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ROBERT FINK

Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon

The following is an expanded version of a paper originally delivered at a 1996 conference on "Representing Rock" sponsored by the English department of an East Coast university. I was one of a small group of gate-crashing musicologists who slipped onto the program to address the very question of why (or whether) we should be there at all. The argument and tone of the present version still retain the performative tension of that rather tense interdisciplinary essay, and I beg the musicological reader's indulgence for passages of exposition—and the inevitable oversimplifications and tendentious as I work my way through an avowedly programmatic piece of disciplinary diplomacy.

In particular, I saw my task that afternoon as interpreting the "New Musicology"—and specifically new musicological relationships with popular music—for popular music scholars outside of academic music departments. Much work on popular music within cultural studies, communications, and sociology proceeds largely unaware of the recent and intense ferment of ideological self-critique within musicology. Scholars can be cut off from valuable syncretic insights into musical culture by out-of-date dualisms marching in lockstep: musicology versus cultural studies, analysis versus interpretation—even classical music versus popular music.

That last binarism seems to underpin all the rest, and it seems especially indefensible under present cultural conditions. The driving assumption in what follows—a wide-ranging, idiosyncratic survey of cultural trends,

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ideological battles, and methodological issues—is that the ruling hierarchy of musical styles that supported the very idea of “classical music” in Western (particularly American) culture for the last two centuries is simply no longer operative. Musicology, long viewed as both a constituent and a beneficiary of that hierarchy, needs to be reconceptualized for what Joseph Horowitz has presciently dubbed “the post-classical” era.

And if it appears that the hierarchy of musicological style has collapsed in what follows—well, that was, for better or worse, intentional.

Introduction: The “Musicological Problem”

[Low fidelity recording:] “You can’t play if you can’t do Elvis. Can you do Elvis?”

The twangy, impatient voice is that of an unnamed impersonator of—who else?—Elvis Presley, and as it happens, her question is a digital sample, a piece of *musique concrète*. It is the first of many samples of Elvis impersonation that composer Michael Daugherty (more on him later) incorporated into an encore for the Kronos Quartet which he called *Elvis Everywhere* (a perhaps unintentional homage to Mojo Nixon’s infamous “Elvis Is Everywhere”?). Our sampled faux-Elvis is too busy launching into a truly unfortunate rendition of “Viva Las Vegas” to raise metatheoretical issues, but her question resonates: Can academic musicologists “do Elvis”? Can we add anything of value to the study of popular music? Are musicologists who venture out from their crumbling ivory towers of Music Appreciation doomed to be the Elvis impersonators of popular music studies—wiggling our hips as best we can, slipping a few “Hey baby”’s in among the chord analyses and the surveys of historical influence, as we try to look cool?

That has certainly been the fate of many of us. Popular music scholars have been telling musicologists for the last decade that, if we want to come out and play with them, our unique disciplinary training is in fact a crushing liability. A key moment in almost every recent metatheoretical book on pop-music studies has been a stern warning against institutionalized musicology: David Brackett tells us to steer clear of “the musicological quagmire”; Richard Middleton seeks to avoid “the musicological problem.” Almost ten years ago, and from the inside, Susan McClary and Robert Walser were exhorting scholars of classical music to abandon “the hidden ideological claptrap of their musicological training.”¹ One cannot fault the accuracy of the picture. If only all practitioners of “traditional” musicology could see themselves this clearly!

Musicology is not historically neutral; it has not always “been there.” It arose at a specific moment, in a specific context—nine-

teenth-century Europe, especially Germany—and in close association with that movement in the musical *practice* of the period which was codifying the very repertory taken by musicology as the center of its attention. . . . The result . . . was an evolutionary sense of history (progress being usually defined in terms of structural complexity, “intellectual” level and expressive capacity), intertwined with the notion of a *canon* of “good music.” . . . For the core of musicology, the main assumptions remain strong: works are autonomous; art has transcendent qualities; the individual, the genius, the “great man” [*sic*] should be the focus of historical explanation; listening should be detached and contemplative, and analysis therefore text-centered.²

For many popular music scholars, it has been axiomatic that a discipline so ideologically compromised by its narrow focus on Western art music is not going to travel well—especially “down scale,” to the kind of music that most musicologists have spent their professional lives pointedly ignoring. But the “core of musicology”—even the idea that musicology *has* a single ideological core—was already under internal attack when Middleton read its beads so dispassionately; and there has been a steady increase in the amount and intensity of self-criticism within academic musicology since.³ It was only a year or two after the above paragraph was written that people began talking about a “New” Musicology—a gawky, speculative set of interdisciplinary trends that bore little resemblance to the traditional discipline whose methodological and ideological rigidity popular music scholars have feared and shunned for decades. Given the intense reevaluation of dogma roiling within the musicological quagmire, it seems appropriate to speculate on what the changes within our discipline taking place under the rubric “the New Musicology” mean for popular music studies. Has anything *really* changed in that swamp? And why should anybody outside of the (Classical) Music Department care?⁴

