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Hayley Smith

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“Ah bitter love!” she sung”: music and unobtainable erotic desires in Theophilus Marzials’s *Love’s Masquerades*

Hayley Smith

Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK

“I have never ceased to regret,” William Bell Scott wrote in his *Autobiographical Notes*, “that the reception [Theophilus Marzials’s] first volume met with has prevented him from persevering” (Minto 1892, 194). Given that Marzials’s first and only collection of poetry, *The Gallery of Pigeons, and Other Poems* (1873), faced disapproval from critics including the much-celebrated Dante Gabriel Rossetti – who, upon receiving a complimentary copy of Marzials’s poetry, wrote to the author and candidly stated his dissatisfaction with the collection – Marzials’s dejection was arguably very understandable. Marzials subsequently wrote to Scott and admitted that he felt as though “what [Rossetti] says is true, that my book is crude and immature, and, what to my mind is worse, trivial” (Minto, 194). My paper strongly disagrees with Marzials’s dispirited suggestion that *The Gallery of Pigeons* was unimportant or insignificant, arguing instead that his poetry articulates the most private (and often dangerous) aspects of sexuality and sexual identity in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In doing so, I call attention to how music is employed throughout *The Gallery of Pigeons*, focusing primarily on *Love’s Masquerades* – a sonnet sequence contained amongst the collection and one within which the personified Love appears in different guises and performs various sexual and romantic roles – to imagine, explore, and express specifically unobtainable erotic desires; their unobtainability arising from the social disruption that they threaten.

Very little has been written on Marzials or his poetry, so in its absence a brief biographical note might be helpful. The youngest of five children, Theo Marzials was born on 20 December 1850 to Antoine-Theophile Marzials and Mary Ann Jackson. Although he only published the aforementioned *Gallery of Pigeons*, Marzials also contributed to the literary periodical *The Yellow Book* during the final years of the nineteenth century. When *The Gallery of Pigeons* did not receive the praise that its author might have wished for, Marzials turned his attention to music, consequently spending much of his time working as a composer. Nevertheless, he sometimes amalgamated both of his artistic interests; *Pan Pipes* (1873), for example, tied together the poetry of Christina Rossetti (the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti) and the illustrations of Walter Crane with Marzials’s musical compositions. In a similar vein, Marzials composed a musical version of

CONTACT Hayley Smith  h.smith8@canterbury.ac.uk

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Algernon Charles Swinburne's poem, "The Oblation" (published in the 1871 collection, *Songs Before Sunrise*), called "Ask Nothing More of Me, Sweet." Such examples undoubtedly point towards the close connection – for Marzials, at least – between music and poetry.

Marzials remains a greatly understudied writer, with John Holmes (2005) offering the only sustained account of his work. Concentrating on the sonnet sequence which now finds itself the primary focus of this article, *Love's Masquerades*, Holmes considers the relationship between Marzials's poetry and that of the writer and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti – whose different artistic outputs offer multiple sensorial experiences, as in Marzials's own work – arguing that Marzials's sequence "epitomises the unsettling power of Rossettian sexuality" (71). Rossettian sexuality, Holmes notes, highlights "the centrality of sexuality to the self, its social and domestic pervasiveness, the power of desire and jealousy, [and] sexuality as power" (original emphasis, 67). This "pervasive and multifaceted" sexuality, "ranging from the ideal to the actual, from the moral to the malign," bleeds into Marzials's *Love's Masquerades*, with the sequence offering a "fascinating and disturbing" representation of sexuality as the desires raised are often met with disillusionment, disappointment, and even death (Holmes, 67; 70). While my article is indebted to Holmes's exploration into Marzials's sonnet sequence, it additionally serves to build upon his discussion by considering the role which music specifically plays in the expression and articulation of sexuality and erotic desires.

