In June of 1956, singer-song-writer and prototypical rock guitarist and performer Chuck Berry released a single entitled 'Roll Over Beethoven'. A few years before this single became a hit on radios and juke-boxes across the country, a war of cultures had broken out in the United States, a phenomenon often referred to as the 'teen rebellion'; middle-class American youth were rejecting the culture of their parents, and insisting on creating a culture that addressed their own specific interests and needs. Films such as The Wild One (1953) and Rebel without a Cause (1955) featured youthful principal characters—played by Marlon Brando and James Dean, respectively—in open rebellion against white middle-class values.

Music became one of the fields on which this battle was played out. The 1955 film Blackboard Jungle also worked the theme of disgruntled youth, but featured perhaps the first official 'rock and roll' song, 'Rock around the Clock' by Bill Haley and the Comets, played over the opening credits. The film also contains a pivotal scene in which tough (and poor) high-school students reject the music of their older (and more middle-class) teacher, a scene that ends with the students throwing the instructor's collectable 78 rpm records around the classroom as the teacher attempts in vain to catch them. Thus, when 'Roll Over Beethoven' was released, it was clear to Berry's listeners that he was playfully taunting high culture and the classical music that his audience would have perceived as going with it; the recurring lyric, 'roll over Beethoven, tell Tchaikovsky the news', makes the song's target abundantly clear. Berry enthusiastically advocates rock and roll music and the dancing that goes with it, and he delights in the subver-

dive character of a musical style that would cause such an icon of high culture as Beethoven to turn in his grave.

A fuller interpretation of this Chuck Berry example would need to account for its many other aspects: the implied mind-body split between art-music and rock and roll (art-music being for cerebral contemplation, rock and roll for dancing and singing along); the racism prevalent in America in the 1950s (and the threat that white culture was being challenged either by black men or by white men singing and playing like black men); and the role played by the entertainment industry and its means of production and distribution of music, to name only a few. But this example is cited here merely to draw attention to a fundamental distinction that has tended, until recently at least, to be generally assumed in American culture: art-music in the Western tradition and popular music (especially popular music after 1955 or so) are radically different from one another in almost every possible way. Berry's lyrics celebrate that difference, and the instrumentation—including Berry's lead-guitar bursts that were to become so influential for the rock guitarists who followed him—and the twelve-bar blues progression upon which the song is based underscore the stylistic distance between Fifties rock and roll and nineteenth-century symphonic music.

More recently, another kind of culture war has been taking place in the United States. Since the mid- to late 1980s, curriculum committees and faculty senates on university and college campuses across the country have argued over what might be called the 'multicultural question': the extent to which curricula (especially undergraduate curricula) need to be redesigned to acknowledge that other cultures exist besides the Western tradition that has dominated academic study up to the present time. Great Books programmes, which overwhelmingly opt for the works of 'dead white (mostly European and American) men', have been a favourite negative example in arguments directed against such perceived cultural biases. Advocates of curricular reform frequently argue for change on two fronts: first, non-Western cultures must be represented in the study of traditional subject areas such as literature and history; and second, other cultures within the Western one must be represented, and this includes the contributions of women and minorities, as well as folk and popular cultures.

Music scholars, as Joseph Kerman has pointed out, tend to be a conservative group generally. Thus, it has only been relatively recently that music departments at American colleges and universities have felt a certain pressure to

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5 This summary surely constitutes a simplification of the issues surrounding the ongoing multicultural debate. I will, however, forego any further consideration of the merits of the many arguments on both sides of this highly charged issue. In the present discussion, I hope merely to establish a context for the issues which these essays have had on the study of music in American colleges and universities.
20

Popular Music, Unpopular Musicology

John Covach

I

In June of 1956, singer/song-writer and prototypical rock guitarist and performer Chuck Berry released a single entitled ‘Roll Over Beethoven’. A few years before this single became a hit on radios and juke-boxes across the country, a war of cultures had broken out in the United States, a phenomenon often referred to as the ‘teen rebellion’: middle-class American youth were rejecting the culture of their parents, and insisting on creating a culture that addressed their own specific interests and needs. Films such as The Wild One (1953) and Rebel without a Cause (1955) featured youthful principal characters—played by Marlon Brando and James Dean, respectively—in open rebellion against white middle-class values.

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4 Greater public interest was drawn to this issue during the summer of 1987, when Allan Bloom’s The Closing of the American Mind (New York, 1987) became a national best-seller. For a collection of responses to Bloom’s arguments, in what proved to be an extremely provocative book, see Robert L. Stone (ed.), Essays on the Closing of the American Mind (Chicago, 1989).

5 This summary roughly constitutes a simplification of the issues surrounding the ongoing multicultural debate. I will, however, keep any further consideration of the merits of the many arguments on both sides of this highly charged issue. In the present discussion, I hope merely to establish a context for the impact which these issues have had on the study of music in American colleges and universities.

reconsider their course offerings in the light of the multicultural debates. The first part of the reform challenge—the study of non-Western musics—tends to be addressed by offering courses in ethnomusicology. And ethnomusicologists can often help out even in the second part of the challenge by offering courses in American folk-music (along with musicologists specializing in American music) and in African-American music and culture. Recent scholarship in feminist musicology has made it possible for musicologists who do not specialize in feminism to incorporate such perspectives in their teaching.7

The situation with regard to popular music presents far more of a problem. It seems self-evident that musicology has tended to ignore popular music, and particularly rock and country and western music, despite the fact that popular music has at various times played an important role in the art-music tradition, especially in the twentieth century.8 One reads often enough, for example, that jazz exerted a certain influence over composers such as Stravinsky, Milhaud, and Krenek; but musicologists almost never approach popular music as being interesting in their own right. This situation is especially curious with regard to twentieth-century art-music, a musical canon that enjoys—to put it mildly—a more limited audience than other styles of art-music. The decline of audience interest in 'post-Pierrot' art-music can sometimes drive musicologists specializing in twentieth-century music to despair; despite the fact that, as Susan McClary has pointed out, vital music is bursting out all around them in the form of popular music.9

But even if musicology has tended to deal with popular music in only a marginal way, popular music has received considerable attention from scholars outside the field of musicology. Even a cursory look through the bibliography provided by Richard Middleton in his 1990 book Studying Popular Music, a magisterial survey of work in this burgeoning field, should convince the most skeptical musicologist that popular music studies is a firmly established area of scholarly enquiry.10 Despite the amount of careful work that has been done in popular-music studies, however, musicologists are not likely to find much information that could help in the preparation, say, of a unit on popular music in a twentieth-century music survey course. The reason for this is simple: popular-music studies have been dominated by cultural critics and sociologists, many of whom do not possess the specialized skills necessary to deal with the musical 'texts' in the ways that musicologists do. These scholars tend to be concerned

with the effect of musics on listeners, and on the ways in which musics can have various kinds of significance within cultures and subcultures; and they treat the music, in the words of John Shepherd, as a kind of 'inscrutable black box'.11 Thus it is not so much that the musicologist will find this work uninteresting, but rather that he or she will find that it addresses what are often a completely different set of disciplinary issues.

