that the stability of the new moral order is at best superficial. Lee's 'Dionea' (1890), which recounts the apparent reincarnation of Venus in contemporary Italy, openly acknowledges such influence: in an attempt to deflect attention from the supernatural implications of the events he describes, the narrator insists that 'that rogue, Heinrich Heine, is entirely responsible for the existence of *Dieux en Exil*'.⁹⁶ Heine's influence on 'Marsyas in Flanders' is similarly clear. Both texts satirize the petty cruelty of the Middle Ages, recounting the quick recourse of 'ecclesiastical courts' to torture upon the rack. Lee's Marsyas, like Heine's Apollo, is mistaken by superstitious country-folk for a vampire; while Apollo escapes a plan to 'impale [his body] on a stake', the effigy of Marsyas does not. In Heine's text, the music of Apollo — 'played so touchingly and [sung] so enchantingly' — is associated with an affective intensity that makes those who listen not only compulsively weep, but also 'sicken'. In Lee's story, merely the recollection of Marsyas's 'piping' is enough to induce those who have heard it to 'tremble and sob' — this music 'freezes [their] blood' (88).

Marsyas, Masochism and the Body at the *Fin de Siècle*

In Greek myth, Marsyas was a satyr, famous for his musical accomplishment on the *aulos*, a reed instrument. Confident in his skill, he challenged Apollo to a musical contest, to be judged by the Muses. Apollo was chosen as victor and, enraged by Marsyas's audacity, punished him by tying him to a tree and flaying him alive. Ovid's account, in book six of *Metamorphoses*, captures the horror of the satyr's visceral fate:

And as he cries, the skin is stripped from his body
until he's all entirely one wound:
blood runs out everywhere, and his uncovered

⁹⁵ Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece*, p. 42. For Vernon Lee and Heine's 'Gods in Exile' see also Catherine Maxwell, *Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 120–24.

⁹⁶ Vernon Lee, 'Dionea', in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, p. 77–104.

sinews lie utterly exposed to view;
his pulsing veins were flickering, and you
could number all his writhing viscera
and the gleaming organs underneath his sternum.⁹⁷

The contest between Apollo and Marsyas is a prevalent theme in aesthetic and decadent writing, frequently used to dramatize both debates about the relationship between morality and music, and the place of pain, suffering and violence in art more generally. Lee was closely involved in the publication by her brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, of *Apollo and Marsyas, and Other Poems* in 1883, a collection that — in the words of John Addington Symonds — pits the ‘remote, wild, pain-compelling, and orgiastic’ realm of Marsyas against the ‘pure, defined, and chastened melodies’ of Apollo.⁹⁸ Lee-Hamilton’s poem ‘On A Surf-Rolled Torso of Venus’, in which a fragment of a ‘mutilated Venus’ is washed ashore, finds close parallels in ‘Marsyas in Flanders’.⁹⁹ For the Oscar Wilde of ‘De Profundis’ (1897), the ‘cry of Marsyas’ represents the ‘undertone of doubt and distress’ and ‘discontent’ that characterizes the ‘modern Art’ of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Burne-Jones, or the ‘deferred resolutions’ of Chopin.¹⁰⁰ Significantly, in the years following his imprisonment Wilde styled himself as Marsyas: he describes the ‘Ballad of Reading Gaol’ (1897), for example, as ‘wrung out of me, a cry of pain, the cry of Marsyas, not the song of Apollo’, lamenting that ‘life, that I have loved so much [...] has torn me like a tiger’. ‘When you come and see me’, Wilde warns his friend Carlos Blacker, ‘you will see the ruin and wreck of what once was wonderful and brilliant’.¹⁰¹ The degradations and deprivations of Wilde’s imprisonment were such that the imagery of a broken body, recalling Marsyas’s torment, is scarcely anything less than literal.

⁹⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by Charles Martin (New York: Norton, 2004) p. 168.

⁹⁸ Eugene Lee-Hamilton, *Apollo and Marsyas, and Other Poems* (London: Elliot Stock, 1884); John Addington Symonds, review of *Apollo and Marsyas, and Other Poems*, by Eugene Lee-Hamilton, *The Academy*, 665 (31 January 1885), 71.

⁹⁹ Eugene Lee-Hamilton, ‘On A Surf-Rolled Torso of Venus’, in *Apollo and Marsyas*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 755–56.

¹⁰¹ Oscar Wilde, Letter to Carlos Blacker, in *Complete Letters*, p. 1035 (9 March 1898). See also Letter to Frank Harris, in *Complete Letters*, p. 1025 (February 1898).

While for Wilde Marsyas's sufferings resonate with his own experience of bodily pain, from a psychoanalytic perspective Marsyas's flayed skin also makes him a powerfully suggestive emblem of the queerness of a selfhood defined by its resistance to the disciplinary forces that inscribe sexual identity upon the body. Cast ashore by the waves, the effigy of Marsyas emerges from the symbolic psychic fluidity of the ocean to find itself in a world of insistent definitional fixity. In Ovid's account, while Marsyas's visceral torture at the hands of Apollo speaks of the process through which power operates on the body, the removal of his skin simultaneously offers the promise of a dispersed, unbounded, albeit destructive and painful subjectivity that resists the disciplinary force of such power. Lee's text focusses on ultimately misconceived attempts to frustrate such dispersal. For psychoanalytic theorists such as Didier Anzieu, the boundaries of the skin play a central role in the emergence of the self. Human subjectivity, Anzieu argues, is generated through the sense of touch; the earliest of embryonic and infantile tactile experiences lay the foundations of an ego that is bounded by the receptive skin that surrounds it.¹⁰² For Michel Serres, the skin is the organ through which all sensory perception is ultimately grounded; as the location 'where soul and world commingle', it represents the privileged site at which the self is formed through its contact with the world.¹⁰³ As Steven Connor observes, the skin literally gives us 'both the shape of the world and our shape in it'.¹⁰⁴

In John Ruskin's study of Greek myths, *The Queen of the Air*, it is precisely the flaying of Marsyas's skin that makes him so unsettling a figure of music's disruptive potential. For Ruskin, the figures of Apollo and Marsyas — following Plato's delineation in the *Republic* — embody music's power of 'moral instruction' and 'moral degradation' respectively.¹⁰⁵ Apollo's music is 'limiting and restraining', 'measured and designed', 'intellectual'; Marsyas's music is 'brutal, or meaningless', 'degraded in its passion'.¹⁰⁶ '[W]hen Apollo prevails', Ruskin recounts, 'he flays Marsyas, taking the limit and external bond of his shape

¹⁰² Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. by Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹⁰³ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. by Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

from him, which is death, without touching the mere muscular strength, yet shameful and dreadful in dissolution.’ Marsyas’s music therefore represents something formless but nevertheless empowered: it has lost its ‘shape’ but retains its threatening ‘muscular strength’.¹⁰⁷ For Apollo to take ‘the limit and external bond of [Marsyas’s] shape from him’ has implications that Ruskin immediately disowns; this, he insists, ‘is death’. Yet the image nonetheless suggests a liberated, unbounded sense of dispersed selfhood: the division between internal and external, self and other is dissolved; no longer confined within the ‘limit’ of the skin, the self becomes *limitless*. That Marsyas’s ‘shape’ is held in place by an ‘external *bond*’ suggests not just the imposition of structure upon the physical body, but also the disciplinary functions of confinement, imprisonment, regulation — the body bound in shackles. Freed from this ‘bond’, from the imposition of ‘shape’, Marsyas becomes an emblem of queer resistance to the disciplinary ‘shapes’ imposed on the body through discourse.

In Lee’s text, the contorting body of Marsyas thus emerges as a potent symbol for the resistance to the disciplinary mechanism of Foucauldian ‘biopower’.¹⁰⁸ The text dwells insistently on the effigy’s shifting movements: it bends ‘violently’ in an ‘effort to break loose’ (77), its ‘violent contortions’ an attempt to ‘spurn the alien cross’ (78); its ‘writhing’ (80) body assumes an ‘attitude of frightful convulsion’ (82). Such movements represent increasingly desperate attempts to break free from the apparently torturous imposition of Christian law on this Pagan body. Mounted on the cross, Marsyas’s flaying at the hands of Apollo is reconfigured as a Crucifixion. As an emblem of the disruptive excess of music, Marsyas refuses the imposition of Christian law — he writhes in agony when mounted on a crucifix — in a manner that has suggestive parallels with resistance to the disciplinary force of regulatory discourses through which, in Foucault’s foundational account, the homosexual subject was brought into knowledge in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Foucault’s conceptualisation of the manner in which law becomes written on the body draws upon Nietzsche’s *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1887), in which the extreme bodily cruelty of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the medieval penal code — typified by stoning, dismembering, flaying, impalement — exemplifies this process: ‘With the help of such images and procedures one eventually memorizes five or six “I will not’s”, this giving one’s *promise* in return for the advantages offered by society’.¹¹⁰ In contrast to Rousseau’s model of the social contract, in which the individual *consensually* relinquishes power, Nietzsche suggests that law is violently imposed upon the individual from above, through the infliction of extreme bodily pain (or the threat of such).

Foucault reformulates Nietzsche’s concept of internalization to refer instead to ‘*inscription*’. In ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ (1971) — Foucault’s exposition of his genealogical method — he views the body as ‘the inscribed surface of events’. The genealogical method, Foucault suggests, ‘expose[s] a body totally imprinted by history’. ‘History’ here represents the repressive forces of civilization, culture and law. The ultimate goal of ‘history’, Foucault argues, is the ‘destruction of the body’. Subject to the domination of ‘history’, the body becomes ‘a volume under perpetual disintegration’, for in order for cultural values to emerge, the body must be sublimated totally into the domain of those values inscribed upon it.¹¹¹ As Foucault suggests in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), ‘inscription’ operates not, as Nietzsche suggests, through the tyranny of bodily pain, but rather in compelling the individual to incorporate the law into every aspect of their selfhood.¹¹² Judith Butler, who draws on Foucault’s insights in her account of the gendered body, avers that ‘bodies are produced which signify the law on and through the body; there the law is manifest as the essence of their selves, the meaning of their soul, their conscience, the law of their desire’.¹¹³

The disciplinary inscription of ‘the law of [...] desire’ upon the bodies of queer subjects has formed the basis of much scholarship examining the history of

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. and trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 43.

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 139–64 (p. 148).

¹¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

¹¹³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 175–78.

sexuality. While Foucault's account of the operation of disciplinary power purposively refuses to specify modes of agency, it is interesting to note that, in Lee's case, it is possible to point directly to the action of pathologizing medical discourses as ascribed directly to her body. In the course of their correspondence relating to *Sexual Inversion* (1897), John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis developed their ideas about the nature of female same-sex desire with reference to the 'lesbianism' of Vernon Lee and Mary Robinson, both of whom Symonds knew well.¹¹⁴ 'I am given to understand — and can well believe', Ellis wrote, 'that "Vernon Lee" is very homosexual. I can scarcely say that I know her; and I suppose it is very doubtful whether she would be able or willing to take any scientific interest in the matter.'¹¹⁵ Symonds confirmed that, in his opinion, Lee was 'certainly a case', noting that she went 'nearly erotically mad as it is possible to be' when Mary Robinson announced her plans to marry James Darmesteter.¹¹⁶ Postulating 'a kind of pseudo-sexual oppositeness of character' as typical in relationships between 'inverts', Ellis drew upon the contrast he observed between the 'straightforward "Vernon Lee"' — 'addressing a meeting, as I best remember seeing her, with her hand on her hip' — and the 'ultra-feminine kittenish little Mary D.'. Having cited Lee as an example, Ellis proceeds to conclude that it is 'quite clear' that 'congenitally inverted women are nearly always to some extent masculine in character'.¹¹⁷ Akin to Marsyas mounted on the cross, Lee's body becomes ensnared in the pathologizing discourse of sexology. In observing her commandingly 'straightforward' position as she speaks and her apparently 'masculine' stance with her 'hand on her hip', Symonds and Ellis inscribe her 'lesbianism' on the surface of her body. There is no record of Ellis or Symonds having approached Lee to ask her to participate as a 'case study' for *Sexual Inversion* — indeed, it seems likely that Ellis's

¹¹⁴ See Sally Newman, 'The Archival Traces of Desire: Vernon Lee's Failed Sexuality and the Interpretation of Letters in Lesbian History', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14.1/2, (2005), 51–75; Newman, "Bizarre Love Triangle".

¹¹⁵ Letter from Havelock Ellis to Symonds, 3 January 1893, cited in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 238–39 (p. 239).

¹¹⁶ Letter from Symonds to Havelock Ellis, 17 January 1893, cited in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 239–42 (p. 240).

¹¹⁷ Letter from Havelock Ellis to Symonds, 9 February 1893, cited in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 245–46.

reservations about Lee's willingness to participate in their scientific investigations would have been confirmed had they done so.

More direct parallels between the disciplined body of Marsyas and discourses of sexual abnormality can be found in the paranoid fears of 'vampirism' that attach to the figure of Marsyas in Lee's text, and the associations between lesbianism and vampirism pervasive in late nineteenth-century literature.¹¹⁸ The superstitious townsfolk in Lee's text perform a final desperate act of disciplinary control when they 'run an iron stake through [Marsyas's] middle, like a vampire, to prevent his rising' (91). This represents another instance of mythic *misidentification*. His flayed body — its boundaries broken — render him an emblem of queerness: of the messiness of identity that is mistaken, misattributed, failed, confused.

Music and the Body: Vernon Lee's Psychological Aesthetics

Around the same time that Lee was writing 'Marsyas in Flanders', she was also pursuing work in the field of 'psychological aesthetics' that sought to account for the significance of the body in the phenomenological experience of the aesthetic. In recent years, critics such as Carolyn Burdett, Susan Lanzoni and Benjamin Morgan have come to recognize Lee's wide-ranging and sophisticated engagement with and contribution to contemporary debates about psychological aesthetics prominent across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁹ Questions relating to the embodied nature of aesthetic response — the physiological reaction of the body to art — are central to Lee's concern with the perception of aesthetic beauty. While much attention has been paid to the significance of Lee's psychological aesthetics to her engagement with visual arts, the manner in which they come to inform her musical aesthetics has been overlooked. As Carlo Caballero has convincingly argued in his influential reading

¹¹⁸ See Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (New York: Marrow, 1981). For Vernon Lee and the figure of the vampire see Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 132–38.

¹¹⁹ Susan Lanzoni, 'Practising Psychology in the Art Gallery: Vernon Lee's Aesthetics of Empathy', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 45.4 (2009), 330–54; Carolyn Burdett, 'Is Empathy the End of Sentimentality?', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16.2 (2011), 259–274; Burdett, 'The Subjective Inside Us Can Turn into the Objective Outside': Vernon Lee's Psychological Aesthetics, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 12 (2011) <www.19.bbk.ac.uk>; Morgan, *The Outward Mind*.

of Lee's 'A Wicked Voice', the 'vivid musical fantasies at play in her fiction' frequently serve to subvert the schematic rigidity of 'the closed system of "differences"' evident in her non-fictional writings on music.¹²⁰ The central place afforded to the body in Lee's writings on musical aesthetics allows for them to be placed in productive tension with 'Marsyas in Flanders', a story which strategically embraces music's associations not with the embodied perception of form, but with a *disembodiment* aligned with music's masochistic emotional excess.

Central to Lee's account of the mechanism of aesthetic experience is the idea of 'empathy', translated from the German *Einfühlung*, meaning literally to 'feel oneself into the place' of an external object. As Carolyn Burdett's work suggests, the concept of *Einfühlung* was central to attempts by German materialist psychologists, such as Friedrich Theodor Vischer and Theodor Lipps, to conceptualize the manner in which the external world becomes meaningful through processes in which we 'project' the self into the objects we perceive.¹²¹ The origins of Lee's work on psychological aesthetics lie in her close romantic relationship with Clementina (Kit) Anstruther-Thomson. Lee and Anstruther-Thomson devoted much of their time together to looking at works of art and discussing their intellectual, emotional and bodily responses to them.¹²² The culmination of around a decade of visits to galleries, churches and museums was the essay 'Beauty and Ugliness', published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1897.¹²³ In the course of their relationship, Lee became aware that Anstruther-Thomson's body was peculiarly responsive to the art and architecture she observed: when looking at a work of art, her breathing, pulse, posture and muscular tension altered. Lee encouraged Anstruther-Thomson to write

¹²⁰ Carlo Caballero, "'A Wicked Voice': On Vernon Lee, Wagner, and the Effects of Music', *Victorian Studies*, 35.4 (Summer 1992), 385–408 (p. 403).

¹²¹ See Burdett, 'The Subjective Inside Us', pp. 17–20.

¹²² For feminist accounts focussing on the place of sexual desire in this collaboration, see Kathy Alexis Psomiades, "'Still Burning from This Strangling Embrace": Vernon Lee on Desire and Aesthetics', in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. by Richard Dellamora (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), pp. 21–41; Diana Maltz, 'Engaging "Delicate Brains": From Working-Class Enculturation to Upper-Class Lesbian Liberation in Vernon Lee and Kit Anstruther-Thomson's Psychological Aesthetics', in *Women and British Aestheticism*, ed. by Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), pp. 211–29.

¹²³ Vernon Lee, with Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, 'Beauty and Ugliness' (Part I), *Contemporary Review*, 72 (October 1897), 544–69; (Part II), 72 (November 1897), 669–88, repr. in *Beauty and Ugliness and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912).

down an account of her response, so as to nurture an awareness of her bodily reactions.

In her essay, Lee argues that this reaction to aesthetic form represents an unconscious physical mimicry of such form. This bodily reaction leads in turn to the formation of an emotional response — for example, a sense of harmony and wellbeing or discomfort and constraint. For Lee, it is this aesthetic-emotional response that constitutes an observer's sense of whether an artwork is beautiful. The observer projects the emotions stimulated by the artwork back into the artwork itself, as if they belong to that artwork. Thus such aesthetic emotion — a sense of 'beauty' or otherwise — is, in fact, a product of the observer's bodily response to the artwork. The observer, in this manner, '*feels themselves into*' the artwork being observed. Lee suggests that this process by which our own bodily movements are attributed to external objects is reflected in the metaphors of action that we use to describe such objects: mountains are said to *rise up*, arches *span*, columns *carry*. We attribute to visual forms the bodily responses that are, in fact, elicited within us by observing such objects.

Lee's concept of the relationship between the body and aesthetic emotion follows that first set out by William James in his 1884 essay 'What is an Emotion?'.¹²⁴ James understood an 'emotion' to be the perception of physiological disturbance prompted by our surrounding environment. Earlier Victorian models of emotional response suggested that one's mental perception of an event gives rise to an emotion, and that this emotion in turn causes a bodily response: for example, *I cry because I feel the emotion of sorrow*. James reverses this: the emotion, he claims, is a product of the bodily change precipitated by the perception of an external event. *I feel sorry because I cry. I feel afraid because I tremble*. 'By an obvious analogy', Lee argued, 'the feeling of the various muscular strains, changes of equilibrium and respiratory and circulatory changes, might be considered as constituting the special aesthetic emotion.'¹²⁵ The body becomes

¹²⁴ William James, 'What Is an Emotion?', *Mind*, 9 (1884), 188–205 (pp. 189–90). This position became known as the 'James-Lange hypothesis'. The Danish physiologist Carl Lange formulated a near-identical theory of emotion independently of James.

¹²⁵ Vernon Lee, 'Recent Aesthetics', *Quarterly Review*, 199 (April 1904), 420–43 (p. 438).

the sole site of emotional production: 'a purely disembodied human emotion', James wrote, 'is a nonentity.'¹²⁶

In 'Beauty and Ugliness', Lee focusses primarily on the plastic arts — the realisation of form through bodily 'projection' is achieved through the *visual* observation of material objects, rather than, for example, *listening* to the immaterial form of music. Lee's 'Recent Aesthetics', published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1904, provides an overview of contemporary European developments in aesthetics and psychology.¹²⁷ In particular, it argues for similarities between the theory of aesthetic response propounded by Lee and those formulated by psychologists Karl Groos and Theodor Lipps. In this account, Lee broadly dismisses the 'backward condition' of 'the aesthetics of music' in terms of the field's engagement with 'the general advance of psychology'. Empirical understanding of the listener's response to music is hampered by 'the special difficulty of self-observation and the hopeless confusion of the terms employed' — the challenge of becoming conscious of one's physical reactions to musical stimulus and expressing clearly in language the nature of that reaction. Lee acknowledges the contributions of Carl Stumpf, Eduard Hanslick and Lionel Dauriac to psychological accounts of musical aesthetics.¹²⁸ But she ultimately concludes, somewhat dismissively, that 'little progress' has been made in the field since Edmund Gurney's 'masterly analysis', *The Power of Sound*, 'refuted all existing explanations without substituting any new ones'.¹²⁹ Lee turns then to focus solely on 'the arts appealing to the eye' on the grounds that they have 'proved less refractory to psychological investigation'.¹³⁰

Only in a later essay, 'The Riddle of Music', does Lee turn to address directly the application of ideas of *Einfühlung* to music. The aim of Lee's essay is to bring into line the formalism of Edmund Gurney and Eduard Hanslick with the 'most

¹²⁶ James, 'What Is an Emotion?', p. 194.

¹²⁷ Lee, 'Recent Aesthetics'.

¹²⁸ For an account of the breadth of Lee's reading in musical aesthetics see Shafquat Towheed, "'Music Is Not Merely for Musicians": Vernon Lee's Musical Reading and Response', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 40.1/2 (2010), 273–94.

¹²⁹ See Gurney, *The Power of Sound*. Lee reviewed *The Power of Sound* in 'Impersonality and Evolution in Music'. See Towheed, "'Music Is Not Merely for Musicians'", pp. 284–86, for an account of Lee's reading and annotation of *The Power of Sound*.

¹³⁰ Lee, 'Recent Aesthetics', p. 429.

plausible modern system of aesthetics' — that is, those systems of 'psychological aesthetics' formulated by Lipps, Groos and Lee herself. It is interesting to track the parallels that Lee draws between the ideas of these figures in the marginalia to the books on music collected in her personal library. Her annotations to Gurney's *The Power of Sound*, made between December 1895 and March 1898, and those to Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, made in 1901, make repeated reference to the similarities of the ideas expressed by these authors about aesthetic emotion and embodiment to those of William James, Lipps and Groos.¹³¹ Having broadly dismissed the significance of listeners' 'emotional' response to music, Lee turns to consider the question raised by the 'more noble half of the art': 'how musical form can affect us as beautiful or not; and how, apart from all coincident emotional suggestion, it should affect us at all'.¹³² Lee's 'speculation' on this topic takes her back to the idea of 'empathy'. Such a concept, Lee makes clear, is equally applicable to the formal appreciation of both visual arts and music. A statue, for example, may indeed have a material existence that a piece of music lacks, but this materiality does not constitute the form, for the form of the statue 'exists only in our act of reconstituting it through measurement, comparison, and reference to dimension and direction' — that is, the act of *feeling oneself into* the musical object. 'Musical form and visual form,' Lee suggests, 'have in common the essential fact of requiring a creative and recreative action of the mind, both being combinations of modes of movement and force, both being referable to our experiences of effort, impact, resistance, direction, velocity, and rhythm'.¹³³ In other words, when listening to music, we project into that music our bodily experiences of physical movement, drawing comparisons between the music we hear and our mental recollections of how our body moves. In this sense, we perceive musical form in spatial terms, akin to our appreciation of the lines and curves of a statue.

This act of self-projection, Lee argues, accounts for the sense of self-affirmation, vitality and moral healthiness arising from our encounter with the beauty of

¹³¹ See the copies of these volumes, with Lee's marginalia, held in the Vernon Lee Collection at the British Institute, Florence.

¹³² Lee, 'The Riddle of Music', p. 217.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

musical form. In the encounter with beautiful musical forms, the body becomes the site for the assertion and renewal of the self. Curiously, Lee's physiological aesthetics are silent as to the bodily effect of music that moves the listener not through its formal beauty, but through overwhelming *emotional* effect. What would it mean for the listener to project the self into the ecstatic emotional music of Marsyas, rather than the proportioned music of Apollo? Lee offers a response not in her scientific writings, but in her more impressionistic essays that capture the phenomenological experience of aesthetic response. Lee's essays repeatedly invoke masochistic imagery of the torn or wounded body to suggest the threat that the emotional intensity of certain forms of music — in particular, that of Richard Wagner — pose to the viability of the self. Such music, as noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, effects a 'stripping away [of] the soul's bone and muscle', akin to being 'paralysed' by a vivisector and 'turned inside out'.¹³⁴ In 'Chapelmaster Kreisler', Lee describes, in similar terms, those isolated moments of 'formless, meaningless' emotional excess in Mozart's operas that 'pierce the nerves like a blade'. They represent a 'return to the [...] *physically touching* music of early ages', achieving their effects not through formal beauty, but by something akin to a haptic intensity felt through the body.¹³⁵ This music gets under skin — piercing, stripping, cutting — in a manner that places the listener in the position of Marsyas as he is flayed.

In 'Marsyas in Flanders', Lee turns tentatively to sympathize with the flayed Marsyas as a figure of queer musical masochism. Her avowed preference for music of formal balance and restraint over emotional intensity and excess is momentarily suspended in order to strategically embrace music's affective power to dislodge, refuse, or challenge the way in which the desiring body is brought into discourse. The music of Marsyas offers an alternative form of (dis)embodiment that resists the inscription of 'homosexual' identity. Lee's 'queer comradeship' with Marsyas, in other words, is not one that seeks a redemptive community of homosexual 'outlaws', but rather resists those essentialist terms of identity upon which such a community might be founded.

¹³⁴ Lee, 'Beauty and Sanity', pp. 260-61; Lee, 'The Religious and Moral Status of Wagner', p. 873.

¹³⁵ Lee, 'Chapelmaster Kreisler', p. 123.

Arthur Symons: Disembodied Music

Music in the works of Arthur Symons becomes associated with a masochistic desire to become ‘inhuman’ — to abandon the materiality of the body, and embrace instead a dispersed subjectivity defined by ‘disembodiment’. In ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ (1893), Symons offers a well-known summation of the fleeting mode of subjectivity that such writing evokes: ‘to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul’.¹³⁶ Music, he suggests elsewhere, is ‘more perfectly disembodied’, it is ‘the one absolutely disembodied art’: it has, he paraphrases Pater, ‘got rid of its responsibilities to its material’. While the *literature* of decadence maintains some connection, even if a loosened one, to the particularities of subjectivity, tied as it is to a ‘human soul’, music, in contrast, might facilitate a more complete abandonment of the human subject.¹³⁷

In ‘Christian Trevalga’ (1902) and ‘Pachmann and the Piano’ (1902) Symons explores the implications of music’s ‘perfect disembodiment’ for the figure of the musician, presenting a mode of subjectivity defined by its complete ‘impersonality’.¹³⁸ For Karl Beckson, following Jan B. Gordon, ‘Christian Trevalga’ is ‘an allegory of the perils of a dehumanized aestheticism’, while Nick Freeman convincingly reads Symons’s text as dramatizing a ‘profound creative, psychological and sexual crisis’ in the life of its author.¹³⁹ When read alongside Symons’s other writings on music, ‘Christian Trevalaga’ emerges as propounding a model of ‘disembodied’ subjectivity that withdraws entirely from the surrounding world, effacing a sense of personality, so as to exist only in the entirely abstract world of music. Such texts speak powerfully to those aspects of contemporary queer theory, discussed in the introduction to this thesis, that have sought to explore modes of subjectivity defined by refusal, disappearance and

¹³⁶ Arthur Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (November 1893), 858–67 (p. 858).

¹³⁷ Arthur Symons, ‘The Problem of Richard Strauss’, in *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Constable, 1906), pp. 300–28 (p. 303); Symons, ‘On Writing About Music’, in *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (London: Constable, 1909) pp. 228–230 (p. 228).

¹³⁸ Arthur Symons, ‘Christian Trevalga’, in *Spiritual Adventures* (London: Constable, 1905), pp. 91–121, hereafter referenced in the text parenthetically; ‘Pachmann and the Piano’, in *Plays, Acting and Music*, pp. 235–56.

¹³⁹ Beckson, *Arthur Symons*, p. 219; Jan B. Gordon, ‘The Dialogue of Life and Art in Arthur Symons’ *Spiritual Adventures*’, *English Literature in Transition*, 12.3 (1969), 105–17; Nick Freeman, “‘Mad Music Rising’: Chopin, Sex, and Secret Language in Arthur Symons’ “Christian Trevalga””, *Victoriographies*, 1 (2011), 157–176 (p. 160).

withdrawal.¹⁴⁰ The queerness of the 'musical' self that drifts from the body lies in its refusal of a stable and solid identity, and its rejection of social connectedness.

The masochistic self-abandonment of Symons's texts on music is marked not by the ecstatic Dionysian pain or the unboundedness of the flayed Marsyas witnessed in Pater's and Lee's texts, but rather by the disconnection of self and body, in which the subject drifts free from its connection with the material world. Music in Symons's texts is ultimately anti-social: it reflects a mode of subjectivity that is in continual retreat from the world, a desire to subsume the self within aesthetic abstraction. Through the experience of music, Christian becomes entirely 'impersonal': he refuses to understand his sense of self as bounded by social interactions or responsibilities, becoming entirely disconnected from the world that surrounds him. Yet while the queerness of Symons's treatment of music lies in such shrinking refusals of the social, it also exists in a simultaneous desire to place the body beyond the taint of music's association with same-sex desire. The impulse to withdraw, shrink back or become diaphanous is motivated by a desire to disavow the intense physical embodiment of queer sexuality, particularly associated by Symons with the emotionalism of Tchaikovsky.

While Symons was largely self-taught, and generally self-deprecating about his musical talents, he nevertheless enjoyed playing a range of challenging repertoire on the piano throughout his life. As a youngster of nineteen, he enthused about his 'passion for Schumann' when playing the *Carnival*, while his particular love for the music of Chopin is attested to by his insistence in 1891 that George Moore, who was living near-by, must tune his piano so that he could play the composer's music to him.¹⁴¹ He began playing piano in 1880 at the age of fifteen, after having listened with rapt enthusiasm to a performance by his German music teacher of the 'Funeral March' from Chopin's second sonata (Op. 35). The young Symons appears to have lacked the patience for systematic musical practice — he soon abandoned 'scales and exercises' — but he immersed himself in the study of

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Love, *Feeling Backward*.

¹⁴¹ Arthur Symons, Letter to Churchill Osborne (13 November 1884), cited in Roger Lhombreaud, *Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography* (London: Unicorn Press, 1963), p. 297; Symons, Letter to Katherine Willard, in *Symons: Selected Letters*, pp. 74–76 (20 February 1891).

music more generally: 'when I was not reading a book I was reading a piece of music at the piano'.¹⁴²

While Symons's immediate social circle in later life was primarily literary, he nevertheless counted amongst his friends the noted early music revivalist Arnold Dolmetsch and the prodigiously musically talented Aubrey Beardsley, and was greatly admired by James Huneker, one of New York's most influential music critics. He was an enthusiastic Wagnerian, who travelled to Bayreuth in August 1897 and August 1899, and he particularly enjoyed playing transcriptions on the piano of Wagner's operas.¹⁴³ When a young Irish writer named James Joyce visited him in his London flat in December 1902, Symons entertained him by playing the Good Friday music from Wagner's *Parsifal*.¹⁴⁴ Symons wrote extensively on a variety of musical topics for several newspapers and journals in the early years of the twentieth century, ranging from evocative accounts of music-hall in *The Star* and *The Fortnightly Review*, to expositions of Wagner's theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the *Quarterly Review*, to short notices on recitals and symphonic concerts in the *Saturday Review of Politics Literature, Science, and Art*.¹⁴⁵ He collected his most significant pieces on classical music in two books specifically dedicated to the non-literary arts: *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906) and *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (1909).¹⁴⁶

'Christian Trevalga'

Symons completed 'Christian Trevalga' in the months after he was appointed classical music and drama critic for the *Academy* in early 1902. The story has its origins in Symons's attendance at a performance by the pianist Vladimir de Pachmann in February of that year. While the text is primarily a response to Pachmann's playing, it is also at least partially autobiographical, as Symons

¹⁴² Arthur Symons, 'A Prelude to Life', in *Spiritual Adventures* (London: Constable, 1905), pp. 5–65 (p. 27).

¹⁴³ See Symons, 'The Problem of Richard Strauss', pp. 212–13; Symons, Letter to Rhoda Bowser, *Symons: Selected Letters*, pp. 133–34 (29 June 1899); Symons, Letter to Julia Marlowe, *Symons: Selected Letters*, pp. 231–32 (2 April 1914).

¹⁴⁴ See *Symons: Selected Letters*, p. 118.

¹⁴⁵ For Symons and music hall see Barry Faulk, 'Camp Expertise: Arthur Symons, Music-Hall, and the Defence of Theory', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 28.1 (2000), 171–93; Arthur Symons, 'The Ideas of Richard Wagner', *Quarterly Review*, 203 (July 1905), 73–108.

¹⁴⁶ Arthur Symons, *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Constable, 1906); Arthur Symons, *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (London: Constable, 1909).

himself acknowledged in the unpublished manuscript 'The Genesis of Spiritual Adventures'.¹⁴⁷ The discussion that follows traces the masochistic self-abandonments that come to mark the experience of music in 'Christian Trevalga', before suggesting how the text might be understood in the light of Symons's negotiations of Pachmann's queer sexuality.

'Christian Trevalga' initially presents Christian's sensitivity to music's apparent aesthetic autonomy as an indication of his particular musical talent, but his experience of music is ultimately characterized by a series of increasingly isolating withdrawals towards disembodiment: the alienation of the child from his mother; the estrangement of the lover from the beloved; the impossibility of social connection when one communicates only in an entirely abstract non-verbal language; the effacement of personal feelings into impersonal abstraction. Each are figured in terms that see the tangible, visible world of the material body supplanted wholly by an imaginary aural one in which the body is cast adrift from any sense of its materiality.

The alienation of Christian from his mother is manifested both through their respective artistic activities — sculpture and music — and in their differing response to listening to music. Symons's text sets in opposition the tangible materiality of Christian's mother's artistry, with that of her son's disembodied aesthetic engagement: her 'tiny fingers' can 'pick out form', while his fingers at the piano 'pick out sound' (95). Christian's mother — 'so queer, half-absorbed, and busy about nothing' (94) — obsessively occupies herself with moulding small pellets of bread into the sculptural forms of 'little nude figures exquisitely proportioned' (93). While clearly eccentric, her sculptural artistry is nevertheless grounded in the social world of the familial and domestic, and the materiality of recreating and representing the body. She works at the kitchen table at teatime, her son observing her perfecting with her fingers the figurines' 'limbs and shoulder-blades' (93), rubbing milk into the bread to smooth over the cracks. The sculptural transformation of bread into a collection of figurines modelled on Classical statuary effects a Pagan reimagining of a Eucharistic transformation. Christian's obsessive piano practice, in contrast, sees him withdraw entirely from

¹⁴⁷ Arthur Symons, 'The Genesis of Spiritual Adventures', cited in Beckson, *Arthur Symons*, p. 218.

domestic sociability: he 'shuts himself' in a room 'at the top of the house' and has to be 'dragged out unwillingly to his meals, grudging the time when he had to sit quiet at the table' (98).

Symons's text also sets in opposition experiences of music that understand it through metaphors of embodiment with those that figure it in entirely abstract terms. Christian's mother hears in his performance of Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23, an evocation of 'two lovers, sheltering under trees in a wood, out of the rain which was falling around them'. This music conjures sensate bodies, alert to the touch of a raindrop on the skin. Christian's perception of music, in contrast, is entirely in terms of abstract 'contours and patterns' (95). When he plays music on the piano, it makes 'lines [...] never pictures' (95). Christian's mother's impressionistic response is, of course, subjective, but it nevertheless affords to her a vision of tender social connectedness, a scene of beneficent protection and mutual solace. As she listens to Christian's playing, she 'follow[s] their emotions' (96), entering into an empathetic connection with the products of her imagination. Christian's perception of the music is, in contrast, of a 'mathematical [...] pattern', wholly 'abstract' and 'not needing to have any of one's own feelings put into it' (96). Music still expresses to Christian the 'passion' of intense emotion, but it is not of a kind that allows him to bring himself closer to other people. A system that is closed off from the world, expressing only itself, music leaves him isolated and alienated from both the material world and those individuals who people it.

Despite his attempts to overcome through romance his isolation from the social world that surrounds him, Christian's disembodied musical abstraction renders him incapable of fulfilling, erotic love. His relationship with Rana Vaughan — an aspiring young pianist, in awe of his playing — comes closest to feeling like love, though he still keeps her at a distance. Symons's text presents her influence on Christian as one that fleetingly allows him to feel physically connected with the material world: 'in her, for a time, he seemed to touch real things' (105). Confronted with Rana's enthusiasm for 'all the beautiful and pleasant things [...] in life', Christian feels 'withered, shrivelled up, in body and soul, beside her magnificent acceptance of the world' (106). While she can enjoy the pleasures of

‘every form of art’, and the bodily thrill of physical activities such as skating and dancing, he remains a ‘prisoner of his own fingers’ (108), unable to surrender himself to anything more tangible than the abstract lines and curves of musical form.

Christian’s withdrawal into this disembodied music is also marked by his inability to communicate with others. His entirely ‘abstract’ (96) perception of music renders its ‘language’ (118) beyond that which can be expressed in words. Devoting himself more and more to the realm of music, Christian grows increasingly detached from the social world that surrounds him. Unable to attach ‘any expressible meaning’ to the music he plays, he is left entirely ‘tongue-tied’ when asked to articulate his experience of the music to which he dedicates his life (97). Symons’s text contrasts this cold, objective ideal of an ‘abstract’ response to music with a subjective intensity that is aligned with the warmth of the living, desiring body: Christian is aware that his music ‘seem[s] to speak’ to his audiences ‘from somewhere inside their own hearts, in the little voices of their blood’ (103). Yet he himself simply cannot experience the aesthetic in this way. He is unable to communicate with people who express themselves in the language of visceral feeling and embodied emotion — the ‘voices’ of ‘hearts’ and ‘blood’ — because his only way of experiencing the world is through the abstract form of music.

Attentive only to the abstract ‘idea’ of the music itself, his own ‘personal feelings’ come to mean ‘less and less’ to him, ‘until he seemed hardly to have any personal feelings at all’ (97). Christian consciously rejects those models of musical understanding arising from German Romanticism, discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, that afford to music the power of most fully articulating human subjectivity. Music, he concludes, is ‘something more’ than ‘the soul of humanity expressing itself in melody’ or ‘the audible dramatisation of human life’ (96). In its place, he asserts an extreme counter-position that aligns music with the effacement and denial of embodied subjectivity. Subsuming the self entirely into the aesthetically autonomous realm of absolute music, Christian’s experience of music becomes one of complete self-denial, in which his embodied experience is entirely eradicated by the impersonality of abstract aesthetic production.

Such a descent into the purely abstract domain of music is marked by the manner in which his experience of the material world — grounded in visual perception — is gradually supplanted by his pre-occupation with his experience of immaterial sound. 'Outward things' come to 'mean very little to him', and any visual impressions of his surrounding environment quickly 'vanish from his memory' (97). On 'long walks with his father', he attends only to the 'sea-cries' he hears around him, noticing nothing of the 'movement, the colour of the sea', and entirely 'indifferent' to the spectacle of 'sunsets over the sea' (98). Such is his total absorption in the aural that his experience of the visual becomes almost entirely curtailed: 'it was as if he had been walking through underground passages, with only a little faint light on the roadway in front of his feet' (98). Christian's pre-occupation with sound also signals a solipsistic turn inwards to the isolated and buried 'underground' self.

The depletion of Christian's sensorium is marked not just by a dwindling interest in the visual but also by a shift in his perception of touch. Symons's text turns repeatedly to metaphors of failed tactile contact to characterize Christian's gradual loss of a sense of embodied selfhood. Pre-occupied with perfecting musical details 'hardly *tangible* enough to put into words' (109, italics added), his awareness of Rana Vaughan's living reality becomes for him so illusory that in their final estrangement she 'drift[s] away from him' (109), wraith-like and insubstantial. With her departure, Christian loses his 'last hold on the world' (109). In her place, it is 'sound' that '[begins] to take hold of him, like a slave who has overcome his master' (110). As Christian descends into delirium, he wanders the streets of London, hoping that immersing himself in a crowd of bodies will allow him to 'take hold of something real': 'he seemed somehow to be slipping away from himself, dissolving into an uneasy vacancy' (113):

I can see no reason he said to himself, why I am here rather than there, why these atoms which know one another so little, or have lost some recognition of themselves, should coalesce in this particular body, standing still where all is in movement! [...] I am losing my sense of material things. (114)

Most strikingly, Christian's detachment is marked by an increasing desire for a complete disembodiment in his musical performance. His preoccupation with the invisible formal structures of musical sound — rather than the tangible, material world of the visual — means that his experience of his body's situatedness in the world that surrounds him is always a precarious one: 'He had never known what it was to feel the earth solid under his feet' (91). At the text's opening, Christian waits to hear from the doctor 'whether he might still keep his place in the world' (91), a threat that speaks as much about a paranoia relating to the dissolution of the self into insubstantial immateriality as it does the fear of incarceration on grounds of insanity. Indeed, the only aspect of Christian's experience that acts to underwrite his connection with the material world that surrounds is the tactile contact between his body and the piano: 'had the man gone out of him [...] when his fingers were no longer on the keyboard?', he asks himself (91).