In addition, I also position my discussion in direct dialogue with other scholarship that considers the closely intertwined relationship between music and sexuality in the Victorian era, much of which focuses upon the connection between same-sex desire and musicality. This is perhaps not so surprising, considering that the latter decades of the nineteenth century saw the so-called relationship between music and homosexuality studied, not least by contemporary sexologists. Joe Law calls attention to these pseudo-scientific investigations in his discussion on the role of music in Oscar Wilde's 1890 sensation, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, within which he argues that Wilde uses music to "encode" homosexual desires (Law 2004, 175). Like Law, Emma Sutton similarly details late-Victorian sexological studies to support her research into the representation of music in *fin-de-siècle* poetry, exploring – primarily – how these texts see gay and lesbian desires imagined through music (Sutton 2005). Sutton also posits, however, that in *fin-de-siècle* poetry, music and musical allusions might have broader implications. Owing to "the affinities between musical form, performance and effect, and the psychological and physiological complexities of erotic experience" (229), Sutton claims that music and musicality were also deployed as analogies for seduction, sensuality, and eroticism (215). Stating that music is therefore "a means of delineating, exploring and imagining sexual experience and identity," Sutton points towards the connection between discourses of music and non-normative sexualities and erotic desires beyond homosexuality (214).

Building upon this suggestion, then, I further explore the connection between music and sexuality in Victorian poetry, concentrating first and foremost upon Marzials's *Love's Masquerades* but touching upon other poems from *The Gallery of Pigeons*, too, in order to explore how music and discourses of music are employed as tools with which Marzials imagines and articulates a range of erotic desires and fantasies. To some degree and in some way, these feelings are all dangerous, dissident, and disruptive because of the

stigma attached to them, ultimately figuring them as unobtainable. Marzials's sonnet sequence sees homoeroticism make an appearance, but the fantasies and sexual identities explored through music voice more than just same-sex desire. They also include the expression of desires which would have similarly found themselves prohibited, like illicit heterosexual acts. Crucially, then, the erotic desires and sexual identities that Marzials includes throughout his sequence can be seen to operate along a *spectrum*. It is fitting that *Love's Masquerades* employs music to articulate and explore these specifically stigmatised desires and identities, given the contemporary attitudes towards music. In fact, as music found itself classed as a feminine pursuit (a point which I return to in more detail later), it came to be seen as "an activity always under suspicion" and "almost shameful in character, best practiced in private and out of public view" (Leppert 1988, 24–25). This artistic output was consequently ascribed a sense of secrecy and stigma that was shared by individuals with non-normative erotic and romantic desires. By employing discourses of music throughout *Love's Masquerades*, then, Marzials manages to express and explore a range of taboo identities and fantasies, consequently uniting these different stigmatised sensorial experiences throughout his sonnet sequence.

Theo Marzials: *Love's Masquerades*

In the Victorian era, Meg Tasker points out, "sexual matters were often much easier to write about in verse" (Tasker 2002, 36). "Not only may sexual desire or activity be described indirectly, through metaphor or allusion," Tasker continues, "but they could be more freely employed as metaphor in poetry" (36). As Sutton demonstrates in her research – and as I similarly intend to show within my own – Tasker's argument certainly applies to poets writing during the Victorian era as they managed to articulate and explore sexual identities and desires using metaphors of music and musicality. This suggests, therefore, that poetry offered a candid space for sexual orientations and fantasies, some of which might be considered particularly dangerous or disruptive, to be explored and imagined. *Love's Masquerades* sees poetry serve such a purpose and primarily adopts and adapts the Petrarchan sonnet to explore these desires. The Petrarchan sonnet swiftly reveals its suitability if we briefly consider Francesco Petrarca and his sonnet structure alongside the content of Marzials's sequence. Indeed, in the early fourteenth century Petrarca allegedly caught sight of a woman called Laura with whom he found himself infatuated. Much to his disappointment, though, Petrarca's feelings were never reciprocated, so he turned to his poetry to communicate his unrequited and unfulfilled desires. This context of Laura's inaccessibility resonates within Marzials's sonnets, for *Love's Masquerades* continually sees – as Holmes notes – the personified "Love deliberately and maliciously caus[ing] suffering, characteristically through disenchantment" (2005, 71). Just like Laura, then, the personified Love in Marzials's sonnets is an equally unobtainable character.