The different ways in which musicologists and sociologists approach music generally is often cast as a distinction between text and context: according to this formulation, the musicologist is primarily concerned with musical texts, while the sociologist is concerned principally with social, economic, and political contexts. While this distinction undoubtedly oversimplifies matters, it does capture a basic problem that exists between the fields of musicology and popular-music studies: musicologists tend to ignore popular-music scholarship (after all, it is more concerned with sociological issues); and popular-music scholars are only too glad that they do (after all, their methods of approaching music, mired as they are in the art-music tradition, can never really get at what is most important about popular music anyway).

Underlying the text–context issue is a basic attitude that takes us back to the consideration of Chuck Berry's 'Roll Over Beethoven' above. At the heart of this distinction is the tacitly accepted notion that art-music and popular music are fundamentally different, and both sides have been willing to abide by what they see as a basic musical and disciplinary separation. Yet it is not at all clear that this difference between Beethoven and Chuck Berry is as fundamental as it may appear; considering the fact that musicologists for the most part have been unwilling—until recently at least—to consider popular music in a careful manner, and considering that popular-music scholars often admit a lack of expertise in the study of art-music, it is surely premature to come to any conclusions about the underlying difference, or sameness, of the two types of music.

Recently there has been some movement toward the centre and away from these established disciplinary poles on the part of both musicologists and popular-music scholars. Susan McClary and Robert Walser, for example, have called on musicology to devote greater attention to rock music, and both Richard Middleton and John Shepherd have proposed grounds upon which musicology and popular-music studies could potentially come together. The arguments advanced by these authors make it clear that co-operation between the two disciplines is in the best interests of both. What is at stake, then, is not whether a closing of the current gap would be mutually beneficial; it is what the 'terms' of this disciplinary détente should be. This chapter will first survey the proposals made by McClary and Walser, Shepherd, and Middleton. All three proposals raise interesting, important issues, but, ultimately, are problematic in my view. I will

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II

In their 1988 essay, 'Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock', Susan
McClary and Robert Walser explore the methodological, political, and ideological
problems that arise when a scholar attempts to negotiate the space between
conventional musicology and the study of popular music.12 The essay takes its
point of departure from a Bloom County comic strip, in which the characters,
Opus and Hodge-Podge, read a review of their recent LP in Time. After making
their way through a meaningless, but fairly typical-sounding interpretive sentence
about their record, Opus asks, 'Yeah, but do we kick butt?' McClary and
Walser then go on to argue that while musicologists tend to be able to describe
how pieces of music work in a technical sense, they are ultimately unable to
account for why and how music has the kind of effects it has on people: they
cannot tell us if it 'kicks butt'.

McClary and Walser build their argument by first considering how difficult it
is to capture music's effects in writing. While music of one's own culture seems
to create its effects in an unmediated way, prose descriptions of how this occurs
tend to result in either 'poetic or technical mystification'.13 This discussion is
followed by a survey of what the authors take to be the various dangers and
obstacles that face the musicologist involved in the study of popular music (more
on this below). They then move on to consider some of the pitfalls of pop musicology,
which turn out to be over-reliance on song-lyric interpretation and attempts 'to control the music by means of a single totalizing method' (semiotics
is used as an example).14 The essay ends with a section entitled 'Fear of Music',
in which the authors suggest why musicologists seem to avoid the issue of how
music affects its listeners.

McClary and Walser argue vigorously that musicology must come to terms
with popular music, and in the article they argue for rock; but their methods
could be extended to encompass other popular-music styles as well. They argue
that one reason why musicology has avoided consideration of rock music is
because any study of rock would necessarily have to confront an issue that musicology
has been carefully avoiding all along: how music affects people, and how
it affects them in direct ways.15 They write as follows:

12. Susan McClary and Robert Walser, 'Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock', in Simon Frith and
Andrew Goodwin (eds.), On Record: Pop. Pop. and the Written Word (New York, 1990), 277–92. Though the essay
appeared in 1990, the date 1988 appears after the text.

13. Ibid. 280.


15. This point is illustrated in what must rank as one of the most colourful analogies of the music-analytical process
to date: 'In fact, musicologists sometimes approach music with the same attitude that gynecologists (quite rightly)

We are not advocating shutting off the mind and playing air guitar as a substitute for rig-
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more attention has to be paid to those aspects of music that trigger adulation in fans,
even if (especially if) those are just the aspects that strike terror in the scholar's rational
mind.16

If rock music is, then, a kind of potent stuff with regard to its unmediated
effect on its listeners, the argument would seem to hinge on establishing pre-
cisely what kind of effects it elicits and from whom. In their survey of the kinds
of dangers and obstacles the pop musicologist can encounter, McClary and
Walser observe: 'Not only does traditional musicology refuse to acknowledge
popular culture, but it also disdains the very questions that scholars of rock
want to pursue: How are particular effects achieved in music? How does music
produce social meaning? How do music and society interrelate?'17 Here we get
to the heart of the authors' concerns with the study of rock music: the kinds of
effects that rock elicits in the listener—and, by extension, those with which music-
ology should be more concerned generally—are primarily socially constructed;
this is clear from the example they use, which describes the reaction of rock fans
in an arena-type concert. The authors, then, are eager to investigate how music's
effects can be explained as a product of social context. Along these lines, they write:

What is important in music is, indeed, elusive. But this need not force us back to some
mystified plea of 'ineffability'. What musicologists can contribute to the discussion of the
politics of popular music is some way of explaining how the powerful moments in music
are accomplished, without discrediting the impression that they are exciting, disturbing,
or pleasurable. The focus should be on constructing models that serve as flexible back-
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of society regard the objects of their scrutiny as pleasurable. The staff historian takes the vital information (date
of birth, height, weight) of the patient. Up into the stairs goes the song. And the theorist, donning 'objectivity' as
a methodological rubber glove to protect against contamination, confronts the dreaded thing itself' (Ibid. 287). This
passage seems strongly influenced by a scene in David Lodge's novel, Small World, An Academic Romance (New
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The notion that popular-music styles must be thought of in their social context, or that the most fundamental questions in popular music are social ones, plays on the tacitly accepted notion that art-music and popular music approach female sexuality: gingerly. In both situations, a concerted effort is made to forget that some of the members of society regard the objects of their scrutiny as pleasurable. The staff historian takes the vital information (date of birth, height, weight) of the patient. Up into the stratum goes the song. And the theorist, donning "objectivity" as a methodological rubber glove to protect against contamination, confronts the dreaded thing itself (ibid. 287). This passage seems strongly influenced by a scene in David Lodge's novel, Small World, An Academic Romance (New York: 1984), in which American postmodern literary critic Morris Zapp delivers a paper entitled 'Textuality as Striptease' (28-32), a paper that shocks the provincial delegates at a conference in the small fictitious English city of Rumbridge.

16 McClary and Walser, 'Start Making Sense', 287.
17 Ibid. 280.
18 Ibid. 289.
are—seemingly, at least—different at a basic level. After all, nobody doubts that rock music works its effects on its audiences in obvious ways; as the authors put it: 'the music plays, the body moves.' This kind of effect has in fact become a familiar caricature since the 1950s, and the image of young people dancing in wild or strange ways to rock music is exactly what has always caused rock to be seen as a threat to 'decent' society in the eyes of some of rock's critics. By contrast, nobody expects dancing in the aisles at a symphony orchestra concert.

But McClary and Walser work a variation on the 'fundamental difference' theme that casts popular music as the model; they reject the notion that rock music can be studied in the same way that art-music is. In fact, this point is taken far too much for granted; it is asserted, rather than argued. The authors suggest that methods that might be developed to study rock music and its effects on listeners could be used equally well in the study of art-music. The gap between musicology and popular-music studies is thus bridged not by folding popular music into the standard concerns of musicology, but rather by folding all music into what have to be seen in the end as sociological issues, or at least as issues that have tended to interest sociologists much more than musicologists. Thus the authors ultimately come to focus their argument less on the issue of incorporating rock music into the horizon of possible musics, which might be fruitful for musicological investigation, and much more on a call for a kind of disciplinary reorientation within the field of musicology itself. For them, musicology will 'start making sense' of music when it addresses how music can affect listeners in direct ways; that is, when it can tell us how music 'kicks butt'.

III

John Shepherd has also addressed the current gap existing between musicology and popular-music studies. In his 1991 book, *Music as Social Text*, Shepherd calls for a bridging of this disciplinary gap, arguing in even stronger terms than McClary and Walser that musicology must become more sociologically oriented if it is to avoid condemning itself to 'an even more peripheral position in the academic world than it presently occupies'.

For Shepherd, an understanding of the sociological dimension of music—how a culture constructs meaning in and through music—serves as a foundation for the understanding of music generally. Toward the end of the book, for example, Shepherd reflects on the interaction of sociological and musicological concerns:

The arguments presented in the previous chapters clearly have implications for the disciplines of historical musicology and music theory as they have traditionally been practised in the Western world. At the very least, sociological dimensions add to the diachronic orientation of historical musicology a synchronic one. Over and above that, however, they bring to the understanding of music a sense of social grounding that historical musicologists... have tended to resist.

So far, then, one gets the impression that sociological concerns complement the current interests of musicology: they offer a new, useful perspective that might be integrated into present concerns in the field. But just a few sentences later Shepherd writes:

there is a need to relate matters of context (historical musicology) to matters of text (music theory—music analysis). The way to do this is to provide a conceptual link in terms of the social ground of both the contextual and textual dimensions of musical processes. Nowhere have these issues been more sharply focused than in popular music studies. The proper interpellation [sic] of popular music studies into the curricula of university music departments... will point the way to an appropriate re-conceptualization of musicology as a discipline.

Here, condensed into a few sentences, we come up against what Shepherd feels is at stake in negotiating the separation between musicology and popular-music studies. In the discussion that follows the lines cited above, Shepherd examines the division of labour that has tended to occur between musicologists and theorists: musicologists often act as historians, 'establishing facts on the basis of empirical evidence', whereas theorists tend to undertake technical analyses, working only from the context of the pitches and rhythms themselves. Both tend to ignore the sociological aspects of the music, or at least think of them as secondary considerations, sometimes even priding themselves on the fact that art-music somehow transcends such concerns. As noted in the introductory section above, this text—context division can also be seen to be operative in

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19 McClary and Walser, 'Start Making Sense', 278.
20 I pursue the question of whether music-analytical methods developed for the analysis of art-music can be applied effectively to popular music, and survey the arguments around this issue, in my 'We Won't Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Music Theory', in Theory Only, 13/1–4 (September 1997), 119–41; also to appear in Anshul Kassabian, David Schwarz, and Lawrence Stegel (eds.), Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture (Charlottesville, Va., 1997), 75–49.
21 Shepherd, *Music as Social Text*, 190. The following discussion is focused primarily on ch. 10; of this work, entitled 'Musicology and Popular Music Studies'. Although the book did not appear until 1991, portions of ch. 10 were published as early as 1985. For a more recent critique of musicology that takes up many of the same themes from the perspective of feminism, see Shepherd's 'Difference and Power in Music', in Ruth Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, 1993), 46–65. My thanks to Rosemary Killiam for drawing my attention to this recent essay.
22 Shepherd, *Music as Social Text*, 189.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid. 190. Shepherd also considers the field of ethnomusicology, a discipline devoted in principle to studying the relationships between music and society. He comes to the conclusion that ethnomusicologists have tended to deal almost exclusively with other cultures, and not with the popular music of Western society. This supports his general argument that musicology has not yet found a successful mode of accounting for popular music in its musicological, music-historical, and sociological dimensions.
are—seemingly, at least—different at a basic level. After all, nobody doubts that rock music works its effects on its audiences in obvious ways; as the authors put it: 'the music plays, the body moves.' This kind of effect has in fact become a familiar caricature since the 1950s, and the image of young people dancing in wild or strange ways to rock music is exactly what has always caused rock to be seen as a threat to 'decent' society in the eyes of some of rock's critics. By contrast, nobody expects dancing in the aisles at a symphony orchestra concert.