We might begin by asking, from the perspective of popular music studies, just what a “New” Musicologist might look like. A shorthand definition: a New Musicologist looks at institutionalized musicology from the *inside* the way popular music scholars have always looked at it from the *outside*: with a certain ideological suspicion. The New Musicology is one product of a decade-long general disciplinary crisis within the academic study of music. In a sense it represents a generational split; it is the collapse for many younger scholars of some of the field’s ruling ideological assumptions, often as a result of acknowledging the very historical contingencies catalogued by Middleton above. (In other words, New Musicology is what you get when musicologists themselves become aware of the musicological prob-

lem.) There is a large overlap between these so-called New Musicologists and the small but growing number of “crossover” musicologists who study popular music from within traditional music departments; for many of us, it seems natural to combine new approaches to canonical classical music with interest in various repertoires of popular music, especially post-1955 rock and pop.

These linked imperatives—to expand the field of study, to change the methodology and ideology of the discipline—represent more than just a hankering after something “new.” As Middleton points out, the ideological and professional moorings of academic musicology are driven deep into the bedrock of the canon of classical music it grew up with, around, and for. Thus it should come as no surprise that the ideological collapse that engendered the New Musicology is in many ways the internal consequence of the most profound external shock to hit American musicology in its brief seventy-five-year history: *the imminent collapse of the cultural authority of the classical music canon*. Digging out from the aftermath of this tectonic shift, battered and chastened, our “mainstream” academic musicology and its once-privileged repertoire are no longer the complacent, convenient targets they once were for popular music studies.

We have our *own* problems now.

Beethoven Has Left the Building
(*Tales from the Collapse of the Canon*)

Classical Music Is Dead?

The most pressing problem is that we may soon have nothing (living) left to study. As the millennium approaches, surveys of the classical music world have become astonishingly apocalyptic in tone. To judge from the pages of the *New York Times* or the reports of the American Symphony Orchestra League, we are in the End Times, and the arrival of Antichrist, in the form of either the latest popular music style or the next advance in the storage and distribution of sonic entertainment, is close at hand. “The (Unnatural) Death of Classical Music” is now a standard journalistic trope, so accepted that reporter-gadfly Norman Lebrecht has begun looking for someone to take the rap. His book-length exposé, *Who Killed Classical Music?* (1997), fingers winner-take-all market capitalism and a cabal of predatory managers, impresarios, and record company executives. Lebrecht’s hysterical conspiracy theories skate over abysses of systemic cultural and technological change, but his statistics, laid out in a grim “Coroner’s Report,” are impossible to ignore. As aging audiences quite literally die off, school music programs vanish, regional orchestras

collapse, and U.S. classical record sales drop below 2 percent of the industry total, we must all admit it: *Beethoven has finally rolled over*.

Indignant partisans will point out, quite correctly, that in absolute terms classical music has never been so widespread; certain genres, most notably opera, are even enjoying a moderate growth spurt. But the problem is really one of *market share*: the vastly expanded realm we now recognize as "American culture" simply dwarfs the puny scale of even the healthiest classical music institutions. Sometimes the material consequences are humiliatingly obvious: Lebrecht has wicked fun pointing out that the entire budget of Sony's classical music subsidiary is less money than the conglomerate has tied up in a single notoriously unstable pop star like Michael Jackson; when one of Jacko's records tanks, dozens of arty projects at what used to be Columbia Masterworks go down with it.⁵

But even the least vulgar Marxist will recognize that this shift in the music industry's base is bound to have some more general effect on the superstructure. Classical music long ago ceded economic primacy to pop; but as the shelf space devoted to it in the American cultural supermarket decreases to the vanishing point, when the majority of educated middle-class professionals have entirely lost sight of it, something new happens. For the first time in a century, classical music has lost even its symbolic or ritualistic power to define hierarchies of taste within the larger culture. Classical musicians have long complained, with voluptuous self-pity, that their position at the top of the hierarchy of musical taste was lonely, cold, and poorly paid. They will now have to get used to ceding that drafty, if prestigious, position altogether. Having long ago accepted loss of financial control (the final, bitter stages of this process are chronicled by Lebrecht), the institutions of classical music need to adjust to a much more disorienting loss of *semiotic* control. What they do is no longer paradigmatic; it is no longer Music-with-a-capital-M.

