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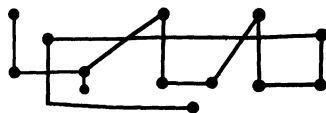
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# PARADIGM DISSONANCES: MUSIC THEORY, CULTURAL STUDIES, FEMINIST CRITICISM



SUSAN McCLARY

IN THE DEBATE that has raged during the past year between music theory and feminist criticism, participants often appear to be talking at cross-purposes. On the one hand, we are offered models of autonomous compositional procedures; on the other, descriptions of musical seduction, analyses of gender-based constructions, occasionally even charges of misogyny and violence. One side accuses the other of insufficient rigor, of dragging ideological issues into the self-contained realm of music; the other dismisses formalist theory as irrelevant to their concerns. At times it scarcely seems possible that the two groups can be addressing the same objects, so utterly divergent are their accounts.<sup>1</sup>

As Thomas Kuhn would tell us, we are in the throes of a paradigm shift; and although he could further assure us that this is the way disciplines typically proceed—through radical discontinuities, often accompanied by bitter institutional struggle—that assurance does not make the

situation any the more pleasant.<sup>2</sup> For a great deal is at stake on both sides. Theorists have refined a number of extremely elegant ways of approaching music's logical processes; and while the field is constantly alive with debates over particular details and even alternative models, its practitioners strive for consensus, and they tend to agree on basic principles. By contrast, feminist critics come at music from many interdisciplinary directions.<sup>3</sup> And while we disagree on many issues both small and substantive—and, furthermore, *value* that disagreement—most of us concur in rejecting the premise that music is *just* about music, even if the questions we pose sometimes demand techniques not yet fully developed.

In this essay, I want to try to head off further escalation of the strife between theory and feminism by introducing a mediating factor, namely cultural studies. If the gap between a self-sufficient music theory and criticism dealing with issues of gender and sexuality seems impossible to bridge, it is in large part because theorists have so long resisted treating music as a cultural phenomenon. Yet under a cultural-studies umbrella, it ought to be possible both to investigate the syntactical conventions that grant coherence to our repertoires and also to examine the ways music participates in the social construction of subjectivity, gender, desire, ethnicity, the body, and so on. We might think of cultural studies as an ethnology of ourselves, a coming home to roost of the anthropological projects of the last several decades.<sup>4</sup> For if we who study Western music were to relax our claims to universality and transcendence, we could learn to appreciate the extraordinary power of music to affect our lives, to operate as an active agent (rather than a distracted bystander) in the unfolding of history.

“Cultural studies” involves a loose amalgam of methods, questions, and issues usually traced back to Raymond Williams in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> Williams's classic work involved exploring the nineteenth-century novel as a site where the “structures of feeling” characteristic of bourgeois subjectivity were formulated, where tensions bound up with class and identity were isolated, intensified, and brought to speculative resolution. Rather than regarding literature as a retreat from the world, in other words, he understood it to be performing crucial *cultural work*, to be influencing and shaping the very societies it appears merely to be describing. Moreover, he demonstrated that nineteenth-century literary criticism and educational policy likewise were preoccupied with how to produce certain ideal versions of “the self” during this period of severe demographic, economic, and political upheaval.<sup>6</sup>

In subsequent years, Williams's project has been taken up by both English and North American scholars, who examine not only literature,

but also the visual arts and film. During the 1980s, his original focus on class was broadened to include the study of gender, gay/lesbian issues, ethnicity, and experiences of postcolonialism. Much of the popular-music research of the past twenty years has derived from a cultural-studies base.<sup>7</sup>

I am not introducing the concept of cultural studies in order to interpose yet another interdisciplinary approach between us and the study of music. As has already been suggested, this area has no single methodology, no fixed predisposition to either celebration or excoriation, no unifying ideology—except a belief that culture matters because it is through culture that we learn how to become socialized beings. And we can tell a great deal about who we are and who our predecessors were by scrutinizing the representations produced, reproduced, transmitted, and contested throughout the history of art, music, letters, and science. Thus it is not so much a matter of adopting a new set of alien techniques as of readjusting many of our own agendas such that music—whatever our particular questions—maintains its status as a cultural activity.