He derides those virtuoso pianists whose performances are defined by the physicality of their 'athleticism' and 'agility', who treat the piano as 'an anvil to hammer sparks out of', their hands crashing on the keys 'as if iron has struck iron' (100). In its place Christian proposes a mode of pianistic technique that scarcely seems to allow for any physical contact between the player's body and his instrument:

When I am playing the piano I am always afraid of hurting a sound. I believe that sounds are living beings flying about us like motes in the air, and that they suffer if we clutch them roughly. Have you ever tried to catch a butterfly without brushing the dust off its wings? Every time I press a note I feel as if I were doing that, and it is an agony to me. I am certain that I have hurt fewer sounds than any other pianist. (118)

Symons evokes the delicacy of pianistic technique that he considers ideal for playing the music of Chopin. In his sketch of Pachmann's playing, he suggests that Chopin must be played with 'a tremulous delicacy of intensity, as if it were a living thing on whose nerves one were operating, and as if every touch might mean life or death'.¹⁴⁸ Reflecting on his own pianistic technique, Symons noted that: 'I

¹⁴⁸ Symons, 'Pachmann and the Piano', p. 238.

learned to touch the piano as if one were caressing a living being [...] in answered me in an intimate and affectionate voice'.¹⁴⁹ In these texts both Chopin's music and the instrument upon which it is played are compared to an infinitely vulnerable, sensitive physical body. The pianist's fingers are afforded the destructive ability to inflict pain, and the pianist himself is overcome with a mix of terror and guilt about doing so. In this fear of destructive tactile contact, Christian withdraws further from embodied materiality. He implicitly envisages an ideal mode of performance in which the pianist's touch becomes so delicately unobtrusive that it need not make contact with the piano at all.

Such is Christian's sense of detachment that he recalls the earlier events of his life as if watching 'an act of a play', unsure when the 'curtain was to come down'. As Symons's text progresses, the bar lines that mark the division of the music Christian plays become transformed into the 'bars' that 'imprison' him in the abstract world of music (108). Just 'as he would never be able to look through the bars' of music to find a concrete, communicable musical meaning beneath them, he is likewise unable to see through the 'bars' of a prison of perception that renders opaque to him anything that extends beyond the formal abstraction of music.

Vladimir de Pachmann

As noted above, 'Christian Trevalga' represents an amalgam of aspects of Symons's own experiences with his recollections of the playing of the Polish concert pianist Vladimir de Pachmann. Symons also wrote several articles on Pachmann, among which are 'Pachmann and Paderewski' (1908) and 'Pachmann: Pianist' (1915).¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, there is little in Symons's accounts of Pachmann to suggest the eccentric buffoon disparaged by the likes of George Bernard Shaw, who referred dismissively to his 'well-known pantomimic performance, with accompaniments by Chopin'.¹⁵¹ Even whilst acknowledging Pachmann's status as

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Symons, 'Marcelle and Other Parisian Diversions', in *The Memoirs of Arthur Symons: Art and Life in the 1890s*, ed. by Karl Beckson (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1977), p. 146.

¹⁵⁰ 'Pachmann and Paderewski', *Saturday Review*, 106 (11 July 1908) 44–55; 'Pachmann: Pianist', *Vanity Fair*, 5 (December 1915), 55.

¹⁵¹ George Bernard Shaw, in *Star* (19 August 1889), cited in Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 332.

one the great Chopin interpreters, James Huneker labelled him the ‘Chopinzee’ on account of the extravagant gestures and grimaces he exhibited whilst he played.¹⁵²

More significantly for this discussion, Pachmann’s homosexuality seems to have been something of an open secret in musical circles. As Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko observe in their biography of Pachmann, the pianist was surprisingly indiscreet about his same-sex desires. In concerts, he was known to single out particularly ‘handsome, well dressed young men’ in the audience, addressing them and playing to them directly.¹⁵³ There is ‘no doubt’, Blickstein and Benko suggest, that Pachmann enjoyed an ‘active [...] homosexual life as he toured, indulging in casual sex’.¹⁵⁴ In a review of November 1893, James Huneker complained that Pachmann played the ‘Chiarina’ movement of Robert Schumann’s *Carnaval* ‘as if [he] was venting his *hatred of the sex* upon poor Clara in F minor’ (*italics added*).¹⁵⁵ Huneker’s description might be dismissed as merely a reflection of the pervasive casual misogyny of its time. Yet it is interesting to note that Huneker would reproach Tchaikovsky — a composer whose queer sexuality caused the critic some discomfort — in similar terms a number of years later: ‘he was [...] morbid in his *dislike of women*’.¹⁵⁶ In both instances, sexual deviance is signalled not by a preference for same-sex attraction, but rather by an aversion to the opposite sex.

It seems unlikely that Symons was completely unaware of Pachmann’s sexual reputation when he came to write about him in 1902. Despite the fact that Symons did not see Pachmann perform until February 1902, Pachmann had been

¹⁵² James Huneker first used the epithet in the *Musical Courier*, 18 (March 1891), cited in Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko, *Chopin’s Prophet: The Life of Pianist Vladimir de Pachmann* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2013), p. 102.

¹⁵³ Blickstein and Benko, *Chopin’s Prophet*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁵⁵ James Huneker, in *Musical Courier* (8 November 1893), cited in Blickstein and Benko, *Chopin’s Prophet*, p. 127. The ‘Chiarina’ movement – a musical evocation of Clara Schumann – is in fact in C minor.

¹⁵⁶ James Huneker, *Mezzotints in Modern Music: Brahms, Tchaikowsky, Chopin, Richard Strauss, Liszt, and Wagner* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1899), p. 87. For a discussion of the manner in which the reception of Tchaikovsky’s music at the *fin de siècle* was coloured by emerging awareness of his homosexuality, see Malcolm Hamrick Brown, ‘Tchaikovsky and his Music in Anglo-American Criticism, 1890s–1950s’, in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 134–49.

playing regularly in London since his debut in May 1882. If such gossip was circulating in London's artistic community, it seems likely that Symons himself would be privy to it, not least because he was close friends with many of those who wrote extensively about London's queer sub-cultures around that time. Symons may have perhaps remained uncertain about the nature of Pachmann's same-sex desire when he wrote 'Christian Trevalga' and 'Pachmann: Pianist' in the opening years of the twentieth century. His encounter with the pianist in December 1915 certainly removed all doubt. When he and Symons met in London, Pachmann 'uttered Rabelaisian words [...] of an unspeakable nature', a scene recounted by Symons in a letter to his friend and benefactor John Quinn:

He: *I love Fucking*: with an immense chuckle. I: Yes, I also. *Mais fornication simple et extraordinaire!* Whereupon he actually hugged me in his arms, rubbed his cheek on mine — with bursts of Rabelaisian laughter. I veritably imagine his desire was — for *me* — to sleep with him that night! (I might — I might not, as [Augustus] John might have said on such an occasion!).¹⁵⁷

Here, Symons playfully toys with the idea of indulging Pachmann's sexual advances. Yet in both 'Christian Trevalga' and his other writings on Pachmann, Symons engages in a strategic disavowal of the possibility of such homosexual desire by aligning music with a disembodied, formalist detachment. Christian's disembodied musicality is placed in opposition to prevalent associations between musicality, emotionalism and sexual deviance explored in chapter 1 of this thesis. In an oscillating movement of attraction and repulsion, 'Christian Trevalga' and 'Pachmann and the Piano' see Symons merge aspects of himself with Pachmann, whilst ultimately negating the threat of Pachmann's queerness by insisting on the 'disembodied' nature of his artistry. In Symons's accounts, Pachmann's performances are marked by a complete effacement of subjectivity: in the 'very serious game' of music-making, in the process of becoming the 'comrade' of music, he becomes 'inhuman'.¹⁵⁸ He has 'sold [his] soul for beauty' — a beauty that effaces both the material body and the embodied self: it 'is not of

¹⁵⁷ Arthur Symons, Letter to John Quinn (2 December 1915), cited in Beckson, *Arthur Symons*, p. 289.

¹⁵⁸ Symons, 'Pachmann and the Piano', p. 238.

the soul, is not of the flesh'.¹⁵⁹ In characterising this 'soulless' beauty, Symons returns repeatedly to images that speak of a hard, detached objectivity that evoke an emotionally desiccated restraint and calculated intensity: Pachmann's 'fingers have in them a cold magic'; his playing is marked by a 'frozen tenderness' akin to a 'bright crystal or a diamond'; his music is like 'fiery ice', that 'chills us a little' as we listen.¹⁶⁰ Most striking is Symons's repeated insistence on the 'inhumanity' of both Pachmann and the music he plays: 'Pachmann is inhuman, and, music too, is inhuman'.¹⁶¹ His playing has in it 'something fantastically inhuman', he has 'venture[d] outside humanity, into music'. Pachmann's command of the keys under his fingers is dependent on a paradoxical denial of the fleshly reality of the physical body: where his 'music turns towards humanity it slips from between his hands'.¹⁶² In Symons's texts, music's 'inhumanity' represents the demands of an extreme aesthetic autonomy in which the 'obliteration' of content, as it disappears into form, also stands for the masochistic abandonment of the self.

In 'Beethoven' (1906), Symons celebrates the musician in similar terms as the ideal of the 'impersonal artist'.¹⁶³ The musician, he suggests, 'can do without life', can remain entirely 'uncontaminated by life'.¹⁶⁴ Like Christian, Beethoven's musical genius is a product of his total solipsistic withdrawal from the social world that surrounds him. His 'waking life [is] a kind of somnambulism', for he is 'concerned only with [...] the inner world'.¹⁶⁵ His success as a composer is predicated on this total 'impersonal' detachment: the only periods in his life marked by 'an interruption in his unceasing labour' were those where 'personal emotion gripped him, and he could not loosen the grasp'.¹⁶⁶ Such is the extent to which Beethoven's artistic success is contingent on complete detachment that 'it is well for him', Symon's text concludes, 'if he never awakens'.¹⁶⁷ Symons similarly characterizes Pachmann as playing Chopin 'somnambulistically'.¹⁶⁸ In

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 239 and 247.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 247, 240 and 251.

¹⁶³ Arthur Symons, 'Beethoven', in *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Constable, 1906), pp. 192–222.

¹⁶⁴ Symons, 'Beethoven', p. 200.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 196.

¹⁶⁸ Symons, 'Pachmann and the Piano', p. 238

characterising these musical figures as ‘somnambulist[s]’ — existing perpetually on the margins between sleep and wakefulness — Symons gestures to Walter Pater’s similar evocation of an idealized ‘aesthetic type’ in his ‘Poems by William Morris’ (1868):

Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them. Surely, such loves were too fragile and adventurous to last more than for a moment.¹⁶⁹

Here, Pater’s characterisation of the culture of Provençal love approaches the type of personality he describes in the broadly contemporaneous essay ‘Diaphaneité’, delivered to the Old Mortality Society in Oxford in 1864. Symons, an enthusiastic acolyte of Pater, would almost certainly have read both pieces carefully: Pater’s review of Morris was republished as ‘Aesthetic Poetry’ in 1889 in *Appreciations*, which Symons reviewed appreciatively in the *Athenaeum*, while ‘Diaphaneité’ was published for the first time in *Miscellaneous Studies* in 1895.¹⁷⁰

In the works of Beethoven’s late style, Symons suggests, he articulates most completely this sense of aesthetic impersonal detachment. The imperative for constant refinement, as aesthetic form itself moves towards an ultimate state of disappearance, stages at the level of the aesthetic the masochistic self-denial desired by the psyche. This music is the product of a ‘master who has proceeded by one exclusion after another, until he has refined sound to its last shade, or sharpened it to its ultimate point’.¹⁷¹ In Beethoven’s last string quartets — String Quartet No. 12 in E flat major, Op. 127, to String Quartet No. 16 in F major, Op. 136 — Symons suggests that ‘form is so completely mastered that form, as limit, disappears, and something new, strange, incalculable, arises and exists’.¹⁷² Once

¹⁶⁹ Walter Pater, ‘Poems by William Morris’, *Westminster Review* 34.2 (October 1868), 300–12 (p. 302).

¹⁷⁰ Arthur Symons, unsigned review of Pater’s *Appreciations*, *Athenaeum* (14 December 1889), 813–14.

¹⁷¹ Symons, ‘Beethoven’, p. 216.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

again, Symons's imagery of sculpted refinement, of disappearance and effacement, recalls that of Pater.

Elsewhere in his writings on music, Symons presents a musical ideal defined in terms of disintegration, vaporization and disappearance: the solidity of the material body eschewed in favour of the dispersion of light, breath and air. In Symons's portrait of Paderewski, he suggests that the pianist — a performer best known for an energetic, theatrical style quite different to Pachmann's — is at his best when playing Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata 'impersonally', rather than Liszt's Sonata in B minor with 'so much personal abandonment'.¹⁷³ In these moments of 'impersonality', Paderewski is transformed into 'a faithful and obedient shadow', appearing, as if observed 'from a great distance', like an 'apparition', his aspect 'mysteriously [...] full of light'.¹⁷⁴ Paderewski, in this respect, becomes akin to one of what Heather Love identifies as Pater's 'diaphanous types' — a subject defined by its shrinking self-effacement.¹⁷⁵ While, for Pater, music is defined by the airy diffuseness of 'aspiration', Symons presents Paderewski's Beethoven in terms that similarly evoke the movement of breath: 'his playing is in the true sense an *inspiration*'.¹⁷⁶ In his essay on 'The Meiningen Orchestra', Symons once again turns to a metaphor of breath, drawing an explicit comparison between the abstract purity of the eponymous ensemble's musical performance style and that of Pachmann. Here, the 'faint, delicate music' of these players 'just came into existence, breathed a little, and was gone'.¹⁷⁷

Musical Disembodiment: Beyond the Queer Touch

The insistent withdrawal of the self that aligns music in these texts with 'disembodiment' is partially motivated by a paranoid desire to escape the embodied emotionalism of music associated with homosexual desire (as discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis). Symons's Beethoven escapes into the realm of pure music so as to avoid the sexual temptation of his 'unspeakable nephew'; his essay on Arnold Dolmetsch contrasts the queer sound of Tchaikovsky with

¹⁷³ Arthur Symons, 'Paderewski', in *Plays, Acting and Music*, pp. 257–66 (pp. 264–65).

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁷⁵ Love, *Feeling Backward*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ Symons, 'Paderewski', p. 259, italics added.

¹⁷⁷ Arthur Symons, 'The Meiningen Orchestra', in *Plays, Acting and Music*, pp. 283–88 (p. 285).

the safe impersonality of early music; Christian Trealva is uncomfortable at the touch of Tchaikovsky, and is disturbed by dreams of half-naked men. In Symons's writings on music, the 'impersonal' (or 'inhuman') detachment that defines the musical practice of Christian, Pachmann and Beethoven is set in opposition to the 'feverish' musical emotionalism of Tchaikovsky, aligned with the threat of homosexuality. In asserting absolute music's aesthetic autonomy — its disinterested 'frozen tenderness' — Symons seeks to place it beyond the taint of a subjective emotionalism associated with deviant sexuality. This assertion is, in turn, a masochistic gesture of ascetic self-effacement that sees the denial of the desiring body.

In 'Beethoven', the composer's complete 'somnambulistic' withdrawal from the world allows him to remove himself from the queer temptation posed by his 'unspeakable nephew'. It would, of course, be reductive to insist too readily on reading every reference to the 'unspeakable' in post-Wilde trial literature as a coded reference to what E. M. Forster's Maurice calls "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort".¹⁷⁸ Yet in the case of Beethoven's nephew, there is contemporaneous evidence to suggest that he was associated in queer sub-cultures with some form of homosexual scandal. Edward Prime-Stevenson's *The Intersexes*, for example, attributes to Beethoven an 'idealized homosexuality', suggesting that his 'unworthy nephew Carl [...] sought to extort money from [him], on threats to disclose an homosexual relationship'.¹⁷⁹ Symons's Beethoven retreats into the abstract world of absolute music in order to achieve an ascetic 'disembodiment' that effaces the threat of homosexual desire.

In 'A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert' (1909), Symons sets up in opposition to the 'inhuman' music of Pachmann and the 'impersonal' early music of Arnold Dolmetsch the 'pathetic' and 'disturbed' music of Tchaikovsky.¹⁸⁰ Symons's text repeatedly aligns Tchaikovsky's music with those markers of effeminacy which, as Alan Sinfield and Joseph Bristow have shown, became inextricably linked to

¹⁷⁸ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁹ Prime Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 396.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur Symons, 'A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert', in *Plays, Acting and Music*, pp. 267–75 (p. 271).

same-sex desire in late-Victorian England.¹⁸¹ Tchaikovsky's 'feverish' music is defined by the 'touch of unmanliness'.¹⁸² J. S. Bach's Passions articulate a 'vehement and mighty sorrow', a mode of emotional expression that, in its stern forcefulness, maintains a conventional masculine reserve. Tchaikovsky's expressions of grief are, in contrast, 'like the whimpering of a child'. He is incapable of emotional 'reticence' or 'self-control': overcome by his unhappiness, he 'weeps floods of tears' and 'beats his breast', unable to distance himself from the 'misery of the moment'.¹⁸³ In other respects, Symons derides the Slavic character of Tchaikovsky's music in terms that align it with discourses of degeneracy, disparaging the composer for 'deform[ing] the rhythms of nature with caprices of half-civilised impulses'.¹⁸⁴ The failure of Tchaikovsky's music, Symons suggests, lies precisely in his inability to achieve the emotional detachment that characterizes the artistry of Pachmann or Beethoven: incapable of immersing himself in 'abstract thought', Tchaikovsky can 'never get far enough from his nerves to look calmly at his own discontent'.¹⁸⁵

'Christian Trealva' displays similar uneasiness about Tchaikovsky's queer emotionalism. Symons's text indicates Christian's discomfort about his encounter with Tchaikovsky through a disjunctive shift in narrative perspective — a shift unique in the course of the text — that sees the text's focalisation momentarily change from Christian's to Tchaikovsky's:

That year in London, the loneliness, poverty, labour of it; the great day of the competition, when he played behind the curtain, and Rubinstein, sitting among the professors, silenced every hesitation with his strong approval; the three years of hard daily work, the painful perfecting of everything that he had sketched out for himself; life, as he had lived it, a queer, silent, sullen, not unattractive boy, among the students in whom he took so little interest; all this passed before him in a single flash of memory. He had gone abroad, at the expense of the college; had travelled

¹⁸¹ Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*; Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995).

¹⁸² Symons, 'A Reflection', p. 271.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

in Germany and Austria; had extorted the admiration of Brahms, who had said, 'I hate what you play, and I hate how you play it, but you play the piano.' Tschaikowsky was in Vienna; he had taken a warm personal liking to the unresponsive young Englishman, who seemed to be always frowning, and looking at you distrustfully from under his dark, overhanging eyebrows. It was not to the musician that he was unresponsive, as he was to the musician in Brahms, the German doctor of music in spectacles, that peered out of those learned, intellectual scores. He felt Tschaikowsky with his nerves, all that suffering music without silences, never still and happy, like most other music, at all events sometimes. But the man, when he walked arm in arm with him, seemed excessive, a kind of uneasy responsibility.¹⁸⁶

Focalized through Christian's perspective, the preceding clauses are marked by quasi-anaphoric repetitions in the pluperfect tense ('he had sketched', 'he had lived', 'he had gone abroad', 'had travelled', etc.). When this formulation is repeated ('he had taken a warm personal liking'), the reader initially assumes that it sustains Christian's focalisation, only for it to become apparent, when reference is made to the 'young Englishman', that the text has assumed the point of view of Tchaikovsky. Other indicators — 'seemed', 'you' — similarly draw the reader's attention to this unexpected shift in Symons's free indirect discourse. The change in focalisation effects a momentary disorientation, tacitly inferring the queer implications of Tchaikovsky's 'warm personal liking' for the young man by positioning Christian as the object of the composer's gaze, whilst simultaneously hinting at Christian's own discomfort. The predatory Tchaikovsky, Symons's texts suggest, convinces himself that Christian is 'always [...] looking' at him, even if he ultimately remains 'distrustful' and 'unresponsive' to the composer's attention. While Christian feels the draw of Tchaikovsky's 'suffering music', he is repulsed by the 'excessive', 'uneasy' queer sexuality of 'the man'. If the 'nerves' that define Tchaikovsky's music align it with sexual degeneracy, Symons's reference to Tchaikovsky walking 'arm in arm' with Christian is similarly suggestive of the composer's sexual deviance. Oscar Wilde,

¹⁸⁶ Symons, 'Christian Trevalga', pp. 100–02.

for example, scored out Basil Hallward's reference to walking 'home from the club *arm in arm*' with Dorian when he came to redraft *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1891, tactfully removing some of the more homoerotically suggestive aspects of the 1890 text.¹⁸⁷ Later in the text, Christian is distressed by a dream which seems similarly pre-occupied by the threat of the queer body. He finds himself 'on the island of Portland, among the convicts', where he sees an array of 'cucumber-frames on the ground, and several convicts were laid out asleep in each, half-naked, and packed together head to heel' (115). Bare male flesh is brought into close physical contact, surreally constrained within a structure associated with a conspicuously phallic vegetable. Symons's text surely gestures, if only obliquely, to the imprisonment of Wilde seven years before. Confronted with this sight, Christian suddenly 'remember[s] the woman' (115), and desperately seeks out Rana once again.

If Symons's text places Christian beyond the threatening queerness of Tchaikovsky, it is nevertheless curious to note the close parallels between the terms in which Symons describes Christian's appearance and those he would later use to evoke the appearance of John Addington Symonds. Christian is marked by 'the sympathetic sullenness of his face', defined by 'a certain painful sensibility which shot like distressed nerves across his cheeks and forehead and tugged at the restless corners of his eyelids'. In 1924, Symons would recollect 'the morbid, disquieting, nervous, contorted painful expression' written on the face of John Addington Symonds, dwelling in particular on the 'the abnormal, almost terrible fixity of his eyes, as restless as the man himself'.¹⁸⁸ In the figure of Christian, Symons conflates not only himself and the conspicuously queer Pachmann, but also the markers of the pathologized, deviant body that Symons observes in John Addington Symonds. Christian's 'enigmatical reluctance to speak out' — his introverted, solipsistic inability to communicate — finds a

¹⁸⁷ Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, p. 14; see Joseph Bristow, 'Introduction', p. liii, italics added.

¹⁸⁸ Arthur Symons, 'A Study of John Addington Symonds', in *The Memoirs of Arthur Symons: Art and Life in the 1890s*, ed. by Karl Beckson (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1977), pp. 115–21 (p. 115).

curious parallel in John Addington Symonds's letter to Symons in June 1892, in which he laments that he had 'never spoken out' about his homosexuality.¹⁸⁹

Music's disembodiment in Symonds's work can best be understood as a strategy for refusing an embodied materiality that taints musical experience with sexual abnormality. The queerness of music in Pater's 'Denys L'Auxerrois' and Lee's 'Marsyas in Flanders' similarly lies in its masochistic and anti-social repudiation of certain forms of embodiment. For all three writers, the embodied nature of aesthetic response makes music a privileged site at which to stage an anti-humanist challenge to the inscription on the body of emergent homosexual identity. Such an approach offers a more nuanced account of the significance of music in queer life experience: rather than insistently affirming homosexual identities and communities, music functions to disavow those identities with which certain subjects, such as Pater and Lee, may feel themselves at odds. The next chapter turns to consider the queer investment in musical disembodiment from a different perspective, examining the significance of the child's singing voice in late-Victorian queer literature. The attachment to the 'pure' and 'ethereal' voice of the chorister represents another way in which *fin-de-siècle* queer texts negotiate questions of bodily materiality, desire and sexual identity through the experience of music.

¹⁸⁹ Symonds, *Letters*, III, 691 (June 1892).

CHAPTER 3: Disembodied Voices: The Victorian Chorister and Pederastic Listening

— Et ô, ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole!

Paul Verlaine, 'Parsifal'¹

In the early 1890s, both John Addington Symonds and Arthur Symons were fascinated by Paul Verlaine's sonnet 'Parsifal' — in particular, by its final line, which dwells upon the voices of singing children. Symonds enthused to Symons that it was 'a line [to] treasure forever', whilst, nevertheless, noting his reservations to Horatio Forbes Brown that 'fine as it is, [it] looks like it [...] must be rather of the sickly school'.² In an article on Verlaine, Symons praised the poem as a 'triumph [of] amazing virtuosity', echoing the sentiments of his friend George Moore, who in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886) exclaimed that he 'kn[ew] of no more perfect thing than this sonnet'.³ With its quasi-chiasmic repetition of assonant vowel sounds, Verlaine's closing line captures the rise heavenwards of the ethereal voices of Wagner's off-stage choristers, resounding above the stage at the conclusion of the opera. The hiatus with which the line opens functions as a sigh of renunciation, as the listeners abandon themselves to the inexpressible force of the transcendental. In Verlaine's sonnet, these children's voices become the epitome of the 'disembodied voice' that Symons sees as so characteristic of Decadent poetics.⁴ They sing of the delicate immateriality of spiritual experience, the transient fragility of existence.

Curiously, when Symonds first recalled the line — in the letter to Horatio Forbes Brown cited above — he misremembered it, so that the children do not sing out of sight, in the dome of a cathedral ('dans la coupole'), but are rendered more immediately present 'in the chorus' ('dans la chœur'). Symonds's mistake is a

¹ Paul Verlaine, 'Parsifal', in *Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. by Martin Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 155.

² Symonds, Letter to Arthur Symons, *Letters*, III, 691 (13 June 1892); Symonds, Letter to Horatio Forbes Brown, *Letters*, III, 571 (27 April 1891).

³ Arthur Symons, 'Paul Verlaine', *National Review*, 19 (June 1892), 501–15 (p. 510); George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*, 3rd edn (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1889), p. 111.

⁴ Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', p. 858.

significant one because it points to a broader tension in his own writings, and in Victorian culture more generally, between the child's singing voice as a disembodied emblem of idealized beauty and the bodily materiality of a singing voice that becomes the object of 'sickly' desire. Verlaine's final line awakens in Symonds the memory of his own experiences as a young man, in which the voice of a chorister — singing before him 'dans la chœur' — first prompted the stirrings of his queer sexual desire.

Symonds's desires for the singing voices of pre-pubescent boys can best be understood by situating them within the wider Victorian context of eroticized childhood innocence, whilst also having regard to insights provided by psychoanalytic theories of voice. In doing so, it becomes possible to articulate the significance of ideas of *disembodiment* — the denial of the body — that attach to such voices. Drawing attention to the manner in which the vocal 'innocence' of the chorister is produced reveals the complicity of Victorian religious institutions in indirectly contributing to the eroticisation of children. More generally, the pederastic listening practices engaged in by Symonds and his contemporaries presents a challenge to the frequent romanticisation in queer studies of the singing voice as a space in which sexual desire might be freely and unproblematically explored.⁵

Recent work in queer studies has explored, in a variety of ways, the significance of the singing voice in articulations of the queer desiring body. The queer potential of gender-indeterminate voices that refuse to match their sexed bodies, such as that of the castrato, has been explored by a number of critics.⁶ As noted above, for example, Patricia Pulham has argued that the voice of the castrato in Vernon Lee's 'A Wicked Voice' is a 'potent symbol of [lesbian] empowerment'.⁷ From a more general perspective, Roland Barthes's paeans to the pleasures of the

⁵ The term 'pederastic' is used here to denote both the age difference between the child singer and adult listener, and the manner in which this listening experience becomes eroticized. In this context, it does not purport to reflect the wider associations — particularly in Symonds's writings — with the specifically Ancient Greek sense of 'paiderastia'.

⁶ See for example Joke Dame, 'Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato', in *Queering the Pitch*, pp. 139–53; Emily Wilbourne, 'The Queer History of the Castrato', in *The Oxford Handbook of Queerness and Music*, ed. by Fred Maus and Sheila Whiteley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁷ Pulham, 'The Castrato and the Cry'.

embodied singing voice in essays such as ‘Le Grain de la Voix’ (‘The Grain of the Voice’) form part of what D. A. Miller has called the ‘gay male cultural project of resurrecting the flesh’.⁸ Freya Jarman-Ivens has examined those disjunctive and failing bodies whose modes of vocal production act to challenge the ideology of the ‘natural’ voice in a way that reveals the voice as a ‘queer space’ through which non-normative sexual identities might be articulated.⁹ Wayne Koestenbaum’s *The Queen’s Throat* has playfully celebrated the operatic voice — particularly the female voice — as a flamboyant emblem of liberated sexual desire.¹⁰ For Koestenbaum, the emotionally overwhelming experience of listening to the operatic voice dissolves the safe boundaries of subjectivity in a way that might liberate and empower the queer listener. The intense identification of queer listeners with the operatic diva arises, he suggests, because the diva’s forcefully visceral voice offers a space in which desire is triumphantly and proudly theatricalized. Such work has often appeared to suggest that the (queer) pleasures one might discover in the singing voice are limitless. Yet, in doing so, such critics have often overlooked modes of queer vocal consumption that do not contribute to such a utopian narrative of sexual liberation. Turning to the example of the chorister’s voice not only challenges the prevalent idealisation of the singing voice as a ‘queer space’, but also allows for the renewed focus on the queer desire for those voices which reject and eschew — rather than affirm — the materiality of the body.

The first section of this chapter situates the fetishization of the chorister’s voice amongst wider Victorian discourses of childhood innocence. Drawing upon late-Victorian vocal treatises, it proceeds to examine the process of vocal training through which the ‘ethereal’ voice of the Victorian chorister was produced. The second section turns to examine a number of literary texts that focus on the chorister’s voice, drawing attention to paradoxical manner in which the chorister’s voice functions simultaneously to assert and disavow their embodied presence. The discussion then proceeds to a more detailed case study, examining

⁸ D. A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (University of California Press, 1992), pp. 31–32.

⁹ Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹⁰ Koestenbaum, *The Queen’s Throat*.

the significance of the chorister's voice and body in the writings of Symonds. The third section turns particular attention on the figure of the 'breaking voice', as an emblem of queer loss and transience. The final section offers an alternative theoretical perspective on the idea of the child's voice as a desired object of loss by examining aspects of Symonds's letters and *Memoirs* in the light of psychoanalytic theories of the voice.

In drawing attention to the problematics of such pederastic vocal consumption, the discussion that follows draws upon recent work in queer studies calling for closer engagement with those shameful and embarrassing aspects of queer history that many in the queer community today might prefer to forget.¹¹ Writing queer history has long been recognized as an important process through which modern queer identities are constructed and articulated.¹² Indeed, Symonds's own works of queer history — 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' (1883) and 'A Problem in Modern Ethics' (1891) — are important early contributions to this project.¹³ Recent work in queer studies has moved beyond the impulse to restore the queer subject to history. Earlier queer historians and critics, such as George Chauncey, were motivated by a desire to reverse the process of what they saw as 'homophobic erasure' — to challenge the manner in which the queer subject is 'hidden from history'.¹⁴ Yet in constructing their accounts of queer history, such scholars often tacitly repressed those aspects of the queer past that failed to contribute to the emancipatory political project in which they were engaged. The pernicious association between homosexuality and paedophilia that persists in contemporary homophobic discourses is one understandable reason why queer historians have remained hesitant in addressing pederastic aspects of Victorian sexuality.

¹¹ See for example Deborah B. Gould, 'The Shame of Gay Pride in Early AIDS Activism', in *Gay Shame*, pp. 221–255; Judith Halberstam, "'The Killer in Me is the Killer in You': Homosexuality and Fascism', in *The Queer Art of Failure*, pp. 147–172.

¹² See Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past*.

¹³ John Addington Symonds, 'A Problem in Greek Ethics', in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 41–121; John Addington Symonds, 'A Problem in Modern Ethics', in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality*, pp. 125–208.

¹⁴ See for example Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (London: Penguin, 1991).

Such an approach also complicates and challenges established assumptions surrounding the consumption of Victorian religious music more generally. Sacred music in England in the second half of the nineteenth century was often explicitly designed to promote moral self-discipline (typified, perhaps, by John Hullah's introduction of the sol-fa system).¹⁵ Scholars have generally taken as axiomatic the assertions of H. R. Haweis's influential *Music and Morals* (1871), which argues enthusiastically for the spiritual and moral edification promoted by Victorian church music.¹⁶ The idea that the experience of listening to music in cathedrals or chapels might elicit homosexual desires, perhaps unsurprisingly, finds no place in contemporaneous accounts of the cultural significance of Victorian religious music.

Any scholarly attention to this aspect of queer history has a duty to maintain a dual perspective. One must seek to historicize in a way that is sensitive to Victorian discourses on childhood and sexuality. Yet, as Rita Felski has argued, it is necessary to do so in a manner that does not seek to use history as an alibi.¹⁷ Rather than blotting out the feelings which colour our engagement with history, we must dispassionately admit to the awkwardness and discomfort that attach to our reading of Victorian accounts of pederastic desire. The discussion that follows presents its textual evidence and analysis in the familiar form of a systematic argument. A quite different approach might dwell on the oscillating feelings of empathy and disgust, identification and repulsion that accompany a reading of Symonds's *Memoirs* and letters. Immersing oneself in the minutiae of Symonds's life as mediated through his correspondence, one is inevitably drawn sympathetically towards a figure who so often seems crippled by his experience of sexual shame. Yet unfolding in the fragmented narrative of Symonds's correspondence with Henry Graham Dakyns, for example, is also a discomfiting revelation of Symonds's sexual desire for pre-pubescent boys, and his calculated sexual grooming of the teenage schoolboys in his care.

¹⁵ See John Potter, *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 81; William J. Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 33–40.

¹⁶ H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals* (London: Strahan, 1871).

¹⁷ See Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 10.

Recent work by Stefano Evangelista and Jana Funke has contributed much to scholarly understanding of Symonds's engagement with Hellenic ideas of pederasty and his concerns about age-appropriate relationships.¹⁸ However, both take as their starting point Symonds's ideas on sexual desire as presented in the mature works of his final years, written in the 1880s and early 1890s. The discussion that follows focusses more closely on Symonds's experiences as a young man in the 1860s, as presented in his letters and his posthumously published *Memoirs*. Funke's work acknowledges Symonds's attraction to 'ephebic' youths, but overlooks his arguably more problematic attraction, as a young man, to pre-pubescent boys.¹⁹ In privileging Symonds's discomfort with inter-generational relationships in his later years over his earlier sexual attraction to children, Funke conveniently presents Symonds as a figure more easily assimilated to the norms of contemporary queer identity.

Discourses that eroticize the voice of the chorister are closely bound up with those that serve to legitimate the sexual abuse of children. While it is necessary to acknowledge the historical contingency of ideas of childhood and appropriate sexual behaviour, the power disparities between children and adults within the Victorian institutions such as Anglican cathedrals and Oxford college chapels have remained broadly similar across time. In terms of their young age, frequently lower-class background, and low position within an institutional hierarchy, choristers in Victorian England were clearly vulnerable to abuse. That there is not more historical evidence pointing to the sexual abuse of choristers in Victorian England seems more likely to be the result of institutional silencing, lack of reporting and systematic cover-up than because it did not occur. While there were well established legal and social discourses relating to the sexual abuse of young girls in Victorian England, the sexual abuse of boys was almost never discussed. As Louise Jackson has noted, even when such abuse was

¹⁸ Stefano Evangelista, 'Platonic Dons, Adolescent Bodies: Benjamin Jowett, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater', in *Children and Sexuality: From the Greeks to the Great War*, ed. by George Rousseau (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 206–30; Jana Funke, "'We Cannot Be Greek Now': Age Difference, Corruption of Youth and the Making of *Sexual Inversion*", *English Studies*, 94.2 (2013), 139–53.

¹⁹ Funke, "'We Cannot Be Greek Now'", p. 140.

recognized, it was ‘frequently side-stepped and concealed’.²⁰ Sexual assault experienced by boys was likely under-reported due to the shame of its victims. In the context of Symonds’s own life, Sean Brady has noted the conspiracy of silence that surrounded the resignation of Charles John Vaughan, Headmaster of Harrow, following his sexual involvement with his pupils.²¹ The Victorian establishment was skilfully adept at protecting the reputations of those men implicated in the sexual abuse of children. One unfortunate effect of the archival silences that accompany such potential scandals is that an account of the eroticisation of the chorister must depend almost exclusively on the written testimony of the men who fetishized the voices of these children. The sexual abuse of children within religious institutions such as the Anglican and Catholic Churches continues to be a matter of grave concern today.²² It is only right that our engagement with the often-problematic relationship between adults and children in earlier historical periods continues to unsettle.

Victorian Choristers and the Construction of Vocal Innocence

Roland Barthes’ essay ‘The Grain of the Voice’ has been instrumental in drawing attention to the singing voice as an object of desire.²³ Following Julia Kristeva’s distinction between ‘pheno-text’ and ‘geno-text’, Barthes contrasts the ‘pheno-song’ with the ‘geno-song’: the former is the aspect of vocal performance connected with the rules of genre, the style of interpretation, the structure of the language being sung; the latter is the presence of ‘the body in the voice as it sings’.²⁴ For Barthes, the revelation of this bodily ‘grain’, and the manner in which it opens up an intimacy between the singer and the listener, allows the singing voice to become a pleasurable object of erotic desire. ‘There is no human voice which is not an object of desire’, Barthes suggests, because the singing voice

²⁰ Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 100–01.

²¹ Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality*, pp. 163–70.

²² See Martin Ashley, *How High Should Boys Sing?: Gender, Authenticity and Credibility in the Young Male Voice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 81–82. An independent government inquiry into child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church and other institutions was announced in July 2014 and remains ongoing.

²³ Roland Barthes, ‘The Grain of the Voice’, in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 178–89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

represents 'the materiality of the body emerging from the throat'.²⁵ Barthes experiences an 'individual thrill' when listening to the 'bodily' voice of Charles Panzera, whilst he dismisses the apparently 'grainless' vocal style of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as 'an art that inoculates pleasure'.²⁶ Yet such an approach, while typically playful, is perhaps too rigidly schematic. Barthes' essay contributes much to his wider project of asserting the importance of pleasure and desire in the aesthetic encounter, but its framework remains an imperfect tool for analysing the manifold cultural meanings attached to the singing voice. Certainly, it does nothing to account for the manner in which resolutely 'grainless' voices, such as that of the chorister, become eroticized nonetheless. The training of the Victorian chorister's voice acts to eradicate all trace of the body from this voice. In doing so, it becomes perversely attractive to the Victorian listener as an object of fetishized innocence. Barthes fails to account for the desire invested in those voices that efface the body, deny the embodied aspect of the voice, and resist corporeal intimacy between singer and listener. In order to account for the voice as an object of desire, it is necessary to turn to history to better understand the cultural meanings ascribed to such voices.

The angelic voice of the Anglican chorister is one of many emblems of childhood innocence manufactured by the Victorians. As Timothy Day has observed, the style of vocal production which characterizes the chorister — often described as 'pure', 'otherworldly' or 'ethereal' — emerged only in the latter part of the nineteenth century.²⁷ Such developments in English church music were closely connected to the influence of the Oxford Movement in the Anglican Church, and its reassertion of a religious spiritualism and ritualism imbued with a sense of aesthetic beauty.²⁸ A number of critics have explored the manner in which the religious and aesthetic discourses developed within such High Church and Anglo-

²⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Music, Voice, Language', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), pp. 278–85 (p. 279); Roland Barthes, 'Listening', in *Responsibility of Forms*, pp. 245–60 (p. 255).

²⁶ Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', p. 185.

²⁷ Timothy Day, 'English Cathedral Choirs in the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. by John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 123–32.

²⁸ See Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music*, pp. 2–10.

Catholic traditions allowed for the articulation of queer desire.²⁹ However, outside this narrow religious context, the development of the chorister's voice can be better understood as a product of the wider Victorian fetishisation of childhood innocence. Following from Philippe Ariès's seminal — though now much-challenged — work on the historical emergence of the idea of the 'child' in *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), the discursive construction of the 'innocent child' in literature and visual culture has been influentially examined by a number of critics and cultural historians.³⁰ The innocence of the idealized Victorian child is almost always present in descriptions of a beautiful 'pure' voice — a voice that soars out of the body, seemingly abandoning the embodied materiality that might taint it with desiring flesh. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1884) — a novel in which, as Gillian Avery has noted, the word 'innocence' recurs 'like the beat of a drum' — is typical in this regard.³¹ Cedric, the titular 'Little Lord', sings in church with a 'pure, sweet, high voice rising as clear as the song of a bird'. The idealized tableau is completed when 'a long ray of sunshine [...] slanting through a golden pane of a stained glass window, brightened the falling hair about his young head'. The child's aural and visual beauty has evidently found the sanction of divine Providence, a view with which the reader is prompted to concur. Yet Hodgson Burnett's text also reveals the manner in which the child's voice becomes an object of adult desire. Whilst the child sings, he is observed (and listened to) voyeuristically from the 'curtain-shielded corner of the pew' by his grandfather, who 'forgot himself a little' in 'his pleasure in it'.³² Despite the prevalence of the trope of vocal innocence, accounts of Victorian childhood have generally overlooked its significance as a key site in the

²⁹ See for example Frederick S. Roden, *Same-Sex Desire in Victorian Religious Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

³⁰ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. by Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973). See for example Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories 1780–1900* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965); Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan; or, The Impossibility of Children's Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998); Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³¹ Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children*, p. 178.

³² Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), pp. 116–17.

construction of childhood innocence more broadly.