But McClary and Walser work a variation on the 'fundamental difference' theme that casts popular music as the model; they reject the notion that rock music can be studied in the same way that art-music is. In fact, this point is taken far too much for granted; it is asserted, rather than argued. The authors suggest that methods that might be developed to study rock music and its effects on listeners could be used equally well in the study of art-music. The gap between musicology and popular-music studies is thus bridged not by folding popular music into the standard concerns of musicology, but rather by folding all music into what have to be seen in the end as sociological issues, or at least as issues that have tended to interest sociologists much more than musicologists. Thus the authors ultimately come to focus their argument less on the issue of incorporating rock music into the horizon of possible musics, which might be fruitful for musicological investigation, and much more on a call for a kind of disciplinary reorientation within the field of musicology itself. For them, musicology will 'start making sense' of music when it addresses how music can affect listeners in direct ways; that is, when it can tell us how music 'kicks butt'.

III

John Shepherd has also addressed the current gap existing between musicology and popular-music studies. In his 1991 book, Music as Social Text, Shepherd calls for a bridging of this disciplinary gap, arguing in even stronger terms than McClary and Walser that musicology must become more sociologically oriented if it is to avoid condemning itself to 'an even more peripheral position in the academic world than it presently occupies'.

19 McClary and Walser, 'Start Making Sense', 278.
20 I pursue the question of whether music-analytical methods developed for the analysis of art-music can be applied effectively to popular music, and survey the arguments around this issue, in my 'We Won't Get Fed Up Again: Rock Music and Music Theory', in Theory Only, 13/1-4 (September 1997), 119-41; also to appear in Anahid Kassanian, David Schwarz, and Lawrence Siegel (eds.), Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture (Charlottesville, Va., 1997), 75-89.
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popular-music studies, where the musicologically oriented have attempted to understand popular music primarily in terms of the music itself, while the more sociologically oriented have tended to understand popular music in terms of contextual processes that are 'extrinsic to the musical event, but which nevertheless imbue the event itself with meaning and significance for people'.

For Shepherd, the common ground between music theory and musicology lies in the inherently social nature of music. Analysis can help reveal how the actual structural properties of music can reflect a society's image of itself; what is usually taken to be the untainted, absolute musical stuff itself turns out to be conditioned by social contexts. According to this scheme, then, musicology takes the role of mapping out the musical territory itself in terms of repertory, including all styles on an even footing, and exploring the social bases of each.

It is an understatement to note that this kind of scheme would require a fundamental change in the ways in which musicology and theory are currently practised. But if Shepherd’s ‘re-conceptualization’ were to occur, many of the problems that have tended to exist between the disciplines of musicology and popular-music studies would have a basis for resolution; for in this case musicologists could tell sociologists and cultural critics the kinds of things they need to know about music and have heretofore been unable to understand fully. Musicologists could provide technical, historical accounts of popular music—or even art-music—that feed into some of the broader concerns with which sociologists have tended to occupy themselves. Like McClary and Walser, Shepherd believes that the study of popular music by musicologists calls for fundamental changes within the discipline itself, and like the argument of McClary and Walser, Shepherd’s argument ends up focusing less on the study of popular music as a separate issue and more on a thoroughgoing critique of musicology, and to a lesser extent, music theory.

IV

In his discussion of how musicology can reconceptualize itself, Shepherd depends on the work of Richard Middleton. In a chapter in his *Studying Popular Music* entitled '“Change Gonna Come”? Popular Music and Musicology', Middleton provides a critique of the ways in which musicologists have studied popular music. He also offers his own proposal for how musicology can restructure itself to deal effectively with what he takes to be the most crucial concerns not only in the study of popular music, but also in the study of music generally. After discussing what he sees as the general problems with the application of the techniques of traditional musicology—which are mostly music-analytical techniques—to popular music, Middleton critiques what he regards as instances of problematic writing on popular music. He turns first to Alec Wilder’s work on Tin Pan Alley and Broadway songs, then to Charles Hamm’s writing on American popular song, and finally to Wilfrid Mellers’ work on the music of both the Beatles and Bob Dylan.

The general conclusion that Middleton comes to in his critical survey is that popular music simply cannot be studied in the same way as art-music; scholars applying traditional methods to popular music produce distorted readings. These readings emphasize harmony, melody, and form, but neglect what are often key components in popular music—components such as timbre, rhythmic structure and its subtle deviations, and expressive pitch deviations. While his critique focuses on how traditional musicological methods are inadequate to the challenge of understanding popular music on its own terms, Middleton is not willing to abandon the advanced techniques that musicologists and theorists have developed in accounting for musical structure and historical context. He writes:

It is not my intention to argue that musicology cannot understand popular music, or that students of popular music should abandon musicology. Nevertheless, it is true that the bundle of methods, assumptions, and ideologies which came to constitute ‘mainstream musicology’ in the later nineteenth and the twentieth centuries renders it a less than useful resource in many ways.

Surveying what has been written about the gap separating musicology and popular-music studies, Middleton assesses the situation as follows:

There is a common tendency for the ‘critique of musicology’ to go too far. This is particularly true of the ‘popular’ versions which have become widespread in the popular music culture itself. Typically, these display either a retreat into sociology—the music interpreted solely in terms of the social categories into which the industry or the fans can be fitted—or an aggressive ‘insiderism’, which stresses that interpretation is ‘intuitive’, ‘anti-academic’, and intrinsic to the music culture itself. Underlying these attitudes is the assumption that popular music, especially recent genres, is completely different from ‘academic’ music, an antithesis; often this assumption is grounded in a naïve revolutionism, which sees rock music as representing a decisive break. Now I, too, have been emphasizing the methodological implications of popular music’s difference, but such totalizing views are misleading, resting on an inadequate historical knowledge or on an undialectical notion of the musical field. Between recent types of popular music and historical

