

# Queer Music in the Queen's Hall: *Teleny* and Decadent Musical Geographies at the *Fin de Siècle*

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the significance of music and musical performance in *Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal* (1893), an anonymous pornographic novel attributed by some scholars to Oscar Wilde. It draws upon historical material on late-Victorian concert venues, queer literary sub-cultures and sexology to illuminate the representation of musical spaces in the text. *Teleny* exists in two different versions: an English text, which is set in Paris, and a French text, which is set in London. The opening section of the article suggests that *Teleny's* dynamic engagement with cosmopolitan cultural exchange between Paris and London is brought into sharper focus by situating the musical performances in the novel in the precise built environment of London's Queen Hall. The second section explores the novel's concern with queer geographies (the Orient, Eastern Europe) in the context of other texts that address music and homosexual identity in the period. The third section examines the significance of space in the novel's presentation of musical listening, arguing that its focus on the materiality of sound and the haptic transmission of desire responds to sexological conceptions of embodied musical response by homosexual subjects. The significance of this sensory experience of listening is understood in the light of Sara Ahmed's theorization of 'queer phenomenology'. Finally, the article traces the significance of musical allusions to songs by Franz Schubert to show how they form part of the novel's broader concerns with the spatial articulation of same-sex desire and the representation of queer urban geographies.

**KEYWORDS:** music, homosexuality, sexology, pornography, decadence, touch, space, the senses, embodiment, Schubert, Paris, Oscar Wilde

In 1894 the publisher Leonard Smithers issued a prospectus for the pornographic novel *Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal*, which suggested to potential purchasers that the text should be understood as reflecting upon 'the subtle influence of *music and musicians* in connection with perverted sexuality'.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, he sought to capitalize on the prevalent association in *fin-de-siècle* literary and sexological discourses between certain aesthetic practices and sexual identities: '[s]how me a musician', asserted the writer Edward Prime-Stevenson, 'and show me a homosexual'.<sup>2</sup> As a text that is self-consciously engaged with the central place of music in queer sub-cultures, *Teleny* presents a useful case study for demonstrating the significance of the spatial dynamics of queer musical geographies in *fin-de-siècle* culture more broadly. Cultural geographers and architectural theorists have demonstrated that experiences

<sup>1</sup> Italics in original. Prospectus for *Teleny*, cited in Peter Mendes, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction in English, 1800–1930: A Bibliographical Study* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Prime-Stevenson [Xavier Mayne], *The Intersexes: A History of Similixualism as a Problem in Social Life* ([n.p.]: privately printed, 1908), p. 395.

of space are constitutive of individual and shared conceptions of subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> A number of studies have explored the significance of the places and spaces of queer sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* London – from Hyde Park to Jermyn Street, Piccadilly Circus to Soho Square.<sup>4</sup> Scholars have also examined the queer erotics of aesthetic encounter in Victorian art galleries and museums.<sup>5</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the queer geography of spaces in which Western art music was performed. The manner in which desiring subjects inhabit space is central to understanding the formation of queer musical sub-cultures at the *fin de siècle*: from the enclosed ‘box at the Opera’ in which Oscar Wilde’s Dorian hears in the overture to Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* a ‘presentation of the tragedy of his own soul’, to the domestic musical salons frequented by ‘swarm[s] of pallid *dilettanti* . . . destitute of any manly vigour or grit’, to the privacy of the Cambridge college bedroom in which E. M. Forster’s Maurice and Clive listen to a piano roll of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony (*Pathétique*).<sup>6</sup> Such musical spaces acted to shape queer listening practices marked by shifting patterns of proximity and distance, formality and intimacy, privacy and disclosure.

*Teleny* is a text designed for a sophisticated cosmopolitan coterie readership alert to the queer implications of its frequent cultural allusions, both to music and the other arts. It assumes that its readers participate in the shared interpretative dynamics of what Matthew Potolsky has called the ‘decadent republic of letters’: a community of readers sustained through shared practices of highly self-conscious aesthetic consumption.<sup>7</sup> The narrative of the novel focuses on a doomed love affair between Camille Des Grieux, a self-conscious Decadent aesthete, and René Teleny, a strikingly beautiful Hungarian virtuoso pianist. Narrated by way of a dialogue between Des Grieux and a subsequent lover, the text recounts an episodic series of graphic sexual encounters, involving both the central protagonists and a host of other minor characters. The opening of the novel recounts their first meeting, where Des Grieux listens enraptured to a recital by Teleny. As their love affair progresses, Des Grieux grows to feel neglected by Teleny, becoming increasingly convinced of the pianist’s infidelity. In a final moment of crisis, Des Grieux realizes that Teleny has been having affair with the aesthete’s own mother. Descending into temporary hysterical madness, he returns to his senses only to discover that Teleny has taken his own life. The novel is something of a generic hybrid: it incorporates a plot that is reminiscent of the most melodramatic of Victorian sensation fiction,

<sup>3</sup> See for example Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1990); David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds, *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1995); David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Edward Soja, *Post-modern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> See for example Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Morris B. Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Tauris, 2003); Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See for example Diana Maltz, ‘Engaging “Delicate Brains”: From Working-Class Enculturation to Upper-Class Lesbian Liberation in Vernon Lee and Kit Anstruther-Thomson’s Psychological Aesthetics’, in *Women and British Aestheticism*, ed. by Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), pp. 211–29.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 114; ‘Manliness in Music’, *The Musical Times*, 30 (August 1889), 460–461 (p. 461); E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, ed. by P. N. Furbank (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Potolsky, *The Decadent Republic of Letters: Taste, Politics, and Cosmopolitan Community from Baudelaire to Beardsley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

urbane repartee redolent of Wilde's dialogues, evocative descriptions of nocturnal cityscapes drawing on Zolaesque naturalism, and stock pornographic episodes that follow well-worn patterns in nineteenth-century erotic literature. What distinguishes the text is its fascinating representations of emergent forms of modern homosexual identity, and of the distinctive aesthetic and social practices of queer sub-communities at the close of the nineteenth century.

