

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.

Sexological writings insistently draw a correlation between 'musicality' and homosexuality. If a number of theories are examined for this link, 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. Debates in nineteenth-century musical aesthetics similarly pivot on the significance of emotion. Setting 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, reveals the underlying queer sexual politics of such debates, granting new perspectives on the embodied significance of music for queer subjects. Shifting our scholarly perspective on these apparently abstract aesthetic debates alerts us to the fact that music in the late nineteenth century not only functions to affirm queer subjectivities, but may also be experienced with the affective force of shame or embarrassment.

Music 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 they examine. Indeed, ever since a concept of the 'homosexual' subject emerged, it has been associated in some sense with musicality. Following Michel Foucault, critical studies of modern sexuality have typically taken the development of sexology as their starting point.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 invention 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.

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. Sexological accounts are almost unanimous in identifying the prevalence of 'artistic' types among their case studies of homosexuality. In Havelock Ellis 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 In the third edition of 1915, for example, he notes that it 'has been extravagantly said that all musicians are inverts', referring to a variety of estimates from European sexologists such as Paolo Celesia (60 per cent) and Magnus Hirschfeld (98 per cent).⁶ This section examines the significance of music in sexological treatises by Edward Prime-Stevenson, John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis, Marc-André Raffalovich and Edward Carpenter. 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 presentation of embodied forms of musical emotionalism found in late Victorian sexological accounts of homosexuality is deeply entangled with the literary subcultures on which this study focusses. 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. The literary texts examined in *Music and the Queer Body* are in conversation with, respond to and challenge the assumptions of musical queerness presented in these sexological works. A brief biographical sketch gives a sense of just how closely interwoven in this period were the networks of sexologists and literary writers (not to mention the significant place of those who might easily fall into both groups). Marc-André Raffalovich, for example, author of *Uranism and Unisexuality* (1896), made the acquaintance during his years studying at Oxford of, among others, Henry James, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symons.⁸ Through Symons, 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 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 Symons 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 the philosopher Henry Sidgwick and therefore indirectly acquainted with Symonds, who was one of Sidgwick's closest friends.¹³ His brother Arthur Benson – among other things, the biographer of Walter Pater – read Horatio Forbes Brown's censored version of 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 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

Of *fin-de-siècle* writers on homosexual identity, Edward Prime-Stevenson has perhaps the most to say about music and embodied emotional experience. 'Show me a musician and show me a homosexual', he asserts in *The Intersexes* (1908), his compendious defence of same-sex love between men.²¹ 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.²² 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.²³ In Prime-Stevenson's imaginative elaboration, Iopas becomes representative of a homosexual musical type that has, he suggests, 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 modernities. It is quite probable that those muscular chieftains, Iarbas and Bitias, often stared in great contempt at you.²⁴

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.²⁵ Prime-Stevenson’s project is underpinned by the desire for transhistorical 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, refined emotions, a mortal quick to feel the joys, sorrows, loves, hates, fears longings, swifter and deeper than most other human creatures’.²⁶ 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.²⁷

For sexological writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is such ‘nervous’ emotionality of the male homosexual’s body that also 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’.²⁸ Magnus Hirschfeld likewise suggests a particular homosexual preference for Wagnerian music.²⁹ 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’.³⁰

Most notable about Prime-Stevenson’s account is the insight it gives into the interpretative listening strategies used by male homosexual listeners at the *fin de siècle*, who discover 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 listeners to 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’.³¹ 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’.³² More surprisingly, even Brahms and Bruckner were viewed by some listeners, Prime-Stevenson observes, as ‘the ultimate voices in a homosexual message by symphonic music’ (though he concedes that this voice was only ‘sub-consciously uttered’).³³