James Kincaid's *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* argues that those Victorian discourses that insist so resolutely on the innocence of the child in fact act to constitute the child as an object of erotic allure: 'The special construction of 'the child' during [the nineteenth century] and slightly before it made it available to desire in a way not previously possible, made it available by, among other things, making it different, a strange and alien species that was once [...] continuous with the adult.'³³ In other words, discourses that relentlessly reinforce a rigid conceptual distinction between the 'Child' and the 'Adult' act to posit the former as a desired Other. Insisting on childhood purity and asexuality creates what Kincaid calls a 'subversive echo': the endlessly circulating virtues of childhood innocence become erotically alluring because so rigorously proscribed.³⁴ Kincaid's approach remains controversial. His style, characterized by the playfulness typical of much deconstructive criticism of the early 1990s, seems disengaged from the painful reality of sexual abuse. As Louise Jackson has noted, his critique fails to engage with feminist thought that has analysed sexual violence in relation to structures of power and authority.³⁵ Yet his central thesis is convincing and has provided the basis for subsequent work, such as Kevin Ohi's *Innocence and Rapture* (2005), which is unafraid to examine the manner in which the figure of the child often elicits covert sexual pleasure in Victorian literature and culture.³⁶

This ethereal voice is the product of a mode of bodily training that often seeks to conceal the embodied origins of vocal production. Victorian vocal treatises on the voice of the chorister typically draw a distinction between the 'head voice' (or the 'thin register') and the 'chest voice' (or the 'thick register'). The main point of contention between these treatises relates to the extent to which each register should be used. Implicitly at stake here are questions of masculinity and

³³ James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 198.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

³⁵ Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 114.

³⁶ Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

embodiment: the more powerful, ‘throaty’ sound is claimed by a masculinist ‘muscular Christianity’, while the ethereal, disembodied voice is aligned with a High Anglicanism frequently castigated for its apparent effeminacy. Use of the head voice came to be one of the defining factors of the vocal style of the Anglican chorister. Proponents of the head voice described its sound as ‘pure’, ‘sweet’, and ‘limpid’,³⁷ whilst deriding the chest voice as ‘rough’, ‘throaty’, ‘harsh’, and ‘strident’.³⁸ Victorian voice trainers in the Anglican tradition would be highly unlikely to argue for the exclusive use of the chest voice: those who defended its ‘power’ and ‘breadth’ typically did so from a position critical of the Anglican musical establishment.³⁹ Exclusive use of the head voice, they suggested, risks producing a sound that lacks ‘verve’, ‘vigour’ and ‘character’, and is defined by its ‘colourlessness’.⁴⁰ The development of the head voice continued to be the primary focus of Anglican voice trainers up until the 1950s, when figures such as George Malcolm (Master of Music of Westminster Cathedral, 1947-1959) began to develop a fuller, more robust chorister sound. Malcolm’s methods aimed to reinstate something of the exuberance of boyhood that he felt had been dampened by Victorian propriety.⁴¹

G. Edwards Stubbs’ *Practical Hints on the Training of Choir Boys* (1888) is typical of many late nineteenth-century vocal treatises in its demands for choir trainers to cultivate ‘pure and musical’ head voices, over the ‘rough and boisterous’ chest voice.⁴² Stubbs’s later treatise — *Current Methods of Training Boys’ Voices* (1898) — insists even more forcefully that the chorister should never sing with the chest voice. ‘It cannot be asserted enough’, he stresses, ‘that the thick register of the

³⁷ J. Varley Roberts, *A Treatise on a Practical Method of Training Choristers* (London: Frowde, 1898), p. 5; Francis E. Howard, *The Child-Voice in Singing* (New York: Novello, Ewer, 1898), p. 28; John Spencer Curwen, *The Boy’s Voice: A Book of Practical Information on the Training of Boys’ Voices for Church Choirs* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1891), p. 59; G. Edward Stubbs, *Practical Hints on the Training of Choir Boys* (London: Novello, Ewer, 1897), pp. 46 and 83.

³⁸ Howard, *The Child-Voice*, p. 3; Emil Behnke and Lennox Browne, *The Child’s Voice* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Seale and Rivington, 1885), p. 33

³⁹ G. Edward Stubbs, *Current Methods of Training Boys’ Voices* (London: Novello, Ewer, 1898), p. 11.

⁴⁰ Stubbs, *Current Methods*, p. 11; Howard, *The Child-Voice*, p.133; Walter S. Vale, *The Training of Boys’ Voices* (London: The Faith Press, 1932), pp. 73–4.

⁴¹ George Malcolm, ‘Boys’ Voices’, *English Church Music* (1967), 24–7.

⁴² Stubbs, *Practical Hints*, p. 36.

boy voice is NOT what Nature designed for singing'.⁴³ The choirmaster should aim to 'eliminate entirely' the use of the chest voice by gradually extending the use of the head voice downwards into the lower register of the voice.⁴⁴ Francis Howard's *The Child-Voice in Singing* (1898) assumes a position similar to that of Stubbs. The focus of his treatises is on promoting the use of the head voice; the chest voice, he concludes, is 'wholly objectionable'. In practice, Stubbs's and Howard's insistence on the exclusive use of the head voice appears to have been a rather extreme position, and it is unclear how widely such an approach was adopted. A more typical approach was propounded by George Martin (Organist and Master of the Choristers of St Paul's Cathedral, 1888-1916) in his influential *The Art of Training Choir Boys* (1877). Rather than developing the strength of the head voice into the lower register, Martin's approach allowed for use of both chest voice and head voice. His 'golden rule' — upon which, he insisted, the 'whole secret of training boys successfully depends' — was that the chest voice should never be forced into the register above b'.⁴⁵ Vocal innocence is contingent, then, on maintaining the illusion of disembodiment, on attaining a mode of vocal production that disguises the means of its own production in the lungs, throat and diaphragm. Eliminating the 'chest' voice is motivated by a desire to disguise those vocal colours that seem to have their origins in the depths of the material body, rather than the ethereal heavenly heights.

The disembodied phantasmagoria of the chorister's voice also accrues much of its cultural resonance due to its dialectical opposition to the sensuous, vibrato-laden voice of the opera singer, particularly that of the operatic soprano.⁴⁶ In texts such as George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1895), the physical power of the operatic voice threatens to emotionally overwhelm its listeners. When the novel's protagonist, Little Billee, listens to an Italian tenor, his voice is presented in terms that ascribe to it a pleasurable power of physical coercion that verges on the sado-masochistic: 'caught, surprised, rapt, astounded, shaken, tickled, teased,

⁴³ Stubbs, *Current Methods*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ George C. Martin, *The Art of Training Choir Boys* (London: Novello, Ewer, 1877), p. 24.

⁴⁶ For an account of the emergence of this vocal style in the nineteenth century, see John Potter and Neil Sorrell, *A History of Singing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 109–148.

harrowed, tortured, tantalized, aggravated, seduced, demoralized'.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the effect of the titular character's astoundingly virtuosic singing voice — a 'monstrous development of the human larynx' — reduces Little Billee to hysterical fits of sobbing.⁴⁸ In Victorian novels, from George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) to George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* (1898), the voice of the operatic soprano becomes so charged with sexual desire that it risks calling into question the virtue of the singer who produces it.⁴⁹ For Walt Whitman — one of Symonds's most profound influences — the operatic voice was similarly sexually charged. The 'Song of Myself' (1855) is typical in its ecstatic praise of the erotics of the singing voice: 'A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,/ The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.'⁵⁰ As Koestenbaum has persuasively argued, such operatic voices became, in certain circles, 'the sound of nineteenth-century sexuality'.⁵¹ The nineteenth-century operatic voice vibrates with desire because it draws the listener deep in to the recesses of the body through its visceral power and heft. In contrast, the voice of the chorister typically insists on disembodiment. It disavows the vibrating chest and throat, demanding a tone produced only in the head. In the process, it attains a state of what is resolutely referred to as 'purity' — a vocal tone that implicitly connotes sexual innocence.

The Desired Chorister in Nineteenth-Century Literature

Such disembodied vocal innocence is consistently foregrounded in representations of choristers and singing children in queer nineteenth-century literature. These texts are notable for the extent to which they fixate not solely on the visual attraction of the desired child, but also on the apparently seductive timbre of the child's voice. For example, whilst a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1805, Byron notoriously fell in love with a fifteen-year-old chorister in Trinity College Chapel, John Edleston: 'His *voice* first attracted my

⁴⁷ George du Maurier, *Trilby*, ed. by Dennis Denisoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 166.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴⁹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Graham Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); George Moore, *Evelyn Innes* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1898). For the place of the female singer in Victorian literature and culture more broadly see Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*.

⁵⁰ Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself', in *Leaves of Grass*, ed. by Jerome Loving (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 51.

⁵¹ Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*, p. 155.

notice, his *countenance* fixed it, & his *manners* attached me to him forever.’⁵² Edleston — who died in 1811 — was seemingly the inspiration for Byron’s cycle of elegies addressed to ‘Thyrza’. In ‘Away, away, ye notes of woe!’, the speaker is haunted by the ‘well remember’d echoes’ of Thyrza’s voice, now transformed in his consciousness into a perpetually recurring funeral dirge.⁵³ Recollection of the voice of the departed is a familiar trope of the elegiac poetic tradition, yet the particularly intense poignancy invested in this lost voice surely suggests Byron’s fixation with the beauty of Edleston’s singing. Whilst studying at Oxford, Gerard Manley Hopkins experienced similar desires, though acted with more characteristic self-restraint. In the extensive catalogue of confessed sins scrupulously recorded in his diaries, he admits in 1865 to ‘looking at a chorister at Magdalen, and evil thoughts’.⁵⁴

In ‘The Portrait of Mr W. H.’ (1889), Oscar Wilde speculates that Willie Hughes — the apparent dedicatee of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* — may have started his life as a ‘delicate chorister of a Royal Chapel’. Wilde’s text offers a broadly historically plausible hypothesis that Hughes might have progressed from chorister to boy actor: in Elizabethan London, the so-called ‘Children of the Chapel’ also intermittently performed as a troupe of child actors.⁵⁵ But in focussing on Hughes’s ‘clear and pure’ voice the text also mobilizes this history as a site of queer pederastic fantasy.⁵⁶ The association between aestheticism, sexual deviance and the desire for choristers was sufficiently well established by the late nineteenth century for it to become the target of thinly veiled satire in Robert Hichens’s *The Green Carnation* (1894). Here, the corrupting affectation of Esme Amarinth and Lord Reggie is marked by, amongst other thing, their predilection for beautiful young choristers. These boys are ‘magnetised’ and ‘mesmerised’ by

⁵² George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals: A New Selection*, ed. by Richard Lansdown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 25.

⁵³ George Gordon, Lord Byron, ‘Away, away, ye notes of woe!’, in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980–), I, 349–50.

⁵⁴ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Lesley Higgins and Michael F. Suarez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–), III: *Diaries, Journals and Notebooks*, ed. by Lesley Higgins (2015), p. 337.

⁵⁵ For further background on choristers in early-modern England see Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 113–26.

⁵⁶ Oscar Wilde, ‘The Portrait of Mr. W.H.’, in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), pp. 302–50 (p. 332).

the sight of the eponymous flowers these men wear in their lapels, falling 'hopelessly in love'.⁵⁷ Fantasy of a more explicitly sexual kind is at play in Ronald Firbank's *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* (1926), in which the titular Primate meets his end whilst lasciviously chasing a chorister around the altar of his cathedral in the nude.⁵⁸

Assuming a position of greater moral earnestness, Vernon Lee sees the attraction towards choristers as symptomatic of abnormal sexuality. In *The Countess of Albany* (1884), the libertine poet Alfieri's early childhood is defined by the 'curious passion which he experienced for [...] little choristers'. 'Silently, painfully', Lee's narrator notes, 'he seems to have yearned for them in solitude.' This aspect of Alfieri's 'morbid and sombre passionateness' exemplifies the 'indefinable imperfection of nature, some jar of character, or some great want, some original sin of mental constitution, which made him different from other men'. Lee's text inverts the usual age hierarchy of Victorian pederasty — here it is a young child desiring other young children (who are, in fact, *older* than him) — but it nevertheless does so in a manner that invokes the spectre of *fin-de-siècle* homosexuality: this desire is silenced, tortured, joyless, and prompted by an unnameable and pathologized fault of 'constitution' that threatens his masculinity.⁵⁹

The chorister frequently becomes an explicit object of sexual desire in what Timothy d'Arch Smith calls 'Uranian' literature (that is, explicitly pederastic, often quasi-pornographic, literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).⁶⁰ Such literature often depicts the desire of a priest for a chorister in his charge. In Cuthbert Wright's poem 'The Chorister', for example, the priest recognizes through 'the yellow incense haze' of his church the face of a chorister whom he knew previously only as a '[s]treet-arab, gutter urchin, child/Incontinent and wild.' The text simultaneously objectifies the child as an object of eroticized innocence, whilst positing him as a sexually aware seducer: his face

⁵⁷ Robert Hichens, *The Green Carnation* (London: Heinemann, 1894), p. 105.

⁵⁸ Ronald Firbank, *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* (London: Richards, 1926).

⁵⁹ Vernon Lee, *The Countess of Albany* (London: Allen, 1884), pp. 59–60.

⁶⁰ Timothy d'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writing of English 'Uranian' Poets* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 179.

is '[w]hite-chinned, red-lipped and clear' but he is, in fact, a 'surpliced faun' — a Pan-like figure of disguised erotic excess.⁶¹ A further dimension of erotic frisson is introduced by the class differential; the priest desires to 'slum it' with a 'street-arab' from the lower classes. Perhaps the most notorious example of such pederastic literature is John Francis Bloxham's 'The Priest and the Acolyte' (1894), a work that Wilde was forced to confront in his libel trial of 1895.⁶² Bloxham's story concerns the intense desire of the young priest Ronald Heatherington for his fourteen-year-old acolyte, and the shame that leads to their double suicide when their relationship is discovered. While Heatherington's victim is not a chorister, the text nevertheless dwells on the priest's attraction to his 'soft, shy treble'; he is 'aroused' by the 'soft and gentle' quality of the child's voice.⁶³

John Gambril Nicholson's *The Romance of a Choir-Boy* (1916) represents the apogee of such pederastic fetishisation of the voice of the chorister.⁶⁴ Nicholson's text recounts the pursuit by Philip — a 'hollow-cheeked and careworn' recent graduate from Magdalen College, Oxford — of the twelve-year-old chorister, Ted: 'a wonderfully pretty boy for a rustic'.⁶⁵ Semi-autobiographical in its contents, the novel was written between 1896 and 1905, but privately published only in 1916. The novel's intention to erotically titillate is clear from the outset. Philip first notices Ted whilst observing him voyeuristically from the long grass beside a bathing pool, taking photographs of the boy as he removes his clothes. This pederastic trope is familiar from Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'Epithalamium' and the paintings of Henry Scott Tuke.⁶⁶ Philip's desire for the boy is justified in the text

⁶¹ Cuthbert Wright, 'The Chorister', in *One Way of Love* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1915), p. 38. For a consideration of the place of pederasty in late-Victorian religious culture more generally, see Roden, *Same-Sex Desire in Victorian Religious Culture*, pp. 232–52; Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 297–64.

⁶² See Merlin Holland, ed., *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003).

⁶³ John Francis Bloxham, 'The Priest and the Acolyte', in *The Decadent Short Story: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Kostas Boyiopoulos, Yoonjoung Choi, Matthew Brinton Tildesley (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 86–98 (pp. 87–88).

⁶⁴ John Gambril Nicholson, *The Romance of a Choir-Boy* (London: Privately Printed, 1916).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 9.

⁶⁶ See Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Epithalamium', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Catherine Philips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 179. Julia F. Saville traces this tradition in 'The Romance of Boys Bathing: Poetic Precedents and Respondents to the Paintings of Henry Scott Tuke', in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. by Richard Dellamora (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 253–78.

by the fact that he allows him to realize his musical potential: the working-class Methodist escapes his background to become an Anglican chorister. Eventually, Ted rejects Philip's increasingly overt sexual advances — Philip 'engineer[s] everything' so that they might share a bed together, but the boy is disgusted by this progression of intimacy.⁶⁷ Philip eventually realizes that his desire for the child must remain idealized: mere transitory physical desires cannot be allowed to distort the deeper and more profound spiritual intimacies that he seeks.

What distinguishes the text from other pederastic literature is its peculiarly intense focus on the visual and aural aspects of desire. The text closes with a detailed description of Philip's extensive collection of pederastic photographs — the reader becomes complicit in Philip's visual pleasure as the text dwells on the details of each image: names, ages, bodies, positions, states of (un)dress. The narrator's intense attraction to the singing voice is presented in a similar way. The music of the Anglican liturgy becomes associated with Philip's desire for young boys. Whilst Philip voyeuristically observes Ted from a distance, the narrator notes: 'A chant by Attwood was running in his head. An old Oxford episode made that chant very reminiscent of love to him [...] Now he tried to fit a new personality to its haunting melody'.⁶⁸ The text teasingly refuses to reveal the precise details of this 'old Oxford episode', but it is clearly implied that Philip has fallen in love with a chorister before, and that this attraction is closely connected with this boy's vocal performance. 'As a Magdalen man', the narrator tells us later, 'Philip knew what [...] good boys' voices were'.⁶⁹ Here, an unidentified psalm chant by Thomas Attwood operates in a manner akin to the 'petite phrase' in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 1913-27), allowing Philip to nostalgically recapture the intensity of his lost desire.⁷⁰ He seeks to retain the thrill of this musical memory whilst substituting his previous object of desire for a new chorister, Ted.

⁶⁷ Nicholson, *The Romance of a Choir-Boy*, p. 185.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁰ This musical fragment from a violin sonata by Proust's fictional composer Vinteuil occurs most notably in *Du côté de chez Swann*, the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. See Marcel Proust, *In Search Of Lost Time Vol 1: Swann's Way*, trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and others (London: Vintage, 1996).

Nicholson's text dwells insistently on the timbre of Ted's voice — it is 'clear, sweet and mellifluous as a thrush's note'; a 'glorious, pure soprano, soaring and vibrating'.⁷¹ This insistence on purity coincides with a less-than-subtle erotic suggestiveness. Philip listens '*enraptured* to a boy possessed of a *natural organ* second to none he had ever heard in his life'.⁷² The voice assumes the status of phallus, penetrating the ear of the 'enraptured' passive listener. The pinnacle of Ted's musical achievement occurs at a service in St. Paul's Cathedral, attended by thirteen-hundred choristers from around the country. The scenario seems purposefully designed as an indulgent pederastic fantasy. Ted has been chosen as principal treble at this grand service. Philip's reaction to Ted's solo — sung in his 'superb soprano' — is similarly redolent of sexual excitement: 'His eyes were closed, his lips apart, and he drew his breath with quick little inspirations; his hands tightly gripped the back of the chair in front of him; his body swayed a little as though he was in a dream'.⁷³

In a later episode, Philip listens 'in a mellow haze of ecstasy' at evensong to 'the boys' high *penetrating* treble [...] *soaring up* like a tongue of flame on the top notes, and *sinking back*, as if in exhaustion, to the lower ones [...] The effect was repeated — its repetition enhancing, and *driving home* the lovely cadences'.⁷⁴ The repeated mechanical movements of these penetrative voices, combined with their climactic 'driving home' and post-coital 'sinking [...] in exhaustion' leaves little to the imagination. In the text's final description of Ted's musical prowess, Nicholson even more explicitly elides the experience of listening to the child's voice with that of passive sexual pleasure. Philip revels in the 'exquisite delicate ecstasy [...] of the *penetrating* modulated tones; the *sharp* enjoyment of a subtle sensuous sensation, that was half *torture*, half *delight*'.⁷⁵ Nicholson wilfully evokes decadent excess with his Wildean word choice ('exquisite', 'delicate') and excessive sibilance.

⁷¹ Nicholson, *The Romance of a Choir-Boy*, p. 76.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 77. Italics added.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 154–55.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

Curiously, Nicholson characterizes this chorister's voice in terms similar to those used by Henry James in *Portraits of Places* (1882), when he hears the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Here 'the beautiful boy voices rose together and touched the splendid vault', where they 'hung there, expanding and resounding, and then, like a rocket that spends itself, they faded and melted'.⁷⁶ James's imagery of ascent, tumescence and climax is rendered additionally suggestive by the comparison of these resounding voices to a conspicuously phallic 'rocket'. In this context, the word 'spend' retains its slang associations with ejaculation and orgasm. It is interesting to note that when James came to make changes for the New York Edition of 'The Pupil' (1891, rev. 1908) — his exploration of the intensely fraught desires underlying a teacher-pupil relationship — he compares the pubescent Morgan Moreen's exclamations of being 'ashamed' to 'a ring of passion, like some high silver note from a small cathedral chorister'.⁷⁷ Here, the purity of the child's unbroken voice functions as one of a number of textual emendations that serves to render the pederastic nature of Pemberton's love for the child more explicit.

What such texts share is a fixation on chorister's voice as an emblem of desire that is disembodied: the child's voice is always presented in terms of its mobility and its dislocation from the material body that produced it. While Victorian fiction is replete with examples of the eroticized throat and mouth of the soprano and tenor, depictions of the chorister's voice insistently see it 'soar' away from body. The desire for the voice of the chorister can be understood as part of a broader queer attachment, as explored in chapter 2 of this thesis, to the disembodied and the immaterial — or, at least, an indulgence in the fantasy that sexual desire might redeemed through its disembodied idealisation into the aesthetic.

⁷⁶ Henry James, *Portraits of Places* (Boston: Osgood, 1884), p. 304. Subsequently reprinted in *English Hours* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1905), p. 264.

⁷⁷ Henry James, 'The Pupil', in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition, Volume XI: What Maisie Knew, In the Cage, The Pupil* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), pp. 509–76 (p. 544).

John Addington Symonds: Music and Desire

The personal writings of John Addington Symonds are continually occupied with the question of what one should *do* with one's sexual desire — as a young man, much under the spell of Plato, Symonds is fixated with ideas of how such feelings might be idealized, so that they leave behind the tainted desiring flesh and embrace instead an elevating disembodied spirit. In his experiences of music — singing in particular — he most pressingly faces the difficulty of achieving such idealisation: music at once speaks of the exalted, spiritual realm, whilst drawing him back continually to the visceral materiality of the desiring body. Before proceeding to focus on the significance of the voice of the chorister in Symonds's writings, it is thus instructive to provide a broader overview of the place of music in Symonds's life. Whilst Symonds's interests in painting, sculpture and photography have been examined by a number of critics, his engagement with music has received little critical attention.⁷⁸

Although never a particularly talented musician, music was one of Symonds's greatest enthusiasms from an early age. As a schoolboy at Harrow, he was keenly involved in the chapel choir, and campaigned vigorously for the improvement of musical standards at the school. It was 'really dreadful', he wrote to his sister Charlotte, that a school of four-hundred boys could produce 'no good singing' — the school's relentless focus on sports, he complained, left no time for music practice.⁷⁹ From his teenage years onwards, as attested by his letters, he had a voracious appetite for classical music of all kinds: opera (Mozart, Bellini, Verdi, Wagner); oratorio (Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Spohr); orchestral music (in particularly, Beethoven); lieder (Schubert, Schumann). As a student at Oxford, Symonds's non-academic reading was dominated by biographies of and novels about composers and musicians, such as Victor Schoelcher's *The Life of Handel* (1857) and Elizabeth Sheppard's *roman-à-clef* of Felix Bartholdy-Mendelssohn,

⁷⁸ See Alex Potts, 'Pungent Prophecies of Art: Symonds, Pater, and Michelangelo', in *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire*, ed. by John Pemble (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 102–21; Stefano Evangelista, 'Aesthetic Encounters: The Erotic Visions of John Addington Symonds and Wilhelm Von Gloeden', in *Illustrations, Optics and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Literary and Visual Cultures*, ed. by Luisa Calè and Patrizia Di Bello (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 87–104.

⁷⁹ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 123–24 (8 November 1857).

Charles Auchester (1853).⁸⁰ At the age of twenty, Symonds claimed to have read George Sand's *Consuelo* (1843) — a voluminous account of the intrigues of the life of an Italian opera singer — no fewer than six times.⁸¹

In his quest to establish himself as a writer upon leaving Oxford, Symonds attempted to publish a number of pieces of music criticism. He had little success. In early 1863 he submitted an article on 'Music' — of which no copy survives — to the quarterly magazine the *National Review*. When it was returned to him with extensive corrections, he decided not to seek to publish it elsewhere.⁸² Later that year, he began composing a 'long analytical description of the Messiah' and planned to engage in similar 'musical rhapsodizing' upon Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, though neither piece was ultimately published.⁸³ Around the same time, Symonds submitted an essay on Beethoven to *Macmillan's Magazine*, but this was rejected by the magazine's editor, the leading Beethoven scholar George Grove.⁸⁴ It is unsurprising that Symonds failed to establish himself with writings on music — as he privately admitted to his sister Charlotte, 'music is not my forte, nor is it part of my education'.⁸⁵ Although the keenest of musical consumers, Symonds had formal training in neither music theory nor musical performance, and he himself believed that the perceptiveness of his criticism was hampered by his lack of practical musical proficiency. In his letters of this period, descriptions of music typically take the form of impressionistic reveries in which musical experience is transmuted at length into descriptions of colourful landscapes and tumultuous weather. Such descriptions were hardly uncommon in the 1860s, but they looked back to the figurative language of E. T. A. Hoffmann's musical Romanticism, rather than attaining to the analytical rigour expected of music criticism once it had emerged as an academic discipline.⁸⁶

Symonds subsequently dealt with music in only a handful of his published works. 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre', as discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis,

⁸⁰ Symonds, Letter to W. R. W. Stephen, *Letters*, I, 251 (19 July 1860).

⁸¹ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 252 (3 August 1860)

⁸² Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 273 (30 January 1861).

⁸³ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 396 (26 May 1863).

⁸⁴ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, II, 172 (22 October 1871).

⁸⁵ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 324 (4 December 1861).

⁸⁶ See Rosemary Golding, *Music and Academia in Victorian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2016).

combines an impressionistic account of a performance of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, with a symposium-style debate on the nature of musical meaning.⁸⁷ 'Palestrina and the Origins of Modern Music' in the seventh volume of Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy* shows the breadth of his knowledge of musical history, but lacks the rapt intensity of musical description found in his letters and the *Memoirs*.⁸⁸ Such an accusation could not be made of Symonds's sketch of 'Beethoven's Concerto in E-Dur' (1893), his contribution to Lord Alfred Douglas's short-lived undergraduate journal *The Spirit Lamp*. Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 becomes in Symonds's imagination a work of decadent excess; its orchestral timbre provokes 'shuddering thrills' that resonate viscerally through the desiring flesh — it is 'beyond *pure* music', not wholly 'legitimate'.⁸⁹

Symonds's engagement with musical culture was curtailed towards the end of his life by his Alpine isolation in Davos. There were occasional concerts by visiting musicians — Symonds's letters to Horatio Brown, for example, include enthusiastic accounts of a Beethoven piano concerto, and a recital including 'Bach's supreme chaconne'.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it is clear that Symonds missed the vibrant musical culture he left behind in England. Lamenting his inability to travel to Bayreuth to hear Wagner's *Parsifal* in 1884 due to ill health, he wrote to Mary Robinson, 'I feel that the greatest art-evolution of my epoch is going on beyond my reach of experience — as much beyond it as if it were on the Moon.'⁹¹

The experience of music in Symonds's writings is frequently connected with the negotiation of intense sexual desire. 'Music', he noted in his diary in 1871, 'intensifies what is within those whom [one] loves' — afforded a power to heighten the force of desire.⁹² A lack of 'music' functions repeatedly as a figure for the absence of sexual 'spark'. When Symonds reveals in the *Memoirs* the intense feelings of disgust, embarrassment and humiliation that accompanied sexual intercourse with his wife, he bemoans that he 'missed something in the

⁸⁷ Symonds, 'Cherubino at The Scala Theatre'.

⁸⁸ Symonds, 'Palestrina and the Origins of Modern Music', in *Renaissance in Italy: The Catholic Reaction*, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1886), II, 185–206.

⁸⁹ Symonds, 'Beethoven's Concerto in E Dur', in *Spirit Lamp*, 4 (May 1893), 2–3.

⁹⁰ Symonds, Letter to Horatio Forbes Brown, *Letters*, III, 539 (7 January 1891); Letter to Horatio Forbes Brown, *Letters*, III, 663 (23 February 1892).

⁹¹ Symonds, Letter to Mary Robinson, *Letters*, II, 968 (14 November 1884).

⁹² Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 387.

music — the coarse and hard vibrations of sex, those exquisite agonies of contact'. The only desire he feels for her is 'too pure, too spiritual, too etherealized'.⁹³ The physical materiality of music — its vibration in space, the manner in which it is felt by the body — stands as a metaphor for desire expressed physically in sexual intercourse. Elsewhere, Symonds frequently alludes to musical examples in his letters to express the exhilaration, misery and frustration of his unrequited or unconsummated same-sex desire. At the conclusion of a letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, Symonds laments the fact that Norman Moor — a school pupil with whom he has become intensely besotted — 'just cares for me'; that is, is not sexually interested in him. Symonds gestures towards the 'thunder obbligato' that concludes Robert Schumann's setting of Heinrich Heine's 'Ich grolle nicht' in the song-cycle *Dichterliebe* (1840). Schumann presents Heine's poem as an insistent declaration by a spurned lover that he will heroically endure his rejection, having realized the cruel true nature of his beloved. The repeated chords in the piano accompaniment on the sub-dominant and tonic with which the song closes ironically over-perform this insistence, suggesting that the lover is merely disguising his emotional upset with a gesture of bravado. Symonds's reference is evidently a shared private joke between the correspondents, but by appending this reference to the close of his letter, he seems to acknowledge to Dakyns that he recognizes the slight ridiculousness of his melodramatic lament.

Symonds and the Choristers: Bristol and Oxford

Symonds's negotiations of music and desire are at their most fraught in his involvement with choristers. The chorister's voice, in Symonds's earliest writings, at first seems to represent an emblem of idealized beauty, capable of transmuting erotic desire into something nobler. Yet despite their apparent promise of ethereal disembodiment, such is the embodied reality of these voices that they continually draw Symonds back towards the temptations of the desiring flesh. From the years 1858 to 1863, Symonds divided his time between his family home at Clifton Hall House, Bristol, and Oxford. He regularly attended choral services at Bristol Cathedral and, in Oxford, at Magdalen and New College Chapels and occasionally Christ Church Cathedral. Over the course of these years,

⁹³ Ibid., p. 260.

Symonds engaged in a series of increasingly emotionally fraught relationships with a number of choristers he heard singing in these institutions.

When not studying at Oxford, or at home in Clifton, Symonds spent much of his spare time over the course of these years visiting a succession of English cathedral cities. Between 1859 and 1862, his letters to Charlotte detail attendance at services at the cathedrals of St. Paul's, London (January 1859), Durham, Bangor, and York (June 1859), Chester (August 1861), Norwich (October 1861), and Worcester (April 1862). Symonds's letters focus particularly on his musical experiences during these visits, dwelling in most detail on the musicianship and vocal quality of the choirs he hears. In Durham in June 1859, Symonds enthuses to Charlotte that the cathedral has 'the best Trebles in England'.⁹⁴ In Worcester in April 1862 he notes that 'the choir [...] seems glorious & will soon be finer still'.⁹⁵ Chester's cathedral choir, in comparison, is 'good — not brilliant but sound & sturdy'.⁹⁶ After a trip to Norwich Cathedral in October 1861, Symonds writes nostalgically to his sister: 'I wonder what has become of the solo boys I heard sing "Oh rest in the Lord" & "I know that my Redeemer liveth". One of them was called Smith, I think.'⁹⁷

Symonds's first significant same-sex relationship was with Willie Dyer, a chorister at Bristol Cathedral. Symonds met Dyer in April 1858 aged seventeen; Dyer, born in April 1843, was fourteen years old.⁹⁸ While their relationship was almost entirely unphysical, it was nevertheless one of the most significant of Symonds's life. From the perspective of the *Memoirs*, written over thirty years later, Symonds would reflect: 'I have never felt the same unreason and unreasoning emotion for any other human being.'⁹⁹ Significantly, his first encounter with Dyer occurred just after the 'revelation' of his discovery of same-

⁹⁴ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 191 (June 1859).

⁹⁵ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 341 (9 April 1862).

⁹⁶ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 308 (26 August 1861).

⁹⁷ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 313 (12 October 1861).

⁹⁸ See Phyllis Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (London: Longman, 1964), pp. 42–49; Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality*, pp. 166–70. Brady's account is inaccurate in suggesting that Symonds was twenty when he first met the seventeen-year-old Dyer (p. 169). The precise date of their first meeting (10 April 1858) is stated in the *Memoirs*, p. 156.

⁹⁹ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 157.

sex desire expressed in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*.¹⁰⁰ Symonds places a remarkable emphasis on the quality of Dyer's singing voice. His account in the *Memoirs* of his first encounter with Dyer in Bristol Cathedral is as follows:

[M]y eyes fell on a chorister who sat nearly opposite the stall which I had taken. His voice charmed me by its sharp ethereal melancholy. In timbre and quality it had something of a wood instrument [...] As I gazed and listened through the psalms and service and litany, I felt that a new factor had been introduced into my life. The voice dominated. But the boy who owned the voice seemed the only beautiful, the only flawless thing I had ever seen.¹⁰¹

Symonds draws attention to both the visual and the aural nature of his desire for the child. Indeed, Symonds's rapt accounts of his visits to the Cathedral return repeatedly to these twin attractions: '*[l]ooking at the boy in church, hearing him sing*'; '*kneeling in cathedral stall, listening to antiphons, gazing on beautiful faces*'.¹⁰² Here, Symonds's visual objectification of the child is clear. Yet, as the text insists, it is the voice that 'dominated'. Symonds's fixation on the child's voice presents it as an object independent of the child's appearance or physical body: the voice that 'dominated' is conceptually separated from 'the boy who owned the voice'. Indeed, the voice is afforded its own disembodied agency. It moves from '*[h]is voice*' — tied closely to the body from which it is emitted — to '*[t]he voice*'. Symonds invokes the familiar trope of the voice as a means of seduction — '*[h]is voice charmed me*'. The voice is the active subject of the sentence here, not the child, and it thus becomes an abstracted seductive force. In this way, the text can insist upon the 'flawless' sexual innocence of the child — it is the voice, not the child, that acts to seduce — whilst simultaneously investing the child's voice with sexual desire. The text leaves the nature of this voice's 'domination' ambiguous. It is the domination of the aural over the visual, but also the domination of the voice over the listener — the rendering of the listener joyfully passive. The voice's capability to 'charm' is attributed to its 'sharp ethereal

¹⁰⁰ For the central importance of Plato to Symonds's understanding of same-sex desire see Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*; Evangelista, 'Platonic Dons, Adolescent Bodies'.

¹⁰¹ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 156.

¹⁰² Symonds, *Memoirs*, pp. 156–57.

melancholy'. Such disembodied ethereality might be seen to reflect the transcendental mysticism of Tractarian Anglicanism (associated by the young Symonds with what he experienced as the 'aesthetic ecstasy [...] called religion'), or the imperative expressed in Plato to idealize bodily sexual desire through the aesthetic.¹⁰³ Yet Symonds is also drawn towards the voice's evocation of pain and sadness. Here the voice's signification shifts again: the voice functions as an intimate revelation of Dyer's (apparent) inner self. The melancholy of the voice becomes key to its enticing quality: Symonds is drawn to Dyer by a sense of shared sorrow.

In 1860, Symonds — now aged twenty — became infatuated with another Bristol Cathedral chorister, Alfred Brooke. In contrast to his love for Dyer, Symonds's intense desire for this fourteen-year-old found expression only in his imagination. Nevertheless, the textual traces of this unfulfilled desire provide useful insights into Symonds's fetishisation of the singing voice. Symonds's relationship with Brooke has been the subject of some confusion in accounts of Symonds's life: Grosskurth presents Symonds's sexual fantasies relating to Brooke as if they recount actual events; Rousseau conflates Alfred Brooke with Willie Dyer, erroneously suggesting that Symonds fell in love with Brooke while both were pupils at Harrow; Brady incorrectly states that 'Alfred Brook' [sic] was 'a fellow undergraduate' at Oxford.¹⁰⁴ Given such confusion, it is necessary to clarify the nature of Symonds's relationship with Brooke.

Alfred Brooke was born in Bristol in 1846. It appears that Symonds first met him in September 1859, at the home of Reverend John Guthrie. The party was attended by a number of clergy associated with Bristol Cathedral, along with the choristers. The group performed music for the assembled guests. Symonds's account of the evening notes that 'we had nice Madrigals etc.: poor little Brooke came rather to grief in "As pants [the] hart"'.¹⁰⁵ Symonds seems subsequently to

¹⁰³ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴ Grosskurth, *Biography*, pp. 58–60; George Rousseau, "'You Have Made Me Tear the Veil from Those Most Secret Feelings": John Addington Symonds Amidst the Children', in *Children and Sexuality: From the Greeks to the Great War*, ed. by George Rousseau (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 177; Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁵ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 204–06 (15 September 1859). While the editors of Symonds's letters suggest that this was 'probably a local youth who was an amateur singer', it seems more likely — given the assembled company — to have been Alfred Brooke,

have strongly associated Brooke with the words of Psalm 42 or, perhaps, musical settings of this text.

During university vacations from his studies in Oxford, Symonds returned home to Bristol, where he regularly attended services at Bristol Cathedral. It was here that he first became infatuated with Brooke. Symonds's *Memoirs* recount:

I fell violently in love with a cathedral chorister called Alfred Brooke. The passion I conceived for him differed considerably from my affection for Willie Dyer. It was more intense, unreasonable, poignant — at one and the same time more sensual and more ideal. I still think that this boy had the most beautiful face I ever saw and the most fascinating voice I ever heard.¹⁰⁶

Symonds characteristically draws attention to the beauty of both Brooke's voice and to his physical appearance. That his voice is 'fascinating' — in its contemporary meaning, spellbinding or enchanting — casts the boy as akin to a Siren, whose erotically alluring voice entices the pacified, weak-willed listener. Through his voice, the child becomes the seducer of the adult.

Incorporated in the *Memoirs* is what Symonds calls a 'prose dithyramb' — an ecstatic Dionysian hymn of praise — recounting his intense desire for Brooke. Symonds asserts in the *Memoirs* that the passage was composed 'in 1865 when the tyranny had been overlived but still vibrated in memory'.¹⁰⁷ That the 'tyranny' of Symonds's desire for Brooke should 'vibrate' suggests something of its connection to the 'vibrating voice' that instigated this desire. The passage's Biblical diction, archaic syntax and repetitive use of the first-person pronoun, alongside its joyfully self-assertive homoeroticism, represent Symonds at his most Whitmanesque, and it seems likely that it was composed in the wake of

who was at that time a chorister at Bristol Cathedral. The music Brooke sung was likely to be the second movement of Felix Bartholdy-Mendelssohn's setting of Psalm 42, 'Meine Seele dürstet nach Gott'.

¹⁰⁶ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

Symonds's discovery of the poet he viewed as a revolutionary proponent of liberated individualism.¹⁰⁸

But while the dithyramb's exalted tone of Old Testament prophecy certainly echoes Whitman, its Biblical allusions can also be placed within the Anglican tradition with which Symonds was closely familiar. The dithyramb bears an epigraph from the Latin Vulgate — '*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum*', the opening verse of Psalm 42 (in the King James Version: 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks'). In heading the dithyramb with an epigraph from scripture, the text consciously echoes the form of the Anglican sermon, familiar from regular church attendance, but also through widely circulated printed copies. Each of the sermons in John Keble's *Sermons for a Christian Year* (1827), for example, begins with a single verse of scripture, which introduces the passage upon which the sermon reflects.¹⁰⁹ Part of this undoubtedly reflects Symonds's desire to reclaim something of the spiritualism of Tractarian Anglicanism in order to incorporate it into a more enthusiastic, sexually liberated vision of what he called the 'illimitable symphony of cosmic life'.¹¹⁰ Symonds's dithyramb subsequently contains nothing that approaches the equivalent of a theological exegesis one would expect from a sermon, but it does proceed to draw specific parallels between the Psalm and Symonds's experience of his desire for Brooke ('I thirst for him as the hart panteth after water brooks').¹¹¹ The 'brook' referred to in Psalm 42 is, of course, a playful pun on the name of Alfred Brooke himself.

In contrast to those texts that dwell on the disembodied ethereality of the chorister's voice, Symonds's here dwells on the visual delight in Brooke's body, listing each detail of his anatomy with an intensity reminiscent of Whitman at his most rhapsodic. This voice leads him *into* the body. This lengthy description presents Brooke as if engaged in the act of singing: the text peers through the

¹⁰⁸ There is a degree of uncertainty as to when Symonds first read Whitman. In *Walt Whitman: A Study* (1893), Symonds suggests that Frederic Myers first introduced him to poems from 'Calamus' in Autumn 1865, whereupon he immediately bought a copy of *Leaves of Grass: Walt Whitman: A Study* (London: Nimmo, 1893), pp. 158–59. However, Symonds's letters to Dakyns suggest that his first sustained engagement with Whitman's verse occurred somewhat later, in February 1867: Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, 1, 696 (2 February 1867).

¹⁰⁹ John Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, 12 vols (London: Parker, 1875).

¹¹⁰ Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, p. 35.

¹¹¹ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 195.

child's open lips into the 'humid' space of his 'large red [...] mouth'; inside it sees his 'vibrating voice', an animated larynx; it dwells upon the child's 'athletic throat and well-formed breast', from which this voice originates. There is 'invitation in the ringing voice; a readiness to grant favours': the intense, assertive power of the child's singing is a signal of his erotic availability, his apparent willingness to engage sexually with the listener. Later, the seductive force of the voice is asserted once again: 'the fascination of his voice and breathing drowsed me'. Within its erotically charged context, the voice's power to impose upon the listener a 'drowsed' tiredness suggests the alluring pleasures of sexual passivity: the voice renders the listener dominated, vulnerable, powerless.¹¹²

In Symonds's dithyramb, the metaphor of 'panting', through which the Psalm expresses the longing for God, becomes another image associated with the eroticized voice. The rapid rise and fall of the diaphragm, the shallow inspiration of the lungs, the swift movement of breath: panting animates the same anatomical machinery used by the singing voice, but it does so in a way that undoes the rigid bodily discipline demanded by vocal technique. In the Psalm, such 'panting' is prompted by the deer's thirst, a metaphor for the soul's longing for divine salvation. Here, the desire for the divine is transformed into something explicitly sexual: it is the panting of sexual excitement, of coital exertion — the panting, perhaps, of the *heart*.