26 Shephard, *Music as Social Text*, 194.
27 For a sense of such analytical work might be carried out in accordance with Shepherd’s concerns, see e.g., Mellers, *The Analysis of Popular Music: Class, Generation, and Ethnicity*.
28 Shepherd relies here on Richard Middleton’s proposal for a ‘critical musicology’, which is discussed in greater depth below.
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27. For a sense of how such analytical work might be carried out in accordance with Shepherd's concerns, see chs. 6, 7, and 8 of his *Music as Social Text*, entitled respectively: 'Functional Tonality: A Basis for Musical Hegemony'; 'The Analysis of Popular Music: Class, Generation, and Ethnicity'; and 'Music and Male Hegemony'.
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traditions of popular, so-called folk, and even bourgeois music stretching back at least as far as the sixteenth century, there are innumerable links and parallels. 31

Middleton is clearly concerned with a reformulation of musical scholarship and criticism that could accommodate both art-music and popular music; he conceives of an approach broad enough that the scholar can appreciate both similarities and differences among and between styles. The call is to develop analytical techniques that are suited to whatever music is being studied—techniques that do not force the music through an interpretive filter constructed especially for one broad style of music (Western art-music), but are rather designed to bring out what is most characteristic in the particular style under consideration. If seemingly disparate styles have musical features in common, this too must be acknowledged. The idea is, as Middleton explains, that:

a critical stance recognizes the need to ‘walk round’ the entire topography, holding this map in the mind so that there is ultimately a committed point of view which is nevertheless aware of a structure of mutually critical perspectives analogous to the structure of the musical practice itself. Methods applying to diverse musics a point of view deriving from one perspective, and methods which simply aggregate varying perspectives, are equally unsatisfactory. The musicologist has to recognize the existence and the interaction—within a society, within a history—of different musical problematics. 32

Middleton’s proposal, like those of Shepherd and McClary and Walser, calls for a fundamental change in the way that musicology is practised. Middleton stresses, however, that what musicology has accomplished in its study of art-music is valuable for the consideration of that music. He seems to suggest, in fact, that popular music studies might in a certain sense model itself on traditional musicology; perhaps methods for analysing popular music could be developed that are as powerful for popular music as the traditional ones are for the study of art-music. But Middleton argues for more than simply a ‘live and let live’ kind of stance. He would like to see a unified field of ‘critical musicology’—a field in which all musics are examined both in their specifically musical characteristics and in their specific social, cultural, and political contexts. Following Middleton’s proposal, then, research that focuses primarily on musical issues, and which might not in so doing take much account of sociological issues, would be discouraged. The goal for Middleton, it seems, is for the scholar to be in a posi-

31 Middleton, Studying Popular Music. 117. Middleton goes on to cite Peter van de Merwe’s work in his Origins of the Popular Style. The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music (Oxford, 1989), as an example of how scholarship can uncover structural relationships between musical styles that would seem unlikely, when viewed only in terms of their respective social contexts, to share such features. Van de Merwe is careful to point out that his book ‘is not a work of sociology’, though he acknowledges that such work is extremely valuable (3). Two reviews of the book display the reactions to such a musically based study can elicit from popular-music scholars. Philip Tagg (Popular Music, 9/1 (1990), 375–80) begins his review by admitting that he was initially suspicious of the book, but that once he accepted its premises and read it through, he found it extremely valuable; Robert Walser (Journal of Musicological Research, 12/1–2 (1991), 125–32), on the other hand, finds the lack of sociological perspective in its book unacceptable.

32 Middleton, Studying Popular Music, 125.

tion to make what he considers to be the crucial connections between the way the music actually goes (texts, the domain of traditional musicology) and the social environment in which it is created, enjoyed, and consumed (social context, the domain of sociology). While Middleton acknowledges the accomplishments of musicology, he nevertheless proposes redirecting its disciplinary focus toward issues that many musicologists would consider to be sociological ones. For Middleton, it is not enough that musicologists begin to consider popular music carefully; the addition of popular music to the field of musicology should be part of a fundamental shift in our conception of the discipline.

McClary and Walser, Shepherd, and Middleton each call for two kinds of change with regard to the disciplinary gap that currently exists between popular music and musicology. The first is that musicology must direct much more of its attention to popular musics within the Western tradition. In the arguments presented by the authors, though, the inclusion of popular music within the discipline requires a second kind of change: a basic reformulation of the fundamental intellectual concerns of the discipline. This basic reformulation in all three arguments requires that musicology consider the sociological dimensions of music as far more central to an understanding of music than they have been thus far. McClary and Walser envision musicology taking far more account of how music creates the kinds of effects it does on its listeners and within communities of listeners; Shepherd proposes that musicologists consider more carefully how cultures create musical meaning and even how music might play a role in creating cultures; and Middleton, perhaps taking the most conciliatory position with regard to traditional musicology, envisions a discipline broad and flexible enough in its methodologies to faithfully account for any kind of musical style, while viewing these styles as socially grounded.

To return, then, to the point from which this survey began, the question, ultimately, is not whether or not the gap between popular-music studies and musicology should be closed, but the terms of such a disciplinary interaction. In accord with the authors surveyed above, I would like to argue that this gap must be closed, and that musicology would benefit in a number of ways from including the careful consideration of both popular music and popular-music scholarship within its disciplinary horizon. But I reject the notion that a fundamental reformulation of musicology is required in order for the discipline to undertake research that will benefit itself and the field of popular-music studies generally. Thus, I accept the first kind of change outlined above, but find a number of problems with the second, more radical one.

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which intellectually concerns, nary ways experience meaningful primarily community plines Kuhn's made the repertory its musicological disciplines are socially constructed. Hence, no matter how passionately the call for a reorientation in musicology is made, it will ultimately be the musicological community itself that will decide whether or not to adopt the new model proposed. Thought of in this way, it seems extremely unlikely that such a paradigm shift will occur. The musicological community is constituted not exclusively, but for the most part, by people who entered the field because they were interested primarily in music—and 'music' here is understood in the traditional, detached-from-social-concerns sense. Most have spent many years, in addition to undertaking musical studies and research, playing and even composing music. Popular-music scholars might argue that this kind of musical experience is meaningful precisely because it is socially grounded, and one must dig out the ways in which this kind of social reality can arise. The question, it seems to me, is not whether or not these kinds of sociological interpretations of musical experience are valuable—I believe they are—but rather, whether or not this should be the only kind of research that musicologists do, or even whether this should be the fundamental kind of question that all musicological work must ultimately address.