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’.³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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.³⁷ When Des Grieux first hears Teleny perform, he plays a 'tsardas' on the piano, 'a wild Hungarian rhapsody by an unknown composer with a crackjaw name'.³⁸ In terms similar to those of Prime-Stevenson, the narrator of *Teleny* emphasizes the embodied material force of this music. Des Grieux 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 enthral 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'.³⁹ The Hungarian 'tsardas' (more usually spelt *csardas* or *czardas*) was widely associated with the exoticism of gypsies in nineteenth-century culture.⁴⁰ 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'.⁴¹

Similarly, in Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds's *Sexual Inversion*, a preference for music is always implicitly about the materiality of the body, where pathologized experiences of desire are grounded in the malfunction of the nerves that manifests itself more generally in social behaviours. 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', while being 'fond of music, pictures and poetry'.⁴² 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'.⁴³ 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'.⁴⁴ Music is 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.⁴⁵ 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'.⁴⁶ The Urning possesses a 'delicate and subtle sympathy with every wave and phase of feeling', which makes him particularly successful as an artist.⁴⁷ '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'.⁴⁸ 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' among male homosexual subjects typically locate its origins in the somatic 'nervous' sensitivity of the queer listener's body. Ellis engages at length with this question in the third edition of *Sexual Inversion*. While he 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 the 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'.⁴⁹ 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 disposition. It follows, Ellis concludes, that a disposition to be musical and a disposition to homosexuality share a common source.⁵⁰ 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 than others 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.⁵¹

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 make him peculiarly vulnerable to abnormal sexual feelings.⁵²

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’.⁵³ Given the prevalence of musical literacy in these countries, it is not surprising, he suggests, that so many of the subjects of sexologist’s case studies report an interest in music.

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

The association between music, male homosexuality and the emotionally receptive body insistently drawn in sexological texts is best understood as co-extensive with wider late nineteenth-century discourses addressing the relationship between music, masculinity and effeminacy. There is a striking absence in sexological accounts of any discussion of female homosexuality and music: while these texts have a great deal to say about lesbianism *in general*, there is scarcely any speculation about the musical tastes or proficiencies of queer women.⁵⁴ Rather, the focus is consistently on the apparent effeminacy of male homosexual musicians.

As David Halperin's influential account has suggested, ideas of effeminacy became central to articulations of the concept of male homosexuality that first appeared around the closing decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Thus 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 late Victorian culture are suggestive of same-sex desire. Before the watershed of the Wilde trials in 1895, Sinfield suggests, effeminacy in England was principally associated not with same-sex desire, but with a deviously 'unmanly' attempt to seduce women.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ Nineteenth-century physiological sciences typically presented woman's bodies as peculiarly vulnerable to musical over-stimulation.⁵⁸ But 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'.⁵⁹ In Victorian England, hegemonic 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.⁶⁰ 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'.⁶¹ 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 mid-Victorian years witnessed a rise in 'masculine domesticity', this was co-extensive with growing anxieties about masculine vulnerability.⁶² According to a study

of G. A. Henty's work published in 1907, for example, this author's 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'.⁶³ 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 debates at the *fin de siècle* about music, effeminacy and emotion can be well illustrated with reference to an episode of intense discussion that took place in the musical 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'.⁶⁴ 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, the author suggests, that people actively avoid association with musicians: their 'feeling[s] amount to a positive repugnance and resentment'. But such associations, he asserts, are unfounded: effeminacy is not an 'essential characteristic of all musicians' but rather 'only the accidental characteristic of some'. In fact, '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 on 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.⁶⁵ By way of example, the author proceeds to provide a list of wholly *unrepresentative* 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.⁶⁶