It probably is not coincidental that most of the initial rumblings of dissatisfaction, the first clear signs of a cultural-studies approach, have emerged from within musicology. As has often been remarked in other areas, such as film or literary studies, theory and history have significantly different priorities—priorities that are not always entirely compatible. If theorists can often sustain the illusion that the objects of their study reside outside the social world, musicologists constantly encounter evidence of music's historical contingencies and its social means of production—which include not only practices connected with apprenticeship, patronage, or marketing, but even the musical procedures themselves.<sup>8</sup>

As one who presents the entire history of Western music every year to undergraduates, I can attest to the fact that music changes—and that we, sometimes can account for why and how it changes only by observing shifts in cultural priorities. Once we begin to recognize the ways in which music operates as an integral part of the social world, it becomes impossible to draw a line and exclude the questions now circulating throughout the other humanities concerning, say, gender. We need only ask: “Does gender enter into this picture?” and the evidence starts pouring in. Documents, lyrics, and the music itself are saturated with references to and images of women, virility, desire, pleasure, the body, and so forth: only our determination not to notice has blinded us to these ubiquitous features of musical practice.

But it is not only musicologists who have begun to realize the impact of the social world on music. Leonard Meyer's book *Style and Music* demonstrates in detail how closely nineteenth-century innovations in

harmony, melody, structure, rhythm, and even part-writing correspond to conceptual transformations occurring throughout European culture during the 1800s. And David Lewin has written not only about how the metaphors structuring Rameau's harmonic theories were grounded in cultural assumptions about gender, but also about how those gendered assumptions got realized and transmitted in tonal compositions for the next two hundred years.<sup>9</sup>

What is important about the recent work of these distinguished theorists is that they are turning to culture, even when addressing questions of “why this note rather than any other?” In other words, these issues are not “extramusical”; they are inextricably bound up with musical procedures, procedures that have no value outside the social systems that produce and embrace them as somehow meaningful. If certain conventions (such as sonata, tonality, or serial technique) occasionally acquire so much formal integrity that they seem to operate outside the social sphere, this is only because they represent a dominant set of shared beliefs—beliefs so fundamental that they come to be accepted as Truth rather than as cultural choices or constructions. And their hegemonic status makes them all the more demanding of cultural examination.<sup>10</sup> As Stuart Hall has written concerning abstract structures in literature:

Meanings are already concealed or held within the forms of the stories themselves. Form is much more important than the old distinction between form and content. We used to think form was like an empty box, and it's really what you put into it that matters. But we are aware now that the form is actually part of the content of what it is that you are saying. So then one has to ask why it is that certain events seem to be handled, predominantly in our culture, in certain forms.<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

Let me begin with an example in which the harnessing of musical procedures for cultural work is relatively obvious: namely, Bizet's *Carmen*. Although premiered in 1875, *Carmen* displays few of the “progressive” features beginning to emerge in other music of the time. Or at least it appears so to our ears: many contemporary French critics and the original performers found the opera almost unbearably abstruse—or, to use their favorite term of abuse, “Wagnerian.”

To be sure, chromatic passages abound in Bizet's score, but they are for the most part easily explained: either they inflect what is otherwise a static framework (as in much of *Carmen*'s music), or they flirt with destabilizing modulations (as in Don José's utterances), but in ways that could

be accounted for by a diligent undergraduate. Not even the “exotic” sections pose serious difficulties, since their apparent modality usually turns out to be merely the result of the occasional odd note sprinkled into what is otherwise an assuringly tonal context. Because it offers so few challenges to accepted notions of musical procedure (in contrast with, say, the perennially sphinx-like *Tristan* Prelude), theorists rarely bother with *Carmen*.