Extending their own argument, Shepherd and the other authors discussed above must admit that if an intellectual community constructs meaning in the music it studies in a manner that excludes or severely subordinates sociological concerns, such a community has a perfect right to do so; while such a disciplinary situation can be examined and explained sociologically, it does not necessarily follow that the resultant analysis will have any impact whatsoever on the community itself. Ironically, insisting on radical change within musicology on intellectual grounds that are not central to the discourse itself—which, in fact, are cast as contrary to a point of view held by most musicologists—seems to go against the very notion that communities decide for themselves which disciplinary issues are central. The argument is cast as a critique from outside the discipline, and the rhetoric is more prescriptive than suggestive.

As has been noted a number of times already, the argument that music is inherently social has arisen—in the initial stages at least—from the notion that popular music and art-music are fundamentally different. In pursuing sociological questions in music, popular music has been fertile ground for investigation. After all, this music is popular, and how or why communities of people are attracted to certain popular-music styles or performers is an issue open to systematic empirical investigation. One can interview fans and musicians, check record sales and radio air-play, analyze visual images associated with the music (album covers, concert posters, etc.), analyze clothing styles, observe behaviour at live performances, and so on. Needless to say, this kind of investigation has not been standard in researching art-music and the culture that surrounds it. But if these methods of investigating popular music and culture provide useful information, so the argument goes, then it is only natural that they could be utilized in the study of art-music and its culture as well. Thus, while the separation of the two general kinds of music provides a starting-point for the investigation of popular music, such study later returns to art-music to claim that it must operate in ways similar to its popular counterpart.

The basic premises of this argument can be questioned, however. The authority of the popular-music scholar claiming a social basis for the understanding of popular music has tended in the past to go unquestioned by musicologists. After all, musicologists are generally thought to know little about popular music—in fact, they may appear to pride themselves on this ignorance—and one clearly needs to know a fair amount of popular music in order to come to even the most preliminary scholarly conclusions about it. It seems, then, that it has been far easier for musicologists to allow the sociological interpretation of popular music to stand than to learn entirely new musical repertories in order to challenge it. But this image of the musicologist immersed in art-music but oblivious to popular music is no longer tenable. Many musicologists and music theorists born after World War II came to music initially through popular music. Many played both art-music and popular music as children and as young adults; some did not come to the study of art-music until they had spent many years involved in popular music. In any case, it is difficult to imagine anybody growing up in the United States after 1955 who was not exposed to popular music, and to rock or country and western music especially. There are a number of young musicologists and theorists who know a lot of popular music, though most may never have made a systematic study of the repertory.

11 Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1970). Kuhn considers the ways in which paradigms are born, and perish only within the context of the history of science. His characterization of the manner in which scientific communities are socially grounded can be very useful in understanding the ways in which humanities disciplines organize themselves.

12 In the discussion that follows, I am forced to depend on my own personal experience in speaking with numerous colleagues in musicology and music theory over the last decade or so.
‘paradigm shift’. Following Kuhn, there is no way of knowing at the present time whether or not the shift proposed by these authors will be taken up by the field of musicology in the future. This will depend on whether or not the musicalological community finds the new models proposed by these authors more powerful than current ones in explaining and organizing the music with which its members are concerned. Popular-music scholars argue that when the repertory of music that is studied by musicologists is expanded to include popular music, their model will have more explanatory and organizational power than the current one.

But a crucial aspect of Kuhn’s work parallels very closely some of the claims made by McClary and Walker, Shepherd, and Middleton. Each popular-music scholar claims that music’s meaning—or its effects—are socially constructed. Kuhn’s claim is that scientific and, extending Kuhn’s claim, humanities disciplines are socially constructed as well. Thus, no matter how passionately the call for a reorientation in musicology is made, it will ultimately be the musicalological community itself that will decide whether or not to adopt the new model proposed. Thought of in this way, it seems extremely unlikely that such a paradigm shift will occur. The musicalological community is constituted not exclusively, but for the most part, by people who entered the field because they were interested primarily in music—and ‘music’ here is understood in the traditional, detached-from-social-concerns sense. Most have spent many years, in addition to undertaking musical studies and research, playing and even composing music. Popular-music scholars might argue that this kind of musical experience is meaningful precisely because it is socially grounded, and one must dig out the ways in which this kind of social reality can arise. The question, it seems to me, is not whether or not these kinds of sociological interpretations of musical experience are valuable—I believe they are—but rather, whether or not this should be the only kind of research that musicologists do, or even whether this should be the fundamental kind of question that all musicalological work must ultimately address.

Extending their own argument, Shepherd and the other authors discussed above must admit that if an intellectual community constructs meaning in the music it studies in a manner that excludes or severely subordinates sociological concerns, such a community has a perfect right to do so; while such a disciplinary situation can be examined and explained sociologically, it does not necessarily follow that the resultant analysis will have any impact whatsoever on the community itself. Ironically, insisting on radical change within musicology on intellectual grounds that are not central to the discourse itself—which, in fact, are cast as contrary to a point of view held by most musicologists—seems to go against the very notion that communities decide for themselves which disciplinary issues are central. The argument is cast as a critique from outside the discipline, and the rhetoric is more prescriptive than suggestive.

As has been noted a number of times already, the argument that music is inherently social has arisen—in the initial stages at least—from the notion that popular music and art-music are fundamentally different. In pursuing sociological questions in music, popular music has been fertile ground for investigation. After all, this music is popular, and how or why communities of people are attracted to certain popular-music styles or performers is an issue open to systematic empirical investigation. One can interview fans and musicians, check record sales and radio air-play, analyse visual images associated with the music (album covers, concert posters, etc.), analyse clothing styles, observe behaviour at live performances, and so on. Needless to say, this kind of investigation has not been standard in researching art-music and the culture that surrounds it. But if these methods of investigating popular music and culture provide useful information, so the argument goes, then it is only natural that they could be utilized in the study of art-music and its culture as well. Thus, while the separation of the two general kinds of music provides a starting-point for the investigation of popular music, such study later returns to art-music to claim that it must operate in ways similar to its popular counterpart.

