CHAPTER 2

Flesh: Music, Masochism, Queerness

> *All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.* For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it.
>
> Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione' (1877)[1]

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

An examination of Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' 'Denys l'Auxerrois' (1886) reveals the manner in which Pater moves between the denial of and embrace of wilfully self-destructive masochistic violence. While Pater turns to the figure of Dionysus as an emblem of music's masochistic potential, in *Plato and Platonism* (1893) music is associated with self-abandonment of a more ascetic kind. Vernon Lee's short story 'Marsyas in Flanders' (1900) is more directly concerned with the manner in which

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modes of power act to inscribe identity on the body. Lee's text strategically embraces the figure of Marsyas – an emblem of musical masochism – as a means of resisting the 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 response, 'Marsyas in Flanders' can be understood as articulating music's resistance to the imposition of fixed identity as it becomes written on the body. If attention is drawn to the refusal of lesbian identity performed in Lee's text, it becomes possible to articulate a more nuanced view of her commitment to the politics of queer community formation. In Arthur Symons's 'Christian Trevalga' (1902) music becomes associated with a masochistic desire to transcend the body: to abandon the restraints of materiality, and embrace instead a dispersed subjectivity defined by disembodiment. Symons's essays on music and musical performance present the aesthetic autonomy of absolute music in a manner that articulates a form of dispersed subjectivity that can profitably be read in the light of contemporary queer theory. At the same time, his texts are notable for their negotiations of *fin-de-siècle* associations between music and homosexuality. In Symons's work, music's masochistic refusal of the body represents an aspiration to efface its association with queer sexual deviance.

The shared interest of Pater, Lee and Symons in music's masochistic efficacy arises from the rich cross-fertilization of these writers' works in the literary networks of English aestheticism. Pater's influence on Vernon Lee and Arthur Symons has been explored by a number of critics.[2] The young Symons held a similar enthusiasm for Vernon Lee's works. In a letter to his friend J. Dykes Campbell in October 1886, Symons enthused that he 'admire[d] her vastly', admitting that when he wrote the introduction for the 'Shakespeare Quarto Facsimile' edition of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in 1885 he 'imitated her style so conscientiously' that the distinguished Browning scholar Frederick J. Furnivall could have sworn the piece was written by Lee herself.[3] As Nicholas Freeman has suggested, 'Christian Trevalga' – and the other fictional studies collected in *Spiritual Adventures* (1905) – can be understood as Symons's response to Walter Pater's 'Imaginary Portraits'.[4] As an example of 'gods in exile' literature, Lee's 'Marsyas in Flanders' might similarly be understood as responding to Pater's mythologizing of music in 'Denys l'Auxerrois' and 'Apollo in Picardy'. Placing these texts alongside each other allows us to attend more closely to their mutual preoccupation with moments where music forcefully disrupts the boundaries of the body, so as to render the self mobile, dispersed, de-centred.

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Nietzsche, Freud, Bersani

The queerness of the association between music and self-abandonment in English aestheticism comes into sharper focus when brought into conversation with Leo Bersani's influential psychoanalytic theory of masochism. As Nietzsche's writings on the viscerally embodied nature of aesthetic experience remind us, the connection between music and violent Dionysian excess has a long cultural heritage. More broadly, in recent years, critical musicology has increasingly considered the connections between music and forms of social and psychic violence.[5] In focussing on the associations between masochism and music, my discussion follows recent work by scholars such as Robert Scholl, who examines examples of the 'traumatic pleasure' of masochistic listening practices in the early twentieth century.[6]

A brief excursus reminds us that Leo Bersani's influential conception of masochism – so important for queer theory's turn to negativity – has its origins in Freud's essays on this topic: 'Triebe und Triebschicksale' ('Instincts and Their Vicissitudes', 1915) and 'Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus' ('The Economic Problem of Masochism', 1924). In 'Instincts and Their Vicissitudes', Freud posits a division between the 'self-preservation (or ego) instinct' and the 'sexual instinct' in an attempt to theorize the relationship between painful and pleasurable sensations. One such 'vicissitude' of the sexual instinct is 'sadism *turned round* upon the subject's own ego'.[7] From this, Freud develops the idea that the pleasure of the sadistic act arises from a sense of masochism directed towards the subject: '[O]nce the suffering of pain has been experienced as a masochistic aim, it can be carried back into the sadistic situation and result in a sadistic aim of inflicting pain, which will then be *masochistically enjoyed* by the subject while inflicting pain upon others, through his *identification of himself* with the suffering other.'[8] The enjoyment of pain is indelibly bound up with sexual excitement, and the primary aim of such enjoyment – even when achieved through the spectacle of another's pain – is masochistic. Freud returns to this issue in 'The Economic Problem of Masochism' (1924).[9] The titular 'problem' is the challenge presented to the idea of the pleasure principle by 'pain and unpleasure [as] *actual aims*'. Once again Freud dwells on the manner in which the 'instinct of destruction' inherent in sadism can be 'introjected' and 'turned inwards'.[10] 'Even the subject's destruction of himself', Freud concludes, 'cannot take place without libidinal satisfaction'.[11] Such a connection between self-destruction and sexual pleasure is key to

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Bersani's reading of Freud. Bersani proposes that Freud 'may be moving towards the position that the pleasurable excitement of sexuality occurs when the body's normal range of sensation is exceeded and when the self is momentarily disturbed (deranged) by sensations somehow 'beyond' those compatible with psychic organization'.[12] That Freud never quite reached this position can be explained by his dualistic opposition of the pleasure principle and the death drive. For Bersani, it is clear that desire and death are not opposed but, in fact, inseparable.[13] In *The Freudian Body* (1986), Bersani develops from this a theory of the aesthetic: art exists in order to 'make visible' our masochistic desires for 'a shattering (or psychically traumatizing) pleasure'.[14] Narratives of violence are inescapably bound up with the libidinal pleasure of masochism – the 'self-shattering pleasure' that Bersani identifies in, for example, the Marquis de Sade's *Les 120 journées de Sodome* (*120 Days of Sodom*, 1785).[15] Bersani's subsequent work, which forms the basis of the so-called 'antisocial turn' in queer studies, has suggested that masochism is the defining feature of the sexual experience. In 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', Bersani reads Freud's 'Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie' ('Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', 1905) as a 'reluctant speculation that sexual pleasure occurs whenever a certain threshold of intensity is reached, when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed by sensations or affective processes that go "beyond" those connected with psychic processes'.[16] In his most recent work Leo Bersani has turned to explore forms of masochism defined by 'the *ascesis* of an ego-divesting discipline'.[17] Bersani and Freud help us navigate how the masochism of music in English aestheticism takes the form of both violent Dionysian self-destruction and an *ascetic* self-denial in which music speaks of a self that might abandon the materiality of the body.

The central role that Bersani ascribes both to the experience of the aesthetic and to the sexual act in the masochistic pleasure of psychic 'self-shattering' finds close parallels in Nietzsche's articulation of the Dionysian violence of music. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian aesthetic experience does not deliver one from suffering, but rather subsumes one within 'eternal, primal pain, the only ground for the world'.[18] The Dionysian aesthetic embraces the *brutality* of the Schopenhauerian Will, celebrating the ecstasy of pain and destruction. The Apollonian surface of a unified, stable self (what Schopenhauer and Nietzsche call the '*principium individuationis*') is obliterated, prompting 'subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting' and 'all memories of personal experience [to] dissolve'.[19] This 'breaking-asunder of the individual' is a fundamental aspect of aesthetic

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

Walter Pater, Music and Violence

Pater's subjects – so peculiarly attendant to the force of aesthetic beauty – frequently find their material bodies to be sites of just such Dionysian masochistic violence. 'We might read all of Pater's writings', Heather Love has suggested, 'as dedicated to the figure of the victim'.[22] Since the critical turn towards 'queer Pater' in the 1990s, Pater's victims have typically been identified as homosexual (or proto-homosexual) martyrs.[23] Jacques Khalip argues that the figure of the beautiful youth in Pater's work inevitably becomes 'the victim of a genocidal impulse that visits [. . .] both him and the entire sexual minority that he represents'.[24] For Richard Dellamora and Linda Dowling, works such as 'Denys l'Auxerrois' and 'Apollo in Picardy' are allegories of homophobic persecution in which Pater protests against the oppressive strictures placed on same-sex desire by Victorian society.[25] Recent work on Pater and music is similarly motivated by a desire to affirm Pater's evidently queer-friendly defence of individualism. Placing Pater's writings on music in the context of late Victorian

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liberalism, David Deutsch argues that Pater 'uses music as an ennobling subject [. . .] to encourage an enlightened, liberal, and more tolerant society'. 'Denys l'Auxerrois', he argues, 'fictionalizes the liberating influence of music on society', while 'Apollo in Picardy' reflects 'individual struggles to live according to Hellenic musical principles'. *Plato and Platonism*, he suggests, 'promotes the moral, intellectual, and even sexually subversive benefits of a Platonic musical education'. Yet in insistently positing music as a force that facilitates a 'more liberal morality', Deutsch overlooks those aspects of Pater's texts in which music refuses to affirm the certainties of the liberal subject. Music, for Pater, promotes not simply a conventionally liberal individualism, but also a Dionysian brutality, masochistic self-abandonment and a severe Platonic *ascesis* associated with self-denial and chastisement.[26]

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

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through his stylistic obscurantism. Shame – aligned with blushing withdrawal, shyness, lowered eyes – is paradoxically writ large in this quiet, shrinking, awkward style. Sedgwick's concept of 'queer performativity' illuminates the manner in which Pater's texts present his marginalized queer identity through their movement between self-affirmation and masochistic self-destruction.

An approach that presents Pater's wounded youths simply as the victims of homophobic oppression overlooks the apparent masochistic pleasure inherent in the spectacle of Pater's violence, by failing to acknowledge his characters' willing desire for joyful self-destruction. At the heart of Pater's works lies a tension between beauty and violence. On the one hand, Pater defends a Platonic system in which observation – *enthusiastic* adoration – of the beautiful male body becomes a means by which one gains access to eternal beauty, to spiritual truth. On the other, he displays a sense of masochistic pleasure in wounded and disfigured flesh, revelling in the sensuous abandon of bodies torn limb from limb. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* insists throughout on the elevating capacity of dwelling upon the spectacle of the beautiful body. In his account of the thirteenth-century courtly love romance 'Aucassin and Nicolette', Pater recounts how the 'mere sight' of Nicolette's 'white flesh [...] healed a pilgrim stricken with sore disease' (*SHR* 12). It is through the Neo-Platonism of Pico della Mirandola that Pater turns to the example of Diotima's 'ladder of love': 'the grades or steps which the soul passes from the love of a physical object to the love of unseen beauty' (*SHR* 27). In 'The Poetry of Michelangelo', Pater recounts that the masters of the Florentine fifteenth century were 'saved' from the 'morbid and grotesque' of Northern European art by their refusal to look upon the decay of the human corpse: they 'paused just in time, and abstained with a sentiment of profound pity' (*SHR* 53). There is no place in this Platonic system for the spectacle of pain. The wounded, dismembered, perverse body allows for no ascent to spiritual truth. Yet Pater's texts return repeatedly to such a spectacle. In 'Hippolytus Veiled' (1889), the titular character is 'entangled in the trappings of [his] chariot', dragged over 'murderous stones'; his mother '*count*[*s*] *the wounds, the disfigurements, telling over the pains*, which had shot through that dear head'.[31] One way to make sense of Pater's demand that – like Hippolytus's mother – his readers 'count the wounds' is through a psychoanalytic framework of masochism.