The author associates musical effeminacy with the 'drawing-room' culture of intimate salon musical performance.⁶⁷ Conscious emotional manipulateness, indulgent virtuosity and sentimentality: all mark out the effeminacy of the musician's style of performance here. But the target of the author's wrath is less these performers than the audiences they attract. Interestingly, these musical 'pests of the drawing room' act to manipulate the 'heart-strings of gullible women' while 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 conceptualizations in which, as Sinfield has shown, effeminacy was primarily associated with devious male attempts to seduce women.⁶⁸ At the same time, it gestures towards an emergent sense of an effeminate homosocial subculture in terms that invoke familiar *fin-de-siècle* homophobic tropes. The paranoid fear of 'contact' with these queer bodies 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.⁶⁹ By 1889, 'pallid' was practically a shorthand 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'.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ The masculinity of the '*tenorino*' is rendered compromised not just by his high voice, but also by his status as a 'mannikin' (a 'little man'). He is both a warbling songbird and a *mannequin*: an emblem of the hollowness and superficiality of the Decadent aesthete, who, like a shop dummy, may 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?'⁷² Curiously, in doing so, he implicitly reasserts the conventional masculinity of three notable models of intense 'romantic 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; while Wilde cited the 'great affection' of David and Jonathan in his second trial.⁷³

The responses prompted by 'Manliness in Music' from a number of correspondents to *The Musical Times* and other periodicals were characteristic in their focus on the relationship between music, emotional reserve and the preservation of nervous energy. 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.⁷⁴ 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 counteract 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.⁷⁵

The danger of music, he suggests, lies in how it moves the listener between states 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 male 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’. Such listeners 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’.⁷⁶ 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 in musical aesthetics at the *fin de siècle* as to how and whether music can express emotions were just as fraught with concerns about same-sex desire as the sexological works that literary writers 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 writer now best known 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, while also affording an opportunity to consider the place of desire and identity in the listening experiences of Victorian queer subjects more broadly. 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. Insistence 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.

While John Addington Symonds is now a familiar figure in the history of sexuality, it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to fully recognize Vernon Lee's significance in English aestheticism, psychological aesthetics and queer literary history.⁷⁷ Lee came to prominence over the course of the 1880s, firstly as an author of aesthetic essays written under the influence of Walter Pater, and latterly for her work in a startling variety of genres, from Decadent fiction (published in *The Yellow Book*) to travel writing to technical treatises on aesthetics.⁷⁸ Lee's life was notable for her intense and fraught emotional relationships with other women, including the poet A. Mary F. Robinson and her collaborator in empirical aesthetics, Clementina Anstruther-Thomson. Her apparently masculine style of dress, and occasionally aggressive mode of intellectual interaction with interlocutors, led many of her contemporaries (including Symonds) to identify her as a lesbian.⁷⁹

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.⁸⁰ 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 its 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 Scala Theatre' (1882).⁸¹ 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"'.⁸² 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.⁸³

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) and the manner in which it granted a transformative new intensity to his same-sex desire. His account is followed by a discussion over dinner with a group of fellow operagoers 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 realization of the young page-boy, Mozart's Cherubino, a love-struck male adolescent sung by a mezzo in men's clothing, who in turn cross-dresses as a woman in Act II of the opera. 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.⁸⁴ 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'.⁸⁵ Symonds's feelings find a close parallel with those of the character of Cherubino himself: his arias express the thrilling and disorienting 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 sphere of intellectual enjoyment raised to rapture. I never lived so fast before!'⁸⁶ Symonds's text pits his own Hegelian, idealist aesthetics ('what is music but emotion, in its most genuine essence, expressed by sound?') against the formalist aesthetics of, among 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'.⁸⁷

Symonds's essay concludes with a section that paraphrases Hegel's aesthetic philosophy, without ever openly acknowledging the influence

of Hegel himself. His 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'.⁸⁸ 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 friend Horatio Forbes Brown, 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'.⁸⁹