The basic premises of this argument can be questioned, however. The authority of the popular-music scholarly claim a social basis for the understanding of popular music has tended in the past to go unquestioned by musicologists. After all, musicologists are generally thought to know little about popular music—in fact, they may appear to pride themselves on this ignorance—and one clearly needs to know a fair amount of popular music in order to come to even the most preliminary scholarly conclusions about it. It seems, then, that it has been far easier for musicologists to allow the sociological interpretation of popular music to stand than to learn entirely new musical repertories in order to challenge it. But this image of the musicologist immersed in art-music but oblivious to popular music is no longer tenable. Many musicologists and music theorists born after World War II came to music initially through popular music. Many played both art-music and popular music as children and as young adults; some did not come to the study of art-music until they had spent many years involved in popular music. In any case, it is difficult to imagine anybody growing up in the United States after 1955 who was not exposed to popular music, and to rock or country and western music especially. There are a number of young musicologists and theorists who know a lot of popular music, though most may never have made a systematic study of the repertory.

13 Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd edn. (Chicago, 1970). Kuhn considers the ways in which disciplines rise, flourish, and perish only within the context of the history of science. But his characterization of the manner in which scientific communities are socially grounded can be very useful in understanding the ways in which humanities disciplines organize themselves.

14 In the discussion that follows, I am forced to depend on my own personal experience in speaking with numerous colleagues in musicology and music theory over the last decade or so.
Music scholars with a background in popular music need not accept the claim that popular music is inherently social in the thoroughgoing way that popular-music scholars have tended to portray it; they have their own experience of the repertory against which to measure such claims. One may acknowledge that the social dimension plays a certain role in popular music—in some popular music it play a crucial role—and still argue that the principal significance of this music lies, for the musicologist, in the music itself—in the way it sounds. Writing as one who has spent many years playing and listening to popular music—and I do not want to rely too heavily on an ‘insider’ argument here—I have always been concerned with the way the music sounds, the way particular songs are situated within a single style and across various styles, and not so much with the kind of social or political statement that the music may have been making. In many years of playing in a wide variety of bands and performing situations, I found that most of the musicians with whom I worked shared this basic attitude. This is not to deny that others may have found that the same music makes social or political statements, or that there were social forces at work in my experience in unconscious ways: my claim is simply that this is not the principal manner in which its practitioners have tended to understand most popular music. I find that many of the claims made in popular-music scholarship, interesting and revealing though they sometimes are, are the results of the popular-music experience as I understand it. In short, I distrust the popular-music scholars’ claims that this music is meaningful in ways that are principally socially constructed.

The problem lies in the assertion that there is a single way to view popular music: namely, as inherently and primarily social. I propose instead that popular music can also be considered as inherently musical, and only secondarily social. According to this model, the gap between the study of popular and art-music becomes far narrower for the musicologist than it is in the more sociologically oriented model. The study of popular music is an area of research that the musicologist can undertake without necessarily becoming a student of sociology; while an understanding of social context is crucial to the understanding of popular music, it need not be the central, fundamental consideration. At the same time, musicologists must take the warnings of popular-music scholars very seriously, and avoid casting popular music as if it were ‘just like’ art-music. The challenge then becomes the investigation of popular music along traditional musicological lines while maintaining a careful sensitivity to how popular music may differ from art-music in its specifically musical dimensions. I do not reject socially grounded interpretations of popular music; I simply argue that such interpretations are incomplete whenever they cannot account for the specifically musical aspects of the music. A musicological account of popular music can coexist with a sociological account; the two approaches are complementary.

VI

For musicology, the problem of bridging the gap between popular-music studies and musicology can be addressed most profitably—in the initial stages at least—by exploring popular music vis-à-vis issues that already tend to occupy musicologists. There are a number of areas in the study of popular music that remain relatively unexplored in terms of the traditional concerns of musicology; in this section I will briefly sketch some of these areas.

One area that could benefit from musicological attention is the actual history of popular music itself. For instance, there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done simply in the historiography of rock.35 Histories of rock music have tended to fall into one of two categories: those that are journalistic and targeted at a popular readership36 and textbooks designed for undergraduate-level general-music courses.37 In such writing, the repertory of rock music has tended to be divided up according to stylistic labels that are often derived from the way the music was marketed, labels such as ‘British invasion’ (or ‘beat music’), ‘folk rock’, ‘surf music’, ‘rockabilly’, and ‘classical rock’ around. But writers have tended to avoid thinking of these styles in terms of their specifically musical characteristics; or if they have done so, they have considered these musical aspects in only the most superficial ways. The development of specific artists has also tended not to be portrayed in musical terms; the Beatles, for instance, are often seen to progress from mop-top innocence to Sgt Pepper psychedelics without any substantial reference to the development of the technical features of their music-making (recording techniques and instrumentation aside).38 The direct influence of earlier popular-music styles on later artists is also a potentially rich area of research which is often pursued in only the most superficial terms.39

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35 Since rock music is the area of popular music with which my own work is concerned, I will restrict my remarks to the situation as it stands in rock music scholarship.

36 Two widely read books of this type are Ward et al., Rock of Ages, and Greil Marcus, Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music, 3rd rev. edn. (New York, 1990).


38 Two recent studies that attempt to account for the development of a single artist or group in a musicological manner are Walter Everett's Swallowed by a Song: Paul Simon's Crisis of Chromaticism' and Daniel Harnson's After Sundown: The Beach Boys' Experimental Music, both in John Covach and Greimess Brown (eds.), Understanding Rock (Oxford, 1997). Everett is also at work on a book that traces the Beatles' development from their earliest days to the demise of the group in 1970.

39 Dave Hindham explores the ways in which American rhythm and blues was transformed in the British rock of the power trio Cream in his Blues Transformations in the Music of Cream', in Covach and Brown (eds.), Understanding Rock.
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Taking up these issues in the historiography of popular music may lead musicologists into unfamiliar avenues of research. Though there are some good collections of popular-music recordings and other materials in university archives, one is still more likely, for example, to have to hunt down older recordings in used record shops.40 Interviews with the artists themselves may appear in guitar or keyboard magazines, sandwiched between glossy ads for the latest guitars and amplification systems. The scholar may find it necessary to become familiar with recording techniques, or the machinations of record companies and radio stations. Tracing the history of any popular-music style demands that the musicologist be immersed in the popular culture from which the music arose, even when this constitutes a popular culture of the past. In the course of this kind of research, the musicologist is bound to depend, in part, on the work of popular-music scholars; and this dependence is bound to go a long way toward closing the gap between the two disciplines. The important aspect of the situation as portrayed here is that the musicologist come to this writing on his or her own terms; popular-music scholarship is used to create a complementary context to the specifically musical one within the overriding concerns of musical scholarship.