While a number of critics have touched upon the masochistic elements in Pater's writings and aesthetics, little has been done to acknowledge how the simultaneous exposition and effacement of painful bodily excess comes

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to structure the pervasive concern of his work with material sensuousness.[32] If, as Bersani has argued, masochism is central to aesthetic experience, the infamous summation of Pater's manifesto for the aesthetic life might be read as a masochistic image of exalted pain: 'To *burn always* with this *hard* gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life' (*SHR* 120, italics added). A perpetual flame that blazes forever but does not consume. The image is, apparently, taken from an article by John Tyndell in the *Fortnightly Review* of February 1866: 'On the Relations of Radiant Heat to Chemical Constitution, Colour, Texture' (see *SHR* 178). But it is as evocative of the corporeal tortures of Dante's *Inferno* as of the experiments of the Victorian laboratory. Sensuous experience in the 'Conclusion' is repeatedly presented in terms that gesture towards the medieval torture chamber: 'experience seems to *bury us under a flood* of external objects, *pressing upon us* with a *sharp* importunate reality' (*SHR* 118, italics added). The observer is buried alive, drowned, held down, pierced. This is sensation acting not just on the 'narrow chamber of the individual mind', but also on the 'delicate fibres [of the] human body' (*SHR* 118). In 'Diaphaneité' (1864), Pater celebrates the 'diaphanous' aesthetic type whose 'moral nature[s] refine themselves to the *burning point*' (*SHR* 136, italics added). 'Within its severe limits', Pater tells us of Winckelmann's aesthetic zeal, 'his enthusiasm *burns like lava*'.[33] In *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* alone, for example, we find the masochistic cognates of: 'flicker', 'pulse', 'throb', 'beat', 'sharp', 'cut' and 'press'. As Freud, Bersani and Sedgwick would no doubt note, it is no coincidence that many of these descriptors of pain are also suggestive of sexual excitement. The aesthetic pleasure felt so intensely on the material body of Pater's embodied subjects hovers on the precipice at the limits of pain, shrinking from the possibility of a masochism too openly acknowledged – but teasingly hinting at it nevertheless.

Pater's Musical Conditions

Before proceeding to look specifically at Pater's musical masochism, it is useful to enquire into his engagement with Victorian musical culture more generally. Here, we confront the presence of an absence – but one that might nevertheless encourage the inquisitiveness of queer methodologies adept at reading resonant silences. Music, it seems, was not one of Pater's great passions. Symonds's letters return repeatedly to his rapt experiences of musical performance; Vernon Lee retained a lifelong fascination with the dynamics of musical listening; Wilde's Dandies are often found at the

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piano or in a box at the opera. Pater's works and letters, in comparison, suggest scant musical enthusiasms. Aside from isolated references to Bach, Mozart and Wagner, his works never admit sustained engagement with the composers or performers of the Victorian musical scene; he never explicitly indicates a preference for one style of music over another. His infamous declaration in 'The School of Giorgione' (1877) that '*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*' has prompted the speculations of a multitude of philosophical source-hunters. Yet it remains entirely unclear what *style* of (absolute) music Pater had in mind. 'Of music itself', Patricia Herzog wryly notes, 'Pater tells us nothing'.[34] One might be inclined to agree with Angela Leighton, for whom Pater's dictum is perhaps knowingly playful: 'It is provoking, memorable, possibly nonsense, but Walter Pater is good at memorable nonsense.'[35]

David Deutsch's work provides a convincing overview of musical culture in Pater's nineteenth-century Oxford.[36] Yet while brief anecdotes from F. W. Bussell, Pater's colleague at Brasenose, and Vernon Lee point to Pater's interest in the religious music performed in Oxford's chapels and cathedral, there is little documentary evidence to suggest that Pater was engaged with music in Oxford more broadly.[37] Pater's extant letters give no indication that he regularly attended concerts or the opera. Following his death in 1894, biographies by Ferris Greenslet (1903), A. C. Benson (1906) and Thomas Wright (1907) similarly fail to suggest any great interest in music. Indeed, Wright presents a twenty-year-old Pater who was sufficiently lacking in musical knowledge to require another student to explain to him the significance of Browning's 'musical poems' in *Men and Women* (1855), 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha' and 'A Toccata of Galuppi's'. Wright suggests that Pater's ignorance about music – or, at least, music as presented in Browning's poetry – continued into maturity: in Pater's review of Arthur Symons's *An Introduction to the Study of Browning* (1886) he 'contents himself with [a] very safe remark' on Browning's treatment of music. 'The poems on music', Wright concludes, 'always remained much of an enigma to Pater'.[38] Neither Benson nor Greenslet dwells on Pater's musical experiences. Benson attempts to counteract the frequent accusation that Pater became dour and humourless as he grew older with an anecdote about Pater's 'whole-hearted and childlike enjoyment' of a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* (1887).[39] Greenslet discusses at some length the aesthetic implications of comments on music in 'The School of Giorgione', but never suggests any broader interest in musical performance.[40]

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Pater's engagement with musical culture, like many of his formative experiences, seems more likely to have taken place vicariously through his reading. As a result, a distinction can be drawn between his interest in musical aesthetics and his interest in Victorian musical culture more generally. Pater's engagement with the aesthetics of music has been well documented. He was well versed in Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1794) and Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*.[41] When writing to Vernon Lee on her aesthetic studies in *Belcaro*, he particularly praised the 'sound and wholesome truth' of her essay on musical aesthetics, 'Chapelmaster Kreisler: A Study of Musical Romanticists' – perhaps because, in privileging musical form over emotional 'content', it broadly matched his own thoughts in 'The School of Giorgione'.[42] Perhaps surprisingly, there is no record of him having read other later influential works on 'formalist' musical aesthetics such as Eduard Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* or Edmund Gurney's *The Power of Sound*.

There is less evidence to suggest wide reading on Victorian musical culture more generally. Pater knew George Grove – who published the first volume of his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1879 – through Grove's work as an editor at Macmillan. In December 1878 he wrote to Grove that he had heard 'in conversation among some musical people' about Grove's work on the dictionary, prompting him to 'put his article on Beethoven down among things to read'.[43] As is noted in Billie Andrew Inman's study of Pater's reading and library borrowings, Pater withdrew all four volumes of Grove's *Dictionary* from Oxford's Bodleian Library on two occasions, in March 1884 and October 1886.[44] Yet Inman identifies no other books in Pater's borrowings or personal collection that deal specifically with music. To dwell on the absent details of Pater's own musical enthusiasms may seem self-defeating. Yet this silence also invites a manner of reading music in Pater's works that does not turn to the immediate contexts of his Victorian musical culture, but attends more closely to the paradoxes and strangeness of his literary texts.

'Denys l'Auxerrois'

Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait' 'Denys l'Auxerrois' enacts at a narrative level the queerly performative oscillation between beauty and violence that characterizes Pater's masochism.[45] Unsurprisingly for a text that stages the reincarnation of Dionysus, it is also notable for its alignment of music with a joyfully masochistic self-shattering. At the opening of Pater's text,

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the narrator introduces his story in terms that disguise the text's fixation with violence, yet as it proceeds the text gradually reveals the narrator's masochistic intent.

A brief summary of the contours of Pater's story offers a way into its masochistic narrative dynamics. 'Denys' recounts the apparent return of 'a denizen of old Greece' (DA 413) – Dionysus – to the French town of Auxerre in the Middle Ages. Pater's story is narrated by a modern-day visitor to Auxerre who discovers the fragment of a stained-glass window depicting the eponymous character and then proceeds to 'piece together' his story. 'Denys' reflects Pater's conception of the deity as presented in 'A Study of Dionysus' (1876): a 'twofold [...] *Döppelganger* [sic]', who encompasses in his character both joy, fertility and excess, and melancholy, destruction and violence.[46] As in a number of *fin-de-siècle* stories – Arthur Machen's 'The Great God Pan' (1890), for instance – an anarchic force of erotic desire is unleashed by the excavation of a buried artefact: Denys's return is preceded by the discovery of a 'finely-sculptured Greek coffin of stone', his spirit distilled in 'a flask of lively green glass' found therein (DA 416).[47] Denys first manifests himself at a solemn ecclesiastical ceremony, which, through his youthful exuberance, he transforms into a delightful game. Childlike and playful, he awakens in the town's inhabitants a sense of Schillerian 'aesthetic free play', reconciling the opposed imperatives of reason and feeling.[48]

Initially, Denys promotes fecundity, rejuvenation, drunken ecstasy, but as time progresses his mood grows darker. He becomes associated with 'strange motiveless misdeeds' (DA 419): maternal infanticide and a murder in the vineyards. In an attempt to 'remedy [...] this evil time' (DA 420), the local clergy exhume the body of the cathedral's patron saint. Pater's gruesome evocation of a 'battlefield of mouldering remains' (DA 420), a 'dwindled body, shrunken inconceivably' (DA 421), shares much with Thomas Browne's description of decaying corpses in 'Hydriotaphia' (1658) – a text Pater praised in an essay on the Renaissance scholar, which he wrote and published contemporaneously with 'Denys'.[49] The spectacle of decaying flesh sends Denys into a fit of physical shock, leaving him 'a subdued, silent, melancholy creature' (DA 421). Henceforth he turns away from the world and devotes himself to the production of art – painting, weaving, sculpture and, above all, music. Under the cover of night, he gradually constructs within the cathedral a grand organ. Eventually, the organ is 'ready to blow' (DA 423); its music 'roll[s] over [the congregation] [...] with various feelings of delight' (DA 423). But when, in the civic ceremony that follows, Denys carelessly scratches his lip on his haircloth garment, the mood of the townsfolk turns violent:

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

This violent conclusion is occluded by the narrator's introduction, which initially cloaks the text's violent intent. The text stages, in this respect, its queerly performative embarrassment – an embarrassment that attaches to its underlying masochistic desire for pleasurable self-abnegation. The tone of Pater's narrator at the opening of the text is academic and aloof. In eschewing the narratorial 'I' in favour of an appeal to what '*we* know', Pater's narrator appeals to an objective standard of knowledge unquestionably shared with his readers. In the paragraphs that follow, the narrator draws the reader into events while disguising his own presence through use of the second-person pronoun ('*you* find it', '*you* have before you', '*you* might fancy'). This detached narrator appears to play no role in the events he narrates: he is, in Gérard Genette's terms, heterodiegetic.[50] It is only later in the text – '*I* found my way to the shop' – that the narrator openly acknowledges his personal involvement in the events recounted (all italics added). This revelation of the narrator's homodiegetic status coincides with the text's close focus on the subjective process through which the narrator constructs his narrative of Denys's life. The broader significance of this change in narrative tone from objective aloofness to subjective engagement is that the certainties of the text's opening are modified through the process of sensuous, subjective reflection. The assertions of the text's opening paragraph are subsequently undermined: the text is not content to dwell on 'surfaces', and the reality of the events recounted is far from 'golden'. The narrator ends up telling a story that breaks the rules he has initially set for himself.

Thus there is a tension in 'Denys' between the aesthetic pleasure of the 'surface' and the impulse to reconstruct the broken 'fragment' or to 'unearth' and 'exhume'. At the opening of the text, Pater's narrator posits a mode of appreciation in which the 'value of things [. . .] lie[s] wholly on their surfaces': a light-hearted 'childish consciousness' happy to take pleasure in sensuous impressions (DA 413). Something akin to Susan Sontag's 'erotics of art', such a method shares a wish to 'reveal the sensuous surface of art without mucking about in it'.[51] Yet the narrator is soon engaged in

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acts of interpretation that inevitably require him to look beyond the sensuous surface of the artefacts he discovers. He desires to reassemble Denys's story by weaving together historical fragments into a coherent narrative.

