

## FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM

FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM:  
DERIVATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (1992)  
(Music Criticism)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Feminist Music Criticism:  
Derivations and Directions

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 180

## ABSTRACT

The tangled relationship of art, gender, and power has a long history. When militant suffragette Mary Richardson attacked the "Rokeby" Venus in 1914--the epitomy of the "eternal feminine"--she was making a vivid statement about male authority, female exploitation, and the operations of power in society (Fowler 109). Feminist cultural critics of the last twenty years have sought to unmask the gender and political ideology embedded in literature, art, and film--an ideology which has served to privilege the masculine over the feminine, severely constraining women's creative opportunities.

The first full-length book on feminist music criticism was published January, 1991. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* by Susan McClary was a long overdue feminist analysis of music ranging from Bach to Madonna. Its timely appearance coincided with radical stirrings within the musicological/music theory community as evidenced by the excitement generated by both specialized and broader-based conferences which have acknowledged these new influences in their sessions.

While many excellent articles have been published on the subject of feminist music criticism,<sup>1</sup> no effort has been made to date to provide an historical context, definition, and in-depth investigation of this topic. Chapter 1 of this thesis will address the historical roots of feminist music criticism in the women's movement of

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<sup>1</sup> McClary's book is a collection of such articles originating from 1987-1990.

the 1960s, other forms of feminist cultural criticism, and socially grounded criticism. Chapter 2 will investigate the building of historical resources of women in music over the past two decades. This exploration of gender and music in a historical context form the immediate backdrop to the entrance of feminist music criticism on the current scene. The music criticism of Susan McClary provides an occasion for more detailed probing of the subject in chapter 3, including a critical assessment of McClary's work. Finally, some preliminary conclusions are offered along with suggestions for the possible direction of feminist critical studies in music in the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis owes a great debt to two remarkable advisors, Dr. James Deaville of McMaster University and Dr. Beverly Diamond of York University. Dr. Deaville was meticulous in his proof-reading and encouraging in his advice. Dr. Diamond gave up valuable "sabbatical" time to offer a feminist perspective from her background in ethnomusicology.

To Dr. Walker, Chair of the Department of Music, I owe thanks for the opportunity to present an early draft of Chapter 3 to the "New Dimensions in Music Conference" held November, 1991 at McMaster University. The responses I received there helped to refine my thinking.

The assistance of my husband, Ron, in editing and questioning was exceeded only by his assistance in doing more than his share of household tasks. For this I am very grateful.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE ROOTS OF FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM

#### INTRODUCTION

*It is probable, however, that both in life and in art the values of a woman are not the values of a man. Thus...she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values...to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important. And for that, of course, she will be criticised; for the critic of the opposite sex will be genuinely puzzled and surprised by an attempt to alter the current scale of values, and will see in it not merely a difference of view, but a view that is weak, or trivial, or sentimental, because it differs from his own.*

Virginia Woolf<sup>1</sup>

Feminist music criticism is a relative newcomer to the expanding world of feminist critical theory. Its immediate ancestry in ethnomusicology and literary, film, and art criticism itself reflects the larger context of socially grounded criticism which views all art forms as expressions related to ideologies of class, gender, and political establishment. In contrast to the idea of autonomy and universality in art, much favoured by positivistic trends or the genius-progenitor model<sup>2</sup>, socially-grounded

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<sup>1</sup> Woolf quoted by Greer in *The Obstacle Race*, 104.

<sup>2</sup> According to this model, the notion of genius was a necessary constituent of great masterpieces and consequently was part and parcel of the functioning of a work of art as organism.



criticism seeks to unveil the hidden codes of privilege, of economic and political struggle, and of gender assumptions embedded in the arts.

While indebted to contextual criticism, feminist music criticism is directly dependent upon the research of musicologists initially devoted to recovering the lost tradition of women in music. The past twenty years have witnessed the documentation of the roles women have played as composers, performers, patrons, impresarios, and critics. A burgeoning archive of rediscovered women's music has been established.

The strongest impetus for all feminist critical theory, however interdisciplinary its methods and scope, derives from the political agenda of the women's movement, namely its articulation of the historical oppression of women and its platform of political redress which has as its goal the achievement of equal opportunity for women with men. Fundamental to this task is the examination of how women have been represented in those societal sources which mirror, shape, direct, or resist our culture.

An overview of the history of the women's movement will furnish a setting of events, outstanding leaders, specific concepts, and vocabulary. The larger study of Chapter 1 which follows will trace the roots of feminist music criticism in literary, film, and art criticism, along with French feminism, ethnomusicology, and socially grounded music. More detailed examination of specific concepts, such as the role of closure or desire which are so integral to cultural criticism, will be deferred to Chapters 3 and 4.

## THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In examining the women's movement as foundational to the development of feminist theory, I shall focus on four influential feminist writers of the twentieth century, noting in particular the ideas, words, and phrases which contemporary feminists have incorporated into their formulation of theory. These writers are Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Germaine Greer. The suffragette story, the *sine qua non* of feminism, must be acknowledged here but passed over in favour of more recent historical predecessors.<sup>3</sup>

In selecting four women as representatives of the history of the women's movement, I have been influenced by the number of references made to Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir in a wide reading of feminist literature. The emphasis given to them by prominent contemporary feminist theorists points to their established place as pillars of feminism.<sup>4</sup> While Friedan and Greer are not given as much serious attention as Woolf and de Beauvoir by theoretical feminists, the place of their books on best-seller lists speaks of the success with which they engaged less scholarly women and the general public. Their work in consciousness-raising captured the

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<sup>3</sup> For an excellent historical treatment of the women's movement, see Eleanor Flexner, *The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1950); 2nd ed., 1975.

<sup>4</sup> For an account of influential early feminist writings, see "Books That Changed Our Lives," by Donna Stanton et al, *Women's Studies Quarterly* 14 (Feb. 1991): 8-29.

attention of the media in a significant way, spreading the news of "women's liberation."

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* has grown in significance since its original publication by the Hogarth Press in 1929. Maggie Humm describes its uniqueness as "the first time that the interrelation of sexual ideology and culture was addressed as a fundamental condition of critical form" (Humm 17). While lacking the self-conscious "manifesto" tone of subsequent feminist texts, this 108-page book has been given cornerstone status by twentieth-century women's rights advocates.

Woolf explores the question, "What conditions are necessary for the creation of works of art?" (Woolf 26). Drawing upon her own gifts as a writer and her extensive knowledge of literature, Woolf creates a fictitious character, a woman who lets her line of thought down into a stream (Woolf 7). What unfolds in this fictive narrative are the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practices and ideologies which were inhibiting for women--interruption, poverty, lack of education, confinement to home, the evils of patriarchy. The remarks of a bishop whom Woolf quotes "that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare" (47) appear comic and ignorant rather than pompous and truthful in the context of women's constrictive conditions.

In perhaps her most compelling illustration of the plight of the woman artist, Woolf describes the course of events of Judith, Shakespeare's imaginary sister bestowed with the equal genius of her brother William. "But she was not sent to

school...[she] had no chance of learning grammar and logic...before she was out of her teens, she was betrothed...she cried out that marriage was hateful and was beaten by her father <sup>5</sup>...She took the road to London...stood at the stage door; she wanted to act. Men laughed in her face...At last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child...and killed herself one winter's night" (Woolf 46-7).

Woolf's polished prose stands in marked contrast to the more bristling tone of some recent feminist writing. However, the fundamental issues, particularly of reformist liberal critics,<sup>6</sup> are clearly articulated by Woolf: "the accumulation of unrecorded life" (83), woman's life, woman's art, needs its obscurity lifted (83); the acknowledgement of a "difference" in male/female sentence structure; the recognition of sexual bias in male writers ("they celebrate male virtues, enforce male values, describe the world of men,"[97]); the depiction of women by male writers, "her alternation between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity" (97), seen only from a male perspective and in relation to men. Even the more recent notion of female writing being grounded in "the body", is found mentioned if not fully explored.<sup>7</sup> The over-riding point Woolf makes is the basic need for a measure of economic

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<sup>5</sup> Woolf quotes Trevelyan in his *History of England*: "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion" (42).

<sup>6</sup> Reformist liberal feminists opt for gaining better opportunities for women through the legislative process as opposed to more radical attacks upon societal structures. See Linda Nicholson's *Gender and History*, p. 22 for further discussion.

<sup>7</sup> See p. 24: "The book has somehow to be adapted to the body..."

independence--"£500 per annum" and a degree of uninterrupted privacy--"a room of one's own."

It is in Woolf that a model for American feminist literary theory is found, i.e., someone who was herself a literary figure and exposed the male underpinnings of liberal education. Examples of the suppression of women's creativity, their portrayal by men in literature, and the call to women to take up their pens--all these Woolfian themes resonate throughout the feminists' politically-informed critical theory of the 1970s and even the 1980s.

It is in Simone de Beauvoir that the model for French feminist criticism--with its more philosophical and psychoanalytical orientation--is found. Of epic proportions (814 pages), *The Second Sex* provided a towering protest against woman's subordination at the height of the post-war enchantment with a "Kinde, Küche und Kirche" definition of female destiny. From its publication in France in 1949, the book became an immediate best-seller. Like Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, *The Second Sex* has grown in importance with its recognition as a classical text of feminism.<sup>8</sup> Toril Moi, the prominent Scandinavian literary critic who writes about the French school of feminism, sees in de Beauvoir the "precursor and mother of modern feminism" (Todd quoting Moi 18).

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<sup>8</sup> For reference to the pivotal place of *The Second Sex*, see "Simone de Beauvoir: An Interview" by Margaret Simons and Jessica Benjamin in *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 330-345.

One of the ideas fully explicated by de Beauvoir (although not original with her) which has become part of the common vocabulary of feminism is the concept of the female as *Other*:

She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other (de Beauvoir xix).

Another outstanding concept integral to the women's movement of succeeding decades, was de Beauvoir's description of the masculine and feminine as primarily socially rather than biologically determined. In current terminology, this idea is referred to as the "social constructedness" of gender, or the "non-essentialist" position.<sup>9</sup> Her famous dictum, "woman is made, not born," is illustrated in the following quotation:

...it is not enough to be a heterosexual, even a mother, to realize this ideal [of the *feminine* woman]; the "true woman" is an artificial product that civilization makes, as formerly eunuchs were made. Her presumed "instincts" for coquetry, docility are indoctrinated, as is phallic pride in man (de Beauvoir 456).

The political and personal impact upon the reader willing to plumb the depths of this ambitious history of women's lives--the myths and literary representations of women and the psychoanalytical survey of the stages of

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<sup>9</sup> An essentialist position points to the biological difference between men and women as being the determining issue from which cultural roles emanate.

woman's life today--is immense. Not surprisingly, the reception of de Beauvoir's work is not without controversy.<sup>10</sup>

One of the problems in *The Second Sex*, articulated by its critics, is also inherent on a larger scale in the women's movement itself. Janet Todd sees de Beauvoir's work as "limited by its philosophical rather than literary approach" (Todd 18) in contrast to Woolf, whom Todd describes as "literary through and through" (19). Maggie Humm, on the other hand, records this conversation with de Beauvoir:

Asked by Alice Schwarzer how she would prefer to be remembered--as a philosopher or a writer--she replied "I set my store by literature" (Humm 26).

It is in this kind of jockeying by later feminists to claim or pass by de Beauvoir on the basis of her connection or lack of it to literature that one sees the paramount role of feminist literary criticism in setting women's political agenda.<sup>11</sup> A wide reading in feminist theory could quite simply equate the women's movement with feminist literary theory in the 1970s. While the movement has diversified over time, feminist theory owes much to the critical tools honed in the context of literary criticism. For this reason it is difficult to

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<sup>10</sup> See discussions of Simon de Beauvoir in Janet Todd 18, Dale Spender 711-715, and Moi 91-92.

<sup>11</sup> "My field is literature. I am interested in novels, memoirs, essays such as *The Second Sex*." See "Simone de Beauvoir: An Interview" with Margaret Simons, p. 338.

separate a sketch of the women's movement from an overview of feminist literary theory.

*The Feminist Mystique* of 1963 was to North American women what the Beatles were to teenagers or flower power was to hippies in the 1960s. Betty Friedan radically connected with the mood of female discontent so pervasive among women after more than fifteen years of post-war exclusion from the world beyond the home. Her reviews of then-current magazines, movies, and novels projected an image of woman who was:

...young, frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home...the only passion, the only pursuit, the only goal a woman is permitted is the pursuit of a man. It is crammed full of food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, and the physical bodies of young women; but where is the world of thought and ideas, the life of the mind and ideas? In the magazine image, women do no work except housework and work to keep bodies beautiful and to get and keep a man (Friedan 36).

This "problem without a name" was not new. Almost seventy years before *The Feminine Mystique*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman described the phenomenon succinctly in her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 1895. The male critics considered it neurotic and refused to take it seriously. In effect the problem so skillfully portrayed by Gilman was censored and buried at the time.

In addition to "the problem without a name," Friedan drew attention to the invisibility of women's lives and experience--both concepts which have held central positions in contemporary feminist thought.



Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* of 1970 marked a step to the left, away from the reformist agenda of Betty Friedan's National Organization of Women (Greer, *The Female Eunuch* 12). Decidedly more revolutionary in tone, it signalled a willingness to embrace the radical. In Greer's words, "Hopefully this book is subversive! Hopefully it will draw fire from all the articulate sections of the community" (Greer, *Eunuch* 22).

While playing with the notion of castration--the loss of virile power, courage, spirit--the book's title refers to a recurring theme of feminist theory, namely the social constructedness of gender. Greer uses the example of April Ashley, "our sister and our symbol"--a castrated male, who underwent a primitive sex change to become a model--to illustrate the feminine stereotype of the female eunuch:

...he was elegant, voluptuous, beautifully groomed. On an ill-fated day he married the heir to a peerage, the Hon. Arthur Corbett, acting out the highest achievement of the feminine dream (Greer *Eunuch* 63).

In effect women have been 'castrated,' i.e. denied full vigour, by socially imposed definitions of femininity.<sup>12</sup>

Both Friedan and Greer modified somewhat their original stances in their subsequent books *The Second Stage* and *Sex and Destiny*, respectively. It

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<sup>12</sup> Greer's use of "castration" is different from the Freudian view which sees women as "lack", as embodying the male fear of castration. For Greer the female castrate is the "Eternal Feminine," impotent by virtue of collusion with the male-defined passive/ornament stereotype.

would seem that each felt a measure of discomfort in giving women even more expectations, more guilt. Another twenty years have served as a reminder that "the problem without a name" has indeed become "the problem without a ready solution."

## FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY

With the publication of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, the preferred mode of feminist theory became clearly aligned with literary theory.<sup>13</sup> Woolf, de Beauvoir, Friedan, Greer, and Millett's approaches have all been similar in their dependence upon historical sources, quoting leading thinkers of their time who expressed ideas about gender that shock present-day sensibilities. All have turned to literature in various degrees to document the many manifestations of femininity and masculinity, but it was Millett who articulated the belief that "there is room for a criticism which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced" (Millett xii).

Devoting one third of her book to a critical analysis of D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet, Millett describes the operating "sexual politics" of the authors. Her thesis is that sexual relations represent

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<sup>13</sup> Toril Moi acknowledges feminists' debt to Millett: "Its [*Sexual Politics*] impact makes it the 'mother' and precursor of all later works of feminist criticism in the Anglo-American tradition" (Moi 24).

"a charged microcosm of the variety of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes" (Millett 23). The power and consistency of Millett's angry diatribe against patriarchal oppression as pictured in and emanating from the sex act, exhibits a reductionist approach that leaves no room for nuance, mediation, or unconscious motivation.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from its chronological claim to primacy, what is it about feminist literary theory that so successfully prefigures later feminist theory, ethnomusicology, film, art and music criticism? Upon what basis do feminist critics challenge universal doctrines of freedom, acknowledged masterpieces of literature, film, art, and music? The very cornerstone of democratic freedom and high culture is its claim to universality.<sup>15</sup> Pioneering feminist literary critics drew attention to the patriarchal social organization upon which this exclusive "universal" system was based. The canons of high art were placed under threat of deconstruction.

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<sup>14</sup> Toril Moi, pp. 24-32, gives a fuller account of Millett's limitations.

<sup>15</sup> The "All men are created equal" slogan stemming in modern history from the American and French Revolutions, had no thought of including women in whatever "equal" represented. The great liberal *universal* doctrines of freedom spoke proudly of their inclusiveness:

It speaks in terms not of classes, but of humanity, not of ranks, but of equals...All are placed on one level, encompassing the whole of mankind (Lipson 123).

Seemingly the men who framed these doctrines had no self-awareness of their total exclusion of women from the political process upon which the concepts of freedom were based.

K.M. Newton in *Interpreting the Text*, 1990, describes feminist literary criticism as the most powerful force in literary theory since the Second World War. The field has become so diffuse that the framework of this thesis does not permit in-depth examination. However, two very influential books have become reference points for subsequent writers. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, 1977, by Elaine Showalter and *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 1979, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, are two texts no serious student of feminist criticism should pass over. In *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter seeks to redress the neglect by male critics of women writers. In her often-quoted words, "the lost continent of the female tradition has risen like Atlantis from the sea of English Literature." The first phase of feminist criticism focused on the woman as reader--"feminist critique"--and consisted of articulating the various representations and images of women as portrayed by male writers. The second phase--"gynocritics"--focused on the woman as writer in an attempt to draw attention to female culture and consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Showalter describes her gynocritics in the following way:

...its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the

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<sup>16</sup> Todd sees Showalter's two-part phases of feminist criticism as an effort to "sound rigorous" in face of competing critical modes such as deconstruction (41).

trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition (Stevens 78).

While Showalter's ideas did not go unchallenged, her influence has nonetheless been considerable. A prolific writer and popular conference speaker, she deserves much credit for the spread of feminist literary theory in American universities.

The title *The Madwoman in the Attic*, by Gilbert and Gubar, refers to the mad Bertha in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, whom the writers "found to be the double of the sane and decorous spinster heroine who could only contemplate such madness in her fantastic dreams" (Todd 28). The texts of nineteenth-century female writers are seen as symbolic narratives expressing "their common feelings of constriction, exclusion, and dispossession" (Todd 28), discouraged as they were by society's penchant for associating female creativity with hysteria and madness. Gilbert and Gubar concentrate on Jane Austen, the Brontës, George Eliot, and Emily Dickinson, monothematic authors still well-received by male literary scholarship today. Based on a socio-historical orientation similar to Showalter's, Gilbert and Gubar's writing style is racey, bristling and tantalizingly clever.

Although limited by its narrow selection of writers and its concentration on decoding the female quest to be freed from social and literary confinement, *The Madwoman in the Attic* was a culmination of this period. Its vigorous,

almost theatrical presentation served to widen significantly the impact of feminist interpretation on literary institutions. The testy quotations and engaging implications are guaranteed to rouse the most disinterested of readers.

Although other forms of feminist criticism are indebted to feminist literary theory, it is now necessary to conclude this discussion of the contributions of feminist literary criticism and move on to a more recent influence in feminist theory, that of French feminism.

## FRENCH FEMINISM

Three French feminists--Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva--represent an expression of woman-oriented theory which departs markedly from the more historically-centred Anglo-American tradition. There are several problems in describing the central features of French feminism. In the first place, the three women have not produced a unified, coherent system. Cixous revels in poetics and language; Kristeva also wrestles with the problems of language, drawing upon semiotic discourse as a means to position the "speaking subject"; Irigaray relies upon psychoanalysis and philosophy. In the second place, they resist the term "feminism", seeing it as irretrievably imprisoned within the male/female binary oppositions (Moi 103). Nevertheless the word "feminist" continues to be used to describe the three writers.

Having called attention to the diversity of these French feminists, I will suggest two of their interconnected ideas which have made the greatest impact on feminist theory in the English-speaking world. These are *écriture féminine* and *jouissance*. *Écriture féminine*, a style of writing which eludes definition, "can never be theorized, enclosed, coded" (Moi quoting Cixous 109), arises from *jouissance*--that pre-Oedipal state of fusion with the mother, prior to the acquisition of language. Although women are more likely to use it, *écriture féminine* is not confined to either sex, but occurs when phallogentric logic is resisted and open-endedness is endorsed.