Classical musicians who venture out into the larger world of music will find this out the hard way; they are in for some rude shocks to their egos. David Schiff, composer, critic, and professor of music at Reed College, recently published what he intended as a blackly humorous account of his local orchestra's attempt to entice a faded pop star, the pseudonymous "Rock Bottom," into a crossover collaboration. Here is Schiff's mordant version of their first creative meeting:

Bottom arrived ten minutes late and entered the room as if he knew he was walking into a booby trap. He looked fortyish and darkly handsome, more presentable than the Afro-haired, gold-necklaced disco idol I had found on the cover of an album from the seventies. [Oregon Symphony conductor Murray] Sidlin laid out the

theme of the concert and expressed his hope that we could reach a common goal. . . . Bottom listened sullenly. "I have a few questions," he began. "First of all, I keep hearing this word 'collaboration.'" He glared across the room at me. "How is that supposed to happen?" Sidlin explained that he would like a piece demonstrating improvisation within different styles, including Baroque, Romantic, modern, and rock; I had written such a piece, he continued, which would alternate sections for the orchestra and the rock band. Bottom looked around the room with an expression of impatient disbelief and then his face lit up. "I know what you want. You want to give a concert of contemporary music. I am a contemporary musician. Let me tell you what you need to do." I had watched the term "music" become synonymous with "rock," at least in the weekly entertainment section of the Portland paper. *But this was the first time I had heard a rock musician claim the present historical moment exclusively for himself.* Bottom continued, an emerging mammal addressing dinosaurs [emphasis mine].⁶

Professor Schiff tries to be a good sport, but he clearly sees himself as the innocent victim in this spiky exchange. Who is this washed-up disco idol to dictate musical terms to a trained classical composer? The ironic truth is that Bottom *is* stepping into a booby trap; he has a much better right than Schiff to "claim the present historical moment exclusively for himself." The musical conception that emerges as the rock star lectures the orchestra management about the facts of contemporary concert life—each orchestra player must be individually miked, they will need a state-of-the-art amplification system to surround the audience with sound, an expanded virtuoso percussion section, and so on—sounds much more interesting and, well, *contemporary* than the paleozoic variations on (get this) "Hit the Road, Jack" that Schiff had planned. (It was a formulaic choice: however tired as pop music, "Hit the Road, Jack" has the descending minor tetrachord in its bass, a familiar tonal progression that has been the basis for many improvisatory forms in the history of Western art music.)

Note: The battle is not over money. (A simultaneous players' strike allows Schiff to demonstrate quite clearly that the Oregon Symphony's worst economic enemy is itself.) The fight is over something much dearer to a music professor's heart: *cultural authority*, specifically the authority, even in absentia, of the classical music canon. Rock Bottom is undeniably a contemporary musician; he is just not in David Schiff's musical canon. His rock-bottom music is not supposed to aspire to be canonical music (the music that needs no qualifying adjective like "rock" or "popular"), especially when Bottom is face to face

with what is left of the classical institutions of what used to be canonical no-adjective-needed "Music." Unfortunately for Schiff and all the rest of us making our living off that classical canon, its hegemony over musical culture is gone. Vignettes like this one are occurring all over the musical world every day.

What does it mean to say the cultural authority of the classical music canon is gone? Indulge me in a very synoptic overview. Since about 1830 or so we have lived in the West with a quite circumscribed repertoire of so-called Classical Music. Obviously not everyone listened primarily to this music—that was a large part of its class appeal—but almost everyone accepted that Beethoven was MUSIC the way the Mona Lisa was (and still is) ART. From the late nineteenth century to about 1965, canonical European concert music occupied a secure—if hard-won—position at the top of a generally accepted hierarchy of musical culture.⁷

Lest I be misunderstood, let me point out that this relatively brief moment of classical music hegemony was hardly a "Golden Age" of natural cultural creativity and utopian relations between composers, performers, and audiences. Most of the canonical pieces that it enshrines were written well before the mummifying hierarchy of taste solidified around them. Even during the final middlebrow paroxysm of classical music canon worship (ca. 1930–60), many commentators saw how canonic power was being deployed as much to discipline the disruptive forces of modern mass culture as to preserve and transmit a unique cultural heritage.⁸

In its heyday, this classical music canon had two secure domains: first, a *performing canon of masterworks*, centered in nineteenth-century Romanticism. This was art music for the masses, the repertoire of the conservatories, the big symphony orchestras, and the opera houses; "great" music hedged around with powerful social mystifications like genius, transcendence, and autonomy. Second, an *avant-garde canon*, also hedged around with powerful social mystifications like genius, transcendence, and autonomy. This was the realm of difficult and intellectually challenging "modern music," not much listened to outside of small coteries and (by the end) university music departments, but possessed of tremendous cultural authority.

Both these domains are in the final stages of a thirty-year collapse as we speak: as Rock Bottom's refusal to kow-tow dramatizes, for the first time since the mid-nineteenth century, neither the performing canon (the Oregon Symphony) nor the avant-garde canon (Dr. Schiff, contemporary composer) has any real authority in American culture. The cultural evidence is simply overwhelming, as the following quick survey of musical current events circa 1997 demonstrates.

