

STEVEN BAUR, RAYMOND KNAPP AND JACQUELINE WARWICK (EDS), *MUSICOLOGICAL IDENTITIES: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF SUSAN MCCLARY* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), ISBN 978-0-7546-6302-7, xxiv + 264pp, £55.

The story has been told before, but it bears repeating. It's about a turf-war waged within musicology in the last two decades of the twentieth century, how new forms of scholarship emerged in Anglo-American musicology during the 1980s, how these were met with a backlash from other scholars within the discipline. It seemed to be a battle for the very identity of the discipline, and, in turn, for the scholarly understanding of music. In hindsight, though, it's difficult to interpret the emergence of the 'new' musicology, or its largely UK-based variant 'critical musicology', as a serious threat to the established order in musicology. It would exaggerate the power and influence of the scholars involved to suggest that they could do more than carve out a niche within the discipline. This was very much a counter-culture, a challenge from one wing of a discipline that otherwise remained stubbornly committed to its indisputable priorities: style history, biography, music analysis, source studies.

No doubt the terms themselves were provocative—who wants to be an 'old' or 'uncritical' musicologist?—and the language often harshly polemical. But is this really surprising in this context? Aren't the most serious debates and paradigm shifts within disciplines characterized by intensity? How else to catch the attention of a slumbering behemoth? This isn't to say that some of this new scholarship wasn't wide of the mark, or to deny that the 'newness' didn't sometimes quickly date. But there are charges to be laid, too, at the feet of the counter-reaction that greeted the new developments: of obstinacy, of defensive posturing, of reactionary zeal. So what were they fighting over? At stake was a virtuous circle: a Western canon modelled on a particular set of values—aesthetic autonomy, organicism, abstraction—shaped the priorities of musicology, which in turn reinforced the canon by privileging those values. Not that musicology was alone in this: literary studies had its great books, art history its great paintings. And as Kevin Korsyn argues, this investment in the transcendent musical work had a wider resonance: the whole project of aesthetic autonomy, he observes, mirrors the modern investment in the autonomous, sovereign subject.¹ But music was special even in this context. After all, books and paintings can be related easily to the

¹ Kevin E. Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45–6.

things of this world. Music? Surely it relates only to itself.² Characterizing musical works as sacrosanct territory protected from the hideous creep of the worldly domain outside, Lawrence Kramer has likened them to the ‘national parks of high culture’.³ At stake here is not simply the perceived purity of the territory but the intervention that enables it. National parks preserve pristine wilderness via an artificial intervention: they are defined by borders which separate the typical human instrumentalization of nature—habitation, harvesting of natural resources, etc.—from some pure, untouched form of nature. Yet this apparent hands-off attitude is itself a form of instrumentalization, in that it stems from a specific set of goals shaped by the ideology of ecology: natural beauty, erasure of the human hand, preservation of species and habitat, etc.

Music, too, has been cordoned off by various cultural interventions: the Romantic metaphysics of instrumental music, the ‘objective’ turn embodied in the idea of absolute music, the modernist insistence on the purity of media. Not that these diverse aesthetic turns constitute some kind of homogeneous historical process, let alone a coherent project. Yet the persistence with which the Western post-Enlightenment discourse on music has invented and reinvented music’s autonomy is striking indeed. Historically, musicology has endorsed and reinforced this cultural work—so much so that the investment in autonomy could be characterized as musicology’s unwritten constitution. And ‘unwritten’ is the key here, for the properly ideological dimension of musicology isn’t in the investment *per se*, but in musicology’s refusal to acknowledge that they *are* interventions. This gets to the heart of the project associated with the ‘new’ or ‘critical’ musicology. It is what John Shepherd has called a ‘politics of articulation’, a willingness, that is, to understand music not as some pure essence that is compromised and sullied by discourse and by practice, but as the *outcome* of those discourses and practices—something that is already deeply implicated by our touch, even as we declare it untouched.⁴

Compared to musicology’s articulation of its object, national parks seem transparent: signposted, patrolled, monitored and visited in ways that discernibly distin-

² ‘To understand a representational painting’, writes Roger Scruton, ‘one must have some knowledge of the subject; but the same has never been honestly claimed for music.’ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding: Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1983), 69.