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

If the narrator ultimately fails in his project to find value on the 'surface' of things, he likewise seems to wilfully misrepresent the events he will subsequently present. Only a reading that entirely overlooks the duality of Pater's Denys – his oscillation between joyfulness and sorrow, tenderness and cruelty – could suggest that this narrative is simplistically about the 'return of a golden or poetically-gilded age' (DA 413). Indeed, as Vernon Lee's 'Dionysus in the Euganean Hills' (1921) observes, 'Denys' begins with a utopian impulse akin to the 'pre-Raphaelite mediaevalism' of William Morris, but soon becomes '[more] akin to the Bacchae than to the Earthly Paradise'.[52] Pater's texts thus set up principles of aesthetic conduct and narrative expectation, only then to revel in the failure to abide by them. His narrator takes masochistic pleasure in prying beyond surfaces, presenting a story that seems far detached from the innocence of 'childish consciousness' which he first demands.

'Ready to Blow': Music and Self-Destruction

It is in the elision of Denys and Dionysus that Pater's association of music with the masochistic finds its sharpest expression. The final scene of Denys's dismemberment enacts the masochistic pleasures of psychic self-divestiture. The culmination of Denys's artistic activities is the building of a grand organ in the cathedral at Auxerre. Denys progresses from those arts 'which address themselves first of all to sight' – sculpture, drawing, tapestry – to the more abstract art of music: his aspiration towards the

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condition of music is also an advancement towards his masochistic self-destruction. Denys aims to invent 'a freer and more various sacred music', 'a music that might express the whole compass of souls now grown to manhood'. In contrast with earlier rustic modes, capable of expressing just one emotional state, his organ will become 'like the book of life', its music revealing 'the full compass of his nature, in its sorrow and delight' (DA 422). Initially, Denys's musical project appears to offer an affirmation of liberal individualism. His organ functions as a mechanism for the promotion of self-realization – liberating, perhaps, the expression of desires that an oppressive society has previously proscribed. Yet the agency that Pater affords to this music ultimately presents a more complex and disturbing situation. In describing the organ as 'ready to blow' (DA 423), Pater purposefully elides the motion of air through the instrument's pipes with a process of explosive, shattering destruction that will be visited not on the pipes of the organ itself, but on Denys's flesh.

Despite the story's setting in medieval France, the musical aesthetics underpinning Denys's project are decidedly nineteenth-century: this 'fuller tide of music' encompassing 'all the instruments then in use' is more redolent of a Romantic Wagnerian orchestra than, say, a Renaissance broken consort (DA 421–22). Denys's music is repeatedly evoked through water imagery: a 'fuller tide', 'rolling over' its listeners. The trope of drowning in the experience of music is one evoked throughout Decadent art, its most notable source being the so-called *Liebestod* that concludes Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, where Isolde drowns ('ertrink[t]') in the surging swell ('[i]n dem wogenden Schwall') of music.[53] Indeed, in Nietzsche's elaboration of the Dionysian force of music in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he specifically quotes the closing lines of Wagner's libretto as an example of the 'primal joy' of self-negation.[54] Denys, likewise, will ultimately be destroyed by waves of the enthusiastic 'mad rage' that overcome the listening crowd.

Throughout Pater's texts, the emergence of new expression in various artistic media presents opportunities to reconceive the self through sensuous experience. Music is assigned a particularly prominent power to prompt such a change – another articulation of the queer 'disclosiveness' of music explored in Chapter 1. In *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), for example, the 'new range of sound' in Flavian's verse is attributed to his having gleaned such 'novel accents' from 'a new musical instrument'.[55] An alternative source of inspiration for Flavian's 'mystic hymn' is the music issuing from 'the lips of the young men, singing because they could not help it, in the streets of Pisa'.[56] Flavian's verse – distilled from the spirit of

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music – provides to Marius a 'foretaste' of the spiritual renaissance yet to come:

> There was in his work, along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn [. . .]. It was as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed-of and renewed condition of human body and soul: as if he saw the heavy yet decrepit old Roman architecture about him, rebuilding on an intrinsically better pattern.[57]

There are clear parallels between the 'new instrument' that inspires Flavian and the 'building of the first organ' undertaken by Denys. However, the outcome of Denys's musical project is presented in a more ambivalent light. In the medieval tapestry upon which Pater's narrator bases his story, those listening to Denys's music appear 'as if transported, some of them shouting rapturously to the organ music', inspired to a 'mad vehemence'. At the conclusion of the text, the 'various feelings of delight' prompted in the people of Auxerre by Denys's music soon mutate into the 'mad rage' that will see them tear him apart (DA 413). In *Marius*, music awakes a utopian impulse of 'undreamed of' subjectivity, conceived through architectural imagery of the solid, concrete and systematic: the 'body and soul' will be 'rebuil[t]', underpinned by the rigorous structure of a 'better pattern'.[58] Music in 'Denys' offers no such promise of architectural stability. It is associated rather with the dispersed breath of Marsyas – his 'aspiration' – as it animates the pipes Denys has gathered from across the countryside. In Pater's mythic system – like Nietzsche's – the music of Dionysus and Marsyas exists in opposition to that of Apollo. In 'A Study of Dionysus', Pater recounts:

> There is one element in the conception of Dionysus, which his connexion with the satyrs, Marsyas being one of them, and with Pan, from whom the flute passed to all the shepherds of Theocritus, alike illustrates, his interest, namely, in one of the great species of music. One form of that wilder vegetation, of which the Satyr race is the soul made visible, is the reed, which the creature plucks and trims into musical pipes. And as Apollo inspires and rules over all the music of strings, so Dionysus inspires and rules over all the music of the reed.[59]

Denys's construction of an organ that attempts to see 'the various modes of the power of the pipe, *tamed, ruled, united*' sees him assume a disciplinary stance akin to Apollo: he constrains something of the wayward exuberance of Pan and Marsyas. Yet his construction of the organ entirely from well-chosen reeds is, at the same time, a wilful provocation to Apollo. It is this

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opposition between the reed and the lyre which is re-enacted on the 'painted shutters of the organ-case' in Pater's text: Apollo 'look[s] askance on the music of the reed, in all the jealousy with which he put Marsyas to death so cruelly' (DA 413). This grand organ of reeds becomes the Marsyan instrument *par excellence*, and it is little surprise, then, that Denys faces a similarly brutal fate.

At the story's conclusion, Denys is 'torn *at last* limb from limb' (italics added). The narrator, it seems, has been seeking the narrative closure of brutal dismemberment from the outset, and it has finally arrived. Pater's text is purposefully ambiguous when it notes that Denys's soul is 'at rest': it is unclear whether he is dead or in a state of spiritual calmness. In its opposition of resting 'soul' and elevated 'body', the text seems to suggest that Denys's death precedes his dismemberment. If this is indeed the case, the narrative sequence passes over the moment of Denys's death to focus instead, with sadistic zeal, on his bodily mutilation. Steven Connor asserts that 'Pater's syntax conducts us directly from horrified expectation to sad aftermath, and from the bloodiness of immediate action to the coolness of marmoreal representation.'[60] Yet Pater's syntax in fact diverts focus intentionally towards the bloody act of dismemberment. There is nothing 'marmoreal' about Denys's corpse as it is 'tossed' energetically around the crowd like a football. Denys, it seems, is reconciled to his death, impassive even as he desires his own violent destruction.

As a result, the text strongly implies that, if Denys is indeed a victim, he may nevertheless be a willing one. As Pater's narrative progresses, Denys dwells with an increasing obsession on the idea of death. The only way he can 'cure' himself of his fits – seemingly prompted by his realization of his own mortality – is through the act of 'digging, by choice, graves for the dead' (DA 422). Denys, like the narrator, becomes obsessed with excavations. At the point of his death, Denys has achieved two forms of closure: the burial of his mother in consecrated ground, and the completion of his grand organ-building project.[61] As Peter Brooks might observe, the two forms of 'desiring machine' that have sustained the text's narrative momentum – the Oedipal and (through sublimation) the aesthetic – have ground to a halt.[62] To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, Pater's story awaits only the sanction of death.[63] In this respect, parallels can be drawn between Denys and the protagonists of Pater's other 'Imaginary Portraits': Duke Carl of Rosenmold fakes his own death in order to observe his funeral, while Sebastian van Storck harbours a desire for 'disintegration' and 'self-effacement' that leads him to apparent suicide (though, like those of Denys's death, the precise circumstances of his death remain unclear in the text).[64]

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That Denys's death is a willing one is likewise supported by the text's repeated gestures to parallels between Denys and Christ.[65] The green flask that prompts Denys's arrival is akin to 'the wondrous vessel of the Grail'; it is used at the mason's 'supper', and Denys arrives in Auxerre on Easter Day. For Gerald Monsman, this Eucharistic imagery means that the story's conclusion is ultimately redemptive: Denys's death 'stands as the guarantee of the renewal of life'.[66] Richard Dellamora argues that such an approach overlooks the critique of homophobia implicit in Pater's text. Monsman's interpretation is, he suggests, 'an attempt [. . .] to appropriate Pater's writing for an erotophobic academic discourse'.[67] The queerness of Pater's text in fact lies in its oscillation between these two positions: Denys is the victim of a violence that he himself has desired. The eroticism of Pater's text lies as much in its masochistic violence as in its affirmation of the sexual freedom of the individual. Denys's death is a pagan reimagining of the Eucharist in which the essence of Hellenism is diffused through the community in his torn flesh.

We can make sense of this conclusion by returning once again to Leo Bersani's work. In *Intimacies*, Bersani and Adam Phillips propose a form of masochism in which 'a potentially catastrophic self-shattering is replaced by an ego at once self-divesting and self-disseminating'. Bersani's earlier model of psychic divestiture is rethought in terms of 'self-expansiveness': 'something like ego-dissemination rather than ego-annihilation'. 'Ego identity, the individual personality', they suggest, 'could then be sacrificed not to biological or psychic death but, rather, to the pleasure of finding ourselves inaccurately replicated everywhere in the world'.[68] That Denys's killers affix to their caps 'little shreds of his flesh [and] torn raiment' suggests the value of such a dispersal of selfhood: the townsfolk have incorporated within themselves something of his Dionysian spirit.

Music and the Disciplined Body: 'Lacedæmon'

Whereas music in 'Denys' is recruited to a psychic fantasy of joyful masochistic self-dispersal, Pater's final works – such as *Plato and Platonism* (1893) – align music with a masochistic self-denial bound to stern, ascetic self-discipline.[69] 'Music' here is the *mousikē* of Ancient Greece, encompassing the arts of the Muses in general, from singing and dancing to the recitation of poetry and drama. In this respect, Pater's writings on Hellenic 'music' reflect upon questions about the relationship between society and the aesthetic more broadly. In 'Lacedæmon' (1892), Pater describes the role of this 'music' in upholding the 'strenuous and

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taxing habit of life' that defines the 'organized [. . .] discipline' of a Dorian city-state.[70] The text is perhaps most striking for the challenge it presents to the conventional view of the humane beneficence of Pater's aestheticism. As Charles Martindale has noted, the text is 'unlikely to be many readers' favourite essay by Pater': 'How can the retiring, liberally minded, and unbellicose Oxford aesthete', he asks, 'come to express so positive a view of the warlike, isolationist, and helot-abusing Spartans?'[71] Yet 'Lacedæmon' openly indulges those desires for masochistic aesthetic self-obliteration that lie below the surface of Pater's more ostensibly liberal works.