With its emphasis on psychoanalysis and linguistics, French feminism often appears esoteric and removed from more politically motivated feminism. However, French feminists' confrontation of binary opposition with its implications of an uncritical essentialism are very relevant to their more empiricist feminist counterparts in North America.

At this point I will not attempt to engage the critics of feminism. That will come in the sections where feminist music critics appropriate these ideas and incorporate them into music in Chapters 3 and 4. First, however, an examination of the legacy of film and art criticism, ethnomusicology and socially contexted music to feminist music criticism will be conducted.

## FILM CRITICISM

It is in the visual media that "woman as spectacle" is most vividly and powerfully represented. The stakes for women are high in cinema. Kathi Maio very simply describes the woman spectator at the movies:

We do not recognize ourselves in what we see. Those women aren't us. They aren't who we want to be either (Maio 1).

The conflicting roles of woman as spectator and woman as spectacle can be better understood by Laura Mulvey's analysis of the "male gaze." She sees the cinema as "structured around three explicitly male looks or gazes":

There is the look of the camera; white, technically neutral, this look..., is inherently voyeuristic and usually "male" in the sense that a man is generally doing the filming; there is the look of the men within the narrative, which is structured so as to make women objects of their gaze; and finally there is the look of the male spectator...which imitates...the first two looks (Mulvey quoted in Kaplan 30).

Feminist film critics--Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnston, Pam Cook among the pioneers--were quick to grasp the inadequacies of the broad sociological approach first applied in analysing sex roles in cultural forms ranging from pop to high art.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the sociological critics who gave attention to the "content" of art works, ignoring the mediation of the art form itself which

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<sup>17</sup> Cook and Johnston authored *Dorothy Arzner: Towards A Feminist Cinema*. Arzner, along with Ida Lupine, "were literally the only women to direct films regularly in Hollywood until the 1970s" (Mulvey 89).



"constructs" these images (i.e., villain or prostitute in movie ought not to be equated with villain or prostitute in society), feminist film critics drew on new developments in film theory that attracted attention in the early 1970s.<sup>18</sup>

Their debt to French theorists Lacan and Althusser can be seen in the following quotation by film critic Ann Kaplan from her influential book, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, 1985. She outlines two points of departure from the earlier sociological orientation:

First, influenced by semiology, feminist theorists stressed the crucial role played by the artistic form as the medium for expression; second, influenced by psychoanalysis, they argued that Oedipal processes were central to the production of art works. That is, they gave increasing attention to *how meaning is produced* in films...and they stressed the links between the processes of psychoanalysis and cinema (Kaplan 23).

Unhindered by a long tradition of institutionalization such as exists in literature, art, or music, film theory has been able to adapt more readily the theories of French writers like Althusser, Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault along with Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray. That contemporary film theory is itself an anti-establishment force partly accounts for the lack of hostility to feminist film theorists by such prominent male film critics as Stephen Heath, Christian Metz, and Raymond Bellour.

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<sup>18</sup> A fuller discussion of the tendency to equate context and meaning may be found in Chapter 4.

Imitating partly as it does the unconscious, dream-like state of the mind, the cinema provides a special medium in which to observe woman as semiotic sign in male discourse and from which to decode Hollywood's mechanisms of the patriarchal depiction of woman to see how image and language conspire to produce meaning. The political agenda of feminist film critics finds expression most strongly in the desire to move away from focussing on woman's placement in film to creating an alternative cinema where women can make women-identified roles and experiment in avant garde movies. The choice between a strategy to move to a counter-cinema and efforts to change Hollywood films represents an unresolved tension amongst feminist film critics.<sup>19</sup>

## FEMINIST ART CRITICISM

What does criticism in the visual arts contribute uniquely to feminist theory and feminist music criticism? Unlike film theory, which has led the way in the application of semiotics and psychoanalysis, feminist art criticism has focused on historical work and socially contexted practice. Film theory, being an anti-establishment practice, was more receptive to feminist influence.

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<sup>19</sup> This "unresolved tension" was evident in discussions amongst film directors and critics at a conference held November, 1991 at Carleton University, "Art as Theory: Theory as Art".

The groundswell of feminism within the literary community is well attested to by its presence in North American universities and scholarly publications. By contrast, mainstream art history and criticism reside in a bastion of establishment conservatism. The art industry functions primarily outside of the protected university environment in the market, where moneyed classes, governments, museums and big business bid in art auctions, coached by art connoisseurs. Feminist critique meets with resistance in an international system which by its ideological presuppositions devalues women's art and opposes feminist art historians whose very political agenda it is to question and subvert the discipline's biases. Feminist art criticism makes its strongest contribution in the bold depiction of power in gender relations as inscribed in works of art.

Having already investigated the "imaging" of women in literature and cinema, it should come as no surprise to see women as "object" rather than "producer" of art. Johann Zoffany's painting, "The Academicians of the Royal Academy" from 1771-72, conveys more when seen as an understanding of the artist's ideal than when it is viewed simply as a representation of the Royal Academy in oils. Its fifteen male members are depicted in various poses as they survey two nude male models. Two female artists of the Royal Academy, Angela Kauffmann and Mary Moser, "barred from the study of the nude model which formed the basis for academic training and representation from the

sixteenth to the nineteenth century" (Chadwick 7), appear as painted busts on the wall. Their rightful role as producers of art is eclipsed by their being framed into objects of art. A century and a half was to pass before any more female artists were allowed into the membership of the Royal Academy.

In supplying anthologies of lost or neglected art by women, feminist art historians have paralleled but preceded the work of feminist musicologists from the 1970s to the present. One of the unique difficulties encountered in compiling anthologies was the common practice of attributing women's paintings to their fathers, teachers, or husbands. Famous mis-attributions of major paintings have resulted in the drastic devaluation of what were once costly masterpieces to being minor "mistresspieces". The paintings themselves showed no metamorphoses, only the external assessment.

One remarkable example of such errors is "The Jolly Companions", 1630, thought to be by Frans Hals and sold to the Louvre as his work. Until May 1983 it was accepted as one of Hals' finest paintings. But when the initials JL, for Judith Leyster, were deciphered in a corner, suddenly the brush strokes were considered decidedly feminine and lacking the boldness of a Hals (Greer, *Obstacle* 137). Prior to this discovery, in 1964 the critic James Laver wrote of the inferiority of women's productions to those of men:

Some women artists tend to emulate Frans Hals, but the vigorous brush strokes of the master were beyond their capacity. One has only to look

at the work of a painter like Judith Leyster to detect the weakness of the feminine hand (Chadwick 22).

For those who looked for so long and saw instead the strokes of a Hals, can one detect rather the weakness of the masculine presuppositions?

Another area of concern in feminist art criticism relates to the cultural politics of "autonomous" ideology, a central issue in literature, film and music.<sup>20</sup> Greer observes how the great painters, themselves not aristocrats, nevertheless expressed "the concerns of the ruling class and in many cases became *ex officio* members of it by recognition" (Greer, *The Obstacle Race* 7).

Linda Nochlin, an outstanding art historian, who more than any other person is responsible for inaugurating feminist art criticism, draws upon Michel Foucault's ideas on power to illustrate the master discourse of iconography. Nochlin investigates crucial relationships in her book *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, from 1988. According to Nochlin,

...one of the most important functions of ideology is to veil the overt power relations obtaining in society at a particular moment in history by making them appear to be part of the natural, eternal order of things... symbolic power is invisible and can be exercised only with the complicity of those who fail to recognize either that they submit to it or that they exercise it (Nochlin 2).

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<sup>20</sup> Chapter 3 explores the concept of autonomy in music in detail.

Clearly it is the task of feminist scholars to unveil the covert power structures.

"The Oath of the Horatii" 1784, by Jacques-Louis David, provides an instance of a portrait of power structures. Depicted are the three brothers, the Horatii, taking an oath of allegiance to Rome on swords held by their father in the presence of the women and children in the family. Male courage versus female passivity are strongly contrasted. This universal assumption of the "natural" order of things is unassailable. As Nochlin comments:

The binary division here between male energy, tension, and concentration as opposed to female resignation, flaccidity, and relaxation is as clear as any Lévi-Strausseau diagram of a native village (Nochlin 4).

A significant contribution of feminist art criticism is found in its reevaluation of works of art in the light of feminism. Hannah Hoch's "Pretty Girl," 1920, provides such an example. Previously considered marginal by critics functioning within Berlin Dada, it can now be viewed as a deconstruction of art practice. This photo-collage of manufactured materials and female body parts calls attention to the production of gender as a social construction rather than a natural phenomenon.

[Pretty Girl] denies the beauty of the beautiful woman as object of the gaze and at the same time insists on the finished work as the result of a process of production--cutting and pasting--rather than inspiration (Nochlin 29).

This reevaluation of art works in the light of feminism has not altered the canon of masterpieces, but it has given a challenge to the whole process of canonicity, a concept well entrenched in literature and music.

The resistance to formalist interpretation, the identification of stereotyped representations of women by men in literature, film, and art, and the questioning of evaluative processes as male-oriented, have all informed the development of feminist music criticism. Two other sources have been important in loosening the boundaries of traditional musicology, thereby creating a space for feminist music criticism. The next two sections address the influence upon feminist music criticism of ethnomusicology and socially contextualized music.

## ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

Ethnomusicology is more immediately familiar to the feminist music critic trained in musicology, theory, composition, and performance than the more remote critical theories of literature, film, and art studies. Some music departments require undergraduates to take a course in ethnomusicology. However, many musicologists and theorists have chosen to ignore or at least to resist any application of the methodologies of ethnomusicology to the Western art tradition.

Not so with feminist critics. The work of ethnomusicologists in developing tools for the study of music in its cultural context has also contributed to providing models for the study of Western music as a phenomenon not without a cultural context. A brief sketch of a few of the developments within ethnomusicology will reveal some of the methods and ideas integral to feminist criticism.

One significant insight of ethnomusicology relates to the idea of absolute or autonomous music. The singular emphasis upon a study of the music itself has led to "portrayals of Western art music as a canon of 'absolute music', of music totally international and purged of any ethnic or historical particularity" (Bohlman in Blum 255). Investigations of non-Western ethnic groups failed to identify any music that was "absolute," "pure," or divorced from the sociological setting of its people. It was a short distance--if not a smooth and easy one--to arrive at the conclusion that Western art music must also be an expression of human constructs, i.e., beliefs, economics, gender, politics, etc. As far back as 1964 Bruno Nettl, in his article, "What is Ethnomusicology?" noted the tension between those who see the study of Western music as an appropriate sphere for ethnomusicological investigation and those who do not (Nettl in McAllester 3).

Another area of distinction in ethnomusicology is its inclusion of various disciplines other than music. Ethnomusicologists have been drawn



from such diverse disciplines as anthropology, sociology, and psychology, geography, physics, mathematics, and philology. The career of early American ethnomusicologist Frank Boaz illustrates this point strongly in his career. An anthropologist, Boaz brought to ethnomusicology the methods of geography and physics, his first areas of study, along with a great interest in psychology. A. J. Ellis was a philologist and mathematician, Walter Fewkes, an anthropologist. This utilization of an inter-disciplinary approach has assisted in opening the door to a new perspective of the study of music, providing a precedent for feminist music criticism's assimilation of concepts from other disciplines.<sup>21</sup>

It is of interest to note that ethnomusicologists publishing prior to the 1970s gave no particular attention to the role of gender in the study of the music of ethnic groups as it related to, for example, power distribution. The publication of Ellen Koskoff's book, *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* of 1989, and Suzanne Ziegler and Marcia Herndon's *Music, Gender, and Culture* of 1990, addresses this omission. First published in 1987 as *Contributions in Women's Studies* No. 79 by Greenwood Press, Koskoff's book will form part of the discussion of "Women in Music" found in

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<sup>21</sup> In the Introduction to their book *Music and Society*, Leppert and McClary observe that "the questions and methods that recur throughout the volume are especially indebted to models developed by ethnomusicologists" (xviii).

Chapter 2. I see Koskoff's book not as background material to feminist investigations, but as groundbreaking, centre-stage material.

## SOCIALLY GROUNDED CRITICISM

Socially grounded criticism<sup>22</sup> refers to that body of musicological writing which, without classifying itself as a branch of ethnomusicology, nevertheless assumes the perspective that the Western art tradition, no less than other more remote musics of the world, is an expression of a particular social framework.<sup>23</sup> This section of Chapter 1 is not as easily seen as a forerunner of feminist music criticism because some of its authors are still active, if older, professionals and would not identify themselves as being feminist--even if sympathetic to feminist perspectives.

My purpose in placing these scholars here is to acknowledge first, their strong agreement with feminist music criticism on a central issue, namely, rejection of autonomy in music; and second, to acknowledge the

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<sup>22</sup> "Socially grounded criticism" is not intended as a technical term with a history of its own. Other variants of the same idea are: socially rooted music, socially contexted music, music in social context. I shall use the terms interchangeably throughout the thesis.

<sup>23</sup> An obvious example of an economically/socially contexted critical system is Marxism. Adorno's work draws upon Marxism significantly as does McClary's to a lesser degree. However, music critics have in general not been self-consciously Marxist in orientation.

inter-disciplinary nature of their approach which is informed by critical theory. These influences have assisted in producing a more open attitude toward feminist music criticism.<sup>24</sup>

Theodor Adorno (1903-69) must take pre-eminence as the initiator of this new direction in music criticism. A philosopher, critic, and music scholar, and prominent member of the Frankfurt School, his influence in music has only relatively recently been felt, owing in no small measure to the work of Rose Rosengard Subotnik.<sup>25</sup> The following passage illustrates the social-cultural connection:

For no authentic work of art and no true philosophy, according to their very meaning, has ever exhausted itself in itself alone, in its being-in-itself. They have always stood in relation to the actual life-process of society from which they distinguished themselves (Adorno, *Prisms* 23).

In an effort to avoid both the impersonality of a list and the narrowness of focusing on a few individuals, I shall offer comments on a few writers, placed within the context of a group of music scholars.

To begin on foreign soil, the work of three British musicologists-- Christopher Small, Alan Durant, and Christopher Ballantine--operates within a

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<sup>24</sup> The sessions on feminist music criticism at recent American Musicological Society meetings may be related to the work and attitudes of these musicologists. For a report of AMS meetings, see Joseph Kerman's "Musicology in the 1990s".

<sup>25</sup> Of particular interest are the second, third, and fourth of Subotnik's articles, re-published in 1991 in her *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*.

music history well informed by social theory. Small's *Music, Society, Education* of 1980, provides a succinct summary of seven assumptions of Western music which, in his opinion, need to be laid aside in order to appreciate music from diverse cultures "on its own terms"; the first of these is "the idea of music as a self-contained art, to be contemplated for its own sake" (36).

On the American scene, Joseph Kerman, Leo Treitler, Edward T. Cone, and Janet T. Levy--if they do not precisely fit the categories I earlier suggested--must at least be given credit for openness to new ideas. Leonard B. Meyer's book, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* from 1956, was one of the few attempts to demystify music in a climate permeated by the autonomy model. In a later book, *Explaining Music* of 1973, one can decipher the possibility of a semiotics of music:

Evidence from many different cultures indicates that music comprehension depends to a considerable extent upon the listener's knowing a traditional tonal syntax and a set of conventional signs and schemata...Once this is granted and the attempt to explain music solely on the basis of innate, universal responses is given up, then common traditions and conventions can be analyzed as objective aspects of a musical culture, just as images, figures of speech, poetic genres, and dramatic conventions are in literature (69).

Excluding specific feminist writers, a younger group of scholars would include such people as Gary Tomlinson, Lawrence Kramer, Peter Rabinowitz, and John Shepherd. John Shepherd of Carleton University, has been

investigating the sociology and aesthetics of music for some twenty years. His latest book, *Music as Social Text* (1991), is about connectedness:

"connectedness to our biographies, our cultures, our societies and our environments" (3). With his article "Music and Male Hegemony", republished in McClary and Lepperd's *Music and Society*, Shepherd made a significant contribution to feminist music criticism.

This cursory examination of the derivations of feminist music criticism in literary, film, art criticism, French feminism, ethnomusicology, and socially contexted criticism in no way exhausts the resources, theories or methods upon which feminist music critics have drawn. One could very profitably explore feminist studies in philosophy, religion, anthropology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science or even the physical sciences in relation to cultural studies, and indeed one ought to do so to be thorough. The impact of feminism on virtually every branch of learning bears testimony to the revolutionary dimensions of the modern women's movement birthed in the 1960s. It also highlights the exclusively male viewpoint from which the above academic power structures have heretofore operated.

The first phase of the feminist agenda, regardless of study area, has been to establish a "herstory" from the silence of history. In music too, some identity, some demonstration of continuity of existence was necessary--a

resource pool of women's stories, compositions, performances, roles in the supporting music establishments of education--before serious questions could be answered. Establishment of an infrastructure of women's studies in music was a first step to critical examination. An examination of this development is the subject of Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN'S STUDIES IN MUSIC

Twenty-five hundred years ago Sappho cried out on behalf of all women in the arts:

"Someone, I tell you, will remember us,  
We are oppressed by fears of oblivion."<sup>1</sup>

The rediscovery of women in history marks an unprecedented occurrence of the accelerated gathering of all the ingredients of historical study into a concentrated time frame. Many have answered the call of Sappho to "remember," and the "fears of oblivion" are being assuaged as new studies of all aspects of women's history have shifted dramatically into high productivity.<sup>2</sup>

The uncovering of the shrouded tradition of distaff musicians represents one result of women's new consciousness of their historical invisibility, of the collective determination to find their roots, their foremothers. The pyramid base of several

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*, np.

<sup>2</sup> Minority groups seek historical legitimization in their past as part of the growing challenge to exclusion by race, class, or gender, and in this context represent a similar concentration of historical research to that of women. By contrast women, who as a group share some of the marginalizing characteristics of minority groups, are not a minority component of any geographic region in the world. Their numbers for most of history have comprised just over half of the human race.

generations of university-educated women has made possible the founding of Women's Studies Departments from which operations in feminist historical and critical work could be launched.

These developments have also made possible the growth of feminist criticism in music. Chapter 3 will examine in some depth the work of someone who offers provocative critical insights in feminist musicology. The writings of Susan McClary have been nourished by two decades of women in music studies, along with sophisticated feminist critical theory culled from diverse disciplines.

The past twenty-year period has witnessed an unparalleled proliferation of historical data on women in music. Prior to 1960 published articles or books on individual women composers, or the more widely encompassing category of women in music were isolated occurrences. Some examples of the latter variety are: *Women in Music* by George Upton, 1880; *Women's Work in Music* by Arthur Elson, 1904; *Female Pipings in Eden* by Ethel Smyth, 1933; and *Music and Women: The Story of Women in Their Relation to Music* by Sophie Drinker, 1948.

The documentation of women's achievements in music was more a function of a heightened women's consciousness which surfaced in the radical awakenings of the 1960s, than the product of an academic quest instigated in university departments seeking to fill in the gaps of women's history. Not surprisingly, the resulting findings, frequently motivated by a sense of mission, present an uneven standard of historical



scholarship. The 1980 article, "Review Essay: Women in Music," by Elizabeth Wood draws attention to these early mining efforts:

In the past five years, there has been a steady flow of checklists, editions, catalogs, handbooks, dictionaries, discographies, and bibliographies of both published and manuscript sources, but few are of scholarly substance (284).

Wood proceeds to feature specific books and articles which she regards as models of scholarly integrity.

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide an account of the swelling database of the investigation of women's activities in music, the bulk of which has been published since the 1970s, in order to sketch a setting for the appearance of feminist music criticism. So fruitful has been the research of musicologists in this area that it includes publications of the following genres: anthologies of women's scores; discographies; monographs about outstanding women composers; general histories of women in music; published primary resources (letters, diaries, critical reviews); compilations of articles; bibliographical studies; studies about women and the business of music (women as patrons and managers, women's concert organizations, recording companies, publishing companies); reports from conferences on women in music; and ethnomusicological studies. The establishment of this crucial mass of material was a necessary pre-condition for critical studies which are a welcome sequel to the descriptive historical materials.