Symonds's erotic revelry is inspired not just by Brooke's voice and body, but also draws upon his recollection of performances of Anglican choral music. References to liturgical performances of settings of Psalm 42 occur repeatedly in his letters around this time. In April 1859, Symonds heard 'a nice service at Magd[alen]' which included Handel's setting of 'As pants the hart'. 'It was well sung', he noted to Charlotte, 'but I have *often* heard it done better'.¹¹³ In December 1860, Symonds attended a service at Christ Church Cathedral specially to hear Mendelssohn's 'As Pants the Hart' sung by Frederick William Pacey, a thirteen-year-old chorister. As noted above, it was the same setting of this text that Symonds heard Brooke struggle to sing in September 1859. In June 1858,

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 196–97.

¹¹³ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 182 (April 1859).

Symonds noted to Charlotte that the 'dear little boy' Willie Dyer had sent him the music for 'As Pants the Hart' 'as arranged in solo & septette'.¹¹⁴ This liturgical choral music is recollected by Symonds as part of the process of 'mental masturbation' — the phrase is his own — that motivated his erotic writings.¹¹⁵

It should be noted that, despite the intensity of Symonds's feelings for Brooke, it is unclear how well he knew him. The *Memoirs* insist that the erotic 'prose dithyramb' is entirely the product of 'dreams and visions', an assertion supported by the marginal note scrawled in frustration on Symonds's manuscript: 'Would to God that I had fraternized with him! Would to God that I had sought and he had suffered that carnal union.'¹¹⁶ Given Symonds's insistence that his desire for Brooke 'runs like a scarlet thread through [his] diaries of several years', it is surprising that he never mentions Brooke in his letters to Henry Graham Dakyns. In other respects, their correspondence discloses in frank detail the persistent, often tortured desire these men felt for children and young adolescents (e.g. the children of Tennyson, their school pupils Norman Moor, Arthur Carré and Cecil Boyle).¹¹⁷ It seems unlikely that Symonds's relationship with Brooke progressed beyond the level of private fantasy; had it done so it seems highly likely that Symonds would have discussed it with Dakyns, with whom he is typically frank in his correspondence.

It was at Oxford that Symonds's desire for choristers was finally to cause a scandal. Any possible scandal arising from Symonds's love for Willie Dyer was avoided by the intervention of Symonds's father, who did all he could to curtail the relationship, while Symonds's painful obsession with Alfred Brooke appears to have been kept secret even from his closest friends. The circumstances of the Oxford episode have been dealt with at length by George Rousseau, so need only be summarized here.¹¹⁸ In 1862, Charles Shorting, a former friend of Symonds who held a grudge against him, wrote to the fellows of Magdalen College — where

¹¹⁴ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 149 (20 June 1858).

¹¹⁵ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 168.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹¹⁷ For further details see Howard J. Booth, 'Same-sex Desire, Ethics and Double-mindedness: The Correspondence of Henry Graham Dakyns, Henry Sidgwick and John Addington Symonds', *Journal of European Studies*, 32 (2002), 283–301.

¹¹⁸ Rousseau, 'John Addington Symonds Amidst the Children'.

Symonds had recently been elected as a probationary fellow — accusing Symonds of harbouring impure desires for the choristers at Magdalen. Symonds had indeed developed an intense attraction to an eleven-year-old chorister, Walter Goolden. Precisely what attracted Symonds to Goolden remains unclear, though letters from Symonds to his sister suggest that he admired his voice — he is referred to in passing as ‘a good treble’.¹¹⁹ However, there is nothing to suggest that Symonds acted on his desires. In the investigation that followed, Symonds was exonerated. Nevertheless, he emerged from the proceedings thoroughly humiliated, and the emotional turmoil of the events took a severe toll on his health. He resigned his fellowship and left Oxford shortly after. Rousseau carefully situates the episode within the intensely homosocial atmosphere of Victorian Oxford, noting Symonds’s position in an ‘Arcadian’ pederastic sub-culture in which choristers were frequently objectified by older men. He ultimately concludes that attraction to choristers may be connected to class disparity, but he overlooks the significance of the fact that these children were most closely associated with their singing voices.

During his time at Oxford, Symonds’s letters often dwell upon the performances and voice quality of trebles to the exclusion of the other musical performers at the services he attends. In October 1858, he enthuses about a rendition of ‘How Beautiful are the Feet’ from Handel’s *Messiah* at Magdalen, ‘sung very nicely by a good treble’.¹²⁰ Later that term, he attends ‘a splendid service at New College’ which included ‘I Waited for the Lord’ from Mendelssohn’s *Lobgesang* sung ‘by two boys in unison’, which provides, he says, ‘a pleasing effect’.¹²¹ In the course of his correspondence, he repeatedly praises the vocal beauty of an assortment of Magdalen choristers without once offering Charlotte an assessment of the standard of singing by the lay clerks or, indeed, of the playing of Magdalen’s organist. While the arrival at Magdalen in January 1860 of John Stainer as organist passes without comment, Symonds’s letters are otherwise closely attentive to changes in musical personnel. Around December 1860, for example, he sorrowfully laments the fact that New College has ‘lost [...] their best treble’

¹¹⁹ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 370 (9 November 1862).

¹²⁰ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 168 (October 1858).

¹²¹ Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 171 (1 November 1858).

and that another favourite chorister, Henry Homer Page, has departed from Magdalen for Rugby School.¹²²

It is clear from Symonds's *Memoirs*, and from historical work undertaken by Rousseau, that Symonds was one of a number of students who were in some way attracted to choristers in Oxford in the 1860s.¹²³ When he first arrived in Oxford, his friends included Edward William Urquhart, whom, he reports, 'had high church proclivities and ran after Choristers'. His friend Randell Vickers was 'a man of somewhat similar stamp'. 'In their company', he notes, 'I frequented antechapels and wasted my time over feverish sentimentalism.'¹²⁴ Symonds also became 'intimate friends' at Oxford with Charles Shorting, a friendship terminated when the latter's 'conduct with regard to boys, especially the choristers at Magdalen, brought him into serious trouble'.¹²⁵ Symonds later blamed Shorting for bringing his 'peculiar atmosphere of boy-love into [his] neighbourhood' around 1862. There is ample evidence to suggest that Symonds harboured strong desires for pre-pubescent boys long before this point in time, though an important distinction is that Shorting appears to have acted on such desires much more readily.¹²⁶

The proximity of choristers to older students was certainly of some concern to Oxford college authorities around this time. At New College in 1860, for example, James Edwards Sewell (Warden of New College, 1860-1901) wrote of William Tuckwell (Headmaster of New College School, 1857-1864): 'I quite approve of the principle which he has acted upon in discouraging communications between the boys under his care, and members of the University not actually related to them, and having no special interest in them, or claim to acquaintance with them.'¹²⁷ Similar concerns were raised repeatedly about such fraternization between boys and students at Magdalen College. In 1864, the choristers were instructed to proceed directly to the vestry before the start of services, and, at

¹²² Symonds, Letter to Charlotte Symonds, *Letters*, I, 217-18 (December 1860).

¹²³ Rousseau, 'John Addington Symonds Amidst the Children'.

¹²⁴ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 170.

¹²⁵ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 178. As Rousseau has noted, Shorting was also involved in a scandal with a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral.

¹²⁶ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 180.

¹²⁷ New College Archive, 8561, p. 8 (Letter from James Edwards Sewell to a member of Brasenose, 14 November 1860), cited in Wollenberg, *Music at Oxford*, p. 201.

their conclusion, to return to the choristers' school without delay. If they went into an undergraduate's room without permission, they were told, their punishment could be dismissal from the choir.¹²⁸ In 1874, a notice was placed on the door of Magdalen College Hall stating that: 'Any undergraduate detected speaking to a chorister will be sent down and the chorister expelled. Or if found asking to his rooms will be expelled.'¹²⁹ The rule appears to have been actively enforced. In June 1881, for example, Frederick Bulley (President of Magdalen College, 1855-1885) sent down for the rest of term one student who had invited a chorister to his room, and rusticated four other students who were 'found to have repeatedly broken the Rule which prohibits all communication with the choristers'.¹³⁰

Symonds's *Memoirs* suggest that one function of the consumption of these voices was to strengthen homosocial relationships between male undergraduates in 'Arcadian' sub-communities, based upon shared sexual and aesthetic tastes. Symonds's accounts of listening to choristers as an undergraduate appear not to be solitary experiences, but rather communal ones in which he was joined by other young Oxford contemporaries. Interesting parallels might be drawn between Symonds's fetishisation of the voice of the chorister whilst at Oxford and his eroticized aesthetic consumption of photographic nudes of young men in his later life. Stefano Evangelista has noted Symonds's interest in photography in the late 1880s, particularly of nudes of young men in a Mediterranean setting, by artists such as Wilhelm Von Gloeden. Symonds was an avid collector of such images, and circulated them amongst friends with similar sexual tastes (such as Henry Graham Dakyns, Edmund Gosse and Charles Kains-Jackson). While Evangelista is careful to note the problematic issues of exploitation that such photographs raise, he also suggests that they might have nevertheless played a more positive role in establishing discourses of homosexual emancipation. Such photographs, he suggests, acted as 'a material referent to cement a shared sexual

¹²⁸ Magdalen College Archives PR/2/3, p. 20, cited in Matthew d'Ancona and others, "'Every One of Us Is a Magdalen Man': The College, 1854-1928", in *Magdalen College Oxford: A History*, ed. by L. W. B. Brockliss (Oxford: Magdalen College Oxford, 2008), p. 500.

¹²⁹ Magdalen College Archives, MS 881 (among loose papers facing p. 81, dated June 1875), cited in Wollenberg, *Music at Oxford*, p. 201.

¹³⁰ Magdalen College Archives PR/2/6, p. 450 (from the Notebook of Frederick Bulley), cited in d'Ancona and others, "'Every One of Us Is a Magdalen Man'", p. 500.

identity'; in doing so, they 'helped to develop a language about male homosexuality that is based on desire and eroticism rather than medicine ("inversion") or the ancient world ("pederasty")'.¹³¹ If the consumption and circulation of quasi-pornographic images can promote the development of community amongst sexual minorities, communal musical listening might also provide a forum in which such groups establish shared aesthetic codes, tastes and practices. The consumption of choristers' voices in 1860s Oxford can be understood as an early example of the 'aestheticism' of the following decades, which, as Matt Cook has argued, 'provided a model for a complex identity based on beauty and the senses, rather than on social and cultural conformity or biological determinism.'¹³² Comparison might be drawn with the episode in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, in which a group of young men listen to Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony reproduced on the pianola in the privacy of their rooms at Cambridge.¹³³ The shared consumption of music which, as the text later makes clear, was explicitly understood as an encoding homosexual desire, becomes a means for fostering an emergent sense of queer community.

Class disparities may have also played some role in Symonds's attraction towards choristers. The role of asymmetric social hierarchies in the apparent production of (or intensification) of desire, has been well documented, particularly with regard to the history of homosexuality.¹³⁴ Yet an apparent class disparity between working-class choristers and more affluent listeners provides only an imperfect explanation for why these boys became the object of pederastic desire. Alan Mould suggests that there was a general shift across the course of the nineteenth century, in which choristers were drawn increasingly from middle-class families.¹³⁵ Such a trend is reflected in the choristers that Symonds listened to in Oxford and Bristol. Alfred Brooke was the son of a music teacher and thus, like Willie Dyer, of a class background considerably lower than Symonds.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Evangelista, 'Aesthetic Encounters', p. 93.

¹³² Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, p. 96.

¹³³ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 28.

¹³⁴ See for example Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, pp. 56–57.

¹³⁵ Mould, *The English Chorister*, p. 180.

¹³⁶ As Cyril Ehrlich has noted, music teaching and musical performance in England in the nineteenth century were, in most cases, poorly paid, and musicians in general were of a low social standing (*The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), pp. 123–25). Even the few permanent posts at established institutions offered scant

Census records indicate that, after leaving Bristol Cathedral as a chorister, Brooke worked in a series of generally insecure jobs on the cusp of the lower middle-class: bank clerk, travelling salesman, and, eventually, like his father, music teacher.¹³⁷ But while the choristers with whom Symonds became infatuated in Bristol were of a lower social class, those in Oxford came from a broader range of class backgrounds. Walter Goolden, for example, was the son of a London doctor with an address in the desirable environs of Hyde Park.¹³⁸ After the scandal surrounding Symonds, he went on to become a Scholar at Merton College and graduated with a First in Natural Science[s] in 1871.¹³⁹ Frederick Pacey — a chorister at Christ Church mentioned in Symonds's letters — was, as the son of a bookseller, from a more modest background. Nevertheless, his training as a chorister appears to have provided the basis for later social advancement: in 1871, at the (unusually advanced) age of 24, he commenced a Bachelors of Music degree at St. Mary's Hall, Oxford. Another favourite chorister, Henry Homer Page at Magdalen, was the son of a Rector from Suffolk. Victorian choristers, then, are quite different in their class identity from, for example, the more obviously lower-class Venetian gondoliers or Swiss farmhands that Symonds was to take as his lovers later in his life. The desired status of the chorister might better be understood through particular attention to their voice and the symbolic weight of beauty and loss invested in that voice's transience.

A Boy's Voice Broken

Symonds's letters whilst at Oxford often note with sadness the departure of favourite choristers from the chapels he attends. The fact that the chorister's voice is always doomed to 'break' is central to the manner in which it becomes eroticized. In Victorian vocal treatises the transition made by the boy's voice around puberty is always figured as a sudden, momentous 'break'. Discourses placing heavy emphasis on the breaking voice can be shown to reinforce the process through which the child is posited as categorically distinct from the adult.

financial rewards: John Stainer, for example, received only £120 a year from Magdalen College in 1860 for playing the organ and training the choir (Peter Charlton, *John Stainer and the Musical Life of Victorian Britain* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), p. 22).

¹³⁷ Census information from 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1901.

¹³⁸ Rousseau, 'John Addington Symonds Amidst the Children', p. 196, n. 22.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Following Kincaid, it is precisely this relentless emphasis on the child's *difference* from the adult that sees the 'innocent child' become eroticized. While this trope is applied to both the speaking and the singing voice, its results are portrayed as particularly dramatic in the context of the latter. As current-day musicologists have emphasized, the conception of the boy's voice suddenly 'breaking' fails to acknowledge the gradual nature of the change in the child's voice. Choir trainers today are more likely to recognize the fact that the boy's voice begins the process of change at the very onset of puberty.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, Victorian treatises on the chorister tend to emphasize an abrupt, catastrophic vocal failure. George Martin's account is representative in this respect:

He is admitted to the choir, and for about two years he appears to be of no appreciable value. At eleven, or thereabouts, perhaps, his voice begins to show signs of development and promise. He continues to improve until he is about twelve, then possibly for two years or so his voice is at its best. Then comes total collapse.¹⁴¹

The hyperbolic conclusion of Martin's narrative of vocal development — 'then comes total collapse' — is humorous both in its melodrama and in its sheer certitude. The contrast between this short, blunt sentence and the longer, more grammatically complex, preceding sentences provides added emphasis. The latter contains none of the hesitant qualifiers of the preceding sentences ('about', 'thereabouts', 'perhaps', 'possibly'). This break is sudden, final, irreversible, cataclysmic. Such rhetoric reflects more general Victorian conceptions of puberty, which is often figured as a sudden, radical change: 'a complex *revolution* is effected in the human economy at the ages of puberty'; 'genital organs *suddenly and astonishingly* develop' and 'sexual desires are awakened'.¹⁴² As Kincaid has noted, while in earlier periods childhood seemed to be defined by ideas of dependence, by the Victorian period, the new dividing line appeared to relate to

¹⁴⁰ Ashley, *How High*, pp. 41–56.

¹⁴¹ Martin, *The Art of Training Choir Boys*, p. 21.

¹⁴² Michael Ryan, *The Philosophy of Marriage* (Philadelphia: Barrington and Hanswell, 1837), pp. 143 and 67; George Drysdale, *Elements of Social Science* (London: Truelove, 1886), p. 65.

puberty. The suddenness of puberty allows the Victorians to draw a clear line between the 'child' and the 'non-child'.

In this manner, the figure of the 'broken' voice can be understood to act within wider discourses on childhood to reinforce the idea of the child as a class distinct from the adult. Discussions of the 'breaking' voice frequently note that it coincides not just with the other secondary physical changes that mark the onset of puberty, but also with the 'moral and intellectual change' understood to signal the transition to adulthood.¹⁴³ Symonds himself reflects such a position in 'A Problem in Modern Ethics' (1891), when he notes that 'at the age of puberty [...] a boy distinguishes himself abruptly from a girl, by changing his voice and growing hair on parts of the body where it is not usually found in women'. Puberty is figured as an 'abrupt' transition. Indeed, in Symonds's consideration of 'the mysterious dubiety of what we call sex', he suggests that it is precisely the very abruptness of gender differentiation at puberty that can lead to 'sexual inversion'.¹⁴⁴ In Symonds's sonnet 'A Boy's Voice Broken' (1884), the breaking of the child's singing voice is precipitated by the arrival of adolescent sexual desire: 'Some god unknown within his heart was strong'. The penultimate line of the poem makes clear that the loss of voice equates to the loss of innocence: 'The boy's voice failed. Love's hour had come.'¹⁴⁵ Here, the caesura introduced by the full stop acts to emphasize the import of the vocal break, drawing a stark division between childhood innocence and sudden adolescent sexual awakening. The chorister's voice remains untainted by the sexual and is thus, perversely, maintained as an object of eroticized innocence.

The other key point of note about the breaking voice is that the child's voice is commonly understood to grow in strength and beauty up to the point at which it breaks. 'For the year or two preceding the break of voice', Howard enthuses, 'the brilliance and power of boys' voices, especially in the higher tones, is often phenomenal.'¹⁴⁶ The idea recurs repeatedly in Symonds's writings. In a letter to

¹⁴³ Behnke and Browne, *The Child's Voice*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁴ Symonds, 'A Problem in Modern Ethics', p. 180.

¹⁴⁵ Symonds, 'A Boy's Voice Broken', in *Vagabunduli Libellus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1884), p. 144.

¹⁴⁶ Howard, *The Child-Voice*, p. 22.

Horatio Brown praising the ‘deep incommunicable spirit-speaking power of voices’ — discussed below — Symonds dwells on his sensuous attraction towards ‘a contralto of extraordinary force and volume and vibration’: ‘a boy’s voice on the point of breaking proved by its incomparable thrill’.¹⁴⁷ In ‘A Problem in Greek Ethics’, Symonds compares the ‘bloom of youth’ celebrated by the Greeks — ‘that [moment of] corporeal beauty, unlike all other beauties of the human form’ — to the fullness of the boy’s voice just before it breaks. This climax of ‘corporeal loveliness’, he suggests, ‘marks male adolescence no less triumphantly than does the male soprano voice upon the point of breaking.’ It is the ‘very evanescence’ of this ‘bloom’ which makes it to the Greeks so very desirable, Symonds argues, ‘since nothing more clearly characterizes the poetic myths which adumbrate their special sensibility than the pathos of a blossom that must fade.’¹⁴⁸ Symonds’s desire for the voice of the chorister might be understood in similar terms. The chorister’s voice attains a special attraction due to the knowledge that its beauty cannot be sustained. In this manner, the voice of the chorister can be seen to take its place alongside a panoply of cherished emblems of loss that populate queer Victorian literature: A. E. Housman’s Shropshire lads, doomed to an early grave; Walter Pater’s ‘diaphanous types’, pre-ordained to victimhood; Vernon Lee’s spectral eighteenth-century operatic voices.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, as both Kincaid and Jackson have noted, many accounts of Victorian pederasty are motivated by a desire to resist the idea of transience, to fix the child in a state of perpetual innocence. ‘The prosaic fact that children do not stay children’, Kincaid observes, ‘takes on an enormous psychological and poetic force in the imaginings of child-love.’¹⁵⁰ The most effective way of infinitely postponing the arrival of adulthood is through death, thus the popularity among Victorian

¹⁴⁷ Symonds, Letter to Horatio F. Brown, *Letters*, II, 641–42 (21 July 1880), cited in Horatio F. Brown, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography*, 2 vols (London: Nimmo, 1895), II, 175–77.

¹⁴⁸ Symonds, ‘A Problem in Greek Ethics’, pp. 111–12.

¹⁴⁹ See Ruth Robbins, ‘“A Very Curious Construction”: Masculinity and the Poetry of A. E. Housman and Oscar Wilde’, in *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 137–59; Jacques Khalip, ‘Pater’s Sadness’, *Raritan*, 20 (2000), 136–58; Martha Vicinus, ‘“A Legion of Ghosts”: Vernon Lee (1856–1935) and the Art of Nostalgia’, *GLQ*, 10 (2004), 599–616.

¹⁵⁰ Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p. 226, Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 114.

authors of killing off the innocent children that populate their stories.¹⁵¹ Such a pattern is borne out in Victorian stories invoking the figure of the innocent chorister, often tales of religious instruction published for mass consumption by organisations such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Texts such as the anonymous *Michael the Chorister* (c. 1870) and *Little Walter: The Lane Chorister* (1885) and Bingley Roel's *Chorister Jim: The Yorkshire Choir Boy* (1897) follow a predictable, morally instructive narrative arc: an innocent child overcomes his tendency towards occasional (if fundamentally mild) naughtiness; he turns towards God in an act of repentance; he becomes the victim of some sort of violence or illness; he places his trust in divine providence; ultimately, he dies peacefully, resigned to any misfortune he may have faced.¹⁵² Importantly, the chorister in such Victorian fictions never lives long enough for his voice to break. The point at which the voice changes is invested with such significance because it stands as a point of metaphorical death. As a category of identity, the chorister cannot exist after the voice changes, for the chorister is defined by his pure, pre-pubescent vocal tone. The voice of the chorister becomes cherished, desired, fetishized because it is doomed to perish.

The desire for the voice of the chorister can thus be understood in its historical context as bound up with the eroticisation of childhood innocence in Victorian culture, a discourse maintained through a rigid conceptual division between adulthood and childhood. The insistent trope of the vocal 'break' acts to reinforce this division, whilst also positing the child's voice as a figure of inevitable loss. Yet such historical contextualization fails to fully account for the intensity of desire invested in these voices, both in Symonds's writings and elsewhere. Symonds's writings can profitably be read in the light of psychoanalytic theory to usefully illuminate the manner in which the chorister's voice becomes desired precisely as a psychic emblem of loss.

¹⁵¹ For example, Little Nell in Charles Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), Helen Burns in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Dolcino in Henry James's 'The Author of Beltraffio' (1884).

¹⁵² *Michael the Chorister* (London: John and Charles Mozley, [c. 1870]); *Little Walter: The Lane Chorister* (London: Joseph Masters, 1885); Bingley Roel, *Chorister Jim: The Yorkshire Choir Boy* (London: Jarrold, 1897).

The Chorister's Voice as Lost Object

Symonds's *Memoirs* describe his recollection of listening to the voices of choristers as a child, and the emotional awakening this experience prompted within him:

I was in the nave of Bristol Cathedral during service time, lifted in my nurse's arms and looking through the perforated doors of the organ screen, which then divided nave from choir. The organ was playing and the choristers were singing. Some chord awoke in me then, which has gone on thrilling through my lifetime and has been connected with the deepest of my emotional experiences. Cathedrals, college chapels, 'quires and places where they sing' resuscitate that mode of infancy. I know, when I am entering a stately and time-honoured English house of prayer, that I shall put this mood upon me like a garment. The voices of choiring men and boys, the sobbing of antiphones and lark-like soaring of clear treble notes into the gloom of Gothic arches, the thunder of the labouring diapasons, stir in me that old deep-centred innate sentiment.¹⁵³

In turning to his childhood experiences to account for the intensity of his subsequent 'emotional experiences', Symonds uses an autobiographical trope common to many writers associated with Victorian aestheticism. Walter Pater's 'The Child in the House' (1878), Vernon Lee's 'The Child in the Vatican' (1881) and John Ruskin's *Praeterita* (1885) each explore the impact of the Wordsworthian 'child as father to the man' on the development of the emotional and aesthetic sensibilities that subsequently coloured their lives and works.¹⁵⁴ But the passage also reflects a wider concern more specific to Symonds's *Memoirs*: the origins of sexual desire and how one might understand such desire. In this respect, the passage describes one of two 'primal scenes' narrated in the *Memoirs*. Later in his narrative, Symonds presents in more explicit terms the awakening of his first feelings of same-sex desire: he experiences erotic dreams involving Bristolian sailors. Here, the precise nature of 'the deepest of

¹⁵³ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁴ Walter Pater, 'Imaginary Portraits: I. The Child in the House', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 38 (August 1878), 313–21; Vernon Lee, 'The Child in the Vatican', in *Belcaro*, pp. 17–48; John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[Symonds's] emotional experiences' remains unclear: the passage certainly addresses a residual attraction towards religious feeling, but its reference to the 'chord' of desire that has 'gone on thrilling' through the author's lifetime seems to speak of emotions rather more erotically charged. The division may, in fact, be an artificial one: in both the *Memoirs* and *Walt Whitman: A Study*, Symonds reconceives of religion in terms of a 'cosmic enthusiasm', in which intense religious feeling and sexual desire become deeply intertwined.¹⁵⁵

The connection that the passage draws between an infantile moment of enraptured listening and the subsequent experience of desire can be usefully illuminated by psychoanalytic approaches to the voice. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the voice and the gaze are added to the list of desired objects — the phallus, the breast, excrement, money, offspring — posited by Freud. As such, the voice and the gaze become the object of 'invocatory' and 'scopic' drives, which sees them inserted into a psychic system through which they become eroticized.¹⁵⁶ The significance of the gaze — and its associated site of infant ego-formation, the mirror scene — has been recognized in a great deal of subsequent psychoanalytic criticism. While the 'voice' as an object of desire has received less critical attention, it nevertheless forms a central part of the psychoanalytic system of theorists such as Guy Rosolato and Didier Anzieu.¹⁵⁷ Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* remains amongst the most influential discussions of Lacanian and post-Lacanian theories of voice, while in more recent works, Mladen Dolar and Steven Connor have also developed their ideas on voice within this psychoanalytic tradition.¹⁵⁸ For the purposes of this discussion, the theories of Rosolato, Anzieu and Michel Poizat are particularly illuminating.

¹⁵⁵ See Symonds, *Memoirs*, pp. 443–72; Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, pp. 13–35.

¹⁵⁶ See Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre X: L'Angoisse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

¹⁵⁷ See Guy Rosolato, 'La voix: entre corps et langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 37.1 (1974), 75–94; Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*.

¹⁵⁸ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Mladen Dolar, 'The Object Voice', in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 7–31; Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

For both Mladen Dolar and Michel Poizat, the voice becomes invested with desire because it retains within it a psychic trace of an excessive presymbolic *jouissance*.¹⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, both locate the desire for the voice as originating in the psychic drama of infantile development. In Poizat's theory of the pleasures of listening, the infant emits a primal cry — a pre-linguistic expression of pure vocal sonority linked to feelings of want and displeasure. The primal cry is answered by the mother: the mother attributes meaning to the cry, and responds by providing the infant with some form of comfort (such as the breast). In the mother's response to the cry, the infant's primal need is fully and perfectly satisfied — it is the scene of what Lacan calls 'primary *jouissance*'.¹⁶⁰ A trace of this *jouissance* becomes incorporated into the infant's psyche. The second cry of the infant becomes an explicit demand for something, and it requires a response. The mother responds to the second cry of the infant, but her response is not identical to her first response to the primal cry. This response cannot recover the initial *jouissance* invested by the infant in the primal cry. The primal cry becomes an irrecoverably lost object (what Lacan calls an 'objet a'). There is a constant, futile desire to return to this lost primal cry and to re-attain the *jouissance* with which it is invested.¹⁶¹ Beyond this mythic scene of early childhood, the voice becomes a space in which the fantasy of recovering lost *jouissance* can be endlessly re-enacted. While the voice enters into signification (and the lack that is always bound up with such signification), it nevertheless maintains a residue of what Gérard Pommier has called 'the skeletal remains of its sonorous materiality'.¹⁶² All voices are haunted by the spectral remnants of the primal cry. Poizat argues that we are forever engaged in an attempt to recover this 'lost sonorous materiality, now dissolved behind signification'. This lost voice

¹⁵⁹ Dolar, 'The Object Voice'; Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*; Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. by Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Michel Poizat, "'The Blue Note'" and "'The Objectified Voice and the Vocal Object'", *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3.3 (1991), 195–211.

¹⁶⁰ See Jacques Lacan, 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 146–78.

¹⁶¹ Poizat, "'The Blue Note'", pp. 206–09.

¹⁶² Gérard Pommier, *D'une logique de la psychose*, trans. by Arthur Denner (Paris: Point hors ligne, 1983), p. 40.

represents that which is, at a subconscious level, a 'totally purified, trans-verbal state, experienced [...] as the primitive encounter with *jouissance*'.¹⁶³

The passage from Symonds's *Memoirs* above can be understood to narrate a recollection of this primal scene of listening. Certainly, its repeated gestures towards 'deep-centred', 'innate', 'deepest' emotions signal a turn towards the unconscious. In narrating a moment of enraptured infantile musical listening, the text looks back to the moment of primal *jouissance* associated with the initial experience of aural pleasure: 'some chord awoke in me then'. That this aural pleasure becomes an object of desire is clear from the manner in which desire itself is figured as a 'chord' that 'thrills' within the listener's body ('in me'). Subsequent experiences of music 'resuscitate that mode of infancy'; they recall traces of this initial auditory pleasure first experienced by the infant. Significantly, the passage reveals the listener's inability to fully recover the pleasure of this primal *jouissance*. The listener remains 'divided' from the source of aural pleasure by 'perforated doors'. While the initial experience of aural pleasure is perceived of in terms of bodily depth ('some chord awoke *in me*'), subsequent attempts to recapture this 'mood' act only upon the surface of the body ('I shall put this mood *upon me* like a garment'). Donning such a 'garment' suggests an attempt to reclaim the comforting, enveloping bath of sounds experienced by the child in earliest infancy, but it also represents another form of *barrier* between primal *jouissance* and attempts to recapture this pleasure.

These images of spatial partition — 'the perforated screen' and the 'divided nave from choir' — also represent another form of division closely bound up with the infant experience of the voice: the division of the infant's sense of self from the maternal body, and the associated emergence of infantile subjectivity. That the infant is held in the arms of his nurse evokes the spectre of maternal care, whilst signalling its loss: the nurse is a substitute for the mother, but her care can never match that provided by the actual mother. Building upon Lacan's theories, Guy Rosolato postulates a primal listening experience, defined by the enclosure of the infant by the maternal voice and associated with plenitude and bliss.¹⁶⁴ He views

¹⁶³ Poizat, 'The Blue Note', p. 209.

¹⁶⁴ Rosolato, 'La voix', p. 78.

this as the prototype for all subsequent auditory pleasure, especially that which arises from listening to music. The maternal voice, he suggests, surrounds the infant in a calming and protective aural blanket; it 'bathes it in a celestial melody whose closest terrestrial equivalent is opera'.¹⁶⁵ This imaginary period of aural plenitude exists prior to the infant's psychic differentiation from the mother, that is, the infant's formation of a sense of self independent from the mother. The infant responds to the maternal voice by attempting to harmonize with her. The process of harmonisation can only be fully realized once the infant and mother have become differentiated from one another. Through the process of harmonising with the mother, the infant thus comes to conceive of itself, in what Rosolato calls an 'acoustic mirror', as a subject independent of the mother. The differentiation of the subject from the object — the infant from the mother — is viewed by Rosolato as an experience of division, loss or lack. The experience of music evokes this psychic drama of separation from the mother, and desire for return:

Harmonic and polyphonic display can be understood as a succession of tensions and releases, of the union and divergence of elements that are [...] opposed in their accords, in order to be resolved in their most simple unity. It is then the whole drama of separated bodies and their reunion which supports harmony.¹⁶⁶

Didier Anzieu suggests a similar model, through which the infant's sense of subjectivity emerges from its primal experience of sound. Anzieu proposes the concept of the 'skin-ego'. During the earliest stages of development, he suggests, the foetus or infant forms a unified ego from the psychical absorption of experiences upon the surface of its body.¹⁶⁷ At such early stages, Anzieu suggests, the infant's sense of sound is more developed than its sense of sight. The division between haptic and aural sensation is sufficiently fluid, so that the infant perceives of itself as being caressed and soothed by the touch of sound. The infant is immersed in what Anzieu calls a 'sonorous envelope', a bath of sounds that surrounds the infant, formed by the echoing interchanges between the mother's

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁶⁷ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, p. 10.

voice and the child's own sounds. This 'sonorous envelope' acts as the auditory equivalent of Lacan's mirror-stage: a 'sound-mirror' or 'audio-phonic skin'.¹⁶⁸ The infant comes to understand its own unified selfhood through the interaction between its body and the sounds that surround it.

Rosolato's and Anzieu's theories of voice are particularly useful for making sense of another account of rapt musical listening relayed by Symonds in a letter to Horatio Forbes Brown. The account is worth quoting at some length:

Deep incommunicable spirit-speaking power of voices. I think now there is nothing like a voice for teaching me about the soul. I think there is nothing I could fall in love with but a voice. I think I love that best, and that reveals most of the life I love.

I was sitting this evening at half-past eight, smoking under the vine at the end of my terrace, when a beautiful thing happened.

A clear soprano voice, strong but not full, the untrained voice of a girl, I thought, of about eighteen years, from behind the wall, back to back with me, gave out a simple melody. The melody was old, probably of Italian origin, either used for hymns in the church service or caught up from some organ recital.

She sang and paused.

Then she sang again; but this time the same melody was repeated on the second by a contralto of extraordinary force and volume and vibration. It overwhelmed me with its richness. I tremble when I remember it. But this was no voice of woman or of man. It was a boy's voice on the point of breaking proved by its incomparable thrill, by a something indescribable, suggestive of chords resonant within the larynx.

They sang together, against each other, in harmony, and then at last in unison. And after I had listened breathless, the melody was (for them at

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

any rate) played out, and I heard the noise of feet that moved upon the street, and words and low laughter [...]

I shall never know anything concerning those two lives, the ripened womanhood of one so musically blended with the broken boyhood and just budding manhood of the other.¹⁶⁹

The passage imputes to the singing voice a power to disclose to the listener the hidden depths of his own selfhood. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it re-enacts the discovery of infantile subjectivity in what Anzieu calls the 'sonorous envelope'. The maternal voice of the girl — inherent in her 'ripened womanhood' — is 'musically blended' with that of the boy, who here stands for the infant. Such 'blending' represents the blissful state of the infant when still undifferentiated from the mother. The boy's voice exists on a threshold akin to that of the infant. Just as the boy's voice is 'on the point of breaking' as he confronts his 'just budding manhood', the infant faces a similar psychic dislocation from the mother. In the light of Rosolato's theory, the meandering duet between the 'contralto' voice of the young boy and the 'clear soprano' voice of the young girl restages the harmonizing of the infant and the maternal voices, through which the infant develops his subjectivity in the 'acoustic mirror' formed by their mutual sounds. The boy's voice responds to that of the girl with an identical melody, but repeated 'on the second' — that is, transposed a tone up from the girl's melody. The aural effect of this is an awkward dissonance between these two opposing voices. Yet as they continue their duet, these polyphonic voices (moving 'together', 'against each other') gradually converge 'in harmony, and then at last in unison'. The infant responds to the sounds emitted by the mother, and through this process of harmonisation his sense of independent subjectivity emerges. This emergence is ultimately tainted by a sense of lack, of loss — the boy's 'extraordinary' voice must break, leaving behind his 'broken boyhood'. The pleasure of listening to these voices — a pleasure that expresses for Symonds 'something indescribable' about his selfhood — might be accounted for, as Poizat has suggested, by the manner in which they elicit psychic echoes of these infantile experiences.

¹⁶⁹ Symonds, Letter to Horatio F. Brown, *Letters*, II, 641–42 (21 July 1880), cited in Brown, *John Addington Symonds* (London: Nimmo, 1895), II, 175–77.

The voices in this scene acquire added intensity from the fact that their source is concealed. In *La Voix au cinéma*, Michel Chion discusses the uncanny nature of what he calls ‘acousmatic’ voices: a voice when it is divorced from its source, he suggests, acquires an added authority and surplus of meaning, but it is nevertheless accompanied by a strong desire to locate the body from which it is emitted.¹⁷⁰ As Steven Connor similarly notes, such ‘sourceless [...] sound’ is typically experienced ‘both as a lack and an excess; both as a mystery to be explained, and an intensity to be contained’.¹⁷¹ Symonds narrates his experience in a manner that makes a virtue of his lack of visual connection with the young singers: he purposefully delays the revelation that the second voice he hears is that of a boy in order to emphasize that he himself only gradually decoded the mysterious gender identity of this voice. He introduces an additional strangeness to this voice through what is presumably a spelling mistake: the power of the boy’s voice is ‘suggestive of *chords* resonant within the larynx’. The voice is ascribed the uncanny ability to produce multiple musical notes simultaneously. Implicitly, the lack of visual stimulus might be understood to heighten the sensation of listening. Yet there is a sadness here too: Symonds will ‘never know anything concerning these two lives’ — their voices leave behind no enduring, material referent from which he might know them again in the future. They are sustained only by an aural trace which, the text suggests, will continue to ‘play out’ in Symonds’s memory.

Such psychoanalytic theories of voice reach beyond the immediate cultural context of Symonds’s musical experiences to provide an alternative perspective on the strange significance of the child’s desired voice in his writings. They suggest another way of approaching those ideas of loss, lack or insubstantiality that attach to the chorister’s voice — lost innocence, inevitable vocal failure, immaterial disembodiment. A close examination of Victorian vocal treatises demonstrates that the voice of chorister was never solely the natural product of the child’s body. Vocal purity, so closely bound up with Victorian ideals of childhood innocence, was the deliberate product of training techniques designed

¹⁷⁰ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

¹⁷¹ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 23.

to create the impression of the voice as naturally disembodied. It is the apparently disembodied nature of such vocal innocence that paradoxically saw it become such a prevalent object of sexual desire in *fin-de-siècle* pederastic literature. By confronting the often-unsettling nature of the Victorian aesthetic consumption of such voices, it becomes possible to move debates in queer musicology beyond their redemptive impulse and consider more carefully the complexities of queer encounters with the singing voice. Such an approach challenges queer scholars to reassess assumptions about the ways in which the singing voice is conceived as a site at which queer subjectivities come into being, calling for a more nuanced account of the dynamics of power at play in the desiring musical encounter.

The chorister's voice gains much of its status as an object of desire in Victorian queer literature because of what it refuses: the sexual knowledge of adulthood; the sensual embodied forcefulness of the tenor or soprano voice; the possibility of a future. In maintaining the poise of innocence, the chorister's voice is also required to efface the place of the body in vocal production. In contrast to such a determined denial of the embodied nature of musical experience, the next chapter turns to consider the queer significance of tactile experience in representations of music.

CHAPTER 4: Music, Touch and Queer Embodiments

Fingers are not to be despised: they are great inspirers, and, in contact with a musical instrument, often give birth to subconscious ideas which might otherwise never come to life.

Igor Stravinsky,
*Autobiography*¹

In April 1917, while serving as an ambulance driver for the International Red Cross, E. M. Forster organized an *ad hoc* concert for military patients at a convalescent hospital in the Egyptian town of Montazah. Towards the end of the programme, Forster himself took to the stage and played on the piano an arrangement of music from Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, the 'Pathétique'. He later wrote to Edward Carpenter of his delight in the performance: 'I was able to talk sense and quiet [the soldiers] because I loved them [...] I felt that I had been burrowing under rubbish and touched something that was alive and had been trying to touch me.'² Forster's hands at the piano are figured as engaging in a process of queer tactile exploration. They 'burrow' blindly, feeling their way through the abject 'rubbish' of shame and loneliness to discover the warm, receptive touch of a hand that has, in turn, been awaiting theirs. As Forster's fingers play over the keys on the piano before him, his touch is transmitted into music and broadcast to the receptive bodies of the soldiers as they listen. Invested with the warmth of a desiring touch, Tchaikovsky's music — a familiar symbol for the joy and pathos of homosexual desire in Forster's *Maurice* — reaches through space to bring queer bodies into closer contact.

Building on the emphasis in previous chapters on the refusal of embodied aspects of sexuality and musical experience, the present chapter explores relations between music and touch, charting the sensory intensities and eroticism inherent in *fin-de-siècle* literary depictions of touching musical instruments and scores and in feeling the material touch of music in performance. To think carefully about

¹ Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 82.

² Cited in P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2001), p. 43.

the tactile experience of queer marginalized subjects is to consider how subjectivities are formed through the refusal of intimate contact between bodies. By considering the perception of music in tactile terms, it becomes possible to articulate the significance of musical experiences that serve to dissolve the spatial distances that separate queer bodies. In texts that figure music in terms of transmission and displacement, rigid boundaries between self and other, subject and object, are dissolved. The orientations that separate queer bodies in space and time are reconfigured in texts that foreground music's power to broadcast tactile intimacy from body to body across concert halls and drawing rooms, or across the expanses of music history. In such texts, musical instruments and musical scores become invested, through sustained tactile contact, with a resonance that transforms them into conduits for the often-unspoken transmission of desire between displaced bodies. Fingers play on the polished ivory of a keyboard, or press on the taut strings of a violin, or write out a score on creamy parchment. In such bodily interactions, these hands invest such objects with significance, transforming them into an archive of the queer touch.