In the Sparta of Pater's imagined past, 'music', in 'the larger sense of the word', was 'everywhere'. Its purpose lay not merely in the 'alleviation' of suffering, but rather in 'promoting' and 'informing' a system of rigid legal order and regularity, in which individuals are ready to 'sacrifice' their 'ease' and 'enjoyments' for the better good of the state.[72] The Lacedæmonians, Pater notes, are a people 'the reverse of indulgent to themselves', their Dorian temperament 'enforced' by the 'reformed music' that forms a central part of their everyday lives.[73] In Pater's text, the music of Sparta finds its fullest expression on and through the body. The 'proportion' of 'Pythagorean music' is embodied in the homoerotic spectacle of the naked athlete. 'It was a Lacedæmonian', Pater reminds his readers, 'who, at Olympia for the first time threw aside the heavy girdle and ran naked to the goal'.[74] In 'Plato and the Doctrine of Number', he notes that, for Plato, the 'order' and 'temperance' of 'musical harmony' finds its 'visible presentiment [. . .] in the faultless person of the youthful Charmides'.[75] The 'perfect visible equivalent' of the refining force of Hellenic musical rhythm is seen in the 'portrait-statues of the actual youth of Greece'.[76]

Indeed, it is the 'austere music' of the Dorian state, Pater suggests, that is central to the 'mastering, remoulding, [of] men's very bodies'.[77] For Pater, this aesthetic education aims to make the 'good musician' indistinguishable from the 'good soldier', underpinned as it is by relentless 'attention', 'patience' and 'fidelity to detail' that instils 'personal dignity' and 'self-command'.[78] The 'orderly' young men of Lacedæmon, Pater recounts, 'made the best music in the world'. They were the product of a severe aesthetic education founded on the infliction of bodily pain with 'whips and rods', a 'monitorial system' in which the use of corporal punishment 'refined them', so that they became 'observant of the minutest direction in [. . .] musical exercises'. This experience of 'pain [. . .] by dignified rules of art' served to produce aesthetic expression purged of all those 'superfluities' that threaten to 'annihilate music'.[79]

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Music here becomes a means through which 'history and law' – 'actually set to music' – become internalized through repetition by the youth of the city-state. Pater implicitly contrasts the 'strictly selfish' pursuit of aesthetic pleasure of 1890s England with the stern functionality of aesthetic discipline in Ancient Greece. The singing through which the 'Lacedæmonian learned by heart' finds its closest parallel in contemporary society, Pater suggests, in the chanting of psalms heard in the choral services of 'our own old English schools' and 'Gothic cloister[s]'. Catching a 'glimpse' of a suggestively homoerotic tableau of 'youthful beauty and strength in perfect service', Pater hears an 'echo' of 'true and genuine Hellenism' in Oxford's choristers as they 'sing [. . .] the law and its praises'.[80] The body of the pliant musician is transformed, in the 'severe schools of Sparta', into a 'perfect musical instrument' that is 'perfectly responsive to the intention, to the lightest touch, of the finger of law'.[81] Through music, the disciplinary force of the law is written into the taut, muscular flesh of the idealized Greek body. Deutsch identifies this passage as celebrating 'the inherent, natural, and moral "harmony" of [. . .] same-sex physical attraction'.[82] Yet this 'lightest touch' speaks not of the momentary homoerotic frisson of bodily contact, but rather of the transformation of the material body into a mechanism that resonates perfectly with societal demands for erotic self-denial. This disciplinary music – indeed, the aesthetic more generally – affords another strategy through which the liberal self is vacated from the body. Whereas Pater's 'Denys' achieves through music his own bodily obliteration, his Lacedæmonian youths engage in a similar process of musical self-abnegation, in which their vibrant individual flesh is subsumed within and effaced by a collective desire for masochistic self-abandonment. Music's queerness in Pater's texts speaks not of the affirmed, desiring homosexual subject, or of the beneficence of queer community formation, but rather of a queerness that challenges foundational accounts of identity and attests to the psychic desire for the loss of self.

Vernon Lee: Music, the Homosexual Body and Queer Identity

For Vernon Lee, like Pater, the queerness of music lies in its function as a solvent of the self. In 'Marsyas in Flanders', Lee strategically turns to sympathize with Marsyas as an emblem of music's anarchic masochistic potential. Marsyas's flayed skin becomes emblematic of a dispersed subjectivity that refuses the labelling of the 'homosexual' body. Rather than insistently reading Lee's works as supporting an ideal of same-sex identity

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or same-sex community formation that Lee herself seems unlikely to have embraced, it is more profitable to consider the manner in which such texts respond implicitly to the processes through which the homosexual subject emerges in the late nineteenth century. Lee's short story can profitably be read alongside her writings on musical aesthetics and the embodied phenomenology of aesthetic response to reveal the complexities of her engagement with music's queer masochistic agency.

Lee's theorization about the significance of the body in the aesthetic response to music is best understood in the context of her writings on musical aesthetics, explored in Chapter 1, structured around often rigid oppositional categories that favour the appreciation of 'musical form' over the evocation of 'musical emotion'. Tellingly, the former is associated by Lee with the 'rapture and anguish' and 'orgiastic madness' of Marsyas and Dionysus, the latter with an Apollo who acts to 'tame the beasts of the wilderness' and 'win the lost soul back from the shades'.[83] Yet while Marsyas is damned as morally poisonous in 'The Riddle of Music' (1906), he is evidently the object of Lee's sympathy in her short story. The apparent incongruity between the Decadent excesses displayed in many of Lee's fictional works and the staunch moralism that underlies her concern with spiritual and moral 'healthiness' shown in her non-fiction prose presents difficulties for those critics who wish to argue for Lee's affirmation of the validity of same-sex desire. Margaret Stetz suggests that 'Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady' (1896) expresses covert 'sympathy' for the imprisoned Wilde, 'a fellow aesthete [. . .] and sexual dissident', while Patricia Pulham's influential reading of 'A Wicked Voice' (1890) views it as a fable of 'lesbian empowerment'.[84] But such readings sit in awkward relation to those essays collected in *Gospels of Anarchy* (1908) that reflect a pervasive concern with the individual's need to moderate 'impulse' and regulate 'peculiar instincts'.[85] Far from presenting a radical defence of sexual deviancy, Lee in fact insists that individual wants and desires should be tempered by an awareness of one's duties to society as a whole.

It is worth pausing briefly here to consider the manner in which critics have located in Lee's works an impetus towards the affirmation of queer sexual desire. This is not because I wish to reject such readings out of hand, but because a more hesitant approach allows us to better grasp the circumspect movement in her work between identitarian and anti-identitarian positions. From a biographical perspective, Lee's life was marked by her intense social relationships, through which she enacted forms of sociality that extended well beyond the conventionally heteronormative. Yet these relationships were often shaped through a fraught dialectic of community

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and isolation, embrace and withdrawal, or perhaps pride and shame. Strikingly, Lee's oscillating feelings of intense attraction and fearful vulnerability are often figured through the experiences played out on the surface of the skin. As Vineta Colby has noted, Lee remained intensely uncomfortable throughout her life with being touched.[86] The physical contact of a lover seemed to threaten Lee with a fear of exposure: 'I *am* hard. I *am* cold [. . .] I *cannot* like, or love', she observed to Irene Cooper-Willis, 'at the expense of having my skin rubbed off'.[87] Here the desiring touch is forcefully destructive, rendering the self – an image that fleetingly recalls the flayed Marsyas – painfully vulnerable though a process of gradual tactile attrition.

Richard Dellamora's reading of Lee's 'Deterioration of Soul' (1896), for example, is one that we might revisit with this dialectic of embrace and withdrawal in mind. Here, Dellamora argues that Lee 'not only passes judgment on the legal destruction of Wilde but also defends sexual dissidence as necessary to the very existence of reason'.[88] Her essay, he suggests, is an 'affirmation of loving friendship between members of the same sex as both virtuous and rational'.[89] While such work does much to bring into sharper focus Lee's contribution to late Victorian debates surrounding individualism and the value of friendship, the contention that Lee offers a covert defence of communities formed around shared same-sex desire cannot be fully sustained. Central to Dellamora's argument is his interpretation of a single phrase in Lee's essay: 'the queer comradeship of outlawed thought'.[90] The term 'queer', he argues, connotes sexual deviancy. Lee's reference to 'comradeship', he suggests, invokes 'an emergent homosexual code', referring to 'the same-sex couple in works such as Whitman's "Calamus" poems'.[91] However, when situated in the context of Lee's wider argument, Lee's evocation of the 'queer comradeship of outlawed thought' in fact forms part of a warning about the dangers of social non-conformity. Lee warns that those 'noble' individuals who challenge the moribund moral standards of the majority, even with the best of intentions, risk being drawn into moral 'deterioration' through their exposure to 'fanatics and criminals'.[92] Far from being an evocation of benevolent same-sex community formation, 'queer comradeship' in fact describes a process through which those who dare to resist normative moral standards find their 'psychic healthiness', the 'health of the soul', placed at risk by their exposure to 'the egotism and depravity of decadents'.[93] The 'herding together of various kinds of nonconformity', Lee concludes, leads to the 'consequent pollution of the superior eccentric by the inferior'.[94] Indeed, Dellamora's contention that Lee refers covertly to a Whitmanian ideal of same-sex 'comradeship' sits uneasily with Lee's

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rejection of what she calls Whitman's 'theology of anarchism' – the indiscriminate acceptance of 'all parts of man's nature' – in 'Gospels of Anarchy' (1898).[95]

While Lee's careful moral scrupulousness presents obstacles for those who wish to read her works as presenting an encoded defence of homosexual subjects, so too do those aspects of her works that deride the reductive intellectual systems that rigidly categorize individuals and their bodies. Lee's text offers a de facto riposte to attempts by sexologists to label her queer body in the 'incongruous adjectives' of *fin-de-siècle* sexology. In both her social and her aesthetic criticism, Lee repeatedly criticizes what she calls 'the mania for reducing a heterogeneous thing to a very simple formula'.[96] In Lee's writings on music, it is often the singing voice that most forcefully resists the impetus to label and classify. In 'The Art of Singing, Past and Present' (1880), for example, Lee praises the pedagogical techniques of eighteenth-century vocal teachers: in contrast to the 'complicated classificatory of the various sorts of voice' typical of the nineteenth century, the 'eighteenth century', she suggests, 'never guessed that such nomenclature could exist'.[97] Rather than being forced to sing in a manner that best suits a specific vocal category, Lee's idealized voices of eighteenth-century Venice emerge organically through the disciplined cultivation of their own unique individuality. In 'A Wicked Voice' – a story that revels in the pleasure of vocal indeterminacy – Lee's narrator gently mocks those 'learned in music' who determinedly seek a 'nomenclature' for Zaffirino's 'mysteriously downy, veiled notes': 'there was no agreement on the subject of this voice: it was called by all sorts of names and described by all manners of incongruous adjectives; people went so far as to describe whether the voice belonged to a man or a woman: every one had some new definition.'[98] Here, the singing voice prompts the relentless efforts of those determined to identify it by reference to the indeterminable sex of the singer. The urge to categorize prompts the emergence of a profusion of descriptions and terminologies, yet the character of the voice nevertheless succeeds in frustrating definition. If, as Catherine Maxwell has convincingly argued, 'A Wicked Voice' 'encodes perhaps [Lee's] strongest fictional avowal of same-sex desire', it nevertheless does so in a manner that affords that desire a spectral mobility and indeterminacy which resists the categorizing impulse of sexology.[99]

'Marsyas in Flanders'

The labelling of identity on the body, and how such labelling might be withstood, is also a significant theme in Lee's short story 'Marsyas in

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Flanders' (written in 1900, though not published in English until 1927). It recounts the fate of a mysterious effigy washed ashore in what is now northern France in 1195 and mounted on a crucifix in a church.[100] The effigy is later discovered in a variety of 'violent contortions' (78), as if in an effort to break loose from the cross to which it had been attached. Meanwhile, the 'miracle' of the contorting effigy begins to attract the attention of passing pilgrims, bringing wealth to the village – and necessitating the construction of a chapel to guard the precious relic against theft. After the effigy smashes the crucifix upon which it is mounted, a new cross is 'consecrated [. . .] in the presence of an immense concourse of clergy and laity', and 'it was now supposed [the effigy] would be satisfied' (80). At the close of the story, the antiquary admits that 'the crucifix at present [. . .] is not the one miraculously cast up by the storm of 1195' (91). Leading the narrator into the cellar of an outhouse, he reveals the effigy: 'buried beneath this vault [. . .] they had run an iron stake through his middle, like a vampire, to prevent his rising' (91). The narrator describes the scene before him:

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

The text invokes from its outset the music of Marsyas – his flute, reed or pipe – as a disruptive force of moral anarchy and sensual licentiousness. Indeed, the spectral presence of Marsyas's music gestures towards the truth of the effigy's obscure identity long before the revelation at the text's conclusion. When the antiquary first meets the narrator he explains cryptically to him that 'this church has witnessed things like no other church in Christendom [. . .] and it still remembers them' (74). The narrator recalls: 'And as he spoke there suddenly mingled with the sough of the wind and the groans of the weather-vane, a shrill quavering sound as of pipers inside.' 'The organist trying his vox humana for tomorrow', the antiquary prosaically explains (75). Such 'shrill quavering' clearly evokes Marsyas's pipe (or 'aulos'). As in Lee's other supernatural tales – most notably 'A Wicked Voice' – this music attaches to the built environment as a spectral historical trace: that the church at Dunes 'remembers' the violent fate of Marsyas's effigy is witnessed by this musical haunting, just

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as, in 'A Wicked Voice', Zaffirino's ghostly voice haunts the stones of eighteenth-century Venice.