A progression from the "mining process" of earlier studies to the "refinement process" of critical feminist cultural theory is generally understood to be the direction that unfolded from the 1960s through the 1990s. However useful this image may be, it can have the unfortunate effect of diminishing some of the quality of historical research which was written prior to the introduction of critical theory into musicology.

In attempting to offer an account of the existing body of women's musicology, one is confronted with several problems relating to criteria of selection. First an epistemological base needs to be defined; second, types of musical genre chosen for study need to be clarified; and third, criteria for choosing samples within the categories must be established.<sup>3</sup>

1. An important distinction needs to be made between the study of musicology about women and more recent feminist studies which focus on the construction of gender as it relates to history about women. This study will embrace both histories of women in music and investigations of gender and music. My assumption is that both have something meaningful to contribute to feminist musicology. The study seeks to resist the tendency to see a straightforward "progress" from basic women-in-music historical work to more sophisticated theoretical feminist writing, on the grounds that

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<sup>3</sup> The articles are garnered from a wide sampling of journals, following the same selection criteria as that of the books. The appearance of inter-disciplinary feminist cultural journals in the 1970s can be interpreted as part of a larger feminist agenda which seeks to reduce barriers. Examples of this development are: *The Feminist Art Journal*, *Signs*, and *Heresies*.

such a potential split between history and theory could lead to an hierarchical arrangement, where feminist critical theory becomes more valued than musicology. Such an emphasis could suffer from a serious ahistoricity. Earlier works can then be seen as important documents in and of themselves.

2. The categories of literature based upon certain musical genres reflect the strengths of the author and are in no way meant as a value judgement on those genres not selected. Accordingly, I have focused on the serious art tradition, leaving an investigation of popular genres to those better qualified in these areas.<sup>4</sup>

3. The criteria for selection within the classical tradition are not constant from the 1970s to 1990s. As the mass of material increases, my criteria enlarge. Thus, while in articles from the earlier years I would note every possible publication related to women in music, by the time of the 1980 decade, I exclude many articles written about specific women, preferring to highlight major studies as opposed to, for example, the many articles written about Ruth Crawford Seeger. I also have passed over writing by women on subjects which do not directly bear on women in music. These important publications are included in the general bibliography.<sup>5</sup>

The method of defining or sorting publications by arbitrary time blocks is not ideal, but in the absence of any more compelling categories, I shall choose the span of

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term "serious" here with misgiving, understanding the value-laden potential of the serious/popular, high/low dichotomies which such a designation infers.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard, see Janet Levy, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, and Ruth Solie. Subotnik's work was referred to in Chapter 1 under socially grounded music.

a decade for classification purposes. Accordingly, the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, will form the structural framework for this investigation. A preliminary sketch of the 1990s may function as a weather vane for future directions.

Each section will be preceded by a table, listing first articles and then books chronologically, along with the corresponding subject, author, and publication source. It is my observation that these tables, admittedly not comprehensive in scope yet inclusive of the most available and representative literature, will, in effect, form a kind of map, illustrating in precis form the progress of research into women's own music history.

A column headed "comments" contains brief descriptions of the works.<sup>6</sup> More comments will be found after articles than books, where summaries or quotes sometimes serve more to distort than to represent the book's message in such a short space. The lack of comments after books is also a reflection of the impossibility of covering thoroughly such a large body of material.<sup>7</sup> In the lower corner of some of the "comment cells" may be found abbreviations for the types of historical and/or analytical work. The entries are listed chronologically and alphabetically by author within each year.

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<sup>6</sup> A blank space under the comment section indicates that I have been unable to consult that particular book or article to date.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the literature up to 1988, see Nancy B. Reich's *An Annotated Bibliography of Recent Writing on Women in Music*.

The following is a key to the abbreviations:

CR = consciousness-raising. This type of writing highlighted discriminatory practices against women composers particularly, in an effort to sharpen the public's awareness of the need for change. I see CR as a necessary precursor to theoretical feminism.

RW = research writing. RW publications provide significant contributions to the body of women's musicology by bringing together previously scattered secondary material and/or primary documents.

EW = exceptional women. Largely biographical in nature, these works have, up to this point, constituted a major proportion of the archival studies.

F = feminist. Not all of the literature about women is informed by feminism. I think it is useful to note those writings which are supported by feminist critique.

NF = non-feminist.

RB = reference book. I would broaden the library classification of this term to include those books which are designed primarily for consultation, rather than for narrative reading.

CT = critical theory. CT represents one of the most pervasive influences in recent academia, and its force has only begun to be felt in music. Feminist

music studies were among the first areas of musicology to acknowledge CT's relevance to music.

## LITERATURE FROM THE 1960S

### ARTICLES:

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLICATION VEHICLE	COMMENTS
1962	Orphans and Ladies: The Venetian Conservatories (1680-1790)	Denis Arnold	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association</i> 89: 31-48	These two articles by Arnold explore one of the few avenues open to women for musical education during the Baroque, i.e. the convent. RW, NF
1965	Instruments and Instrumental Teaching in the Early Italian Conservatories	Denis Arnold	<i>Galpin Society Journal</i> 18: 72-81	
1967	A Woman Composer Speaks Out	Beatrice Laufer	<i>ASCAP</i> 1: 9	CR
1967	Augusta Holmes: A Meteoric Career	Rollo Myers	<i>The Musical Quarterly</i> 53: 365-376	RW, EW, NF
1967	Francesca Caccini's <i>Primo Libro</i>	Carolyn Raney	<i>Music and Letters</i> 48: 350-57	RW, NF
1968	Equal Opportunity for Women Pianists	Claudette Sorel	<i>Music Journal</i> 26: 41+	CR

## BOOKS:

- |      |  |                |  |           |
|------|--|----------------|--|-----------|
| 1964 | <i>The Price of<br/>Genius: A<br/>Biography of<br/>Pauline Viardot</i>             | April Fitzlyon | London:<br>Calder                                | EW        |
| 1966 | <i>An Introduc-<br/>tion to<br/>Elizabeth-<br/>Claude Jacquet<br/>de la Guerre</i> | Edith Boroff   | Brooklyn, NY:<br>Institute for<br>Medieval Music | EW, RW, F |

Of the seven listed entries from the 1960s, three are biographical studies of exceptional women: singer-composer Pauline Viardot and composer-performers Augusta Holmes and Elizabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre. These are pioneering efforts about significant musical figures who are conspicuously absent from the standard histories. The first two articles are reminders of the anomaly of women playing a wide range of instruments in an era when so many instruments of the orchestra were considered inappropriate for females. They are an unusual testimony to the achievements possible for women given the educational options, orchestral experience and compositional opportunities traditionally denied them.

Drawing from the decade of the 1960s, I will examine in detail two articles, the first by Rollo Myers and the second by Beatrice Laufer, to see what information they can offer about the types of historical writing from this period.

Rollo Myers' article on Augusta Holmès gives recognition to someone whose presence and influence in artistic circles in nineteenth-century Paris was legendary. Its

value lies in the presentation of new research about a colourful musical creator of considerable fame in her own time, whom mainstream musicologists have omitted from their records.<sup>8</sup>

Myers seems eager to clarify from the start that his interest in this historical character in no way stems from her music--"four operas, twelve symphonic tone-poems, and other extended orchestral and choral works, not to mention over one hundred songs"--which was considered "old-fashioned," substandard in quality, and of "only a curiosity value for us today" (366). Myers sets out the purpose of his paper in unequivocal terms:

I ought, therefore, to make it clear before proceeding further, that my object in this paper is...to reveal some perhaps little-known facts about her life, her friends, and her position in the Parisian society of her day, and to show to what extent her reputation largely rested on the sheer exuberance of her dynamic personality and evidently irresistible physical attractions (366).

Myers' article did contribute to rescuing Augusta Holmès from "what could have been total but undeserved oblivion" (376). And yet, however well written this work is, it belongs to that now unenviable category of sexist writings about women composers which fail to take seriously the very considerable musical achievements of the person, preferring to focus on her outstanding beauty, charms, and artistic social milieu.

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<sup>8</sup> Augusta Holmès (1847-1903) was born in Paris of Irish parents who took up permanent residency there. Accordingly Augusta Gallicized her name by the addition of the grave accent.



The second article from the 1960s, "A Woman Composer Speaks Out" by Beatrice Laufer, illustrates the new feminist consciousness which questioned the status quo of women's lack of success, tracing the unequal representation of women as performers and composers to discriminatory practices. Writing in the United States in 1967, Laufer notes:

in this era of commissions there is not one woman composer who has received a commission for a musical work to be performed by any major organization (9).

Laufer's message fills only two columns in a newsletter put out by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, but it clearly throws down the gauntlet:

Female composers are treated with apathy, indifference and amused and polite tolerance...It is now time for a reversal of attitudes throughout the rest of the world of music (9).

The decade of the 1960s witnessed the first stirrings of the second wave of feminism spreading its influence into musicology. About half of the entries show no awareness of gender issues. However, they still contribute to the reservoir of knowledge about women in music which was to fuel women's advancement in music.

## LITERATURE FROM THE 1970S

Quotations from a variety of articles will illustrate the largely consciousness-raising role they performed. The seeds of the 1960s experienced their first blossoming in the 1970s, and what a prolific array of buds they produced!

## ARTICLES:

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLICATION VEHICLE	COMMENTS
1971	The Music of Elisabeth Lutyens	Susan Bradshaw	<i>Musical Times</i> 112: 653-56	NF
1972	The Women of Music	A research paper prepared by The American Music Conference	<i>Music Journal</i> 30: 9-24, 55-59	"The problem with women in music has nothing to do with ability" (12). CR, RW, F
1973	Why Haven't Women Become Great Composers?	Judith Rosen and Grace Rubin-Rabson	<i>High Fidelity</i> 23: 47-51	Rosen: "They've been squelched by men." Rabson: They lack the ultimate creative spark" (47). CR

1974	Women in Music: A Preliminary Report	Nancy Barnes and Carol Neuls-Bates	<i>College Music Symposium</i> 14: 67-70.	Conclusion: women are poorly represented on music faculties, especially as rank increases. CR
1974	Women in the Profession in Higher Education	Adrienne F. Block	<i>College Music Symposium</i> 14: 60-66.	Block explores discriminatory practices comparing federal laws and current statistical data. CR
1974	Women in Music: Their Fair Share	Jean Bowen	<i>High Fidelity/Musical America</i> 24: 20	A summary of the status of Women in Music colloquium is featured. CR
1974	The Distaff'd Composers	Don Burns	<i>Music Journal</i> 32: 16-17, 32-37	"music... has been and still is, a world lorded, controlled and led by men"(36). RW, CR
1974	Women Musicians Offer Advice	Karen Phillips	<i>Music Journal</i> 32: 18-19, 28-29	CR
1974	The Prejudice Against Women	Susan Starr	<i>Music Journal</i> 32: 14-15, 28	CR

1975	Women Composers: Reminiscence and History	Edith Boroff	<i>College Music Symposium</i> 15: 26-33	Boroff gives a careful condensation of women in music history. RW, CR, F
1976	Five Women Composers 1587-1875	Carol Neuls-Bates	<i>Feminist Art Journal</i> , Summer: 70-76	RW, CR, F
1976	Walking into the Fire (Sarah Caldwell)	Robert Jones	<i>Opera News</i> 40: 10-19	CR
1976	Potpourri: Impressive Gains for Women in American Symphony Orchestras	no author given	<i>The Instrumentalist</i> 31: 95-96	"The number of women instrumentalists in major symphony orchestras took a 36% jump in the past decade (95). CR
1976	Career Alternatives in Music: Advice from Women Musicians	no author given	<i>The Instrumentalist</i> 31: 34-39	CR
1976	International Women's Year Ends: "Decade of Women" Begins	no author given	<i>Music Clubs Magazine</i> 55: 6-7	CR, F

1977	Women's Studies in Music	Report of panel	<i>College Music Symposium</i> 17: 180-191	"The tradition of music as a feminine accomplishment decreed that women ...learn music for the purpose of pleasing others" (186). RW, CR, F
1978	Barbara Strozzi, <i>virtuosissima cantatrice</i> : The Composer's Voice	Ellen Rosand	JAMS 31: 241-81	CR, RW, F
1978	Women in Music	Paulette Weiss	<i>Stereo Review</i> 41: 72	CR
1978	A 1978 Perspective	Paulette Weiss	<i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 65: 43-45	Reprint of "Women in Music" 1978 above.
1979	A 1940 Perspective	Carl Seashore	<i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 65: 43-44	NF
1979	So Your Daughter Wants to be a Drummer?	Susan Yank Porter and Harold F. Abeles	<i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 65: 46-49	CR
1979	America's Women Composers: Up from the Footnotes	Jeannie G. Pool	<i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 65: 28-41	RW, CR, NF

## BOOKS:

- |      |   |  |   |                                   |
|------|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1970 | <i>Directory of American Women Composers</i>                  | Julia Smith, editor                        | Chicago: National Federation of Music Clubs       | RB                                |
| 1975 | <i>Women in Music: A Bibliography</i>                         | Donald Hixon and Donald Hennessee, editors | Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press                     | RB                                |
| 1977 | <i>Teresa Carreno "By the Grace of God"</i>                   | Maria Miliowski                            | New Haven: Yale University Press                  | Reprint of NY: DaCapo Press<br>NF |
| 1977 | <i>Women in Music History: A Research Guide</i>               | Jeannie Pool                               | NY: author  | RB                                |
| 1978 | <i>The Women Troubadours</i>                                  | Meg Bogin                                  | NY: Norton  | RB                                |
| 1978 | <i>Women of Notes: 1,000 Women Composers Born Before 1900</i> | Anya Laurence                              | NY: Richards Rosen Press                          | CR                                |
| 1978 | <i>The Life and Works of Lili Boulanger</i>                   | Leonie Rosenstiel                          | Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press | EW                                |
| 1978 | <i>Women in American Music: A Bibliography</i>                | JoAnn Skowronski                           | Chicago: National Federation of Music Clubs       | RB                                |
| 1978 | <i>Women Composers: A Handbook</i>                            | Susan Stern                                | Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press                      | RB                                |

1979	<i>Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life</i>	Berthold Litzmann	NY: DaCapo Press	1913 reprint NF
1979	<i>Women in American Music: A Bibliography of Music and Literature</i>	Adrienne Fried Block and Carol Neuls-Bates	Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press	RB

Before embarking on a close-up view of two contrasting articles, I will make some general observations which the above table highlights. The books published in the 1970s tell a story very different from the articles of that decade. Out of twelve books represented here, no fewer than six are of a bibliographical or biographical nature. Three are reprints from the early twentieth century, while two other books, *The Women Troubadours* and *The Life and Works of Lili Boulanger*, contribute original research. When bio-bibliographical publications take a central position, then one has the sense that a more mature stage in historical development is being established.

The first article selected for closer scrutiny, "Why Haven't Women Become Great Composers?" focuses on the question which is one of the most frequently asked whenever the subject of women composers is raised. Two very different viewpoints are presented in response to the article's title, "Why Haven't Women Become Great Composers?" One response is given by a feminist, Judith Rosen. Another response, by psychologist Grace Rubin-Rabson, takes the well-documented position, held with

consensus in past centuries and continuing tenaciously in some quarters up to the present, that ultimate creativity lies within the exclusive domain of males. While the Rubin-Rabson argument still has its sympathizers, these adherents have become the closeted ones, given the changing climate of concern for gender fairness. Less than twenty years since the 1973 publication date, it is almost inconceivable that this lingering viewpoint would find public expression in a respected scholarly journal. It is my observation that the Freudian "biology is her destiny" sentiment has retreated from the unfavourable prevailing climate and gone underground.

The second article I will investigate, "Women Composers: Reminiscence and History" by Edith Boroff, is representative of some of the more comprehensive attempts to bring together the multiplying strands of musical evidence to produce a composite picture of women's accomplishments over time, efforts that were gathering momentum in the mid-1970s. What called forth Boroff's historical survey of women in music was her awareness of the need to produce material which could serve as a resource for the growing interests in women's studies for both the arts and music students.

Boroff articulated an ongoing problem, namely the difficulty in finding qualified instructors with expertise in the arts, history, women's rights, and music. Most commonly, those with credentials in feminist critique lack sophisticated music training, and conversely, those with many years behind them in music have had little formal exposure to feminist cultural theory.



Boroff gallops through the major historical periods of music, touching the high moments, all the while highlighting the obstacles and social expectations which confined women's expression in music. The reader is left with an appetite for more.

While the book entries contain some in-depth studies of exceptional women and significant reference additions, the articles are mainly concerned with addressing the more general topic of the plight of women in music. The issue of gender is coming into focus. Stories of discrimination from the past and present are told.

#### LITERATURE FROM THE 1980S

The literature of the 1980s saw many more academic journals participate in the growing interest in women's music studies. The eighties mark a move from CR to more RW and F with the category of CT making its debut.

#### ARTICLES:

1980	Women and Music	many authors	<i>Heresies</i> 3	This whole issue is devoted to presenting women in music in various musical genres. RW, F
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|------|---|-------------------|--|---|
| 1980 | The Singing Ladies at Ferrara before 1580         | Anthony Newcomb   | Ch. 1 in Newcomb's <i>The Madrigal at Ferrara 1597-1587</i> Princeton, NJ: Princeton Un. Press | Newcomb strongly makes the case that the <i>concerto delle donne</i> comprised women who owed their positions not to birth or social rank, but singularly to their voices. RW, NF |
| 1980 | Review Essay: Women in Music                      | Elizabeth Wood    | <i>Signs</i> 6: 283-97   | Wood's excellent essay calls for the integration of a feminist theoretical approach into musicology. RW, F  |
| 1981 | Review of Recording: Women Composers Series       | Susan E. Erickson | <i>19th Century Music</i> 4: 270-73  | Repetition of what has become standard information about women. CR, NF  |
| 1982 | A Conference on Women in Music: A Progress Report | Edith Boroff      | <i>College Music Symposium</i> 22: 161-5   | To be discussed in more detail.   |

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|------|--|--------------------|---|--|
| 1982 | Report from the University of Michigan: A Conference of Women in Music | Susan Cook         | <i>Current Musicology</i> 33: 102-4                                   | This is a highly informative report on the scholarly work and performances of "Women in Music." F            |
| 1982 | Conference on Women in Music   | Michele Johns      | <i>The American Organist</i> 16: 42                                   | Less detailed than Cook's report, Johns conveys the dimensions and ambience of the conference. F             |
| 1982 | Letters responding to questions posed by Elaine Barkin                 | 26 letters printed | <i>Perspectives of New Music</i> 20, no page numbers given            | A unique article, this entry conveys the range of opinion amongst American women. CR                         |
| 1983 | Women Composers: Performance Art, and the Perils of Fashion            | John Rockwell      | chapter in Rockwell's <i>All-American Music</i> . NY: Vintage: 123-32 | Rockwell focuses on the work of Laurie Anderson and demonstrates a positive reception to women composers. RW |
| 1984 | The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Conductors and Composers  | Mary Brown Hinely  | <i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 78: 42-49                             | CR, F, RW.   |

1984	Association of Canadian Women Composers Newsletter: 4 articles on Women in Music	Pam Margles, Gayle Young, Carol Ann Weaver, Valerie King	Toronto, Ont.	Very politically motivated writing, these articles address subject matter from female aesthetics to course outlines on Canadian women composers. CR, F
1984	<i>Readers Comment</i> on previous articles on women in music	M. Thomas Seaman, David Katz, Judith Lang Zaimont	<i>Music Educators' Journal</i> 71: 8-11	One letter published conveys the bitterness of a reader who resents the influence of "women's lib" in MEJ.
1985	Integrating Music by Women into the Music History Sequence	James Briscoe	<i>College Music Symposium</i> 25: 21-27	CR, F
1985	Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia as Patrons of Music: The Frottola at Mantua and Ferrara	William F. Prizer	<i>JAMS</i> 38: 1-33	RW, NF
1985	Consort not with a Female Musician	Aelwyn Pugh	<i>Music Teacher</i> 64: 12	CR, F