In its preoccupation with the queerness of such experiences, this discussion draws upon recent studies such as William Cohen's *Embodied* (2009) in accounting for the phenomenological significance of touch and affect, whilst also retaining an interest in the lived historical experience of queer subjects at the *fin de siècle*. By charting encounters between bodies, musical instruments and music, it becomes possible to delineate the emergence of a late-Victorian queer erotic sensorium linked to the tactile experience of music. While critical accounts of the representation of the sensory experience of music in *fin-de-siècle* literary texts have perhaps unsurprisingly privileged the aural and (less frequently) the visual, the discussion that follows addresses a wider range of sensory responses, suggesting that an increased focus on tactile experience might better account for the embodied nature of engagement with music as both a listener and performer.³

³ See for example Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (University of California Press, 1993).

The first section of this chapter examines encounters between bodies and musical instruments in Richard Marsh's 'The Violin' (1891), Forster's 'Dr Woolacott' (1926) and the anonymous pornographic novel *Teleny*.⁴ It suggests that tactile intimacy between musician and instrument sees the musical instrument transformed into a technology for the transmission of touch, acting to close the physical distance between those queer bodies that might otherwise remain untouchable. The second section compares the experience of piano playing in Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908) with Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) to suggest that tactile interaction between the body and the musical instrument allows for marginalized subjects to more fully inhabit a sense of their desiring bodies.⁵ The final section examines tactile encounters with the musical score, focussing in particular on Vernon Lee's experiences with the archival remains of eighteenth-century music in *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880).⁶ It explores Lee's sensuous archival engagement, and draws attention to how her affective engagement with the historical past is articulated through a wish for restored tactile contact. The queerness of Lee's writing is found in the pervasive sense of loss that inhabits her desire for a mode of tactile engagement that allows for the recovery of a sense of trans-historical community.

The work of theorists such as Constance Classen has prompted a renewed interest in the manner in which touch animates our experience of the social world.⁷ Critical engagement with the nature of embodied experience has sought to analyse the manner in which social ideologies are conveyed and sustained through sensory values and practices. As noted in chapter 2, much critical attention has been afforded in recent years to the body's margins: theorists such as Didier Anzieu, Michel Serres and Steven Connor have posited the skin — and its associated sensory intensities of touch — as a key site for exploring ideas of

⁴ Richard Marsh, 'The Violin', in *The Seen and the Unseen* (London: Methuen, 1900), pp. 92–115 (repr. from *Home Chimes*, 12 (December 1891), 347–62); E. M. Forster, 'Dr Woolacott', in *The Life to Come and Other Short Stories* (New York: Norton, 1972), pp. 83–96, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *DW*.

⁵ E. M. Forster, *A Room with a View*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2006), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *RV*; Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, ed. by Lorna Sage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *VO*.

⁶ Vernon Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, 2nd edn (London: Fisher Unwin, 1907), p. xxi, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *SEC*.

⁷ Constance Classen, ed., *The Book of Touch* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

selfhood, and the interface between the embodied self and the world.⁸ The experience of touch has also become central to the work of theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Sara Ahmed, who aim to account for the importance of affective experience in the formation of queer subjectivities.⁹

In talking here of the *queerness* of musical touch, the discussion that follows seeks both to acknowledge the particularity of the experience of ‘untouchability’ of queer subjects at the *fin de siècle*, whilst also drawing upon recent phenomenologically inflected work in queer theory. Such work has done much to explore ways in which sensory experience might complicate or challenge foundational accounts of the coherence of identity. The work of phenomenological theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty ascribes to touch a central place in discussions of human embodied experience. Merleau-Ponty suggests that human subjectivity emerges through the experience of the body’s proximate encounters with sensory surfaces. The distinction between the subject and the external world of objects is formed and demarcated by the tactile interactions of the body in the world. In similar terms, Bataille and Deleuze and Guattari posit the body as a sensory interface between the interior and the world, engaged in a continual process of flux and becoming, where the sensory experience of the body becomes a source for the making and unmaking of subjectivity. As William Cohen has convincingly argued, such sensory experience might be understood as queer in its representation of ‘an openness of the body to the world by the senses as a type of permeability, or penetrability, that is not reducible to heterosexuality — nor is it ever limited to the realm of the sexual’.¹⁰

The sensory experience of touch informs a variety of aspects of musical experience explored in *fin-de-siècle* literature: the experience of the hands as they engage with an instrument to create music, the experience of touching the score, or of merely holding an instrument in one’s hands. The literary texts under discussion also capture something of the experience of listening to music as a *tactile* experience —that is, music is experienced not just as *heard* through the ear, but also as *felt* on the surface of the body. Indeed, in Victorian materialist

⁸ See Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*; Serres, *The Five Senses*; Connor, *The Book of Skin*.

⁹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 106–07.

¹⁰ Cohen, *Embodied*, p. 134.

accounts of the psychology of music, hearing is often figured as taking place at the visceral level of the nerves, or on the surface of the skin, rather than solely through the ear. The affective intensity of listening to Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* leads Edmund Gurney, for example, to speculate as to 'whether music should be called a spinal or a cutaneous affection'.¹¹ In John Henry Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* (1865) — now most familiar from Edward Elgar's oratorio setting of 1900 — the soul of the eponymous everyman enters purgatory to the sound of music:

And hark! I hear a singing; yet in sooth
I cannot of that music rightly say
Whether I hear or touch or taste the tones.¹²

The experience of this ethereal music here enfolds the senses into one another: the aural, tactile and gustatory become indistinguishable. While Newman's text is more concerned with the spiritual experience of salvation than the phenomenology of sensory perception, it anticipates late nineteenth-century culture's emerging interest in the multi-directional interaction of the senses. Charles Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondances' evokes the 'shadowy, profound' integration of the senses, while Arthur Rimbaud praises the ideal seer-poet as one who embarks upon 'a long, vast, reasoned, derangement of all the sensations'.¹³ In Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A rebours* (*Against Nature*), des Esseintes enacts just such a 'derangement' of the olfactory, gustatory and auditory by selecting odours to form 'perfume concerts' and building a 'mouth organ' that dispenses liquors to play 'silent melodies on the tongue'.¹⁴ In a similar manner, a number of writers have understood visual experience in modernity as attaining the tactile immediacy of direct physical contact: Virginia Woolf characterizes the visceral intensity of cinema by eliding the tactile, visual and gustatory in the

¹¹ Edmund Gurney, 'The Psychology of Music', in *Tertium Quid: Chapters on Various Disputed Questions*, 2 vols (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, 1887), II, 251–302 (p. 21).

¹² John Henry Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), p. 30.

¹³ Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondances', in *The Flowers of Evil*, ed. by Jonathan Culler, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 19; Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works, Selected Letters: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. by Wallace Fowlie, ed. by Seth Whidden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 375, cited in Steven Connor, 'Literature, Technology and the Senses', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body*, ed. by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 177–96 (p. 184).

¹⁴ Huysmans, *Against Nature*, pp. 39–40.

image of the 'licking eye'; Walter Benjamin evokes the 'tactile' experience of film as 'hit[ting] the spectator like a bullet'; Merleau-Ponty talks of the 'palpation of the eye'.¹⁵

As Ryan Bishop has suggested in his discussion of 'musical haptics', acknowledging the tactile experience of sound allows for a better understanding of the manner in which hearing might similarly be experienced as a sense of proximate contact. 'Sound', Bishop notes, 'is also already touch': it is 'composed of waves that physically and invisibly touch our ears and bodies', and, as such, 'to touch a tympanum, to caress the cochlea, one needs the invisible touch of sound waves'.¹⁶ That sound is both produced by touch (the finger on the keyboard) and perceived through touch (the soundwave as it touches the skin) means that rather than being a *distant* sense, it might alternatively be experienced as a proximate one, bringing the bodies of those subjects placed at a distance into closer contact. In recent years, considerable work on tactile theories of visual art has charted the reorientation of the senses in the late nineteenth century, from the dominant mode of visual perception, to a tactile mode of engagement that present more intimate, affective relations between subjects and objects.¹⁷

Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* has drawn attention to those 'queer orientations' that allow bodies that have traditionally been placed spatially 'out of reach' to come into closer contact with each other. As Ahmed notes, touch involves an economy that insists upon 'a differentiation between those who can and cannot be reached' — it 'opens bodies to some bodies and not others'.¹⁸ An attention to 'queer orientations', then, encourages the exploration of those phenomenological experiences that bring marginalized subjects to feel the touch of other bodies. The discussion that follows charts the manner in which the musical touch 'orients' queer bodies to allow them to find new forms of contact,

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', in *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 172–77 (p. 172); Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Arendt, pp. 211–44 (p. 231); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Intertwining – The Chiasm', in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*, ed. by Thomas Baldwin, trans. Alphonso Lingis (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 247–71 (p. 251).

¹⁶ Ryan Bishop, 'The Force of Noise, or Touching Music: The Tele-Haptics of Stockhausen's "Helicopter String Quartet"', *SubStance*, 40.3 (2011), 25–40 (p. 25–26).

¹⁷ Hilary Fraser, 'Foreword', in *Illustrations, Optics and Objects*, ed. by Calè and Di Bello, pp. ix–xv.

¹⁸ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 107.

whether with other queer bodies, or a more secure sense of embodied subjectivity, or an affective relationship with the musical past. Before proceeding to examine these tactile experiences of music, it is first necessary to situate them in the context of the lived experience of queer subjects.

'Beyond the Reach of these Hands': Untouchable Bodies at the *Fin de Siècle*

Vernon Lee struggled throughout her life with the intensity of her feelings for other women. Yet she remained terrified of being touched.¹⁹ The physical contact of a lover seemed to threaten Lee with a fear of terrible exposure: 'I *cannot* like, or love', she wrote to Irene Cooper-Willis, 'at the expense of having my skin rubbed off'.²⁰ Here the desiring touch is grotesquely destructive, rendering the self — in another image that fleetingly recalls the flayed Marsyas — fatally vulnerable though a process of gradual tactile attrition. Such tropes of 'untouchability', as Heather Love has noted, 'run deep in queer experience'.²¹ The body of the queer subject is so often isolated from the tender physical caress of the lover's touch, their desire for contact with the warm skin of another frustrated by fear or shame. For Carolyn Dinshaw, '*Noli me tangere*' — do not touch me — serves as a motto for the refusal of touch that complicates any attempt to establish a queer historical genealogy.²² For queer subjects, so often starved of sensual physical contact, the fantasy of being touched is a particularly powerful one. The physical touch becomes burdened with intense meaning. If, as Emmanuel Levinas has argued, subjects are implicated in the world through their experience of tactile proximity and intimacy, the depleted experience of the *feel* of other bodies acts, for the queer subject, to form their subjectivity around a sense of their untouchability.²³

Such experience is best understood within the wider context of expectations relating to Victorian masculinity. While Constance Classen is correct in her

¹⁹ See Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 149-52.

²⁰ Vernon Lee, Letter to Irene Cooper-Willis, cited in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 150.

²¹ Love, *Feeling Backward*, p. 39.

²² Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 40.

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, 'Language and Proximity', in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp. 109-27 (p. 118).

assertion that ‘the stiff untouchability of the Englishman [...] is legendary’, she nevertheless acknowledges the historical contingency of such cultural prohibitions on tactile contact between men.²⁴ As Alan Bray has shown, for example, men in early modern England frequently embraced, kissed and shared beds.²⁵ While tactile interactions between men in *fin-de-siècle* England were, in general, more ‘hands-off’ than in earlier periods, to imply too monolithic a prohibition on such physical contact would be to overlook the varieties of codes of touching that subsisted across different homosocial communities. Holly Furneaux’s work on Dickens has drawn attention to a tradition of ‘reparative touch’ between men in Victorian culture, a form of physical interaction that eschewed pervasive cultural expectations of masculine aggressiveness to embrace instead the gentle tenderness of nursing.²⁶ In similar terms, Santanu Das has explored the tactile intimacies that emerged in the context of the First World War, where the male touch primarily served not to express homoerotic desire, but rather to respond to the pain of the soldier’s wounded or emaciated body.²⁷

Nevertheless, as Victoria Mills has noted, following Wilde’s 1895 trial and conviction for ‘gross indecency’, affectionate tactile contact between men was increasingly associated with perversion and degenerative behaviour.²⁸ Havelock Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion* reflected wider cultural assumptions in explicitly linking the language of the caress to male same-sex desire.²⁹ Some institutions seemingly allowed, or at least passively tolerated, public tactile expressions of close intimacy between men of a sort that would not have been possible elsewhere. When Arthur Benson attended a dinner at King’s College, Cambridge, in 1909, for example, he observed amongst the (all-male) students ‘the public *fondling* and

²⁴ Constance Classen, ‘Male Bonding’, in *The Book of Touch*, ed. by Classen, pp. 155–59 (p. 155).

²⁵ Alan Bray and Michel Rey, ‘The Body of the Friend: Continuity and Change in Masculine Friendship in the Seventeenth Century’, in *English Masculinities, 1660–1800*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock and Michelle Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 65–84.

²⁶ Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁷ Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Victoria Mills, ‘Books in my Hands – Books in my Heart – Books in my Brain’: Bibliomania, the Male Body, and Sensory Erotics in Late-Victorian Literature’, in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. by Katharina Boehm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 130–52 (p. 137).

²⁹ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, pp. 124–58.

caressing of each other, friends and lovers sitting with *arms enlaced*, cheeks even *touching*' (italics added). Such an open display of homoerotic intimacy struck Benson as 'curious' and 'rather dangerous'.³⁰ Benson's anecdote provides a useful riposte to accounts that emphasize too insistently the 'untouchable' nature of the male body at the *fin de siècle*. Even if such behaviour is evidence only of an intensely relaxed homosociality amongst King's undergraduates, Benson's response serves as a reminder of the pervasive cultural paranoia that attached to expressions of male tactile intimacy in England at this time.

Given the peculiar importance of touch — its absence, its withdrawal, its intense communicative potential — to queer life experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that the writers upon which this thesis focusses dwell in significant ways on the tactile experience of desire. The writings of John Addington Symonds, for example, repeatedly evoke the isolation and loneliness of queer experience in descriptions of failed or frustrated touch. In a poignant letter to a friend, he laments that Norman Moor, one of the adolescent school pupils with whom he is besotted, is 'beyond the reach of these hands even to touch him'.³¹ For Symonds, the inability to 'touch or get close to' the 'magnificent young people' he sees around him makes him feel like 'a statue walking among men', his sensitive, living flesh transformed into cold, hard, impervious marble.³² The sustained withdrawal of human physical contact risks, he suggests, deadening the body's ability to experience the sensuous plenitude of tactile intimacy. As a '*walking statue*', Symonds's body retains the inner musculature that sustains dynamic physical movement, but its surface — its skin — has become senseless to the touch. Elsewhere, Symonds expresses a desire to utilize tactile intimacy in the service of queer community formation, whilst simultaneously being cowed by fears of self-exposure and humiliation. Particularly striking is Symonds's encounter with what he describes as a 'man-woman, so strong & sweet & magnetic' on a train in Northern Italy: 'How strange [...] to feel the palpitation of a being like oneself so near one's own & not to be able to touch! Perhaps it is

³⁰ Arthur Benson, *Diary*, CVIII, 70, Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, cited in Goldhill, *A Very Queer Family Indeed*, p. 139.

³¹ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, II, 100 (27 December 1869).

³² Symonds, Letter to Henry Sidgwick, *Letters*, II, 321 (15 December 1873).

better not to touch & try & find no fusion'.³³ Symonds's anecdote movingly foregrounds the feelings of deep isolation felt by many queer subjects in the late nineteenth century, and how precarious the task of building a sense of queer community might be. Symonds is drawn almost compulsively to reach out towards a person that he recognizes as a fellow sexual minority, but is held back by the fear of finding 'no fusion', of his touch remaining unwanted or its intent being misinterpreted. It is perhaps no coincidence that Symonds was haunted as a child by nightmares in which a 'finger, disconnected from any hand, crept slowly into [his] room [...] crooking its joints and beckoning'. Terrified of what would happen if this ghastly disembodied finger touched him, the young Symonds always awoke before the 'catastrophe' of tactile contact occurred.³⁴ As such examples suggest, the physical touch becomes invested for Symonds with a dissoluble combination of desire, disgust, fear and fantasy.

Walter Pater's writings similarly express both a desire for tactile intimacy and the pathos of the impossibility of such a connection. Pater places the experience of the tactile at the centre of his sensuous model of aesthetics, calling for an appreciation of art 'not through the understanding, but by instinct or touch'.³⁵ This aesthetic mode of life is invested with an urgency that implores each individual to '[gather] all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch'.³⁶ Yet, as Kate Hext has observed, the sculpted marble bodies that populate Pater's works are always in some way 'out of touch' — 'the idealized male body tantalizes the imagination with the possibility of touch [...] only to deny the reality of warm responsive flesh and reciprocal desire'.³⁷ Pater praises the 'unembarrassed' Winckelmann as one who 'finger[ed] with unsinged hands', 'with no sense of shame or loss' the 'pagan marbles' he saw about him, whilst in his own life remaining distant and aloof from the unadulterated sensuality implied by this mode of aesthetic encounter.³⁸

³³ Symonds, Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, *Letters*, II, 252 (10 December 1872).

³⁴ Symonds, *Memoirs*, p. 68.

³⁵ Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p. 95.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁷ Hext, *Walter Pater*, p. 116.

³⁸ Pater, 'Winckelmann', *Westminster Review*, 31 (January 1867), 80–110 (pp. 84 and 104).

In the works of E. M. Forster, the significance of the queer touch is evidenced most strikingly in the 'Terminal Note' to *Maurice*. Here, Forster presents the origins of his most overtly homosexual novel as lying in a quasi-mystical tactile encounter with George Merrill, the partner of Edward Carpenter.³⁹ The men's influence acted, Forster recalled, to 'touch a creative spring', to 'kindle' the 'spark' of inspiration. Merrill, he reports, 'touched my backside — gently and just above the buttocks': 'The sensation was unusual and I still remember it [...] It was as much psychological as physical. It seemed to go straight through the small of my back into my ideas, without involving my thoughts.'⁴⁰ This touch has, for Forster, an affective intensity that allows it to overcome the restraint of the conscious mind, achieving expression directly through the body. It also represents a moment of queer insemination: in accordance with Carpenter's 'yogified mysticism', Forster notes, its effect 'would prove that at that precise moment I had conceived'. *Maurice* stands as the queer offspring of touch's generative potential. More generally, the centrality of tactile experience in these accounts of queer life experience invite renewed attention to the significance of touch in *fin-de-siècle* literary texts and, in particular, those dealing with music.

'I Know His Touch': Musical Instruments and the Transmission of Touch

The section that follows brings into focus the manner in which tactile interactions with musical instruments bring queer bodies into closer contact. Musical performance, in this respect, engages in those 'queer orientations' identified by Ahmed in which the sense of spatial distance between marginalized subjects is closed. In Richard Marsh's short story 'The Violin', tactile contact invests the titular instrument with erotic desire, so that to hold it in one's hands becomes a way of sensing the touch of a lost lover. In the pornographic novel *Teleny*, the piano acts to facilitate the transmission of touch between bodies, broadcasting the hands of the pianist onto the body of the listener. In E. M. Forster's 'Dr Woolacott' the queer touch between bodies is conflated with the act of playing

³⁹ As Philip Gardner has shown, the genesis of *Maurice* was, in fact, more protracted than the creation myth in Forster's 'Terminal Note' would allow. See Philip Gardner, 'Introduction', in *Maurice*, ed. by Philip Gardner (London: André Deutsch, 1999), pp. vii–liv.

⁴⁰ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 219.

the violin, so that the violin's music serves as an aural externalization of the desiring queer touch.

'The Violin' is particularly notable for the manner in which the titular instrument becomes a conduit for the transmission of the intimate touch between men. Marsh's text begins with the narrator buying a violin, at a suspiciously low price, from a rag-and-bone shop as a gift for his nephew, Ernest. After examining the violin closely and playing on it a snatch of melody, Ernest begins to suspect the instrument is one that belonged to his musician friend Philip Coursault, 'a strange and wild young man' (95), who has recently gone missing. Whilst the narrator and his nephew discuss Philip's bohemian life as a musician over dinner, they hear the sound of the violin being played in the drawing room above their heads — 'quaint and sweet and mournful, like the refrain of an old-world song' (100). Yet when they head upstairs to investigate the identity of the mysterious musician, the sound fades as they approach and they discover the violin still enclosed within its unopened case on a table. As the violin repeats its ghostly melody throughout the evening, Ernest begins to recognize it as one composed by Philip in 'commemoration of certain pleasant days' (104) which the two young men spent together. Convinced that this ghostly music suggests that something has happened to Philip, Ernest determines to confront the proprietor of the rag-and-bone shop, who soon admits that she had purchased the violin from Philip. She too has been tormented by the violin's obsessive nocturnal repetitions of this melody.

The following day, the narrator acts as chaperone for Ernest and a young girl, Minnie, on a gentle rowing trip on the Thames. Ernest persistently dwells on the topic of his lost friend, Philip, and his ghostly violin. He soon admits that the direction of his rowing is motivated not simply by a desire to discover a pleasant picnic spot, but rather to return the point on the riverbank where he and Philip enjoyed the 'pleasantest of all [their] pleasant days' (113). As they talk about Philip's love for the willow-tress that overhang the riverbank, Minnie absent-mindedly reaches her hand into the undergrowth on the riverbank, only to recoil in horror when she feels the cold, dead hand of a corpse. It is the body of Philip. When Ernest returns to his uncle's house, he discovers that the violin has

mysteriously fallen from a high shelf onto the floor and now lies 'shivered into splinters' (115). These fragments are placed in Philip's coffin: 'The dead man and his fiddle were lowered together into the grave' (115).

The queerness of Marsh's text lies in the manner in which it poses questions about the nature of the relationship between Ernest and Philip, moving playfully between apparent exposure and staunch reticence about the nature of their relationship. While Ernest is presented as a run-of-the-mill, unremarkable young Englishman, the character of Philip Coursault lies somewhere between an archetypal tortured Romantic and a pathologized degenerate worthy of Max Nordau. Ernest describes him as a 'genius [...] struggling with insanity' (109), 'wild' and 'quite mad' (95). His French surname aligns him with the excesses of Parisian decadence (always already tainted by the threat of sexual deviancy in the moralistic imagination of the Victorian middle-class). The text characterizes him throughout in terms that insist on his outsider status and abnormality: he is 'erratic' (98), 'eccentric' (111), and 'strange' (95) in ways that are never fully explicated. To the proprietor of the rag-and-bone shop he is the 'the queerest-looking little chap ever I see' (107). In casting Philip in this manner, the text also implicitly invokes the associations between musicality and compromised masculinity — described in chapter 1 — prevalent in London in the early 1890s.

Ernest's desire for Philip is fleetingly suggested by small physical tells that the narrator, his uncle, invariably interprets in other ways. After Ernest sombrely recounts that Philip has 'vanished into thin air', for example, the narrator observes 'a suggestive twitching about the corners of Ernest's lips' (97). This he attributes to Ernest being irritated by a suspicion that his uncle's servant is 'guilty of what may be politely termed a subterfuge' (97). An alternative way of reading this is as a physical externalisation — a 'twitch' of the famous 'stiff upper lip' of English reserve — revealing the depth of Ernest's feelings for the missing Philip. It is Ernest who is, in fact, guilty of 'subterfuge'. Other aspects of the text hint at the queer implications of Ernest's desire for Philip in a more oblique manner. The narrator's paranoia about queer desire becomes displaced, for example, in the text's presentation of his exploration of London's slum geography, in a manner than imbues the cityscape with fears of abject sexual activity. Ernest and his uncle

travel to Lisson Grove — then an area of London's Marylebone notorious for crime and poverty — through a 'dirty night' (105) in their search for a 'dirty shop, in a dirty street' (94), 'poking out of one hole and into another' (105). 'I should think we must have penetrated at least half a dozen' (105), he observes. The city's labyrinthine and disorientating back-alleys become figured as the 'dirty' recesses of the body, 'hole[s]' to be 'penetrated' and 'poke[d]' by perverse nocturnal flaneurs.

At times, Marsh's text seems to playfully foreground music and touch as means of 'outing' hidden queer desires. Ernest responds in frustration, as he listens to the violin's ghostly music emanating from behind a locked door:

He's in hiding. Come, you rogue, where are you? We know you're here,
Philip. Do you think I don't know your touch, and that queer song of yours?
Come out, you beggar! (102)

As this suggests, queer desire in Marsh's text is transmitted not just through the aural experience of music — 'that queer song of yours' — but also through the 'knowledge' of touch. Such transmission occurs in two ways: in the act of handling the material body of the violin, and in the act of listening for the touch of the violinist, made evident in the tone of the music that his instrument produces. Much is made in Marsh's story of the fact that Ernest is haunted by the repetition of a 'quaint' (109) song that Philip had composed for him. In both its insistent repetitiveness and its apparent threat to reveal some queer sexual secret, the song functions as an example of the Uncanny familiar from any number of tales in the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic tradition. The 'unpublished' (101) status of this song affords to it a sense of intimacy: it represents a message to be communicated only from Philip to Ernest; it is not motivated by commercial gain; it serves not as commodity but as a gift from one man to the other. The text draws particular attention to the mysterious symbolic status of this song by having Ernest pose, on two separate occasions, the question: 'I wonder why he always plays that tune?' (110, 113). On the first occasion, the narrator tartly comments that '[he] was unable to supply the information' (110). The eventual solution, made clear at the story's denouement, is that the song is leading Ernest to the body of Philip. Yet by posing the question repeatedly, the text teasingly invites the reader to

ascribe a queerer interpretation to the music's insistent repetitions: Ernest is haunted by the music because it stands as a memorial of the 'pleasantest days' (113) that the men spent together, serving as a mode of transmission for a desire that must remain spectral because it cannot otherwise be openly expressed.

In a similar manner, when the narrator observes that 'Where the Willow Casts its Shade' is a 'rather curious title for a song' (104), the text knowingly invites the reader to speculate about this song's queer significance. Evocations of 'willows' and 'shade' are, of course, something of a poetic cliché for evoking the melancholy of lost love (see for, example, Christina Rossetti's 'In the Willow Shade' (1881). In this respect, the song could be viewed within a long tradition in which the inexpressibility of queer desire sees it associated with loss and loneliness.⁴¹ Yet the text might also gesture to an alternative tradition, epitomized by William Davenant's 'Under the Willow-Shades' (1668), in which two lovers 'embrace unspied' under the 'privacy supplied' by the surrounding willow trees.⁴² The song might be seen, paradoxically, to stage a revelation of the need for Ernest and Philip's queer desire to remain secret.

Queer desire finds itself transmitted not only through the encoded medium of music, but also in the tactile interactions between bodies and musical instruments. In the case of the violin, the sense of intimacy between body and instrument might arise from the fact that the fingers of the left hand have direct contact with the strings of the violin as they are stopped against the fingerboard. Whereas in playing the piano, the fingers merely trigger the mechanism of the escapement that leads a hammer to hit a string, here there is direct contact between the fingers of the violinist and the mechanism through which the instrument produces sound. This intimacy accounts for the fact that the violin is often presented as a prosthesis: the instrument merges with body of the player, incorporated into their sense of self. This prosthetic instrument makes the boundaries of the desiring self more porous: the musician's touch flows from the fingers, into the instrument, from which it is broadcast into the world as music.

⁴¹ Christina Rossetti, 'In the Willow Shade', in *Poems and Prose*, ed. by Simon Humphries (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 237–39.

⁴² Sir William Davenant, 'Under the Willow-Shades', in *The Shorter Poems, and Songs from the Plays and Masques*, ed. by A. M. Gibbs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 264.

In D. H. Lawrence's *The Trespasser* (1912), for example, the violinist Siegmund is described as having 'infused [his violin] with his life, till its fibres had been as the tissue of his own flesh':

Grasping his violin, he seemed to have his fingers on the strings of his heart [...] It was his little beloved that drank his being and turned it into music [...] During the last nights of the season, when Siegmund's fingers had pressed too hard, when Siegmund's passion, and joy, and fear had hurt, too, the soft body of his little beloved, the violin had sickened for rest.⁴³

Through his touch on the violin Siegmund becomes, as Freud puts it in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), a 'prosthetic God': his violin becomes a direct extension of his body, channelling from his fingers his desiring 'being' into music, and facilitating its dispersal to those who listen.⁴⁴ In a typically Lawrencian fantasy of erotic domination, the violin is simultaneously figured as a passive body — 'his little beloved' — to be 'hurt' and 'sickened' into submission, its distinct material identity overcome by and enfolded into Siegmund's sense of self.

In Marsh's text, attention is repeatedly drawn to the touch of Ernest's hands on Philip's violin. Ernest's insistence on such tactile contact is explained by the nature of Philip's relationship with the object: the violin was to him, Ernest notes, 'his first love, and his last', akin to his 'mother, father, wife, and friend' (99). Indeed, when Philip abandons his instrument in the rag-and-bone shop, he solemnly kisses it farewell. Such intimacy between Philip and his violin sees his desiring touch marked on the material body of his instrument, leaving a permanent trace. For Ernest to touch this violin is, then, to feel on his own body something of Philip's touch imbedded within this object. 'A genuine musician', the narrator observes 'always does handle a fiddle — even a common fiddle — with a sort of reverence' (94). Yet Ernest's attempt to ascertain the provenance

⁴³ D. H. Lawrence, *The Trespasser*, ed. by Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 48.

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–73), xxi, 86–92. For a wider discussion of the prosthetic in literature of the early twentieth century, see Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 77–105.

of the violin invests this moment with a sensuousness that goes beyond mere connoisseurship: '[h]e rapped its back softly with his knuckles; he peeped into its belly; he smelt it; he tucked it under his chin' (94). Ernest's gentle attentiveness to the object before him — its shape, its smell, its touch to the flesh — sees him handle it with a sensuousness afforded to the body of a lover. As Ernest proceeds to speculate as to the violin's origins, the text insists on his continued compulsive tactile connection with the object, as he stands 'turning it over and over' (94). When Ernest's suspicions about the violin are finally confirmed, the text once again draws attention to his tactile contact with the instrument: Ernest 'hold[s] the fiddle in front of him *with both his hands*, glaring at it as if it were a ghost' (103, italics added).

As Stephen Greenblatt has noted, certain material objects attain a powerful 'resonance' not solely based on their aesthetic value but because 'of use, the imprint of the human body on the artefact'.⁴⁵ Recent theoretical work — often falling within what Bill Brown has called 'Thing Theory' — has drawn attention to the manner in which the interaction between subject's bodies and inanimate objects dissolves clear distinctions between subject and object.⁴⁶ This interaction, Brown suggests, transforms objective, material objects into 'things'. As Bruno Latour has insisted, 'things do not exist without being *full of people*' (italics added): maintaining a rigid division between subject and object obscures patterns of circulation, transference, translation, and displacement between bodies and the material objects with which they interact.⁴⁷ In this respect, the interaction between a musical instrument and its player might transform that instrument into *thingness*, imprinting onto it aspects of the player's self through tactile contact.

Thomas Hardy's poem 'Haunting Fingers: A Phantasy in a Museum of Musical Instruments' (1921) is particularly useful for considering the manner in which

⁴⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 161–83 (p. 172).

⁴⁶ See Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2001), pp. 1–22; Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ Bruno Latour, 'The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things', trans. by Lydia Davis, in *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture*, ed. by P. M. Graves-Brown (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 10–21 (pp. 10 and 20).

the touch of an instrumentalist leaves its trace on the material body of their instrument.⁴⁸ Hardy's poem stages a nocturnal conversation between a group of melancholic musical instruments, lying abandoned and unplayed in a museum. As they bemoan their 'voiceless, crippled, corpselike state' (l. 15), they still feel 'past handlers clutch them' (l. 9) and 'old players' dead fingers touch them' (l. 11). Despite the fact that these musicians are now 'shrunk in the tomb' (l. 12), their tactile interactions — the 'tender pat' of 'aery fingers-tips' (ll. 25-26) on a harpsichord, for instance — remain imprinted in their instruments. Tim Armstrong has suggested that this tactile imprint represents something akin to 'the newly opened space of recorded music'.⁴⁹ Yet it is surely significant that Hardy's instruments are haunted not by the strains of music that they once produced, but rather by the tactile interactions they once shared with their players: it is not music that is 'recorded' on these instruments, it is touch. The pathos of Hardy's poem lies in its focus on the sense of loss engendered by the withdrawn intimacy of tactile contact: these instruments once felt loved and cherished by the touches they received, now they desire only a release from the materiality — the 'glossy gluey make' (l. 3) — upon which this touch is inscribed. Within the context of Marsh's story, for Ernest to hold Philip's violin in his hands is to thus experience the transmission of Philip's touch from one body to the other, through the intermediary of the violin upon which his touch is marked.

The intimacy of the queer touch is also implied in Marsh's text through Ernest's recognition of Philip's musical 'touch' on the violin: the particular musical tone produced by Philip's violin as he plays. When quizzed by his uncle as to how he can be sure that the music he hears is played by Philip, Ernest replies assertively: 'I know his touch' — a style of playing characterized by Ernest, in terms that invoke tactile contact, as 'very soft and delicate, but instinct with a strength, and a force, and a passion' (102). The bluntness of Ernest's statement invites the reader to dwell on its queer ambiguities: in referring simply to 'his touch' rather

⁴⁸ Thomas Hardy, 'Haunting Fingers: A Phantasy in a Museum of Musical Instruments', in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2006), pp. 545–46.

⁴⁹ Tim Armstrong, 'Hardy, History, and Recorded Music', in *Thomas Hardy and Contemporary Literary Studies*, ed. by Tim Dolin and Peter Widdowson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 153–66 (p. 161). For an alternative consideration of disembodied hands in Hardy's work, see J. Hillis Miller, 'Hardy's Hands', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 505–16.

than, say, 'his touch upon the violin' the text allows for Philip's touch on the violin to be conflated with his touch on Ernest's body. At the story's denouement, the text contrasts the intimate, sensuous touch communicated between Ernest and Philip through music with Minnie's ghastly experience of feeling the touch of Philip's dead hand. The touch of Philip's dead hand acts here to frustrate the heterosexual imperative underlying Ernest and Minnie's courtship, reasserting instead the primacy of the queer touch between Ernest and Philip, made vibrant through the tactile interactions associated with music and musical instruments in Marsh's text.

In the pornographic novel *Teleny*, music is similarly experienced in tactile terms as facilitating the transmission of the queer touch between bodies. Here, the piano operates as a technology that allows for touch to be broadcast through space, bringing into contact the bodies of the instrumentalist and the listener. As Steven Connor notes, understandings of the senses in the long nineteenth century were produced by the technologies that reproduced them: the development of the phonograph and telephone altered the way in which sound was perceived, just as the photograph and (latterly) the cinema revolutionized modes of visual perception.⁵⁰ The piano itself might be understood in similar terms as a technology that reproduced not just the sound of a score, but also the musician's touch. In doing so, it advanced new modes of perceiving touch as spatially mobile — a sense that was traditionally perceived as proximate could now be experienced as moving through space, made evident by the music through which it was transmitted. As Connor has suggested, tactile perception 'becomes recruited to experiences that are [...] auditory, insofar as [they] involve the sharing or transmission of impulses rather than their localization'.⁵¹

The phenomenology of tactile pianism evoked in *Teleny* can be understood as the product of both changing musical technologies and performance practices. The mechanical development of the piano over the nineteenth century certainly allowed for its increased sensitivity to the touch of the instrumentalist.⁵² As Mine

⁵⁰ Connor, 'Literature, Technology and the Senses', pp. 177–96 (pp. 185 and 187).

⁵¹ Connor, *The Book of Skin*, p. 67.

⁵² For developments in piano technology over the nineteenth century, see Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); David Rowland, 'The Piano Since c.1825', in *The Cambridge*

Doğantan-Dack has noted, descriptions of modes of touch became increasingly central both to treatises on piano technique and to composers' performance directions towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁵³ Tobias Matthay's *The Act Of Touch In All Its Diversity* (1903), for example, demarcates forty-two distinct modes of touching the piano.⁵⁴ This profusion of tactile metaphors seems to relate less to any empirically measurable interaction between instrumentalist and piano than to the manner in which the sensation of touch became central to the phenomenological experience of musical performance.⁵⁵

The emergence of the solo piano recital, along with performance practices that placed the pianist's hands in full view, likewise acted to train audiences to look and listen for the musician's touch.⁵⁶ The term 'recital' had first been used by Franz Liszt for a number of his 1840 London concerts. He himself believed that a concert he gave in Rome towards the end of 1839 was the first true solo recital and announced with pride to his friend Princess Belgiojoso that he could say, after Louis XIV, that 'Le concert c'est moi' ('I am the concert!').⁵⁷ The virtuoso pianism displayed by Teleny is best understood as a response to the particular cultural moment of London in the 1890s, in which a feverish cult of celebrity developed around the flamboyant Polish concert pianist Jan Paderewski. There are some similarities between the two figures: the text makes much of the quasi-Oriental sexual allure of the Hungarian Teleny's eastern-European origins. Yet in

Companion to the Piano, ed. by Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 40–56.

⁵³ Mine Doğantan-Dack, 'In the Beginning was Gesture: Piano Touch and the Phenomenology of the Performing Body', in *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, ed. by Elaine King and Anthony Gritten (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 244–65 (p. 253). See also Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg, *The Player Piano and the Edwardian Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 60–61.

⁵⁴ Tobias Matthay, *The Act of Touch In All Its Diversity: An Analysis And Synthesis Of Pianoforte Tone Production* (London: Bosworth, 1903).

⁵⁵ As Mine Doğantan-Dack suggests in her discussion of the phenomenology of pianistic touch, it is important to acknowledge a distinction between the 'objective body' investigated through the empirical methods of the experimental sciences and the 'lived and living body, with its pulsating inner life and particular point of view' investigated by phenomenological accounts of experience. See 'In the Beginning was Gesture: Piano Touch and the Phenomenology of the Performing Body', in *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, ed. by Elaine King and Anthony Gritten (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 244–65 (p. 247).

⁵⁶ Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley, 'Introduction: The Nineteenth-Century Invention of Media', in *Media, Technology and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 4.

⁵⁷ Cited in Kenneth Hamilton, 'The Virtuoso Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. by Rowland, pp. 57–74 (p. 63).

many respects Teleny is more conventionally masculine than his Polish equivalent: Paderewski was notorious for the androgyny of his huge bouffant head of hair, while *Teleny* goes to considerable lengths to distinguish its virile queer protagonists from 'effete, womanish men'.⁵⁸

Teleny is notable for the manner in which it presents Des Grieux's eroticized experience of a piano recital in a manner that elides the aural perception of musical performance with the visual and tactile.⁵⁹ Teleny's music is afforded an ability to heighten the intensity of multi-sensory perception: Des Grieux is rendered '[s]pellbound by that soft music, which sharpened every sense'.⁶⁰ The music's mesmeric power to provoke such sensory excess is rendered by the sentence's insistent sibilance. As he listens to Teleny's virtuoso performance, his 'whole body [...] convulse[s] and writhe[s] with mad desire'.⁶¹ For Des Grieux, this erotic charge is attributable not just to the music he hears, but also to the visual connection between him and Teleny: the 'lingering, slumberous look' he perceives cast in his direction by the pianist.⁶² As the music progresses towards its climax, Des Grieux experiences this musical performance also through a fantasy of tactile contact:

[S]uddenly a heavy hand seemed to be laid upon my lap, something was bent and clasped and grasped, which made me faint with lust. The hand moved up and down, slowly at first, then faster and faster it went in rhythm with the song. My brain began to reel as throughout every vein a burning lava coursed, and then, some drops even gushed out — I panted —

All at once the pianist finished his piece with a crash amidst the thundering applause of the whole theatre.⁶³

⁵⁸ See Ivan Raykoff, *Dreams of Love: Playing the Romantic Pianist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 199–222; *Teleny*, p. 67.

⁵⁹ For a consideration of the significance of touch in *Teleny* from an alternative perspective, see also Colette Colligan, 'Teleny, the Secret Touch, and the Media Geography of the Clandestine Book Trade (1880–1900)', in *Media, Technology, and Literature*, ed. by Colligan and Linley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 215–38.

⁶⁰ *Teleny*, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Here, the hands of the virtuoso pianist as they ‘crash’ on the keys of the piano in front of him are experienced as if displaced onto the body of the listener. The spectral masturbatory hand that moves ‘up and down’, then ‘faster and faster’, in ‘rhythm’ to the music in Des Grieux’s lap mirrors the hands of Teleny that he sees playing before him on the keyboard. Listening enraptured to the sound of the music, his gaze fixed firmly on the player before him, Des Grieux feels the touch of Teleny’s hands transmitted by the piano through the space that divides them, bringing their bodies into direct physical contact. After the concert, when Des Grieux and Teleny first meet, the text once again draws attention to the erotic significance of such tactile contact between them. Des Grieux recounts that when Teleny ‘stretched forth his ungloved hand’, he ‘pulled off both [his] gloves’ so as to ‘put my bare hand into his’. ‘Who has not been sentient’, Des Grieux asks, ‘of the manifold feelings produced by the touch of a hand?’, before proceeding to present a lengthy catalogue of tactile interactions that seemingly allow for the demarcation of the class, health and character of the subject in hand. Finally, he concludes with a paean to the ‘thrill’ awakened by feeling his hand in touch with that of Teleny’s:

There is, moreover, the magnetic hand, which seems to have a secret affinity for your own; its simple touch thrills your whole nervous system, and fills you with delight.