While Marzials does not abide by the typical rules of the rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan sonnet, as his sestets generally differ from the usual CDCDCD or CDECDE pattern, he nevertheless adheres to the verse structure of octet/sestet in all but two sonnets, suggesting, therefore, that the sequence is an *adaptation* of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet. This adapted structure immediately gestures towards Marzials's refusal

to conform to conventional expectations. Perhaps, then, in his adoption and adaption of the (typically heterosexual) Petrarchan sonnet, the altered rhyme scheme hints at and supports Marzials's representations of non-traditional erotic desires and fantasies. In a discussion on the lesbian history of the sonnet, Lisa L. Moore (2017) also considers how the Petrarchan sonnet, "typically but ... not inevitably read as male speaker and female beloved," refuses binary subjectivities and instead presents readers with "feminine masculinities and masculine femininities": queered identities which challenge rigid gender constructs (815). It is conducive to read Marzials's *Love's Masquerades* with a similar sense of flexibility surrounding personal and sexual identity; indeed, as Holmes explains, *Love's Masquerades* is "not a representation of a specific subjectivity" (2005, 71). Rather, Marzials employs music and musical discourses to introduce a spectrum of subjectivities throughout the sequence and includes genders and sexual orientations which depart from heterosexual and cisgender identities. Thus, for Marzials, the Petrarchan sonnet becomes a suitable site within which conventional assumptions surrounding gender roles and expectations can be contested and a variety of erotic desires and fantasies can be explored.

This is clear from the very first of the nine poems contained within *Love's Masquerades*. Immediately thrusting the reader into a medieval world of ladies and courtiers, the sequence begins with a sonnet called "Love, the Poet." The opening lines see three women talking about what might happen on their wedding night until Love interrupts the scene:

In broad brocades, three laughing ladies sat,
 Hand in white hand, and marygold-girt head
 To warm white throat; their cheeks encrimsonèd;
 And from their lips intent, the waifs of chat
 Went twittering o'er the daisied terrace-plat
 Of Love's delights what time they might be wed;
 Then Love came by the marygold's bright bed
 A gay court poet, peacock-plume in hat. (I, lines 1–8)

The women are instantly eroticised in the opening lines of the verse; indeed, Marzials highlights the way they hold hands, their "warm white" throats, and their blushing cheeks. The image becomes progressively sexualised as the women are flushed, suggesting that there is some sort of psychological stimulation causing this physiological response. As the women appear to be in an erotic reverie over "Love's delights what time they might be wed" – or rather, the perks of their wedding night and the loss of their virginity – readers might conclude that their reddened cheeks are a result of their romantic and sexual arousal and passionate contemplations. Nevertheless, their blissful scene is disrupted by the introduction of Love, with "peacock-plume in hat." The harsh plosive alliteration in the description of his attire is distracting and intrusive; in keeping with his entrance, the sounds quite literally disrupt the scene and foreshadow the dissidence that he introduces.

Love continues to make a dramatic entrance in the following sestet as he is introduced "With soft hand feeling down his slender thigh, / Where dangling hung his deadly chorded lute" (I, lines 9–10). In his discussion on the sequence, Holmes suggests that Marzials takes the theme of Rossettian sexuality to "such an extreme that his poetry

appears almost satirical” (2005, 71). Indeed, the opening two lines of the verse are undeniably sexual; so much so, in fact, that Marzials presents readers with an almost hyperbolic scene of eroticism. Here the women – not to mention the readers, too – are expecting Love to feel for his penis. Instead, he reveals a different type of instrument: his “deadly chorded lute.” This substitution already gestures towards, as Holmes notes, an “association between love and death” which resurfaces several times throughout the sonnet sequence (73). By replacing Love’s penis with a musical instrument in this tactile innuendo and combining such a substitution with the sensual sibilant sounds found amongst these two lines, Marzials connects musical allusions to physicality and eroticism, already gesturing towards how music might provide a way of introducing and exploring sexuality. “Love, the Poet” continues:

He ’gan recite of Tristram and Yseut:
 For whose sad loves the silenced dames thereby,
 In tears forgot their lords long due from chase;–
 And Poesy had stolen all love’s space. (I, lines 11–14)

It is fitting that Love recites the chivalric romance of Tristan and Iseult to the women, as they listen in awe and adoration. The story of Tristan and Iseult sees the pair engage in an adulterous relationship; as the Cornish knight, Tristan, and the Irish princess, Iseult, travel from Ireland so that Iseult can marry Tristan’s uncle, they ingest a love potion and begin their illicit affair. Although the tale has its origins in medieval Europe, it experienced a revival during the mid-nineteenth century, with Matthew Arnold drawing upon the legend in his poem *Tristram and Iseult* (1852) and Richard Wagner adapting the narrative for his opera *Tristan und Isolde*, composed between 1857 and 1859. Marzials thus combines Arnold’s popular contemporary poem with Wagner’s musical composition, suggesting that Love uses his lute – in part, at least – in his performance of this medieval romance tale. In response to the powerful recitation, the women are – just like the eponymous lovers of the tale – drawn away from traditional sexual norms and embrace their unconventional fantasies. Forgetting their suitors, they are instead tempted by the personified Love as he presents them with a dissident and ultimately unobtainable experience.