Recent discussion of *Teleny* has begun to examine the significance of the novel's representation of urban locales that were associated with non-normative sexual identities. Drawing parallels with Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Matt Cook situates *Teleny* in a West End that is 'not merely fashionable' but replete with 'other associations for those familiar with London's homoerotic history'.<sup>8</sup> Colette Colligan shows a similar sensitivity to the historical resonance of geography in her examination of the novel's material history, in which the location of publishers and bookshops associated with *Teleny*'s dissemination are understood to interact with the 'topography of desire' inherent in the text itself.<sup>9</sup> The discussion that follows examines the novel's engagement with geographical space in three distinct ways. Firstly, it locates the musical performances in the text in the precise built environment of London's Queen Hall in order to demonstrate *Teleny*'s dynamic engagement with cosmopolitan cultural exchange between London and Paris. Secondly, it examines the significance of space in the novel's presentation of musical listening, arguing that its focus on the materiality of sound and the haptic transmission of desire responds to sexological conceptions of embodied musical response by pathologized homosexual subjects. Thirdly, it traces the significance of musical allusions to songs by Franz Schubert to show how they form part of the novel's broader concern with the spatial articulation of same-sex desire and the representation of queer urban geographies.

### 1. TRANSNATIONAL LISTENING AT THE QUEEN'S HALL: MUSICAL DECADENCE BETWEEN LONDON AND PARIS

Issues of queer geography in *Teleny* are bound up with the complex textual history of the novel. As has been explored in detail by a number of scholars, the novel exists in both English and French versions, the former ostensibly set in Paris, the latter in London.<sup>10</sup> The earliest English edition of *Teleny* was published in 1893 in London by Leonard Smithers, a central figure in late nineteenth-century clandestine publishing who consistently championed the works of Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley.<sup>11</sup> In 1934, a French translation of *Teleny* was published in Paris by Charles Hirsch.<sup>12</sup> This translation was preceded by a 'Notice Bibliographique' written by Hirsch himself, who claimed to have based his translation on an original manuscript, passed by Smithers to a mutual friend named Duriège, who subsequently gave it to Hirsch.<sup>13</sup> Notably, Hirsch suggested that this manuscript was the product of the collective

<sup>8</sup> Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, pp. 95–121.

<sup>9</sup> Colette Colligan, 'Teleny, the Secret Touch, and the Media Geography of the Clandestine Book Trade (1880–1900)', in *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 215–38.

<sup>10</sup> For a summary of the principal variants, see John McRae, 'Introduction', in *Teleny* (London: GMP, 1986), and Mendes, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction*, p. 253.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Leonard Smithers's role in clandestine publishing see James G. Nelson, *Publisher to the Decadents: Leonard Smithers in the Careers of Beardsley, Wilde, and Dowson* (High Wycombe: Rivendale, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> *Teleny, Étude Psychologique, Traduit de l'anglais sur le manuscrit original révisé par l'auteur* (Paris: Charles Hirsch, 1934).

<sup>13</sup> It remains unclear which text should be regarded as the 'original' – the French text (1934) or the English text (1893). Certain passages in the English text show signs of being a poor translation from an earlier French text. However, there are passages in the French text where distinctly English idioms have been translated directly into French, in a manner that suggests an English source text. The competing status of the texts is reflected in subsequent publication history. Winston Leyland based his 1984 edition on Hirsch's 1934 French edition, repeating the claim that it was close 'to

efforts of a group of writers, one of whom was Wilde.<sup>14</sup> While the status of the English and French texts, and the fraught question of their authorship, are outside the scope of this discussion, what remains clear is that *Teleny* is best understood as a hybrid text: the product of a historical moment in which emergent sexual identities were being formed through the dynamic exchange and translation of texts and ideas between similar but distinct queer sub-cultures in London and Paris. The respective settings of the English and French texts allow readers based in each city to indulge in an erotic *frisson* generated by the exoticism of geographical distance. It also enables such readers to feel vindicated in their pre-existing chauvinistic assumptions about homosexuality being either the 'English Vice' or the 'French Vice'.<sup>15</sup> Yet the indeterminacy generated by reading across the multiple versions of *Teleny* also acts to dissolve these national distinctions. Ultimately, as Alex Murray has noted, the 'curious symbiosis' of London and Paris in this Decadent historical moment 'works to unravel the very boundedness and stability of them as locations'.<sup>16</sup>

Attention to the specific spaces in which musical performances take place in *Teleny* allows for a fuller understanding of the novel's close engagement with queer urban geographies in *fin-de-siècle* London. The narrative opens at 'a grand charity concert' in a concert hall which, although unnamed in the 1893 English edition, is identified as the Queen's Hall, on London's Langham Place, in the 1934 French edition.<sup>17</sup> Foregrounding the significance of this concert venue in the novel reveals the ways in which these late-Victorian London locations were associated with same-sex erotic encounters. The Queen's Hall opened on 25 November 1893 and was one of London's most significant venues for classical music until its destruction in the Blitz in May 1941. As Leanne Langley has noted, this new venue did much to 'challeng[e] the status quo' of musical performance in 1890's London, free as it was 'from control by any one music publisher, instrument dealer, political faction or private society'.<sup>18</sup> The venue's main hall had 3000 seats, including places for the orchestra. In addition to this, over the second balcony, there was a smaller hall, known as the Queen's Small Hall, which was used for chamber recitals, with a capacity of 500.<sup>19</sup> Surviving concert programmes from the 1890s suggest that mixed programmes of piano music and song – like that described in *Teleny* – were held in both the (large) Queen's Hall and the Queen's Small Hall.<sup>20</sup>

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the original manuscript' (*Teleny: A Novel Attributed to Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Winston Leyland (San Francisco, CA: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984)). McRae is critical of this approach in his 1986 edition, which reprints the 1893 text.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert Gray and Christopher Keep, "An Uninterrupted Current": Homoeroticism and Collaborative Authorship in *Teleny*, in *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*, ed. by Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 193–208.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of how emergent conceptions of homosexuality in the nineteenth century were aligned with a long tradition of stereotyping sexual behaviour in terms of nationality see George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> Alex Murray, *Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> *Teleny*, 2 vols ([I, 7: Cosmopoli, 1893), p. 7 (hereafter referred to in the text parenthetically); *Teleny, Étude Psychologique*, p. 1 ('Ce fut au Queen's Hall, dans un grand concert de charité où il jouait').

<sup>18</sup> Leanne Langley, 'Joining Up the Dots: Cross-Channel Models in the Shaping of London Orchestral Culture, 1895–1914', in *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley*, ed. by Bennett Zon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 37–58 (p. 38).

<sup>19</sup> Robert Elkin, *Queen's Hall 1893–1941* (London: Rider, 1944).

<sup>20</sup> See the digital archive of 'Queen's Hall Programmes' available on Nineteenth Century Collections Online <<https://link.gale.com/apps/collection/SWLE/NCCO?u=duruni&sid=NCCO>>.