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

Lee's story bears certain similarities with Pater's 'Denys l'Auxerrois'. Like Pater's 'Imaginary Portrait', the story is narrated from the perspective of an inquisitive visitor who scrutinizes historical artefacts in order to decode their unsettling hidden identity. Both 'Denys' and 'Marsyas in Flanders' are responses to Heinrich Heine's 'Die Götter im Exil ('Gods in Exile', 1853).[101] Pater's essay 'Pico della Mirandola' (1871) opens with his translation of Heine's account of Apollo's return to Austria in the Middle Ages, in which Apollo is tortured and executed by superstitious countryfolk before apparently rising from the grave to escape further persecution (*SHR* 18–19). In this subgenre, as Stefano Evangelista has observed, characters from antiquity typically reappear to participate – either as perpetrator or as victim – in scenes of violence and trauma.[102] Such violence emerges from the tension between modern ethical codes (usually represented through oppressive Christian moralism) and Classical systems of value. Antiquity represents a liberating, if often terrifying, disruption of moral certainties, ultimately suggesting that the stability of the new moral order is at best superficial. Lee's 'Dionea' (1890), which recounts the apparent reincarnation of Venus in contemporary Italy, openly acknowledges such influence: in an attempt to deflect attention from the supernatural implications of the events he describes, the narrator insists that 'that rogue, Heinrich Heine, is entirely responsible for the existence of *Dieux en*

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Exil'.[103] Heine's influence on 'Marsyas in Flanders' is similarly clear. Both texts satirize the petty cruelty of the Middle Ages, recounting the quick recourse of 'ecclesiastical courts' to torture upon the rack. Lee's Marsyas, like Heine's Apollo, is mistaken by superstitious countryfolk for a vampire; while Apollo escapes a plan to 'impale [his body] on a stake', the effigy of Marsyas does not. In Heine's text, the music of Apollo – 'played so touchingly and sang with such music'[104] – is associated with an affective intensity that makes those who listen not only compulsively weep, but also ' f[a]ll sick'.[105] In Lee's story, merely the recollection of Marsyas's 'piping' is enough to induce those who have heard it to 'tremble and sob': this music 'freezes [their] blood' (88).

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

This interest in the embodied emotional force of Marsyas's music is prominent in the works of number of Victorian writers, an examination of which brings into sharper focus my central concern with music, desire and the regulation of the body. In Greek myth, Marsyas was a satyr, famous for his musical accomplishment on the *aulos*, a reed instrument. Confident in his skill, he challenged Apollo to a musical contest, to be judged by the Muses. Apollo was chosen as victor and, enraged by Marsyas's audacity, punished him by tying him to a tree and flaying him alive. Ovid's account, in Book VI of *Metamorphoses*, captures the horror of the satyr's visceral fate:

> And as he cries, the skin is stripped from his body
> until he's all entirely one wound:
> blood runs out everywhere, and his uncovered
> sinews lie utterly exposed to view;
> his pulsing veins were flickering, and you
> could number all his writhing viscera
> and the gleaming organs underneath his sternum.[106]

The contest between Apollo and Marsyas is a prevalent theme in aesthetic and Decadent writing, frequently used to dramatize both debates about the relationship between morality and music, the trauma of historical change, and the place of pain, suffering and violence in art more generally.[107] Lee was closely involved in the publication by her brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, of *Apollo and Marsyas, and Other Poems* in 1883, a collection that – in the words of John Addington Symonds – pits the 'remote, wild, pain-compelling, and orgiastic' realm of Marsyas against the 'pure, defined, and chastened melodies' of Apollo.[108] Lee-Hamilton's poem

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'On a Surf-Rolled Torso of Venus', in which a fragment of a 'mutilated Venus' is washed ashore, finds close parallels in 'Marsyas in Flanders'.[109] For the Oscar Wilde of 'De Profundis' (1897), the 'cry of Marsyas' represents the 'undertone of doubt and distress' and 'discontent' that characterizes the 'modern Art' of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Burne-Jones, or the 'deferred resolutions' of Chopin.[110] Significantly, in the years following his imprisonment Wilde styled himself as Marsyas: he describes the 'Ballad of Reading Gaol' (1897), for example, as 'wrung out of me, a cry of pain, the cry of Marsyas, not the song of Apollo', lamenting that 'life, that I have loved so much [. . .] has torn me like a tiger'.[111] The degradations and deprivations of Wilde's imprisonment were such that the imagery of a broken body, recalling Marsyas's torment, is scarcely anything less than literal.

While for Wilde Marsyas's sufferings resonate with his own experience of bodily pain, from a psychoanalytic perspective Marsyas's flayed skin also makes him a powerfully suggestive emblem of the queerness of a selfhood defined by its resistance to the disciplinary forces that inscribe sexual identity upon the body. Cast ashore by the waves, the effigy of Marsyas emerges from the symbolic psychic fluidity of the ocean to find itself in a world of insistent definitional fixity. In Ovid's account, while Marsyas's visceral torture at the hands of Apollo speaks of the process through which power operates on the body, the removal of his skin simultaneously offers the promise of a dispersed, unbounded, albeit destructive and painful subjectivity that resists the disciplinary force of such power. Lee's text focusses on ultimately misconceived attempts to frustrate such dispersal. For psychoanalytic theorists such as Didier Anzieu, the boundaries of the skin play a central role in the emergence of the self. Human subjectivity, Anzieu argues, is generated through the sense of touch; the earliest of embryonic and infantile tactile experiences lay the foundations of an ego that is bounded by the receptive skin that surrounds it.[112] For Michel Serres, the skin is the organ through which all sensory perception is ultimately grounded; as the location 'where soul and world commingle', it represents the privileged site at which the self is formed through its contact with the world.[113] As Steven Connor observes, the skin literally gives us 'both the shape of the world and our shape in it'.[114] The breach of the skin's boundaries represents, in this respect, a moment of queer disruption: a dissolution of the coherence and boundedness of the desiring self.

Such an idea is anticipated in John Ruskin's study of Greek myth, *The Queen of the Air*. Here, it is precisely the flaying of Marsyas's skin that

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makes him so unsettling a figure of music's disruptive potential. For Ruskin, the figures of Apollo and Marsyas – following Plato's delineation in the *Republic* – embody music's power of 'moral instruction' and 'moral degradation' respectively.[115] Apollo's music is 'limiting and restraining', 'measured and designed', 'intellectual'; Marsyas's music is 'brutal, or meaningless', 'degraded in its passion'.[116] '[W]hen Apollo prevails', Ruskin recounts, 'he flays Marsyas, taking the limit and external bond of his shape from him, which is death, without touching the mere muscular strength, yet shameful and dreadful in dissolution'. Marsyas's music therefore represents something formless but nevertheless empowered: it has lost its 'shape' but retains its threatening 'muscular strength'.[117] For Apollo to take 'the limit and external bond of [Marsyas's] shape from him' has implications that Ruskin immediately disowns; this, he insists, 'is death'. Yet the image nonetheless suggests a liberated, unbounded sense of dispersed selfhood: the division between internal and external, self and other, is dissolved; no longer confined within the 'limit' of the skin, the self becomes *limitless*. That Marsyas's 'shape' is held in place by an 'external *bond*' suggests not just the imposition of structure upon the physical body, but also the disciplinary functions of confinement, imprisonment, regulation: the body bound in shackles. Freed from this 'bond', from the imposition of 'shape', Marsyas becomes an emblem of queer resistance to the disciplinary 'shapes' imposed on the body through discourse.

In Lee's 'Marsyas in Flanders', the contorting body of Marsyas thus emerges as a potent symbol 'for the resistance to the disciplinary mechanism of Foucauldian 'biopower'.[118] The text dwells insistently on the effigy's shifting movements: it bends 'violently' in an 'effort to break loose' (77); its 'violent contortions' are an attempt to 'spurn the alien cross' (78); its 'writhing' (80) body assumes an 'attitude of frightful convulsion' (82). Such movements represent increasingly desperate attempts to break free from the apparently torturous imposition of Christian law on this pagan body. With Marsyas mounted on the cross, his flaying at the hands of Apollo is reconfigured as a crucifixion. As an emblem of the disruptive excess of music, Marsyas refuses the imposition of Christian law – he writhes in agony when mounted on a crucifix – in a manner that has suggestive parallels with resistance to the disciplinary force of regulatory discourses through which, in Foucault's foundational account, the homosexual subject was brought into knowledge in the late nineteenth century.[119]

In the course of their correspondence relating to *Sexual Inversion* (1897), John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis developed their

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ideas about the nature of female same-sex desire with reference to the 'lesbianism' of Vernon Lee and Mary Robinson, both of whom Symonds knew well.[120] 'I am given to understand – and can well believe', Ellis wrote, 'that "Vernon Lee" is very homosexual. I can scarcely say that I know her; and I suppose it is very doubtful whether she would be able or willing to take any scientific interest in the matter.'[121] Symonds confirmed that, in his opinion, Lee was 'certainly a case', noting that she went 'nearly erotically mad as it is possible to be' when Mary Robinson announced her plans to marry James Darmesteter.[122] Postulating 'a kind of pseudo-sexual oppositeness of character' as typical in relationships between 'inverts', Ellis drew upon the contrast he observed between the 'straightforward "Vernon Lee"' – 'addressing a meeting, as I best remember seeing her, with her hand on her hip' – and the 'ultra-feminine kittenish little Mary D.' Having cited Lee as an example, Ellis proceeds to conclude that it is 'quite clear' that 'congenitally inverted women are nearly always to some extent masculine in character'.[123] Akin to Marsyas mounted on the cross, Lee's body becomes ensnared in the pathologizing discourse of sexology. In observing her commandingly 'straightforward' position as she speaks and her apparently 'masculine' stance with her 'hand on her hip', Symonds and Ellis impose the pathologizing label of 'lesbianism' onto Lee's body through their enumeration of her gestures and posture. A woman's body scrutinized for meaning by two men determined to categorize and control it: this anecdote is perhaps so common as to be unremarkable, yet it serves here as a useful reminder of the experiential reality that underpinned the emergence of categories of sexual identity in this period.