The women’s temptation and willingness to distance themselves from conventional sexual expectations bears similarities to a later sonnet from *Love’s Masquerades*, called “Love, the Ideal,” in which a woman lies in her bed reading a book. In a similar vein to the women from “Love, the Poet,” “Love, the Ideal” sees the reader entranced by the erotic and romantic version of Love contained within the text: “The one she dream’d of, on light pinions fann’d / Over the sill, did gently swoop and stand / Beside her, quivering for her full mouth’s red” (IV, lines 6–8). These lines once again eroticise both Love and the woman as Love’s body shakes for her “mouth,” suggesting that the pair will soon engage in an act of oral sex. Just like “Love, the Poet,” Love disrupts traditional sexual norms as art inspires visions of an alternative (and potentially dangerous) version of romance. Indeed, as Holmes discusses in his reading of “Love, the Poet,” the women “are fascinated by Love as an expressly erotic fantasy, and Marzials’s readers are invited to share that fantasy . . . but to do so is to distract themselves from their own proper, exterior objects of affection” (2005, 72). By distancing themselves from their

suitors, and by allowing the recital to steal “all love’s space,” Marzials suggests that the women will soon be met with disappointment. As in “Love, the Ideal,” when the unrealistic Love vanishes from the dame’s bedroom, the women in “Love, the Poet” are spellbound by Love’s performance and, by extension, the unobtainable fantasy introduced in this poetic/musical recital. Music is therefore figured within “Love, the Poet” as a sonorous symbol of erotic transgression.

Although “Love, the Poet” imagines an illicit heterosexual fantasy, Marzials also employs music throughout his sequence to express and explore same-sex desire, too. Indeed, unobtainable homoeroticism reappears throughout *Love’s Masquerades*, most notably in “Love, the Deceiver” and “Love, the Awakener.” In the former sonnet Marzials uses his opening octet to introduce his reader to a melancholy boy:

Deep in a draft orchard just in shoot,
 A-shivering as the light wind laugh’d and sped,
 A soft-limb’d stripling wept and shrill’d his flute,
 With daffodils bound doubly round his head,
 Why then so woebegone; fair friend? I said,
 Now every man some maiden finds to suit.
 Come, learn a strain more gaily gamutēd,
 And don some flower can bring forth likelier fruit. (VI, lines 1–8; original emphasis)

The age of the “stripling,” imagined as somewhat delicate and fragile with his “soft” limbs, gesturing already towards the effeminacy confirmed in the description of his crown of daffodils, is reflected by the landscape surrounding him; just as the orchard is “in shoot,” so is the boy. He is beginning to reach sexual maturation, initially “eager for sexual experience with a woman,” which the image of the budding orchard confirms (Holmes 2005, 75). As the stripling’s flute is introduced (with its phallic connotations) while the sonnet hints at his fragility and femininity, Marzials shows himself to be drawing upon and participating within long standing discourses surrounding music and masculinity. Indeed, as Richard Leppert (1988) has pointed out, by the mid-1600s and throughout the 1700s, the place of music “changed dramatically” because of the connection between “music and effeminacy” (17–18). This is illustrated, for example, by John Locke’s often-quoted *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), recalled by Leppert within his discussion. This treatise on the education of gentleman argued that music “wastes so much of a young Man’s time, to gain but a moderate Skill in it, and engages often in such odd Company, that many think it much better spared” (Locke 1779, 296–297). Dismissed as a “waste” of time, music was distanced from acceptable versions of masculinity and, in turn, was positioned as a feminine endeavour. Music and musical allusions therefore appear to provide an additional signifier of a non-traditional masculine identity.