Interestingly, the architectural design of the Queen's Hall itself reflects the novel's indeterminate elision of London and Parisian queer geographies. The external ornamentation of the hall was completed by the Parisian firm of Noel Quillet, and the interior decoration was also the work of French designers. The arched ceiling of the main auditorium had a 'highly elaborate' painting of *putti* by a French artist known as Carpegat, associated with Paris's Opera Garnier.<sup>21</sup> That such designs were associated by at least some concert-goers with the apparent effeminacy of French culture is suggested by the hall's portrayal in later literary texts. For Helen Schlegel in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), for example, these 'attenuated Cupids . . . inclining each to each with vapid gesture, and clad in sallow pantaloons' are representative of an effete, intellectually vacuous decadent masculinity that she derides. 'How awful', she concludes, 'to marry a man like those Cupids!'<sup>22</sup> If, as Matt Cook has argued, 'Paris was the place where Oriental eroticism, aestheticism and the decadent impulse for sensual exploration were seen to intersect', the interior design of the Queen's Hall imported something of *la vie Parisienne* into the heart of London's West End.<sup>23</sup>

Associations of the Queen's Hall with Parisian culture extended beyond the built environment to encompass the mode of musical performance that took place there: the concert hall adopted 'French pitch' (or *diapason normal*) for its Promenade concerts from 1895. Slightly lower than English pitch at that time, the adoption of French pitch was a proviso of the Promenade concerts' original benefactor, Dr George Cathcart – a noted throat specialist, who feared that high musical pitches were placing a dangerous strain on the voices of English singers. As Langley observes, the novelty of 'French pitch' was a considerable draw to audiences to the new hall.<sup>24</sup> To hear music performed at the Queen's Hall was, in this respect, to hear music *Gallicised*: the musical performance associated, if only indirectly, with Parisian culture.

The geographical location of the Queen's Hall on Langham Place saw it situated at the epicentre of queer sub-cultures in the heart of London's West End. An audience member at the Queen's Hall (such as *Teleny's* Des Grieux) would emerge from a concert into an urban landscape replete with erotic possibilities. The streets around Regent Street and Haymarket provided the prowling ground, for example, of the male streetwalkers in *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain, or the Recollections of a Mary-Ann* (1881).<sup>25</sup> The sexual licentiousness of this area was frequently associated with the insidious influence of French culture: Robert Machray's guidebook *The Night Side of London* (1902) describes how the prevalence of French prostitutes in London's West End transformed the London streets into French boulevards, while E. Beresford Chancellor's *Wanderings in Piccadilly, Mayfair and Pall Mall* (1908) observed the 'foreign newspapers' and 'French demoiselles' that dominated Piccadilly Circus.<sup>26</sup> Attending to such details of geographical location and built environment highlights the ways in which

<sup>21</sup> See Elkin, *Queen's Hall*, p. 18. The ceiling design is visible in a photo of the Queen's Hall in Jennifer R. Doctor, David Wright and Nicholas Kenyon, *The Proms: A New History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Langley, 'Joining Up the Dots', p. 42. For discussion of the debates surrounding French pitch in *fin-de-siècle* London, see Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music, 1844–1944: A Century of Musical Life in Britain as Reflected in the Pages of the 'Musical Times'* (London: Novello, 1947), pp. 406–9; Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1938), pp. 69–71.

<sup>25</sup> *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain, or the Recollections of a Mary-Ann* (London: privately printed, 1881).

<sup>26</sup> Robert Machray, *The Night Side of London* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1902), p. 31; E. Beresford Chancellor, *Wanderings in Piccadilly, Mayfair and Pall Mall* (London: Alston Rivers, 1908), p. 58, p. 61.

the novel's narrator carefully situates the events recounted in the text in specific cosmopolitan locales associated implicitly with queer sub-cultures at the *fin de siècle*.

## 2. MUSIC, SEXOLOGY AND THE HOMOSEXUAL LISTENER AT THE *FIN DE SIÈCLE*

The spatial and geographical dynamics of musical performance in *Teleny* are best understood in the light of broader *fin-de-siècle* discourses of music, aesthetic consumption and same-sex desire. The form of musical listening in which Des Grieux engages is one that sexological texts of the period specifically present as symptomatic of pathologized homosexuality. Such listening practices create an intimate proximity between listener and performer in the concert hall, for they presuppose a listener whose nervous body is rendered peculiarly porous to the material movement of sound through space. The repertoire that Teleny performs – associated with Hungarian gypsies – draws on the same musical works that other queer fictional and sexological texts of the period associate with queer sexual desire. As we shall see, Des Grieux's presentation of Teleny's ethnic identity in the text draws upon specific *fin-de-siècle* discourses that associate musical genius, homosexuality and Orientalized geographies of racial otherness.

Des Grieux's nervous, emotional and sexualized response to Teleny's musical performance bears many hallmarks of the modes of listening, musical tastes and forms of musical talent that *fin-de-siècle* sexological texts connect closely with the sexuality of the subjects examined. *Teleny* itself explicitly alerts us to the manner in which queer subjectivities and sub-communities are formed through engagement with such aesthetic, historical and scientific discourses: in his attempts at self-understanding, Des Grieux purposefully 'read[s] all [he] could find about the love of one man for another' (I, 99), including 'a modern medical book' (I, 100) on the subject of homosexuality.<sup>27</sup>

Sexological theories of the prevalence of 'musicality' amongst homosexual subjects typically locate its origins in the somatic 'nervous' sensitivity of the queer listener's body. In Havelock Ellis's and John Addington Symonds's *Sexual Inversion* (1897), the first such study in English, an insistent connection is drawn between male 'inversion' and an interest in the arts, particularly music.<sup>28</sup> Ellis cites the work of German neurologist Hermann Oppenheim, who holds that 'the musical disposition is marked by a great emotional instability, and this instability is a disposition to nervousness.'<sup>29</sup> Such 'nervousness', Oppenheim suggests, is not itself caused by music. Rather the musician's nervousness and his musical aptitude both arise from the same innate disposition. It follows, Ellis concludes, that dispositions towards homosexuality and musicality share a common source.<sup>30</sup> Edward Carpenter's study of the nature of the 'Urning', *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), notes the connection between music, homosexuality and the emotionally receptive body.<sup>31</sup> The Urning possesses a 'delicate and subtle

<sup>27</sup> For the significance of sexological discourses in *Teleny* more broadly see Frederick D. King, 'British Aestheticism, Sexology, and Erotica: Negotiating Sexual Discourses in *Teleny*', *Victorian Review*, 41 (2015), 163–79; Dustin Friedman, 'Weird Sex: *Teleny* and the History of Sexuality', *Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism*, 4 (2019), 67–86.