³ Lawrence Kramer, ‘Dangerous Liaisons: The Literary Text in Musical Criticism’, *19th-Century Music*, 13 (1989), 159–67: 165.

⁴ John Shepherd, ‘Difference and Power in Music’, in Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 46–65, 65.

guish them from 'ordinary' wilderness, they carry an aura of man-made experience. Confronted with this cultural frame, we can hardly speak of a 'natural' encounter with nature, even if we believed that such an experience were ever possible. Yet music aesthetics has repeatedly reminded us that a musical encounter with music is the proper one, and that scholarly accounts of music should reflect this.⁵ Nor is there much room for negotiation: this hasn't been presented, historically, as a possible engagement with music; rather, the assumption was made that that is the way music *is*. Anything else is irrelevant or, worse, vulgar. More than one colleague has wondered if my interest in issues of music and ethnicity, class, the body and sexuality comes from the fact that these are regarded as 'sexy'. It's a disregard that repeats *within* the discipline an attitude I have glimpsed being visited *upon* the discipline by colleagues in the sciences: music is all very well for performing or listening or as part of a child's education, they sniff, but placing 'ology' at the end of 'music' doesn't make it a legitimate science. Likewise, an important constituency within musicology regards 'that sort of thing'—studies of the body, the erotic, the racial—as beneath their calling, beneath musicology, beneath Music.

Enter Susan McClary and her *Feminine Endings*, a book that was received as a kind of manifesto of the new musicology, not least in its reflection on the possibility of a feminist musicology. The result was nothing short of a scholarly shitstorm, a barrage of reactions and counter-reactions that raged on for years after the book's publication in 1992. In this sense the book reaped what it sowed, for its polemics were bound to inflame. Even potentially sympathetic readers reacted: feminist scholars Elaine Barkin and Paula Higgins were not alone in wondering if McClary hadn't overplayed the reactionary character of musicology or overlooked the strides already made by colleagues in addressing issues of gender or in broadening the scope of the discipline to embrace contemporary popular music. It is no exaggeration to say that the book became *the* most celebrated catalyst for discussion, debate and, yes, rancour within the discipline throughout the 1990s. But that was then and this is now. What has happened in the meantime? A colleague recently confessed that she missed the 'show-downs' at conferences of that period. What seems to have replaced it is something much less polarized and dramatic. Already in 1999 Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist were claiming that 'Conquest is giving way to colonization, which is perhaps also to

⁵ See, for example, Scruton's Hanslickian account: 'In music nothing can be represented except sounds; for no sound can be heard as anything that is not itself a sound. But sounds are not, strictly speaking, properties of objects. They are individuals, with a history and identity separate from the objects which emit them'. Scruton, 67.

say that controversy is giving way to compromise.⁶ Although the language is a touch melodramatic—‘conquest’ was never on the cards, not least because the debate had very little resonance outside Anglo-American musicology—the assessment rang true then and rings true now. This is neither because the legacy of the new musicology has dissolved in the face of stubborn resistance, nor because it has won unchallenged acceptance in the bosom of the discipline. I would suggest, rather, that something more interesting has happened: Anglo-American musicology—‘traditional’, ‘new’, ‘critical’ and otherwise—has grown up. It is as if the discipline no longer feels the need to register shock or dismay at questions or conclusions that address music’s relationship to otherness, to the body, to pleasure. It may be wishful thinking, but I can’t help feeling that this scholarship is now judged on its merits, not its badge or orientation. A critical mauling is still a possibility, but that wouldn’t distinguish it from any other form of musicological scholarship. As for the fruits of this scholarship, the hard edge of the polemics has now given way to something more subtle and rich. Where once the strongly interdisciplinary bent of the new musicology seemed to mean wearing imported theories on one’s sleeve, musicology now seems to be ready to participate in genuine exchange with other disciplines.