We might see further parallels between the disciplined body of Marsyas and discourses of sexual abnormality both in the paranoid fears of 'vampirism' that attach to the figure of Marsyas in Lee's text and in the associations between lesbianism and vampirism pervasive in late nineteenth-century literature.[124] The superstitious townsfolk in Lee's text perform a final desperate act of disciplinary control when they 'run an iron stake through [Marsyas's] middle, like a vampire, to prevent his rising' (91). This represents another instance of mythic *mis*identification. His flayed body – its boundaries broken – render him an emblem of queerness: of the messiness of identity that is mistaken, misattributed, failed, confused.

Music and the Body in Vernon Lee's Psychological Aesthetics

The concerns raised in 'Marsyas in Flanders' about the emotional power of music and its ability to destabilize and disrupt identity arise in a different

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manner in the other writings that preoccupied Lee around the turn of the twentieth century. Around the same time as Lee was writing 'Marsyas', she was also pursuing work in the field of psychological aesthetics that sought to account for the significance of the body in the phenomenological experience of the aesthetic. In recent years, critics such as Carolyn Burdett and Kirsty Martin have come to recognize Lee's wide-ranging and sophisticated engagement with and contribution to contemporary debates about psychological aesthetics prominent across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[125] Questions relating to the embodied nature of aesthetic response – the physiological reaction of the body to art – are central to Lee's concern with the perception of aesthetic beauty. While much attention has been paid to the significance of Lee's psychological aesthetics to her engagement with visual arts, the manner in which they come to inform her musical aesthetics has been overlooked. As Carlo Caballero has convincingly argued in his influential reading of Lee's 'A Wicked Voice', the 'vivid musical fantasies at play in her fiction' frequently serve to subvert the schematic rigidity of 'the closed system of "differences"' evident in her non-fictional writings on music.[126] The central place afforded to the body in Lee's writings on musical aesthetics allows for them to be placed in productive tension with 'Marsyas in Flanders', a story which strategically embraces music's associations not with the embodied perception of form, but with a *disembodiment* aligned with music's masochistic emotional excess.

The conceptual insights of Lee's psychological aesthetics into the relationship between music and the body are important, though occasionally obscure, and so warrant a careful excursus here. Central to Lee's account of the mechanism of aesthetic experience is the idea of 'empathy', translated from the German *Einfühlung*, meaning literally 'feeling oneself into the place' of an external object. As Burdett's work has shown, the concept of *Einfühlung* was central to attempts by German materialist psychologists, such as Friedrich Theodor Vischer and Theodor Lipps, to conceptualize the manner in which the external world becomes meaningful through processes in which we 'project' the self into the objects we perceive.[127] The origins of Lee's work on psychological aesthetics lie in her close romantic relationship with Clementina (Kit) Anstruther-Thomson. Lee and Anstruther-Thomson devoted much of their time together to looking at works of art and discussing their intellectual, emotional and bodily responses to them.[128] The culmination of around a decade of visits to galleries, churches and museums was the essay 'Beauty and Ugliness', published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1897.[129] In the course of their

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relationship, Lee became convinced that Anstruther-Thomson's body was peculiarly responsive to the art and architecture she observed: when looking at a work of art, her breathing, pulse, posture and muscular tension altered. Lee encouraged Anstruther-Thomson to write down an account of her response, so as to nurture an awareness of her bodily reactions.

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

Lee's concept of the relationship between the body and aesthetic emotion follows that first set out by William James in his 1884 essay 'What Is an Emotion?'[130] James understood an 'emotion' to be the perception of physiological disturbance prompted by our surrounding environment. Earlier Victorian models of emotional response suggested that one's mental perception of an event gives rises to an emotion, and that this emotion in turn causes a bodily response: for example, *I cry because I feel the emotion of sorrow*. James reverses this: the emotion, he claims, is a product of the bodily change precipitated by the perception of an external event. *I feel sorry because I cry. I feel afraid because I tremble*. 'By an obvious analogy', Lee argued, 'the feeling of the various muscular strains, changes of equilibrium and respiratory and circulatory changes, might be considered as constituting the special aesthetic emotion'.[131] The body becomes the sole site of emotional production: 'a purely disembodied human emotion', James wrote, 'is a nonentity'.[132]

In 'Beauty and Ugliness', Lee focusses primarily on the plastic arts: the realization of form through bodily 'projection' is achieved through the *visual* observation of material objects, rather than, for example, *listening* to the immaterial form of music. But the manner in which she applies these ideas to music has important implications for her understanding of the

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relationship between the perception of musical form and embodied experience. Lee's 'Recent Aesthetics', published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1904, provides an overview of contemporary European developments in aesthetics and psychology.[133] In particular, it argues for similarities between the theory of aesthetic response propounded by Lee and those formulated by the psychologists Karl Groos and Theodor Lipps. In this account, Lee broadly dismisses the 'backward condition' of 'the aesthetics of music' in terms of the field's engagement with 'the general advance of psychology'. Empirical understanding of the listener's response to music is hampered by 'the special difficulty of self-observation and the hopeless confusion of the terms employed': the challenge of becoming conscious of one's physical reactions to musical stimulus and expressing clearly in language the nature of that reaction. Lee acknowledges the contributions of Carl Stumpf, Eduard Hanslick and Lionel Dauriac to psychological accounts of musical aesthetics.[134] But she ultimately concludes, somewhat dismissively, that 'little progress' has been made in the field since Edmund Gurney's 'masterly analysis', *The Power of Sound*, 'refuted all existing explanations without substituting any new ones'.[135] Lee turns then to focus solely on 'the arts appealing to the eye' on the grounds that they have 'proved less refractory to psychological investigation'. [136]

Only in a later essay, 'The Riddle of Music', does Lee turn to address directly the application of ideas of *Einfühlung* to music. The aim of Lee's essay is to bring into line the formalism of Edmund Gurney and Eduard Hanslick with the 'most plausible modern system of aesthetics' – that is, those systems of 'psychological aesthetics' formulated by Lipps, Groos and Lee herself. It is interesting to track the parallels that Lee draws between the ideas of these figures in the marginalia to the books on music collected in her personal library. Her annotations to Gurney's *The Power of Sound*, made between December 1895 and March 1898, and those to Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, made in 1901, make repeated reference to the similarities of the ideas expressed by these authors about aesthetic emotion and embodiment to those of William James, Lipps and Groos.[137] Having broadly dismissed the significance of listeners' 'emotional' response to music, Lee turns to consider the question raised by the 'more noble half of the art': 'how musical form can affect us as beautiful or not; and how, apart from all coincident emotional suggestion, it should affect us at all'.[138] Lee's 'speculation' on this topic takes her back to the idea of 'empathy'. Such a concept, Lee makes clear, is equally applicable to the formal appreciation of both visual arts and music. A statue, for example, may indeed have a material existence that a piece of music lacks, but this

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materiality does not constitute the form, for the form of the statue 'exists only in our act of reconstituting it through measurement, comparison, and reference to dimension and direction' – that is, the act of *feeling oneself into* the musical object. 'Musical form and visual form', Lee suggests, 'have in common the essential fact of requiring a creative and recreative action of the mind, both being combinations of modes of movement and force, both being referable to our experiences of effort, impact, resistance, direction, velocity, and rhythm'.[139] In other words, when listening to music, we project into that music our bodily experiences of physical movement, drawing comparisons between the music we hear and our mental recollections of how our body moves. In this sense, we perceive musical form in spatial terms, akin to our appreciation of the lines and curves of a statue.

This act of self-projection, Lee argues, accounts for the sense of self-affirmation, vitality and moral healthiness arising from our encounter with the beauty of musical form. In the encounter with beautiful musical forms, the body becomes the site for the assertion and renewal of the self. Significantly, though, Lee's physiological aesthetics are silent as to the bodily effect of music that moves the listener not through its formal beauty, but through overwhelming *emotional* effect. What would it mean for the listener to project the self into the ecstatic emotional music of Marsyas, rather than the proportioned music of Apollo? Lee offers a response not in her technical aesthetic writings, such as 'Beauty and Ugliness', but in her impressionistic essays that capture the phenomenological experience of aesthetic response. These essays repeatedly invoke masochistic imagery of the torn or wounded body to suggest the threat that the emotional intensity of certain forms of music – in particular, that of Richard Wagner – pose to the viability of the self. Such music, as noted in Chapter 1, effects a 'stripping away' of the soul's 'bone and muscle', akin to being 'paralysed' by a vivisector and 'turned inside out'.[140] In 'Chapelmaster Kreisler', Lee describes, in similar terms, those isolated moments of 'formless, meaningless' emotional excess in Mozart's operas that 'pierce the nerves like a blade'. They represent a 'return to the [...] physically touching music of early ages', achieving their effects not through formal beauty, but by something akin to a haptic intensity felt through the body.[141] This music gets under skin – piercing, stripping, cutting – in a manner that places the listener in the position of Marsyas as he is flayed.

In 'Marsyas in Flanders', then, Lee turns tentatively to sympathize with the flayed Marsyas as a figure of queer musical masochism. Her avowed preference for music of formal balance and restraint over emotional

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intensity and excess is momentarily suspended in order to strategically embrace music's affective power to dislodge, refuse or challenge the way in which the desiring body is disciplined through sexological discourses. The music of Marsyas offers an alternative form of (dis)embodiment that resists the inscription of 'homosexual' identity. Lee's 'queer comradeship' with Marsyas, in other words, is not one that seeks a redemptive community of homosexual 'outlaws', but rather resists those essentialist terms upon which such an identitarian community might be founded.

Arthur Symons: Disembodied Music

Music in the works of Arthur Symons becomes associated with a masochistic desire to become 'inhuman': to abandon the materiality of the body, and embrace instead a dispersed subjectivity defined by 'disembodiment'. In 'The Decadent Movement in Literature' (1893), Symons offers a well-known summation of the fleeting mode of subjectivity that such writing evokes: 'to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul'.[142] Music, he suggests elsewhere, is 'more perfectly disembodied', it is 'the one absolutely disembodied art': it has, he paraphrases Pater, 'got rid of its responsibilities to its material'. While the *literature* of decadence maintains some connection, even if a loosened one, to the particularities of subjectivity, tied as it is to a 'human soul', music, in contrast, might facilitate a more complete abandonment of the human subject.[143]

In 'Christian Trevalga' (1902) and 'Pachmann and the Piano' (1902) Symons explores the implications of music's 'perfect disembodiment' for the figure of the musician, presenting a mode of subjectivity defined by its complete 'impersonality'.[144] For Karl Beckson, following Jan B. Gordon, 'Christian Trevalga' is 'an allegory of the perils of a dehumanized aestheticism', while Freeman convincingly reads Symons's text as dramatizing a 'profound creative, psychological and sexual crisis' in the life of its author.[145] When read alongside Symons's other writings on music, 'Christian Trevalga' emerges as propounding a model of 'disembodied' subjectivity that withdraws entirely from the surrounding world, effacing a sense of personality, so as to exist only in the entirely abstract world of music. Such texts speak powerfully to those aspects of contemporary queer theory that have sought to explore modes of subjectivity defined by refusal, disappearance and withdrawal.[146] The queerness of the 'musical' self that drifts from the body lies in its refusal of a stable and solid identity and its rejection of social connectedness.