The Disneyland Symphony Orchestra (Classical Music as Simulation)

First, the Masterwork Canon. One of the sad ironies of recent musical discourse has been the amount of time we spend nerving ourselves up to challenge the awesome cultural power of the Great Works, when outside the Music Department that same music is, at best, marketing fodder, and at worst, totally ignored.⁹ The Western classical music establishment today bears little resemblance to an oppressive fortress of High Art. The effort to keep the money coming in has turned it into something akin to Disneyland's Magic Kingdom: behind the papier-mâché battlements is a carnivalesque scene of frenzied and quasi-random marketing efforts. Onto the covers of classical CDs and record magazines troop phalanxes of sexpot violinists in revealing poses, diminutive virtuosi, floating monks—and at the head of the parade, the infamous Three Tenors, the single most popular classical music phenomenon of all time, hammering their way through famous opera arias, in unison and at great amplification, for soccer stadium after soccer stadium of enthralled “fans.” Pallid collections of classical “greatest hits” are thematized according to time of day (Bach at Bedtime); hawked by spurious scientific claims (Mozart Makes You Smarter); marketed like computer manuals (Beethoven for Dummies); even sorted by sexual preference (Sensual Classics, Out Classics). More and more traditional media outlets for high art music are, to paraphrase Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “defining classical music down.” Turn from MTV to PBS in search of musical programming, and the only string players you can rely on seeing are those backing Yanni, Lawrence Welk, and John Tesh.

Representative of a historical moment, perhaps, was the sad saga of the *Shine* pianist, David Helfgott: a schizoid who had nothing left to offer audiences but a weird array of on-stage tics and mannerisms; the remains of a fluent technique; and, crucially, the kind of gripping, if heavily fictionalized, dysfunctional life story familiar from tabloids and talk shows.¹⁰ Yet his empty run-throughs of canonic warhorses topped the Billboard charts; his recording of Rachmaninoff's Third Concerto has by now probably outsold all others (including the composer's own and those of such crowd-pleasers as Horowitz and Van Cliburn) combined. I submit that this could never happen with popular music, music most people actually know and care about. Brian Wilson may have been tragically poignant in the documentary *I Just Wasn't Made for These Times*, but old (or new!) Beach Boys records didn't start outselling Alanis Morissette.

This is by no means the beginning of a neoconservative jeremiad about the corrupting effects of modern mass media on Great Art.

None of the above is new; in fact, to a music historian, the explosion of hype feels weirdly familiar. In its postcanonic state, the musical world is quite naturally starting to revert to the lineaments of its *precanonic* guise. After all, it was P. T. Barnum (of Barnum & Bailey fame) who successfully marketed the first classical music superstar back in 1850. He only had one soprano to work with, not three tenors—but by the time he was done with Jenny Lind, the “Swedish Nightingale,” she had become the biggest box-office draw in U.S. history. If the American classical music scene looks like a circus today, it is simply returning to its roots.

Joseph Horowitz sees Barnum as the epitome of an American tradition of “ballyhoo”—art as hype and spectacle—which has been fighting it out since the mid-nineteenth century with a Puritan marketing rubric of art as moral uplift.¹¹ The classical masterwork canon has always been firmly on the side of selling art as serious moral endeavor; indeed, the more strenuous the rhetoric of uplift, the more narrowly the musical canon has been interpreted. The narrow, uplifting canon of classical music, like the expensive imported wines and automobiles with which it is indelibly associated, has demanded to be marketed with discretion—a discretion often sniffily contrasted with the high-pressure tactics associated with more popular musical products. It is comforting to decry the explosive resurgence of ballyhoo in classical music marketing as an intrusion from the world of rock and roll; but it is just as much the consequence of the institutions of classical music continuing to operate—and reverting to time-honored marketing strategies—in the absence of the proprieties enforced by an authoritative canon of classical music.

Thus the attraction of Lebrecht’s modernist, crypto-Marxian analysis of this development: it neatly shifts blame away from the world of classical music itself. Isn’t this just a textbook example of what happens when the late-capitalist “cash nexus” bulldozes through a backward, helpless sphere of cultural production, one that is in many ways still pervaded by the mentality of the guild? Lebrecht is right to point out the radically destabilizing cultural effect of folding classical music institutions into multinational conglomerates and subjecting them to unmediated market forces. It is his insistence on fixing individual blame in the face of inevitable, systemic economic transformation that makes no sense; it actually weakens the effect of his Cassandra-like pronouncements.¹²

But we are much more cautious now about questions of priority in the base-superstructure relationship; in postmodern analyses of cultural production, changes in the cultural sphere often precede and presage transformations in the material sphere.¹³ Did greedy record company executives—or even impersonal market forces—really swoop down

and decimate the mores and customs of a vibrant and unsullied “classical” music? Or were they just moving into the vacuum left when its historically contingent construction of a normative hierarchy of musical tastes *collapsed all by itself*? Boosters are right to point out the tenacity of classical music institutions, and the often-heroic struggles by individual musicians and scholars to uphold their constructions of the “classical”; but no amount of material struggle can resurrect the epistemological power of a dead canon. All we have left is ballyhoo.