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|---------|---|---------------|--|---|
| 1986    | Nanette<br>Streicher and<br>her Pianos  | Margaret Hood | <i>Continuo</i> : 9 2-5                  | Hood sheds new<br>light on the role<br>of women as<br>instrument-<br>makers. CR, F,<br>RW   |
| 1986    | Emerging from<br>the Shadows:<br>Fanny<br>Mendelssohn<br>and Clara<br>Schumann<br>(Review of two<br>Recordings) | James Parsons | <i>Opus 2</i> : 27-31                    | Parsons<br>produces a<br>thoughtful<br>review of the<br>recordings while<br>giving an<br>historical/social<br>setting for the<br>composers CR,<br>F, RW.                          |
| 1986/87 | Mozart's<br>Women   | Susan McClary | <i>border/</i><br><i>lines 6</i> : 14-17 | CR, F, RW   |
| 1987    | Is There<br>Feminist Music<br>Theory?   | Editorial     | <i>In Theory Only</i><br>9:3-4.          | The editors<br>express their<br>curiosity about<br>what a feminist<br>perspective in<br>music theory<br>might be, at the<br>same time<br>inviting essays<br>on the subject.<br>CR |

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|------|---|----------------------|---|---|
| 1987 | Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel as Composer and Pianist          | Camilla Cai          | <i>The Piano Quarterly</i> 139: 46-53     | Cai draws on the substantial Mendelssohn correspondence to depict Fanny's predicament of family loyalty and creative needs.<br>CR, F, RW    |
| 1988 | ClarNan Editions: Early Music Publication by Women        | B.G. Jackson         | <i>Continuo</i> 12: 20-22                 |   |
| 1989 | Ethel Smyth, <i>The Wreckers</i> , and Sir Thomas Beecham | Kathleen A. Abromett | <i>The Musical Quarterly</i> 73: 196-211. | Abromett offers some interesting glimpses of Smyth and Beecham through letters. Her discussion is not particularly informed by feminism. RW |
| 1989 | Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology:l        | Jane Bowers          | <i>College Music Symposium</i> 29: 81-92  | Bowers' article marks a new level of critical scholarship: historically sound, interpretive, and critically informed.<br>F RW               |

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|------|---|---------------|--|---|
| 1989 | Clara Schumann<br>"A Woman<br>Must not Desire<br>to Compose..."                           | Camilla Cai   | <i>The Piano<br/>Quarterly</i> 145:<br>55-<br>61 | Cai covers<br>familiar<br>territory here,<br>more fully<br>articulated by<br>Reich.[see<br>books] CR, F,<br>RW  |
| 1989 | Women,<br>Women's<br>Studies, Music<br>and<br>Musicology:<br>Issues of<br>Pedagogy        | Susan C. Cook | <i>College Music<br/>Symposium</i> 29:<br>93-100 | Cook writes<br>with the same<br>"come of age"<br>confidence as<br>Bowers. Her<br>bibliography<br>reflects the<br>inter-disciplin-<br>ary dependence<br>of feminist<br>music criticism.<br>RW, F |
| 1989 | Conference<br>Report: Music<br>and the Verbal<br>Arts                                     | James McCalla | <i>Journal of<br/>Musicology</i> 7:<br>3-20      | One of the first<br>conferences to<br>include music,<br>the Dartmouth<br>gathering<br>represented a<br>wide<br>combination of<br>music and<br>critical theory.<br>F, CT                         |
| 1989 | Construc-<br>tions of Gender<br>in Monte-<br>verdi's<br>Dramatic Music<br>and Scholarship | Susan McClary | <i>Cambridge<br/>Opera Journal</i><br>1: 203-23  | RW, F, CT   |

Before presenting the book table which is quite extensive, I shall comment on the articles. The increase in journal publication enhancing the visibility of women in music history represents a progressive development. Perhaps the absence of any articles of the Myers/Rubin-Rabson orientation in the 1980s signals a negative gain, in the sense that at least overt expressions of female creative inferiority are no longer acceptable. It is noteworthy that of the twenty-seven articles documented, four focus on conferences where women received either exclusive attention or were a featured segment. Three from 1982 report on the March conference on "Women in Music" held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The last article listed by Susan Cook describes the 1988 American Musicological Society's special panel and papers on feminist musicology.<sup>9</sup>

The advent of conferences on women in music marks a quickening of the momentum of feminist musicology. The energy that is generated as women come together and shed their isolation for community cannot be underestimated, particularly in these "first" efforts. Conferences are enabling and empowering forums for the flow of communication along scholarly networks, for the concentrated update of current research. They are still a relatively new segment of women's musicology.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Kerman examines the evolution of JAMS conference topics from 1981-1990 in his article, "American Musicology in the 1990s," *The Journal of Musicology* ix (Spring 1991): 131-144. See especially page 144.

<sup>10</sup> The following incomplete list of conferences gives some sense of the intensification of these gatherings:

1975	International Conference on Women in Music	New York City
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During the late 1980s a noticeable shift is evident from an emphasis on accumulating information about women in music to a feminist interpretation of the material collected. This change is particularly striking when one examines Edith Boroff's report on the 1982 Michigan conference alongside Susan Cook's report on the American Musicological Society's session on "Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology." The keynote speaker in 1982, Boroff, makes these observations:

The one discussion of scholarship (the panel that comprised the penultimate item of the Conference) was stimulating, but served as a cautionary demonstration of the danger of the theoretical claiming to be more important than the actual. Their brunt is sociological, sometimes political, but seldom musical. They must remember that their studies are peripheral, and that, to paraphrase Alexander Pope, the proper study of music is *music* (164).

Had Boroff so quickly forgotten that when the proper study of music was ostensibly just music, it did not include women's music? Is recognizing the formerly disguised political nature of music or its sociological context "peripheral"? While Boroff's viewpoint may not be well received by socially grounded critics, this fact should not

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1975	International Conference on Women in Music	New York City
1980	Second International Conference	New York City
1982	Opus 1 Women in Music	Michigan
1983	Opus 2 Women in Music	Michigan
1985	Opus 3 Women in Music	Kansas
1988	Alternative Musicology	Ottawa
1991	Feminist Theory and Language	Minneapolis

take away from the magnitude of her contribution to women in music studies, nor diminish her compositional achievements and research on American composers.

Compare Boroff's words to Elizabeth Wood's comments quoted by Susan Cook from the 1988 AMS panel on women in music:

We continue to operate within a conservative methodology, whether compensatory or contributory, that is not necessarily feminist and not specifically female. Rather it tends to relate and relocate women to the accepted canon of great artists and great works, without necessarily rethinking or reexamining, to quote from Myre Jehlen, "the way certain assumptions about women and the female enter into the fundamental assumptions that organize our thinking" (95).

It is this progression from the amassing of raw data on women in music which is classified as consciousness-raising, to the feminist interpretative methodology that follows, which characterizes the flow of articles and books from the 1960s through the 1980s. Jane Bowers' 1989 paper succinctly relates the field of feminist scholarship to musicology. She notes that "feminist scholarly perspectives call for change in the framework of scholarship generally, not merely the addition of a body of research about women" (83). This tension is at the heart of Boroff's 1982 remarks.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I would caution against any simple value judgement which favours the more recent critically-informed approach. It is not acceptable to evaluate work from a different time frame by standards of the present. Such a critique would be an example of failing to take into account the generational context of the writers.

## BOOKS:

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|------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1980 | <i>Unsung: A History of Women in American Music</i>                        | Christine Ammer                 | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press     | CR, RW, F                      |
| 1980 | <i>Women Composers, Conductors, and Musicians of the Twentieth Century</i> | Jane Weiner LePage              | Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press        | RB                             |
| 1981 | <i>The Music of Isabella Leonarda</i>                                      | Stewart Carter                  | Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms | Score                          |
| 1981 | <i>International Encyclopedia of Women Composers</i>                       | Aaron Cohen                     | NY: R.R. Bowker                      | RB                             |
| 1981 | <i>Louise Farrenc, 1804-75: Composer, Performer, Scholar</i>               | Bea Friedland                   | Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press    | EW, published PhD dissertation |
| 1981 | <i>Keyboard Music by Women Composers: A Catalogue and Bibliography</i>     | J. Meggett                      | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press     | RB                             |
| 1981 | <i>Contemporary Concert Music of Women Composers</i>                       | Judith Zaimont and Karen Famera | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press     | RB, F                          |

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|------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1982 | <i>Contemporary American Composers, A Biographical Dictionary</i> | Ruth Anderson, editor             | Boston: G.K. Hall                      | This new edition includes women in main body, not as an addenda. RB |
| 1982 | <i>Barbara Pentland</i>   | Shirley Eastman and Timothy McGee | Toronto: Canadian Music Centre         | NF  |
| 1982 | <i>Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings</i>            | Carol Neuls-Bates                 | NY: Harper and Row                     | This is a highly readable book, often quoted. CR, RW, F             |
| 1983 | <i>Women Composers: A Discography</i>                             | J. Frasier                        | Detroit: Information Coordinators      | RB  |
| 1983 | <i>Alma Mahler: Muse to Genius</i>                                | Karen Monson                      | Boston: Houghton Mifflin               | EW  |
| 1983 | <i>American Women Composers before 1870</i>                       | Judith Tick                       | Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press          | RW, RB  |
| 1983 | <i>The Music of Pauline Oliveros</i>                              | Heidi Von Gunden                  | N.J.: Scarecrow Press                  | RW  |
| 1984 | <i>International Discography of Women Composers</i>               | Aaron Cohen                       | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press       | RB  |
| 1984 | <i>Music From Within</i>  | Ferdinand Eckhardt                | Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press | EW  |

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|------|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1984 | <i>Thea Musgrave: A Bio-Bibliography</i>                        | Donald L. Hixon                      | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press                                 | RB   |
| 1984 | <i>Grázyna Bacewicz: Her Life and Works</i>                     | Judith Rosen                         | LA: Friends of Polish Music, U. of South. Calif. School of Music | EW, F  |
| 1984 | <i>The Musical Woman. An International Perspective Vol. 1</i>   | Judith Lang Zaimont, ed.-in-chief    | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press                                 | RW, F  |
| 1985 | <i>Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman</i>                 | Nancy Reich                          | Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press                             | EW, RW, F  |
| 1986 | <i>The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn</i>         | Marcia Citron, ed. and trans.        | NY: Pendragon Press  | This book contains the original German letters plus translations.<br>RW, RB, F |
| 1986 | <i>Women Composers for the Harpsichord</i>                      | B. Harbach, ed.                      | Bryn Mawr, PA: Elkan-Vogel                                       |  |
| 1986 | <i>Handbook: Teaching the History of Women in Music</i>         | Jean Pool                            | Northridge, CA: Calif. State University Department of Music      | RW, RB, F  |
| 1987 | <i>Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950</i> | Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, editors | Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press                 | RW, F, CT  |

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|------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|
| 1987 | <i>Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950</i>                  | Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, editors       | Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press | RW, F, CT                   |
| 1987 | <i>Historical Anthology of Music by Women</i>                                    | James R. Briscoe                           | Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press      | collection of musical works |
| 1987 | <i>Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective</i>                             | Ellen Koskoff, ed.                         | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press                 | RW, F, CT                   |
| 1987 | <i>Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception</i> | Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, editors | Cambridge: Cambridge University Press            | RW, F, CT                   |
| 1987 | <i>The Musical Woman: An International Perspective Vol. II</i>                   | Judith Lang Zaimont, ed.-in-chief          | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press                 | RW, F                       |
| 1988 | <i>Cécile Chaminade</i>  | Marcia Citron                              | Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press                 | RB, EW                      |
| 1988 | <i>Opera, or the Undoing of Women</i>  | Catherine Clément                          | Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press       | RW, F, RW                   |

1988	<i>Clara Schumann: La vie à quatre mains</i>	Catherine Lepront	Paris: Editions Robert Laffont	EW
1988	<i>An Annotated Bibliography of Recent Writings on Women in Music</i>	Nancy B. Reich, ed.	Boulder: College Music Society	RB
1989	<i>Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found</i>	Diane P. Jezic	NY: The Feminist Press	CR
1988	<i>Violin Music by Women Composers: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide</i>	Rose-Marie Johnson	Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press	RB

The dramatic increase in the number of books in the 1980s is probably the most obvious observation from the table. A survey of the numbers of articles and books selected from my list of the last three decades is instructive:

DECADE	ARTICLES	BOOKS	TOTAL
1960s	6	2	8
1970s	22	11	33
1980s	27	34	61

The following observations of increases indicated are modest given the process of selection in the 1970s and 80s. The greatest overall increase occurs from the 1960s to the 1970s, a four-fold increase in total output. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the production of surveyed books almost tripled. It is here that one can locate a truly significant development. The process of putting an article into print in already established journals requires a smaller investment of time and commitment than the efforts demanded in creating a book. The appearance therefore of so many books represents a more sustained research and a decided deepening of the pool of new resources.

Seven books in the "exceptional women" category point to the ongoing interest in identifying foremothers, models, and composers of considerable status about whom scholarly investigations have not been exhausted. The burgeoning discography of women's music and its cataloguing are an important parallel to the literature. The growing category of reference books facilitates and stimulates ongoing research by making information about women in music accessible to the non-specialist.



A general elevation in the level of scholarship characterized, for example, by a greater use of primary sources, more sophisticated methodologies, and feminist interpretation, distinguishes many of these more recent books from earlier works. Three studies on one musical woman were published within five years of each other: Joan Chissell's *Clara Schumann, A Dedicated Spirit* (1983); Nancy B. Reich's *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (1985); and Catherine Lepront's *Clara Schumann: La vie à quatre mains* (1988). Reich's biographical account is informed by feminism, depicting Clara's resistance to societal prescriptions, whereas Chissell's story displays a more traditional approach. Lepront's Clara biography is part of a series, *elle était une fois*, which included Sarah Bernhardt, Alma Mahler and Kiki. Lepront employs a narrative/chronological structure, drawing upon diaries and letters. The book lays no claim to scholarly status, eschewing any footnotes or bibliography.

Of the thirty-four books reported in the 1980s, I will mention three which I think merit special commendation. They are: *Women in Music* edited by Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* edited by Ellen Koskoff, and *Women Making Music* edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick.

Neuls-Bates' book from 1982 is an "Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present." For the first time, documents of a wide variety became available, enabling interested individuals to read for themselves what women were doing and saying in different historical periods. An expanded introduction, contextualizing comments preceding each of the fifty entries, a bibliography, and index

facilitate the reader's work. Neuls-Bates' anthology is among the most quoted sources for subsequent musicologists who address issues related to women's music. The following quotation of Baldesar Castiglione follows a brief discussion of the Renaissance lady, in which Neuls-Bates intersects Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* with Joan Kelly-Gadol's insightful article, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?":

Imagine what an ungainly sight it would be to have a woman playing drums, fifes, trumpets, or other instruments of that sort; and this is simply because their stridency buries and destroys the sweet gentleness which embellishes everything a woman does (39).

The second book selected for closer examination contributes to arguments favouring music as a socially-grounded phenomenon. *Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective* is an ethnomusicological investigation of women's music-making. Many of its fifteen articles were drawn from two music conferences: Opus 1 and 2, both called "Women in Music", held at the University of Michigan School of Music in 1982 and 1983.

The contribution of ethnomusicology to gender issues in music has been immense. Ethnomusicology's special relationship to anthropology with its mechanisms for interpreting group behaviour, customs, and values vis-à-vis cultural expression, provide valuable methodological tools for exploring gender in the Western art tradition. Rather than seeing music simply as an expression of prevailing political ideology, Koskoff notes how music can convey some of the complexities of

inter-gender relationships (12). She describes four types of performance which serve to illustrate the intricate nuances of asymmetry/equality:

1. Performance that confirms and maintains the established social/sexual arrangement;
2. performance that *appears* to maintain established norms in order to protect other, more relevant values;
3. performance that protests, yet maintains, the order (often through symbolic behavior); and
4. performance that challenges and threatens established order (10).

Given the 1987 original publication date for Koskoff's book, one could hardly classify it among the roots of feminist criticism. However the contributions stemming from anthropology and confirmed by ethnomusicology (for example, Margaret Mead's deconstruction of "natural" behaviours associated with gender), have provided a rich resource for the feminist interpretation of music.

The third book I will focus on is *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950* (1987), edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, both familiar, high-profile names in feminist musicological circles. The fifteen articles include two by distinguished male scholars, Howard Mayer Brown and Anthony Newcomb. Their inclusion could be interpreted as a move away from the tendency of only women writing the histories of women in music. Leppert and McClary's book, *Music and Society* (1987), illustrates the same inclusiveness of male and female authors.

The breadth of documentation and new research evident in most of the articles demonstrates the high level of work being done by feminist music historians. Bowers

and Tick articulate their awareness of the ground-breaking nature of their work in the

Introduction:

[These chapters] deal with concerns--socialization, institutional patterns of music education, and access to professional outlets--that have not been traditional for conventional historical musicology. Their consideration forces us to realize the bond between society and creativity (13).

Leaving the decade of the 1980s, I am impressed with the healthy state of music literature relating to women. Its rising level of scholarship, its diversification, its inclusion of male researchers, and its sheer accumulation are encouraging indications of a maturing process taking place.

LITERATURE FROM THE 1990S

ARTICLES:

1990	Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon	Marcia Citron	<i>Journal of Musicology</i> 8: 102-117	F, CT
1990	JoAnn Falletta	Richard Ginell	<i>Musical America</i> 110: 11, 12	music review, NF

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|------|---|----------------------|--|--|
| 1990 | One of the Most Accomplished Women of Her Age: Anna Storace, Mozart's First Susanna                 | Sheila Hodges        | <i>The Music Review</i> 50: 93-102               | EW   |
| 1990 | Towards a Feminist Criticism of Music   | Susan McClary        | <i>Canadian University Music Review</i> 10: 9-17 | A paper delivered at the Ottawa symposium. F, CT |
| 1991 | American Musicology in the 1990s  | Joseph Kerman        | <i>Journal of Musicology</i> 9: 131-144          | CT   |
| 1991 | Music and the Feminine Sphere: Images of Women as Musician in <i>Godey's Lady's Book, 1830-1877</i> | Julia Eklund<br>Kiza | <i>The Musical Quarterly</i> 75: 103-129         | F  |
| 1991 | Music and Sociology for the 1990s: A Changing Critical Perspective                                  | Derek B. Scott       | <i>The Musical Quarterly</i> 75: 385-410         | CT   |

- 1991 Ruth Crawford's 'Spiritual Concept': The Sound-Ideals of an Early American Modernist, 1924-1930 Judith Tick *JAMS* 44: 221-261 EW, F

## BOOKS:

- 1990 *Music as Cultural Practice: 1800-1900* Lawrence Kramer Berkeley: University of Calif. Press F, CT
- 1990 *Frances McCollin: Her Life and Music* Annette M. Di Medio Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow EW
- 1990 *Music, Gender, and Culture* Suzanne Ziegler and Marcia Herndon, eds. Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag RW, F
- 1991 *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* Carolyn Abbate Princeton: Princeton University Press CT
- 1991 *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* Charles Ford NY: Manchester University Press CT
- 1991 *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* Susan McClary Minneapolis: University of Minn. Press F, CT

1991	<i>Women and Music. A History</i>	Karin Pendle, ed.	Bloomington: Indiana University Press	RW
1991	<i>Music as Social Text</i>	John Shepherd	Cambridge: Polity Press	CT
1991	<i>Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music</i>	Rose Rosengard Subotnik	Minneapolis: University of Minn. Press	CT
1992	<i>Gender and the Musical Canon</i>	Marcia Citron	Forthcoming	
1992	<i>Georges Bizet's "Carmen"</i>	Susan McClary	Forthcoming	
1992	<i>De-Tonations: Narrative and Signification in "Absolute" Music</i>	Susan McClary	Wesleyan University Press, Forthcoming	
1992	<i>Music and Difference</i>	Ruth Solie	Forthcoming	
1993	<i>Power and Desire in Seventeenth-Century Music</i>	Susan McClary	Princeton: Princeton University Press, Forthcoming	

It is premature to make many deductions from the available articles and books of the 1990s. Characteristically, the writings are feminist and demonstrate a knowledge of critical methods traditionally associated with literary criticism. If one word could be used to epitomize this period, it would be "theory", and not music

theory. The invasion of such diverse theoretical systems as Marxism, psychoanalysis, reader reception theory, and deconstruction into almost every discipline from science to theology has not left musicology untouched. An overview of the literature on women in music demonstrates the existence of a significant body of writing from which critical deductions can be made. Chapter 3 will include a consideration of these influences in exploring the music criticism of Susan McClary.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE MUSIC CRITICISM OF SUSAN MCCLARY

*Any discourse which fails to take into account the problem of sexual difference in its own enunciation and address will be, within a patriarchal order, precisely indifferent, a reflection of male domination.*

*Stephen Heath*<sup>1</sup>

Chapters 1 and 2 were attempts to articulate some of the events, research, and intellectual climate which have contributed to the development of feminist music criticism: the women's movement; feminist criticism arising from literary, French feminism, film, and art studies; ethnomusicology; socially grounded criticism; and the rapidly expanding base of women referenced in music publications. The powerful influence of critical theory in academia has by and large strengthened the position of feminist music criticism by formulating methodologies of "new readings"-- psychoanalytical, deconstructive, reader-response--not just of *texts*, but of art productions, scores, and cultural artifacts in general.