Although the sonnet’s narrator expects the stripling to desire a heterosexual relationship – evidenced by, as Holmes explains, “the image of ‘likelier fruit’” – the mention of fruit also gestures towards the Biblical forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden, thereby connecting the sonnet to temptation and foreshadowing a sexual transgression (2005, 75). Alongside the impression of Eve’s sin, and with the stripling’s flute (and his potentially non-binary gender identity) in mind, Marzials also raises questions about the boy’s

sexual desires, not least because of the contemporary assumptions surrounding the (supposed) relationship between music, effeminacy, and homosexuality. As I mention above, such theories were introduced and disseminated by sexologists writing at the *fin-de-siècle*, with notable examples including the German psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), English physician Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897–1928), and Edward Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex* (1908). Ellis's research sees the second volume – published in 1900 – deal specifically with homosexuality or, as he describes it, “sexual inversion.” “As regards music,” Ellis claims, “my cases reveal the aptitude which has been remarked by others as particularly common among inverts. It has been extravagantly said that all musicians are inverts; it is certain that various famous musicians ... have been homosexual” (1900, 295). Quoting the German physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, Ellis adds “[Hirschfeld] himself elsewhere states ... that 98 per cent ... of male inverts are greatly attracted to music” (295). Ellis and Krafft-Ebing similarly employ case studies to support their arguments, many of which consisted of first-hand statements from their patients recalling their own homosexual experiences and feelings. In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, for example, the accounts which mention music suggest that it is intrinsic to sexual identity, with one man noting that “it is the nervous, exciting music of a Chopin, a Schumann, a Schubert, or a Wagner, etc., *that is in most perfect harmony with me*” (Krafft-Ebing 1892, 249; my emphasis). Another similarly says,

While I have but little interest in politics, I am passionately fond of music and an inspired follower of Richard Wagner. *I have noticed this preference in the majority of us; I find that this music is perfectly in accord with our nature*” (291; my emphasis).

The shared enjoyment of Wagner's music is important; in fact, Wagner is discussed by Fuller and Whitesell (2002) for his “dramatic exploration of illicit love, homosocial bonding, and male suffering”: unspeakable themes which were, at the time, better expressed through music (11). Wagner's music came to be considered, therefore, as “material for the nurturance of queer sensibilities,” at once a tool with which queer and stigmatised desires might reveal themselves or be embraced (11). It is significant, too, that both men in Krafft-Ebing's study not only note the integral place of music to their own identities, but that the latter speaker even suggests that this affinity can be generalised to “the majority” of homosexual men. Given the sexuality of the speaker, this argument sees him personally reinforce the role of music as a queer sound and a means of sexual identification. Despite appearing at the *fin-de-siècle*, between one and two decades after Marzials is writing, the suggestions made throughout these surveys arguably serve to confirm the well-established relationship between music and homosexuality during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. After all, discourses of music and sexuality would have necessarily circulated throughout Victorian society for some time before they possessed any credibility in a study.

It is with these contemporary discourses and assumptions in mind that readers might find Marzials's musical allusions indicative of the stripling's non-normative sexual desire. Such a suggestion is soon reinforced after the speaker in the sonnet proposes that the stripling should “learn a strain more gaily gamutèd,” or rather, play a complete range of musical notes on his flute, implying that the stripling's musical abilities are insufficient. As the speaker associates musical expertise with sexual success – “*Come, learn a strain*

more gaily gamutèd,” / “*And don some flower can bring forth likelier fruit*” (VI, lines 7–8) his advice, by extension, serves to gesture towards the stripling’s limited sexual opportunities. It transpires, though, that the stripling’s sexual constraints – imagined through his musicality – are likely the result of his homosexuality. The boy replies to the speaker in the following lines:

“Not so,” quoth he. Love came in lady’s guise,
Crimson with sweet intent, and piled our bed;
And when I drew her t’wards it in love’s wise,
Love laugh’d and spann’d his flaming wings and fled. (VI, lines 9–12; original emphasis)