Yet few pieces of music have had the impact of Bizet’s masterpiece. *Carmen* is the opera most frequently performed in the repertory, the opera whose tunes show up most often in film, TV, or sporting events. If musicians take *Carmen* for granted—often disparaging it as borderline kitsch—historians of late nineteenth-century culture are beginning to recognize its unparalleled role not only in reflecting, but in articulating publicly for the first time many of the anxieties that still trouble our own moment. More compellingly than any other document from that period, *Carmen* gives voice to contestations over class, race, gender, colonialism, and high-versus-low-culture that started to ignite around that time. Nor is the story alone responsible: we remember Mérimée’s original novella (if at all) because of its relationship to its more illustrious offspring. Thus, even if Bizet’s procedures do not attract the attention of music theorists, they surely deserve considerable scrutiny from *someone*.

As a scholar concerned with cultural questions who has studied *Carmen*,<sup>12</sup> I have found I must have something more than standard analysis in order to account for how the opera makes its impact. In addition to the music itself, I have had to take into account the tensions that preoccupied late nineteenth-century French culture and that inform the dramatic logic of this opera. Moreover, I have had to recover the extremely diverse musical codes—the conventions of *opéra-comique*, French Wagnerisms, musical practices associated with exoticism—by means of which Bizet fashioned his best-known work. Finally, I have had to pay attention to the various ways actual people have understood this opera: both the historical record of reception (reviews, interpretations in opera guides, textbooks, program notes, and so on) and also responses of today’s listeners (students or general audience members), for whom *Carmen* exists as a contemporary cultural text.

To those accustomed to discussions in which only music-specialists participate, this last may seem a dubious way to proceed: why pay attention to the impressions of someone who could not label a chord, even at gunpoint? Well, largely because these are the listeners who reliably make up the audiences for the never-ending stream of *Carmen* performances, and because such people are often in closer touch with music as it operates in the social world—they are concerned not with chords or forms per

se, but with *effects*, and thus are in some respects better witnesses than many professionals, given our training to regard effects as vulgar, subjective, or irrelevant. Such listeners often describe their responses in language that sounds vague. Yet they can, when pressed, usually point to features in the music that led them to their conclusions: Carmen's melodies are sensual yet unpredictable; Don José's music roams around as though lost and yet pushes in ways that sound violent; the disorienting montage and rising pitch of the ending makes them—against their better judgment—root for Carmen's death.

Now I could, of course, explain to these listeners that in his "Flower Song," Don José merely proceeds through a series of enharmonic and chromatic pivots—all fairly easily analyzed. Yet I think they're right: in his portrait of Don José, Bizet worked hard to create the impression of impotent violence, which is crucial to the unfolding of the rest of the opera. Accordingly, I would want to examine how precisely the composer achieved this effect. And not simply for the sake of my untutored friends. Within the profession, we often regard such modulations merely as markers of a particular moment in the history of style—as signs of late nineteenth-century practice—and deal with them more deeply only if they seem to raise interesting technical problems. Yet not all such modulations produce the same effects as Don José's. How are his different? How did Bizet manipulate such shared devices to this end? And why would he have wanted to do so?

In the last few years, several scholars working in cultural studies have turned to philosopher J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*,<sup>13</sup> in which Austin tries to get beyond the hair-splitting debates about meaning that had paralyzed the philosophy of language and to focus instead on the performative—how language actually operates in the world. While alien to many of us today, a work titled *How to Do Things with Notes* would have seemed quite congenial to Monteverdi, Bach, or Mozart, for musicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were explicitly concerned with the marshalling of devices for rhetorical effect. We can read accounts of composers from these periods trying out new combinations and responding with glee when audiences responded just as they had anticipated.<sup>14</sup>

No less than Monteverdi, Bach, or Mozart, the composer of *Carmen* calculated his effects—as it turns out, with astonishing success. Surely some of us need to use our analytical training to interrogate how Bizet "did things with notes"; and surely to do so is as much a project in the theorizing of music as is the production of self-contained systems. Indeed, the answers we often seek within the "purely musical" sometimes lie within this messy terrain of culture, its discontents, and its competing modes of representation.