How can I express all that I felt from the contact of Teleny’s hand? It set me on fire; and, strange to say, it soothed me at the same time. How sweeter, softer, it was than any woman’s kiss. I felt his grasp steal slowly over all my body, caressing my lips, my throat, my breast; my nerves quivered from head to foot with delight, then it sank downwards into my reins, and Priapus, re-awakened, uplifted his head.⁶⁴

Here, once again, Teleny’s touch attains a mobility that allows the touch of the hand to be felt on other areas of the body, spatially displaced in a manner that recalls the touch of Teleny’s hand on the piano. Teleny’s handshake is experienced as being channelled through Des Grieux’s body ‘into [his] reins’ to

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

perform an act of masturbatory stimulation, akin to that experienced in the concert hall.

The thrill of tactile contact is likewise central to Forster's short story 'Dr Woolacott', in which the homoerotic fantasy of sensuous touch between bodies is aligned with the touch of the hand on the violin, its music an aural externalization of queer desire. 'Dr Woolacott' is the story of a young upper-class 'chronic invalid', Clesant, visited at his manor house by an attractive farmhand (DW 86). Clesant elusively describes the condition from which he suffers as 'functional', 'nothing organic', admitting that he is 'sick of being myself perhaps' (DW 84). In this respect, Forster's text aligns his illness with prevalent pathological constructions of deviant sexuality. Clesant obediently complies with the orders of the eponymous Dr Woolacott to 'avoid all excitement', not play his violin and not to physically assert himself. Most importantly, he must not be 'intimate with people' (DW 84). Meanwhile, the handsome labourer conveys to Clesant his distinct distrust of Dr Woolacott — 'he never makes anyone well' (DW 90). As he gradually awakens Clesant's vitality, seducing him into 'intimacy' and 'love', it becomes clear that this mysterious stranger is, in fact, the spectre of a soldier, killed on the battlefields of France. This farmhand succumbed to his injuries in a French military hospital, having refused Woolacott's attempts to 'patch [him] up' (DW 96). At the story's conclusion, Clesant himself dies in a passionate embrace with the farmhand, just as Woolacott arrives on the scene in an attempt to 'save' him.

While Forster's story was read by early critics as a 'record of despair' that 'treats homosexuality as a disease that separates the sufferer from life', the text is better understood as an indictment of those — such as Dr Woolacott — who pathologize non-normative desire, and seek to enforce a death-in-life existence by curtailing its expression.⁶⁵ Clesant's illness is the *product* of his sexual repression, not a symptom of his sexual abnormality. Forster needed look no further than Symonds's self-authored case study in *Sexual Inversion* for such a medical model.

⁶⁵ See Wilfred Stone, "'Overleaping Class': Forster's Problem in Connection," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 39 (1978), 386–404; 'Now They Can Be Told', *Times Literary Supplement* (13 October 1972), p. 1215; James S. Malek, 'Salvation in Forster's "Dr Woolacott"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 18 (1981), 319–20.

Here Symonds recalls that he ‘rapidly recovered his health’ only upon allowing himself to ‘indulge his inborn homosexual instincts’.⁶⁶ Dr Woolacott’s prohibition on Clesant’s musical activities in this text reflects a late nineteenth-century tradition that afforded to certain forms of music — particularly Wagner’s music — a pathological ability to awaken intense and destabilizing erotic desires.⁶⁷ Yet just as the text ultimately rejects Woolacott’s tyrannical, destructive control over Clesant’s desiring body, it also affirms the musical *jouissance* of a quasi-Wagnerian *Liebestod*.

Forster’s text repeatedly emphasizes Clesant’s frustrated desire for tactile contact. When the farmhand first sits on the sofa on which Clesant lies, Clesant is closely attentive to his sensation of the farmhand’s near-by body: ‘his weight sent a tremor, the warmth and sweetness of his body began casting nets’ (*DW* 88). While their bodies remain at a distance, Clesant nevertheless dwells on the thrill of sensing a ‘tremor’ that communicates the physicality of the farmhand’s body. He is attentive also to those other sensory experiences afforded by close bodily proximity, temperature and smell — the ‘warmth’ and ‘sweetness’ of the farmhand’s corporeal presence. Such sensory perceptions are presented as being transmitted enticingly out of the farmhand’s body into the world that surrounds him, ‘casting nets’ into the space that divides him from Clesant, in order to bring their bodies into closer contact. It is unsurprising then that the text emphasizes the significance of tactile contact in its presentation of those moments of long-desired erotic consummation — the encroaching movement of a hand, being held in another’s arms, clinging to the farmhand’s ‘broad shoulders’ (*DW* 89), limbs ‘intertwined’ (*DW* 95) or ‘entwined’ (*DW* 96), hands that ‘gripped’ (*DW* 95) one another. When Clesant reflects on the apparent foolishness of allowing his health to be upset by his desire for the farmhand, he scolds himself that: ‘that’s what comes of being kind to handsome strangers and *wanting to touch them*’ (*DW* 92, italics added). Even the text’s naming of this young man — ‘I’m one of your farmhands’ (*DW* 86) — draws attention to a manual dexterity that promises tactile contact.

⁶⁶ Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 146.

⁶⁷ See Kennaway, ‘Modern Music’, pp. 63–98.

Forster's diaries from later in his life repeatedly return to what he saw as the 'lustful idea' at the core of 'Dr Woolacott': a 'sick youth' overwhelmed by the sensuous touch of a working-class man. An entry in Forster's 'Locked Diary' in March 1965 described an 'unwritten spasm' that 'came back to [him] after 30 or more years': 'Sick youth lies in bed, strong one cleans window, their eyes meet. Strong one comes in when the nurse goes, kneels by bed, slips his hand deep into it to caress what he finds there, stabs it and kills, their mouths touching.'⁶⁸ A similar recollection is noted in March 1966: 'The old one of the invalid in the bed, and the young workman climbing in, slipping a hand down and killing him'.⁶⁹

At the same time that Clesant is revelling in the thrill of touching the farmhand's body, his servants hear the sound of his violin echoing around his manor house:

The voices entered. They spoke of the sounds of the violin. The violin had apparently been heard playing in the great house the last half-hour, and no one could find out where it was. Playing all sorts of music, gay, grave and passionate. But never completing a theme. Always breaking off. A beautiful instrument. Yet so unsatisfying... Leaving the hearer much sadder than if it had never performed. What was the use (someone asked) of music like that? Better silence absolute than this aimless disturbance of our peace. (DW 93)

Forster's story is unusual in his oeuvre for its dream-like, disorientating narrative style. In occupying Clesant's point of view, it affords to the farmhand a tangible physical reality at some moments, only to later suggest that he is purely the fantastical product of Clesant's feverish, deluded imagination. In this respect, the spectral violin music heard by the servants invites a number of possible interpretations, each of which elides queer tactile contact between bodies with the touch of the hands on the violin. Clesant indulges in the imaginative fantasy of touching the farmhand whilst simultaneously playing on his violin; the tactile contact between him and his instrument becomes akin, in itself, to touching this desired body. Alternatively, this music can be viewed as the *product* of the sensuous touch between Clesant and the farmhand, transforming the farmhand's

⁶⁸ Forster, *Journals and Diaries*, II, 165.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

body into a violin to be played upon by Clesant's eager hands. In either interpretation, the music stands as an aural externalization of Clesant's experience of queer tactile contact.

In accounting for the text's presentation of this music, it is necessary to note that it is reported from the perspective of Clesant's servants. Implicated alongside Woolacott in maintaining the repressive medical regime that traps Clesant in a joyless existence, they too wish to impose 'silence', rather than allowing for the articulation of desires that might effect an 'aimless disturbance' of Clesant's 'peace'. Forster's text alerts us to the fact that we need not share this view in two ways: firstly, by ascribing it not to the story's omniscient narrator but to 'someone' else; secondly, by creating a distinction between 'our peace' — that of an oppressive society — and the pleasure that Clesant himself discovers in this music.

In setting up an opposition between the celebration of sensuous, erotically-charged music and the denigration of music that causes an 'aimless disturbance' and leaves its listeners feeling 'sad', Forster's text recalls, in particular, debates about the affective impact of the music of Richard Wagner.⁷⁰ The accusations that this music 'never complet[es] a theme' and is 'always breaking off' sound similar to the sort of accusations levelled against formal aspects of Wagner's music by contemporary anti-Wagnerians.⁷¹ Interestingly, Forster completed his first draft of 'Dr Woolacott' only days after attending a performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* at Covent Garden on 17 May 1927.⁷² The text's presentation of a sensuously charged touch facilitating a salvific release from a life tormented by desire finds some parallels with the end of Wagner's opera, in which Parsifal heals the wound of Amfortas with the touch of a conspicuously phallic spear. As Lawrence Dreyfus has noted, there was a well-established tradition in queer sub-communities of understanding *Parsifal* as a parable celebrating the superiority of intense quasi-erotic bonds between men, and, as Michelle Fillion has suggested, Forster's queer

⁷⁰ See Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley*.

⁷¹ See, for example, George Eliot's complaint that Wagner's *Tannhäuser* lacks melodic interest: 'Liszt, Wagner and Weimar', *Fraser's Magazine*, 55 (July 1855), 48–62.

⁷² J. H. Stape, *An E. M. Forster Chronology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 96.

re-fashioning of the Parsifal myth in *The Longest Journey* (1907) can be understood in these terms.⁷³

Yet Forster's affirmation of erotic self-abandonment at the text's conclusion has more in common with the philosophy of *Liebestod* underpinning Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* than the ethic of renunciation demanded by *Parsifal*. It is curious to note that Forster first attended Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* — his first opera — at Covent Garden in June 1898 with Dr Wilmot Herringham.⁷⁴ It seems likely that the character of Dr Woolacott draws upon — even if subconsciously — Dr *Wilmot* Herringham, whose first name bears a curious resemblance in its patterning of sounds.⁷⁵ Herringham, like the character of Woolacott, was a military doctor, who served in the First World War: between 1914 and 1919, he was consultant physician to the British Forces in France in the Royal Army Medical Corps.⁷⁶ From a purely biographical perspective, it is interesting to speculate as to why Forster conflates Herringham with a character who seeks to frustrate the expression of queer sexual desire. It may be the case that the young Forster had a conversation with Herringham similar to that which his fictional Maurice has with his family doctor, Dr Barry. When Maurice confesses that he is 'an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort', Barry responds in disgust: 'Rubbish, rubbish! [...] who put that lie into your head? You whom I see and know to be a decent fellow! We'll never mention it again. No — I'll not discuss. I'll not discuss. The worst thing I could do for you is discuss it.'⁷⁷ Barry's dismissive response to Maurice's desire to openly articulate his queer sexual desire — 'rubbish, rubbish' — finds echoes in the 'rubbish' that Forster feels himself to be burying through whilst at the piano on stage in Montazah, in an attempt to counter-act his sense of shame.

⁷³ Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 175–217; Michelle Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm: Music and the Word in E. M. Forster* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), pp. 39–55.

⁷⁴ E. M. Forster, 'My First Opera', *Opera*, 14 (June 1963), 373–74.

⁷⁵ In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Freud explores the 'condensation by compression' of words with similar sounds in the unconscious. See *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953–1974), XIII (1964).

⁷⁶ Hugh Clegg, 'Herringham, Sir Wilmot Parker (1855–1936)', revised by Patrick Wallis, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33838>> [accessed 16 March 2017].

⁷⁷ Forster, *Maurice*, p. 138.

‘Dr Woolacott’, like ‘The Violin’ and *Teleny*, is a text in which embodied encounters with musical instruments serve to bring queer bodies into contact by facilitating an experience of tactile transmission. In other works of the period, the sense of visceral materiality afforded by tactile contact with a musical instrument functions to affirm the subjectivity of those who otherwise experience their embodied self as fragile and precarious.

‘Fingers Caressing Her Own’: Tactile Embodiment at the Piano

Unless I can stretch and touch something hard, I shall be blown down the eternal corridors for ever. What then can I touch? What brick, what stone? and so draw myself across the enormous gulf into my body safely?

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*⁷⁸

An examination of the significance of the musical touch in Forster’s *A Room with a View* and Virginia Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* allows for a consideration of the manner in which tactile interactions between bodies and musical instruments facilitate modes of embodiment that allow marginalized subjects to more fully experience their desiring bodies. In both texts, the physical act of touching the piano allows for the emergence of a sense of subjectivity that more securely inhabits the corporeal body. Both novels explore the attempts of young women to arrive at a less precarious sense of their own selfhoods, articulating the experience of precarious forms of subjectivity in a manner that speaks powerfully to the concerns of much contemporary queer theory.⁷⁹

In 1904, the American music critic James Huneker coined the term ‘piano girl’, denoting the stereotypical nineteenth-century daughter who plays the instrument by way of social accomplishment, providing ‘a magnificent stop-gap for the creaking pauses of the drawing-room machinery’.⁸⁰ As Ruth Solie has suggested, such musical performance — what she describes as ‘girling’ at the parlour piano — acted as a technology of social regulation: it served to ‘form girls

⁷⁸ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 92.

⁷⁹ See for example Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

⁸⁰ James Huneker, *Overtones: A Book of Temperaments* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1904), p. 286.

appropriate to the needs the society they live', demonstrating 'their own enactment — or, in Judith Butler's terms, their performance — of girlhood' in the light of such gendered expectations.⁸¹ The nineteenth-century novel — from Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) to Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) — offers countless examples of the piano as a site at which ideals of conventional female subjectivity are reinforced.⁸²

Recent work by Michelle Fillion and Emma Sutton, on Forster's *A Room with a View* and Woolf respectively, has done much to highlight the manner in which these texts challenge the stereotypes of the genteel 'piano girl'. Piano performance becomes in *A Room with a View* and *The Voyage Out* a forum for exploring alternative models of female subjectivity.⁸³ Both Lucy Honeychurch and Rachel Vinrace play the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32, Op. 111, a notoriously challenging work that presents considerable technical and interpretative difficulties. The first movement includes a startlingly disjointed opening melodic line, played on double octaves in the bass register of the piano; a deferred announcement of the tonic key at the start of the work; a leap of five and a half octaves; and is defined by a highly chromatic and harmonically ambiguous structure based on diminished-seventh chords.⁸⁴ Frederick Niecks, an English music critic writing in 1904, characterized the work as 'all iron firmness, irresistible energy, and inflexible determination', while Forster himself — in 'The C Minor of that Life' (1941) — evoked the sonata's opening as a 'dive into the abyss'.⁸⁵ In her reading of Forster's text, Michelle Fillion traces parallels between what she sees as a 'Hegelian synthesis' of 'masculine and feminine principles' in the sonata and the narrative of Forster's text.⁸⁶ In similar terms,

⁸¹ Ruth Solie, "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', in *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 85–117 (p. 86).

⁸² Jodi Lustig, 'The Piano's Progress: The Piano in Play in the Victorian Novel', in *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Nicky Loseff (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 83–104; Ivan Raykoff, 'Piano Women, Forte Women', in *Dreams of Love*, pp. 175–98.

⁸³ Emma Sutton, 'Killing the Pianist in the House', in *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music: Politics, Aesthetics, Form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 48–68; Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, pp. 56–78.

⁸⁴ Mi Zhou, 'Sublime Noise: Reading E. M. Forster Musically' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009), pp. 110–14; Sutton, 'Killing the Pianist', p. 59.

⁸⁵ Frederick Niecks, 'The Pianoforte Sonatas of Beethoven', *Musical Age* (December 1904), 235; E. M. Forster, 'The C Minor of that Life' in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 135–38 (p. 137).

⁸⁶ Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, p. 165.

Emma Sutton suggests in her reading of *The Voyage Out*, that such repertoire was ‘unequivocally perceived as “masculine”’.⁸⁷ Both Sutton and Fillion overlook the curious fact that this sonata held specific queer resonances for listeners in homosexual sub-cultures around the time of the publication of these novels. Edward Prime-Stevenson notes in *The Intersexes* that ‘Beethoven's beautiful sonata, Opus 111, is often called among German and Austrian Uranians, “The Uranian Sonata”, from some legendary “in-reading” of the work’. The sonata, Stevenson suggests, is musical expression of Beethoven’s ‘idealized homosexuality’, reflecting upon the ‘real passion’ that Beethoven felt in his ‘sad last days’ for his ‘unworthy nephew Carl’.⁸⁸ Work by Sutton and Fillion has done much to historicize the associations of Beethoven’s music, and its implications for the gender politics of these novels, yet it has generally overlooked the manner in which playing music forms part of these texts’ wider concern with embodied physical experience. The discussion that follows suggests that a renewed attention to the presentation of musical touch in these texts might provide alternative, queerer perspectives on the manner in which the desiring self comes into being through tactile interactions.

In *A Room with a View*, Forster posits the propensity to experience music-making through tactile sensation as the mark of ‘every true performer’ (*RV* 29). The pleasure that Lucy Honeychurch gains from playing Beethoven and Schumann at the piano is attributed as much to her sensation of touching the instrument as it is to the sounds that she produces: ‘she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire’ (*RV* 29). For Lucy, the piano on which she plays becomes akin to a receptive body, the keys transformed into fingers that lovingly respond to her own touch with a gentle ‘caress’. Lucy’s simultaneous experience of touching and being touched calls to mind Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s classic account of the ‘double sensation’ — the right hand touching the left — which serves to unsettle the boundary between the touching subject and the touched object. For Merleau-Ponty, this chiasmic ‘reversibility of the flesh’ means that

⁸⁷ Sutton, ‘Killing the Pianist’, p. 61.

⁸⁸ Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 397.

subject and object mutually participate in the process of perception.⁸⁹ The piano is both receptive to touch, and responds with its own touch. This chiasmic tactile interaction with the piano allows Lucy to inhabit her desiring body with a greater sense of consciousness. As Mi Zhou has suggested, it is precisely the physicality of Lucy's piano playing that generates her 'intoxication' through allowing her a greater awareness of her own body and senses.⁹⁰

Lucy's intensely tactile experience of Beethoven's work anticipates that of Roland Barthes, for whom the pleasure of musical performance 'comes from an activity that is very little auditory, being above all manual'. This, he suggests, is particularly true of Beethoven's music. Barthes links this tangibility to the composer's deafness, suggesting that Beethoven's music contains something 'inaudible (something for which hearing is not the *exact* locality)' — it is 'not abstract or inward, but [...] endowed [...] with a tangible intelligibility, with the intelligible as tangible'.⁹¹ What Lucy and Barthes share is a sense that certain forms of knowledge become most accessible through the sensual experience of touch. Lucy enters a 'more *solid* world when she open[s] the piano' (italics added), inhabiting more securely the materiality of her desiring body. Lucy 'disturbs' the 'composure' of Mr Beebe by playing Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 (*RV* 29). While the pedantic Mr Beebe might warn against the apparently emotionally destabilising influence of 'too much Beethoven' (*RV* 36), Lucy comes to understand herself through this embodied tactile experience of musical performance: 'Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music' (*RV* 37).

In 'Not Listening to Music' (1939), Forster notes the physicality of his own performances of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas.⁹² He comes to an understanding of Beethoven's formal ingenuity not by the cold academic abstraction of what he dismisses as the 'slough of "appreciation"' — that is, passively listening to music

⁸⁹ Merleau-Ponty, 'The Intertwining – The Chiasm'.

⁹⁰ Zhou, 'Sublime Noise', pp. 110–14.

⁹¹ Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 149 and 152–53, Barthes's emphasis. For Barthes's tactile experience of his pianism see also François Noudelmann, *The Philosopher's Touch: Sartre, Nietzsche, and Barthes at the Piano*, trans. by Brian J. Reilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁹² For Forster's pianism and his sustained interest in Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, see Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, pp. 108–22.

(perhaps, like Tibby in *Howards End*, with ‘a full score on his knee’).⁹³ Rather he relishes the insights afforded by the ‘physical approach’ of his hands on the piano, drawing attention to the tactile pleasures of Beethoven’s ‘sudden softnesses’.⁹⁴ Such is the sustained concentration required to play Beethoven’s music that he is prevented from indulging in speculative mental ‘wool-gathering’. In focussing attention principally on the movements of the hands, rather than the indulgent peregrinations of an ever-active mind, piano practice promotes a sense of humility: there is ‘no [...] thinking myself clever here’, Forster admits. A close familiarity with Beethoven’s Sonatas from the perspective of a performer provides, Forster suggests, an education in the art of ‘construction’ — ‘what becomes of a phrase, how it is transformed or returned, sometimes bottom upward’.⁹⁵

Forster’s *Howards End* likewise charts the tactile experience of music as connected to both an appreciation of thematic ‘construction’ and an awareness of one’s desiring body. Here, Forster’s narrator recounts a performance of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, charting a variety of listening practices — from Margaret’s focus on musical form, to Mrs Munt ‘tap[ping] [...] when the tunes come’, to Tibby’s score-fixated pedantry, to Helen’s insistent impressionism (*HE* 26). In Helen’s conceptualisation of Beethoven’s thematic development, she visualizes the notorious ‘goblins’ that inhabit the symphony’s Scherzo in terms that present the process of composition as one of dextrous manipulation: he ‘took hold of’ them, he ‘gave them a little push’, he sees them ‘scattered’ (*HE* 28). Such is the intensity of Helen’s imaginative engagement that the music — elided with the fantasies evoked by it — achieves for her a sense of physical immediacy: ‘she even stretched out her gloved hands as if it was tangible’ (*HE* 28). For Helen, music is perceived not just audibly, but felt on the surface of the entire body — ‘music *enwrapped* her’, she rhapsodizes (*HE* 27). Yet Forster’s narrator maintains a quizzical ironic distance from such a stance. In an earlier manuscript draft of the novel of the novel, the sentence reads: ‘she even stretched out her hands *in*

⁹³ E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 26, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *HE*.

⁹⁴ E. M. Forster, ‘Not Listening to Music’, in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 1972), pp. 139–42 (p. 142).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

ecstasy to touch it'.⁹⁶ The 'ecstasy' of the earlier text makes Helen's gesture more explicitly sensual. Forster's later revision adds a hint of the absurd. The gloves on her hands cover her skin, presenting a barrier to the tactile musical contact she apparently yearns for. The detail of her 'gloved hands' acts to ironize the Romantic indulgence of her daydreams: Helen exists not in a fantastic world of 'stars', 'angels' and 'dancing elephants' but in one of mundane, upper middle-class respectability (*HE* 28). Elsewhere, Forster's revisions reinforce the significance of the tactile in Helen's experience of this music: in the final text, Helen concludes that the symphony's unequivocal 'meaning' amounts to 'a *tangible* statement' (*HE* 29, italics added), while Forster's earlier draft has the more prosaic 'final statement'.⁹⁷

Helen's insistence on the 'tangible' intensity of lived experience reflects the broader concern of *Howards End* with the necessity of genuine contact between disparate individuals, families and classes, each with their own distinct world-view. 'Only connect...', the novel's epigraph famously demands (*HE* i). Early in the text, Margaret warns Helen of the 'great outer life' of 'telegrams and anger' that 'you and I have *never touched*' (*HE* 23, italics added). While the rational level-headedness of Margaret's 'touch' of social connection is underpinned by her idealistic liberal humanism, Helen's desire to 'touch' is more viscerally embodied.

If the touch of connection in *Howards End* also ultimately becomes grounded in the body, *A Room with a View* can also be understood as exploring the way in which subjects come to inhabit a sense of their desiring embodied selves through touch. It follows the preoccupations of much of Forster's work in pitting systems of values that deny the body (associated here with the English, Medieval and Gothic), against one that embraces it (the Mediterranean, Renaissance and Greek). The forums available for the realisation of one's embodiment in Forster's text are markedly restrained by gender expectations. George, Freddy and Mr Beebe swim naked with childish joy in the 'sacred lake', their skin exposed to the touch of the water, air and vegetation that surround them (*HE* 120). The 'call to the blood' (*HE* 123) presented by such contact between the natural world and

⁹⁶ E. M. Forster, *The Manuscripts of Howards End*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Arnold, 1973), p. 30, italics added.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

their bare flesh allows these men an opportunity to experience the feel of their bodies with a renewed intensity. Such a forum of bodily self-discovery does not lie open to Lucy, for whom the rigid expectations of genteel feminine behaviour prove a persistent constraint. Instead, as we have seen, she discovers a sense of her embodied existence in her wilful performances of Beethoven and Schumann at the piano.

The nature of Lucy's embodied experience at the piano is contingent also on her own sense of personal autonomy. The pleasure she takes in the tactile experience of Beethoven is connected partially with the wilfulness with which she frustrates the expectations of the repertoire appropriate for a genteel 'piano girl' to play. She eschews popular domestic favourites — the sentimental song 'Adelaide', the Turkish March from *The Ruin of Athens* — to play instead Beethoven's hugely technically challenging Piano Sonata No. 32. Later in the text, she is forced to play music from Wagner's *Parsifal*, against her will, through a combination of her mother's stern invocation of 'duty' and her own sense of acute social embarrassment. Her physical experience of playing piano is transformed: 'She liked music, but how much better tennis seemed. How much better to run about in *comfortable clothes* than to sit at the piano and *feel girt under the arms*' (RV 145, italics added). The primary sense of Lucy's feeling of being 'girt' — belted up or buckled in — relates to her constrictive clothing, but it also invokes the manner in which musical performance acts to discipline her body. When it is demanded of her that she perform the role of the pliant domestic 'piano girl', her arms held aloft at the keyboard, Lucy's embodied experience of the piano changes markedly.

While in *A Room with a View*, Lucy's piano playing allows for a form of embodiment through which the desiring self might come to a fuller sense of consciousness, in *The Voyage Out*, tactile embodiment becomes a more pressingly fundamental question of the self's survival: Rachel's death at the text's conclusion is closely aligned with her inability to fully inhabit her own body. In Woolf's text, Rachel Vinrace's piano playing — the touch of her hands on the piano — operates as a strategy through which Rachel can experience her otherwise precarious self as securely embodied. The text connects Rachel's piano playing with ideas of

spatial construction; she experiences playing music as akin to the creation of material architectural structures. In this sense, playing becomes a way of understanding the self as embodied and of feeling secure in this embodied self. The touch of the hand on the keys of the piano forms part of a web of images in the text in which a grounded sense of embodied selfhood is connected with the tactile experience of the surrounding world. Reaching out to touch the world around her forms a tactile equivalent to the famous mirror scene in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), where Clarissa looks into her glass to '[collect] the whole of her at one point'.⁹⁸ Here, a sense of self is ascertained not through a moment of Lacanian *visual* self-identification, but rather through the tactile articulation of what Anzieu has called the 'skin ego'.⁹⁹ For Anzieu, human subjectivity is generated through touch; infantile tactile experiences lay the foundations of an ego that is rooted in the body and linked to the skin both as a boundary and a receptive organ. In similar terms, Freud posited that the experience of touch plays an integral part in the formation of a stable sense of selfhood. In an intriguing footnote to *The Ego and the Id* (1923), added in 1927, he suggests that 'the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body'. The self is conceived, in these terms, as 'a mental projection of the surface of the body', coming into being through the process of tactile interactions that demarcate the margins of the self through contact with the surrounding material world.¹⁰⁰

Music-making in Woolf's text is an activity that engages the surface of the physical body as much as the depths of the reflective mind. Indeed, for Rachel's Aunt Bessie, the physicality of her playing risks modifying Rachel's body in a manner that frustrates conventional expectations of female beauty. 'She is afraid that you will spoil your arms if you insist upon so much practising', reports Helen. 'The muscles of the forearm — and then one won't marry?', Rachel surmises (*VO*

⁹⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 31.

⁹⁹ See Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*.

¹⁰⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (1953–74), XIX (1961), pp. 3–63 (p.26).

15). The text's first description of Rachel's piano playing reflects the physicality of her body's engagement with the piano:

She slammed the door of her room, and pulled out her music. It was all old music — Bach and Beethoven, Mozart and Purcell — the pages yellow, the engraving rough to the finger. In three minutes she was deep in a very difficult, very classical fugue in A, and over her face came a queer remote impersonal expression of complete absorption and anxious satisfaction. Now she stumbled; now she faltered and had to play the same bar twice over; but an invisible line seemed to string the notes together, from which rose a shape, a building. She was so far absorbed in this work, for it was really difficult to find how all these sounds should stand together, and drew upon the whole of her faculties, that she never heard a knock at the door. It was burst impulsively open, and Mrs. Dalloway stood in the room leaving the door open, so that a strip of the white deck and of the blue sea appeared through the opening. The shape of the Bach fugue crashed to the ground (VO 58-59).

The touch of the keys under her fingers, as the musical forms unfold before her, allows her to participate in an act of musical construction that is simultaneously an act of feeling into her own body, of constructing a sense of her embodied self. Woolf presents Rachel's 'complete absorption' whilst she is playing in terms that evoke bodily immersion: 'she was *deep in* a very difficult, very classical fugue'; 'she was so far *absorbed in* this work'. The embodied nature of Rachel's playing is evoked by the metaphors of architectural construction used to characterize the interaction between her body and the piano: from the 'invisible line' that 'string[s] the notes together' arises 'a shape, a building'; the sounds she produces must 'stand together'; when she is interrupted the 'shape' of the Bach fugue 'crashed to the ground'. Rachel's hands at the piano are engaged in the creation of something that feels tangible; she experiences music not in terms of the sounds it makes, but rather in the feelings of spatial materiality that it evokes. Later in the novel, when Rachel once again plays Bach, music is experienced in such architectural terms as constructing 'a building with spaces and columns succeeding each other rising in the empty space' (VO 187). Woolf presents the

arrangement of musical scores in Rachel's room with similar imagery: 'books of music rose in two jagged pillars on the floor' (VO 136). These 'pillars' provide at least some sense of a coherent, solid self, but hint nonetheless that this 'jagged' structure might collapse at any point. Indeed, at the novel's conclusion, as Rachel descends into the delirium of illness, Woolf's text presents her gradual loss of any spatial perception of her own body in terms that demolish the architectural constructions used to characterize her experience of piano playing: 'all landmarks were obliterated' (VO 384).

Later in the text, Woolf presents Rachel's piano playing in similarly material terms:

Up and up the steep spiral of a very late Beethoven sonata she climbed, like a person ascending a ruined staircase, energetically at first, then more laboriously advancing her feet with effort until she could go no higher and returned with a run to begin at the very bottom again (VO 339).

Woolf does not specify the identity of the work being played by Rachel here. However, as Sutton has noted, Woolf elsewhere implied that it was Beethoven's Op. 111 that she had in mind here.¹⁰¹ It is curious coincidence that Woolf's text is identical to Forster's in this choice of repertoire. Woolf had certainly read *A Room with a View*; she reviewed it favourably in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1908 whilst working on *The Voyage Out*. In this respect, Rachel's pianism may, to some extent, be understood as a response to that of Forster's Lucy.¹⁰² Here, Rachel's experience of playing is once again characterized by its embodied physicality: the 'energetic' and 'laborious' ascent of a spatially demarcated 'steep spiral', a 'ruined staircase'. The force of Rachel's hands at the keyboard see them transformed into the heavy, determined feet of a mountaineer. Beethoven's fragmented late style unfolds under her fingers to suggest a sense of the self that must somehow negotiate the precariousness of its own fragile, 'ruined' state.

While the physicality of her touch allows Rachel a sense of her material body grounded in the world, her desire for tactile contact extends, in Woolf's text,

¹⁰¹ Sutton, p. 60.

¹⁰² Virginia Woolf, 'A Room with a View' in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), II, 221–22.

beyond her hands on the keyboard to encompass other aspects of her engagement with the material world around her. Rachel dwells also on the feel of the sheet music from which she plays: 'old music — Bach and Beethoven, Mozart and Purcell — the pages yellow, *the engraving rough to the finger*' (VO 58, italics added). Woolf's text also sets in contrast the active, controlled process of construction in which Rachel engages her hands whilst at the piano and the compulsive and repetitive movements of her fingers in other contexts. As she sits at the dinner table, her father observes her in a self-absorbed trance, her 'fingers still toying with the fossilized fish' (VO 17). When her playing is interrupted by Clarissa Dalloway, she is left awkwardly 'fumb[ling] her fingers in her lap' (VO 58), as if her hands are still in some way still engaged at the keyboard. Terence can simultaneously praise her fingers as 'well shaped and competent', whilst observing that they are clearly the 'nervous fingers [...] of a musician' (VO 238). When not immersed in the sense of embodied materiality afforded by her hands at the keyboard, Rachel is rendered ontologically vulnerable. Her 'nervous', 'fumbling' gestures register the fact that her subjectivity is never quite secure without some firmer tactile grounding in her material surroundings.

In this respect, touch becomes particularly important when Rachel's precarious sense of her own selfhood feels somehow threatened. When she is called upon to account for herself by the politically radical, perpetually embattled Evelyn Murgatroyd, she responds by grounding herself in the physical reality of the objects that surround her. 'Are you real?', 'Do you *believe* in anything?', Evelyn demands. Rachel reacts by 'finger[ing] different objects' in the room that surrounds her — tables, books, photographs. She focusses, in particular, on the corporeality of a '*fleshly* leaved plant' and the contrasting textures of its 'stiff bristles' and the 'large earthenware pot' in which it stands (VO 290). Likewise, when Mrs. Flushing invites Rachel to 'open [her wardrobe] and look at the things', she instead compulsively 'began to *finger*' the assortment of objects — fabrics, buttons, broaches — that lie before her (VO 272).

Whereas the tactile experience of piano playing in Woolf's text promises for Rachel a certain security in the embodied self, the more purely cognitive experience of reading risks a disorientating sense of disembodiment. For Helen,

Rachel's musical pursuits distract from her intellectual development: she 'desired that Rachel should think, and for this reason offered books and discouraged too entire a dependence on Bach and Beethoven and Wagner' (*VO* 137). In turning from music to books, Rachel attempts to project into her act of reading the sense of tactile materiality she finds in her piano playing. The sentences she reads become 'possessed of shapes like tables and chairs' (*VO* 137) and the books she handles are distinguished not only by their 'shiny yellow covers', but by the textured feel afforded by 'a great deal of gilding on the back' (*VO* 137). Yet her cognitive experience of reading is defined by a disorientating sense of self-loss:

The morning was hot, and the exercise of reading left her mind contracting and expanding like the main-spring of a clock [...] It was all very real, very big, very impersonal, and after a moment or two she began to raise her first finger and to let it fall on the arm of her chair so as to bring back to herself some consciousness of her own existence. She was next overcome by the unspeakable queerness of the fact that she should be sitting in an arm-chair, in the morning, in the middle of the world. Who were the people moving in the house—moving things from one place to another? And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish, though the furniture in the room would remain. Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any more, and sat perfectly still, listening and looking always at the same spot. It became stranger and stranger. She was overcome with awe that things should exist at all.... She forgot that she had any fingers to raise.... (*VO* 137–38).

It is through the gesture of her hand — the controlled movement of a pianist's finger — that she attempts to reclaim a sense of her own 'consciousness of her own existence'. She slowly restages the actions of her fingers at the keyboard, 'raising' and 'letting fall' her finger, as she determinedly attempts to re-inhabit a sense of her physical body. The text sets in opposition this active process of tactile engagement and the entirely passive sensory experiences of 'listening' and 'looking'. As Rachel is gradually 'overcome' by a sense of the 'unspeakable

queerness' of her mind as it seems to drift away from her body, this is marked by an inability to feel control over her fingers, and then ultimately a lack of awareness of those finger's very existence. The possibility of recruiting tactile sensory experience in order to secure the self in the world slips from her grasp. If *A Room with a View* and *The Voyage Out* present the embodied intensity of musical experience as a strategy through which queer marginalized subjects might bolster their ontological security, Vernon Lee's writings turn instead to more insubstantial and ephemeral tactile connections.

'Things Long Untouched': Music and Tactile Connections in the Archive

How shall we, whose souls are aged and wrinkled with the long
years of humanity, shake hands across the centuries with those
young-eyed, young-limbed immortal children?

Symonds, *Studies in the Greek Poets* ¹⁰³

For Lee, like Symonds, the desire for the formation of affective communities across time is expressed through a fantasy of tactile contact. While Symonds's hand extends to caress the 'young-limbed' bodies of idealized Greek youths, Lee's tactile engagement with the past is less conspicuously erotic. In Lee's writings on eighteenth-century Italian music, such a desire for connectedness is expressed through her tactile interactions with music's archival remains. Handling the dusty manuscript scores of long-lost Italian operas becomes, for Lee, a means of reaching out to recover something of those affective resonances of the lost historical past. Yet her texts simultaneously acknowledge the frustrating impossibility of such connection: these scores remain only imperfect conduits for the transmission of the musical culture they represent and the modes of feeling that this culture embodies.

Lee's preoccupation with feeling a sense of tactile connection with the past might usefully be read in the light of what Carolyn Dinshaw has called the 'queer touch'.¹⁰⁴ Dinshaw draws attention to modes of transhistorical affective connection that allow for the articulation of subjectivities that go beyond the

¹⁰³ John Addington Symonds, *Studies in the Greek Poets* (London: Smith, Elder, 1873), p. 398.

¹⁰⁴ Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 3.

restrictions of present-day identity classifications. The 'queer touch' acts to bring aspects of the historical past forward into the present, building an affective community between 'lives, texts, and other cultural phenomenon left out of sexual categories back then, and, on the other, those left out of current sexual categories now'.¹⁰⁵ In utilising figures of tactile contact, Dinshaw is closely alert to the wish for embodied connectedness that often motivates queer subjects' desire for the formation of a transhistorical sense of community. The mode of affective historicism that Dinshaw advances also speaks directly to that propounded by Vernon Lee, Walter Pater and other aestheticist writers: the past is to be defended against an over-intellectualized 'mere antiquarianism', motivated by an urge towards 'classification', which desiccates our capabilities to 'feel' into the past (*SEC* 295).¹⁰⁶ Dinshaw's work has also proved influential for those queer theorists, such as Heather Love, who wish to account for those texts that investigate the failure of such affective connections.¹⁰⁷ Understood in this light, the queerness of Lee's work, has less to do with any articulation of alternative sexual subjectivities than in the pervasive sense of loss that inhabits her affective engagement with eighteenth-century Italy. In drawing attention to this aspect, this discussion builds upon Martha Vicinus's convincing analysis of the manner in which nostalgia frequently operates in Lee's works to '[displace] her powerful homoerotic feelings onto an imagined past'.¹⁰⁸ Touch acts in Lee's work to extend a hand towards a past that ultimately remains, so often, just out of reach.

Lee's most sustained engagement with the affective nature of her historicism is seen in her essay 'In Praise of Old Houses' (1892).¹⁰⁹ Here, the historical past becomes a productive forum in which new modes of feeling spaces might be realized: the 'historical habit' allows us, Lee suggests, to '[supplement] our present life by a life of the past; a life larger, richer than our own, multiplying our emotions by those of the dead' (*OH* 29). Such engagement guards against the

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1

¹⁰⁶ Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 78. For a detailed consideration of Pater's historicism see Williams *Transfigured World*.

¹⁰⁷ See Love, *Feeling Backward*.

¹⁰⁸ Vicinus, "'A Legion of Ghosts'".

¹⁰⁹ Vernon Lee, 'In Praise of Old Houses', in *Limbo and Other Essays* (London: Richards, 1897), pp. 19–42, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *OH*.

isolation and loneliness of the present by forming communities across time: it represents a 'the sense of being companioned by the past', of existing in a 'place warmed for our living by the lives of others' (*OH* 29). Paradoxically, here the bodies of the dead radiate a warmth that might be felt on the skin of the living. For Lee, the past is 'somehow more companionable, warmer, more full of flavour' (*OH* 36) than the 'chilly, draughty, emptiness' (*OH* 30) that defines her experience of modernity. Lee presents this intense 'rapture' for the past in terms that afford to it a sense of displaced queer erotic desire. It is, Lee suggests, 'not easy to describe', having its 'origins far down in mysterious depths of our nature'; it 'arises overwhelmingly from many springs, filling us with the throb of vague passions welling from our most vital parts' (*OH* 34-35). It is unsurprising, then, that Lee experiences her historicism as a process of tactile connection:

I feel [...] that I am in contact with a whole living, breathing thing, full of habits of life, of suppressed words; a sort of odd, mysterious, mythical, but very real creature; as if, in the dark, I stretched out my hand and met something (but without any fear), something absolutely indefinable in shape and kind, but warm, alive. This changes solitude in unknown places into the reverse of solitude and strangeness (*OH* 31).

The historical queer touch is one that can overcome the 'fear' of contact to form a sense of community built upon those vague, unspeakable feelings and those 'suppressed words' that lurk at the edge of the expressible. It is a community so ephemeral, delicate and tentative that it offers not to transform 'solitude' into its forcefully articulated opposite, but only into the 'reverse of solitude'.

Lee's first book, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, similarly alert to the possibility of historical affective connection, is much concerned with ideas of music, loss and modes of historical recovery.¹¹⁰ Her project is motivated by what Lee describes, in the preface to the second edition of the work, as a 'passion for actually seeing and touching the things of that time' — an 'odd mania' that leads her to 'hanker after archives and scores' (*SEC* xxi). Yet it is marked by what she

¹¹⁰ For further background on *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* see Hilary Fraser, 'Regarding the Eighteenth Century: Vernon Lee and Emilia Dilke Construct a Period', in *The Victorians and the Eighteenth Century: Reassessing the Tradition*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman and Katherine Turner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) pp. 223–49.

describes as ‘a sort of sadness which should not belong to historians or aestheticians’ (*SEC* 294). Her enthusiasm for the Italian eighteenth century has, in its own way, tactile beginnings at the keyboard: ‘How it arose would be difficult to explain’, Lee recounts, ‘perhaps mainly from the delight which I received from the melodies of Mozart and Gluck, *picked out with three fingers on the piano*’.¹¹¹ Lee’s writing is particularly alert to how feelings of historical connectedness are sustained through tactile contact channelled between and through bodies. Unlike in the case of those historical periods, such as the Renaissance, that lie in the distant past, she observes, one can still meet — and *touch* — those who have known the musicians and artists of eighteenth-century Italy. Lee is particularly thrilled to recall her meeting with ‘that sweet and sunny lady, whose hand, which pressed ours, had pressed the hands of Fanny Burney’ (*SEC* 294). The ‘pressed’ hand forms an impression on the flesh that allows it to be transmitted from one body to another, bringing Lee into closer contact with Burney, the daughter of Charles Burney, the music historian who forms of the focus of Lee’s account. The warmth of touch is passed from hand to hand across time, affirming a sense of shared fellowship by closing the gap of historical distance.