The stripling’s expected heterosexual relationship is unfulfilled as Love, deceptively arriving in “lady’s guise,” transforms into a man. Holmes points out that these lines “[raise] the question of what, symbolically, this transvestism represents, and why it has such an impact” (2005, 75). After being cruelly mocked by Love – suggesting that Love knows how the stripling’s expected heterosexuality will never be realised – the boy swears off any future relationships, “*Deceived in Love himself, all love is vain’, / ‘And life undone;’* – and here he wept again” (VI, lines 13–14). Holmes argues that this final, dramatic statement reveals the “unconscious homoerotic desire which ... has no place in current discourses of love and for which those discourses offer no outlet or explanation” (2005, 75). Thus, the intimations surrounding the stripling’s effeminacy and his non-traditional sexual identity that Marzials alludes to in the opening octet are subsequently confirmed in the final six lines of the poem. Although music is not central to this sonnet and is not called upon again in the final lines, Marzials’s introduction of musicality and discourses of music at the beginning of the poem remain significant; indeed, music is utilised to gesture towards and raise early implications surrounding the stripling, his erotic desires, and his personal and sexual identity. Music therefore serves to signify a forthcoming disruption to the heteronormative expectations determined by the speaker of the sonnet, once again establishing how music and musical allusions work to subtly express and articulate transgressive and unobtainable erotic desires.

In “Love, the Awakener,” Marzials arguably introduces a similar – but certainly more explicit – expression of homoeroticism. The sonnet begins by introducing Love:

Love, through the stars, swoop’d down the violet sky;
His flaming feet caught at a fountain-brim;
And crouching there, sweet taper limb to limb,
He stood his rebeck on his moonlit thigh,
Toss’d back his pinions, wreath’d in pansied rim,
Shaking off silver, and stroked out thereby
His twinkling strings to swooning harmony;
And tinseling sprays the fountain spill’d on him. (X, lines 1–8)

It is significant that Love positions himself in this space – by the side of a fountain – because it connects him to an erotic scene from one of Marzials’s earlier sonnets, “Love, the Minstrel,” in which a pair of lovers engage in an act of foreplay beside a fountain, “In

the deep shadows round the fountain-space, / Clear to the moonlight and the slim jet's tip / Toss'd into silver" (V, lines 1–3). The sensual sibilant sounds in these lines combined with the suggestive imagery of the "slim jet's tip" that is "tossed" prompt readers to imagine that the female character from "Love the Minstrel" is sexually stimulating her male partner. It is also significant that the couple are hidden amongst the "deep shadows" of the fountain as they engage in this heterosexual act, suggesting that their secretive behaviour is prohibited. When readers also meet Love by the side of the fountain in "Love, the Awakener," then, this place and the characters therein are similarly imbued with both secrecy and eroticism, ultimately foreshadowing the introduction of another stigmatised sexual act: masturbation. Here Marzials writes about masturbation using musical analogies; indeed, as in "Love, the Poet," he replaces Love's penis with another musical instrument, the rebec, a bowed stringed instrument with a narrow boat-shaped body. As Love plays his rebec, then, he engages in an act of self-pleasure, a "near-explicit depiction of masturbation" (Holmes 2005, 76). This suggestion is heightened by the inclusion of the word "tossed" which, as Holmes points out, was "first recorded as written slang for masturbation in 1879, so surely current with spoken slang earlier in the 1870s" (76). Crucially, though, it is Marzials's inclusion of the musical instrument and his musical allusions which enable readers to distinguish this scene of autoeroticism and, by the end of the octet, Love's ejaculation.

While at first music presents itself as an expression of self-pleasure, it soon appears to be – as in "Love, the Deceiver" – connected to homoeroticism. Marzials continues:

Anear, through a low window left unclose,
 The sound stole through breathing trails of rose,
 And kiss'd the sleeping courtier's comely head;
 Who, starting up, felt all his soul on fire,
 Rack'd and rent back by some sad strange desire,
 And sleep forever banish'd from his bed. (X, lines 9–14)

In these lines, the sound of the rebec/the image of Love masturbating reaches the courtier through his open window. As he was originally sleeping, this moment calls into consideration whether this awakening – a double entendre suggesting that this scene also sees the courtier's sexual "awakening" – is an auditory symbol of the courtier's unconscious desire. The response to hearing the rebec is significant; the courtier starts with his soul "on fire," yearning for the music which he wishes to embrace. Holmes writes that the end of the sonnet connects the courtier's confusing, unspecified, and unobtainable "sad, strange desire" with "the image of Love masturbating. Whether the courtier identifies ... and so is drawn towards the masturbation himself, or whether instead he finds the image of Love's own masturbation arousing, a previously unconscious non-generative desire is awakened" (2005, 76). Music and sound in "Love, the Awakener," then, are employed as a means of expressing and exploring unspeakable erotic desires, as is evidenced by both Love as he uses his rebec to engage in an act of self-pleasure as well as the courtier who, upon hearing Love play, finds himself emotionally and erotically stimulated by the sound of Love's music. It is also worth pointing out that Love (as musician) and the courtier (as the listener) make contact through sound, thereby figuring music as a sonic medium for erotic communication. This concept of sonic/sexual communication