Which brings me at last to feminist criticism. From the moment of its inception—long before Bizet put pen to paper—*Carmen* was recognized as trafficking in controversial images of gender. The distinguished director of the Opéra-Comique resigned his post as the opera took shape; prominent prima donnas refused to perform the title role; Parisian critics panned it for its lurid depictions of female sexuality (described by one as “uterine frenzies”). Even when embraced later by Viennese audiences, it was because (as Nietzsche put it in his attack on Wagner) Bizet had captured “That love which is war in its means, and at bottom the deadly hatred of the sexes!”<sup>15</sup> Twentieth-century responses have ranged from outright exploitation of its exotic sensationalism, to philosophical meditations that use *Carmen* to illustrate the essential treachery of Woman, to productions that celebrate her as a martyr to radical causes. Only embarrassed academics have tried to erase altogether the issue of gender.

Thus it isn’t surprising to see feminist critics addressing Bizet’s opera, since these are the scholars today who are most concerned with how gender and sexuality are constructed in society by means of culture and since *Carmen* has always acted as a lightning rod for public debates over these issues.<sup>16</sup> Yet feminist criticism of even so notorious a work does not result in uniform condemnation, for while the apparent “necessity” of *Carmen*’s death troubles many women, the opera has received varied interpretations. Her portrait may be read as a sordid stereotype, but it also has been hailed as a liberating enactment that acknowledges the possibility of female desire and self-determinism. Indeed, a number of feminist artists at the turn of the century—several of them lesbian—identified strongly with the outlaw sexuality of Bizet’s leading character.<sup>17</sup>

Nor can one always decide on the basis of the opera’s score that some of these reactions are right, others wrong. Like most works of art that survive extreme changes in cultural climate, *Carmen* does not lend itself to unified, totalizing accounts. In fact, the more deeply one studies Bizet’s strategies, the more one encounters contradictions and ambivalences—ambivalences that have made viable the wide range of mutually incompatible responses it has provoked.

On the one hand, Bizet clearly relished the physicality and hedonism he bestowed on his gypsy characters: he could not have composed them so vividly otherwise. But on the other, we know that he aspired to writing music that could meet the idealist standards he identified with Beethoven, that he felt guilty for succumbing continually to temptation—in his personal life as well as his work. As he confessed once concerning his musical proclivities: “I am German by conviction, heart and soul, but I sometimes get lost in artistic houses of ill-fame.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus while the opera plays on fears of the Other (understood as nonwhite, non-Christian, colonial, working-class, and female), it can also



be read as dramatizing the internal conflicts suffered by Bizet himself, along with many of his contemporaries. Drawn to the prohibited body and to popular music against his “better judgment,” Bizet’s stand-in—Don José—apparently has to enact his cruel punishment not only on the uncontainable Carmen, but also on himself and the audience, which has delighted perhaps a bit too much in the melodic pleasures of the flesh offered by the gypsies. It is not because he wrote a one-dimensional morality play that Bizet is celebrated, but because he captured, amplified, and left more or less unresolved a powerful set of dilemmas.

The status of *Carmen* as a cultural document rests not on its technical innovations (though Bizet obviously had all the technique necessary to his task), but on its ability to engage and galvanize heterogeneous audiences. In the realm of “doing things with notes,” Bizet has had few peers. Which makes it all the more imperative that we study how he constructed the impotence of Don José, the exuberance of Carmen, the triumphant exoticism that exacerbated the widely shared fear that European artistic resources had been exhausted, the impulses that drive the opera’s narrative to its fatal conclusion. Not because it is our duty to pass judgment on the cultural politics of a former time, but because *Carmen* still informs our own present moment—every time, for instance, that an ice-skater chooses the “Habañera” for the Olympics.

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Well and good for opera, but what about instrumental music? Surely so-called Absolute Music resides beyond the clutches of either feminism or cultural studies. Its buzzwords—autonomy, organic, developing variation—stand to guard it securely against any incursions from the outside; here, at least, is a haven where the purely musical can operate freely.

Without question, instrumental music is free of verbal texts that would link it explicitly with the social world. Yet this absence of words does not automatically exempt the repertory from the kinds of questions I am asking. First, eighteenth-century instrumental music was able to cast off verbal reference largely because its composers and audiences had inherited from opera an extensive vocabulary for the articulation of affect and topos. The increasingly longer, more “self-contained” ritornelli of da capo arias served as a site where composers perfected their skills at communicating without words, and listeners learned to grasp the significance of given melodic shapes, rhythms, and instruments long before the lyrics entered to announce the piece’s heroic or sorrowful intent. That vocabulary is still alive and well (somewhat modified over time, but still recognizable) in the music of films and advertisements. It also made possible the symphony’s highly-touted “emancipation from language.”