The study of popular music raises a number of issues that shed new light on topics that have traditionally interested musicologists. The issue of compositional process in popular music is largely unexplored. Many of the CD repackagings of older recordings include 'bonus tracks' made up of alternative versions of important, influential songs. In rock music, for example, comparison of multiple versions of a song can sometimes reveal the process through which the musicians came to the final version. This can suggest fresh perspectives on compositional procedure.41 The rapid, wide distribution of popular music radically speeds up historical and geographical components of style change and development, and this kind of change can be traced through a number of popular-music styles. These mechanisms of style change in popular music are bound to feed back into larger considerations of style change in music generally.

Popular music also challenges established notions associated with the study of art-music. Many popular-music songs, for example, are composed by two or more musicians; the Beatles' Lennon and McCartney are a well-known songwriting team. Add to this particular combination the roles played by band members George Harrison and Ringo Starr and producer George Martin in the arranging and recording process of Beatles music, and the single-composer model prevalent in art-music quickly breaks down. The role of the recording producer is an especially interesting one in popular music, and has no direct parallel in art-music. For instance, Elvis Presley's music changed in important ways when he moved from Sun Studios in Memphis, where he was produced by Sam Phillips, to RCA's Nashville studios, where he was produced by Chet Atkins.42 Thus the notion of a single artist controlling all aspects of a work's creation is no longer workable in much popular music, and needs to be replaced by a framework more faithful to the repertory. This kind of work is currently only in its most initial stages.

From even such a brief sketch as this, it is clear that the investigation of popular music by musicologists, in terms of the traditional issues of musicology, would benefit popular-music studies generally; but such investigation is also likely to suggest new angles on some of the traditional issues in musical scholarship, as well as new musicalological issues altogether. I am not arguing that socially and culturally grounded readings of popular music somehow do not constitute real musicology. Recent work by Lawrence Kramer and Susan McClary, for example, interprets Western art-music from a socio-cultural perspective; but Kramer's hermeneutic readings of Beethoven, Wagner, and Liszt, and McClary's feminist interpretations of Monteverdi, Bach, and Brahms depend to a significant extent on the reader's knowledge of how the canon of Western art-music is organized.43 While such approaches may challenge traditional musicalological interpretations, they can at least assume that the reader is well acquainted with the traditional slicing up of the art-music canon. By contrast, the history—or histories—of popular music and its myriad styles has, for the most part, not yet been established in anything but the most preliminary sense. There is still plenty of 'traditional musicology' left to do in popular music; in fact, the work has hardly begun.

Ultimately, I am arguing that if popular music is going to be interesting to musicologists, it will be interesting because it engages issues that already exist in the current discourse, or because it raises issues that extend or are closely related to issues within the current discourse; this needs to occur before popular music can suggest new issues within the discourse. The proposals made by McClary and Walker, Shepherd, and Middleton not only ask musicologists to look at different music, but also tell them to care about different issues in all the music they study. This is too much to demand of the discipline, and this kind of radical change is therefore unlikely to occur. If musicologists are going to include popular music in their teaching and thinking about music generally, they will do so because popular music fits into the ways in which the discipline conceives of music in a universal sense. In the current climate of curricular reform,
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40 Much older material has been re-released in CD format, but often repackaged in ways that do not preserve details of the original release. Meticulous casual blame of repackaging can be the elimination of the original liner notes or song lyrics; more drastic repackagings combine tracks from different albums, or even include material that has been re-recorded to avoid licensing problems.
41 Daniel Harrison explores this issue with regard to the music of the Beach Boys in a recent paper entitled 'Good Vibrations: A Case Study of Compositional Process in Rock Music', presented at the annual conference of the Society for Music Theory, 4 Nov. 1993, in Montreal, Canada.
42 For an account of Sam Phillips and Sun Records, see Colin Escott with Martin Hawkins, Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock 'n' Roll (New York, 1991).
43 See Lawrence Kramer, Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900 (Berkeley, 1990); Susan McClary, Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality (Minneapolis, 1991); idem, 'Narrative Agenda in "absolute" Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony', in Sue (ed.), Musicolecty and Difference, 326–44.
musicologists are increasingly called upon to teach popular music; but there are better reasons for including popular music in the teaching of music than those that arise through political and institutional pressures. The study of popular music opens up new repertories and introduces fresh perspectives on current issues in musicology; thus, it expands our understanding of the history of music and enriches our relationship to music itself.46

46 I would like to thank Matthew Brown, Walter Everett, and Allen Forte for reading an earlier version of this chapter and offering many helpful comments and suggestions. The opinions expressed here are of course my own.

21

Gender, Musicology, and Feminism

Suzanne G. Cusick

1. Gender and Musicology

Present at the Origin

My task here is to explain the relationship between gender and musicology, to explain the intellectual, musical, and political challenges that feminist scholarship poses to musicology, and to consider the reasons why feminist scholarship about music warrants the serious attention of all readers interested in 'rethinking music' as the twentieth century draws to a close.

I will begin by arguing that gender had been intrinsic to the practice of musicology in the United States, grounding my claim in a story of origins, the story of the founding in 1930 of the New York Musicological Society. This is the group that in 1934 dissolved itself so that it could be reconstituted on the same day as the American Musicological Society—the society whose corporate existence represents the institutionalization of musicology as a cultural practice in the United States.1

On 22 February 1930, the young American composer Ruth Crawford, lodging in the New York home of music patron Blanche Walton so that she could study dissonant counterpoint with musical polymath Charles Seeger, wrote thus in her diary:

The musicologists meet. It is decided that I may sit in the next room and hear [Joseph] Yasser about his new supra scale. Then when I come out for this purpose, I find someone has closed the doors. Blanche is irate, so am I. Men are selfish, says Blanche. You just have to accept the fact. Perhaps, I wonder, their selfishness is one reason why they accomplish more than women. . . . I walk past the closed door to my room, and when I pass I turn my head toward the closed door and quietly but forcibly say, 'Damn you,' then go on in