This openness to the communicative potential of tactile contact extends to Lee’s engagement with the archive. Lee is sensuously alert to the materiality of the archival remains that she investigates. Indeed, a sense of tactile curiosity to the material world can be found throughout her work: Neroni, the ‘fanatical lover of human forms’ in ‘A Seeker of Pagan Perfection’ (1895), familiarizes himself with the materiality of the flesh by ‘handling horrible remains’; William Oke, in ‘A Phantom Lover’ (1886) imagines the ‘hands of ladies long since dead’ touching the furniture in his rooms; *The Handling of Words* (1923) presents literary criticism as an activity of tactile appreciation.¹¹² In *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, exploring the ‘dingy dens’ around Rome’s Piazza Navona, Lee

¹¹¹ Vernon Lee, ‘Rococo’, in *Juvenilia*, I, 130–52 (pp. 136–37), italics added.

¹¹² Vernon Lee, ‘A Seeker of Pagan Perfection, Being the Life of Domenico Neroni, Pictor Sacrilegus’, in *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (London: Smith, Elder, 1895), pp. 163–232 (p. 177); Lee, *A Phantom Lover: A Fantastic Story* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1886), p. 19 (repr. as ‘Oke of Okehurst: A Phantom Lover’, in *Hauntings: Fantastic Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1890); Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1923). For further consideration of Lee’s tactile appreciation of literary form see Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism and the Legacy of the Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 103.

discovers 'rows of musty, faded, worm-eaten, volumes' and 'heaps of soiled prints, engravings, and etchings' (*SEC* 10). She is closely attentive to the feel of the manuscripts she handles, written 'on the thickest and creamiest paper' (*SEC* 101), whilst reflecting mournfully that 'the paper has now, alas! become yellow and stained, the ink brown and shiny, the loose, mottle cardboard bindings give out a cloud of dust when you touch them' (*SEC* 101–02). Part of Lee's fascination with the music that she discovers in the Italian archives — principally scores of long-neglected operatic works — arises from the fact that they are manuscript copies, rather than printed copies of engraved scores. These documents are the product of the skilled hands and dextrous fingers of historical composers and copiers. In her account of the fevered rate of musical production in eighteenth-century Venice she notes that 'printing and engraving were thrown aside as too laborious and expensive processes' (*SEC* 159), because such was 'the rapid rush forward of Italian music, in the tremendous vortex of new compositions, [that] the work even of an eminent composer was rarely performed more than one season at the same place' (*SEC* 159). The uniqueness of these manuscripts leads Lee to ascribe a particular sense of poignancy to their physical decay, and the contact between the hand of the copyist and the manuscripts invests these scores with an aura that affords to them a peculiar potential for affective transmission.

Lee's work explores how an affective connection across time might be sustained by a sense of the touch that remains imprinted on these archival scores. Paradoxically, it is the very marker of historical neglect that guarantees the promise of tactile connection: the dust that remains on the untouched surface. Lee warns against 'brushing away, perhaps over roughly, cobwebs and dust which lay reverently on things long untouched', for it is precisely this dust that sustains these objects' ability to transmit a sense of affective touch across time: 'dust has brought home to our hearts that [these] men and women once lived and felt, and [these] things once charmed or amused' (*SEC* 293). The affective power of these archival remains is attributed to the fact that they still retain the tactile imprint of their original beholders. While the artefacts of the Renaissance — 'a darkened canvas of Titian or a yellowed folio of Shakespeare' — have 'passed through too many hands', so that they 'retain the personality of none of their owners' (*SEC* 293), an 'old book of cantatas of Porpora', in contrast, was 'probably

touched last by the hands which had clapped applause' (*SEC* 293) in eighteenth-century Venice.

This layer of dust stands not just as a marker of the fact that these objects have remained 'untouched' in the years between their creation and rediscovery, it is also the means through which they maintain their historical aura. 'With this dust, which we shake reluctantly out of the old volumes', Lee laments, 'vanishes we know not what subtle remains of personality' (*SEC* 293). In accounting for the 'subtle remains' through which this dust affords a sense of tactile intimacy with the past, it might be recalled that a great proportion of dust consists of, at least reputedly, dead skin cells. The Victorians themselves were alert to this, not least in the context of the archive. In 1871, the scientist John Tyndall speculated, for example, that half the dust caked onto the walls of the British Museum was accountable to just such inorganic matter, noting that 'the visible particles floating in the air of London rooms' were more likely than not the dry flakes of skin shed from passing bodies.¹¹³ Dust, it might be said, settles over these archival objects to form a layer of skin, and to brush one's fingers over the dust that lies upon these scores is, then, to feel one's body in touch with the skin of the deceased. Yet, as Lee's text makes clear, this skin is not dead, but rather sustains and gives shape to the 'personality' of the past.

These archival remains of music simultaneously offer the promise of touching the past, whilst also standing as emblematic of what has been lost. The musical score serves only as an imperfect record of the musical culture that it represents. The ontological basis of music in the eighteenth century, Lee argues, lies not in the primacy of the written score, but in the modes of performance that afforded 'real existence' to the 'abstraction in the composer's mind': 'Music, according to the notions of the eighteenth century, was no more the mere written score than a plan on white paper would have seemed architecture to the Greeks' (*SEC* 117). While the score might allow for the transmission of the music as it is notated, it fails to transmit the style of performance, or those aspects of the performance which were improvised, or, more importantly, the modes of feeling that gave

¹¹³ John Tyndall, 'On Dust and Disease', in *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1871), I, 275–322 (p. 293).

meaning to this music. Lee laments that ‘the genius spent in an extemporized vocal ornament that was never transmitted to paper, in the delivery of a few notes that lasted but a second; the genius squandered in the most evanescent performance, the memory of which died with who had heard of it’ (*SEC* 122).

Lee’s sensuous engagement with the archival remains of eighteenth-century music continually leads her to reflect mournfully in her later works upon music’s status as ‘the most ephemeral of all arts’.¹¹⁴ In ‘The Immortality of the Maestro Galuppi’ (1887), she observes that the ‘precious scores’ of the eponymous composer, once ‘furtively fingered by enthusiasts prying about the writing-table and the spinette’, have ‘become in the eyes of posterity, a mere heap of ruled paper, once white, now dirty, and fit only for the chandler’s or the archive’ (*MG* 5). Here, the aura invested in the score by the ‘enthusiasm’ of its admirers’ tactile contact fades when this touch is withdrawn; the score is no longer a living conduit of musical feeling, but merely a record of cold, objective musical data. Reflecting upon the ‘fate of forgotten melodies’ (*MG* 13), she laments that the survival of the score alone — the ‘heap of ruled paper’ — cannot guarantee the transmission of those modes of feeling that music embodies because music ‘exists absolutely in us who listen’. The death of those ‘men and women in whose mind [these melodies] had their sole existence’ represents the ‘total severing of all tradition between ourselves and them’ (*MG* 15). ‘An Eighteenth-Century Singer: An Imaginary Portrait’ (1891), Lee’s quasi-fictionalized retelling of the life of the castrato Gaspare Pacchierotti, makes a similar point: ‘the work of the singer is fleeting [...] and while the melodies of Mozart are in our ears, nay, even those of Gluck, and the melodies of their contemporaries can still be reverently copied from their dusty scores, *the way in which Vivarelli sang* [is] long since and entirely forgotten’.¹¹⁵ Looking at the portraits of Italian opera singers in Bologna’s once-vibrant Philharmonic Academy, she notes a ‘sadness in the dandified singers, whose names have long been forgotten, but whose eyes are upturned and whose lips are parted, as if they still thrilled and delighted those that have been dead a

¹¹⁴ Vernon Lee, ‘The Immortality of the Maestro Galuppi’, in *Juvenilia*, II, 1–18 (p. 5), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as *MG*.

¹¹⁵ Vernon Lee, ‘An Eighteenth-Century Singer: An Imaginary Portrait’, *Fortnightly Review*, 50 (December 1891), 842–80 (p. 846), italics added.

hundred year'. It represents 'a world of feeling extinct and genius forgotten' (*SEC* 67). For Lee, the 'discoloured fragments' of a book that recounts the life of Pacchierotti sustains only 'a faded, crumbling flower of feeling': a delicate bloom of ephemeral emotion that has now wilted away (*SEC* 120). At the book's conclusion, Lee articulates a hopelessness about the possibility of rekindling the modes of affective relation expressed by the music of this period: 'The music [...] will, nay certainly must, sooner or later be exhumed; but the revival will have taken place too late, [...] tradition will be gone' (*SEC* 294). The queerness of Lee's account of music history lies not just in its insistent pathos but also in the sense of asynchrony — the feeling of being out of time — that underlies such moments of failed tactile connection.

This chapter has explored ways in which tactile sensory experience is recruited by musical performance to facilitate alternative modes of embodiment for marginalized subjects. Musical instruments become technologies for the transmission of touch, allowing for the modification of the way in which queer subjects experience their spatial 'orientation'. One way in which such musical experiences render the body queer is the manner in which they act to dissolve those corporeal and spatial boundaries that define the humanist subject: between self and other, subject and object, distance and proximity. As desires bodies flow into and through musical instruments — via piano keys or the strings of a violin — tactile contact becomes a means through which the body can experience an extended sense of mobile, desiring materiality. In Lee's writing on music history, tactile perception opens up new perspectives on how the queer body is situated not only in space but also in historical time. The final chapter of this thesis maintains such a focus on queer experiences of the temporal, turning to consider literary representations of music in which modes of abject and perverse embodiment respond to the provocations of evolutionary time.

CHAPTER 5: The Queer Body in Time: Backwards Listening

Do you remember what Darwin says about music? He claims that the power of producing and appreciating it existed among the human race long before the power of speech was arrived at. Perhaps that is why we are so subtly influenced by it. There are vague memories in our souls of those misty centuries when the world was in its childhood.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)¹

For Sherlock Holmes, to listen to music is to undertake a sort of mental time-travel into the depths of the individual soul: to awaken those ‘vague memories’ that speak from the spectrally indefinite ‘misty centuries’ of humanity’s collective evolutionary past. Read in the light of contemporary queer theorists’ concern with the temporal, Darwin’s theory of music’s origins opens up useful perspectives on the link between music, the body and temporal displacement. In *fin-de-siècle* literary texts, music’s agency to provoke such disruptive anachronicity is typically inscribed on the body: an abject degeneration towards an earlier stage of evolutionary development, a flickering oscillation between the human and non-human, a stasis in which the body is held suspended in time. Musical listening is rendered queer in such texts not only because it re-awakens an echo of those primitive desires insistently aligned in *fin-de-siècle* culture with the threat of sexual abnormality — a regression to the primitive, the instinctual, or the bestial — but also because it threatens the reproductive drive towards the future upon which society’s heteronormative logics are predicated.

Such a motif emerges with particular prevalence in stories relating to the Pan myth, such as Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1890), E. M. Forster’s ‘The Story of a Panic’ (1902) and E. F. Benson’s ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’ (1904), in which the music of Pan unleashes queer desires that find their visual correlative on bodies subject to evolutionary time flowing in reverse. Yet fears about the backwards agency of music also find a place in genres less salacious than *fin-de-siècle* supernatural fiction. Robert Browning’s philosophical poem

¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, in *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 15–86 (p. 37).

'Parleying with Charles Avison' (1887) presents an intriguingly ambiguous account of the origins of emotions evoked by music. This discussion seeks to suggest Darwin's usefulness as a model for thinking through those images of backwardness — reverse evolution, awakened primitive pleasures, abject emotions — that cluster around music in certain *fin-de-siècle* texts. Turning critical attention to the transformation and degradation of the body in these myths of music allows new perspectives on the queer agency of music in *fin-de-siècle* culture to emerge.

Queer Temporalities: A Backwards Turn

In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler articulates a future-focused queer critical project based on the 'becoming possible' of forms of subjectivity that were previously unthinkable. The queer becomes a space in which the hegemony of the present is disavowed in favour of unlimited future potential.² For David Halperin, the queer 'describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance'.³ Annamarie Jagose articulates the queer in similar terms as 'a way of pointing ahead without knowing for certain what to point at'.⁴

In recent scholarship, queer theorists have moved beyond a focus on future-oriented accounts of queerness, and turned instead to consider alternative articulations of temporality. The work of such critics has sought to address the manner in which discourses of temporality shape the experiences of queer subjects. Such discussions have contrasted so-called 'queer time' with the heteronormative logics of 'straight time', defined by Rohy as 'regular, linear, and unidirectional' and associated by critics such as Lee Edelman with a 'reproductive futurism' that acts to devalue the queer subject.⁵ Normative conceptions of time are maintained through the recurrence of interconnected

² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 149. See also Judith Butler, 'Politics, Power and Ethics: A Discussion Between Judith Butler and William Connolly', *Theory & Event*, 44 (2000), unpaginated <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32589>> [accessed 6 October 2017].

³ David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 62.

⁴ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 131.

⁵ Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others*, p. xiv; Edelman, *No Future*.

temporal metaphors: the *teleological* (time moves forwards towards a directed goal); the *progressive* (as time moves forward, the present improves upon the past); the *linear* (time unfolds in a straight line); the *sequential* (the unfolding of moments in time follows a specific logic); the *reproductive* (the present attains meaning only where it feeds into the economic or biological production of the future). As Elizabeth Freeman has argued, the processes through which such normative temporal logics are sustained and naturalized have much in common with the operation of those discursive practices that present gender as a trans-historical natural truth, as opposed to a contingent social construct.⁶ For critics such as Judith Halberstam, the subversion of 'straight time' offers 'the [queer] potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space'.⁷

Queer musicology has typically followed the future-oriented critical project of Butler and Halperin. For critical musicologists such as Susan McClary and Lawrence Kramer, music offers just such a horizon of possibility for new articulations of subjectivity. Yet in the light of queer theory's turn towards temporal backwardness an alternative critical approach might examine what it would mean for music to be understood in terms of backwardness, regression or a refusal of futurity. Music in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts is often presented as implicitly threatening the teleological imperative of 'straight time'. Vernon Lee follows Friedrich Nietzsche in criticising Wagner's music for its 'lack of rhythm' — a sense of 'aimless movement', an 'amazing capacity for *slowing off*'.⁸ In Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924), Settembrini praises the 'moral value' of that '[m]usic [which] quickens time, [...] quickens us to the finest enjoyment of time', whilst deriding that which acts against 'action and progress'.⁹ E. F. Benson's musical protagonists are repeatedly castigated by Puritanical fathers for the 'waste of time' spent practising piano.¹⁰ Music's queerness, in this sense, lies in its threat to the straight

⁶ Elizabeth Freeman, 'Introduction', *GLQ*, 13 (2007), 159–76 (p. 160).

⁷ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 2.

⁸ Lee, 'The Religious and Moral Status of Wagner', pp. 872 and 874.

⁹ Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. by H.T. Lowe-Porter (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 112.

¹⁰ See for example E. F. Benson, *The Challoners* (London: Lippincott, 1904), p. 59.

linearity of temporal progress: its power to apparently pull the listener backwards in time, or to appear to suspend time, or to invoke a sense of time running faster or slower, or time moving sideways, or looping in circles. One particularly productive way of engaging with the queerness of musical temporality in *fin-de-siècle* texts is to trace through them the echoes of Charles Darwin's theory of the origins of musical emotion, which had been prominent in English culture since mid-century.

'Mental Reversions': Charles Darwin and the Origins of Music

The origins of musical expression, Darwin suggested, lie in providing an evolutionary advantage in sexual reproduction. Darwin first articulated his thoughts on the relationship between natural selection and the origins of music in an essay written in 1844, in which he noted the apparent significance of birdsong in the mating rituals of birds.¹¹ By the time this essay was posthumously published in 1909, his views on the issue had been further developed in *The Descent of Man* (1871), and revisited in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).¹² 'Musical notes and rhythm were first acquired by the male or female progenitors of mankind', he suggests, 'for the sake of charming the opposite sex'.¹³ Neither the pleasures of performing music nor listening to it are 'the least use to man in reference to his daily habits of life'; for this reason, the musical impulse is viewed by Darwin as 'the most mysterious with which [mankind] is endowed'. In order to explain the intensity of our emotional response to music, Darwin looks to the origins of music in the courtship rituals of our primeval ancestors. Music is afforded the ability to awaken those instincts which lie deep within the pool of humanity's 'inherited associations'. 'The sensations and ideas thus excited in us by music', he suggests, 'appear from their vagueness, yet depth, like mental reversions to the emotions and thoughts of a long-past age.'¹⁴ In support of his argument, Darwin cites Herbert Spencer's

¹¹ Charles Darwin, 'Essay of 1844', in *The Foundations of the Origin of Species: Two Essays Written in 1842 and 1844*, ed. by Francis Darwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), pp. 57–255 (pp. 92–93).

¹² Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1871); Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions* (London: Murray, 1872).

¹³ Darwin, *Expression of the Emotions*, I, 87.

¹⁴ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, II, 336.

observation that ‘music arouses dormant sentiments of which we had not conceived the possibility, and do not know the meaning; or [...] tells us of things we have not seen and shall not see’.¹⁵

Through music’s primeval development as a means of facilitating sexual reproduction, Darwin suggests, it became associated with ‘the strongest passions an animal is capable of feeling’: ‘ardent love, rivalry and triumph’.¹⁶ Listening to music prompts us to recall the ‘vague and indefinite’ echoes of powerful emotions associated with courtship:

The impassioned orator, bard, or musician, when with his varied tones and cadences he excites the strongest emotions in his hearers, little suspects that he uses the same means by which his half-human ancestors long ago aroused each other’s ardent passions, during their courtship and rivalry.¹⁷

Darwin is unusual amongst Victorian theorists of music in relating the intensity of emotional response to music to sexual desire. While the association between music and sexual desire has its origins in antiquity, and is a mainstay of literary texts across the centuries, nineteenth-century treatises on the psychology, philosophy and morality of music are broadly silent on such issues. Darwin affirms the connection between musical emotion and sexual desire drawn throughout this thesis: sanctioned by the queer imperative to better account for the centrality of desire to lived experience, it becomes possible to ascribe to those ‘ardent passions’ referred to above a keen sense of queer desire that might never have been intended by Darwin himself. More strikingly, Darwin implicitly rejects those liberal claims of music and sociality that this thesis has sought to challenge. Music refuses to affirm a community of future-oriented subjectivities based around desire, it does not open up new futures or allow for the articulation of new identities. Rather it acts as a ‘temporal drag’ in which the primitive past

¹⁵ Herbert Spencer, ‘The Origins and Function of Music’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 56 (October 1857), 396–407.

¹⁶ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, II, 336, n. 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 337.

always impinges disruptively on the apparently sovereign present — a musical return of the repressed.

The anti-social queerness of Darwin's theory of music might best be understood by contrasting it with that of Herbert Spencer. As Peter Kivy has observed, Darwin's argument is best understood as a response to contemporary debates about the respective origins of music and language initiated by Spencer in 'The Origins and Function of Music' (1857).¹⁸ In broad terms, Spencer argued that music originated as a form of 'emotional speech intensified' — a heightening of the emotional expressiveness of language. Darwin took the opposite view: the origins of language, he suggested, lay in music.¹⁹ For Spencer, the nature of music's origins had important implications for its wider social function: due to its origins in language, music reacts to and develops the emotional dimensions of language. In this way, Spencer argued, music becomes one of the 'chief media of *sympathy*' upon which 'our general welfare and our immediate pleasures depend'.²⁰ Darwin's theory, in contrast, deprives music of the social usefulness conferred upon it by Spencer's theory. Music for Spencer offers the promise of a teleological development towards moral perfectibility; for Darwin, the emotions it awakens are echoes of the evolutionary past, not directing humanity to a more highly evolved future.

As Bennett Zon has noted, Darwin's ideas on the origins of music influenced a number of writers on musical aesthetics in late nineteenth-century England.²¹ In particular, Edmund Gurney's *The Power of Sound* turns to Darwin's theory of the connection between music and primitive emotion to account for what he calls the 'impressiveness' — the powerful emotional effect — of music on the listener.²² Gurney admits that the connection drawn by Darwin between musical emotion

¹⁸ Peter Kivy, 'Charles Darwin on Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 12 (1959), 42–48; Spencer, 'Origins and Function of Music'.

¹⁹ See Bennett Zon, *Music and Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century British Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 116–73; Bojan Bujić, *Music in European Thought, 1851–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 305–20; John Offer, 'An Examination of Spencer's Sociology of Music and Its Impact on Music Historiography in Britain', *International Review of Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 14 (1983), pp. 33–52.

²⁰ Spencer, 'Origins and Function of Music', p. 406. See also John Offer, *Herbert Spencer and Social Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 253–74.

²¹ See Zon, *Music and Metaphor*, pp. 116–73.

²² Gurney, *Power of Sound*. Gurney first articulates his support for Darwin's theory of musical origins in 'On Music and Musical Criticism', *Nineteenth Century*, 4.17 (July 1878), 51–74.

and primitive expressions of sexual desire may 'seem at first sight somewhat startling', but he goes on to insist that the 'extraordinary depth and indescribability of the emotions' evoked by music surely supports such a 'far-reaching' thesis.²³ In justifying his belief in Darwin's theory, Gurney suggests that music is peculiarly placed to produce an 'emotional excitement of a very intense kind' which cannot be 'defined under any known head of emotion':

So far as it can be described, it seems like a fusion of strong emotions transfigured into a wholly new experience, whereof if we seek to bring out the separate threads we are hopelessly baulked; for triumph and tenderness, desire and satisfaction, yielding and insistence, may seem to be all there at once, yet without any dubiousness or confusion in the result; or rather elements seem there which we struggle dimly to adumbrate by such words, thus making the experience seem vague only by our own attempt to analyse it, while really the beauty has the unity and individuality pertaining to clear and definite form.²⁴

If the power of music to evoke this peculiarly intense, uniquely vague emotion is due to its primeval connection with the mating rituals of early man, then music as an art form might become tainted, in the prudish Victorian imagination, through its association with sexual desire. 'Mr. Darwin grows here simply shocking', noted an anonymous writer in *The Orchestra* in a discussion of Darwin's thoughts on the origins of music.²⁵

Gurney addresses what he calls the 'derogatory' implications of Darwin's theory in the following manner.²⁶ First, he appeals to an evolutionary concept first articulated by Herbert Spencer: differentiation.²⁷ As organisms evolve they develop from a simple, undifferentiated homogeneity to a complex, differentiated heterogeneity, so that they are transformed into 'something unrecognisably high and remote from their original nature'.²⁸ Musical emotion might have sexual

²³ Gurney, *Power of Sound*, p. 119.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁵ 'The Musical Descent of Man', *The Orchestra*, 16.395 (21 April 1871), p. 43.

²⁶ Gurney, *Power of Sound*, p. 121.

²⁷ See Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause', *Westminster Review*, 67 (April 1857), 445–85.

²⁸ Gurney, *Power of Sound*, p. 120.

excitement as its evolutionary source, but this emotional response becomes differentiated over time into something far removed from its origins. Indeed, Gurney suggests, it is precisely the fact that musical pleasure was first ‘associated with the *most exciting passions*’ — that is, sexual excitement — which affords it a ‘correspondingly large’ potential for such differentiation.²⁹

Second, Gurney refutes the idea that our experience of musical emotion is connected in any direct or perceivable way with the sexual excitement that lies at its evolutionary source. ‘We know from individual observation’, he suggests, ‘how easily the recurrence of one element of an exciting experience recalls the *intensity and general quality* of the excitement, without involving any *detailed memory* of the concomitants.’³⁰ Rather, over the course of the ‘enormous period of time’ separating us from our primeval ancestors, the ‘coarse, definite passions and excitements’ have become ‘transmuted’ into the complex aesthetic emotions we experience today. ‘The differentiation in question is so complete’, he concludes, ‘that [one] can easily afford to ignore the early steps of it.’³¹ Yet despite his attempts to play down the significance of the ‘early steps’ of the origins of musical emotion, Gurney’s views were widely derided for degrading music’s idealized dignity. Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, while sympathetic to Gurney’s formalist stance on musical emotion, dismissed Gurney’s Darwinist theories as ‘poison’, deriding the suggestion that ‘we enjoy music because our apish ancestors serenaded their Juliet-apes of the period in rudimentary recitatives and our emotions are the survival’.³²

Beastly Queers: Degeneration and Sexual Abnormality

Hopkins’s derision towards such evolutionary theories of music’s origins can be understood within the wider context of late-Victorian theories of degeneration. In general terms, as J. W. Burrow has noted, the overarching focus on progress and teleology in evolutionary theory was countered by those thinkers who

²⁹ Ibid., p. 120, Gurney’s italics.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 121.

³² Gerard Manley Hopkins, Letter to Robert Bridges, in *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Lesley Higgins and Michael F. Suarez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–), II: *Correspondence 1882–1889*, ed. by K. R. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (2013), p. 562 (4–5 January 1883).

constantly stressed the dangers of regression, sliding back, of chaos and dissolution.³³ The prevalence of such post-Darwinian fears of social and cultural degeneration in late nineteenth-century European thought has been explored at length by a number of historians and critics.³⁴ While in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) Darwin held with some confidence that ‘corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection’, his later writings — such as *The Descent of Man* became more circumspect: ‘natural selection only acts in a tentative manner’; ‘we must remember that progress is no invariable rule’.³⁵ For Spencer, evolution provided an explanation not just for development towards ‘higher forms’, but also for ‘dissolution’ and regression to the so-called ‘primitive’. Under the influence of Spencer’s thought, scientists such as John Hughlings Jackson proposed theories of neurophysiological ‘undevelopment’ — reverse evolution — in which patients were understood to have mentally reverted to their primeval ancestral state.³⁶ In *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880), Edwin Ray Lankester likewise warned that, as subjects of the ‘general laws of evolution’, humanity is ‘as likely to degenerate as progress’.³⁷

Constituted around a constantly shifting nexus of fictional narratives, socio-political commentaries and scientific treatises, the idea of degeneration never attained anything approaching definitional fixity. Rather than a coherent set of principles, it is better understood as a set of discourses that acted to divide the normal from the abnormal, the healthy from the morbid and the civilized from the primitive. The association between degeneracy and homosexuality in late nineteenth-century scientific, medical and literary discourses has been well established.³⁸ Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1895) undoubtedly assumed an

³³ See J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 228–59.

³⁴ See for example Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁵ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: Murray, 1859), p. 489; *Descent of Man*, I, 35 and 177.

³⁶ John Hughlings Jackson, ‘Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System’, in *Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson*, ed. by James Taylor, 2 vols (London: Staples, 1931), II, 45–75 (p. 46).

³⁷ Edwin Ray Lankester, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (London: Macmillan, 1880), pp. 59–60.

³⁸ See for example Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, pp. 78–80; David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 411–18.

extreme position in presenting homosexuality as the symptomatic condition of a wider cultural malaise, yet his views were nonetheless echoed in the work of other theorists of sexual abnormality such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, August Forel and Cesare Lombroso.³⁹ As Kelly Hurley has observed, Krafft-Ebing characterizes virtually all of the subjects of his 237 case studies of ‘sexual abnormality’ in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1882-1902) as contaminated by an apparently degenerative ‘hereditary taint’ — a family history of insanity, hysteria or neurasthenia.⁴⁰

In Victorian homophobic discourses, same-sex sexual acts between men were frequently characterized in terms suggestive of evolutionary backwardness: ‘beastly’, ‘animalistic’, ‘primitive’. Characterisations of Oscar Wilde were typical in this regard: H. G. Wells claimed that *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) — an unsettling fictional parable of the threat of reverse evolution — was to some extent inspired by Wilde’s trials, a ‘reminder that humanity is but *animal rough-hewn to a reasonable shape* and in perpetual internal conflict between *instinct and injunction*’. The novel was written, Wells suggested, to ‘give the utmost possible vividness to that conception of men as hewn and confused and tormented beasts’.⁴¹ The Marquess of Queensberry drew upon similar associations, when he sent to his daughter-in-law a picture of an iguanodon torn from the *Illustrated London News*, scrawling across it, ‘a possible ancestor of Oscar Wilde’.⁴² In both instances, Wilde’s homosexuality is aligned with reversion to the bestial, the atavistic threat of unimpeded instinct, and the negative *telos* of bodily dissolution to earlier evolutionary forms.

Exploring the intersection of discourses relating to homosexuality, atavism and music provides a new context in which to understand the elision of music and

³⁹ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*; August Forel, *The Sexual Question: A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study for the Cultured Classes*, trans. by C. F. Mitchell (London: Rebman, 1908); Cesare Lombroso, ‘Atavism and Evolution’, *Contemporary Review*, 68 (July 1895), 42–49.

⁴⁰ Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 67–68; Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

⁴¹ H. G. Wells, ‘Preface’, in *The Works of H. G. Wells*, 28 vols (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1924–27), II: *The Island of Doctor Moreau, The Sleeper Awakes* (1924), pp. ix–xiii (p. ix), italics added. For a discussion of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in terms of evolutionary regression see Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, pp. 102–13.

⁴² See Hyde, *Trials of Oscar Wilde*, p. 232–33.

queer sexuality, both in emergent sexological discourses and more widely, as explored in chapter 1 of this thesis. Those literary texts that associate music with the atavism and the abject body speak also to the concerns of contemporary queer theory with modes of temporality that underpin the replication of normative conceptions of the social. Music, in such texts, offers not the replication of such temporal structures — the teleological drive towards futurity — but a reversal or stasis that might allow for the articulation of alternative sexual subjectivities.

The Abysmal Bottom-Growth: Robert Browning and Musical Emotion

[...] fitly weave
 March-music for the Future!

Or suppose
 Back, and not forward, transformation goes?⁴³

Robert Browning, 'Parleying with Charles Avison', ll.
 387-90

Robert Browning's 'Parleying with Charles Avison' from *Parleyings* (1887) is a text in which the pull of the musical future struggles with fears of regression. It reveals the manner in which the emotions elicited by music come to be invested with fears of queer evolutionary regression in late-Victorian culture. Much of the interest in Browning's text lies in the tension between a belief in the teleological drive of progress — embodied in the insistent forward momentum of Avison's March — and doubts about whether music is capable of articulating the values and truths of Victorian liberalism in a manner that can endure the passage of time. The ephemeral and immaterial nature of music makes it a fragile conduit to sustain one's hopes for the future. While Browning's text concludes with a jingoistic affirmation of the Enlightenment liberal and imperial values he associates with Avison's March, elsewhere he questions whether the apparently

⁴³ Robert Browning, 'Charles Avison', in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, ed. by Ian Jack and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983–), xv: *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day and Asolando*, ed. by Stefan Hawlin and Michael Meredith (2009), pp. 211–35.

eternal truths afforded by music are destined to be revealed by history as mere 'nescience absolute' (l. 342).

Critical work addressing Browning's engagement with music has often tended to focus on biographical and historical details — the music he performed or listened to, his technical knowledge of music theory, his musical education — at the expense of close attention to the ambiguities of his poetical treatment of the idea of music.⁴⁴ William DeVere reflects a critical consensus when he identifies the following tenets as central to Browning's 'philosophy of music': music is superior to other art forms in its ability to express emotional depth, and is associated with divine revelation, the miraculous and the redemptive.⁴⁵ Yet, as will be explored below, the treatment of musical emotion in 'Charles Avison' is more ambiguous than DeVere's characterisation of 'music as a miracle' would suggest.⁴⁶ In her contextualization of Browning's views on music, Penelope Gay concludes that 'Browning was indebted to nobody for his musical philosophy' — his thoughts did not, and need not be seen to, reflect a coherent external system of thought. She argues convincingly for the relevance of early nineteenth-century German Romantic conceptions of music — so embedded within the *Zeitgeist* of much Victorian thought on music — whilst admitting that it is unlikely that Browning had direct knowledge of philosophers such as Hegel or Schopenhauer.⁴⁷ However, in doing so, she too readily dismisses the relevance of contemporary English, Darwinist debates about music.

Most interesting for the purposes of this discussion is Browning's fascination with the nature of the emotions evoked by music, and the 'truths' obtainable from such emotions, which Browning articulates within a discussion of the relationship between 'Soul' and 'Mind' (ll. 137-150). The Soul is characterized, in

⁴⁴ See H. E. Greene, 'Browning's Knowledge of Music', *PMLA*, 62.4 (1947), 1095-99; W. W. Roberts, 'Music in Browning', *Music and Letters*, 17 (1936), 237-48; R. W. S. Mendl, 'Robert Browning, the Poet-Musician', *Music and Letters*, 42.2 (1961), 142-50; G. M. Ridenour, 'Browning's Music Poems: Fancy and Fact', *PMLA*, 78.4 (1963), 269-77; Rowena Fowler, 'Browning's Music: The L.L. Bloomfield Collection', *RES*, 47 (1996), 35-46; Malcolm Richardson, 'Robert Browning's Taste in Music', *Browning Institute Studies*, 6 (1978), 105-16.

⁴⁵ See William DeVere, *Browning's Parleyings: The Autobiography of a Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), pp. 264-71; William DeVere, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), pp. 519-22.

⁴⁶ DeVere, *Browning Handbook*, p. 522.

⁴⁷ Penelope Gay, 'Browning and Music', in *Robert Browning: Writers and their Backgrounds*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), pp. 211-230.

terms suggestive of fluidity and flux, as a tempestuous sea. It is from the depths of the Soul that emotions originate. The Soul is beyond the control of the Mind: it is 'what Mind may [...] not tame' (l. 159), that which 'Mind arrogates no mastery upon' (l. 164). The operation of the Soul is not transparent to the Mind: it is 'unsounded' (l. 161) and 'works beyond our guess' (l. 160). Browning sets up a further division between Feeling (that which emerges from the Soul) and Knowledge (that which is produced by the active Mind). Feelings are figured as in a constant state of delicate ephemerality: they 'rise and sink/ Ceaselessly' (ll. 188-89), they represent a 'transient flit and wink' (l. 189), they are as momentary, fleeting and intangible as a 'ripple's tinting' (l. 190) (the light catching a ripple in a stream) or a 'spume-sheet's spread/ Whitening the wave' (ll. 190-91) (the white line on the top of a wave that disappears when it reaches the shore). Feeling resists and refuses the solid permanence of Knowledge.

Music, Browning suggests, attempts to address some of the mysteries about the operation of the Soul. It promises to reveal 'what we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know' (l. 194). It seeks to 'make as manifest/ Soul's work as Mind's work' (ll. 186-87) — to explain the mysteries of the Soul in a way that makes it seem as logical and transparent as the operation of the Mind. That this attempt to pin down the flux of Feeling will ultimately prove futile is suggested by Browning's chemical metaphor: attempting to allow transient Feeling to attain the solidity of Knowledge is compared to 'run[ning] mercury into a mould like lead' (l. 192). Mercurial emotion will retain its liquid state despite momentarily assuming the form of the mould into which it has been poured. While molten lead will set solid, take away the mould from around the mercury and it will, once again, lose its semblance of permanence.

All art forms, Browning suggests, are engaged in this attempt to make transparent to the Mind (to allow us to 'know') elements of the Soul (our Feelings). Music, in this regard, is most successful — but it still ultimately 'fails of touching' (l. 199). Each art form attempts to 'stay the apparition' (l. 218) — preserve or capture the ghostly, fleeting nature of feeling. The Poet's 'word-mesh' (l. 219) and the Painter's 'Colour-and-line throw' (l. 220) have been successful in capturing something of these fleeting emotions whilst fishing in the 'Soul's sea'

(l. 178). However, their nets have retrieved little, if anything at all, of the 'nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears' (l. 223), that lie deepest in the Soul. The 'brooding' of these feelings even hints that there may be something darkly menacing about these obscure emotions. As Browning writes, while Homer and Michelangelo have, respectively, captured and made immortal the pathos of Troy and the sublimity of the Creation, they have, nevertheless, been unable to make manifest those emotions that are '[e]nwombed past Art's disclosure' (l. 224).

It is music, Browning asserts, that is best able to plumb the depths of the Soul:

Outdo

Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
 Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
 The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
 Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
 With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
 Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
 And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!

(ll. 254-241)

Browning clearly wishes to attest to the beneficent nature of Music's power of emotional articulation: it is that which the reader is asked to 'love and laud'. Yet, in other respects, the text is strikingly equivocal as to the nature of the emotion music awakens from the depths of the Soul. Compared to the delicately 'sure and swift' motion of the painter's net, music's process of 'dredging' up emotion is forceful and laborious. To dredge is to disrupt the resting seabed, to dislodge that which has become buried, to descend to slimy detritus. That these Feelings must be '*drag[ged]* into day' suggests that there is resistance to such forceful compulsion; these are not emotions that wish to be brought to the Soul's surface. Emerging 'into *day*', these emotions more naturally inhabit a dubious realm of nocturnal darkness. Alongside denotations of profound depth, the 'abysmal' evokes the moral dubiety of the infernal. In the context of the pervasive sexual paranoia of late-Victorian culture, this infernal '*bottom-growth*' intimates abject associations of the anal or the sodomitical. Stefan Hawlin and Michael Meredith

suggest that the 'abysmal bottom-growth' is to be understood as a 'branching piece of coral', yet there is surely something more unsettling about the very indeterminacy of this 'ambiguous thing'.⁴⁸

Musical emotion is evoked in Browning's text through imagery of the abject body: a grotesque sea creature, its limbs flailing, lungs throbbing and quivering as it gasps for breath. Read in evolutionary terms, this is a striking image of music's power to awaken emotions connected with the primitive past. Here, musical emotion represents some primeval ancestor, having not yet evolved into a higher form, achieving only the 'semblance' of life. Its 'ambiguous' nature suggests that this creature cannot be easily classified in any existing taxonomy — it is 'unbroken' from the 'branch' which demarcates individual species identity. Such 'dredg[ing]' of emotion evokes parallels with the primordial 'mire', 'slush' and 'slime' of Browning's most notable engagement with the implications of Darwinian natural selection, 'Caliban upon Setebos' (1864). Indeed, the grotesque terms used to characterize Caliban are similar to those used to evoke emotions awakened by music: 'a sea-beast, lumpish', a 'drudge', 'snared' and brought to the surface to be 'pen[ned]' by Prospero.⁴⁹ Even the assertion that this object is a 'Marvel and mystery, of mysteries/ And marvels' seems not to guarantee that this 'thing' is entirely pleasant or unthreatening. The faintly hyperbolic tone of the statement — attained through its chiasmic repetitiveness — is evocative less of the miraculous sublime than of something shouted by a Victorian freak-show proprietor to advertise his latest strange exhibit.

As Joseph Bristow has noted, while Browning engaged closely with evolutionary thought in a number of his works, he was generally dismissive of the implications of Darwin's theories.⁵⁰ He would nevertheless have been aware of Darwin's thoughts on music: as Hawlin and Meredith have noted, *Parleyings* is replete with references — some explicit — to Darwin's *The Descent of Man*.⁵¹ Music in Browning's work often assumes a haunting presence: in 'Charles Avison', musical

⁴⁸ Browning, 'Charles Avison', p. 223.

⁴⁹ Robert Browning, 'Caliban upon Setebos', in *Browning: Poetical Works, 1833–1864*, ed. by Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) pp. 836–44 (p. 840, l. 163; p. 836, ll. 2 and 4; p. 823, l. 280).

⁵⁰ Joseph Bristow, *Robert Browning* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 70–71.

⁵¹ See *Parleyings*, ed. Hawlin and Meredith, p. 118.

emotions are ‘ghost-like’ (l. 260), ‘dawn-doomed phantoms’ (l. 265), while in ‘A Tocatta of Galuppi’s’, the ‘cold music’ of the eighteenth-century Venetian composer echoes through time ‘like a ghostly cricket’.⁵² Evolutionary resonances in this text are best understood as similar spectral hauntings — residual traces of those Darwinian models that Browning himself would almost certainly disavow.

In Browning’s text, such are the ‘ambiguous’ psychological depths stirred by music that it risks awakening modes of evolutionary backwardness aligned in the Victorian imagination with the threat of sexual abnormality. Musical emotion is to be ‘loved’ and ‘lauded’, but it promises neither the progress towards greater empathetic connection, postulated by Spencer, nor the vision of the divine offered in Browning’s other poems on music, such as ‘Abt Vogler’. Browning’s poem concludes with the assured march forward of Victorian liberal humanism, but this momentary problematising of music’s civilizing claims attests to music’s queer power to unsettle the relentless replication of the normative future.

Pan, Music and Queerness

Here too was all the work by which man had been made repeated before my eyes. I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed [...] I watched, and at last I saw nothing but a substance as jelly. Then the ladder was ascended again... [*Here the MS. is illegible*] ...for one instance I saw a Form, shaped in dimness before me, which I will not farther describe.⁵³

Whereas Browning’s text ultimately repudiates Darwinist fears of music and the abject body, *fin-de-siècle* texts on the figure of Pan wilfully embrace associations

⁵² Robert Browning, ‘A Tocatta of Galuppi’s’, in *Browning: Poetical Works, 1833–1864*, ed. by Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) pp. 578–80 (l. 33).