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

While Symons was largely self-taught, and generally self-deprecating about his musical talents, he nevertheless enjoyed playing a range of challenging repertoire on the piano throughout his life. As a youngster of nineteen, he enthused about his 'passion for Schumann' when playing *Carnaval*, while his particular love for the music of Chopin is attested to by his insistence in 1891 that George Moore, who was living nearby, must tune his piano so that he could play the composer's music to him.[147] He began playing the piano in 1880 at the age of fifteen, after having listened with rapt enthusiasm to a performance by his German music teacher of the Funeral March from Chopin's Second Sonata (Op. 35). The young Symons appears to have lacked the patience for systematic musical practice – he soon abandoned 'scales and exercises' – but he immersed himself in the study of music more generally: 'when I was not reading a book I was reading a piece of music at the piano'.[148]

While Symons's immediate social circle in later life was primarily literary, he nevertheless counted among his friends the noted early music revivalist Arnold Dolmetsch and the prodigiously musically talented Aubrey Beardsley, and was greatly admired by James Huneker, one of New York's most influential music critics. He was an enthusiastic Wagnerian who travelled to Bayreuth in August 1897 and August 1899, and he particularly enjoyed playing transcriptions on the piano of Wagner's operas.[149] When a young Irish writer named James Joyce visited him in his London flat in December 1902, Symons entertained him by

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playing the Good Friday music from Wagner's *Parsifal*.[150] Symons wrote extensively on a variety of musical topics for several newspapers and journals in the early years of the twentieth century, ranging from evocative accounts of music-hall in *The Star* and *The Fortnightly Review* to expositions of Wagner's theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the *Quarterly Review* and to short notices on recitals and symphonic concerts in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*.[151] He collected his most significant pieces on classical music in two books specifically dedicated to the non-literary arts: *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906) and *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (1909).[152]

'Christian Trevalga'

Symons completed 'Christian Trevalga' in the months after he was appointed classical music and drama critic for the *Academy* in early 1902. The story has its origins in Symons's attendance at a performance by the pianist Vladimir de Pachmann in February of that year. While the text is primarily a response to Pachmann's playing, it is also at least partially autobiographical, as Symons himself acknowledged in the unpublished manuscript 'The Genesis of Spiritual Adventures'.[153] The discussion that follows traces the masochistic self-abandonments that come to mark the experience of music in 'Christian Trevalga', before suggesting how the text might be understood in the light of Symons's negotiations of Pachmann's queer sexuality.

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

The alienation of Christian from his mother is manifested both through their respective artistic activities – sculpture and music – and in their differing responses to listening to music. Symons's text sets in opposition the tangible materiality of Christian's mother's artistry with that of her son's disembodied aesthetic engagement: her 'tiny fingers' can 'pick out

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form', while his fingers at the piano 'pick out sound' (95). Christian's mother – 'so queer, half-absorbed, and busy about nothing' (94) – obsessively occupies herself with moulding small pellets of bread into the sculptural forms of 'little nude figures exquisitely proportioned' (93). While clearly eccentric, her sculptural artistry is nevertheless grounded in the social world of the familial and domestic, and the materiality of recreating and representing the body. She works at the kitchen table at teatime, her son observing her perfecting with her fingers the figurines' 'limbs and shoulder-blades' (93), rubbing milk into the bread to smooth over the cracks. The sculptural transformation of bread into a collection of figurines modelled on Classical statuary effects a pagan reimagining of a Eucharistic transformation. Christian's obsessive piano practice, in contrast, sees him withdraw entirely from domestic sociability: he 'shuts himself' in a room 'at the top of the house' and has to be 'dragged out unwillingly to his meals, grudging the time when he had to sit quiet at the table' (98).

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

Despite his attempts to overcome through romance his isolation from the social world that surrounds him, Christian's disembodied musical abstraction renders him incapable of fulfilling, erotic love. His relationship

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with Rana Vaughan – an aspiring young pianist, in awe of his playing – comes closest to feeling like love, though he still keeps her at a distance. Symons's text presents her influence on Christian as one that fleetingly allows him to feel physically connected with the material world: 'in her, for a time, he seemed to touch real things' (105). Confronted with Rana's enthusiasm for 'all the beautiful and pleasant things [. . .] in life', Christian feels 'withered, shrivelled up, in body and soul, beside her magnificent acceptance of the world' (106). While she can enjoy the pleasures of 'every form of art' and the bodily thrill of physical activities such as skating and dancing, he remains a 'prisoner of his own fingers' (108), unable to surrender himself to anything more tangible than the abstract lines and curves of musical form.

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

As Christian remains attentive only to the abstract 'idea' of the music itself, his own 'personal feelings' come to mean 'less and less' to him, 'until he seemed hardly to have any personal feelings at all' (97). He consciously rejects those models of musical understanding arising from German Romanticism that afford to music the power of most fully articulating human subjectivity. Music, he concludes, is 'something more' than 'the soul of humanity expressing itself in melody' or 'the audible dramatisation of human life' (96). In its place, he asserts an extreme counterposition that aligns music with the effacement and denial of embodied subjectivity. By subsuming the self entirely into the aesthetically autonomous realm of absolute music, Christian's relationship with music becomes one of

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complete self-denial, in which his embodied experience is entirely eradicated by the impersonality of abstract aesthetic production.

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

The depletion of Christian's sensorium is marked not just by a dwindling interest in the visual but also by a shift in his perception of touch. Symons's text turns repeatedly to metaphors of failed tactile contact to characterize Christian's gradual loss of a sense of embodied selfhood. Preoccupied with perfecting musical details 'hardly *tangible* enough to put into words' (109, italics added), he finds that his awareness of Rana Vaughan's living reality becomes so illusory that in their final estrangement she 'drift[s] away from him' (109), wraith-like and insubstantial. With her departure, Christian loses his 'last hold on the world' (109). In her place, it is 'sound' that '[begins] to take hold of him, like a slave who has overcome his master' (110). As Christian descends into delirium, he wanders the streets of London, hoping that immersing himself in a crowd of bodies will allow him to 'take hold of something real': 'he seemed somehow to be slipping away from himself, dissolving into an uneasy vacancy' (113): '"I can see no reason," he said to himself, "why I am here rather than there, why these atoms which know one another so little, or have lost some recognition of themselves, should coalesce in this particular body, standing still where all is in movement! [. . .] I am losing my sense of material things"' (114). Most strikingly, Christian's detachment is marked by an increasing desire for a complete disembodiment in his musical performance. His preoccupation with the invisible formal structures of musical sound – rather than the tangible, material world of the visual – means that his experience of his body's situatedness in the world that surrounds him is always a precarious one: 'He had never known what it was to feel the earth

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solid under his feet' (91). At the text's opening, Christian waits to hear from the doctor 'whether he might still keep his place in the world' (91), a threat that speaks as much about a paranoia relating to the dissolution of the self into insubstantial immateriality as it does about the fear of incarceration on grounds of insanity. Indeed, the only aspect of Christian's experience that acts to underwrite his connection with the material world that surrounds him is the tactile contact between his body and the piano: 'had the man gone out of him [. . .] when his fingers were no longer on the keyboard?', he asks himself (91).

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

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

Symons evokes the delicacy of pianistic technique that he considers ideal for playing the music of Chopin. In his sketch of Pachmann's playing, he suggests that Chopin must be played with 'a tremulous delicacy of intensity, as if it were a living thing on whose nerves one were operating, and as if every touch might mean life or death'.[154] Reflecting on his own pianistic technique, Symons noted, 'I learned to touch the piano as if one were caressing a living being [. . .] in answered me in an intimate and affectionate voice.'[155] In these texts both Chopin's music and the instrument upon which it is played are compared to an infinitely vulnerable, sensitive physical body. The pianist's fingers are afforded the destructive ability to inflict pain, and the pianist himself is overcome with a mix of terror and guilt about doing so. In this fear of destructive tactile contact, Christian withdraws further from embodied materiality. He implicitly envisages an ideal mode of performance in which the pianist's touch becomes so delicately unobtrusive that it need not make contact with the piano at all.

Such is Christian's sense of detachment that he recalls the earlier events of his life as if watching 'an act of a play', unsure when the 'curtain was to come down'. As Symons's text progresses, the bar lines that mark the division of the music Christian plays become transformed into the 'bars'

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that 'imprison' him in the abstract world of music (108). Just 'as he would never be able to look through the bars' (101) of music to find a concrete, communicable musical meaning beneath them, he is likewise unable to see through the 'bars' of a prison of perception that renders opaque to him anything that extends beyond the formal abstraction of music.

Vladimir de Pachmann

As noted above, 'Christian Trevalga' represents an amalgam of aspects of Symons's own experiences with his recollections of the playing of the Polish concert pianist Vladimir de Pachmann. Symons also wrote several articles on Pachmann, among which are 'Pachmann and Paderewski' (1908) and 'Pachmann: Pianist' (1915).[156] Interestingly, there is little in Symons's accounts of Pachmann to suggest the eccentric buffoon disparaged by the likes of George Bernard Shaw, who referred dismissively to his 'well-known pantomimic performance, with accompaniments by Chopin'.[157] Even while acknowledging Pachmann's status as one the great Chopin interpreters, James Huneker labelled him the 'Chopinzee' on account of the extravagant gestures and grimaces he exhibited while he played.[158]

More significantly for this discussion, Pachmann's homosexuality seems to have been something of an open secret in musical circles. As Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko observe in their biography of Pachmann, the pianist was surprisingly indiscreet about his same-sex desires. In concerts, he was known to single out particularly 'handsome, well dressed young men' in the audience, addressing them and playing to them directly.[159] There is 'no doubt', Blickstein and Benko suggest, that Pachmann enjoyed an 'active [...] homosexual life as he toured, indulging in casual sex'.[160] In a review of November 1893, James Huneker complained that Pachmann played the 'Chiarina' movement of Robert Schumann's *Carnaval* 'as if [he] was venting his *hatred of the sex* upon poor Clara in F minor'.[161] Huneker's description might be dismissed as merely a reflection of the pervasive casual misogyny of its time. Yet it is interesting to note that Huneker would reproach Tchaikovsky – a composer whose queer sexuality caused the critic some discomfort – in similar terms a number of years later: 'he was [...] morbid in his *dislike of women*'.[162] In both instances, sexual deviance is signalled not by a preference for same-sex attraction, but rather by an aversion to the opposite sex.

It seems unlikely that Symons was completely unaware of Pachmann's sexual reputation when he came to write about him in 1902. Despite the

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fact that Symons did not see Pachmann perform until February 1902, Pachmann had been playing regularly in London since his debut in May 1882. If such gossip was circulating in London's artistic community, it seems likely that Symons himself would be privy to it, not least because he was close friends with many of those who wrote extensively about London's queer subcultures around that time. Symons may have perhaps remained uncertain about the nature of Pachmann's same-sex desire when he wrote 'Christian Trevalga' and 'Pachmann: Pianist' in the opening years of the twentieth century. His encounter with the pianist in December 1915 certainly removed all doubt. When he and Symons met in London, Pachmann 'uttered Rabelaisian words [...] of an unspeakable nature', a scene recounted by Symons in a letter to his friend and benefactor John Quinn:

> He: *I love Fucking*: with an immense chuckle. I: Yes, I also. *Mais fornication simple et extraordinaire!* Whereupon he actually hugged me in his arms, rubbed his cheek on mine – with bursts of Rabelaisian laughter. I veritably imagine his desire was – for *me* – to sleep with him that night! (I might – I might not, as [Augustus] John might have said on such an occasion!)[163]

Here, Symons playfully toys with the idea of indulging Pachmann's sexual advances. Yet in both 'Christian Trevalga' and his other writings on Pachmann, Symons engages in a strategic disavowal of the possibility of such homosexual desire by aligning music with a disembodied, formalist detachment. Christian's disembodied musicality is placed in opposition to prevalent associations between musicality, emotionalism and sexual deviance (as explored in Chapter 1). In an oscillating movement of attraction and repulsion, 'Christian Trevalga' and 'Pachmann and the Piano' see Symons merge aspects of himself with Pachmann, while ultimately negating the threat of Pachmann's queerness by insisting on the 'disembodied' nature of his artistry. In Symons's accounts, Pachmann's performances are marked by a complete effacement of subjectivity: in the 'very serious game' of music-making, in the process of becoming the 'comrade' of music, he becomes 'inhuman'.[164] He has 'sold [his] soul for beauty' – a beauty that effaces both the material body and the embodied self: it 'is not of the soul, is not of the flesh'.[165] In characterizing this 'soulless' beauty, Symons returns repeatedly to images that speak of a hard, detached objectivity that evoke an emotionally desiccated restraint and calculated intensity: Pachmann's 'fingers have in them a cold magic'; his playing is marked by a 'frozen tenderness' akin to a 'bright crystal or a diamond'; his music is like 'fiery ice' that 'chills us a little' as we listen.[166] Most striking is Symons's repeated insistence on the 'inhumanity' of both Pachmann and

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the music he plays: 'Pachmann is inhuman, and, music too, is inhuman.'[167] His playing has in it 'something fantastically inhuman'; he has 'venture[d] outside humanity, into music'. Pachmann's command of the keys under his fingers is dependent on a paradoxical denial of the fleshly reality of the physical body: where his 'music turns towards humanity it slips from between his hands'.[168] In Symons's texts, music's 'inhumanity' represents the demands of an extreme aesthetic autonomy in which the 'obliteration' of content, as it disappears into form, also stands for the masochistic abandonment of the self.

