

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 genitourinary 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 'spermatorrhœa' – 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 canal disappears – the emissions cease, and the health improves'.⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, this did little to improve Symonds's fragile health.

In a letter written many years later, it is clear to Symonds that his ‘malady’ was the result of his inability to ‘indulge [his] sexual instincts’ – that is, his same-sex desire. 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 defenceless. 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 queer sexual desire.

In English literary texts of the *fin de siècle*, music is endowed with a queer agency that acts to make and unmake the material body. The embodied experience of musical performance in literature brings some queer bodies into closer contact while placing others out of reach; it indulges queer fantasies of disembodiment while leaving other bodies burning with shame; and it places some queer bodies out of temporal sequence while drawing others into an affirmative future. In these terms, *Music and the Queer Body* shows how music operates in *fin-de-siècle* literature to challenge foundational accounts of identity written on the body. In drawing upon the ‘antisocial’ provocations of contemporary queer theory, it moves debates in queer musicology beyond their broad focus on the ways in which music acts to affirm positive homosexual identities, to sidestep the restrictions of the closet, or to afford a utopian space for the exploration of gender fluidity. It suggests 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 that are often unsettling and disturbing, I ask us to look beyond narratives that focus only on heroic queer self-assertion and

emancipation. This study explores these dynamics of embodied experience through readings of texts by authors who have been central to discussions of queer identities in studies of *fin-de-siècle* literature: John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, Vernon Lee and E. M. Forster. It also turns to consider works by more neglected figures such as Arthur Symonds, Richard Marsh, John Gaboriel 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 became an important site for their articulations and evasions of same-sex desires. The focus of the study is broadly on texts by queer male writers, not least because the ‘musicality’ of the male homosexual subject was a persistent fascination of late nineteenth-century sexologists. However, it also foregrounds examples of lesbian encounters with music marked by intense or unsettling experiences of bodily materiality. In doing so, it offers an alternative to accounts of lesbian desire in this period that have often emphasized the ‘apparitional’ or the ‘spectral’.⁷

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 book demonstrate the value of combining such a historical approach with one that responds to the provocations of contemporary queer theory. *Music and the Queer Body* 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 enquiry 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 and the Queer Body gives an account of the diverse forms of queer agency that music is afforded in literary texts of the *fin de siècle*: to challenge essentialist identities, or to facilitate reconceptions of embodied subjectivity, or to present alternative conceptions of occupying a sense of space and time. In this respect, it does not attempt 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, my study generally avoids speculating about the sexual identities or self-conceptions of those authors whose writings it has examined. My discussion maintains a dual emphasis by moving between specific case studies of musical performance and consumption 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. In doing so, my study asks us 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.

Music, Homosexuality and Queer Musicology

What if music IS sex?

Suzanne Cusick⁸

The connection between musicality and male 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, a number of sexological studies of the 'invert' or the 'Urning' in English in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

For the pioneering first wave of queer musicologists, such as Brett and Cusick, the linguistic indeterminacy of music and its alignment with

formal aesthetic 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).¹² Music's apparent ability to powerfully articulate sexual desires while 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'.¹³ For Brett, the expression through music of a desire which otherwise remained 'closeted' in inarticulacy led to an unfortunate form of political quietism: music remained an essentially private forum for the exploration of listeners' sexual desire while leaving unchallenged the heteronormative assumptions of society more generally.¹⁴

In similar terms, much early work in queer musicology was preoccupied 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'.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ While queer musicology has been closely attentive to disciplinary processes that seek to counteract 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.¹⁷ Similar work in studies of popular music has approached, from a sociological perspective, the place of music in expressing subjectivities that resist heteronormativity.¹⁸

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 two particularly important contributions by recent scholars – Joe Law and David Deutsch – affords a sense of prevailing critical tendencies while allowing my own argument to come into sharper focus.

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.¹⁹ 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'.²⁰ 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 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.²¹ 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.²²

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 liberalism and aestheticism.²³ 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 [and] sophisticatedly sensitive'.²⁴ 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'.²⁵ To represent queer characters as innately musical, Deutsch contends, became an affirmative gesture that posited them as 'uniquely valuable'.²⁶ This, in turn, had the effect of bolstering queer musical subcultures that developed in the face of legal and social persecution. *Music and the Queer Body* 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 our historical understanding of the musical encounter.