⁵³ Arthur Machen, ‘The Great God Pan’, in *Late Victorian Gothic Tales*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 183–233 (pp. 228–29), hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically.

of music, sexual abnormality and bestial embodiments. The music of Pan acts upon the bodies of those who hear it to effect an often horrific reversal in evolutionary time. In Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890), Pan's daemonic influence ultimately sees evolutionary time collapse into a single moment, flowing backwards and forwards in turn, so that categories of sex and species dissolve into a primordial 'jelly'. Machen sends into reverse Ernst Haeckel's concept of recapitulatory development, in which 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' — each human foetus passes in its development through all stages of evolution from protozoa to invertebrate.⁵⁴ In Machen's book, Helen Vaughan — the offspring of her mother's impregnation by Pan — descends from the 'heights' of species development to the 'abyss' of the 'beasts'. The dissolution of her body is the physical correlative of the queer sexual anarchy she represents: she exposes a young boy to the molestations of a 'strange naked man' (193) in the woods, leaving him permanently traumatized; she engages a young girl in a 'peculiarly intimate' (194) relationship, introducing to her sexual pleasures that remain suggestively ambiguous; she precipitates a series of suicides by men in the intensely homosocial (and sexually paranoid) world of London's clubland. Machen's Pan retains his association with music, his presence marked only by a 'sort of strange singing', a 'peculiar noise' (193), and recalled by Latin inscription, noting the Bacchic '*cantus tibiae, et tinnitus cymbalorum*' ('singing of pipes and the tinkling of cymbals', 212) with which he is associated.

Before turning to examine in detail the significance of Pan's music in texts by E. F. Benson and E. M. Forster, it is useful to give some sense of the wider resonances of the Pan myth in *fin-de-siècle* literature. The place of the Pan motif in late-Victorian English literature has received increasing interest from scholars since the publication of Patricia Merivale's *Pan the Goat God* (1969).⁵⁵ While recent work by Nicholas Freeman and others has more fully acknowledged the importance of Pan in queer sub-cultures, little attention has been paid to the

⁵⁴ Ernst Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen*, 2 vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1866), cited in Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 76–77.

⁵⁵ Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

musical aspects of Pan's queerness.⁵⁶ As Merivale notes, 'an eerie piping is one of the most characteristic manifestations of Pan's power; it is found in virtually every prose fiction in which he appears.'⁵⁷ Stories on Pan draw on a long cultural tradition in which music is aligned with the threat of unleashed, unstable sensuous desire. Judith Ann Peraino rightly observes that 'the figure of Pan perhaps more than any other, manifests the queer sexual potency of music'.⁵⁸ As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, attending to the resonances of mythical figures of music at the *fin de siècle* is a useful strategy for exploring those queer aspects of musical culture that slip between the lines of more empirically historicist accounts of musical culture.

Pan's music can usefully be understood through a specifically Darwinian lens, related to a threat of pulling the listener back towards the primitive past, a dislocation of the forward movement of evolutionary development. In the context of the *fin de siècle*, stories about Pan engage particularly closely with the natural world in a post-Darwinian context. For Robert Louis Stevenson, the Pan myth provides an alternative articulation to science's 'feint explanation' for the 'troubled and uncertain element in which we dwell': 'So we come back to the old myth, and hear the goat-footed piper making the music which is itself the charm and terror of things.' Yet implicit in Stevenson's nostalgic account is an acknowledgment that nature must now inevitably be understood in Darwinist terms. The violence of the Pan myth, he suggests, articulates the brutal truth of a natural world 'where one thing preys upon another'.⁵⁹

In 'A Study of Dionysus' (1876), Walter Pater reflects on the multiplicity of meanings that attach to the figures of Pan and the Satyrs, ranging from associations with 'insolence and mockery' to 'unmeaning and ridiculous fear'.

⁵⁶ See Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); William Greenslade, "'Pan" and the Open Road', in *Outside Modernism*, ed. by L. Hapgood and N. L. Paxton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 145–61; Robert Dingley, 'Meaning Everything: The Image of Pan at the Turn of the Century', in *Twentieth Century Fantasists*, ed. by K. Filmer (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 47–59; Nicholas Freeman, "'Nothing of the Wild Wood"? Pan, Paganism and Spiritual Confusion in E. F. Benson's "The Man Who Went Too Far"', *Literature and Theology*, 19 (2005), 22–33.

⁵⁷ Merivale, *Pan*, p. 172.

⁵⁸ Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Pan's Pipes* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside, 1910), pp. 11 and 16.

More interesting, though, is a conception of Pan held only, Pater suggests, by a sensitive minority of readers:

But the best spirits have found in them also a certain human pathos, as in displaced beings, coming even nearer to most men, in their very roughness, than the noble and delicate person of the vine; dubious creatures, half-way between the animal and human kinds, speculating wistfully on their being, because not wholly understanding themselves and their place in nature.⁶⁰

Appealing specifically, in what Thaïs Morgan describes as Pater's 'aesthetic minoritizing discourse', to those 'best spirits' that constitute his homosexual readership, Pater posits the Satyrs as figures that speak with a particularly powerful sense of 'human pathos' to those 'displaced beings' whose sense of identity is painfully confused by its failure to conform to pre-existing modes of categorization.⁶¹ The figure of the Satyr resonates with the delicate sadness of the Victorian queer subject: uncertain in how to articulate their desires, marginalized in society, their very sense of being tainted by a sense of regretful longing for something out of reach. For Pater, Pan is also a temporally 'displaced' subject — like those 'Gods in Exile' explored in chapter 2 — who finds himself a revenant at odds with those modes of self-understanding offered by modernity.

Elsewhere, Pan is more explicitly associated with same-sex sexual desire. In Aleister Crowley's enraptured fantasies of animalistic pleasure, the depiction of sexual pleasure in encounters with Pan could scarcely be more overt: 'the heavy breath and the rank kisses of a faun are on my neck, and his teeth fasten in my flesh — a terrible heave flings our bodies into mid-air with the athletic passion that unites us with the utmost God.'⁶² As the introduction to his (anonymously published) erotic orientalist poem-cycle, *The Scented Garden of Abdullah, The Satirist of Shiraz* (1910), Crowley includes a paean to the pleasures of sexual passivity (attributed — clearly satirically — to the 'Reverend P. D. Carey'). Pan is transplanted from the pastoral margins of the Mediterranean to a park square in

⁶⁰ Pater, 'A Study of Dionysus', p. 755.

⁶¹ Morgan, 'Reimagining Masculinity'.

⁶² Aleister Crowley, *The Scented Garden of Abdullah, The Satirist of Shiraz* (London: Privately Printed, 1910), p. 22.

metropolitan London, where the narrator engages in an al fresco nocturnal rendezvous: 'In the hush of the sunset come noiseless hoofs treading the enamelled turf; and else I know it a fierce lithe hairy body has gripped mine, and the dead wand of magic shudders its live way into my being, so that the foundations of the soul are shaken'.⁶³

One specific source for the prevalent associations between Pan and anal sex in *fin-de-siècle* literature may be the somewhat notorious sculpture of *Pan and the Goat*, excavated at Pompeii in the 1740s, and kept in the so-called 'Secret Cabinet' in the National Museum of Naples. In the most explicit way, the sculpture shows Pan copulating with a goat. The goat lies on its back in what could be called — with some definitional violence — the missionary position, whilst it is visibly penetrated by Pan's erect penis. As Mary Beard has noted, access to the Secret Cabinet became increasingly unrestricted as the nineteenth century progressed. Knowledge of the erotic contents of the gallery was widespread throughout Europe and America from the 1830s onwards, due to the circulation of numerous catalogues and illustrated books.⁶⁴ The Secret Cabinet may have plausibly formed part of Forster's tourist trail when he visited Naples in 1902. The Baedeker travel guide gives directions to 'the RESERVED CABINET (*Raccolta Pornografica*), to which men only are admitted; it contains mural and other paintings not adapted for public exhibition'. The untranslated — and therefore all the more suggestive — phrase '*Raccolta Pornografica*' ('Pornographic Collection') was a relatively recent addition to the guide, added only in the eighth and subsequent editions from 1883.⁶⁵ It seems likely that Arthur Machen had this sculpture in mind when, at the horrific climax to *The Great God Pan*, he hints at 'a horrible and unspeakable shape' reminiscent of 'ancient sculptures [...] which survived beneath the lava, too foul to be spoken of' (229). Here, the buried physical artefact, like Browning's

⁶³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶⁴ Mary Beard, 'Dirty Little Secrets: Changing Displays of Pompeian "Erotica"', in *The Last Days of Pompeii*, ed. by Beatrice Hohenegger (Los Angeles: Getty, 2012), pp. 62–66. See also Kate Fisher and Rebecca Layland, 'The Censorship Myth and the Secret Museum', in *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today*, ed. by Shelley Hales and Joanna Paul (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 301–15.

⁶⁵ Karl Baedeker, *Italy: Handbook for Travellers, Third Part: Southern Italy, Sicily, and excursions to the Lipari Islands, Malta, Sardinia, Tunis and Athens*, 8th edn (Leipzig: Baedeker, 1883), p. 79. Compare with the 5th edn (Leipzig: Baedeker, 1875), p. 73.

‘abysmal bottom-growth’, is emblematic of those repressed sexual desires that threaten to return by bridging the gap of historical and evolutionary time.

‘The Man Who Went Too Far’

In E. F. Benson’s ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’, music’s queer backwardness relates to the manner in which it prompts a bestial return to nature, invested in the text with a simultaneous sense of pleasure and disgust.⁶⁶ Here, the music of the pipes lures the epicurean Frank towards a deadly sodomitical encounter with Pan at the story’s conclusion. At first, Frank spends his days swimming in the ‘river Fawn’ (159) and his nights sleeping in a hammock under the stars. This ‘glorious specimen of young manhood’ (160) is visited by his old friend Darcy, who is astounded to note that Frank (much like Wilde’s Dorian Gray) seems to be ageing in reverse: he is thirty-five, but looks little over twenty. Frank recounts how he has heard ‘a strange unending melody’ — ‘Pan playing on his pipes, the voice of Nature’ (164). He is initially ‘terrified’, but over the course of six months he learns to ‘put [himself] in such an attitude towards Nature that the pipes will almost inevitably sound’ (165). Frank looks forward to a ‘Final Revelation’ whereby he will receive ‘sight of Pan’ (166). Darcy is sceptical of Frank’s idealisation of nature. Indeed, when Frank flees in horror from the sound of a crying child, Darcy suggests that his understanding of nature is lacking in a crucial respect: it fails to account for the misery of nature. He suggests that Frank’s revelation will not be one of joy, but of ‘horror, suffering, death, pain in all its hideous forms’ (170). Later that night, Darcy is woken by a ‘quivering sobbing voice’ followed by a ‘little mocking, bleating laugh’ (170). In the darkness, he observes a shadowy Pan-figure jump from Frank’s hammock and make its escape. Frank lies dead and on his bare chest are ‘pointed prints’ as if ‘some monstrous goat had leaped and stamped upon him’.

The homoeroticism of Benson’s text is thinly veiled: the narrator revels in the ephebic youthful beauty of Frank’s bronzed body, paying close attention to glimpses of his naked flesh. Insistently dwelling upon the exposures afforded by rolled-up sleeves and unbuttoned shirts, Benson’s narrator evidently agrees with

⁶⁶ E. F. Benson, ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’, *Pall Mall Magazine*, 33 (June 1904), 159–71, hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically.

Roland Barthes that 'the most erotic portion of the body [is] where the garment gapes'.⁶⁷ The celebration of the sensuousness of naked male flesh is, of course, a recurrent motif of the homoerotically inflected Paganism posited by many queer writers at the *fin de siècle*. As Oscar Wilde quipped in November 1894: 'To be really medieval one should have no body. To be really modern one should have no soul. To be really Greek one should have no clothes.'⁶⁸

Here, too, as in Machen's novel, an encounter with Pan is aligned with bestial sexual pleasure. Frank's final encounter with Pan is evidently to be understood in sexual terms. At the text's conclusion, it is clear that Pan has joined Frank in the hammock where he sleeps — his 'black shadow jump[s] into the air' and makes his escape with 'frolicsome skippings' (171). The '*pointed* prints' that Pan leaves on Frank's body, having 'leaped and stamped upon' are perhaps even suggestive of sexual penetration in the impression they have left in his skin. When Benson came to re-cast this story as part of a longer novel, *The Angel of Death* (1905), the pre-meditated brutishness of 'stamped' was replaced with 'danced', reverting to a tradition in which Pan is mischievous, rather than vicious.⁶⁹ The text's opening frame narrative informs us ominously that Frank was '*done* to death' — a phrase which, in retrospect, might suggest that he was killed through the violence of sexual penetration. The threat (or allure) of sodomitical passivity lurks at the margins of the text: Frank suggests to Darcy that in order to gain sight of Pan one must be 'open, resting, receptive' (166). Elsewhere, Frank informs Darcy that he will see 'birds and beasts' behaving 'somewhat intimately' to him — though he surely never anticipates a bodily intimacy of this sort. E. M. Forster certainly seems to have recognized the sexual implications of Benson's tale. In a discussion of literary treatments of 'homosex' in his *Commonplace Book* in 1926, he notes the 'Satanic intimacy' of the 'Pan school', a literary fashion that 'peter[s] out in [Robert] Hichens and E. F. Benson'.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1975), pp. 9–10.

⁶⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated', *Saturday Review* (12 November 1894), 533–34 (p. 533).

⁶⁹ E. F. Benson, *The Angel of Death* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1906), p. 304.

⁷⁰ Forster, *Commonplace Book*, p. 18.

Frank's final encounter with Pan is presented in ambivalent terms; his exclamation of 'My God, oh, my God; oh, Christ!' (170) suggests a terrifying vision of the horrors of nature, but also the ecstatic pleasure and pain of anal penetration. Indeed, the final expressions on Frank's face suggest an experience which may have been profoundly terrifying, but nevertheless ultimately gives a sense of pleasure: as he expires the look of 'supreme terror and agony of fear' is replaced with the 'smiling curves' of his 'beautiful mouth'. Still, 'repulsion and deathly anguish' have 'ruled dreadful lines on [Frank's] smooth cheeks and forehead' (171).

Underlying Benson's tale are opposing views of the natural world. The text contrasts Frank's neo-Pagan understanding of nature — beneficent, life-affirming, vital — with Darcy's Darwinian pessimism: the natural world is driven not by some 'great native instinct to be happy', but rather by the brutal imperatives of survival and reproduction ('[f]ood, food and mating'). Darcy chides Frank for his naïveté in overlooking the fact that 'all Nature from highest to lowest is full, crammed full of suffering, every living organism in Nature preys on another' (170).

Frank's knowledge of Pan's existence is principally based upon his aural perception of the sound of Pan's pipes — his growing spiritual intimacy with Pan is reflected by their sound growing closer and closer. The sceptical Darcy is unable to hear this music at all, even when to Frank it is 'close, oh so close' (168). Frank's first encounter with Pan's music is described in a manner that is reminiscent of the music of Wagner:

Well, as I sat there, doing nothing, but just looking and listening, I heard the sound quite distinctly of some flute-like instrument playing a strange unending melody. I thought at first it was some musical yokel on the highway and did not pay much attention. But before long the strangeness and indescribable beauty of the tune struck me [...]

It never repeated itself, but it never came to an end, phrase after phrase ran its sweet course, it worked gradually and inevitably up to a climax, and having attained it, it went on; another climax was reached and

another and another. Then with a sudden gasp of wonder I localised where it came from. It came from the reeds and from the sky and from the trees. It was everywhere, it was the sound of life. It was [...], as the Greeks would have said, it was Pan playing on his pipes, the voice of Nature. It was the life-melody, the world-melody. (164)

As noted in chapter 4 of this thesis, Wagnerism was frequently associated with homosexual sub-cultures at the *fin de siècle*. Benson himself was an enthusiastic Wagnerian, whose novels often hint suggestively at such associations. In *The Book of Months* (1903), for example, the protagonist's pursuit of Pagan beauty sees him travel directly from a performance of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth to the island of Capri, a well-known homosexual resort, where he admires the 'smooth swift limbs' of some local 'young Apollo[s]'.⁷¹ Here, the music of Pan — like Wagner's notorious '*Unendliche Melodie*' — is an 'unending melody', its wave upon wave of ecstatic climaxes suggestive of those rising musical sequences that became something of a cliché of Wagner's musical style following *Tristan und Isolde*. Yet if this music invokes Wagner's, it does so in a way that aligns it with discourses of evolutionary retrogression. Edmund Gurney, for example, in terms strikingly similar to those of Browning, characterizes Wagner as 'throw[ing] himself fearlessly into the sea of music': 'sinking, finds himself naturally in the variegated home of invertebrate strains, things with no shape to be squeezed out of, no rhythmic ribs to be broken, tossed hither and thither, as hard to grasp as jelly-fish, as nerveless as strings of seaweed.'⁷² In Benson's text, Pan's quasi-Wagnerian 'unending' music stretches backwards and forwards across evolutionary time, bringing with it a threat of bestial sexual awakening associated with the stirring of primitive, abject desires.

Frank gains access to a music which has always been playing, though until now unheard — the *cantus firmus* of natural history. While he is initially 'terrified with the infinite horror of a nightmare' (164) by this music, he later actively seeks it out as a source of 'the full knowledge, the full realisation and comprehension that I am one...with life' (166). A key aspect of Frank's character, though, is his failure

⁷¹ E. F. Benson, *The Book of Months* (London: Heinemann, 1903), pp. 205–06.

⁷² Edmund Gurney, 'Wagner and Wagnerism', in *Tertium Quid: Chapters on Various Disputed Questions*, 2 vols (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, 1887), II, 1–46 (p. 19).

to recognize the suffering inherent in nature — Darcy chides him for ‘leaving [it] out altogether’ from his philosophical outlook, ‘you run away from it, you refuse to recognize it’ (170). That his ultimate encounter with Pan prompts a scream of ‘supreme and despairing horror’ might suggest that Frank has been naïvely *mishearing* the nature of Pan’s music — and that its message is altogether a much bleaker one than he initially realized. Pan’s music also works simultaneously as a source of *seduction* — it leads Frank towards what is a profoundly ambiguous sexual encounter with Pan at the story’s conclusion. It is this music that first prompts his desire to ‘know Pan’, and he is continuously drawn back to the ‘meadow where the Pan pipes sounded’ (169) with the zeal of an addict. This Wagnerian music seductively promises ‘knowledge’, ‘realisation’ and ‘comprehension’ (170). Ultimately, the essence of nature that it reveals collapses the distinction between man and animal, prompting an experience of queer sexual pleasure aligned in the text with abject evolutionary backwardness.

Pan’s Masturbatory Music: ‘The Story of a Panic’

E. M. Forster’s ‘The Story of a Panic’ similarly aligns a musical encounter with Pan with a queer subversion of the logic of evolutionary development.⁷³ In Forster’s story, a group of tourists travelling in Southern Italy go on a day trip to the countryside. The cast is familiar within the Forsterian corpus: a morally prudish narrator, an affected artist, a curate, two fussy maiden aunts and their fourteen-year-old nephew Eustace, described by the narrator as ‘conceited and arrogant’, ‘indescribably repellent’ (1). Whilst exploring the scenery, they have a picnic, observe the beauty of their surroundings and discuss whether ‘the great God Pan is dead’ (7). Suddenly the group become panic-stricken — the narrator reflects that he was ‘more frightened than he ever wish[es] to become again’ — and all, except for Eustace, flee from the hillside in terror. Regaining their composure, they return to the spot to find Eustace ‘lying motionless on his back’, though he is soon roused and seemingly unaffected. Next to him on the ground are a ‘goat’s footmarks in the moist earth’ (15). Upon returning to their hotel, the narrator is struck by Eustace’s newfound energy and enthusiasm. But he soon becomes

⁷³ E. M. Forster, ‘The Story of a Panic’, in *The Celestial Omnibus, and Other Stories* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1911), pp. 1–42, hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically.

irritated by his 'promiscuous intimacy' with Gennaro, an 'impertinent fisher-lad' who works as a 'stop-gap waiter' at their hotel (19). The narrator awakens later that night to see Eustace running wild in the garden, 'saluting, praising, and blessing the great forces and manifestations of Nature' (29). Gennaro is summoned to capture the rampant schoolboy, and is eventually persuaded to betray his friend. His concerned aunts attempt to lock Eustace in his room, but both he and Gennaro escape by jumping out a window. Eustace escapes over the garden wall but Gennaro collapses on the asphalt path by the hotel — 'something had gone wrong inside him, and he was dead' (41).

Eustace invokes the spirit of Pan by blowing on a whistle that he has carved from a piece of wood. Clearly, the whistle is meant to be understood as equivalent to Pan's pipes; Eustace's act of hewing it into shape has obvious, if not exact, parallels with Pan's construction of his pipes in Ovid's account of the Pan and Syrinx myth in *Metamorphoses*.⁷⁴ In the context of the sexual awakening that follows, Eustace's construction of a whistle can be read as an act of phallic empowerment. Here, unlike in other accounts of encounters with Pan, it is not Pan's music which unleashes queer sexual excess, but rather a wilful act of musical self-assertion that allows apparently primeval desires to re-surface. The music Eustace produces is neither seductive nor sensuous — it is brutal, forceful and crude. The narrator describes it as 'excruciating', 'ear-splitting' and 'discordant', and quite unlike anything he has heard before. Although the narrator subsequently rejects the 'superstitious' interpretation that Eustace's music unleashes the 'panic' that descends on the group, such an interpretation is nonetheless invited by the sequence of his narrative. Certainly, one member of the party, Leyland, takes this view, and proceeds to cut Eustace's whistle in two in an attempt to frustrate its disturbing power.

As has been explored elsewhere in this thesis, music frequently functions in Forster's texts to awaken aspects of intense emotional experience that might otherwise remain unarticulated or obscured to its listeners or performers: hearing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in *Howards End* affords to Helen Schlegel an

⁷⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, p. 57.

epiphany of the apparent 'panic and emptiness' of modernity; for Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View*, playing Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32, Op. 111 allows for an expanded sense of the self-affirming possibilities of desire; in *Maurice*, queer desire finds tentative expression through a pianola recording of the March from Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony. Here, the agency of music is equally powerful, though more ambivalent: Eustace's spontaneous musical noise prompts the backwards turn of evolutionary progress, towards an awakening of quasi-primitive sexual desire which is intensely pleasurable but also oddly unsettling.

Forster was confused when his short story was interpreted by his queer Cambridge contemporaries as a parable of homosexual initiation. Charles Sayle, a librarian at Cambridge and author of pederastic poetry summarized the story to John Maynard Keynes in the following manner: 'B[ugged] by a waiter at the hotel, Eustace commits bestiality with a goat in the valley where I had sat. In the subsequent chapters, he tells the waiter how nice it has been and they try to b[ugger] each other.'⁷⁵ There is little in the text itself to support such an explicit reading, except perhaps the fact that, after his first encounter with Pan, 'Eustace walked with difficulty, almost with pain'. But Sayle's interpretation is based less on any internal textual evidence than on the more general associations between Pan and anal sex circulating in homosexual subcultures at that time — a tradition of which the sexually naïve Forster may not, at least at the time of writing, have been aware. Nevertheless, the text's intense portrayal of emotional, if not explicitly sexual, intimacy between Eustace and Gennaro make it, as Joseph Bristow has argued, 'as richly homoerotic as any of [Forster's] fictions'.⁷⁶

Much of the interest of the text arises from the strategies in which Forster's priggish, morally censorious narrator — Mr. Tytler — attempts to deny or obscure the sexual implications of the events he observes. As his narrative progresses, his apparent fascination with the sexual becomes increasingly

⁷⁵ Cited in E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey*, ed. by Elizabeth Heine (London: Arnold, 1984), pp. 302–03.

⁷⁶ Joseph Bristow, 'Fratrum Societati: Forster's Apostolic Dedications', in *Queer Forster*, ed. by Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 113–35 (p. 118).

evident. Yet it is masturbation, rather than ‘buggery’, that emerges as his principal obsession. In late nineteenth-century England, masturbation was one of the many sexual activities associated with dominant discourses of degeneracy, pathology and abnormality; it was the subject of an intense moral crusade on the part of late nineteenth-century campaigners for social purity.⁷⁷ Forster himself appears to have absorbed such clinical notions; an early draft of *Maurice* included references to masturbation as ‘degraded’ and ‘fatigu[ing]’.⁷⁸ The connection that Forster draws between the figure of Pan and masturbation has its origins in a common Classical myth, in which Pan first taught the shepherds — who had little else to entertain themselves on the solitary hillside — to masturbate.⁷⁹

Thus when Mrs. Tytler — the narrator’s equally priggish wife — begins to chide Eustace for his apparent laziness with Isaac Walton’s warning that ‘Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do’ (14), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the adolescent Eustace’s encounter with Pan may have instigated some mischief of a masturbatory kind. The narrator notes repeatedly that Eustace has ‘lain on his back’ (13 and 15) — a resting position that Victorian treatises on the dangers of masturbation warn against for its propensity to encourage the sin of self-abuse.⁸⁰

Imagery of moving hands and fingers, typically imbued with a sense of the threatening or disgusting, betray the narrator’s fascination with masturbatory pleasure. The ‘valley and ravines’ of the Italian landscape in which the ‘panic’ occurs has the ‘general appearance [...] of a many fingered green hand, palm upwards, which was clutching, convulsively to keep us in its grasp’ (3). The motif of this ‘convulsive’ grasp occurs later in the narrator’s account, where Eustace is observed to have ‘convulsively entwined [his hand] in the long grass’ (13) — an indication that the boy has achieved some morally suspect, if unspecified,

⁷⁷ See Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003); William A. Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

⁷⁸ See Jeffrey Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature: 1890–1930* (London: Athlone, 1977), p. 104.

⁷⁹ See for example Diogenes, *Sayings and Anecdotes: With Other Popular Moralists*, ed. and trans. by Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 254, n. 646; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 140.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, p. 288.

intimacy with world of nature. In both cases, it is the hands and fingers that are peculiarly guilty of a 'convulsive' movement, associated with both agitation and lack of self-control.

Elsewhere in the story, hand movements are characterized by words with masturbatory connotations. Gennaro, in his final betrayal of Eustace's confidence, for example 'stuck his hand out with a *jerk*' (35). As Albert Barrère and Charles Godfrey Leland's *Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant* (1889) attests, 'jerking' was already a slang term for masturbation in Forster's youth.⁸¹ Gennaro's hand movements are a particular source of discomfort for the narrator: 'He came close up to me with horrid gesticulating fingers' (25). For Forster's casually xenophobic narrator, such exuberant manual gesticulation — an Italian cultural stereotype — is another distasteful example of uncouth Italian manners. But once again the disgust invested in this hand movement is connected with an echo suggestive of ejaculatory sexual pleasure: '*he came* close up to me' (25). Such is the pattern of masturbatory imagery in the narrator's account that even his rather mundane observation about Eustace withdrawing to 'loosen the bark from his whistle' (5) begins to accrue sexual connotations.

In the narrator's sexually paranoid account, the repeated rhythmic patterns of natural sound or bodily movements become evocative of the rhythms of overheard masturbation or sexual congress. Before the 'panic' sets in, the narrator notes the distant sound of 'two boughs of a great chestnut *grinding together*'. These 'grinds grew shorter and shorter, and finally [the] sound stopped'. Looking over the 'green fingers of the valley', he observes that the trees have resolved into a post-coital calm, 'absolutely motionless and still' (8).

Eustace's increasingly erratic behaviour is characterized by the rhythmic sound of him 'pattering up and down the asphalt' (26) — apparently the sound of his feet as he darts excitedly around the grounds of the hotel. The narrator only ever hears distant aural traces of the boy's movements, rather than catching clear sight of him. As such, the unknown source of these 'ghostly patterings' (27) becomes enveloped within the narrator's pervading sexual paranoia. Gennaro

⁸¹ Albert Barrère and Charles Godfrey Leland, *Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1889), p. 497.

‘patters off’ through the darkness towards the ‘pattering’ Eustace, and only after he has emitted ‘absurd cries of pleasure’ (34) — surely suggestive of the ejaculatory or orgasmic — does ‘the pattering cease’. ‘Pattering’ as a term suggestive of masturbation — particularly in the case of Forster’s censorious narrator — is perhaps no more absurd than the ‘sharing’ that euphemistically describes physical expressions of same-sex desire in Forster’s *Maurice*.⁸² A similar suspicion regarding the regular rhythmic pulse of the masturbatory might attach to the ‘faint but steady stound’ (38) that the narrator overhears emanating from Eustace’s bedroom. Here, the rhythm of masturbation becomes its own form of Pan-inspired musical performance.

As in ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’, Eustace’s queer sexual awakening, and his associated neo-Pagan urge to commune with nature, are presented by the narrator as a reversion towards the bestial. His energetic bodily movements are likened to those of dogs, goats and moths, and he seeks the fellowship of a ‘poor dazed hare’ (20), which sits terrified on his arm. He utters unsettling cries that the narrator ‘should not have thought the human voice could have produced’ (40). The narrator himself admits to similar fears of regression when he acknowledges that, in his moment of panic, he had ‘been afraid, not as a man, but as a beast’ (10). As Eustace reaches the heights of his ecstatic reverie, the linear logic of evolutionary progress is subverted by moments in which the narrator perceives Eustace to flicker between different stages of evolutionary development:

There [...] was something white. I was too much alarmed to see clearly; and in the uncertain light of the stars the thing took all manner of curious shapes. Now it was a great dog, now an enormous white bat, now a mass of quickly travelling cloud. It would bounce like a ball, or take short flights like a bird, or glide slowly; like a wraith. [...] And at last the obvious explanation forced itself upon my disordered mind; and I realized that

⁸² Forster, *Maurice*, p. 216.

Eustace had got out of bed, and that we were in for something more. (26-27)

Evolutionary time accelerates backwards here, so that Eustace is transformed — in the narrator's 'disordered' perception of events — over a short course of time from a human into an intangible 'cloud'. Much as in Machen's tale, his metamorphosis represents a descent away from clear species identity (the human, the canine), to an 'enormous white bat' — a creature that confuses a systematic division of the mammalian and avian, and finally to an ephemeral, transparent 'wraith'.⁸³ Here, the confused flux of evolutionary time finds an equivalent in the frenetic, apparently random, variation in physical movement through space: bouncing, flying, gliding.

Pan's musical impact on Eustace is likewise portrayed through a moment of evolutionary flux. Eustace ecstatically sings 'anything that came into his head [...] five-finger exercises, scales, hymn tunes, scraps of Wagner' (28). In doing so, he flits at random between musical forms representative of increasing levels of complexity. The trajectory of music history was commonly understood by Victorian music theorists through the prism of evolutionary theory.⁸⁴ The composer C. Hubert H. Parry took the opposing view to that of Edmund Gurney cited above: the music of Wagner, he suggested, stood at the apogee of music's evolutionary development.⁸⁵ Eustace darts from monodic practice exercises and scales of childhood piano lessons, to homophonic hymn tunes, to the apparent evolutionary pinnacle of the Western art music tradition in 'scraps of Wagner'. His fevered oscillation between musical forms serves to collapse the distinction between them in terms not only of musical complexity but also moral propriety. Forster draws upon prevalent associations of Wagner's music with erotic

⁸³ Forster later acknowledged indirect influence of Machen's text in a radio broadcast in 1943: 'even when one had not read Machen, his influence was in the air', see E. M. Forster, 'Some Books: Machen, Graves and Others', in *The Creator as Critic and Other Writings*, ed. by Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), pp. 267–70 (p. 268)

⁸⁴ Zon, *Music and Metaphor*, pp. 116–74.

⁸⁵ C. Hubert H. Parry, *Studies of Great Composers* (London: Routledge, 1887), p. 323. For Wagner and evolutionary metaphors in Victorian thought see also: Bennett Zon, 'From Great Man to Fittest Survivor: Reputation, Recapitulation and Survival in Victorian Concepts of Wagner's Genius', *Musicae Scientiæ*, 13.2, supplementary issue (2009), 415–45.

licentiousness: it is the music of awakened sexuality. Yet even the ostensibly innocent 'five-finger exercises' here also attain sexual associations, another example of the narrator's *idée fixe* of masturbatory hands and fingers.

Pan's music elicits, then, forms of sexual pleasure — the masturbatory, the sodomitical — that are not only aligned with the subversion of progressive linear evolutionary development but, in their sterility and non-reproductive capacity, also refuse those reproductive imperatives which, as queer theorists such as Lee Edelman have suggested, underpin the heteronormative replication of the social. In responding to Darwin's theories of music's origins, such queer texts present music not as the horizon of futurity, but as a temporal drag that acts to pull subjects back in evolutionary time. The queerness of such texts lies in the challenge they present to music's grand humanistic claims as an exalted site of liberal self-cultivation. In these texts, the music of Pan performs its anti-humanist provocation upon the material body, acting upon it to collapse the distinction between aesthetic and sexual pleasure, the human and the animal.

CONCLUSION

In drawing attention to the queer significance of the body in *fin-de-siècle* representations of music, this thesis has offered new ways of thinking about how music challenges foundational accounts of identity written on the body, how the embodied experience of musical performance brings queer subjects into closer contact, how music acts to position queer bodies in time, and how music engages fantasies of disembodiment. This conclusion acts to draw together these important contributions, before articulating their significance to other areas of scholarly debate in queer musicology, music and literature studies and *fin-de-siècle* studies more broadly.

The material body is central to debates about the significance of music both in *fin-de-siècle* sexological treatises and writings on musical aesthetics. The 'nervous' bodies of homosexual subjects account not just for the prevalence of their musical enthusiasms, but also for their preference for overtly emotional musical styles, as well as their tendency to dwell on their own subjective emotional experience when listening to music. The alignment of such embodied emotionalism with sexual deviance has implications for debates in musical aesthetics, where the formalism of Vernon Lee and Edmund Gurney can be understood as an attempt to negotiate concerns about the place of shameful or unwanted sexual desires experienced in the act of listening to music.

In texts by Walter Pater, Vernon Lee and Arthur Symons, the material body is presented as the site at which subjectivity is made and unmade. In such works, music is afforded a masochistic agency that sees it entangled with psychic fantasies of self-loss and self-dispersal. In Arthur Symons's work, forms of musical performance that eschew the materiality of the body are set up in opposition to a subjective musical emotionalism marked as sexually deviant. The queerness of these texts is two-fold. Firstly, in the way in which they present music's anti-humanist challenge to foundational accounts of identity. Secondly, in their reflection of the experiences of queer subjects who, at a moment of historical transition in understandings of human sexuality, recruit musical experience to resist the inscription of 'homosexual' identity upon their material bodies.

Alternative perspectives on bodily materiality, music and queer desire emerge by having regard to the significance of the voice of the chorister in *fin-de-siècle* literature and culture. An examination of Victorian vocal treatises shows that the voice of chorister was never solely the natural product of the child's body. The purity of the voice, itself inseparable from Victorian ideals of childhood innocence, was produced deliberately through a range of training techniques designed to create the impression of the voice as naturally disembodied. Such disembodied vocal innocence becomes a prevalent object of sexual desire in *fin-de-siècle* pederastic literature. By negotiating the paradox of the material bodily origins of voices that are consistently figured as ethereal and unearthly, it becomes possible to consider more carefully the approach of queer writers towards the idealisation of their sexual desires in the aesthetic encounter.

The embodied reality of musical production is most evident in those texts that draw attention to tactile interactions between musicians and musical instruments. By foregrounding the significance of tactile experience in texts such as Richard Marsh's 'The Violin', E. M. Forster's 'Dr Woolacott' and the anonymously published *Teleny*, one can chart the ways in which queer tactile intimacy is rendered mobile through musical performance, bringing queer bodies into closer contact. Such texts present the boundaries of the desiring body as porous, as desires flow into objects and through space. In texts such as Forster's *A Room with a View* and Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, the embodied physical experience of musical performance is central to the assertion of coherent desiring subjectivities. Bodies also act to leave their tactile imprint in the materiality of the musical archive, facilitating queer community formation underpinned by a sense of trans-historical tactile contact.

Music in queer *fin-de-siècle* literature also acts to disrupt the way in which the body inhabits evolutionary time. An examination of the ways in which literature on Pan — a recurrent figure of music's queer sexual potency — is entangled with Darwinian theories of the origins of music allows for alternative perspectives on music, desire and the body to emerge. Such texts repeatedly present moments of evolutionary flux, in which the music of Pan prompts the body to degenerate to

earlier, bestial evolutionary forms. In doing so, music acts to call into question those modes of embodiment that claim to divide the human from the animal.

This thesis also offers important new insights to a variety of other scholarly debates. By drawing upon the ‘anti-social’ provocations of contemporary queer theory, it has moved debates in queer musicology beyond their broad focus on the ways in which music acts to affirm positive homosexual identities, to side-step the restrictions of the closet, or to afford a utopian space for the exploration of gender fluidity. It has suggested ways in which music is often recruited to psychic fantasies of masochistic self-divestiture, particularly by those queer subjects who wish to resist the discursive construction of an essentialist ‘homosexual’ subject. By drawing attention to modes of queer musical consumption — such as pederastic listening — that are often unsettling and disturbing, such work challenges historians of queer musical experience to look beyond narratives that focus only on heroic queer self-assertion and emancipation. In gesturing to those ways in which marginalized subjects experience music in terms of shame, embarrassment and loss, this thesis prompts further enquiry into a broader range of embodied affective responses to music.

This is the first study to consider in detail the queer sexual politics of debates in musical aesthetics in Victorian England. It calls for a more flexible and creative inquiry into the ideologies that underpin certain aesthetic philosophies, and suggests ways in which aesthetic commitments should be understood as entangled with — rather than insulated from — individual desires and attachments. By examining in detail the musical experiences of John Addington Symonds, for example, it becomes possible to understand his interest in Hegelian musical aesthetics as part of a broader commitment to musical experience as a mode of queer self-fashioning. In a similar way, the formalism of Edmund Gurney and Vernon Lee implicitly responds to and is in dialogue with late-Victorian discourses that align subjective emotionalism in music with sexual deviance.

In its examination of the often-unsettling significance of the chorister’s voice in *fin-de-siècle* literary texts, this study contributes important new perspectives not just to studies in music and literature, but also to studies of Victorian childhood

and studies of Victorian religious culture. It challenges queer scholars to reassess assumptions about the ways in which the singing voice is conceived as a site at which queer subjectivities come into being, calling for a more sensitive consideration of the dynamics of power, hierarchy and status at play in the desiring musical encounter.

This thesis also represents the first sustained examination of the significance of tactile experience in studies of *fin-de-siècle* musical culture. By drawing attention to the variety of ways in which tactile sensory perception is recruited to experiences of music such work presents a more phenomenologically rich account of the embodied nature of musical listening and performance. It emphasizes, in particular, the important role that tactile sensation plays in the construction of embodied subjectivities for those marginalized queer subjects whose experience of touch is often depleted. Renewed attention to the ways in which musical technologies — the piano, the violin, the manuscript score — modify and activate the sensory experience of touch also opens up new perspectives on how queer subjects come to understand their material bodies as ‘oriented’ both spatially and historically.

In addition to contributing to broad theoretical debates in queer musicology, this thesis has also suggested new approaches to thinking about the queerness of a number of important *fin-de-siècle* writers. In reading texts by writers such as Walter Pater and Vernon Lee in the light of such ‘anti-social’ queer theory, this thesis has suggested alternative ways to think about how these authors engage with ideas of sexual dissidence. Attending more closely to moments of violence in Pater’s works allows for a more complex view of Pater’s queerness to emerge. Pater’s texts present a more challenging idea of queer subjectivity than one that simply protests against the oppression of homosexual martyrs. Rather, his subjects are often masochistically invested in their own destruction. In similar terms, the role of the aesthetic in Pater’s works is not solely to facilitate the individual self-development of fulfilled liberal subjects. A more nuanced view must account also for the association of the aesthetic — particularly music — with an anti-humanist impulse towards psychic self-destruction and ascetic self-divestiture. Likewise, queer readings of Vernon Lee’s works might have closer

regard to those moments where her texts refuse to embrace queer solidarity or a communitarian impulse. The radical queerness of such texts lies not in the manner in which they express covert protest against homosexual oppression but in how they call into question foundational accounts of embodied identity.

This thesis has also suggested new ways of thinking about the significance of music in the works of E. M. Forster. Foregrounding the significance of the body in Forster's texts shifts critical focus away from debates about the historical reception of Wagner, Beethoven or Tchaikovsky and allows instead for a renewed attention to Forster's precise textual mediation of embodied musical experience. The discussion has also contributed significant new readings of works by more neglected writers, such as E. F. Benson, Richard Marsh and Arthur Symons. In doing so, it aims to diversify the genres of fictional texts that have formed the basis of *fin-de-siècle* studies of music and literature, purposefully emphasising texts that sit in awkward relation to realism.

The methodological approach of this thesis also presents a new departure in queer studies of music and literature. It has not attempted to offer a systematic cultural history of how *fin-de-siècle* homosexual subjects listened to music or to demarcate a canon of music that was associated with homosexuality at the *fin de siècle*. Indeed, it has (generally) avoided speculating about the sexual identities or self-conceptions of those authors whose writings it has examined. Rather it has focussed on the forms of queer agency that music is afforded in literary texts: to challenge essentialist identities, or to facilitate re-conceptions of embodied subjectivity, or to present alternative conceptions of occupying a sense of space and time. This discussion has maintained a dual focus by oscillating between specific case studies — the performance of Chopin's piano music, the voice of the chorister — and more abstract views on music offered by *fin-de-siècle* reformulations of myths of Dionysus, Marsyas and Pan. Such an approach allows a variety of both complementary and opposing perspectives to emerge, wilfully embracing the heterogeneous messiness that must underlie critical attempts to think seriously about queerness. It presents a provocation to music and literature studies to consider more carefully how to account for those aspects of historical musical experience that often leave little trace in the conventional archive:

ephemeral bodily gestures; negative emotional responses; problematic musical pleasures; transient structures of feeling.

No study can ever claim to encompass the full range of embodied experiences that render music a particularly rich site for the emergence of queer subjectivities. However, this thesis suggests that detailed investigations of the representation of music in *fin-de-siècle* literature can provide productive new ways of thinking about the significant place of embodied experience in both queer musical culture and in our relationship with music more broadly.

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