<sup>28</sup> Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, ed. by Ivan Crozier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> See C. H. Hughes, 'Oppenheim on Music and Nervousness', *Alienist and Neurologist* (November 1910), pp. 491–96, cited in Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume II: Sexual Inversion*, 3rd edn (Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis, 1915), p. 295.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis, *Studies*, p. 295.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1908).

sympathy with every wave and phase of feeling,' which makes him particularly sensitive to music.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in *Teleny*, Des Grieux foregrounds the intense affective impact that music has on his body as he listens. He recounts that he has 'a nervous organization' which 'thrills in response' to the music he hears (I, 12). Teleny's 'maudlin song' renders his 'nerves . . . utterly unstrung' (I, 17) and his 'morbid state of health and mind' means that such music has 'an uncommon effect upon [his] nerves' (I, 53).<sup>33</sup>

The way in which Des Grieux characterizes his response to Teleny's performance through recourse to visual imagery and by recounting his intensely subjective emotional engagement is also typical of how musical consumption by homosexual listeners is presented in *fin-de-siècle* sexological texts. Whilst listening to Teleny play, Des Grieux experiences 'the strangest visions', in which the music evokes the Orientalized landscapes of Spain, Egypt and Babylon (I, 12). The 'pianist's notes' express to him the 'panting of an eager lust' and 'the sound of thrilling kisses (I, 14)', whilst prompting within him a 'smouldering unknown fire [which] began to kindle itself within [his] breast' (I, 13). Des Grieux's response is inattentive to the formal aspects of the music he hears. Rather he dwells on the embodied, emotional and sensory intensity of the music. Des Grieux repeatedly emphasizes that Teleny plays 'sensationally' (I, 53 and 97) – that is, appealing to the embodied immediacy of the senses. In *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (*Homosexuality in Men and Women*, 1914), the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld proposed that typical homosexual listeners 'experience music only as an aspect of mood, a purely sensory impression.' Lacking the 'intellectual engagement' to follow the complex formal structure of 'older, classical music', they naturally prefer the 'more colourful or sensual music' of nineteenth-century musical Romanticism.<sup>34</sup> Hirschfeld's model of homosexual listening contrasts the intellectual appreciation of musical form with an embodied indulgence in musical emotion just like Des Grieux's corporeal response to Teleny's playing. Significantly, however, Des Grieux's narrative accentuates the intense *pleasure* he experiences in listening to Teleny's music: his receptivity may be understood as a symptom of his 'morbid' illness, but it is no less enjoyable for that. In this respect, the text neither affirms nor rejects the pathologizing degenerative implications of Ellis's theories (nor, for that matter, the more affirmative account of the 'Urning' as more highly evolved found in Carpenter's works).

Teleny's performance of the 'tsardas' is also part of a wider alignment in *fin-de-siècle* discourses of specific musical repertoire with homosexual identities. In nineteenth-century culture the Hungarian 'tsardas' (more usually spelt *csardas* or *czardas*) was widely associated with the sexual exoticism of gypsies.<sup>35</sup> Des Grieux holds that 'in no music is the sensuous element so powerful as in that of the Tsiganes' (that is, Hungarian gypsies). To understand Teleny's character, he insists, one 'must begin by feeling the latent spell which pervades every song of Tsigane' (I, 12). Edward Prime-Stevenson makes a near-identical connection

<sup>32</sup> Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> The materiality of sound, and its impact on the sensitive listener's body, is a frequent theme in the literature of aestheticism and decadence. For Walter Pater's engagement with this idea, for example, see David Sweeney Coombs, 'The Sense and Reference of Sound; or, Walter Pater's Kinky Literalism', in *Reading with the Senses in Victorian Literature and Science* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), pp. 133–62; Crescent Rainwater, 'Netta Syrett, *Nobody's Fault*, and Female Decadence: The Story of a Wagnerite', *Journal of Victorian Culture* (December 2019), 1–15 (pp. 7–8) < <https://doi.org/10.1093/jvcult/vcz057> >.

<sup>34</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1914), pp. 510–11. Unpublished translation by Tom Smith.

<sup>35</sup> See Anna G. Piotrowska, *Gypsy Music in European Culture: From the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2013), pp. 207–8.

between Hungarian music and homosexual 'sensuality' in *The Intersexes* (1908) – a compendious defence of same-sex love between men which explores at length the connections between musical and homosexual sub-cultures at the *fin de siècle*.<sup>36</sup> While Prime-Stevenson's text has little to say about music beyond the core of the Western art music tradition, an intriguing exception is his praise of the 'wonderfully beautiful . . . rhythms, melodies and harmonies' of 'Magyar' – that is, Hungarian – music. 'No music seems as directly sexual as the Magyar', he observes, before noting that 'the Magyar is a distinctively "sexual" racial type'.<sup>37</sup> Significantly, Prime-Stevenson also indulges his interest in this 'racial type' in his novel *Imre* (1906), in which the lover of the protagonist Oswald is a 'singularly sensitive' piano-playing Hungarian army officer, who as a child 'wanted to study . . . music more than anything'.<sup>38</sup>

Des Grieux actively aligns Teleny's Hungarian 'gypsy' origins with his apparent 'Arabic' lineage, drawing upon a trope common in clandestine erotic fiction of the period: the Orient as the origin of sodomy. Teleny's 'Asiatic blood' (I, 32) places his ancestry in the 'Sotadic Zone' identified by Sir Richard Burton as the 'geographical and climactic' region where 'the Vice [of sodomy] is popular and endemic'.<sup>39</sup> The novel invokes such associations throughout: Des Grieux's visions during Teleny's performance transport him from Moorish Spain to 'the sunlit sands of Egypt' to the 'gorgeous towns of Sodom and Gomorrah' (I, 14); the 'Persian and Syrian divans' that populate the studio where the lovers attend an orgy recall those 'seen in the brothels of men in . . . the wanton East' (II, 97), while other artefacts in this room represent 'a museum of lewd art worthy of Sodom or of Babylon' (II, 98). This act of listening reinterprets the link between sexual deviancy and the eroticized exoticism of the Orientalized body, by transporting Des Grieux to 'gorgeous' idealized places of sensual promise. Des Grieux's account thus turns sexological discourses associating sexual deviancy with musical emotionalism and 'nervous' listening into something pleasurable.