With Symonds as our guide, it is worth briefly revisiting Hegel's aesthetic philosophy, not least because it can profitably allow us to recognize the contours of much broader positions in *fin-de-siècle* literature about the relationship between music, the self and sexual desire. In Hegel's aesthetics, art becomes 'the supreme means of unifying necessity with freedom, the particular with the universal, the sensuous with reason'. The aesthetic functions 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; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man'.⁹⁰ Music, for Hegel, is the most subjective of the arts, allowing for the direct expression of the inwardness of subjectivity and effacing those dimensions of space that characterize sculpture and painting. 'Emancipated from external reference', music can reach the highest 'inwardness of self-consciousness'.⁹¹ Music expresses, and moves us to, various different feelings, such as love, longing and joy.⁹² Despite placing music below poetry in his aesthetic hierarchy, Hegel praises music as dealing most directly with the 'concrete inner life'.⁹³ Instrumental music, Hegel suggests, is 'empty and meaningless' because it 'lacks a principal feature of all art – spiritual content [*geistiger Inhalt*] and expression'.⁹⁴ 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*]'.⁹⁵ 'In spite of this incontestable defect of seeming

vagueness', as Symonds puts it, 'emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self'.⁹⁶ '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.⁹⁷

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. If Symonds's account is placed in the context of his other writings on the figure of Cherubino, it becomes clear that 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 realization of new emotions, desires and subjectivities.

Symonds's essay can be placed in a long tradition in which Cherubino 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'.⁹⁸ 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'.⁹⁹ Symonds himself recounts that his homoerotic poem 'A 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 1866.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ 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 that of 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.¹⁰² 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, amid the gradual revelation of Figaro's parentage. Here, Symonds playfully 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' while travelling in Normandy, Symonds reports, he 'hummed to [himself] "Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio"'.¹⁰³ 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'.¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵

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 among 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 literary texts in which music becomes a resource for the affirmation of same-sex desire. Music, for many queer writers, becomes a horizon of utopian possibility, an ineffable that 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'.¹⁰⁶

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'.¹⁰⁷ 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.¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰

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 H. G. Wells's *The Wonderful Visit* (1895), for example, music functions to reveal 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.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹² The Angel's rapturous violin playing is 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.¹¹³

As well as allowing for the visionary disclosure of queer-affirmative societies, music in *fin-de-siècle* literature acts to prompt a form of individual psycho-sexual awakening in which emotionally repressed queer subjects are brought to fuller consciousness of their desiring selves. Music, in short, might allow subjects to feel inchoately queer before they even fully understand what queer desire is. In Edward Prime-Stevenson's *Imre*, for instance, 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 ever 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 tone-autobiographers'.¹¹⁴ E. F. Benson's *Mike* (1916) makes a similar point. Benson's 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.¹¹⁵ Only on a trip to Bayreuth, where he attends a performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) 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.'¹¹⁶ Here, the emotionalism of Wagner's music prompts an epiphanic experience of self-discovery while facilitating also an act of self-revelatory 'outing' – figured in conspicuously homoerotic terms – through which Benson's Mike discovers the transformative potential of erotically charged 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'.¹¹⁷ 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 other texts, it is more immediately the effect that music has on the material body which operates to affirm marginalized queer subjectivity. Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament' (1905), for example, explores the 'peculiar stimulus' of music on a young man who effectively functions as a character sketch of a 'typical' young male homosexual in early twentieth-century America.¹¹⁸ Weighed down by the mundane, repressive drudgery of his life in the Pittsburgh suburbs, Paul 'really live[s]' only when listening to music.¹¹⁹ Orchestral music acts to 'free some hilarious and potent spirit within him': his 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'.¹²⁰ 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 that renders his ‘imagination master of his senses’, he finds that 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 feels that he ‘got what he wanted much more quickly from music’.¹²¹ 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’.¹²² As in the examples by Wells and Benson, music here is understood, in the tradition of Romantic aesthetics, as a disclosive 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 I will argue below, may 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).¹²³ ‘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 remarks neither logical sequence nor aesthetic principles’.¹²⁴ 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. While such debates might seem arcane, close attention to the manner in which they find expression in texts of this period reveals their surprising entanglement with queer sexual politics. If Lee’s writings on musical formalism are examined alongside those of another reputedly queer English formalist critic, Edmund Gurney, it becomes possible to trace in formalism a defensive response against ‘effeminising’, subjective accounts of musical listening that implicitly align music with an embodied emotionalism associated with queer sexuality. In Lee’s writings on musical aesthetics, a preference for a disinterested appreciation of ‘aesthetic emotion’ can be understood as part of her reaction against music that provokes feelings of queer shame. For Gurney, formalist aesthetic 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’.¹²⁵