Second, the formal procedures by means of which instrumental composers constructed their movements arrived already laden with cultural baggage. These included primarily tonality—a cluster of techniques developed during the seventeenth century for purposes of erratic, unruly expansion that had been domesticated and standardized in the eighteenth century as a set of devices signifying “reason”; and sonata—an unlikely cultural genre that resulted from the infusion of narrative impulses into the aristocratic binary-dance schema.<sup>19</sup> Neither tonality nor sonata look quite so purely musical when one traces back through their genealogies; they appear instead as the most important bearers of hegemonic meaning, the most privileged modes of cultural representation.

And what are they representing? The very buzzwords (autonomy, organic, developing variation) that are designed to ward off or deny all outside influences actually tell us a great deal. As Terry Eagleton demonstrates in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*,<sup>20</sup> these same terms cluster around the principal agenda of both political theory and the arts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: namely, the formation of the autonomous, self-generated masculine subject.

During previous periods of European history, identity was more or less determined by accidents of birth; but the Enlightenment introduced the ideal of the individual who invents himself from his own essential materials, free from the constraints of social convention. In literature, the privileged genre became the *Bildungsroman*—or novel of development—in which a young, relatively unformed male proceeds through a series of experiences that serve to consolidate his mature identity. In contrast to episodic genres, in which adventures occur and then disappear, all events in the *Bildungsroman* appear to contribute directly, organically, to the developing variation of the emergent subject.<sup>21</sup> Recall the intricate web of characters and seeming coincidences in the works of Dickens, in which nothing happens by accident, in which everything feeds back into the economy of the totalized world constructed by the novel at hand.

As our buzzwords indicate, this most crucial agenda of nineteenth-century cultural work was undertaken by instrumental music, especially the symphony. In movement after movement or over the course of an entire cycle, we witness the narrative formation of a musical self as it encounters obstacles, strengthens its own innate resources through motivic development, and finally achieves the secure identity that confirms the viability of the centered subject.

Of course, the emphasis of such pieces changes over time: Haydn’s movements often start with a relatively well-formed entity that struts its stuff as it proceeds through the trajectory provided by tonality and the

sequence of events loosely grouped within the sonata rubric; Mozart begins (in, say, the *Prague* Symphony) to work with how to reconcile public processes of “becoming” with the deep private feelings expected of the bourgeois subject of that period;<sup>22</sup> Beethoven lashes out against the constraints of conventionality and stakes the fate of his movements on their organic strength of purpose. As mid-century European culture becomes obsessed with the impossibility of producing a truly stable self, symphonic themes increasingly employ gendered codes of masculine versus feminine, thus defining “self” in counterdistinction to “Other.” Finally, composers such as Schönberg scrap the whole project underlying tonality and sonata as illusory—at the same time as the conventions responsible for representing the centered subject in literature and art likewise get banished or displaced.<sup>23</sup>

Metaphors, metaphors, nothing but metaphors. True enough; but then philosopher Mark Johnson has demonstrated that metaphors underlie our languages, our cultural forms that make social interaction possible, our most fundamental thought processes.<sup>24</sup> Far from being ephemeral figures of speech that can be scraped away to get at the truth, metaphors ground knowledge at its very root. I am claiming that tonality and sonata correspond to the foundational metaphors that have governed bourgeois thought and social life since the Enlightenment. (One reason audiences so resist posttonal music is that they are loath to surrender that model of the self performed—that is, brought tangibly into existence—in music from before 1900.)