crops up in another of Marzials's poems from *The Gallery of Pigeons*. Indeed, the speaker from the poem "The Love-Token" (taken from the sequence *Majolica and Rococo*) is only able to use music to contact their beloved. As "she left her shutter a-jar," the speaker reveals

I scraped a chord on my mandoline,
A chord, Pardè, that might ruin a queen!
And softly a-down the garden I crept;
And, ah! the song slid thro' the shutter a-jar,
And the lady lean'd over the window-bar! (XIII, lines 10–14)

The speaker tentatively approaches their well-guarded lover, until they choose to use music to communicate through the window (a space which recalls the permeable open window in "Love, the Awakener"). "The Love-Token" raises questions of *why* the couple are not able to easily meet one another and why the lover is so unsuitable that they must stealthily approach the window. Recalling the secrecy of the lovers by the fountain space in "Love, the Minstrel," the speaker's subtlety in "The Love-Token" also hints at a prohibited relationship. Whatever the reason for their separation, though, music is the only way for them to communicate with one another; indeed, upon entering through the window, music is imagined as a tool which can be used to articulate inexpressible sexual and romantic desires.

As "The Love-Token" shows, music is employed to articulate desire in other poems from *The Gallery of Pigeons* beyond *Love's Masquerades*. This is no clearer than in a poem called "Nocturne," a reference to a musical composition inspired by the night. Emerging primarily during the nineteenth century and made famous by the music of Frédéric Chopin – a composer, like Wagner, with whom sexological studies linked music to homosexuality – a nocturne was generally composed for the solo piano. In discourses surrounding musicality and masculinity, keyboard instruments (including pianos) were frequently considered particularly feminine instruments (Leppert 1988, 122). Leppert offers an example to attest to this, stating that "an eighteenth-century father might agree to pay ten guineas for a new spinet [a smaller type of piano] for his teenage son but only with regret that it was nevertheless 'a female instrument'" (122). Consequently, Law argues, the piano is used to allude to same-sex attraction in much-celebrated texts like *Dorian Gray* as well as lesser-known fiction from the *fin-de-siècle*, like Florence Farr's *The Dancing Faun* (1894). Such deeply entrenched musical allusions arguably also appear in "Nocturne" to suggest and voice a stigmatised emotional and sexual desire. Indeed, Marzials immediately presents his readers with a romantic night-time scene, in which the speaker watches their male beloved play the (allegedly effeminate) spinet. Throughout the poem, Marzials sheds little light on the unnamed and ungendered speaker; however, given the content of the poem and the unattainable relationship, it might be conducive to consider this text – and, perhaps, the previously mentioned "The Love-Token," too – in a similar way that Natasha Distiller and John Holmes (2010) talk about the love poetry of Rosa Newmarch. As Newmarch's sonnet sequence *Horae Amoris* (1903) sees the ungendered speaker call attention to their unrequited love for a woman, Distiller and Holmes suggest that "in its refusal to name its desire," it may offer an "example of a self-consciously queer desire" (31). The indeterminacy and therefore fluidity of the speaker's gender and sexuality in *Horae Amoris* bears

similarities to the genderless speaker of Marzials's "Nocturne," who intimately admires their beloved with an unwavering – if ultimately futile – attraction.