From this post-Marxist perspective, moments of surreal marketing excess like Helfgott and the infamous Three Tenors are the symptom, not the disease. Their brand of hyped-up “Classical Music,” like the shiny fakeness of Disneyland, functions as what postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard would call a “third-order simulacrum”: the obviously inauthentic simulation that disguises the fact that there is no underlying authentic reality left. David Helfgott and John Tesh have not cheapened the image of the concert pianist; their joint ascendancy proves that *there is no such thing anymore as a “concert pianist.”* That particular cultural role has collapsed (shrunk?) into meaninglessness, and these flamboyant simulacra—almost dialectical extremes of the bizarre and the bland—help disguise the fact. As Baudrillard says, such simulacra help create “a deterrence machine set up in order to reverse the fiction of the real.” To paraphrase one of his most notorious quips (originally about Disneyland), David Helfgott and John Tesh are there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” pianists, all of them, who are Tesh and Helfgott.¹⁴

The unanimous systematic attack on the post-*Shine* Helfgott phenomenon shows the process in action. As he toured city after American city, every major music critic felt obligated to weigh in, verifying that the shattered pianist was bad in Boston, still bad in New York, even worse in San Francisco, and so on. Underneath the frowning denunciations of a deplorable media spectacle, there was a secret relief, a condescending smile that readers and recordbuyers reacted to with fury. Helfgott was obviously a fake—which meant *there had to be a “real” somewhere*. By painstakingly insisting on the difference, journalistic apologists for high art music could switch on the deterrence machine, and pump a little reality back into the collapsed canon of “great music” and its “great interpreters.” Alert readers will ask what part musical academia plays in this game of deterrence and simulation. So has the New Musicology.

Radical Chic (Bring in da Noise, Leave Out da Funk)

The situation of the Avant-Garde Canon is less dire in some ways, but much more disorienting. There is as much good composing going on in academies as ever; it is just getting harder to believe that

the academy is an independent source of cultural and stylistic authority. Composers are rummaging through every discard bin of popular culture searching for the hipness and cultural cachet they used to think they could create for themselves. The single biggest trend in "serious" music composition is the wholesale borrowing of the attitude of rock music to get a rise out of audiences and critics. (The days are long gone when Leonard Bernstein could ruffle feathers by confessing he was more interested in the next Beatles record than anything his colleagues were doing. Everybody's into radical chic now.) Composers used to be photographed in front of some intimidating computer equipment or a row of scores; now the done thing is to be holding an electric guitar.

The 1970s rise of the so-called downtown minimalists (Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, La Monte Young), with their openness to jazz-rock textures and modes of production, was a relatively tame fore-shadowing. These guys were driving cabs, not going for tenure. Now Steve Mackey, Milton Babbitt's junior colleague at (once so austere modernist) Princeton, openly pastiches alternative rock, writing electric guitar solos with titles like "Grungy." More flamboyant still is Michael Daugherty, the author of *Elvis Everywhere* and the even more wonderful *Dead Elvis*. (A bassoonist dressed as Elvis gyrates in front of a chamber ensemble playing the "Dies irae" chant as a high-volume, high-speed gallop. *Cool*.) Daugherty's music drama on the life of *Jackie O* had its premiere at the Houston Grand Opera, but the composer is running away from "grand" opera as fast as he can. He would much rather have you think of *Jackie O* as fun, campy musical theater—what his liner essay calls a "pop opera." Daugherty downplays his impeccable pedigree as a member of the University of Michigan composition department, and plays up his pop chops: "[I'm] a musician who came of age during the sixties, playing in rock and jazz ensembles, performing in avant-garde improvisation groups, and paying my dues as a cocktail pianist in nightclubs."¹⁵

The rise of postminimalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s has almost worn the accolade "the power and punch of a rock band with the precision of a chamber ensemble" right out. Inspired by Dutch iconoclast Louis Andriessen and expatriate radical Frederic Rzewski, an entire generation of composers (Steve Martland, Elliot Sharp, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, Evan Ziporyn) has been attempting to repackage—and thus redeem—musical modernism by insisting on its solidarity with a particular reading of popular music as anarchic critique of society. Highly amplified ensembles feature horns, guitars, and percussion; the musical language emphasizes aggressive, explicit backbeats, virtuosic rhythmic play, and a deliberately restricted harmonic and melodic palette; the composers dress, talk, and sometimes preen like rock musicians.