Twenty years ago the debate was between a ‘new’ and ‘traditional’ musicology. Now we can speak of a tradition stemming from new musicology. The evidence? *Musicological Identities*, a *Festschrift* devoted to McClary? A *Festschrift*, the epitome of traditional scholarship, with its lionization of venerable *Doktorvater* figures? The irony is not lost on Rose Rosengard Subotnik, who begins her opening tribute with an account of McClary’s outsider status in the musicology of the 1970s. Not that *Musicological Identities* reads like an attempt to right past wrongs, as though summoning the most traditional trappings of scholarly authority would symbolize McClary’s acceptance into the academy. A glance at McClary’s subsequent career reveals that she has no need of further honours. As Subotnik points out, *Festschriften* are rare in part because only a very few scholars inspire the kind of enthusiasm needed to generate them. McClary, she adds, is one of those scholars. Yet the editors are quite justified in claiming that the seventeen scholars represented in the volume, although all connected to McClary as colleagues and former students, are in no sense ‘disciples’, as though some gospel needed to be passed on to a future generation. This really is a diverse collection, addressing subjects from Enlightenment subjectivity to contemporary

⁶ Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), x.

popular culture and from waltzes to techno. Nor is there any binding uniformity of methodology as though to canonize specific modes of engagement.

On the contrary, quite a number of the contributors pose questions about the need for new methodologies, especially in cases where existing approaches seem inadequate. Richly suggestive reflections on the discipline run through much of the volume, recalling the reflexivity that characterizes McClary's work while opening new and diverse territory. And this balance between diversity of outlook and relevance to McClary's work ultimately forms the rationale of the book. The division of the collection into three sections represents an attempt to relate the essays to central themes in McClary's work. 'Musical Identities: Gender, Sexuality, and Race' foregrounds the issues of music and difference that are probably the most readily associated with McClary's work, while the section 'Music and Temporality' picks up on her interest in the historical and cultural values associated with the musical manipulation of time, above all, the hegemony of linear, teleological forms of temporality. Finally, the essays grouped under 'Reinventing Analysis' respond to McClary's challenge to rethink traditional analytical method by considering the parameters that its implicit priorities often marginalize.

Yet these themes won't be so neatly contained. Several of the essays could easily have been grouped under another of the headings. Daniel Goldmarks's essay on temporality in film music, for example, is to be found, unsurprisingly, in the 'Music and Temporality' section, but it also seeks new forms of analysis. Despite the key role of music in articulating and manipulating temporal experience in film, there is, Goldmark argues, no satisfactory means of analyzing or interpreting its effects. Rather than hastily propose or demonstrate a methodology, he outlines the challenge facing the film-music scholar and issues a call for further investigation. Other essays touch on a bigger picture than the section headings imply. Paul Attinello's reflections on temporality in Steven Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* (1976) and *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) repeatedly open up to a broader philosophical rumination on temporal experience, while several contributors in the 'Reinventing Analysis' section pose questions that might be better labelled 'Reinventing Musicology'. David Ake ponders some of these larger questions in his account of 'Old Folks', the second track on the Miles Davis album *Someday My Prince Will Come* (1961). Drawing attention to an extraneous noise on the recording (the sound of a chair creaking), Ake considers how this brief intrusion penetrates the gloss of the finished product to suggest something of the

physical effort involved in making music.⁷ If one of the concerns of recent musicology (including McClary's work) has been to move beyond the score to performance, wouldn't this moment, he asks, point beyond performance to the work that makes it possible? Not work in the sense of the transcendental object beloved of musicology, but work as doing, as labour.

Mitchell Morris touches on a similar reflexivity when he concludes his account of the goth-rock band Evanescence with a reflection on the risks and rewards of studying contemporary popular music. Morris wonders if the temptation to associate very recent music with a living present and characterize the music of the past as a set of dead monuments misses the point. In fact, he argues, those monuments offer a reassuringly permanent answer to our own 'transitoriness', suggesting something enduring, something elevated above the trivial and everyday encounter it might have represented to its contemporaries. They offer, in other words, an assurance to the scholar that his/her words won't be lost in the sort of dissolution that threatens an as-yet un-canonized aspect of our music culture: 'the risk of studying very recent popular music is that it is only just now beginning to die, and might well be infectious. Here it is, still swaddled in dense layers of commentary, parasitism, and repetition, still bruised by taste and expediency. And the texts that respond to this will begin to die almost immediately, too' (190). To engage with contemporary culture, Morris concludes, is to encounter...evanescence.