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’,¹²⁶ who 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 any association with its dramatic content: she ‘leav [es] out the page most completely and entirely’.¹²⁷ 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’ – that is, to better communicate the purely formal beauty of Mozart’s music.¹²⁸ 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’.¹²⁹ The dramatic scenario in which he appears is marred by an ‘undefinable sense of impropriety’, ‘a hidden audacity of corruption’.¹³⁰ 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’.¹³¹ 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’.¹³² 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 – in the text discussed above – 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, in contrast, become a means through which the possibility of such desire might be denied.

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-scrutinizing attitude towards the intellectual positions she assumed, it is in some respects surprising that her views on musical aesthetics changed very little over the course of 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’; and thirdly, a formalist commitment to aesthetic autonomy that defends the ideal of music as ‘non-imitative’.¹³³ 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.¹³⁴ 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-concentrated art, the very standard of a classic art’.¹³⁵ 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’; it 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’.¹³⁶

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 – as explored above – 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 experiencing shame in the act of *listening* to music itself.¹³⁷ Axiomatic in countless recent studies is the assumption of music as *the* privileged site in nineteenth-century culture for the exploration of sexual dissidence.¹³⁸ Yet few scholars have considered what it would mean to find disclosed in the music one hears sexual desires of which one is ashamed. To do so is not necessarily to argue that the music itself *expresses* shame, but rather to argue that a feeling of shame arises from the listener’s affective 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'.¹³⁹ Indeed, 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.¹⁴⁰ Among the most influential theorists of shame in recent decades has been the psychologist Silvan Tomkins.¹⁴¹ For Tomkins, shame is pre-eminent as the only affect marked by 'the experience of the self by the self'.¹⁴² 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 unobserved – in an act of listening to music, say – the subject can be overcome with a sense of shame contingent on *imagining* that they are being watched.

The commitment of theorists such as Tomkins and Ahmed to attend closely to the complexity of phenomenological and affective experiences, as they are expressed in literary texts, presents a useful tool for understanding the dynamics of shame in Lee's writing on music. 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'.¹⁴³ 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 primaevial nudity of confused instincts, the soul's vague viscera.¹⁴⁴

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 'primaevial nudity'

purposefully invokes Salome's dance of the seven veils, a moment emblematic of Decadent sensual excess, rendered notorious by both Wilde's *Salome* (1891) and Des Esseintes's preoccupation with the same scene in *À rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884).¹⁴⁵

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 of the privacy of the human soul which haunted me throughout that performance'.¹⁴⁶ 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'.¹⁴⁷ 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'.¹⁴⁸ 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.

Lee's repeated recourse to imagery of exposed or wounded bodies signals the extent to which such shameful listening is an intense bodily experience. 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'.¹⁴⁹ 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'.¹⁵⁰ 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 the listener becomes deluded into believing that the music has 'told you the secrets you have really been telling yourself'.¹⁵¹ The mirror that music holds up to the self in this act of self-indulgence prompts the listener to confront those elements of the self that they might prefer to remain uncovered.