Not infrequently theorists and critics such as Koch, A.B. Marx, Hanslick, Kretschmar, Schenker, or Schönberg bear witness to this view of the standard repertory in passages where the process is described as narrative or where themes are personified as beleaguered individuals.<sup>25</sup> Nor are these ways of speaking simply crutches for articulating what truly transcends the verbal and the social; rather they testify to the very structures of thought underlying such procedures. Even our proscriptions against examining the cultural premises of the standard instrumental repertory betray an extraordinary emotional investment in objects we want to cherish not as products of society at all, but as icons that are themselves highly individualistic and that resonate with our own most private feelings.

As a cultural historian, I am drawn irresistibly to this medium in which various models of subjectivity were hammered out over the course of a century, the medium that we still take to represent our ideal selves, that teaches us about our inner emotions and public aspirations. I have no trouble including this repertory among the most magnificent achievements of Western civilization. At the same time, I find that achievement

all the more remarkable when I allow myself to consider what is at stake in each particular movement; how constructions of masculinity differ in Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert;<sup>26</sup> how and why the conventions upon which these pieces rely collapsed—or were deliberately detonated—at the turn of the century. That is, the more I know about these compositions as cultural entities the more I admire what they attempted and what they accomplished as agents participating in social formation.

Yet as a critic I also need to be able to observe certain problematic aspects of the repertory. In part, I must do this in order to explain to puzzled undergraduates why Schönberg and Stravinsky began writing music most people still find alienating. For to make sense of their innovations, it is necessary to realize that the first generation of Modernists were themselves engaged in a far more devastating version of cultural critique than any I am likely to mount: they felt personally stifled by the nineteenth-century ideology of centered subjectivity, and the vehemence with which they attacked its premises reveals their frustration.<sup>27</sup> Their work and that of more recent artists (whom we might call postmodern) have so removed us from that mythology that it should at last be possible to go back and examine from our own vantage point what was at stake in this music without words.

And as a feminist, I am interested in both the exscription of women from these narratives (for such stories of heroic self-development were generally understood not to be relevant to females during that period)<sup>28</sup> and also in the representations of gender and desire constructed within the repertory. Not because I want to rail at this music (indeed, I find much to celebrate there), but because its priorities, its blindspots, and its anxieties have contributed to the shaping of present day culture.<sup>29</sup> Late twentieth-century sexual politics did not spring into being with the Bush administration: they have a long, complex history that can in part be read from these privileged compositions that seek to naturalize, to metaphysicize a certain way of construing the world.

Moreover, understanding this repertory as the product of European males during a particular period of history helps to clear space for appreciating other repertories likewise as products of other groups in other times and places. If this is relativizing, so be it; but it makes no sense to ask why women or Africans, for instance, “failed” to contribute to a medium obsessed with formations of the masculine self in nineteenth-century Germany. We live in a musical environment too rich with too many other voices to remain stuck within a single ideology, and these other voices often compose music beginning with very different visions of the world—visions that generate different musical procedures and that require new sets of theoretical models. As Charles Hamm recently

pointed out, ours is now a society characterized by multinational exchanges, and musical practices (if not our theories) have acted both as barometers and as active participants in the articulation of cultural reality in the late twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> The contributions of the Western tradition are strong enough to stand up undiminished in the context of a multitude of other living alternatives, but we can no longer afford the parochialism of our approaches if we are to make sense of today's music.

To say this is not to advocate the demise of music theory. Indeed, we need something called "music theory" all the more as we begin to reorient our questions, methods, and objects of study. But if the discipline is to survive, it will have to open up to accommodate those studying the musics that matter in the world today—including non-Western practices, which have so heavily influenced even Western composers since Debussy, and popular repertoires, which are performing cultural work on a global scale that far surpasses anything dreamed of in the "universalist" Enlightenment. For it is African-American-based music—not the Groutly canon—that now informs our collective memories worldwide.

And we will need to redefine the project of Western formalist theory, such that the historical and cultural contingency of its structures are always acknowledged—at least tacitly. There is no reason why Schenker graphs and set analysis should not continue to flourish, so long as we know what it is we are tracing when we undertake those tasks and why the patterns we uncover matter in human terms. What kinds of cultural work are performed by the interlocking contrapuntal strands that link foreground with *Ursatz*? Or by the intensive combinatoriality of serialism? Why did these particular formal devices emerge and acquire the status they did at specific moments in history?