The music is really very good, sometimes it even rocks hard—but the ideological imbalance is striking. Although composers talk with equal reverence of Stravinsky and Coltrane, Mondrian and Chaka Khan, Iannis Xenakis and Wile E. Coyote, they consistently put their pop foot forward. It seems that the rock references that dot their record covers and interviews are what really confers “authenticity.” The situation of the 1920s, when modernism first encountered popular music, has been almost exactly reversed. Modernist composers like Eric Satie, Igor Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud, and Aaron Copland tried to provoke bourgeois audiences, Dada-style, by transgressive borrowings of low-status jazz and ragtime; today’s postminimalism attempts to resuscitate the same modernism by appealing to the now *higher* status of alternative rock and jazz. These “popular” styles have more cultural prestige than classical music for their prospective audience, that same bourgeois intelligentsia in its present Boomer/Gen-X American incarnation. Andriessen and his followers may be trying to reassert the cultural priority of the avant-garde canon, yet with every grungy, out-of-focus album cover they confirm only the opposite.¹⁶

Still it would be a grave mistake to see postminimalism’s fusion of modernism and popular music as slack cultural relativism, hipster irony, or just selling out. These composers care deeply about art, believe in its ethical importance, and proclaim their strenuous idealism in the ringing tones of the *Blaue Reiter* and the *Vienna Secession*: “An entire generation of composers has been drawn to Louis Andriessen’s rigorous radicalism. There is something about his personality that is like a call to battle. Are you for him or against him? Do you want to join the defenders of true originality and art? Or go to the other side where everyone is entrenched in old, superstitious ideas?” “For Steve Martland, all stages of composition—production, reproduction, and consumption—are as political as they are inextricably intertwined. His ideal: to make the world a better place.”¹⁷

Really, postminimalism’s embrace of alternative rock/jazz culture is arty composers turning not away from artiness, but *toward* it. It is a tacit admission by university-trained musicians that they and their institutions have lost control of what constitutes “art music.” Sometimes that loss of control is material and obvious. The rules governing the eligibility of musical compositions for the Pulitzer Prize were modified in 1997 to remove their implicit bias toward classical music. The jury promptly selected Wynton Marsalis’s “jazz oratorio” *Blood on the Fields*, putting an end to decades of insider trading.

But this is a trivial epiphenomenon of the deeper (and profoundly positive) phenomenon that postminimalist composers have intuitively understood: for the first time, the production and consumption of contemporary art music has broken quite free of institutionalized clas-

sical music. It is the classical avant-garde (the oxymoron is telling) that is “entrenched in old, superstitious ideas.” That composers and critics within the academy are largely unaware of this development can only be charged to myopia. It may come as a surprise to those enmeshed in campus compositional politics, but the intellectually adventurous are not sitting around in coffeehouses complaining that the continued dominance of high modernist ideologies within academic music departments has alienated them from serious contemporary music. They have plenty of avant-garde music in their lives. It’s just not “classical.”

No, I’m not talking about people who think Kate Bush’s lyrics are “deep,” or the amateur musicologist who has a catalogue of every extended jam by Phish. I’m not even concerned with the graduate student who can tell you how the Talking Heads act out the dissolution of the subject in postmodern society. I’m talking about people who will buy (and listen to) a fifty-five-minute collage of radio speeches *in German*; who will sit in the audience while their favorite band “plays” by attaching a contact microphone to an industrial belt-sander; who regularly consume huge stretches of dissonant, often achromatic sound, pulsed or pulseless, screamingly loud, vanishingly soft—contemporary music that would have the audience for the Oregon Symphony tearing up their seats and throwing them at the stage.

It has been years since a musicologist’s search for interesting contemporary art music recordings (and there are so *many* of them now) could responsibly stop with the classical bins. You won’t find Glenn Branca’s mind-bending symphonies for massed electric guitars in various temperaments there; nor will you find the dissonant high-frequency assault of John Zorn’s *Kristallnacht*, built upon layer after layer of sampled shattering glass, so literally excruciating that the composer warns it may cause nausea, headaches, and ringing in the ears; and don’t expect to find any of John Oswald’s CDs there, even though he has worked with the Kronos Quartet, and though his *Plexus* album purees Top 40 hits into insanely precise digital collages that make Luciano Berio’s *Sinfonia* look like a child’s puzzle. Today, serious art music has to be tracked down all over the cultural landscape: the grittier end of the new age; the spookiest and most ethereal corners of ambient; the most uncompromising slabs of hardcore and techno; and, sometimes, the least academic products of the university new music ensemble. As you explore this postmodernist, postclassical explosion of sonic creativity, you will be rubbing elbows with fans and fierce partisans who will not necessarily share your interest in Bach, Beethoven, Babbitt—or academic musicology.

This is the quiet, hopeful truth behind sensational announcements that “classical music is dead.” Classical music institutions like sym-

phonies and record labels will continue to function, and many people will derive pleasure and meaning from the composition, performance, and consumption of classical music. But both classical music canons, performing and avant-garde, have lost their roles as cultural validators; they have lost control over what is defined as “art” music. The ultimate result is a fundamental *decentering*—not just of avant-garde or institutional authority, but of music culture in general. No longer is there classical Music-with-a-capital-M and its “Others” (such as jazz, pop, folk); the canon of Western classical music is now just one among many, and *not* the most culturally prestigious anymore, at least in America. Other canons are forming busily, and other kinds of music are making credible plays for the top of the taste hierarchy. These days, Wynton Marsalis might persuasively nominate pre-bop jazz as the most “classical” American style; a baby boomer, following his sixties idols Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, might counter with Mississippi Delta blues. Ask any streetcorner Goth, or an East Village performance artist, and they’ll tell you that boomer nostalgia sucks; the most culturally challenging, sonically difficult styles of contemporary music are techno, ambient, and (for the really arty) industrial.