### 3. QUEER PHENOMENOLOGIES OF THE CONCERT HALL: DESIRE AND TRANSMISSION IN MUSICAL SPACE

While the novel draws upon prevailing associations between certain geographical regions and non-normative sexual desires, it is also alert to the way in which the embodied experience of such desire is shaped within particular musical spaces. Des Grieux's reference to his place in the '*stalle l'orchestre*' (I, 8) suggests that he is sitting towards the front of the large hall at the Queen's Hall when he first hears Teleny perform. The text's interest in his precise position in the concert hall alerts us to the way in which the erotics of music are bound up with the perception of space: first, in the way music is ascribed a materiality and mobility that allows it to affect the bodies of listeners both physically and emotionally; secondly, through the text's presentation of the persistent agency of the desiring gaze between performer and listener. Both tropes operate in similar ways to modify the spatial experience of musical performance: the sense of physical distance between Des Grieux and Teleny is collapsed, so that the isolated bodies of these desiring queer subjects are felt to achieve a closer spatial proximity. Sara Ahmed's theorization of 'queer phenomenology' helps us to understand the significance of

<sup>36</sup> Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 396.

<sup>37</sup> Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes*, p. 396.

<sup>38</sup> Prime-Stevenson, *Imre: A Memorandum*, ed. by James J. Gifford (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2003), p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Burton, 'Terminal Essay', from *The Books of The Thousand Nights and a Night* (London: The Burton Club for Private Subscribers Only, 1885), in *Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850–1900*, ed. by Brian Reade (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 158–93 (p. 159).



spatial experience in the Victorian concert hall for listeners like Des Grieux. Ahmed's work draws attention to those 'queer orientations' which allow bodies that have traditionally been placed spatially 'out of reach' to come into closer contact with each other. As Ahmed observes, experiences of non-normative sexuality are closely connected with the way subjects inhabit a sense of their bodies in space. Heteronormativity manifests itself by insisting upon 'a differentiation between those who can and cannot be reached' – it 'opens bodies to some bodies and not others'.<sup>40</sup> An alertness to 'queer orientations', then, allows for a richer account of those phenomenological experiences that might bring marginalized subjects to feel the affirmative desiring proximity of others' bodies.

For Des Grieux in *Teleny*, music facilitates the material transmission of the desiring touch through space. Here, the piano broadcasts touch, bringing into contact the bodies of the instrumentalist and the listener. The modern concert grand piano replicates not just the sound of the pianist's music, but also renders the pianist's touch itself spatially mobile – as if felt to be physically touching spectators who are sat some distance away in the auditorium. The tactile pianism evoked in *Teleny* is the product of both changing musical instrument design and performance practices. The mechanical development of the piano over the nineteenth century certainly allowed for its increased sensitivity to the touch of the instrumentalist.<sup>41</sup> As Mine Doğantan-Dack has noted, towards the end of the nineteenth century descriptions of modes of touch became increasingly central both to treatises on piano technique and to composers' performance.<sup>42</sup> Tobias Matthay's *The Act of Touch in All Its Diversity* (1903), for example, demarcates 42 distinct modes of touching the piano.<sup>43</sup> This profusion of tactile metaphors relates less to any empirically measurable interaction between instrumentalist and piano than to the manner in which the sensation of touch became central to the embodied experience of musical performance. The emergence of the solo piano recital, along with performance practices that placed the pianist's hands in full view, likewise trained audiences to look and listen for the musician's touch.<sup>44</sup> At a historical juncture at which the materiality of sound itself is increasingly emphasized by the physical sciences, aural perception becomes enfolded into the tactile and visual.

*Teleny* is notable for the way Des Grieux's eroticized experience of a piano recital stages this synesthetic merging of sensory channels. His experience of listening is narrated in a way that places the focus less on the movement of sound, and more on the transmission of the performer's material touch and gaze through space to the body of this receptive listener. *Teleny*'s music is afforded an ability to heighten the intensity of multi-sensory perception: Des Grieux recounts that he is rendered '[s]pellbound by that soft music, which sharpened every

<sup>40</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> For developments in piano technology over the nineteenth century, see Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); David Rowland, 'The Piano Since c.1825', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. by David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 40–56.

<sup>42</sup> Mine Doğantan-Dack, 'In the Beginning was Gesture: Piano Touch and the Phenomenology of the Performing Body', in *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, ed. by Elaine King and Anthony Gritten (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 244–65 (p. 253). See also Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg, *The Player Piano and the Edwardian Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 60–61.

<sup>43</sup> Tobias Matthay, *The Act of Touch in All Its Diversity: An Analysis and Synthesis of Pianoforte Tone Production* (London: Bosworth, 1903).

<sup>44</sup> See Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley, 'Introduction: The Nineteenth-Century Invention of Media', in *Media, Technology and Literature*, pp. 1–22 (p. 4); Janet Rittermann and William Weber, 'Origins of the Piano Recital in England, 1830–1870', in *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture: Instruments, Performers and Repertoire*, ed. by Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 171–92.

sense' (I, 14). The music's mesmeric power to provoke such sensory excess is foregrounded here by the sentence's insistent sibilance. As he listens to Teleny's virtuoso performance, his 'whole body . . . convulse[s] and writhe[s] with mad desire' (I, 15). For Des Grieux, this erotic charge is attributable not just to the music he hears, but also to the visual connection between him and Teleny: the 'lingering, slumberous look' he perceives cast in his direction by the pianist (I, 14). As the music progresses towards its climax, Des Grieux experiences this musical performance through a fantasy of tactile contact:

[S]uddenly a heavy hand seemed to be laid upon my lap, something was bent and clasped and grasped, which made me faint with lust. The hand moved up and down, slowly at first, then faster and faster it went in rhythm with the song. My brain began to reel as throughout every vein a burning lava coursed, and then, some drops even gushed out — I panted —

All at once the pianist finished his piece with a crash amidst the thundering applause of the whole theatre. (I, 15-16)

Here, the hands of the virtuoso pianist as they 'crash' on the keys of the piano in front of him are experienced as if displaced onto the body of the listener. The spectral masturbatory hand that moves 'up and down', then 'faster and faster', in 'rhythm' to the music in Des Grieux's lap mirrors the hands of Teleny that he sees playing before him on the keyboard. Listening enraptured to the sound of the music, his gaze fixed firmly on the player before him, Des Grieux feels the touch of Teleny's hands transmitted by the piano through the space that divides them, bringing their bodies into direct physical contact.