In short, I would like to see a future in which theorists, students of culture, and feminist critics can all collaborate in the greater understanding of music. We need not be at odds. Indeed, if recent work by Meyer, Lewin, and many younger scholars is any indication, theory is already moving in the direction of culture-sensitive interpretation.<sup>31</sup> And as this cluster of articles suggests, many feminist scholars are deeply committed to contributing to and enlarging the projects of theory and analysis, making it possible to account for the innovations of female—and also male—composers whose music refuses to conform to more familiar models.

Paradigm shifts, while never pleasant episodes in the ongoing production of knowledge, usually occur because the insights offered by the reigning model have begun to dry up and/or because the world has altered so that new concerns appear on the horizon to supplant or modify older ones. When disciplines refuse to undergo such shifts, they render themselves obsolete, for other groups simply take up and perform the

tasks rejected by more traditional scholars (already some of the most interesting work on music is taking place within comparative literature departments). Yet the fact that this debate has now arisen within music theory itself is evidence of vitality and willingness to consider different approaches. We need to leave the antagonisms behind and concentrate on a broader, more inclusive vision of what music theory could be if we all participated.

## NOTES

1. For theory, see Pieter van den Toorn, "Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory," *Journal of Musicology* 9 (1991): 275–99; and Elaine Barkin, "either/other," *Perspectives of New Music* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 206–33. For feminist criticism, see my *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Ruth Solie, "What Do Feminists Want? A Reply to Pieter van den Toorn," *Journal of Musicology* 9 (1991): 399–410; and my reply to Barkin, *Perspectives of New Music* 30, no. 2: 234–38.
2. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Since Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts deals principally with rival means of explaining a particular phenomenon, the confrontation between music theory and feminist criticism may seem not to fit his schema. Yet Kuhn's model has been highly influential in the humanities, where it is frequently used to account for changes in intellectual orientation within disciplines—changes that parallel the one I am concerned with here. In all the fields it has touched, feminist work has introduced new priorities that have resulted in very different questions, interpretations, and explanations. And these new approaches have had the effect of destabilizing some of the most fundamental tenets of earlier, usually more self-contained modes of operation (though never without institutional resistance). This, I submit, is what we are now experiencing in music studies.
3. For overviews, see my review essay, "Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s," *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 399–423; and the special issue on music of *Women: A Cultural Review* 3 (1992). See also the following collections: Ruth Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Susan Cook and Judy Tsou, eds., *Reclaiming Cecilia: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
4. As Paul Ricoeur has written: "When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one . . . when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with destruction by our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible

that there are *just* others, that we ourselves are an ‘other’ among others.” “Civilization and National Cultures,” in *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 278.

For this view of anthropology, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and George Marcus and Michael Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). This methodology has been represented in musicology in Gary Tomlinson, “The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology,” *19th Century Music* 7 (1984): 350–62; and Christopher Small, *Music—Society—Education* (London: John Calder, 1980).

5. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*, 2d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). See also Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe’s Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paul Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988); and Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan, eds., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
6. It is helpful to read Schumann’s critical project—his attempts at weaning middle-class audiences from flashy entertainments and at turning them toward the serious German repertory—from this point of view. For a remarkable study of how these issues operated in the United States during the 1800s, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988). Levine demonstrates that working-class audiences during most of the nineteenth century embraced Shakespeare, Italian opera, and Beethoven as their own culture, and they had to be taught that they could not understand such works. Gradually, Shakespeare, Italian opera, and Beethoven became the exclusive property of elite institutions and university classrooms.
7. See especially Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock ‘n’ Roll* (New York: Pantheon, 1981); John Street, *Rebel Rock: The Politics of Popular Music* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990); Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989); and George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*