That reflections on analysis should invite broader reflection on what we do as musicologists is perhaps unsurprising: music analysis, a practice that straddles the rival but not always clearly differentiated disciplines of musicology and music theory, highlights one of the fault lines of the discipline. This has important consequences, as Adam Krims has pointed out, for wider disciplinary and methodological allegiances. If musicology has always planted its flag firmly on humanities soil, music theory has retained a certain loyalty to the science-inspired rigour of the Cold War era that nurtured its modern incarnation: 'Music theory, perhaps because of the exclusivity of its music-educated clientele and perhaps because of its still tenacious links to composition, has remained in, and developed to a breath-taking level, the models of precision and controlled, confined elaboration that now retain little prestige in the humanities.'⁸ That is, while the humanities have adopted increasingly sceptical attitudes to what it regards as 'scientism', music theory has retained a resemblance to

⁷ Almost all the essays include references to a website which hosts audio and video clips, as well as text and score extracts.

⁸ Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.

post-war models of scholarship. And to the extent that music theory engages with the humanities, it is, Krims adds, a New Criticism model of the autonomous text. By this reckoning, musicology followed, to a much greater degree, the post-war paradigm shifts in the humanities. This is by no means an open and shut case, though. If, as Krims suggests, music theory's resistance to the humanities may have stemmed from its own special relationship to music practice—composition, the peculiar demands of music literacy—this resistance has not been absolute. It may have been a long time in coming, and the steps, at least for Janet Schmalfeldt writing in the late 1990s, were tentative, but the notion of musical autonomy is not uncontested in music theory.⁹

Equally, musicology by no means embraced new developments in the humanities with open arms. It's not that musicology hadn't already absorbed a great deal from other disciplines in the past. Outlining the form of the projected new discipline of *Musikwissenschaft*, Guido Adler cited a whole series of *Hilfswissenschaften* (associated disciplines), including literary history, palaeography, acoustics, psychology and logic.¹⁰ And there have been subsequent waves of absorption and appropriation. Methods of textual and style criticism developed in the field of literary studies, for instance, had repeatedly found their way into the discipline. But the 'postmodern' paradigm shifts of the late 1960s that led to the emergence of post-structuralism, cultural studies and feminist theory were a different matter. Now, it seems, a line needed to be drawn in the sand. For a while, musicology seemed to enjoy a splendid isolation: on that score, Joseph Kerman was quite right.¹¹ If the postmodern intellectual revolution of the 1960s shook up the academy, musicology only registered its after-shocks much later, and even then, only properly in its Anglo-American forms.

Which isn't to say that the 'new' or 'critical' musicology can be associated uncomplicatedly with 'postmodern' scholarship, any more than the established forms of musicology align simply with modernism.¹² Postmodern or not, though, the new

⁹ Janet Schmalfeldt, 'On Keeping the Score', *Music Theory Online*, 4/2 (March, 1998).

¹⁰ Guido Adler, 'Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft', *Vierteljahresschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 1 (1885), 5–20.

¹¹ Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press, 1985).

¹² Giles Hooper rightly problematizes this binary, arguing that the association of the 'new' musicology with postmodern thought is often vaguely defined, as is musicology's association with modernism: 'some of the principal concepts targeted by much contemporary 'postmodern' musicological discourse—among them, transcendentalism, internalism, organicism—were in part reactive *against* early cultural and social modernity, while historically *prior* to aesthetic modernism proper.' Giles Hooper, *The Discourse of Musicology* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 32–3.

music scholarship was characterized by its embrace of methodologies and outlooks developed in disciplines that only established themselves from the Sixties onwards: cultural studies, performance studies, media studies, feminism. That this new scholarship might encourage consideration of music's social dimensions was in itself no shock: ethnomusicology had long offered a model for that. But the implicit view was that these questions, while appropriate to non-Western musical practices and repertoires, was less relevant to the transcendent masterpieces of European art music. And it was to the latter repertoire that much of the early 'new' musicology directed its attention, as though to challenge musicology at its precious core.