After the concert, when Des Grieux and Teleny first meet, the novel once again stresses the erotic significance of tactile contact between them. Des Grieux recounts that, when the pianist 'stretched forth his ungloved hand', Des Grieux 'pulled off both my gloves' so as to 'put my bare hand into his'. 'Who has not been sentient', Des Grieux asks, 'of the manifold feelings produced by the touch of a hand?' (I, 21), before proceeding to present a lengthy catalogue of tactile interactions that seemingly allow for the demarcation of the class, health and character of the subject in hand. For example, he describes the feel of the 'gaunt, horny, clay-coloured, begrimed workman's hand, which hard, unremitting labour has changed into a kind of hoof' (I, 21). Finally, he concludes with a paean to the 'thrill' awakened by feeling his hand in touch with that of Teleny's:

There is, moreover, the magnetic hand, which seems to have a secret affinity for your own; its simple touch thrills your whole nervous system, and fills you with delight.

How can I express all that I felt from the contact of Teleny's hand? It set me on fire; and, strange to say, it soothed me at the same time. How sweeter, softer, it was than any woman's kiss. I felt his grasp steal slowly over all my body, caressing my lips, my throat, my breast; my nerves quivered from head to foot with delight, then it sank downwards into my reins, and Priapus, re-awakened, uplifted his head. (I, 22)

Here, once again, Teleny's touch attains a mobility that allows the 'contact' of a hand to be felt on other areas of the body, spatially displaced in a manner that recalls the touch of Teleny's hand on the piano. Teleny's handshake is experienced as being channelled through Des

Griex's body 'into [his] reins' to perform an act of masturbatory stimulation, akin to that experienced in the concert hall.

The spatial dynamics of queer desire are also evident in the novel's focus on the intense haptic materiality of the visual connection between performer and listener. Des Griex recounts that when he was in Teleny's presence, he 'felt [the pianist's] glances greedily *fall everywhere*, they *sank* in my brain, and my head began to swim; they *pierced* through my heart, *whipping* my blood up' (II, 43).<sup>45</sup> The gaze is imbued with its own visceral agency here, violently penetrating the surface of Des Griex's body so as pleasurably to violate the apparent privacy and distance of the visual encounter. In certain passages, the French text makes clear in a manner only implicit in the English text that Teleny's eyes actively search the audience for Des Griex's reciprocating gaze: '[O]n vit aussitôt le feu sacré de l'art s'allumer dans sa prunelle; il fouilla rapidement l'auditoire, m'aperçut et envoya à mon adresse un regard chargé de gratitude et d'amour' ('We immediately saw the sacred fire of art light up in his eye; he quickly scanned the audience, saw me, and sent a look charged with gratitude and love in my direction').<sup>46</sup> Here, the gaze is afforded a sense of material mobility; it transmits a physical 'charge' that also acts to collapse the distance in space between the desiring bodies of musician and listener.

In emphasizing the power of the queer gaze, *Teleny* draws upon contemporary accounts of performances by virtuoso pianists in *fin-de-siècle* London and Paris, specifically by the noted Polish pianist Vladimir de Pachmann (1848–1933). During his concerts in London, where he first played in 1882, Pachmann was known to single out particularly 'handsome, well dressed young men,' catching them in his line of sight and playing to them directly.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, Pachmann's homosexuality seems to have been something of an open secret in musical circles. As his biographers have observed, Pachmann was surprisingly indiscreet about his same-sex desires: there is 'no doubt,' they conclude, that Pachmann enjoyed an 'active . . . homosexual life as he toured, indulging in casual sex.'<sup>48</sup> While it seems unlikely that the character of Teleny is modelled directly on Pachmann – their appearances are markedly different, and the latter was of Polish, not Hungarian, descent – his example nevertheless suggests that the text's presentation of musical performance is not merely the product of pornographic fantasy. Rather, the text fictionalizes the spatialized strategies of musical seduction adopted by queer performers in the concert halls of late Victorian London.

#### 4. SINGING AT THE MARGINS: FINDING QUEER SPACE IN SCHUBERT'S *LIEDER*

'And what happened afterwards?' 'Let me see. I think there was some singing.' (I, 8)

As we have seen, the novel imagines listening and performance practices as spatialized musical encounters in which characters construct and negotiate queer subjectivities. The text's queer musical geography extends beyond the concert hall to less overt references to musical works, specifically songs by Franz Schubert. Following Teleny's performance of 'one of those

<sup>45</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>46</sup> *Teleny, Étude Psychologique* (1934), p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko, *Chopin's Prophet: The Life of Pianist Vladimir de Pachmann* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2013), p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> Blickstein and Benko, *Chopin's Prophet*, p. 217.

slight, graceful, and easy melodies' (I, 8), Des Grieux recalls that he hears 'some singing'. Des Grieux's narrative never gives specific details of this song performance in the Queen's Hall, and yet references to Schubert's songs form an important part of the novel's citational web. At two central moments in the narrative, there are clear allusions to specific *Lieder* by Schubert: 'Ungeduld' ('Impatience') from *Die schöne Müllerin* (1823) and 'Der Doppelgänger' ('The Doppelgänger') from *Schwanengesang* (1828). Within the diegesis, these songs become a vehicle for the novel's characters to articulate their desires, while such allusions create encounters for the novel's coterie readers based on shared intimacy with, and investment in, Schubert's music.

The dispersal of references to Schubert's music throughout the text suggests that intimate encounters based on shared knowledge of music fundamentally shape characters' queer desires and subjectivities. *Teleny* stands as evidence for the long heritage of these queer investments in Schubert, staging his reception by the novel's authors and coterie readers in its frequent allusions. This is especially significant because Schubert's music has become central to debates in contemporary queer musicology.<sup>49</sup> Given the pervasive association of the composer and his music with 'femininity' and 'effeminacy' in Victorian culture, it is perhaps surprising that there is little evidence of Schubert's music becoming associated with queer sexual deviance.<sup>50</sup> While it is possible to point to a well-established tradition of queer reception at this time of works by, for example, Richard Wagner or Pyotr Tchaikovsky, evidence of Schubert's queer reception remains scarce.<sup>51</sup> Yet *Teleny* demonstrates that Schubert's music was central to the queer encounters that surrounded the novel's creation and circulation, while gesturing to one reason that scholars may have missed more overt evidence of Schubert's queer reception. The encoding of images from 'Ungeduld' and 'Der Doppelgänger' into an enigmatic web of allusions suggests that the pleasure of this encounter with Schubert was, at least partly, in the intellectual virtuosity required of readers to decipher these covert references.