Such examples are lacking in the classic shameful 'tell' of the blush, yet shame's affective force marks itself on the body in other ways. The posture

of the body as one listens to music might already be close to that which marks the shamed subject: to paraphrase Eve Kosofsky 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.¹⁵² 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 space, his head bowed and eyes lowered to avoid the gaze of the spirits of music that surround him.¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴ 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, which leave her feeling ‘giddy and sick’ with a sense of ‘shame’.¹⁵⁵ 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.¹⁵⁶ 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 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 in this area – 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 that ‘he read all [Lee’s] things with great interest & that [Lee] was the only writer on music whose career he watched with interest’.¹⁵⁷ Even in 1897, by which time Lee had immersed herself in a wide range of aesthetic theory in German, French and Italian, she still referred to Gurney as the one ‘whom I admire above all other writers on aesthetics’.¹⁵⁸

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. Gurney’s distinctive contribution to musical

aesthetics in Victorian England has been recognized in a number of recent studies in historical musicology.¹⁵⁹ For Jerrold Levinson, Gurney's magnum opus, *The Power of Sound*, is 'doubtless the most important work of its kind in the latter half of the nineteenth century'.¹⁶⁰ A brief overview of its central concerns – with the proper nature of musical emotion and the nature of musical pleasure – allows me to gesture to issues germane to the traces of queer shame that underlie his aesthetic priorities. *The Power of Sound* argues that music's 'primary and essential function is to create beautiful objective forms', not to 'induce and support particular subjective moods'.¹⁶¹ Here, Gurney retains a Romantic commitment to the ineffable nature of musical emotion while upholding the principle that music does more than simply express subjective emotion. Gurney 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.¹⁶² He 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'.¹⁶³ Yet such emotion remains abstract, reflecting only the music itself, rather than working to 'induce and support particular subjective moods'.¹⁶⁴ 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'.¹⁶⁵ In this respect Gurney's aesthetics participate in a tradition, as identified by Philip Brett, in which music's ineffability reflects the structural dynamics of the closet.¹⁶⁶ The 'indefinable' nature of musical emotion works as one of those 'speech acts of silence' which, as Sedgwick has suggested, constitute 'closetedness'.¹⁶⁷ Gurney's mode of thinking about music does not so much hide some sort of queer reality of the emotion expressed by music as 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 – may be understood as a strategic response to those discourses discussed above that increasingly pathologized musical emotion (and emotionalism) as pathologically solipsistic, effeminizing and aligned with homosexuality.

A close examination of how Gurney articulates his theory of music's origins brings this point into sharper focus. In turning to consider the source of 'melodic pleasure', Gurney draws on Darwin's theory that music became 'transfused with highly exciting emotional elements' as a result of its 'primeval use [...] under conditions of sexual excitement'.¹⁶⁸ 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 musical pleasure.¹⁶⁹ 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 may be understood as a function of Gurney's fraught negotiations of his own sexual desire. This aspect of Gurney's life has been overlooked in scholarly discussions of his work, and is worth considering with some care – not least because Gurney's negotiation of his sexual desires provides an important context in which to understand his broader aesthetic, political and social commitments. Following his untimely death, possibly by suicide, in 1888, Gurney was rumoured to have been implicated in some form of homosexual scandal.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ As a number of scholars have noted, there are good reasons to doubt the veracity of Butler's rather melodramatic account.¹⁷² However, there is nevertheless significant evidence of Gurney's close involvement in communities notable for both 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 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 were 'devoted to a life of Uranian activity and philosophizing'.¹⁷³ 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.¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵ 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 a 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.¹⁷⁶

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.¹⁷⁷ Alice suggests that Gurney was persuaded to marry by Myers, and that he was 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 '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'.¹⁷⁸ 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 often fraught boundaries that distinguish intense masculine friendship from suspect 'homosexual' desire at the *fin de siècle*. 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'.¹⁷⁹ 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'.¹⁸⁰ Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1889) surely attest to the contradictions of those late Victorian gentlemen who maintain a front of perfect respectability while simultaneously pursuing covert sexual liaisons.¹⁸¹

Gurney's closeted formalism represents, at its most extreme, a disavowal of the embodied materiality of musical experiences. 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 next chapter, 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.