The direction of the last twenty years in women's music studies has seen a movement away from gathering data about women in a consciousness-raising vein to a

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<sup>1</sup> "Difference," *Screen* 19 (Winter 1978-79): 53.

more self-aware feminist critique, drawing upon the various methods of critical theory. A number of women have laboured in this field with great dedication and singular focus, attempting to restore the forgotten past of the distaff musician. Others have been drawn to feminist critique from other musicological areas and have maintained their primary research while making excursions into FMC<sup>2</sup>. Outstanding contributors to women in music would include: Edith Boroff, Jane Bowers, Judith Tick, Carol Neuls-Bates, Adrienne Fried Block, Nancy Reich, Suzanne Cusick, Marcia Citron, Ruth Solie, Susan Cook, Ellen Koskoff, and Karin Pendle.

My intention of focusing on the work of one person as a representative of FMC reflects my wish to explore some issues to a greater depth than would be possible if brief overviews of a number of women were the plan. In the selection process I sought someone with four qualifications: 1. enough publications available to provide a significant body of work for study; 2. conversancy in the areas of women's music history, feminist and critical theory; 3. recognition of the centrality of her work by feminist musicologist colleagues and consequent acknowledgement as a leader within FMC; 4. recognition as a credible musicologist by the wider academic community. All of the criteria are fulfilled in the person of Susan McClary.

Having received her PhD from Harvard in 1976, Susan McClary joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota's School of Music in 1977, where in 1990 she became a full professor. McClary's completed publications include 26 articles and 2

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<sup>2</sup> Feminist music criticism hereafter will be referred to by the initials FMC.

books: *Feminist Endings*, 1991 and *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, 1987, which she co-edited with Richard Leppert.<sup>3</sup> Three other books are under contract, one of which, *George Bizet's Carmen*, is in production. McClary's other accomplishments include musical composition, piano and harpsichord performances, stage directing, conference papers and panels, many scholarly awards and grants, and widespread academic consultation.<sup>4</sup>

This Chapter will investigate the music criticism of Susan McClary under four headings: Methodology, Autonomy in Music, Socially Contexted Music, and Critical Assessment of McClary's Work.

## METHODOLOGY

A definition of FMC introduces this section on methodology. FMC has at its core a political agenda: equal opportunities for women. It seeks to promote women's music from the past and present it in a way that diminishes the barriers of High and Low art. Its mandate involves investigating reasons for women's invisibility in music history and examining gender representation in all music, seeking to unmask the ideology embedded in "neutral" music. FMC addresses questions of meaning in music,

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<sup>3</sup> A complete list of McClary's publications to date can be found in the bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Prof. McClary has accepted a teaching position at McGill University for January, 1993.

explores the ways in which music channels desire, and calls into question the aesthetic and epistemological framework which rendered "the feminine" inferior.

McClary follows what she describes in FE as a "provisional methodology" involving questions clustered into five groups.<sup>5</sup> The following is a summary of McClary's points.

1. The first procedure focuses on the "musical constructions of gender and sexuality" (FE 7). Underlying this investigation of musical constructions of gender is the recognition that gender and sex are two distinct categories, with gender being a socially-construed pattern of learned behaviours, and sex being a biologically determined classification. The exchangeability of roles performed by males and females in various ethnic groupings points to the non-biological, social origins of gender behaviour. With this perspective of sexuality it is easier to locate the unfolding of gender construction in music, which can be seen then as operating as a forum for the reflecting and working out of gender conduct.

McClary credits seventeenth-century musical conventions of *stile rappresentativo* with musically articulating affective states in the context of music drama, many of which have changed or lost their meaning over time<sup>6</sup>. What is

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<sup>5</sup> Hereafter *Feminine Endings* will be referred to as FE.

<sup>6</sup> McClary's article, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music," explores the development of a musical vocabulary in music theatre of the seventeenth century.

surprising is the constancy of the codes relating to gender and sexuality and their preservation into the present in, for example, film music and advertising. When discussing music theatre, McClary is moving in the arena of her primary expertise, having written her PhD dissertation about "The Transition from Modal to Tonal Organization in the Works of Monteverdi".

McClary cites the French historical theorist Michel Foucault who locates a significant change in expressions of sexuality in the seventeenth century. He describes the period as a time when "Sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without due reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit" (Foucault 3). The seventeenth century also marked the beginning of the age of capitalism and the subsuming of sexuality into the bourgeois order. Foucault writes, "Rather than a massive censorship, beginning with the verbal proprieties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse" (34).

It is this "incitement to discourse" that McClary identifies as being played out in the works of Monteverdi. McClary sees the addressing of issues of gender and power in this music as integral to their understanding. Formal analysis and traditional music criticism fail to take these matters into account, all the while utilizing language that is rife with sexual metaphor.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In FE, p. 179, McClary quotes Joseph Kerman from his article, "Orpheus: the Neoclassic Vision," as an example of such writing:

2. The second area of investigation in McClary's methodology is that of "gendered aspects of traditional music theory" (FE 9). Were gendered aspects of theory not so loudly denied and declared to be dinosaurs of another era, it would not be necessary to draw attention to their still-prevalent infusion in current thinking--that is, unless one views the 1960s and 70s as our distant past.

The familiar metaphor of masculine/feminine cadences is defined in the 1970 edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*:

*Masculine, feminine cadence.* A cadence or ending is called "masculine" if the final chord of a phrase or section occurs on the strong beat and "feminine" if it is postponed to fall on a weak beat. The masculine ending must be considered the normal one, while the feminine is preferred in more romantic styles (FE 9).

As McClary points out, in the above two sentences Willi Apel outlines widely-held Western beliefs in sexual differences (FE 10). Thus if masculine = strong, then feminine = weak. If feminine is the preferred choice for romantic styles, masculine must be the preferred choice for more rational-type styles. If the masculine ending is considered the "normal" one, then the feminine ending is considered "not-normal", abnormal?

Perhaps a more obscure, but nonetheless significant, example of gender mapping in theory, is to be found in the writings of Georg Andreas Sorge,

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And to whip the recitative line into passion, he [Monteverdi] harrowed every available musical means for tension. Declamation guided him to sudden halts and spurting cascades in rhythm, and to precipitous, intense rises and falls in melodic line.

eighteenth-century theorist. By his association of the major triad with the male sex and the minor triad with the female sex, he provides yet another instance of a hierarchy designating the powers of men and women. Sorge equates the major triad with the male, "a creature more splendid and perfect than the others of God" (quoted by McClary in FE 11).

In his *Theory of Harmony*, Arnold Schoenberg attempts to resist these polar binaries of the sexes, invoking a mode of music which is "asexual", no longer subject to the attraction and repulsion of interacting major and minor. This effort of resistance is preceded by Schoenberg's description of what it is he wishes to expunge. McClary provides this excerpt as an example of a more recent use of gender coding than that of Sorge:

The dualism presented by major and minor has the power of a symbol suggesting high forms of order: it reminds us of male and female and delimits the spheres of expression according to attraction and repulsion...The will of nature is supposedly fulfilled in them (Schoenberg quoted by McClary in FE 11).

3. McClary subsumes the third cluster of questions under the heading "gender and sexuality in musical narrative." The tonal system in the music of the masters thrived in the same climate as the ascendance of the novel and the emergence of capitalism as a dominant system. McClary refers to a statement of Schoenberg which succinctly extends to music the flavour of narrative and its attendant maleness, and its absorption of Other (FE 15).

For [our forbears] the comedy concluded with marriage, the tragedy with expiation or retribution, and musical work "in the same key." Hence, for them the choice of scale brought the obligation to treat the first tone of that scale as the fundamental, and to present it as Alpha and Omega of all that took place in the work, as the patriarchal ruler over the domain defined by its might and its will: its coat of arms was displayed at the most conspicuous points, especially at the beginning and ending. And thus they had a possibility for closing that in effect resembled a necessity (FE 15).

An outstanding example of gender-typing can be seen in the sonata narrative paradigm with its thematic areas often described in terms of a masculine opening theme and a feminine subordinate theme. In 1845 theorist A.B. Marx wrote:

The second theme, on the other hand, served as contrast to the first, energetic statement, though dependent on and determined by it. It is of a more tender nature, flexibly rather than emphatically constructed--in a way, the feminine as opposed to the preceding masculine. In this sense each of the two themes is different, and only together do they form something of a higher, more perfect order (FE 13).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The next paragraph by Marx, which McClary omits, clarifies the meaning of the first paragraph in a way which does not fit McClary's categories of male/dominant, female/subordinate.

In this sense the nature of the sonata form is founded on the *equal* stature of both themes, where the second theme is *not merely secondary*, not subordinate to the main theme, but in general demands the same attention to its construction and the same space as the first theme. Of course there is thus no question of petty measure-counting (Peter Bloom 162). [Italics mine]

Given Marx's influence as a theorist, it would be interesting to explore this presentation of two equal sonata themes. It is unfortunate that McClary ignores this important reference.



Narratologists of the Western literary tradition seek to address what they regard as one of the master tropes of contemporary criticism, namely the arousal and directing of desire. For Jacques Lacan, "desire is always displaced and deferred" (Clayton 40). For theorist Peter Brooks the "model of desire, and hence, of narrative, is based almost entirely on a male sexual paradigm" (40).

McClary compares the narrative with its hero, obstacle, and closure to the sonata procedure with its male-protagonist main theme and female-obstacle subordinate theme teleologically driven to closure in the home key. Within such a framework there are no "feminine endings."

4. The fourth method of investigation outlined by McClary examines "music as a gendered discourse." The long-standing association of music with effeminacy is evident to any teacher of music classes in the school system. Even a seven-year-old boy knows that singing is "sissy." Football, not choir, is where "it's at" for the majority of high school males.

This association is epitomized in the music and person of Charles Ives. At a conference of "Feminist Theory and Music" held in June, 1991 at the University of Minnesota, four papers were presented under the heading "Power, Masculinity and the Feminization of Music." Lawrence Kramer's paper, "Ives's Misogyny and Post-Reconstruction America," pointed out how formalist analyses treat Ives's legendary misogyny as a "private eccentricity." According to Kramer, "It is anything but that.

Ives's misogyny is an entrenched political and esthetic position" (Abstract of papers read at Feminist Theory Conference, 21).<sup>9</sup>

A number of strategies have been employed to diminish male anxiety of the feminine in music. McClary describes four retaliatory measures:

by defining music as the most ideal (that is, the least physical) of the arts; by insisting emphatically on its "rational" dimensions; by laying claim to such presumably masculine virtues as objectivity, universality, and transcendence; by prohibiting actual female participation altogether (FE 17).

In the twentieth century the reaction of Modernism to the expressive subjectivity of Romanticism is interpreted as an attempt to reclaim musical discourse for the masculine.

5. "Discursive strategies of women musicians" makes up the fifth method, referring to a variety of considered approaches women employ to promote their own music. Many women have availed themselves of opportunities within the last few decades to obtain training as composers. Some women who have downplayed their gender as a political strategy have enjoyed success. But McClary is especially drawn to women artists who like herself "are involved with examining the premises of inherited conventions" (FE 19).

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<sup>9</sup> Ives, for instance, plainly identifies the formal innovation of the Second String Quartet as an aggressive means to revitalize an "emasculated" genre: "The string quartet got more and more weak, trite, and effeminate...[I was] making those men fiddlers get up and do something like men" (21).

Having investigated a definition of FMC and the provisional methodology which McClary offers, I will turn now to a more in-depth study of McClary's work and to the task of finding an organizing mechanism that will facilitate a fairly comprehensive review of her articles without suffering from the loss of perspective to which too much detail would inevitably lead.

After an initial reading, I identified a number of recurring themes and then, upon subsequent readings, entered information relating to these themes on a database. Further readings caused me to question the separateness of my first categories, leading to a process of reduction and refinement. The following is a list in alphabetical order of that which I identified on first reading as distinct issues:

- autonomy
- binary oppositions
- chromaticism
- closure
- desire
- essentialism
- gender
- ideology
- meaning
- politics
- popular music
- semiotics
- socially contexted music
- tonality

Closer examination revealed the interdependency of many of the ideas. One of McClary's fundamental tenets is that the political dimension underpins all ideology.<sup>10</sup> Some other themes are philosophical (e.g. essentialism, binary oppositions, autonomy, socially contexted music); some refer to specific aspects of musical language (tonality, chromaticism, closure); some are procedural (e.g. semiotics "decodes" meaning), some are of particular interest to feminist theory (desire, gender); while the category of popular music reflects a rejection of "high" art music as the only proper sphere of musicological study.

The following condensed version of McClary's viewpoint is an attempt to indicate some structure and connection in her themes. McClary establishes her feminist political commitment in a number of settings:

If anyone asks, "Why are you dragging sexual politics in here?" I can only respond, "Sexual politics are already here, and they always have been. I am simply pointing them out" (Mozart's Women 73).<sup>11</sup>

Socially contexted music and autonomy in music are juxtaposed in a dichotomous relationship to depict the polar division of the two approaches McClary identifies as

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<sup>10</sup> Feminists understand the political dimension to be operant in all human interactions, both private and public. FMC is to be credited with foregrounding the issue of politics in musicological scholarship.

<sup>11</sup> In Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Moi examines the theoretical work of Annette Kolodny. Moi notes, "Kolodny even recommends that feminist criticism should be 'obliged to separate political ideologies from aesthetic judgments', since, as she puts it, political commitment may make 'dishonest' critics of us" (31). For a more detailed discussion of "how to evaluate a work of art that one finds aesthetically valuable but politically distasteful," see Moi's treatment of Myra Jehlen, pp. 80-86.

operating in the academic music world. McClary explores the topics of tonality, pitch, and chromaticism as some of the semiotic mechanisms which composers employ in signifying meaning, channeling desire, and negotiating closure. Autonomy represents the position which McClary targets as the prime ideological obstacle to the realignment of the dismal gender asymmetry so thoroughly incorporated into music history.

Having sketched a picture of McClary's work with broad, framing strokes, I will now take up smaller brushes as a means to illuminate more detail. The following section on Autonomy in Music will be made up of two parts: 1. a description of autonomy and 2. a critique of McClary's treatment of autonomy.

## AUTONOMY IN MUSIC

### 1. Description of Autonomy

The subject of autonomy in music is *the* obstacle which McClary relentlessly assaults in all of her writings.<sup>12</sup> This was the heading which amassed the most entries in my database. The Introduction to *Music and Society* provides a clarification of autonomy and its centrality to musical scholarship:

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<sup>12</sup> I was able to consult all but two of the articles published at the time of writing. They are: "The Rise and Fall of the Teleological Model in Western Music," 1987 and "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," 1982.

...the disciplines of music theory and musicology are grounded on the assumption of musical autonomy. They cautiously keep separate consideration of biography, patronage, place and dates from those of musical syntax and structure. Both disciplines likewise claim objectivity, the illusion of which is possible only when the questions considered valid are limited to those that can, in fact be answered without qualification (xiii).

In her article "The Blasphemy of Talking Politics during Bach Year," and in her four-part series, "Historical Deconstructions and Reconstructions," McClary gives a historical context for the rise of the idea of music as a "separate sphere". She first locates its origins in the need of a massing bourgeois audience to legitimize its high culture in "the 'certainty' of another, presumably more absolute realm--rather than in terms of its own social tastes and values" (Bach, *Music and Society* 15). This view gains in metaphysical status as such terms as the Schopenhauerian *will itself* are attached to it (FE 183n).

McClary finds, however, a more ancient ancestry to autonomy, extending back to Pythagoras and forward to Jean-Philippe Rameau, Heinrich Schenker, and Allen Forte (*Music and Society* 15). Pythagoras' persuasion resonates with an orientation exhibited by many contemporary music theorists:

...he [Pythagoras] inspired philosophers from the Academy to the medieval scholastics to consider music as a discipline worthy of the same intellectual rigor accorded geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic (Norton 81).

This tendency to claim for music an order derived from nature renders an aura of universality or supernaturalness to it, lifting it out of the realm of human interaction

into a realm of mystification.<sup>13</sup> McClary registers her strongest opposition to autonomy's attribution of a natural, extra-human order of things to music.

McClary is clear in stating her partisan reasons for wishing to discredit the autonomous principle of aesthetics. In her "Sexual Politics in Classical Music," she states:

I am especially concerned with deconstructing the Master Narrative of "Absolute Music" with removing that final fig leaf for open critical discussion, for I believe that it is this denial of meaning in the instrumental repertory that has systematically blocked any attempt at feminist or any other sort of socially grounded criticism (FE 55).

In "Mozart's Women" McClary writes:

Something is beautiful to one to the extent that it mirrors one's values, one's understanding of the world: the same work that I admire may be (and ought to be) loathsome to someone who finds him/herself marginalized or objectified in it (167).

The same message is reiterated in the "Bach" article:

It is only when one is dissatisfied with that music and its implicit social agenda--when, for instance, one's own voice is being silenced by its prestige and its claim to universal autonomy--that the music's ideological constructedness will become an issue: a *political* issue (Bach in *Music and Society* 17).<sup>14</sup>

In the "Terminal Prestige" paper, McClary offers the ongoing commitment to autonomy as the reason for feminist's late arrival in musicology:

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<sup>13</sup> It was Pythagoras' alleged discovery of the musical ratios found by dividing a vibrating length of string that linked music to nature.

<sup>14</sup> See a similar statement in the "Madonna" article, FE 159.

Feminism has been very late in making an appearance in music criticism, and this is largely owing to the success composers, musicologists, and theorists have had in maintaining the illusion that music is an entirely autonomous realm (73).

McClary's task to deconstruct the autonomy principle was not a difficult one. In the first place this deconstruction had been completed fairly thoroughly by musicologist John Shepherd in 1977.<sup>15</sup> McClary is well acquainted with the methods of other cultural critiques, contending as she does that "musical strategies can be handled in ways parallel to those used in the criticism of literature or the visual arts" (Pitches 83). Literary critic Gerald Graff observed the basic consensus among theorists on the matter of autonomy in his book, *The Origins of Literary Studies in America*:

If there is any point of agreement among deconstructionists, structuralists, reader-response critics, pragmatists, phenomenologists, speech-act theorists, and theroretically-minded humanists, it is on the principle that texts [substitute *musical compositions*] are not, after all, autonomous and self-contained, that the meaning of any text in itself depends for its comprehension on other texts and textualized frames of reference" (Graff 256).

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<sup>15</sup> See his Chapter 1, "Media, Social Process and Music" (pp.7-52) in *Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages*.



## 2. Critique of McClary's treatment of Autonomy

McClary rightly targets autonomy as a central point, but in virtually every discipline except music it is a very dead horse.<sup>16</sup> The whole postmodern movement and its attendant crisis in cultural authority bear witness to the death of any universal aesthetic. In 1962 Paul Ricoeur acknowledged the end of Western sovereignty when he wrote:

When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an "other" among others (quoted by Craig Owens in Hal Foster's *The Anti-Aesthetic* 57).

Are McClary's polemical lashings against autonomy still relevant? This activity would certainly be deemed anachronistic in other cultural domains. Leo Treitler has been waging a battle against "the conception of the musical entity as a closed, unified, unchanging object with its own autonomous existence, objectively describable from any interpretation of it"<sup>17</sup> for many years.<sup>18</sup> The socially grounded music critics referred to in Chapter 1, and of course many of the women

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<sup>16</sup> For an excellent discussion of the development of autonomy in literature, see Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* Chapter 1, "The Rise of English" (pp.17-53).

<sup>17</sup> See Kerman, "American Musicology in the 1990s," 138.

<sup>18</sup> See his *Music and the Historical Imagination*.

authors mentioned in Chapter 2, contributed to a rejection of the autonomy principle. One could refer to Joseph Kerman's article "American Musicology in the 1990s," where a discussion of Susan McClary is included (pp. 136-7), as an indication of the radical nature of the changes in musicology which draw their infusion of new life largely from the "pan-intellectuals" of critical theory (Kerman 132). However, it has been my observation based on attendance at conferences, personal conversations, and journal articles that many leading figures both in music theory and musicology in Canadian music departments regard the Kerman analysis with suspicion, and hold unproblematically to what they understand to be "objective" methods. The "horse" of autonomy is still alive, if somewhat wounded.

Failing to recognize their own political investments in autonomous music, many would-be critics of McClary might be troubled by the outright political nature of feminist music criticism's orientation. In scholarly writing, the zeal of one's attack is traditionally restrained and hence its oftentimes political nature is camouflaged, for the sake of preserving the "arm's length" illusion. But does openly stating one's biases remove the problem of possible conflict of interest in a politically-motivated project? Furthermore, how can one be sure that all of a writer's biases are articulated? McClary seems content simply to foreground her political agenda, a practice certainly to be preferred to concealing it. However, she fails to wrestle with the complexity of the problem of articulating one's biases. For

example, how deeply ought one to probe in stating biases? Who is the best judge of what an author's biases are?

It could be argued that McClary assumes the untenability of autonomy before her reasons to dislodge it from its place are set out. In this sense her method illustrates a "begging the question fallacy". I would suggest that McClary's political stance is irrelevant to the argument, that the autonomy principle has been demonstrated to be fatally flawed both by McClary and scores of critical theorists.

I would, however, offer some criticism of McClary's historical treatment of autonomy. McClary's interest in its historical context is reflected in her many allusions to its association with the rise of the bourgeoisie. One of her strongest points, of course, is that autonomy itself is an ideological construct of a socially-rooted time and place. The four-installment series on "Historical Deconstructions and Reconstructions," in *The Minnesota Composers Forum Newsletter* April 1982-1984, contains McClary's most extensive historical investigation of the social-economic setting of autonomy, in particular Part II, subtitled "The Roots of Alienation," and Part III, subtitled "Autonomy and Selling Out."<sup>19</sup>

McClary lays great stress upon the alienation of the artist/composer from society, seeing this split originally as a kind of defensive mechanism, serving to explain a work's lack of success with audiences, and ending in a kind of

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<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately these are the only published articles of McClary for which the format does not allow for footnotes or bibliography. Consequently her sources are unidentified.

transcendentalism which saw a concern to communicate to listeners as "selling out." This "Art for Art's Sake" slogan reified the image of the isolated, misunderstood genius, holding out the notion of a pure musical integrity which would suffer contamination by interesting itself in market receptivity. Autonomy thus served to reinforce the gap between the creators and the consumers of music.

Without wanting to detract from what is McClary's more Marxist interpretation of the artist-society interaction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I would suggest that the above articles and all other of McClary's historical treatments of autonomy suffer from their emphasis upon social-economic factors and their consequent lighter treatment of intellectual and philosophical influences. This point assumes that the two kinds of elite, economic/social and intellectual/philosophical, are not always identical. For instance, the far-reaching influence of the concepts expressed in Robert Schumann's music criticism is not so much attributable to his economic or bourgeois status as it is to the power of his ideas resonating with an intellectual elite which was not particularly economically powerful, but had access to a press.

It is in E.T.A. Hoffmann's famous "Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" of July 11, 1810 that a classic statement of autonomy was articulated.<sup>20</sup> McClary makes no reference to this epoch-making announcement. The following excerpts from Hoffmann's review highlight the central philosophical features of the review:

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in David Charlton's *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Music Writings*, pp. 234-251.

When music is spoken of as an independent art, the term can properly apply only to instrumental music, which scorns all aid, all admixture of other arts, and gives pure expression to its own peculiar artistic nature.... Music reveals to man an unknown realm, a world quite separate from the outer sensual world surrounding him, a world in which he leaves behind all feelings circumscribed by intellect in order to embrace the inexpressible (Charlton 236).

The roots of a preoccupation with musical analysis are exposed two pages later in the review:

...only the most penetrating study of the inner structure of Beethoven's music can reveal its high level of rational awareness, which is inseparable from pure genius and nourished by continuing study of the art. (Charlton 238).

Hoffmann's description of Beethoven's music as participating in "the realm of the mighty and immeasurable" (238) points to a metaphysics for instrumental music:

Beethoven's own music sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism (Charlton 238).

Carl Dahlhaus underscored the achievement of this benchmark review when he attributed to Hoffmann's outline of a romantic aesthetic the heralding of "a new era in the history of musical thought" (*Nineteenth Century Music* 91). Dahlhaus writes:

To understand music means, according to the romantic view that Hoffmann shared with Friedrich Schlegel, grasping the structure, the harmonic and thematic logic of a work, so as to be able to fathom its aesthetic meaning, a meaning that remains inaccessible to mere mindless enthusiasm (91).

In this view, autonomy is seen as a reaction to the eighteenth-century psychological aesthetic and thereby has the effect of taking it out of a continuous stream of positivistic criticism running back to Pythagoras and placing it in a more dialectical model, where current socially grounded criticism partakes more of eighteenth-century concerns for "Affections", or in McClary's terms, a semiotics of musical discourse.

Hoffmann's, Ludwig Tieck's, and Eduard Hanslick's advocacy of autonomous music are better understood as a reaction to what was seen as an outworn eighteenth-century aesthetic of feeling (Dahlhaus 92), than as more simply a bourgeois phenomenon. While clearly the expansiveness of a middle class played a key role in the changing climate of music's reception and evaluation, it must not be assumed that the bourgeoisie was a monolithic group supporting "brandname" composers and becoming willing victims to new marketing procedures. On the contrary, they maintained their allegiance to the eighteenth-century aesthetic of feeling while their more esoteric counterparts--the Hanslicks, Schopenhauers, and Nietzsches--preached a more ineffable doctrine:

...here, in the age of "art as religion," the quintessence of art was seen to reside in absolute instrumental music, divorced from texts, extramusical functions, and clearly defined emotions (Dahlhaus 92).

McClary's treatment of autonomy registers little of the breadth or historical complexity which surrounds the subject. The major discussion generated by the

autonomy principle reflects its centrality in each of McClary's papers while pointing at the same time to a need for more penetrating analysis of the concept. Having neither exhausted this subject nor engaged fully in a critique, I will nevertheless turn now to the alternative position in the polarities McClary offers, the social contextedness of music, which is where her sympathies lie.

### SOCIALLY CONTEXTED MUSIC

The opposite pole to autonomous music is socially contexted music. One could describe it in terms of what autonomous music is not: it does not privilege instrumental music; it allows for no metaphysics, ineffability, or Utopian transcendence; it claims no universality; it dismisses objectivity as a much-discredited myth, opting instead for recognition of a subject's biases in any investigation; it acknowledges the essentially social character of music, thus making way for the articulation of meaning in music. Music rooted in society restores human ownership to music, demystifies it, and in so doing makes possible the deciphering of its messages both past and present.

The grounding of music in a social dimension renders its discourse a human construct and thereby dislodges any insistence on the supremacy of Western art music on the basis of appeals to metaphysics, or a "natural" order. This approach allows for an investigation of the ideology behind the promotion of an autonomy

principle in the first place. The expressive qualities of music can be admitted and explored. The exclusiveness of "high" art music can be challenged--its refusal of access to women, popular genres, and non-Western music.

Approaches of socially contexted music are in keeping with the postmodern challenge to the cultural hegemony of the Western art tradition. As such they draw upon the insights of critical theory and keep abreast of current inter-disciplinary scholarship. Advocates of autonomy tend to isolate themselves from the inter-disciplinary methods which seek to diminish barriers both between the various disciplines and the artificial academic/popular categories.

It is McClary's concern to map the above characteristics of socially grounded criticism onto music from a feminist perspective. In this operation she stands out as a pioneer and expert. The following examination of McClary's methods and illustrations is not confined to material in any particular article. It has been produced from my database, which was built around the themes listed earlier in this chapter. In this sense the following overview can be described as a construction of McClary's arguments, a distillation of what I perceive to be her emphases.

While each of her articles focuses on a specific topic, understandably none is exhaustive in its treatment of the social contextedness of music. It is primarily in McClary's introductions, such as the ones found in *Music and Society* and *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, and her own book, *Feminine Endings*, also in her afterword to Jacques Attali's *Noise, The Political Economy of Music*, that one finds more



concentrated discussions of the debate about autonomous versus socially-contextualized music.

In her attempt to extricate meaning in music, McClary employs a number of strategies. Her first mission was to discredit thoroughly the autonomy principle which denied meaning apart from any intrinsic formal relationships. It was necessary to establish that music could refer to something outside of itself. With this task accomplished it was possible to address the mechanisms which coded musical meaning.

The workings of the diatonic system encompass the field within which meaning is primarily produced. This is not to suggest that atonal music has no meaning. Instead this assumption serves not to privilege tonal music over any other variety, but rather to recognize that it is a tonal vocabulary which informs musical signification in Western societies whether found in a simple child's Raffi tune, a string quartet, or a pop tune. The study of non-Western musics has traditionally been the work of ethnomusicologists.<sup>21</sup>

While tonality may provide the overarching schema within which various musical mechanisms function, tonality must not be understood as some kind of white playing field upon which diverse meanings are enacted. On the contrary, embedded

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<sup>21</sup> The implied exemption of Western music from ethnomusicology suggests that Western music is not "ethno", but is the standard by which all else is measured. The separate class of Western music has often been understood to be a transcendent one, universal in scope.

within tonality itself are some fundamental assumptions which point to political, gender, and economic overtones. McClary describes tonality's characteristics as an expression of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment bourgeoisie: "its goal orientation, obsessive control of greater and greater spans of time, its willful striving, delayed gratification and defiance of norms" ("Bach" in *Music and Society* 58). The tonic and its attendant themes that reign over all other key regions has been traditionally likened to a male protagonist ("Sexual Politics in Classical Music" in FE 64). The tonal idiom that defines "degrees of tension/release, stability/instability, directionality/closure" has been effective in favouring a male perspective in such a way as to obscure its own devices. The intrinsically teleological dimension of tonality coupled with its "rule-bound harmonic syntax that...seems rational, controlled, and progressive" ("A Musical Dialectic from the Enlightenment" 134) expresses the "values of upwardly mobile bourgeoisie" (135).

Inter-connected within the discourse of tonality are commonly understood musical mechanisms such as pitches, chromaticism, and closure which McClary uses to demonstrate how the syntax of harmony channels desire and defines gender behaviour. Since the topics of closure, desire, and gender are very significant ones in the wider domain of cultural theory, it comes as no surprise to find them occurring in a feminist criticism of music.

In order to provide a framework and context for a discussion of these issues which will avoid the problem of vague generalities without a context, I have chosen

to use McClary's article, "A Musical Dialectic from the Enlightenment: Mozart's *Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, Movement 2*," as a point of departure which will serve to supply specific examples. Mozart's concerto supplies an instance of "absolute" music, a well-recognized formal structure, and a typical embodiment of tonality which employs pitches, key regions, and closure creating a narrative format.

It is not by accident that McClary chooses the music of Mozart for her cultural critique. The iconic status which Mozart's music has held over the years renders it particularly impervious to associating it with social influences of any century. McClary notes that the movie *Amadeus* demonstrates that one may perhaps demystify the man, but that the music itself is beyond critique" (130).

McClary commences her analytical procedure by introducing the tools whereby she will reveal the meaning embedded in Mozart's concerto:

As is the case with any semiotic discourse, meaning in music is produced in part through the use of codes (specific repertoires of gestures, rhetorical device, associations, and so on) shared by both composer and presumably listeners-codes that assume, acknowledge, affirm, and reinforce the social bonds among them (131).

McClary is careful to point out that meaning does not inhere in the music but is there only by social agreement. Thus a certain configuration of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic elements would convey the emotions of anger, fear, or joy.

Composers of movie music have great expertise in handling musical codes. These

codes are not permanent in any sense but are subject to changes in association over time.

A second way in which meaning is produced is "through the use of formal procedures that are accepted in the musical community as norms or conventions" (132). The ways in which components of music design are manipulated in a piece represent a type of social practice. Adherence to accepted normal formal functioning constitutes order.

Instances of departure from these norms qualify as noise...A piece of music therefore can be perceived as a dialectic between order and noise, a strategic model of how violence or deviance may be tolerated and channeled within a given social framework (133).<sup>22</sup>

McClary goes on to discuss conventions of the eighteenth-century musical style, namely tonality, sonata procedure, and concerto format. Having referred earlier to some implications of tonality, I shall draw attention only to those features unique to McClary's interpretation of the sonata and concerto forms. In describing the role of the second theme, McClary uses the feminist and theoretical term "Other," where the theme and key are "often presented as a kind of threat to the identity of the first, but ultimately that threat is controlled by being assimilated, absorbed into the key area of the first theme" (136).

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<sup>22</sup> The order/noise dichotomy is used throughout Attati's book, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*.

The concerto form can be seen as a spectacle enacting "the dramatic tensions between individual and society, surely one of the major problematics of the emerging middle class" (138). A reading of Mozart's application of these models, i.e. his resistance to them or acceptance of them, conveys something of the composer's position in such matters as, for example, freedom and order.

Without trying to duplicate McClary's analysis, I shall attempt to highlight those features which depart from traditional analysis but are characteristic of McClary. The opening ritornello five-measure phrase of Figure 1 which McClary designates "motto", is left unanswered by any

Figure 1: Piano Entry, Mozart *Concerto K. 453*



consequent phrase. This unusual dangling feeling, produced by the phrase's ending on the dominant followed by a rest with a pause over it, has the effect of giving it a prominence in the listeners' memory, a kind of open-ended question to be dealt with later. McClary refers to a common technique of depicting "lamentation, grief, or serious contemplation" in Baroque music in which "a pulsating rhythm over a slowly moving harmonic pattern" was employed (143). This connection with the "sacred music of the Baroque" suggests "serious, introverted contemplation--even

prayer" (143). The remainder of the ritornello section is described as "stereotypical" Mozart, "secular, extroverted, gracious". A return to the opening motto precedes the cadence.

The entry of the solo piano takes up the serious motto and, like the orchestra, leaves it in an unresolved state. Unlike the orchestra, however, the piano reels off in a different direction from the mood of the orchestra. McClary interprets this move on the part of the soloist in this manner:

...it [the soloist] has situated itself as "Other," rather than collaborator, with respect to the orchestra's narrative. This means either that the soloist will have to be brought under the control of the orchestral forces or else that the conventions of formal closure will have to be suspended... With the former option, the identity of the individual would suffer; but with the latter, nothing less is at stake than the foundation of social order (147).

The re-assimilation of the piano into the orchestra at the closing of the exposition may be seen "on the part of the piano as rehabilitation, as selling out, or as ironic over-statement" (148).

In the development section McClary describes the orchestra's music as attempting to console the piano, which shows its resistance by moving into more remote key regions, until it settles on a G# major triad, a note just a semi-tone away from the tonic, G, but functionally one of its furthest extremes. "From the point of view of tonal norms, the piano has retreated to a position of the most extreme irrationality, and normal tonal logic cannot really be marshalled to salvage it" (149).

There is no typical standing on the dominant here. In an unconventional move, "the orchestra seizes this remote key and forces it...back to the tonic and the opening motto" (150). The controlling manoeuvres of the recapitulation could be interpreted as showing "the authoritarian force that social convention will draw upon if confronted by recalcitrant nonconformity" (151).

The prayer motto is resisted by both orchestra and piano initially, but later functions as a means of reconciling both parties under a religious or "transcendental principle". McClary interprets this embracing of the motto in the following way:

The individual and social norms are required to submit to some higher order...for the purpose of satisfying the necessities of tonality and sonata procedure, both of which conventionally stand for the quite specifically secular and bourgeois principles of the rational achievement of goals through purposeful striving (159).

A marked political shift in tone occurs when McClary raises the perspective of the nonconformist individual who must always be purged in this kind of predetermined formulaic narrative. It is in this marginalized space that she situates women.<sup>23</sup>

While McClary lays great stress on the concept of closure in the Mozart article, a number of other articles serve to illustrate more dramatically the interconnection of closure with chromaticism, the channeling of desire, and the feminine. This web of themes plays a central role in at least seven of the papers

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<sup>23</sup> "Roland Barthes...made the margin into the productive space and gave it to the lover, the individual and the self-aware" (Janet Todd 88).

published. McClary's introduction to Clément's *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* outlines the interaction of these musical devices with the feminine.<sup>24</sup>

The choice of opera as an object of FMC has the advantage of being a medium where clearly a text and the presence of singers on a stage leave no doubt that the representation of gender is an issue. While the plot and dialogue form a backdrop for the music, just as in much rock music, it is not the verbal message which is all-determining. Frequently operas are presented in languages largely foreign to an audience.<sup>25</sup>

The topics of closure and desire with their inherent sexual nature are a source of major discussion in literature and film studies. Susan McClary must be acknowledged as one of the first music critics to engage in criticism which takes these matters into account in a central way.<sup>26</sup> If her work strikes one as disturbing

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<sup>24</sup> For the depiction of women in opera, see also: "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music" FE pp. 35-52, "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen," FE, pp. 80-111, and "Mozart's Women". See bibliography for full references.

<sup>25</sup> Plot summaries, and more recently translated captions, are employed to offset this difficulty. However, language barriers have not been serious obstacles to the enjoyment of opera where music, costuming, and sets make up a large part of the attraction.

<sup>26</sup> The prior work of John Shepherd dealing with the representation of gender in music can be found particularly in his article "Music and Male Hegemony," reprinted in Leppert and McClary's *Music and Society*. Feminist music criticism coming from a male has possibly not been taken as seriously as from someone like McClary. This irony is addressed by Elaine Showalter in "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminists and The Woman of The Year."



in the context of traditional musicology, it pales beside more radical studies such as Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Armstrong's study "considers the history of the British novel as the history of sexuality" (14).

McClary's and Armstrong's work represents but the tip of an iceberg in recent writings which have begun to explore the role of desire in narrative.<sup>27</sup> What unites these authors is the hope "to use the exploration of desire as a way to move beyond formalism" (Clayton 34). Another feature which unites these critics is their emphasis on violence. Teresa de Lauretis is one of McClary's primary sources along with Clayton in her investigation of the tracing of desire in music. De Lauretis also associates narrative with violence, but inheres the violence within the narrative structure itself (De Lauretis, *Alice* 104-5). Both McClary and de Lauretis draw from Laura Mulvey's now classic article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," where Mulvey associates voyeurism with sadism, which in turn "fits in well with narrative":

Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end (Mulvey 22).

Well informed of the attention which "desire" has received in critical theory, McClary incorporates this emphasis into her music criticism.

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<sup>27</sup> In his article "Narrative and Theories of Desire" Jay Clayton lists eighteen authors from this group, names such as Roland Barthes, Peter Brooks, Luce Irigaray, Fredric Jameson, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Leo Bersani.

Another much-heralded subject of cultural analysis is that of closure.<sup>28</sup> One of McClary's sources on this topic has been D.A. Miller's *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Miller equates closure with the text's need for control:

In Jane Austen, for example, what motivates the narratability of a story coincides with what the novelist strongly disapproves of (waywardness, flirtation), and what motivates closure is associated with her most important official values (settlement, moral insight, and judgment) (Miller xiv).

McClary employs this interpretation in her critique of opera.

A very simplified synopsis of a feminist critique of opera would proceed along these lines: tonal syntax is capable of setting up the desire, or intense longing for cadence, or closure. Insofar as the protagonist associated with the tonic is male, and the obstacle/other associated with the key regions to be brought under control is female, a potentially violent scenario is set up in which the conquest of the foreign key region/female/other is desired and in effect, demanded, by the formal requirements of tonality. The female enacts a postponement of closure/death by avoiding the tonic and dwelling in the gaps of chromaticism. This chromaticism is thereby a threat to the male protagonist who must demonstrate his mastery through affirming the tonic in cadence/death of the female. The woman who refuses the

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<sup>28</sup> See Marianna Torgovnick's overview of closure in the introduction to her book, *Closure in the Novel*. She locates renewed interest in narrative endings with the publication of Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

rational control of music's formal procedures is depicted as mad and typically displays her madness in high, shrieking, irrational embellishments.<sup>29</sup> The female is typically cast in the role of virgin or whore.

McClary illustrates these practices in operas as diverse as Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Strauss' *Salome*. McClary seems particularly attracted to the character Carmen, and sees this opera's narrative plot and its music as paradigmatic.<sup>30</sup> The virgin/whore dichotomy is not long in establishing itself in the opera. Micaëla, the choice of Don José's mother for her son, fulfills the virgin role:

Her musical discourse accordingly is simple, lyrical, sweet: as she sings to José.., her melody lines are diatonic.., her rhythms innocent of physicality (*Sexual Politics*, FE 57).<sup>31</sup>

By contrast Carmen's music employs a gypsy-like rhythm of exotic dance. Her swinging body, seductive rhythms, and deviant chromatics mark her as a victim (57). We may remember Carmen's compelling music but it is José's music that is on the

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of madness depicted in music, see McClary's "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen," FE, pp. 80-111.

<sup>30</sup> McClary's full-length book on Bizet's *Carmen* is currently in press at the time of writing.

<sup>31</sup> McClary discusses *Carmen* in some detail in her foreword to Clément, but writes more in generalities. She provides a fuller analysis of *Carmen* in "Sexual Politics in Classical Music" FE: 53-79.

side of "universal" order.<sup>32</sup> His music is devoted to "lofty sentiments rather than to the body" (59).

...despite the undeniably greater popular appeal of the gypsy dances, the musical conventions regulating structure turn out to reside on the side of the unfortunate white, male, high-art "victim," whose duty it is finally to purge all traces of the exotic and chromatic, to restore social and musical order *at any cost* (61).

The message of the bourgeois concern for stability, negotiated within the noise/order polarities, is once again played out in music. The patriarchal order must prevail, while the female either plays out her proper submissive/passive role or is purged.

The resistance of Madonna to the virgin/whore categorization is addressed in McClary's "Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly" (FE 148-166). This seductive temptress is determined not to suffer the fate of the Marilyn Monroes, Lulus, Carmens, and Salomes. As writer and producer of many of her own songs and scripts she "masterminds" her own endings.<sup>33</sup> McClary highlights Madonna's manipulation and refusal of closure in her music pointing out that:

Madonna is as much an expert in the arena of musical signification as de Lauretis is in theoretical discourse. It seems clear that she has grasped the assumptions embedded within these basic musical mechanisms and is audaciously redirecting them (161).

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<sup>32</sup> I wonder if the strength and beauty of Carmen's music and the singer's voice don't somehow question José's ultimate triumph. Does not the fact that it is Carmen's music that keeps ringing in one's ears suggest that her voice has prevailed?

<sup>33</sup> Mulvey notes "A feminist perspective should insist on the possibility of change without closure, drawing by analogy on the female Oedipus complex, the crucible out of which sexual identity does not emerge as pure gold" (175).

Without having exhausted McClary's materials, I have presented what I think is a fair overview of the key ideas in her publications. It is now time to consider a critical assessment of McClary's work.

### CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF MCCLARY'S WORK

One obvious source to consult for an evaluation of an author's writings is published critical reviews. A simple count of the number of book reviews is often an indication of the books potential importance regardless of the reviewers' judgement. By this standard Leppert and McClary's *Music and Society* was taken very seriously. It is too early to count the reviews of *Feminine Endings*, having just been published in 1991. Some of the reviews I did consult impressed me with the narrowness of their grasp of McClary's total output. For this reason I have chosen to consult my file of McClary reviews after producing my own assessment, rather than be influenced by their more limited focus.

I have selected five areas of McClary's work which, in my opinion, would benefit from more in-depth investigation: 1. Epistemology, 2. History, 3. Semiotics, 4. Polarities, and 5. Essentialism.

## 1. Epistemology

In identifying the autonomy principle as the prime culprit in preventing feminist inroads into musicology, McClary could be seen as engaging a mighty warrior rather than the chieftain. A more fundamental disagreement of feminism is with what has come to be accepted as normative epistemological methods: the reifying of objectivity or any other methodology which excludes from its observations "itself". To conservative musicologists unaffected by the Copernican dimensions of feminism, McClary may appear to be a radical. However in taking aim at the product--autonomy with its positivistic and formalist methods--McClary is, in my view, not being radical enough. The processes whereby knowledge is produced need themselves to be objects of ongoing scrutiny. The concept of autonomous music is a product of epistemological processes which must be called into question.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. History

It is in the area of history that I believe McClary reveals her most serious shortcomings. It is certainly academically fashionable to "deconstruct" the position

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<sup>34</sup> The feminist historian, Joan Scott, describes this radical approach: A more radical feminist politics...addresses questions of epistemology, relativizes the status of all knowledge, links knowledge and power, and theorizes these in terms of the operations of difference (*Gender and the Politics of History* 4).

Scott regards the categories of gender, class, and race as hierarchies.

of one's opponents, and by unmasking the contradictions inherent in the autonomy principle, McClary has been successful in this operation. However, in using the tools of deconstruction, McClary addresses only superficially what I regard as a more convincing approach, namely the historical. Given also the general lack of awareness of deconstruction and other critical methods among musicologists and music theorists, an historical investigation might be more politically effective in gaining sympathy for a more socially grounded emphasis.

McClary never really offers an historical account of the development of autonomy in music.<sup>35</sup> She assumes its underlying importance without examining in the first place the conditions--social and ideological--which gave rise to it. She writes:

The central assumption underlying this view [the alienation of the artist from society which forces the choice "between artistic and economic suicide"] is that music and the other arts ought to be detached from social and economic influences. Upon this central assumption (hereafter referred to as the Autonomy Principle) are based our mutually exclusive categories of High/Low Art and commercial/non-commercial music, the slogan of "Art for Art's Sake", and the all-too-familiar phenomenon of the artist struggling in self-imposed exile from social and economic institutions ("Autonomy and Selling Out", no pagination).

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<sup>35</sup> In "Historical Deconstructions and Reconstruction III. Autonomy and Selling Out", McClary notes:

It is not necessary at this time to go through a lengthy historical expose of the origins and development of the Autonomy Principle. Suffice it to say, however, that it is yet another ideological premise of the 19-century German tradition--designed to support such outmoded programs as transcendental art and cultural colonization (no pagination).

It seems ironic that in the process of doing "historical deconstruction", McClary assumes uncritically that which she most urgently needs to investigate historically, namely the Autonomy Principle itself. Such a foundational principle cannot be accepted simply as "yet another ideological premise of the 19th-century German tradition."

Fortunately, someone has done the equivalent of an "historical deconstruction" of the Autonomy Principle. In his book *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Carl Dahlhaus investigates minutely the historical development of absolute music. McClary makes repeated references to Dahlhaus' *Nineteenth-Century Music*, but seems does not refer to his section on "The Metaphysic of Instrumental Music" (pp. 88-96), which forms a brief summary of some of the concepts dealt with more extensively in *The Idea of Absolute Music*. Both books appeared in English for the first time in 1989, and so it is odd that McClary would have overlooked such a critically relevant book, given the otherwise admirable sweep of her reading.<sup>36</sup>

Without indulging in the temptation to re-create Dahlhaus' historicizing of autonomous music, I must nonetheless highlight a few of his points, not the least of which is a quotation which grounds absolute music in a very non-metaphysical setting:

What may seem obvious today, as though indicated in the nature of the thing--that music is a sounding phenomenon and nothing more,

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<sup>36</sup> An earlier book by Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, published in English translation in 1983, is also important to the subject.



that a text is therefore considered an "extramusical" impetus--proves to be a historically molded theorem no more than two centuries old.

Understanding the historical character of the idea serves two purposes: first, to prepare for the insight that what has come about historically can also be changed again; second, to understand more precisely the nature of today's predominant conception of music by becoming aware of its origins i.e., the assumptions that underlie it, and of the background against which it sets itself off (Absolute Music 8).

If, as Dahlaus indicates, the idea of absolute/autonomous music is a "theorem no more than two centuries old", how does this statement vie with McClary's that "music has a much longer history of claiming autonomy from social practice--indeed a history that can be traced at least as far back as Pythagoras and the discovery of a correspondence between harmonious tones and numerical proportions"? ("Bach" in *Music and Society* 15). McClary's source for this information is Richard Norton's *Tonality in Western Culture*, pp. 80-104. Norton traces the history of "physical determinism" in music to the Pythagorean principle of *harmonia*, by which it is understood that music was "realized from that world by virtue of its very physical essence, its constitutive substance" (Norton 84). Rameau's and Schenker's views of tonality as a "natural" system are expressions of a more modern *physical determinism*.

Norton states that "this book is an argument against the physical determinist view of tonality" (99). While Norton acknowledges Plato's responsibility in transmitting much of what is known about Pythagoras (82), he passes over the other two parts of Plato's triumvirate: *rhythmos* and *logos*. Without denying the

importance of the mathematical or scientific dimensions whereby a Greek scale was considered to be a symbol of celestial order, it must also be recognized that this *harmonia* was only a part of the picture. *Logos*, or "language as the expression of human reason," was equally important. Dahlhaus stressed that *logos* was necessary for music to be whole or complete. "Music without language was therefore reduced, its nature constricted: a deficient type or mere shadow of what music actually is" (*Absolute Music* 8). It would seem that Norton's conclusions were based on the privileging of *harmonia* over *logos*. McClary's historical reconstruction is consequently also called into question.

Another historically related weakness of McClary's "Historical Deconstructions" is her treatment of the bourgeois class as a homogeneous group. By attaching the autonomy principle to the middle class unproblematically, McClary ignores the complexity of the issue. It was not until the highly publicized Hanslick-Wagner split, representing the absolute/programmatic debate, that a strictly formalist interpretation of music spread to bourgeois readers. The famous 1810 review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by E.T.A. Hoffmann, which located music's value in its structure and the "yearning" it evoked, did not receive immediate and widespread acceptance. In the early nineteenth century it would be more accurate to describe a quite opposite picture of bourgeois conviction: "bourgeois thought held instrumental music without purpose, concrete concept, or object to be insignificant and empty" (*Absolute Music* 6). It would seem that the bourgeois were reluctant to relinquish

their eighteenth-century attachments to the doctrine of affections and the belief in music's role to reinforce moral values.

McClary glides past the absolutist/programmatic debate in the following quotation, seemingly unaware of its centrality to her autonomy argument:

Experts (usually composers such as Schumann, Berlioz, or Wagner posing as reviewers) disagreed widely about what was important--the absolutist/programmatic dispute was one result--but they provided the potential audience with consumer guides (Historical Deconstructions II Roots of alienation, no pagination).

It is this very "autonomy versus social contextedness" dichotomy that so engages

McClary which is at the heart of the battle between "formalists" and "estheticians of content" of nineteenth-century romanticism. The classic manifesto was articulated in Hoffmann's Beethoven review, and Eduard Hanslick championed the cause eschewing extra-musical association in favour of the form as spirit and the spirit as form (Absolute Music 39).

### 3. Semiotics

McClary recognizes in semiotics the possibility of providing a link between music and meaning. She states:

One of the principal tasks of feminist music criticism would be to examine the semiotics of desire, arousal, and sexual pleasure that circulate in the public sphere through music (FE 9).

Again she writes:

Thus understanding Mozart's piece as a social text requires reconstructing the semiotic codes and the formal conventions within and against which the piece is articulated ("A Musical Dialectic" 134).

Nowhere does McClary explain what system of semiotics she is using. Presumably by Peirce's definition she is using sign as a "symbol in which the signifier's relation to the thing signified is completely arbitrary and conventional" (Richter 848).

However, in drawing upon, for example, the eighteenth-century doctrine of affections as "an area of inquiry that strongly resembles semiotics" ("Dialectic" 134), McClary runs the risk of oversimplifying interactions that are somewhat more involved. One wonders about the need for recourse to semiotics in associating "major with affirmative affective states (hope, joy) and minor with negative states (sadness, depression)" ("This Is Not a Story My People Tell," FE 142).

In his *Theory of Semiotics*, Umberto Eco challenges the one-to-one communication between producer and receiver:

The multiplicity of subcodes which runs through a culture shows how the same message can be decoded from many points of view, in recurring within different systems of conventions. Thus for a given signifier, we can perceive the basic denotation attributed to it by the producer, yet we may also assign it different connotations, because the receiver [in decoding it] follows a path that is not the same as the path set by the code that the producer used as his reference [in producing it] (Eco quoted by Nattiez 21).

This possibility for multiplicity of interpretations would be all the greater when non-texted music is played to receivers of widely varied backgrounds. Despite the commonality of tonal language, differences in gender, ethnicity, age, and musical literacy would influence the message received. Work on the semiotics of music is still at too early a stage to apply it unproblematically.

#### 4. Polarities

McClary's whole presentation is built upon the fundamental dichotomy of autonomy and socially contexted criticism. These two opposite concepts form organizing poles throughout her writing. McClary is very aware of the problems associated with the use of binary oppositions, which she describes as "the kind of oppositions that structuralists such as Saussure and Lévi-Strauss revealed as lying at the foundations of Western thought" ("This is not a Story My People Tell," FE 141). Traditionally feminists have distanced themselves from this kind of thinking.<sup>37</sup> Susan Bordo, in her article "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," addresses this issue in detail. Would McClary's dependence on these polarities represent an instance of her speaking in "male drag"?

...it is only if a woman agrees to speak in male drag--that is, if she relinquishes her right to observe and write from a female point of

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Laurie Anderson's "O Superman" involves a play on the notion of binary oppositions, using two triads in such a way that their normal structural importance is confused (142).

view--that she is permitted into the profession at all (Mozart's Women 14).

In his article, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," Craig Owens relates binary opposition to postmodern thinking. He quotes Lyonard's observation, "Thinking by means of oppositions does not correspond to the liveliest modes of postmodern knowledge [*le savoir postmoderne*]" (62). The challenge for McClary might be "how to conceive difference without opposition"(62).

## 5. Essentialism

One of the thorniest issues in current feminist theory is the essentialist debate. Margaret Simons and Jessica Benjamin in "Simone de Beauvoir: An Interview" supply a definition for essentialism:

It takes the biological difference between the woman and the man and makes it an *essential* difference. It takes an experience such as maternity, or such as the woman's relationship with her body, and makes this biological given the center of her existence, of a woman's culture (342).

McClary is clear about her position vis-à-vis this debate:

...women can choose to write music that foregrounds their sexual identities without falling prey to essentialist traps (FE 33).

I do not believe in essentialism, and thus do not think that women compose differently automatically by sheer virtue of being female ("Toward a Feminist Criticism of Music" 16).

An understanding of gender as being socially constructed and variable as opposed to being biologically determined informs this debate.

As McClary is drawn into accentuating difference in males and females in order to strengthen certain arguments, her non-essentialist stance becomes less convincing. Wanting to underscore the contrast between men's and women's reception of music, she comes dangerously close to falling into the "essentialist trap" herself. In recounting responses of students to Janika Vandervelde's *Genesis II*, McClary notes:

Usually the two groups gaze at one another in bleak disbelief, as though they have just discovered that they are irreconcilably of different species (Getting Down off the Beanstalk, FE 124).

McClary seems to be aware of the fine line she is walking and in fact brings the matter to the reader's attention:

Another problem with *Genesis II* is that it may encourage essentialist readings: to map femininity onto nature, cycles, and timeless stability and masculinity onto culture, linear time, and agency is to risk reinscribing these associations that very much need to be interrogated and resisted (Beanstalk FE 131).

Having raised some areas of weakness or ambiguity in McClary's work, my overall assessment remains very positive. The strength of her contribution lies in the courageousness of her confrontation with fundamental assumptions which, by and large, musicologists, theorists, and critics would prefer not to talk about. While I

regard strict adherence to sexual paradigms in musical narrative along with similar interpretations in literary criticism as limiting, I share none of the acrimony which Pieter van den Toorn exhibited in his "Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory".<sup>38</sup>

McClary is to be credited for more than just courage. Her writing tools are well-honed--the style is always engaging. Her grasp of such a wide range of critical writing, along with her extensive expertise in musicology, provide a model of the breadth of skills and knowledge required to engage in contemporary critical scholarship.

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<sup>38</sup> It is a great temptation to respond to van den Toorn's article as he seems to misunderstand McClary on a number of points. For example, nowhere does McClary attack the "male sex drive" as being perverse. No viable reading of McClary's work could substantiate van den Toorn's statement that "to be a male as distinct from a female is to be a *sexist*" (291). Ruth Solie's response to van den Toorn in the following issue of *Journal of Musicology*, did not address van den Toorn's criticisms of McClary--"...my purpose here is not to come to her defense (she needs no such help from me)" (39). Instead Solie provided an excellent rebuttal to van den Toorn's more general arguments.



## CHAPTER 4

### SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS

#### ACHIEVEMENTS OF FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM

The fact that feminist music criticism's appearance on the critical landscape is so recent renders it vulnerable to the charge of a lack of refinement, a quality that can often come only from the accumulation of a critical mass of writing and intensive debate. By the standards of other types of cultural criticism, the literature of FMC is still sparse. However the quantity of its publications is not the only means of measuring the impact of FMC. FMC questions the very assumptions upon which centuries of musical composition, performance, history, and theory are based--presumption of an objectivist base of structuralist/autonomy approaches to music theory; assumptions about the maleness and mystery of genius; prescriptions about the proper sphere of male/female musical activity which have privileged the male; and assumptions of women's inability to contribute significantly to music.

Documentation of the blatant discrimination against women in music seriously challenges the notions of scholarly neutrality and objectivity so widely claimed by academic music study. Resituating "great" music into a specific social-historical

setting calls into question the other-worldliness and pseudo-religious attributes of what has become an all male musical canon. FMC has highlighted the implications of such expressions as "masterpiece," and "the music of man." The automatic exclusion of women assumed by such titles leaves little room for a study based on any kind of gender-neutral, universal criteria.

Susan McClary has built upon the base of twenty years of women's research into their past, work which has established women's historical place in music and identified the practices which constrained women's full participation in music. In drawing upon critical theory in conjunction with feminist theory, McClary has injected a powerful dimension into feminist music criticism, pioneering a standard the breadth and penetration of which is of the highest quality.

## CHALLENGES FOR FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM

While acknowledging both the impressive developments within FMC and the still early stage of its production, I think it is very much within the interests of FMC to address any deficiencies and to point to directions for further investigation. It should be noted here that the general nature of this engagement with FMC and the limitations of space preclude any comprehensive critique of FMC. In having to choose between a more thorough list-like approach examining large and small issues in an undifferentiated manner, and a less exhaustive but more focused approach, I

chose the latter. With this understanding in mind, I will explore four areas in feminist musicology which, in my opinion, would benefit from clarification and perhaps even, significant revision. These areas are:

1. questionable assumptions within the archival work of historians of women in music.
2. implications of reliance on polarities.
3. the problem of mediation in representation.
4. the enigma of a politicized aesthetics.

My responses to these four areas, based upon material from the first three chapters, comprise some preliminary conclusions to this study. All of these areas are problematized less as weaknesses within FMC itself than as new challenges to assumptions underlying positivist research in general, challenges which open up the field to multiple answers, if not always tidy ones.

This discussion will be followed by some insights into the possible future directions of FMC. Given the fundamentally political nature of feminist criticism, I will consider some strategies which might be effective in introducing the subject to a wider audience.

### 1. Questionable Assumptions

The need to revise the historical record to take into account the contributions of women is a basic tenet of all branches of feminism. Chapter 2 offered an overview of

just such a process in music. In conjunction with the archival activities which seek to restore knowledge of women's traditions is the articulation of the reasons for women's invisibility in standard histories. Women's silence and absence is seen as the result of oppression from the patriarchal system which pervaded every institution from the family to the state. Documenting women's disadvantages in terms of their confined social expectations, education, and economics is an important dimension of feminist research.

An apparent contradiction arises when, on the one hand, historical research highlights the considerable achievements of women in an effort to disprove the patriarchal pronouncement that women are incapable of any but the biological variety of creativity, while on the other hand, it depicts women as victims of an oppressive regime in which men defined the boundaries of female behaviour.

Any depiction of women which favours a uni-dimensional portrait, such as the "woman as victim," suffers from a different confinement--not from patriarchy this time, but from feminist zeal. Just as contemporary women can look at Hollywood representations of their sex and fail to see any likeness of themselves, so also women placed in a different historical setting from ours might question recent representations of their constrained existence by modern feminists and fail to see any likeness to themselves. It is not enough to explain away their different viewpoint by saying that women who deny or are unable to recognize their subordinate status have simply absorbed the prevailing male standards. Such a response merely begs the question.

Without abandoning analysis of those conditions which have been clearly unfavourable to the realizing of women's potential, it must be recognized that women have responded to their environments in diverse ways, sometimes more on the basis of their class or ethnic definition, for example, than their gender definition.

Because women have been excluded from the public arenas of power does not negate their exercise of power from different quarters. Perhaps this dilemma of representing women as oppressed while at the same time demonstrating women as active creative agents, is solved to some extent by distinguishing between the symbolic representation of gender (constrained stereotypes of women) and actual experience, where one finds women making laudable achievements.<sup>1</sup> Clearly the relationship between stereotypes and experience is one of significant complexity. No present model seems adequate to account for this entanglement.

## 2. Implications of Polarities

Much ink has been spilled on the subject of binary oppositions as it relates to feminist critique. The dichotomies of male/female, mind/body, culture/nature, reason/emotion, etc., are viewed by feminists as products of Cartesian, male epistemologies which have worked to the disadvantage of women. In fact, all of the oppositions could be seen as collapsing onto the one grand metaphor of male/female, where the term male stands in for mind, culture, reason, and the female term stands in

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Dr. Beverly Diamond for this insight.

for body, nature, and emotion. Robin Morgan typifies this position in her book, *Going too Far*:

I've learned that the "either/or" dichotomy is inherently, classically patriarchal. It is the puerile insistence on compartmentalization (art versus science, intelligence versus passion, etc.) that I abhor...And it is the inclusiveness of the feminist vision, the balance, the *gestalt*, the refusal to settle for parts of a completeness, that I love passionately (16).

However resistant feminist methodology may be to this kind of exclusionary thinking, feminists frequently fall into the polarity trap themselves. Susan McClary's positioning of autonomy versus socially-contexted music is such an example. How then can one identify sides--certainly a very necessary operation in feminists' battle against patriarchy--without engaging in polarities? The whole feminist agenda is itself based on the binary opposition of feminism and patriarchy. To be "correct" from this feminist perspective would entail never taking sides.

Perhaps this dilemma could be solved by recognizing binary oppositions as one expression of logical argumentation, available for argumentation by either gender. On the other hand, more consistency from feminists who resist thinking based on polar opposites would require a recognition of the instability or incompleteness of each side on its own. Historian Joan Scott refers instead to the conflictual processes that produce meaning:

Fixed oppositions conceal the heterogeneity of either category, the extent to which terms presented as oppositional are interdependent--that is, derive their meaning from internally established contrast rather than from some inherent or pure antitheses (7).

The polarities of male/female and their attendant stereotypes provide such an opportunity to challenge the status of binary oppositions which cannot maintain their independence convincingly. For example, one polarity which is too frequently assumed in contrast to the male=strong, female=weak equation, is the feminist substitute equation: male=oppressor, female=victim. This dichotomy may work in identifying the opposition, but it has the effect of blurring the complexity of power distribution. It is simply not always the case that male=oppressor and female=victim. Sometimes in gender relations neither male nor female is oppressor or victim. Cooperation rather than conflict describes the interaction. In other situations, the woman may occupy a position of power and use it in an oppressive way.<sup>2</sup> It was Sarah who oppressed Hagar, and the arch-patriarch Abraham who appeared in a more charitable light. Women too have used and abused slaves, both male and female. Maternal and paternal cruelty fall into a most despicable category and female violence cannot simply be explained away as the oppressed becoming oppressors.

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<sup>2</sup> The movie *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* illustrates the confusing complexity of power relations. In this plot the career woman--presumably occupying a more powerful position than her live-in nanny--is subject to the power of the nanny whose control of the child gives her leverage over the mother, who then becomes the victim. Similarly, John McAhern in his novel, *Amongst Women*, calls into question the operations of power and gender. The central character, a dominating Irish patriarch, rules over his wife and two daughters, who seem to accept his authority. However, it is the women without power but with good manners who in the end are the ones who dominate. The form of the novel is circular, a design primarily associated with the feminine mode.

Feminism becomes easily entangled in a whole series of contradictions when it gives labels to certain modes of thinking as male and then uses these modes in its own interests. At the root of the problem is an affirmation of the prime binary opposition, namely the male/female one. The political need of feminists to defeat patriarchy and hence to attribute all that is patriarchally tainted with negative connotations comes directly into conflict with the need to "deconstruct" the polarities and thereby demonstrate the social constructedness of gender and its fluidity as a concept. This tension is particularly evident in the essentialist/non-essentialist debate, itself another set of poles.<sup>3</sup>

Would a better understanding of this tension be achieved by acknowledging as in area 1 the difference between symbolic representation and experience? If feminist theory has not solved all of these issues, it has contributed to scholarly investigations by thoroughly problematizing matters which were formerly unchallenged.

### 3. The Problem of Mediation

In 1958 in his book *Anthropologie structurale*, Lévi-Strauss recognized both the relationship between culture and reality and their difference:

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<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the essentialist debate, see: "On *In a Different Voice: An Interdisciplinary Forum*" (by Linda K. Kerber, Catherine G. Greeno and Eleanor E. Maccoby, Zella Luria, Carol B. Stack, and Carol Gilligan in *Signs*, Vol.11 (1986): 305-333). *Feminist Studies* 11 (Spring 1985): 149-161, addresses the same topic: "Commentary on Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*" with Judy Auerbach, Linda Blum, Vicki Smith, and Christine Williams.



...between culture and language there cannot be *no* relations at all, and there cannot be 100 percent correlation either. Both situations are impossible to conceive.<sup>4</sup>

Literary critic Terry Eagleton takes up this idea in his book, *Marxism and Literary Theory*:

It appears to assume that ideologies, once mediated through social groups, simply appear in visual or literary form. One might say that this kind of work suffers from a residual reflectionism, because it implicitly assumes that ideology, however complexly constructed, is simply reflected in art.<sup>5</sup>

Insofar as one of the principal functions of feminist criticism is to analyze the ways in which women have been depicted in art, the problem of mediation and representation becomes paramount. McClary acknowledges this critique of mimesis in art:

...art is always a fabricated construct merely posing as the mirror of reality, and...to view a work of art as representation is to take uncritically its biased formulation to be unmediated reality itself (Beanstalk, FE 115).

Having paid homage to the theoretical problematizing of art as representation, feminist cultural critics frequently proceed to ignore this problem. For example, in "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen," McClary offers "several famous portrayals of madwomen in music":

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by John Shepherd in his *Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Language* (55).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Janet Woolf in her book, *The Social Production of Art* (61).

I hope to demonstrate how madwomen such as Monteverdi's Nymph, Donizetti's Lucia, and Strauss's Salome are offered up as spectacles within the musical discourse itself: how their dementia is delineated musically through repetitive, ornamental, or chromatic excess, and how normative procedure representing reason are erected around them to serve as protective frames preventing "contagion" (in FE 81).

However skillfully and convincingly McClary analyzes the musical portrayals, it would seem that she assumes their aberrant depiction to reflect social assumptions concerning madness and gender in a fairly direct way.

Is it possible to avoid the charge of ignoring mediation while still drawing relationships between art and society? I think that the urge to simplify in order to make a better political statement must be moderated by the need to recognize art's penchant for irony, its ability to initiate resistance or empathy by its very indirectness and obscurity.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. The Enigma of Politicized Aesthetics

In 1864, when Matthew Arnold made the pronouncement that literary criticism must abide by the rule of the critic's "disinterestedness", this declaration was considered a great step forward. However it must be seen within Arnold's historical

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<sup>6</sup> In her review of Catherine Clément's *Opera or the Undoing of Women*, Hilary Finch accuses Clément of this mirror=reality assumption:

She [Clément] shuts her ears to the complexities, the ambiguities, even the empathy and intriguing crypto-feminism of a Puccini or a Massenet, as her selective hearing imprisons her time and again into taking every incident at face-value (758).

context in which "English literary reviews of his time are controlled by various parties and factions" (Stevens and Stewart 75). Arnold argued that all true criticism is "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" (Arnold quoted by Stevens and Stewart 75). Feminists have been quick to point out the self-delusion of such a proposition, favouring instead the foregrounding of one's political premises.<sup>7</sup> In fact, "many argue that exposing sexism, elucidating feminist ideals, and thereby contributing to the liberation of society can be a proper function of literary criticism" (75).

The question of how one forms evaluations of art becomes a pressing problem when any notion of "objectivity" is disposed of as impossible. The idea of conflict of interest is supposed to be taken very seriously in government operations, and certainly the notion of fair trial presumes an effort to eliminate prejudices that could be construed as working unfavourably against an accused person in any legal system.<sup>8</sup>

How, then, would a feminist music critic assess the artistic value of a musical composition given, for example, the problematizing of the tonal system as modelled on

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<sup>7</sup> McClary builds a strong case for political awareness when she repeatedly questions whose interests are being served by "disinterested" criticism. The following quotation illustrates her concern:

But the structures graphed by theorists and the beauty celebrated by aestheticians are often stained with such things as violence, misogyny, and racism (FE 4).

<sup>8</sup> In the Canadian scene, efforts are being taken by the federal Department of Justice under the leadership of the Minister of Justice, Kim Campbell, to correct the disadvantage to women in a system oriented to a male perspective.

a male sexual paradigm, and the problematizing of modern music as alienating and also inherently masculine?<sup>9</sup> Would a "good" piece of music resist procedures of closure, dwell in the region of the flat-six<sup>10</sup>, and employ slippery chromaticisms as strategies of resistance? According to McClary, Madonna's "Living to Tell" illustrates such a technique. Or would efforts to represent a female sexual paradigm such as in Janika Vandervelde's *Genesis II* be considered valuable expressions aesthetically?

A contemporary account of critical judgement and the formation of a literary canon in Canada illustrates the play of politics and aesthetics. In a recent issue of *McGill News*, Robert Lecker questions "why we call some [books] good and others not" (9). He writes:

In fact, the central value that has informed the creation and discussion of Canadian literature since the early 19th century is literary nationalism, the belief that the writer's task is to celebrate and give voice to the country's present and potential (8).

And further on,

My own research suggests that the establishment of the classics was often a random process that had more to do with market conditions than with informed judgement or consensus (8).

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<sup>9</sup> See Andreas Huyssen's "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other".

<sup>10</sup> The region of the flat-six is a tonal area which McClary finds often to be associated with feminine instability and/or resistance. McClary explores the area of flat-six in her article "Pitches, Expression, Ideology" and provides a feminist application of these ideas in "Living to Tell" (FE 157).

It is Lecker's contention that the Canadian canon of literature is more about "Canadianness" than about quality:

Yet in Canada, the difficulty of arriving at any form of textual consensus was obscured by two decades of government efforts to promote a national literature and to elevate the status of its study (9).<sup>11</sup>

In the formation processes of the Canadian literary canon, I hear echoes of nineteenth-century German nationalism:

Using 'the magic rod of analogy' [the doctrine of organicism], rather than the spurious magics of Jacobins and mystics, Novalis invited the Germans to participate in 'a superior epoch of civilisation' (Cunningham 91).

The embracing of that same strong German nationalism which informed such promoters of a German musical canon as Heinrich Schenker, at the very least suggests that aesthetics are formed within a politically charged context.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In *The Toronto Star*, March 11, 1992, Philip Marchand reviewed the work of Canadian author David Walker, who died March 5. Having won the distinguished Governor-General's award two years in a row, Walker was never widely accepted in Canada, regardless of the quality of his writing. Marchand observes, "Walker's reputation in Canlit may have suffered because few of his novels were actually about Canada."

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Cook, in his article, "Schenker's Theory of Music Ethics," points out that:

Schenker was a member of the Allgemeine Deutscher Sprechverein, an organization founded in 1885 in order to protect the German language from the use of unnecessary foreign words and neologisms, and so to further German national consciousness (430).

Without doubt feminist theory, in targeting the limitations of scientific and objective epistemologies, has performed a great service both in academia and in the political domain. After all, it was under the guise of the scientific method that Gustave Le Bon, a founder of social psychology whose work on the study of crowd behaviour is still respected today, wrote in 1879:

In the most intelligent races, as among the Parisians, there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion. All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women, as well as poets and novelists, recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man...Without doubt there exist some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as for example, of a gorilla with two heads; consequently, we may neglect them entirely (quoted by Stephen Jay Gould 105).<sup>13</sup>

Feminist cultural criticism has not succeeded in solving the riddle of politics and aesthetics, and indeed would not welcome credit for erecting some new set of aesthetic criteria. The enormity of the contribution of feminist criticism lies in its constant questioning of "neutral" criteria, its seeking out of hidden gender assumptions, and its attempts to create space for women artists both past and present.

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<sup>13</sup> For an excellent treatment of race and gender during the heyday of early scientific inquiry, see Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*.

## DIRECTIONS FOR FEMINIST MUSIC CRITICISM

In his article, "American Musicology in the 1990s", Joseph Kerman predicted radical changes for musicology in this decade:

On the whole, it seems to me that the most fruitful grafts upon recent musicology have come not from other music disciplines; rather they have come from areas of thought outside of music, in the humanities and social sciences...among them structuralist and poststructuralist theory, anthropology, feminism, and ideology critique (132).

Feminist music criticism has drawn extensively on a variety of critical theories in different disciplines in forming its own ideology and methodology. The implications for FMC of the influence of critical theory, in particular deconstruction, forms the first part of this section on the directions of FMC. The second part will investigate political strategies for FMC in the future.

### 1. FMC and Deconstruction

One of the most favoured tools of feminist criticism is deconstruction, i.e. locating the underlying supports for a particular position and then demonstrating how an argument fails by its own criteria. For example, the autonomy principle in art is dependent upon the notion that art exists in a separate realm, independent of social context. Showing how the autonomy principle itself is an expression of a specific ideology which served the interests of a social group, provides a point of

deconstruction. This very condensed and over-simplified version of deconstruction tends to be the version used by FMC.

It is really not necessary to draw upon a theory of deconstruction to weaken the autonomy position. A consideration of the historical conditions which precipitated formalist analysis logic would serve just as well. Is evoking the mystification of such critical terms as deconstruction a ploy to garner authority or credence from what is clearly a very "in vogue" academic style? This kind of bowing to a theory which appears more complex and, by virtue of its widespread popularity, more powerful, could be interpreted as an indication of insecurity on the part of some feminist critics. The use of deconstruction could also be interpreted as appropriate engagement with vibrant new methods. What is at issue here in discrediting autonomy is the effectiveness of the method. It is my contention that an historical approach is preferred.

A more penetrating examination of deconstruction reveals some troublesome issues for feminism.<sup>14</sup> In dividing the signifier from the signified, deconstruction disperses meaning along the whole chain of signifiers (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 128). Similarly individual subjectivity becomes "always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself" (Eagleton 130). This substitution of shifting, constructed subjectivities for the integrated individual calls into question the concept

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<sup>14</sup> A good account of deconstruction/poststructuralism can be found in Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, pp.127-150.



of human agency. Without any unified human agency, social change becomes impossible. A non-identity makes an unlikely social agent. Discursive subjectivities do not lobby for child care. FMC seems not to have grappled with the more intricate consequences and implications of deconstruction at the present time.

## 2. Political Strategies

The political nature of feminist criticism is never far beneath the surface of its discourse. In looking for possible directions that FMC might take in the future, I would propose that more emphasis be placed upon refining its political agenda and developing strategies consistent with feminist goals.

A peril to be avoided is the alienation of feminist critics from their audience. The isolation of modern music from its listeners in interests of integrity must not be repeated by feminists. Without compromising concern for scholarly standards, the critic must always be careful to communicate in a language that is both understandable and persuasive. To this end, the critic's audience or reader should be consciously identified and the language geared to meaningful dialogue with that specific group whenever possible.

If, for example, one's audience is made up of people identified with traditional musicology, it serves no purpose to indulge in the obfuscating jargon of critical theory. On the other hand, articles prepared for inter-disciplinary or feminist journals should

demonstrate all the rigour of these sophisticated discourses, not just some superficial dabbling in the terminology.

Perhaps the time has come to specialize in FMC. Given the formidable tasks of researching the history of women in music--translations, editing of manuscripts, establishing archives, publishing new findings--and of mastering the concepts and language of critical theory, a good strategy might be to acknowledge that scholars committed to promoting the cause of women's music cannot have expertise in all of these areas. Care would need to be taken to avoid any hierarchical designation in the process, in which, for example, theorists were accorded higher status than historians. FMC needs both equally.

A thorough grounding in history which seeks to take into account the complexity of human experience would help to offset any criticism of revising the past in the interests of politics. A balanced historical investigation would reveal that pain, discrimination, rejection, and self-doubt are not the sole property of women any more than moral virtue, compassion, or fairness are. Robert Hughes sums up this problem succinctly:

The need for absolute goodies and absolute baddies runs deep in us, but it drags history into propaganda and denies the humanity of the dead: their sins, their virtues, their failures. To preserve complexity, and not flatten it under the weight of anachronistic moralizing, is part of the historian's task (48).

Some final comments relate to my own interest in musical performance. As a pianist and teacher who is constantly confronting scores which must be brought to life by the performer, I am conscious of music's difference from literature and art. Music theory often treats the musical score in the same manner as the literary or art critic treats a text or painting, examining them at close range in order to decode their secrets and offer careful, analytical interpretations. But for literature or art, there is no necessary next stage to fulfill in order to make the text or painting live.

Comparing the concert hall to the art gallery or library, one is immediately impressed with the emptiness of the concert hall without a performance. This comparison calls to mind the potential emptiness of any comprehensive theory relating to music which does not give central consideration to music performance. So far FMC has been too busy slaying the dragons of music's "innocent" ideological foundations to be able to digress very seriously into performance. Carolyn Abbate challenges Clément's interpretation of women's defeat in operatic plots by directing attention to women's "triumph: the sound of their singing voices". This sound is...unconquerable; it cannot be concealed by orchestras, by male singers, or--in the end--by murderous plots" (Abbate ix).

Relating critical theory to music has been the means of opening new understandings of, for example, its relation to the social world with all the complexity which that connection entails. Perhaps it has, at present, also been the unintentional means of concealing the uniqueness of music's functions. Edward Said's book,

Musical Elaborations, represents an effort on the part of a literary critic to grapple with the idea of musical performance in a fresh way. While acknowledging the role that music has played in "domination and sovereignty", he also calls attention to its capacity for "pleasure and privacy" (xxi). Could this later dimension be a fruitful source of inquiry for feminist music criticism?

In order to understand anything,  
one must understand everything;  
but in order to say anything  
one must leave out a great deal.

Simone de Beauvoir

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