This allusive texture gains added resonance through the way in which it responds to the specific musical performance practice of concert venues in Victorian London. 'Ungeduld' and

<sup>49</sup> On Schubert's place in early queer musicology, see Maynard Solomon, 'Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 12 (1989), 193–206, and the subsequent special issue 'Schubert: Music, Sexuality, Culture', ed. by Lawrence Kramer, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 17.1 (1993), especially contributions by Rita Steblin, Maynard Solomon, Kofi Agawu, Susan McClary, and James Webster; Susan McClary, 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 205–34; Lawrence Kramer, 'The Ganymede Complex: Schubert's Songs and the Homoerotic Imagination', in *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 93–128.

<sup>50</sup> David Gramit, 'Constructing a Victorian Schubert: Music, Biography and Cultural Values', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 17 (1993), 65–78 (p. 72). For the association between effeminacy and homosexuality more broadly see Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> A notable exception is Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884), in which Schubert's *Lieder* prompt in Des Esseintes – the archetypal Decadent aesthete – 'a great outpouring of nervous energy, during an extreme mystical experience'. The intense affective excess, subjective emotionalism and visual evocativeness of Des Esseintes's musical listening has much in common with that of Des Grieux in *Teleny*. See Huysmans, *Against Nature*, ed. by Nicholas White, trans. by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 168. For Wagner and homosexuality, see James Kenaway, 'Modern Music and Nervous Modernity: Wagnerism as a Disease of Civilization, 1850–1914', in *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 63–98. For Tchaikovsky and homosexuality, see Malcolm Hamrick Brown, 'Tchaikovsky and his Music in Anglo-American Criticism, 1890s–1950s', in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. by Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 134–49. On Schubert in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, see Scott Messing, *Schubert in the European Imagination*, 2 vols (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), II, 118–45.

'Der Doppelgänger' were regularly performed at the Queen's Hall and other venues as part of recitals that combined solo piano music with vocal items, in the same pattern described at the opening of the novel – 'a favourite *gavotte*', followed by 'some singing' (I, 8). Both songs were commonly programmed in Victorian recitals as stand-alone items, in contrast to contemporary performance practice in which these songs are most commonly performed in the context of the song cycles from which they originate.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the performance in the novel, Des Grieux may apparently only dimly recall this 'singing', but the dense allusions suggest that the novel's authors can rely on its readers' familiarity with and investment in certain songs and perhaps even certain performances.

The reference to Schubert's 'Ungeduld', the seventh song in the song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, works to emphasize that Des Grieux is more than merely a passive recipient of queer desires transmitted through music. Echoing the song's lyrics, he feels enthusiastically compelled to display his desires in the landscapes around him. The allusion occurs at a significant moment in Des Grieux's narrative: the day after he first has sex with Teleny (his first experience of same-sex sexual intercourse). Des Grieux recounts to his unnamed interlocutor that, following this sexual encounter, his pervading sense of the 'loathsomeness of life' has now 'quite passed away' (II, 67):

Far from being ashamed of my crime, I felt that I should like to proclaim it to the world. For the first time in my life I understood that lovers could be so foolish as to entwine their initials together. I felt like carving his name on the bark of trees, that the birds seeing it might twitter it from morning till eventide; that the breeze might lisp it to the rustling leaves of the forest. I wished to write it on the shingle of the beach, that the ocean itself might know of my love for him, and murmur it everlastingly. (II, 67)

The imagery used here directly recalls that found in Wilhelm Müller's poem as set by Schubert. 'Ungeduld' presents a list of the assorted natural media through which an ecstatic lover wishes to communicate his feelings of everlasting love to the world. The parallels between the texts are clear: 'Carving his name on the bark of trees' recalls 'Ich schnitt' es gern in alle Rinden ein' ('I would like to carve [a declaration of love] in the bark of every tree'); birds 'twitter[ing]', the love of Des Grieux evokes 'Ich möcht' mir ziehen einen jungen Star, | Bis daß er spräch' die Worte rein und klar' ('I would like to train a young starling | to speak the words loud and clear'); the 'breeze' in the 'rustling leaves of the forest' recalls 'Den Morgenwinden möcht' ich's hauchen ein, | Ich möcht' es säuseln durch den regen Hain' ('I would like to whisper it into the morning breeze, | to waft it through the rustling wood'); references to 'writ[ing]' in the 'shingle of the beach' finds its equivalent in 'Ich grüb' es gern in jeden Kieselstein' ('I would like to engrave it on every pebble'). The closing reference in the passage to 'everlastingly' evokes the refrain at the close of each stanza of Müller's poem: 'Dein ist mein Herz und soll es ewig bleiben' ('Yours is my heart, and ever shall be yours').<sup>53</sup> Just as Teleny's playing

<sup>52</sup> For example, 'Ungeduld' was performed alongside songs by Brahms, Rubinstein and Weber (in a concert that included a performance of Beethoven's 7th Symphony and Schumann's Piano Concerto) on 16 January 1875 at the Crystal Palace (see Crystal Palace Programme of the Twelfth Saturday Concert, January 16th, 1875; July 17th, 1875, MS Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts, British Library, *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*); 'Der Doppelgänger' was performed in the Queen's Hall on 4 May 1898 (alongside 'Der Atlas') and on 24 November 1900 in a version orchestrated by Theodore Thomas. A performance of the song by Marie Brema took place in the Crystal Palace on 10 October 1896.

<sup>53</sup> For Müller's text, see Susan Youens, *Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 43–44.

made Des Grieux feel his touch communicated through space, here musical references offer a model for Des Grieux to declare his own desire, even as the allusions remain cryptic.

Drawing upon the imagery of Müller's poem, Des Grieux's impulse openly to 'proclaim' his love for Teleny finds expression in a fantasy of material inscription enacted on the natural environment: 'carv[ed]' on the 'bark of trees' or arranged on the 'shingle on the beach'. Significantly, this is also a fantasy of unimpeded organic transmission: the existence of such desire is diffused through the natural world as it is passed from the 'bark' to the 'birds' to the 'breeze', absorbed from the seashore by the tide to become dispersed through the wide waters of the ocean. Just as the transmission of desire in the concert that opens the narrative takes place through the movement of sound through space, here too queer desire is encoded and communicated through 'twitter[s]', 'lisp[s]', 'rustle[s]', and 'murmur[s]': The indeterminacy of these sounds speaks not of a closeted refusal to speak openly of queer desire, but rather an assured sense that this aural dispersal through the natural world affirms the natural purity of desires so often derided as 'unnatural' in *fin-de-siècle* homophobic discourses.