This kind of approach—what might be called 'ideology critique'—informs Nasser Al-Tae'e's survey of operatic representations of the East. Unfortunately, what begins as a fascinating glimpse of whirling Dervishes in eighteenth-century opera ends up re-treading familiar ground on nineteenth-century forms of orientalism in *Carmen* and *Samson et Dalila*. More convincing are the essays by Lawrence Kramer and Raymond Knapp, both of which mobilize ideology critique but in ways that open up to the possibility of resistance and dialogue. What is it about the music in *The Magic Flute*, Kramer asks, that 'allows us not to care' about its racism (Monostatos the blackamoor?) and misogyny (think of Sarastro's pronouncements on women)? More than mere subversion, Mozart's music unleashes, in Kramer's reading, an untameable 'transgressive' energy that mocks the feeble attempts of directors and musicologists to rescue the opera from its dire and dated ideologies (15). At the centre of his account, too, are audiences who are not simply subject to the ideology embedded in the opera, but find ways to negotiate their engagement with, and pleasure in, a work that is supposedly tainted. In a similar way, Raymond Knapp's analysis of *Pacific Overtures* (again!) interprets Sondheim's music as raising the spectre of orientalism, while also destabilizing its hold by 'offering us realities and fantasies with equal force and equal consequence' (176).

Like much of the best critical work, these essays are about much more than merely exposing ideologies in Western art music. Nor can the collection as a whole be accused of fixating on this repertoire. In fact, the diverse musics represented in the collection would suggest that Derek Scott's distinction between 'critical' (UK) musicology's focus on popular music and the 'new' (US) musicology's emphasis on 'canonic works' is no longer valid.¹³ Jacqueline Warwick, for example, explores the cultural positioning of non-white backing singers in popular music of the 1960s. Focusing on the widely

¹³ Derek B. Scott, 'Postmodernism and Music', in Stuart Sim (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 134–46: 145.

heard but little-known trio The Blossoms, Warwick describes the racial barriers that confronted these musicians, barriers that they were occasionally invited to cross. Being asked to sound 'white', she reveals in a telling anecdote, meant imposing vocal restraint on voices otherwise accustomed to greater technical and affective freedom. If this is about racial difference informing musical practice, it also opens up a reverse perspective, suggesting how musical practices might inform our understanding of the cultural fashioning of racial difference.

One of the themes of Kramer's essay—the transformative power of music—recurs throughout *Musicological Identities*, but in strikingly diverse guises. So, for example, the transgressive capacity that Kramer identifies in *The Magic Flute* surfaces in Steven Baur's compelling account of the waltz in nineteenth-century America. For Baur, the waltz, whether danced or played at the piano, offered women forms of pleasure and attention that were at odds with the demure, domestic role assigned to them. More than simply an anticipation of the social licence associated with the emergence of the 'new woman' at the end of the century, music and dance in the waltz effect, in Baur's reading, an important transformation of women's bodies, one on which subsequent emancipations would depend.

In Stan Hawkins's essay we turn to a more contemporary form of dance: electronic dance culture. The questions, though, are not dissimilar. Hawkins's language can be obtuse and jargonistic: a choice sentence refers to the 'idea that dance spaces proliferate subjectivities as an effect of performative citationality' (132). Wordy passages aside, though, he offers a telling account of the pleasures and social impact of corporeality, movement and temporality in dance culture. For Hawkins, dance and music share a role in negotiating identities that straddle public and private, permitted and forbidden. 'After all', he observes, 'moving our bodies in time to music is a way of saying something we are not meant to express in words' (132).