In 'Beethoven' (1906), Symons celebrates the musician in similar terms as the ideal of the 'impersonal artist'.[169] The musician, he suggests, 'can do without life', can remain entirely 'uncontaminated by life'.[170] Like Christian's, Beethoven's musical genius is a product of his total solipsistic withdrawal from the social world that surrounds him. His 'waking life [is] a kind of somnambulism', for he is 'concerned only with [...] the inner world'.[171] His success as a composer is predicated on this total 'impersonal' detachment: the only periods in his life marked by 'an interruption in his unceasing labour' were those where 'personal emotion gripped him, and he could not loosen the grasp'.[172] Such is the extent to which Beethoven's artistic success is contingent on complete detachment that 'it is well for him', Symon's text concludes, 'if he never awakens'.[173] Symons similarly characterizes Pachmann as playing Chopin 'somnambulistically'.[174] In characterizing these musical figures as 'somnambulist[s]' – existing perpetually on the margins between sleep and wakefulness – Symons gestures to Walter Pater's similar evocation of an idealized 'aesthetic type' in his 'Poems by William Morris' (1868):'Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them. Surely, such loves were too fragile and adventurous to last more than for a moment.'[175] Here, Pater's characterization of the culture of Provençal love approaches the type of personality he describes in the broadly contemporaneous essay 'Diaphaneité', delivered to the Old Mortality Society in Oxford in 1864. Symons, an enthusiastic acolyte of Pater, would almost certainly have read both pieces carefully: Pater's review of Morris was republished as 'Aesthetic Poetry' in 1889 in *Appreciations*, which Symons reviewed appreciatively in the *Athenaeum*, while 'Diaphaneité' was published for the first time in *Miscellaneous Studies* in 1895.[176]

In the works of his late style, Symons suggests, Beethoven articulates most completely this sense of aesthetic impersonal detachment. The

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imperative for constant refinement, as aesthetic form itself moves towards an ultimate state of disappearance, stages at the level of the aesthetic the masochistic self-denial desired by the psyche. This music is the product of a 'master who has proceeded by one exclusion after another, until he has refined sound to its last shade, or sharpened it to its ultimate point'.[177] In Beethoven's last string quartets – No. 12 in E flat major, Op. 127, to No. 16 in F major, Op. 135 – Symons suggests that 'form is so completely mastered that form, as limit, disappears, and something new, strange, incalculable, arises and exists'.[178] Once again, Symons's imagery of sculpted refinement, of disappearance and effacement, recalls that of Pater.

Elsewhere in his writings on music, Symons presents a musical ideal defined in terms of disintegration, vaporization and disappearance: the solidity of the material body eschewed in favour of the dispersion of light, breath and air. In Symons's portrait of Paderewski, he suggests that the pianist – a performer best known for an energetic, theatrical style quite different from Pachmann's – is at his best when playing Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata 'impersonally', rather than Liszt's Sonata in B minor with 'so much personal abandonment'.[179] In these moments of 'impersonality', Paderewski is transformed into 'a faithful and obedient shadow', appearing, as if observed 'from a great distance', like an 'apparition', his aspect 'mysteriously [. . .] full of light'.[180] Paderewski, in this respect, becomes akin to one of what Heather Love identifies as Pater's 'diaphanous types': a subject defined by its shrinking self-effacement.[181] While, for Pater, music is defined by the airy diffuseness of 'aspiration', Symons presents Paderewski's Beethoven in terms that similarly evoke the movement of breath: 'his playing is in the true sense an *inspiration*'.[182] In his essay 'The Meiningen Orchestra', Symons once again turns to a metaphor of breath, drawing an explicit comparison between the abstract purity of the eponymous ensemble's musical performance style and that of Pachmann. Here, the 'faint, delicate music' of these players 'just came into came into existence, breathed a little, and was gone'.[183]

Musical Disembodiment: Beyond the Queer Touch

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

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

In 'Beethoven', the composer's complete 'somnambulistic' withdrawal from the world allows him to remove himself from the queer temptation posed by his '*unspeakable* nephew' (italics added). It would, of course, be reductive to insist too readily on reading every reference to the 'unspeakable' in post-Wilde trial literature as a coded reference to what E. M. Forster's Maurice calls '"an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort"'.[184] Yet in the case of Beethoven's nephew, there is contemporaneous evidence to suggest that he was associated in queer subcultures with some form of homosexual scandal. Edward Prime-Stevenson's *The Intersexes*, for example, attributes to Beethoven an 'idealized homosexualism', suggesting that his 'unworthy nephew Carl [. . .] sought to extort money from [him], on threats to disclose an homosexual relationship'.[185] Symons's Beethoven retreats into the abstract world of absolute music in order to achieve an ascetic 'disembodiment' that effaces the threat of homosexual desire.

In 'A Reflection at a Dolmetsch Concert' (1909), Symons sets up in opposition to the 'inhuman' music of Pachmann and the 'impersonal' early music of Arnold Dolmetsch the 'pathetic' and 'disturbed' music of Tchaikovsky.[186] Symons's text repeatedly aligns Tchaikovsky's music with those markers of effeminacy which, as Alan Sinfield and Joseph Bristow have shown, became inextricably linked to same-sex desire in late Victorian England.[187] Tchaikovsky's 'feverish' music is defined by the 'touch of unmanliness'.[188] J. S. Bach's Passions articulate a 'vehement and mighty sorrow', a mode of emotional expression that, in its stern forcefulness, maintains a conventional masculine reserve. Tchaikovsky's expressions of grief are, in contrast, 'like the whimpering of a child'. He is incapable of emotional 'reticence' or 'self-control': overcome by his unhappiness, he 'weeps floods of tears' and 'beats his breast', unable to distance himself from the 'misery of the moment'.[189] In other respects, Symons derides the Slavic character of Tchaikovsky's music in terms that align it with

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discourses of degeneracy, disparaging the composer for 'deform[ing] the rhythms of nature with caprices of half-civilised impulses'.[190] The failure of Tchaikovsky's music, Symons suggests, lies precisely in his inability to achieve the emotional detachment that characterizes the artistry of Pachmann or Beethoven: incapable of immersing himself in 'abstract thought', Tchaikovsky can 'never get far enough from his nerves to look calmly at his own discontent'.[191]

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

> That year in London, the loneliness, poverty, labour of it; the great day of the competition, when he played behind the curtain, and Rubinstein, sitting among the professors, silenced every hesitation with his strong approval; the three years of hard daily work, the painful perfecting of everything that he had sketched out for himself; life, as he had lived it, a queer, silent, sullen, not unattractive boy, among the students in whom he took so little interest; all this passed before him in a single flash of memory. He had gone abroad, at the expense of the college; had travelled in Germany and Austria; had extorted the admiration of Brahms, who had said, 'I hate what you play, and I hate how you play it, but you play the piano.' Tschaikowsky was in Vienna; he had taken a warm personal liking to the unresponsive young Englishman, who seemed to be always frowning, and looking at you distrustfully from under his dark, overhanging eyebrows. It was not to the musician that he was unresponsive, as he was to the musician in Brahms, the German doctor of music in spectacles, that peered out of those learned, intellectual scores. He felt Tschaikowsky with his nerves, all that suffering music without silences, never still and happy, like most other music, at all events sometimes. But the man, when he walked arm in arm with him, seemed excessive, a kind of uneasy responsibility. (100–02)

Focalized through Christian's perspective, the preceding clauses are marked by quasi-anaphoric repetitions in the pluperfect tense ('he had sketched', 'he had lived', '[h]e had gone abroad', 'had travelled', etc.). When this formulation is repeated ('he had taken a warm personal liking'), the reader initially assumes that it sustains Christian's focalization, only for it to become apparent, when reference is made to the 'young Englishman', that the text has assumed the point of view of Tchaikovsky. Other indicators – 'seemed', 'you' – similarly draw the reader's attention to this unexpected shift in Symons's free indirect discourse. The change in

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focalization effects a momentary disorientation, tacitly inferring the queer implications of Tchaikovsky's 'warm personal liking' for the young man by positioning Christian as the object of the composer's gaze, while simultaneously hinting at Christian's own discomfort. The predatory Tchaikovsky, Symons's texts suggest, convinces himself that Christian is 'always [. . .] looking' at him, even if he ultimately remains 'distrustful' and 'unresponsive' to the composer's attention. While Christian feels the draw of Tchaikovsky's 'suffering music', he is repulsed by the 'excessive', 'uneasy' queer sexuality of 'the man'. If the 'nerves' that define Tchaikovsky's music align it with sexual degeneracy, Symons's reference to Tchaikovsky walking 'arm in arm' with Christian is similarly suggestive of the composer's sexual deviance. Oscar Wilde, for example, scored out Basil Hallward's reference to walking 'home from the club *arm in arm*' with Dorian when he came to redraft *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1891, tactfully removing some of the more homoerotically suggestive aspects of the 1890 text.[192] Later in the text, Christian is distressed by a dream which seems similarly preoccupied by the threat of the queer body. He finds himself 'on the island of Portland, among the convicts', where he sees an array of 'cucumber-frames on the ground, and several convicts were laid out asleep in each, half-naked, and packed together head to heel' (115). Bare male flesh is brought into close physical contact, surreally constrained within a structure associated with a conspicuously phallic vegetable. Symons's text surely gestures, if only obliquely, to the imprisonment of Wilde seven years before. Confronted with this sight, Christian suddenly 'remember[s] the woman' (115) and desperately seeks out Rana once again.

If Symons's text places Christian beyond the threatening queerness of Tchaikovsky, it is nevertheless curious to note the close parallels between the terms in which Symons describes Christian's appearance and those he would later use to evoke the appearance of John Addington Symonds. Christian is marked by 'the sympathetic sullenness of his face', defined by 'a certain painful sensibility which shot like distressed nerves across his cheeks and forehead and tugged at the restless corners of his eyelids' (96–97). In 1924 Symons would recollect 'the morbid, disquieting, nervous, contorted painful expression' written on the face of John Addington Symonds, dwelling in particular on the 'the abnormal, almost terrible fixity of his eyes, as restless as the man himself'.[193] In the figure of Christian, Symons conflates not only himself and the conspicuously queer Pachmann, but also the markers of the pathologized, deviant body that Symons observes in John Addington Symonds. Christian's 'enigmatical

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reluctance to speak out' (96) – his introverted, solipsistic inability to communicate – finds a curious parallel in John Addington Symonds's letter to Symons in June 1892, in which he laments that he had 'never spoken out' about his homosexuality.[194]

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

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