Fate hands me the perfect summary example. This article is being revised in the shadow of Princess Diana’s public funeral ceremony, one of the most powerful media events of the decade, seen live by over 30 million and rebroadcast to hundreds of millions more. Since the funeral contained music from the masterwork canon, the avant-garde canon, and from the world of pop, it was a vast, uncontrolled experiment on a significant fraction of the world’s population: how paradigmatic did each style of music seem at this moment of high ceremony and emotional drama? How well did it function as Music-with-a-capital-M?

The representative of the masterwork canon, the “Libera me” movement of Verdi’s *Requiem*, fared worst, even though it would seem to have been perfectly tailored to the pomp of a big state funeral. (Some of this was circumstantial: the orchestra part had to be replaced by organ, and the acoustics of the Abbey were obviously not designed for Italian opera!) Although it became known that this was one of Diana’s favorite classical pieces, there was little positive reaction to it. The representative of the avant-garde canon, John Tavener’s anthem *Song for Athene*, actually provoked more interest, at least among those already familiar with classical music. (Tavener’s piece was chosen by Prince Charles, an acquaintance of the composer; it was originally written for another young woman who died in an auto accident.) Internet mailing lists devoted to choral music lit up with questions about the author, where the sheet music could be had, and whether a recording was available.

Meanwhile, of course, everyone in the English-speaking world ran

out to buy a copy of a rewritten 1973 ballad about Marilyn Monroe called "Candle in the Wind." It looks fair to be the biggest-selling single in the history of recorded music (600,000 copies were sold in Britain in one day, which along with the 1.5 million advance orders meant it went double platinum in 24 hours); every newspaper printed Bernie Taupin's new lyrics, and CNN camera crews captured crowds of British mourners swaying and singing it together over and over during extravagant midnight vigils. This was the Music of the moment, not Verdi's *gran scena* or Tavener's hieratic chant, or even the sturdy Anglican hymns that once would have spoken most directly to the mass. The classical canon was outclassed on its home turf (Westminster Abbey is where Handel is buried). Rock Bottom, in the person of Reginald Dwight, a.k.a. Elton John, had effortlessly "claimed the present historical moment exclusively for himself."¹⁸

That is why it does no good to spout statistics about the sudden mass-market craze for this or that classical music phenomenon—Helfgott, Gorecki, chant, and so on. As we shall see below, the collapse of the canon does not mean the *disappearance* of classical music. Far from it. But classical music will never be paradigmatic or hegemonic again.

Don't think this is a lament—or a call to arms. Calls to "revitalize" the classical music world do not seem very helpful, especially from within the academy. If "keeping it alive" is just academic musicology's code for restoring the canon's cultural hegemony, then we really *do* have a "musicological problem." Another shorthand definition of a New Musicologist: one whose entire professional training took place after the classical music era; who feels no nostalgia for its distinctions and no desire to be a mandarin of canonical high art music; who questions whether the mission of academic musicology is to reify and reinscribe the distinctions that create a canon of art music. In the second part of this essay, I want to address some ideological and methodological issues that arise from reconceiving musicology (and perhaps pop-music studies as well) for the "postclassical" era. But first, why would any musicologist tell this tale to popular music scholars? What does it mean for you—beyond the occasion of a little discreet gloating over our discomfiture? Is this the beginning of a beautiful friendship?

Interlude: Baby, Let's Play House
(*Why You Need a Musicologist to Listen to Beck*)

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?
(The Amphibious Musicologist)

It doesn't take much imagination to picture popular music scholars awaiting the influx of postcanonic New Musicologists with decidedly mixed feelings. They have a perfect right to conceptualize their sit-

uation in terms of the classic 1950s science-fiction scenario of invasion from outer space. "We have exhausted the resources of our home world. . . so now we need yours!" And indeed, it has often seemed that, in the face of alien interlopers with superior technology ("*Their ability to analyze music is centuries ahead of ours, Mr. President!*"), the only honorable response from popular music studies has been guerrilla resistance—a scorched-earth antiformalism backed up with Marxist accusations of cultural and class imperialism (or at the very least, a few tart reminders about the musicological problem). The rise of the "amphibious" musicologist, the scholar who glibly claims to be researching at the same time sixteenth-century polyphonic treatises and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, has not necessarily helped matters. Such ambidexterity might mean transcending the classical canon and its hegemony—or it might just signal overweening confidence in the canonizing power of musicological method. Do we really come in peace, for all mankind?