Pitching the Queer

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 fresh perspectives on the queerness of music, both in *fin-de-siècle* literature and more broadly. This section offers an overview of such developments, before proceeding to discuss the ways in which they can stimulate more creative ways of understanding 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* (1995).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 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 ‘antisocial’ 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.

Among the most influential and controversial works in queer theory following Bersani’s ‘antisocial’ turn is Lee Edelman’s 2004 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 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* (2013).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 Jack 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 affects have been marginalized in accounts of queer subject formation. Focussing on literary texts written around the time when 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. Utilizing 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, 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 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* (2006) has, in a similar way, investigated the idea that sexuality may 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 *antisocial* 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 emphasizing 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 identities that the closet would seek to impose upon them. Instead of understanding music as providing a means of expression for desire that must otherwise remain 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 categorization 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 turns instead to consider the alignment of music with experiences of an affective intensity that exceeds or exists outside 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 inquisitive form of queer musical history to emerge. It also 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. It 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 out of place, then, to offer anything as systematic as an inflexible definition of the key concepts with which my study 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', my study 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 *Music and the Queer Body* 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 categorization of desires and identities along clear lines of sexual object choice. In some contexts, 'queer' is used in my study 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 and 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, *Music and the Queer Body* 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 striking ways in which such authors respond to materialist science, recasting the material body as the site at which subjectivity is formed and re-formed 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 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 drawn attention to the wide-ranging influence of materialist theories of embodied responses to aesthetic experience 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 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 reoriented mode of enquiry 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 interrelationship 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 My approach 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 life writing. In a similar spirit, I examine texts on 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. Attending to such a heterogeneous range of texts on music makes it 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 should 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 *Music and the Queer Body* 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 study 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 our having regard to representations of those mythical 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* (1869), 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, antisocial or perverse beliefs about music that lurk on the edge of discourse in Victorian musical culture.

Thus, while this study 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 what might be characterized as a '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 pervasive place of sexual 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 systemization that, as Jack 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 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 *Music and the Queer Body* invites *fin-de-siècle* literary texts 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 while retaining an interest in how such approaches might illuminate familiar historical contexts in new ways.⁶⁷

A Miniature Score

Chapter 1 demonstrates the centrality of ideas of 'emotionalism' in those sexological writings that consistently present the body of the male

homosexual subject as peculiarly responsive to music. The contentious issue of the place of emotion and the body in music likewise informs 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 theorization of the queer as 'antisocial', Chapter 2 examines the significance of the association between music and masochism in texts by Walter Pater, Vernon Lee and Arthur Symons. 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 while turning instead to modes of self-abandonment and disembodiment. Music in Pater's 'Denys l'Auxerrois' dramatizes a broader oscillation in Pater's works between the denial and embrace of wilfully self-destructive masochistic violence. 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 categorization 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. In Arthur Symons's 'Christian Trevalga' (1902) music becomes associated with a desire to abandon the materiality of the body and affirm instead a form of 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 refusal of the body represents a strategy to efface the association between music and proscribed homosexual desire.

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 forms part of a broader eroticization of childhood innocence in Victorian culture. An examination of Victorian vocal treatises shows 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'. The pederastic listening practices engaged in by Symonds and his contemporaries invite a reassessment of the frequent idealization 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 reveals 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 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) to explore how tactile proximity 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 experience of piano playing in Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908) and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) similarly suggests that tactile interaction between the body and the musical instrument allows for marginalized subjects to more fully inhabit a sense of their desiring bodies. Such a dynamic can also be traced in queer material encounters with the musical score. In Vernon Lee's experiences with the archival remains of eighteenth-century music, her sensuous affective connection with the historical past is articulated through a wish for restored tactile contact. The queerness of Lee's writing is manifested in the pervasive sense of loss that resides in her desire for tactile intimacy. 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. If such texts are read 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. A closing coda considers how we might put such badly behaved music to queer use, returning to Beethoven with Amy Levy's poem 'Sinfonia Eroica' (1884).