Des Grieux's idealistic impulse to see his queer desire openly inscribed on the environment that surrounds him is subsequently revealed as short-lived. When confronted with the threat of public exposure by the blackmailer Briancourt, he is overwhelmed by a paranoid sense of his identity as a 'sodomite' being visibly branded on the surface of his body. 'Like Cain', he laments, 'it seemed as if I carried my crime written upon my brow' (II, 77). More broadly, Des Grieux's youthful enthusiasm is revealed as naively misplaced by Teleny's subsequent betrayal. *Teleny's* sophisticated coterie readers are expected to register the implications of the novel's allusions to Schubert's song of misplaced romantic expectation, and to note the significant parallels (or ironic distance) between the narratives they present. The allusion to Schubert's 'Ungeduld' works to emphasize Des Grieux's romantic self-delusion at this point in the text. As Lawrence Kramer has noted, the song is 'a declaration of love that never occurs': Müller's young miller expends his energies in fantasizing about a love affair that is doomed to failure.<sup>54</sup> Schubert's setting of Müller's text gently ironizes the young miller's insistent declarations of love through a recurrent rhythmic disjunction between the dotted duple rhythms in the vocal line and the piano accompaniment in triple time. Just as Schubert's young miller drowns himself in the brook at the conclusion of *Die schöne Müllerin*, Des Grieux will also plunge himself into the river Thames in a state of psychic torment upon discovering Teleny's unfaithfulness.

While the reference to 'Ungeduld' in *Teleny* is markedly explicit, allusions to Schubert's 'Der Doppelgänger' operate in the text more obliquely. Des Grieux's 'doppelgänger' [sic] appears in the narrative at a moment of intense psychic torment, shortly after he has been confronted with the sight of his own mother *en flagrante* with his lover Teleny. Uttering a 'cry of shame, of terror, of despair' (II, 178), he flees into the street to find himself face-to-face with a figure 'so exactly like myself', as Des Grieux recounts, 'that we might have been taken for twin brothers' (II, 180). Heinrich Heine's poem 'Der Doppelgänger', set to music as the final song in Schubert's *Schwanengesang*, similarly depicts the agony of abandonment. In Heine's poem, the lyric subject returns to the site of the empty house of the sweetheart who has forsaken him and comes face-to-face with a doppelgänger figure who mimics his own display of anguish ('Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid?').<sup>55</sup> The sensational, perhaps even wilfully comic,

<sup>54</sup> Kramer, *Franz Schubert*, p. 141.

<sup>55</sup> For an overview of critical approaches to Schubert's 'Der Doppelgänger', see Robert Samuels, 'The Double Articulation of Schubert: Reflections on *Der Doppelgänger*', *The Musical Quarterly*, 93 (2010), 192–233.

melodrama of this passage in *Teleny* is markedly different in tone from the numbed sense of stasis that Schubert's setting of Heine evokes through its hypnotic, funereal passacaglia (established in the B A# D C# motif in the song's opening bars). Yet Schubert's 'Doppelgänger' can be heard as a haunting intertext to *Teleny*, not least in these texts' shared evocations of desolate nocturnal cityscapes: both invoke the stillness of the night ('Still ist die Nacht' ('the night is still'), 'the still night air' (II, 133)); *Teleny*'s 'quiet house' recalls the house long vacated by the sweetheart of Heine's speaker; the 'gloomy streets' lying in 'peaceful slumbers' inhabit a similar space to 'es ruhen die Gassen' ('the streets lie at rest'). Des Grieux describes the meeting with his doppelgänger as a collision with 'my own image' (II, 179), while Heine's protagonist experiences a chilling moment of recognition with 'meine eig'ne Gestalt' ('my own shape').

As Elaine Showalter and Andrew Webber have observed, the figure of the doppelgänger in nineteenth-century literature frequently functions to precipitate moments of 'male hysteria', often acting as an agent of repressed (homo)sexual fantasies.<sup>56</sup> The author of *Teleny* is sufficiently aware of such generic forebears for its doppelgänger scene to be at least partly a playful response to this literary tradition – though here Des Grieux's 'hysteria' is less the product of unacknowledged same-sex desire, and more of an openly acknowledged Oedipal wish. While the episode in *Teleny* is at least partially parodic, the passage nevertheless presents Des Grieux alienated from the urban landscape in direct contrast with his ecstatic visions of his desire extending unproblematically into nature in his evocations of 'Ungeduld'. Placing Heine's text alongside Des Grieux's narrative helps draw our attention to this alienation:

Meanwhile I walked on at hap-hazard. After wandering about for an hour, I found myself unexpectedly before *Teleny*'s house. I had wended my steps thitherwards, without knowing where I went. I looked up at *Teleny*'s windows with longing eyes. How I loved that house. I could have kissed the very stones on which he had stepped. (II, 165–66)

In a similar manner to Heine's lyric subject, Des Grieux is drawn back obsessively to the house of his lost former lover. The passage is most striking for its focus on the relationship between the materiality of urban space and the transmission of desire. Like the novel's opening scene in the Queen's Hall, Des Grieux indulges a fantasy of indirect bodily contact. Just as *Teleny*'s desiring touch and gaze are rendered proximate in his musical performance, he also invests the 'very stones on which he has stepped' with a presence that Des Grieux might absorb through the act of kissing. The text's passing allusion to Schubert (and Heine) alerts us to the queer phenomenology of an urban space invested with a displaced desire for sustained physical intimacy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Focussing on the relationship between queer bodies, spaces and places in *Teleny* allows us to think more carefully about the embodied nature of musical consumption in the period. Decadent musical cultures were marked not only by the pleasures of cosmopolitan exchange – pleasures often entangled with the fetishization of geographical and ethnic otherness – but also by an awareness of the embodied materiality of the musical encounter. As attention

<sup>56</sup> See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p. 107; Andrew Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 13–18.

to sexological texts can show us, forms of such embodied experience were associated with non-normative sexual identities and shaped the representation of musical listening in queer literary texts in distinctive ways. Locating such musical encounters in specific venues, such as the Queen's Hall, demonstrates how such embodied experiences are shaped through the cultural associations of particular built environments. It also alerts us to the way specific musical performance practices might inform the allusive texture of literary texts, such as *Teleny*, written for an elite coterie readership.

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