Movement of a more linear kind features in Ruth Solie's essay, which explores aspects of the late-Victorian discourse on music that complicate our understanding of music history. Centring her account on the trope of progress and its embodiment in the 'technological sublime' of the railways, Solie argues that it was Beethoven's music, and not the 'modern' Wagner, who offered the 'ordinary bourgeois consumer of the arts' the kind of goal-orientated trajectory that they sought (161). In this context, 'progress' and the 'modern' are at odds. In contrast, John Richardson writes of the technological 'counter-sublime' of contemporary audio-visual culture. Examining the seemingly haphazard alignments that result from the practice of 'syncing' scenes from classic films with 'progressive rock' albums, Richardson notes the inadequacy of critical language to engage with the phenomenon. What can we say, he asks, about the

apparent pleasure in ceding control and authority to a ‘relentless unfolding of the parallel narratives’ that is determined by technology (145)?

‘Where is the love?’, asks George Lipsitz, citing the lyrics of the rap artists Black Eyed Peas. For Lipsitz the question invites a meditation on the legacy of the civil rights movement in America, but if it were to be directed at the contributions to this collection, the answer would surely be that the love is everywhere—love, that is, for music that has meant a great deal to the writers: Richard Leppert on the voice of Patsy Cline, Subotnik on the tin pan alley song, Charles Hiroshi Garrett on the music of Cassandra Wilson, David Ake on Miles Davis. I dwell on this partly because I am convinced that the freedom to declare affection, investment, passion, love is one of the liberating and enriching features of contemporary musicology and its sister disciplines. Ethnomusicology has permitted itself this freedom for some time, not to mention theatre and performance studies, but musicology has been considerably slower to let down its ‘objective’ guard and get in touch with its feelings, so to speak. Writing in the mid-Nineties, Pieter van den Toorn articulated a classic musicological horror of pleasure when he wrote ‘in the name of passion, or the scholarly pursuit of passion, music is likely to be reduced to something wholly sociological, passion itself to the humdrum or vulgar.’¹⁴ I can think of no better endorsement of change than this dour disapproval. Hooper shares van den Toorn’s disdain: ‘while aesthetic pleasure may therefore form the basis of informal, and perhaps interesting, communicative exchanges, it cannot form the basis of the kind of discursive claims that are to be deemed legitimately constitutive of musicology as an institutionalized discourse’.¹⁵ But isn’t ‘aesthetic pleasure’ already an ‘institutionalized discourse’? Doesn’t the aesthetic depend on culturally negotiated, *institutionalized* frameworks, its pleasures, or lack thereof, an effect of *discourse*?

This isn’t simply about scholars indulging themselves. Suffused with obvious affection, Leppert’s engagement with Cline’s voice speaks in intimate terms. It is an intimacy borne of personal experience, an enthusiasm that is persuasive, even infectious (I’m almost persuaded to give country music a try...almost). Ake writes in a more explicitly first-person style, but he takes the opportunity to reflect on ‘subjective’ experience and its meaningfulness in scholarship, citing philosopher Mark Johnson to refute the notion that the subjective is merely a free-for-all: ‘what we perceive as our innermost thoughts and feelings [is] always shaped by our daily interactions with

¹⁴ Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics and the Academy* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1996), 53.

¹⁵ Hooper, 66.

other people and things in the world' (224). There is a vulnerability here, too. No longer concealed by the persona of some hidden authority, no longer 'working under the sign of a silent appeal' to a set of values (as Robert Walser puts it in the closing pages of the book (242)), 'I allow myself to be questioned, to be vulnerable.¹⁶ This is Shepherd's 'politics of articulation'. What it is not is a politics of coercion or political correctness. *Musicological Identities* already resists this prospect, situating these openly personal perspectives beside essays that adopt a far more traditional and impersonal tone: the two co-exist. The point is surely that both might be valued, neither of them dismissed out of hand. This diversity and openness is echoed in many aspects of the book: in the range of musics and methodologies, in the willingness of scholars to interrogate their assumptions. In these qualities I detect a confident and mature discipline, one that goes far beyond appropriation or imitation of other disciplines to give something back to the humanities. Grown-up musicology? I think so.

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¹⁶ Suzanne Cusick explores this idea further in 'Gender, Musicology, and Feminism', in Cook and Everist (eds), *Rethinking Music*, 471–98.