- (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990). See also Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1993) for a study that combines a cultural studies methodology with musical analysis.
8. See, for instance, Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Discourse, 1800–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).
  9. Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); David Lewin, “Women’s Voices and the Fundamental Bass,” *Journal of Musicology* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 464–82.
  10. See my *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming).
  11. Stuart Hall, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Southern Review* 17 (1984): 7. Hall also writes: “In any society we all constantly make use of a whole set of frameworks of interpretation and understanding, often in a very practical unconscious way, and those things alone enable us to make sense of what is going on around us, what our position is, and what we are likely to do. . . . What is it that is secured, put in place, by those being the ways in which we talk to ourselves about life, experience, emotions, new situations? Who is it that benefits? . . . Why do [these stories] take that shape? What are the stories we don’t tell ourselves?” (12).
  12. See my “Sexual Politics in Classical Music,” *Feminine Endings*; “Identity and Difference in *Carmen*,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 3 (1992): 1–15; and *Georges Bizet: Carmen* (Cambridge Opera Handbook Series, 1992). The handbook includes a number-by-number account of Bizet’s music, as well as chapters devoted to cultural context, musical codes, and reception history.
  13. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2d ed., ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975). Lawrence Kramer, too, has made use of Austin, especially in the opening chapter of *Music as Cultural Practice*.
  14. See, for instance, Monteverdi’s account in the foreword to his *Madrigali guerrieri ed amorosi* of how he invented the *stile concitato*, or Mozart’s letter to his father on 3 July 1778, in which he describes

- how the Parisians responded to his Symphony, K. 297. See also Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 159.
  16. In addition to my work, see also Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); and Nellie Furman, "The Languages of Love of Carmen," *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 168–83.
  17. I am grateful to Liz Wood for this information. Ethel Smyth and Sarah Bernhardt were among those drawn to *Carmen*.
  18. Letter to Paul Lacombe (March 1867), quoted in Winton Dean, *Georges Bizet: His Life and Work* (London, 1965), 240.
  19. On tonality, see my "The Transition from Modal to Tonal Organization in the Works of Monteverdi" (Harvard University Dissertation, 1976); and *Power and Desire in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming). On sonata, see my "Narratives of Bourgeois Subjectivity in Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony," in *Understanding Narrative*, ed. Peter Rabinowitz and James Phelan (Columbus: Ohio University Press, forthcoming); and *De-Tonations: Narrative and Signification in "Absolute" Music* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, forthcoming).
  20. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
  21. See Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987); and Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
  22. See my "Narratives of Bourgeois Subjectivity."
  23. See Arnold Schönberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), especially the sections I discuss in *Feminine Endings*, Chapters 1 and 4. The best work on the German symphonic repertory from a cultural vantage point remains that of Theodor Adorno, although his insights occur scattered throughout his many writings. For helpful accounts and extensions of Adorno's views, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*

- (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). For a fascinating ideological reading of music history from the seventeenth century through John Cage, see Jean-François Lyotard, "Several Silences," trans. Joseph Maier, *Driftworks* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1984), 91–111.
24. Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
  25. Many of these are cited in Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*. See also Meyer, *Style and Music*, and Richard Littlefield and David Neumeier, "Rewriting Schenker: Narrative—History—Ideology," *Music Theory Spectrum* 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1992): 38–65.
  26. See my "Schubert's Sexuality and His Music," in Brett, Wood, and Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch*, and my "Narratives of Bourgeois Subjectivity."
  27. To be sure, Schönberg soon reinstated a far more intensely centered subjectivity in serialism.
  28. Of course, individual women could and did identify with these cultural narratives; and while some succeeded in patterning their lives after models intended as male, others were punished for not having understood their proper place as women. Marcia Citron has suggested that the gendered implications of the symphonic narrative help explain why women composers rarely participated in this genre. See her "Feminist Approaches to Musicology," in *Reclaiming Cecilia*, Cook and Tsou, eds.
  29. See my "Narrative Agendas in 'Absolute' Music: Brahms Symphony No. 3," in Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference*.
  30. Charles Hamm, "The Implications of Increasing Internationalization and Globalization of Human Activity for Higher Education in Music," unpublished typescript. I wish to thank Professor Hamm for permitting me to have a copy of this paper.
  31. See above for Meyer and Lewin. Edward T. Cone's work too has always been remarkable for its cultural grounding. Among the younger theorists working from a cultural point of view are Joseph Straus, Michael Cherlin, Ellie Hisama, Fred Maus—and, of course, Marion Guck and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert.