From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology

DEREK B. SCOTT

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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INTRODUCTION

FOR OVER TEN YEARS now, I have found myself confronted again and again with questions of ideology and musical style in my musicological research. I can say at the outset, then, that my broad intention in this book is to present a review of where my quest for answers has taken me and to outline my current epistemological position. Several of the chapters are revised and updated versions of essays that originally appeared elsewhere, essays in which I have been concerned, especially, to develop a critique of musical styles as discursive codes. My critical perspective, therefore, has not surprisingly been shaped by semiotics and poststructuralist theory. The concept of ideology I put forward is much broader than, for example, that of political propaganda or Marxist "false consciousness." Perhaps my approach is best epitomized by V. N. Volosinov's neat remark: "Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too."[1] For me, ideology exists in all forms of representation and the sound images of pieces of music are as ripe for ideological inquiry as any other cultural artifact. The blunt acceptance of either the humanist notion of an inner expressive essence in music or the antihumanist position epitomized by Stravinsky's declaration that any apparent expression is "simply an additional attribute" thrust upon the music's "essential being"[2] seems to me to yield a cruder framework for the interpretation of musical meaning than the rich cultural theorizing that has developed over the past twenty years.

Before moving on, it is important to consider why cultural theory was to have an increasing impact upon musicology in the last two decades of the twentieth century[3] and to account for the paradigmatic shift that occurred in musicological thought. I would argue that it came about for three major reasons. First, the idea that a mass audience did no more than passively consume the products of a culture industry had become discredited, making it

necessary for musicologists to contest the binary divide between "classical" and "popular," since both may be perceived as intimately related to the same social formation. Second, postmodernism had arrived, ousting notions of universalism, internationalism, and "art for art's sake" and replacing them with concerns for the values of specific cultures and their differences. The neglect of the social significance of music had become more apparent, especially the way changing social factors alter our response to existing works[4] and cultural context often determines the legitimacy of styles of playing and singing. Not least, the impact of technology had been insufficiently considered. Thus, what became necessary was a concern with social and cultural processes, informed by arguments that musical practices, values, and meanings related to particular historical, political, and cultural contexts. Third, the musical genealogical tree had needed surgery too often: lines that connected composers and charted musical developments and influences had been redrawn too many times and music had occasionally been conjured up from nowhere (for example, New Orleans jazz). The related issue of the evolution of musical style was now questioned: if atonality was presented as an inevitable stylistic evolution, then clearly Duke Ellington was a musical dinosaur. Causal narration in musical historiography had been found problematic,[5] and the teleological assumptions of historical narrative (for instance, the "inevitability" of atonality) now needed to be avoided. Other factors that bear upon the current situation were the rise of "authentic" performances that made old music seem new (and arguably a replacement for the new) and crossovers between classical and popular idioms by increasing numbers of performers and composers.

The rise in the 1990s of feminist musicology, critical musicology, and gay and lesbian musicology prompts the question: Are we living in an age of alternative musicologies, or are we witnessing the disintegration of musicology as a discipline? Is the unitary concept of a discipline part of a now discredited paradigm for musicological thought? The fences around disciplines are certainly in a bad state of repair these days, as Saul Bellow recognized by declaring that a series he edits, *Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture,* "acknowledges the deterritorialized nature of our present intellectual environment."[6] In embracing postdisciplinarity, therefore, musicology joins a growing intellectual movement. This alternative view is one in which musicology is no longer perceived as an autonomous field of academic inquiry but as, to employ Julia Kristeva's terminology, "a field of transpositions of various signifying systems."[7] Critical musicology has revealed what it means to regard musicology as an *intertextual field* and why this, rather than the notion of a *discipline,* offers a more productive epistemological framework for research.[8] It may often entail a necessity to examine a broad range of discourses in order to explain music, its contexts, and the way it functions within them. For example, questions of music and sexuality cannot be considered in isolation from political, biological, psychological, psy-

choanalytical, and aesthetic discourses. There may be no intention or need, however, to document each area comprehensively.

A Critical Musicology Forum was established in the United Kingdom in 1993 to discuss the character and purpose of critical musicology and whether its purpose was to extend or challenge other forms of musicological inquiry. The term was chosen to indicate a concern with critique, including the critique of musicology itself. The growth in numbers attending meetings over the next two years led to a major conference in Salford, Greater Manchester, in 1995, which, by attracting some seventy delegates who represented thirty different universities in Europe and North America, demonstrated the relevance and topicality of the new theorizing. The group came to consist of not only those working in more recent fields, such as film music, music semiotics, and constructions of gender and sexuality in music, but also researchers in ethnomusicology and the psychology of music who had long felt themselves to be out of the musicological mainstream.

Critical Musicologists in the United Kingdom were united in agreement that one of the biggest problems that faced musicology was the collapse of the binary divide between pop and classical. It was the importance accorded to this perception that set them apart from the New Musicologists of the United States, who tended (with few exceptions) to concentrate on canonic works. The disintegration of high and low as aesthetic values had, of course, been theorized for some time by anthropologists, poststructuralists, and sociologists of culture. Yet what was urgently needed was a new theoretical model capable of embracing the values and meanings of all musical practices and musical texts. A model ready to engage with, rather than marginalize, issues of class, generation, gender, and ethnicity in music and to address matters such as production, reception, and subject position, while questioning notions of genius, canons, universality, aesthetic autonomy, and textual immanence. Different cultures need to be studied in terms of their own specific cultural values, so that a cultural arbitrary is not misrecognized as an objective truth, though musicologists also have to recognize the necessity of extending the terms of such study beyond explicit cultural self-evaluation itself. Above all, we need to be ready to respond to the multiplicity of music's contemporary functions and meanings (for example, the drama/art/music/film/video/digital software fusions variously described as time-based arts and multimedia arts). This may be achieved by adopting the epistemological position and methodology outlined earlier (one that requires intertextual study). Again, I stress that this contrasts with a narrow discipline-based study of music as performance art or as composition (typically represented by the printed score).

As an illustration of my method of engaging critically with music practice and music historiography, I have listed here ten questions that I consider to be important in helping to tease out the ideological dimension in judgments about music. It should be noted that I have used terms here that are

by no means innocent—"expression," "aesthetics," "intention," etc.—yet I have made no attempt to problematize them. That I leave to the reader. It is not my wish to become overly prescriptive (or even proscriptive). Depending on the music under discussion, however, I should point out that some of the questions here might link together to produce similar answers, while others may not be at all relevant.

1. *Why does it sound the way it does?* Does the way it sounds indicate that it is intended as, for example, music for a salon, a concert hall, or a park? Has this affected it in terms of form and instrumentation, or has the composer been guided only by imagination in choice of timbre?
2. *What does it mean or express?* Accounting for meaning is the concern of semantics and hermeneutics. It is important to look for conventions, upon which all meanings eventually rely. Intended and perceived meanings should be distinguished where these are known to differ. Why is the *tune* of "Land of Hope and Glory" considered nationalistic? Is it solely because of association with the words? Why is "Born in the USA" often seen as nationalistic *despite* Springsteen's critical words?
3. *What is its instrumentation, and does this affect its status?* Certain ensembles carry greater status. For example, a string quartet would be regarded in some circles as more refined and "elevated" than a saxophone quartet no matter what music each played.
4. *Under what circumstances was it produced?* Is there, for example, evidence that historical, social, or psychological factors have influenced its musical character? Does it matter knowing that Mahler turns his faltering heartbeat into a rhythmic idea in the first movement of his Ninth Symphony? What are the revolutionary connotations of brass in Beethoven's music? Do representations of the East in nineteenth-century Western music link with colonialist ideas and ambitions?
5. *To whom is it addressed?* What is the implied audience for this music (its subject position)? How can you tell? Why did Haydn make folk-song arrangements for piano and voice rather than guitar and voice? Whom do Nanci Griffith, Shirley Bassey, and Kiri Te Kanawa think they are singing to?
6. *In what environment is it experienced, and does this affect its status?* Music has more status in a concert hall than in a public house or saloon; because of this, the status of jazz was negatively affected for many years. Almost automatically, a concert hall accords the status of art to any music played there. The extreme case is when there is no music actually played: does Cage's *4′ 33″* exist as a work of art under anything other than concert hall conditions?
7. *How is the music disseminated, and how does this affect its status?* Certain publishers carry high status. Publication in a "popular" periodical would carry less artistic status than separate publication. Music type

and music lithography did not carry the elevated status of engraving. How far does all this become a question of economics rather than artistic value?

8. *What have past and present critics said and what have past and present audiences done?* Sometimes current critics contradict past critics (for example, regarding the artistic merit of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*). Sometimes audiences respond with enthusiasm to music condemned by certain critics (for example, the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber). Is there evidence of a critic working to a particular agenda—for example, a dislike of a particular musical style or a contempt for music that suggests entertainment rather than art?
9. *Has this musical style, or this particular piece of music, been used to illustrate an artistic movement?* Is it seen as an example of Romanticism, Impressionism, or whatever? Is it regarded as an example of an artistic coup? Are canons being created? Or is it seen in terms of social function (for example, dance music) or social history (for example, labor songs)?
10. *Who is marketing it and why?* Usually the answer to the "why" is "for money," but not always. Sometimes, for example, it may be a concern for a national heritage; at other times, it may be for political or religious reasons. When money is not a prime object, less consideration has to be given to who may or may not like the music in question. This may affect its status positively if, for instance, the music is linked to an affluent and dominant social group (such as the English court of Charles II) or negatively if, say, it is linked to those involved in a failed political struggle (such as the Levellers).

Defining ideology

It is now time to explain in more detail my usage of the term "ideology." I employ it in the broad sense it began to acquire in the 1970s. Roland Barthes in his earliest work used the term "mythology" for what he and others would later describe as "ideology."[9] Just about every major French cultural theorist of the past thirty years uses "ideology" in the same way, and a very large number of North American theorists do so, too. Moreover, cultural thinkers not associated with poststructuralism or deconstruction have also widened its meaning. For example, it has been more than a decade now since the English literary theorist Terry Eagleton published a book titled *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*.[10]

Let me make reference to Rose Rosengard Subotnik's insightful book *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (1991). In this work, she defines ideology "not narrowly, as a specific and explicitly political doctrine, but broadly, as a network of assumptions and values shaped by experience and culture."[11] She also asserts that "ideological values con-

tribute inevitably and fundamentally to the structural definition of human utterance, even musical utterance, as well as to the understanding and judgment of utterance, even aesthetic judgment."[12] My own working definition of ideology would be as follows: *the study of how meanings are constructed within signifying practices and how that impacts upon our understanding of the world we live in.*[13] I am particularly interested in how "truths" are constructed and the role played by historical and cultural determinants of human consciousness. In this book, my major preoccupation is examining the ideology encoded in a diversity of Western musical styles. At the risk of oversimplifying, I am trying to explain how metaphysical ideas are communicated through music. This is not to make the absurd claim that in this book I am attempting to exhaust all there is to say about metaphysical philosophy and music. Indeed, what I am offering here is a collection of essays that should be regarded more as speculative experiments than as explications of fully worked out theoretical positions. Furthermore, my focus is on musical representation, and some metaphysical concepts (for example, that of justice) do not lend themselves readily to sound images.

If the preceding issues are understood as my central concerns, then the various chapters that make up this book can be seen as taking off in different directions like roots from the stem of a rhizome. The chapters share a kinship in that each attempts to decode the communication of meaning in musical style structures, but they do not link together in the shape of a linear, let alone teleological, narrative. My contention, then, is that the coherence of my work is to be found in its focus on ideology and musical style.

Music and representation

Readers familiar with Peter Kivy's stimulating book *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation* (1984) will want to know how my ideas about representation relate to his. There is no room for a detailed comparison here, but I will list half a dozen ways in which we differ:

1. I insist upon the role of the conventional in *all* musical meaning; he is unwilling to go this far.
2. My understanding of musical representation is informed by semiotic theory (attempting to *account for* perceived meanings), whereas his thinking is guided by classical logic (attempting to *validate* meanings).
3. Intention is a necessary condition for representation for him, but I make room for unconscious and even "accidental" representation (for example, I would maintain that representations of the East are not always consciously constructed and often unintentionally reveal Western attitudes; see my chapter 7).
4. I am concerned with the socially constituted values of musical *styles;* Kivy says little about style.

5. He is not shy of making an appeal "at the level of common sense" or to "anyone of musical taste,"[14] whereas for me common sense and taste are not ideology-free zones and often embody ideology at its most powerful.
6. Kivy is prone to an unproblematized use of adjectives, being prepared to speak of a "sunny cadence" or "languid, drooping chromaticism" or to describe music as having a "somber, chilly character" without explaining *why* it sounds that way.[15] He thus implies that such moods are *not* represented, that they exist in the music as an inner essence. For me, not only are atmospheric moods and emotions *represented,* but also the manner in which they are represented differs according to particular musical style codes (see, for example, my chapter 1).

A similarity I do share with Kivy, however, is that of following an argument where it leads without making an attempt to ensure its completeness.[16] I have also tried to emulate his admirable clarity and to keep the argument as free from unnecessary jargon as possible. Finally, for me, reception overrides intention. Certain associations can become attached to music. Kivy insists that a person is musically misguided who hears rustling leaves in Bach's C-minor Prelude (from *The Well-Tempered Clavier,* book 1);[17] yet what if this music was used to accompany a prolonged shot of rustling leaves during the opening credits of a popular television series? Could "anyone of musical taste" who watched that series detach the music successfully from the image next time he or she heard it, just as, in the words of an old gag, a "real musician" was someone who could listen to the *William Tell* Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger?[18] Surely not: music does not reside in some isolated domain of its own; no cultural artifacts do. That is the lesson of intertextuality. It is also a lesson we learn, not from the dyadic relations of Saussurean semiology but from the triadic relations theorized by Ferdinand de Saussure's contemporary Charles Peirce. In Peirce's semiotics, a sign stands for something for *someone:* Peirce's *interpretant* mediates between a sign and its relation to another thing. As Eero Tarasti puts it, "One could say that, in music, signs in relation to their interpretants concern those sign processes that take place in the mind of the listener, whereby he or she interprets the musical experience."[19] A common error is to insist upon the arbitrary nature of the musical sign while failing to recognize the equally arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign. To remain with the Bach example, there is certainly nothing actually "leafy" in any part of that C-minor prelude, but *there is nothing actually "leafy" in the word "leaf."* In saying this, my intention is not to argue that music is a language but, rather, to claim that music and language are both signifying practices and both make use of arbitrary signifiers. Language philosopher Donald Davidson has detailed the problems encountered by those who have tried to build a theory of communication based on meanings; he concludes, "it seems clear that the semantic features of words cannot be explained directly on the basis of non-linguistic phenomena."[20]

In recent years, topical analysis has appealed to many musicians whose toleration of musical semiotics does not extend beyond the self-referential or, in other words, beyond music qua music (Eero Tarasti is a notable exception). There may be token remarks about the socially constituted character of *topoi,* but social content is quickly dissolved into form for the analysis to proceed. Kofi Agawu has recently provided a topical analysis of the British national anthem that ignores the topic of the galliard, though this dance rhythm is one of the anthem's striking features.[21] It is a telling omission, since this is a sign with a referent outside of the "music itself" a sign that requires us to consider social meaning. In the book before you, my commitment is to social semiotics, not to semiotics as a means of demonstrating musical-theoretical positions divorced from social meaning. In pursuing this critical aim, I willingly acknowledge my indebtedness to the work of Richard Leppert, Susan McClary, and Lawrence Kramer. The reader will no doubt find that my concerns differ here and there from those of the preceding authors, that I make different emphases, and that I have taken up either more extreme or less extreme theoretical positions. For example, I would distance myself from some (though not all) of Kramer's arguments that are based on Freudian theory. As might be imagined, given some of the statements I have made earlier, it is the ahistoricism of Freudian psychoanalysis that I resist most strongly (thus, I am obviously more drawn to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari).

An overview

To conclude this introduction, I will allude briefly to the chapters that follow and try to underline what is new or distinct about some of the positions I am adopting. Each successive chapter considers the workings of a particular relationship between ideology and musical style. My intention is to illustrate my current understanding of how musical styles construct ideas of class, sexuality, and ethnic identity. In doing so, I am concerned to demonstrate how such constructions relate to particular stylistic codes in particular historical contexts. This, of course, necessitates a consideration of the subject position offered by the music in question and of the way "truths" inscribed within contemporaneous discourses (political, aesthetic, medical, biological, etc.) impact upon the music. The book is divided into four parts that present the chapters in related pairs.

Part I concerns sexuality, gender, and musical style, and my first chapter, "Erotic Representation from Monteverdi to Mae West," explores the mutability of constructions of the erotic in various styles of music from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. My argument, here, is that music does not act as a simple channel through which ideology is mediated and can therefore be renegotiated. For example, it is not a straightforward matter to negotiate different *expressions* of sexuality in music; a representation of sexu-

ality in music must relate to the pregiven code of the particular musical style within which it is articulated. As Gino Stefani has pointed out, style codes are not only rooted in social practices but also "a blend of technical features, a way of forming objects or events."[22] If that were not the case, then two of the pieces discussed in this chapter, David Rose's "The Stripper" and Richard Strauss's "Dance of the Seven Veils," would surely resemble each other a little more than they do.

The past ten years have witnessed a wide-ranging debate about the feminine and masculine in music, particularly as it relates to social issues such as public and private performance and to compositional matters such as gendered themes or gendered conflict in sonata form movements. Chapter 2, "The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics," moves from considering how metaphors of masculinity and femininity solidified into biological truths to teasing out the ideological dimension of the supposedly disinterested and universally applicable aesthetic theories of the beautiful, ornamental, and sublime in music. I would add that, like Susan McClary, it is not my intention or wish to see any composer's music reduced solely to issues of sexuality.[23] However, I do wish to challenge the idea of "absolute music" or "pure music" whenever and wherever it appears. An important reason for choosing Bruckner as a case study in chapter 5 is because his symphonies have usually been interpreted as pure music—however murky the ideological reception of them has been at times (the extreme being reached with the appropriation of Bruckner as German nationalist by the Nazis).

Part II explores the workings of ideology in relation to popular music and, in so doing, underlines the resistance of postmodern theory to the metaphysical spell of a universal aesthetic. In chapter 3, "The Native American in Popular Music," I examine representations of the American Indian in popular styles of Western music from the eighteenth century to the present. Having tackled issues of gender and sexuality and the relationship between them and musical style, I now consider ethnicity for the first time. Here my intention is to show how cultural difference is represented when little is known or understood about the culture of those being represented and to consider how shifting perceptions of the Native American can be related to changes in attitude to the "civilized" and the natural world. The emphasis on the popular sharpens the argument, because this kind of representation needs to be widely understood and easily assimilated in order for it to be popular. The ideology embedded in the way the American Indian is represented tells us, predictably, about the attitudes of the person who stands outside Native American culture.

My concern in chapter 4, "Incongruity and Predictability in British Dance Band Music of the 1920s and 1930s," is the ideology of "high" and "low" art and how this impacts upon both musical style and reception. Defenses of the popular that relate its value to its historical context often provoke the question: How is it to be valued once its historic moment has passed? The purpose of this chapter is to show how a "popular musicology"

might tackle the problem of discussing music once loved but now regarded by many as valueless. To this end, it explores qualitative issues in British dance band music. A critique of musical style needs to take account of incongruity between styles. In chapter 1, I argued that modes of representation needed to be related to different styles; here I argue that the same goes for qualitative values. For instance, what is admired as good singing in one style may not be so perceived in another. Part II is the popular counterpart to part IV. The Self versus Other binarism introduced in chapter 3 is revisited in a more complex manner in chapter 7, which largely concerns the representation of different cultures in concert music and opera. British dance bands and their music can be seen, in some measure, as a response, in the popular arena, to the impact of African-American music making, the impact of which on European composers working in the classical tradition is explored in chapter 8.

Part III presents two case studies to explore the ideology embedded in representations of two concepts that are themselves conjoined in a binary opposition, the sacred and profane. In chapter 5, "*Lux in Tenebris:* Bruckner and the Dialectic of Darkness and Light," the construction of the sacred in music is discussed by way of a study of a particular composer. Bruckner is chosen because he is widely seen as a "pure" musician, impervious to ideological assault. It becomes clear, however, that he often makes musical choices with reference to Christian religious discourse and thus for ideological rather than structural reasons. This chapter examines the usefulness of a "darkness and light" trope for understanding the compositional process in his music. It affords an opportunity to import ideas from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as to apply Jacques Derrida's antidialectical arguments through use of the deconstructive strategies that were referred to so cursorily at the end of chapter 1.

One purpose of chapter 6 is to present a typology of the demonic in the music of Liszt, but I am also seeking to answer a number of related questions: What impact did his representations of the demonic have on his stylistic development as a composer? Do demonic elements appear even where Liszt has not chosen to indicate their presence by title? Do we find them in nondemonic programmatic works, like "Mazeppa" and even in a work like the Sonata in B minor, for which Liszt offers no program? In the eighteenth century, the demonic topos is found, most famously, in the music of Mozart. In the music of Liszt, demonic *topoi* abound and a typology of the demonic becomes necessary. Moreover, I argue that building on the work of others (Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Berlioz), Liszt plays an important part in establishing particular demonic genres, such as the *danse macabre,* the demonic scherzo, the demonic ride, and the more abstract study like *Unstern* (a dark counterpart to the *méditation religieuse* genre). In so doing, he was to bequeath a fertile legacy to the likes of Saint-Saëns, Dvořák, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, and others less known. I contend that the primary demonic technique for Liszt is that of *negation:* negation of the beautiful,

the noble, the graceful, and so forth. The secondary technique is parody, though qualities are often negated and parodied (or mocked) at the same time. There is a sense that the demonic is not just evil but gleefully evil. I discuss Liszt's strategies in the context of ideas of the demonic in the work of Goethe and Kierkegaard.

The fourth and final part of the book tackles the issue of ideology and cultural otherness. In chapter 7, "Orientalism and Musical Style," I discuss constructions of the East in Western music and the development of Orientalist styles independently of the objective conditions of non-Western musical practices. This chapter explores a variety of questions that concern the impact of Orientalist ideology on Western music. Is there any consistency to be found in the way non-Western cultures have been represented? Is it often only the exotic, or the cultural Other, that is signified rather than a particular ethnic musical practice? Are there reductive sets of musical conventions that signify something vaguely Asian, Spanish, or Chinese/Japanese and little else? When did these styles become recognizable? Once established, did they perpetuate themselves as musical discursive codes in which a musical text of the East replaced the actual East? Is there a change in representations of non-Western cultures that can be related to the growth of Western nationalism and imperialism?

Chapter 8, "The Impact of African-American Music Making on the European Classical Tradition in the 1920s," offers another exploration of cultural otherness in music. Black Africans, before the time of Columbus and knowledge of the "New World" were thought of as the third race and often depicted as such in art (for example, in paintings of the three Magi). Of course, that in itself would not prevent the black African from being "Orientalized"—witness what happened in the case of the Spanish Moors. However, the lack of identification of the black African with an Orientalist style is explained by the association of black people with African-American music making. This had become familiar, from the mid–nineteenth century on, as "folk art" such as spirituals and plantation songs, as well as being misrecognized in much of the repertoire of blackface minstrel troupes. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the African becomes represented in and by jazz. In the late 1920s the Cotton Club's jungle exoticism can be interpreted as one more variety of Orientalism. To a certain extent, much of the Caribbean and South America became "Orientalized" in this manner (the bossa nova, "Tiki" music, and so forth). Moreover, from the 1960s on, debates about "authentic" blues, gospel, and soul have often had lurking in the background the idea of a black Other.

This final chapter is concerned with the early impact of ragtime, blues, and jazz on music of the European classical tradition and concentrates on the same period as chapter 4. Consideration is given to the social and ethnic connotations of references to African-American styles in these pieces. The broader European social context—modernity, the alienated creative artist, and cosmopolitanism—is also found to be important. The chapter dis-

cusses the relation of jazz to modernism and confronts the question: How far are African-American elements seized upon by composers as mere tricks of the trade to give a new lease on life to a tradition in crisis? It goes on to explore the use of jazz-influenced styles as satiric weapons and, finally, discusses the misconceptions of African-American music making that were widespread among European composers of this period.

It will be obvious from this overview of my chapters that the kinds of broad arguments I am making rely for their persuasiveness on a considerable amount of supporting evidence. They do not permit me to concentrate on a small number of examples, since I would immediately be open to the charge of either having relied on too tiny a "control group" or having cunningly selected those few examples that reinforce my exaggerated claims. On top of this, I am aware how easily a detailed analysis (or close reading) tends to become fixated on musical structure rather than on historicizing musical discourse.[24] For this reason, the close reading has become problematic for poststructuralists, and it is compounded by the challenge poststructuralism poses to the very idea of deep structure. To the reader who bemoans the plethora of examples, I will simply say that where I have felt that they merely lend additional weight to rather than deepen my argument I have consigned them to the notes. There they may be savored or ignored at will.

part one

SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND MUSICAL STYLE

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1

EROTIC REPRESENTATION FROM MONTEVERDI TO MAE WEST

THIS CHAPTER EXAMINES some of the conventions involved in representing the erotic in music and reveals the ideological character of these conventions. The disparity and mutability uncovered by a comparison of representations of sexual desire in three differing musical styles (Baroque opera, the Victorian drawing-room ballad, and Tin Pan Alley in the 1920s and 1930s) show that a genealogy of sexuality in music needs to address disjunctions rather than developments, historical contingencies rather than evolutionary questions.

Representations of sexuality in music are not restricted to eroticism; it would be possible to devote an essay to a discussion of how musical representations of masculine and feminine laughter differ or to a comparison of masculine and feminine grief. However, I have chosen eroticism—if that is not too strong a word to describe my Victorian examples—because it offers such clear examples of how gender difference is constructed in music. What we find, here, are disjunctions in representation rather than any kind of universals or constants that can be traced through the changes brought about by an autonomous evolution or progress of a Western musical language. There is certainly no progress to be discovered in the way eroticism has been depicted in music: representations of eroticism in contemporary music are not more real now than they were in the seventeenth century. The fact that the latter can seem cool or alien to us today points to the way sexuality has been constructed in relation to particular stylistic codes in particular historical contexts and is therefore cultural rather than natural.

It may be accepted already that everyday notions of sexuality are socially constructed rather than a reflection of the natural world. Indeed, we may follow Julia Kristeva in regarding the categories of masculine and feminine as metaphysical; but, in the light of the foregoing remarks, it does not

follow from this acceptance that music acts as a simple channel through which ideologies of gender are mediated and may be renegotiated. In other words, *sexual ideology cannot be straightforwardly renegotiated in music, because a representation of sexuality in music has to relate to the pregiven code of the particular musical style within which it is articulated.*

Certain popular musical styles, however, have sometimes been treated as if they had arisen from attempts to negotiate differing *expressions* of sexuality in music. In their early, pioneering study "Rock and Sexuality" of 1978,[1] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie have a tendency to see the bifurcation of rock into what they call cock rock and soft rock in this way. John Shepherd, too, argues that "notions of gender and "sexuality" can be renegotiated by "popular" musicians," adding: "Negotiation is the key concept in understanding how the politically personal is articulated from within the internal process of music."[2] Roland Barthes's essay "The Grain of the Voice,"[3] a frequent departure point for considerations of the radical possibilities of timbre (though Barthes's "grain" is not synonymous with timbre), encourages Shepherd to theorize about the potentialities of female timbres within a male musical hegemony. Leaving aside that the biological terms "male" and "female" are often used when the cultural terms "masculine" and "feminine" would be more appropriate, the contention is problematic in that timbre is considered to be an arena for hegemonic negotiation in "popular" music, while vocal timbre is apparently regarded as a fixed, ideologically encoded parameter in "classical" music. This does not bear scrutiny: not only have classical timbres changed remarkably even in the past hundred years (compare a recording of Dame Clara Butt with one of a contralto of even fifty years later), but also particular timbres have, by way of contrast, been long-established features of certain popular styles (for example, the high, "lonesome" tenor of Appalachian music, still to be heard in contemporary bluegrass).

With this in mind, it is clear that a much-discussed song like Tammy Wynette's "Stand by Your Man" (Wynette-Sherill) cannot be fully understood solely in terms of its being an *expression* in music (negotiated or otherwise) of the ideology of supportive and submissive femininity but must also be considered in relation to the stylistic expectations and constraints of 1960s Nashville country music. Think of how different Billie Holiday sounds (arguably more submissive than Tammy) when "standing by *her* man" in songs like "Don't Explain" (Holiday-Herzog). What should be recognized, however, is that one singer is not offering a more "real" submission than the other but a different musical discourse of submission. In the words of Jenny Taylor and Dave Laing, the issue is "the radically different codes and conventions of representation involved in different genres."[4]

Given that representations of sexuality are constructed within particular musical styles and that musical styles are signifying practices, it is evident, as deconstructionists have shown, that what is being signified is "up for grabs" (something the lesbian appropriation of country music[5] in the 1980s