The opening lines immediately reveal the speaker's devotion and admiration; "He sat at a spinet and play'd," Marzials writes, "He play'd – my beautiful soul with the earnest eyes" (lines 1–2). The player's music is directly connected to the speaker's affection, bearing similarities to the infatuation presented by the speaker of John Addington Symonds's "Clifton and a Lad's Love," contained within the 1893 collection *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays* and published thirty years after its original composition. In "Clifton and a Lad's Love," the speaker talks of their feelings towards their beloved, a chorister, by recalling his voice. "His voice was swifter than the lark," they admit, adding "I found him in a lowly place, / He sang clear songs that made me weep: / Long nights he ruled my soul in sleep: / Long days I thought upon his face" (I, line 5; lines 9–12). As in Symonds's poem, then, Marzials's "Nocturne" also sees the speaker's emotions tied to the spinet player's music, thereby connecting music and musicality to their sexual and romantic desires. Indeed, while watching the spinet player, the speaker says "He sat at a spinet and play'd / His long firm hands on the music linger'd, and stray'd / Longingly, lovingly – I – (did he know I was by?)" (lines 5–7). Marzials eroticises the player's hands in these lines; the description of his slow, sensual touch is sexual and emotional. As the speaker gazes upon the spinet player – in secret, again suggesting that there is a stigma attached to openly watching him – they might very well be picturing his hands "lingering" and "straying" upon their own body.

Later, the speaker imagines the pair together; "your hand stroked mine / and I look'd, and was fill'd by your earnest eyes" (line 62). There is once again an emphasis on the spinet player's delicate touch and the effect this has on the speaker, while the image of being "fill'd" calls into question the possibility of a sexual union. When the music ceases though, so too does the speaker's dream of the two of them together: "Crash! and I ran to the earth – the playing had come to an end. / My dream is shatter'd; it seems as if nothing can mend" (lines 63–64). The onomatopoeic crash at the beginning of these lines visually and aurally shatters and interrupts the previous musical dream-space, reminding both the speaker and the reader that the imagined experience was ultimately a fantasy and prompting an emotive response from the speaker which resembles the psychological trauma seen at the end of "Love, the Deceiver," when the stripling suggests that "all love is vain," (VI, line 13) and in "Love, the Awakener," when sleep is "forever banish'd" (X, line 14) from the courtier's bed. Just as in the sonnets contained in *Love's Masquerades*, then, music ultimately provides the speaker of "Nocturne" with a tool with which to articulate their most private and intimate, albeit unattainable, fantasies and feelings.

Conclusion: expressing the inexpressible

In his essay, "The Rest is Silence" (1931), Aldous Huxley proposes that "After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music" (17). The power of music, Huxley suggests, is that it offers a way of understanding and communicating experiences and feelings that we may so often find ourselves unable to verbally articulate. Just like the prose fiction and poetry published throughout the final two decades of the nineteenth century, Marzials's *Love's Masquerades* also employs music for the very same purpose.

No more overt is this suggestion than in the line that this discussion borrows for its title, taken from “Love, the Intimidator”: “And quick the glib notes ran along her tongue, / Like rose and fruit. ‘Ah bitter love!’ she sung” (VII, lines 4–5; original emphasis). These lines introduce readers to a woman who sits beside a fountain – the location once again infusing the sonnet with expectations of the woman’s sexual transgressions and eroticism – and articulates her romantic disappointments and feelings through song. Directly entwining music with expressions of unobtainable desire, “Love, the Intimidator” serves well to prompt immediate connections between musicality and sexual identity. Within *The Gallery of Pigeons*, then, and *Love’s Masquerades* especially, music is introduced as a way of articulating and imagining erotic desires; specifically, those which can never be fully realised because of their dissidence and transgression. This ultimately illustrates how music functioned as a tool that mid- to late- Victorian writers might have deployed to voice and explore a spectrum of sexual identities and fantasies.

With this in mind, it is worth returning to Sutton’s work to reconsider the suggestion that music in late-Victorian poetry “anticipated” recent musicological studies, those which determine how “music is constitutive of sexual, and more broadly, personal identity” (2005, 215). Indeed, as “music can cause listeners to experience their bodies in new ways,” Susan McClary writes in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991), it finds itself intrinsically tied to the social, the political, and the sexual self, necessarily connecting it to personal identity (25). While my reading of *Love’s Masquerades* does not seek to reject Sutton’s claim, it does – I believe – raise questions over whether this anticipation in fact *precedes* the poets about whom she speaks. Indeed, Marzials’s poetry suggests that writers were using music to imagine, express, and explore sexual desires and identities even earlier than scholarship currently suggests. Consequently, the “mutually constitutive” relationship – as Sutton describes it – between music and sexuality in poetry published *before* the *fin-de-siècle* may have been unfairly ignored (214). In recognising and exploring the use of music in Marzials’s poetry, this discussion hopes to go a little way towards rectifying this research gap.

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