Let us admit that the recent path of historical musicology has been progress by annexation. Something very like a fear of limited resources—how many Mozart editions do we need?—has indeed driven musicologists toward canonic expansion. (Music theory, on the other hand, has tended to emphasize increasing depth of formal insight into a relatively restricted canon of masterworks.) As long as it is just the corners of the European concert music tradition being "rehabilitated," musicology can move in easily, with few external accusations of cultural insensitivity and incremental modifications of canonic faith. But the assimilation of rock and pop brings with it greater challenges.

Though it may seem unprecedented, this situation is unique only in degree, not in kind. Each musicological annexation of territory has involved what, from the inside, felt like wrenching ideological self-transformation. Studying Rossini and Verdi meant dispensing with lingering Germanic cultural chauvinism (the invidious "two cultures of music" argument), and reassessing long-held beliefs about organic structure, fixed musical texts, and the primacy of abstract instrumental music. Dealing with Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Ives, and Britten meant confronting entrenched homophobia and misogyny masquerading as an ideology of musical "genius." Forays into twentieth-century historiography, seeking to situate problematic antimodernists like Stravinsky and Weill, proved to be fatal to venerable beliefs in music's political autonomy, both from totalitarianism and the mass audience of capitalism.¹⁹

There is reason to hope that an engagement with popular music will be the catalyst for musicology's most profound self-transformation yet. That is undoubtedly a large part of its attraction on the part of those who wish to study it and still call themselves "musicologists."

We will gain new tools and ideological freedoms to apply to what used to be canonical music; we may also be able to catalyze some transformations in the ideological and methodological approaches that have crystallized around pop and rock music. In the final part of this essay, I would like to take a first step, and ask what a New Musicologist, freshly scarred from fierce internecine battles over formalism and hermeneutics in the analysis of classical music, can add to the debate over formal analysis of popular music. All too often, the positions of musicologists and popular music scholars *vis-à-vis* "formalism" or "structural analysis" harden into a pat dialectical opposition that serves neither repertory well. Perhaps as we explore the same music, we can find some common epistemological ground.

Classical Music as . . . Whatever

But first, a brief plug for the practical services of historical musicology in the postcanonic era. Allow me to unfold a paradox: the collapse of classical music's cultural hegemony makes a specialist's knowledge of classical music *more* necessary for pop-music scholars, not less. Remember, the walls of the canon served not only to keep barbarians and their music out; they also served, very conveniently, to keep the high art music safely walled in. Now that those walls are down, the sounds of classical music are drifting out into the bloodstream of popular music like a new and disorienting virus. (This is the flip side of the rock seepage into postminimalism.) While the canon and its hegemony were strong, the cultural prestige of high art music was an effective antigen. Upon encountering the stuff, either the rock host rejected it immediately as foreign, or a distinctive inflammation set in, which we used to call, perhaps unfairly, "being pretentious." The Bach trumpet in "Penny Lane," rock operas, the entire corpus of Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. You know . . . *Art Rock*.

Art Rock's fusion of styles could be studied and understood, from both sides, within the old patterns of classical music's cultural hegemony. But now—and Baudrillard could have predicted this—now that "real" classical music is dead, its ghostly simulacra have developed the ability to move freely through the mediasphere. And these decontextualized, culturally neutral shards of classical music turn up, unheralded, in the strangest places.

Who could have predicted, for instance, the current fascination with classical music signifiers in mainstream rap and soul videos? Lushly lit orchestras of (almost always black, very rarely real) string players fill the set, when the only musical correlative is a synthesized "analog string" patch down in the mix. Often rappers will lead the orchestra, in one video even conducting with a white, phallic baton. The

association of classical orchestras with wealth and (white) power is of long standing in black soul music;²⁰ yet one marvels at Coolio's "C U When U Get There," which samples Pachelbel's famous canon for a somber meditation on death, complete with a white-robed Coolio conducting a heavenly choir also dressed in white. Sean "Puffy" Coombs (a.k.a. Puff Daddy) took some heat for swallowing The Police's "Every Move You Make" whole on his massively successful *No Way Out* album; but the musicologist's ears perk up when, as an intro to the much-condemned "I'll Be Missin' You," he indulges in a maudlin Barry White-style confession of loss for the Notorious B.I.G. over—Lord!—Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, in the composer's own treachery arrangement as an "Agnus Dei" for choir.

Even more enigmatic is Coombs's video for "Can't Nobody Hold Me Down," which begins with the artist-producer asleep in his luxurious digs. In the grips of a nightmare, he struggles underwater for breath—and the soundtrack starts by dropping us right into a grand opera climax, soprano and tenor caterwauling as if the whole thing were going to be a high-concept BMW ad. But as soon as Puff Daddy wakes up ("Man, I just had the *illest* dream," he remarks), the opera vanishes, never to return. There is nothing in the rest of the video to support a class reading of the operatic intro; it appears to be a straight shot from the cultural unconscious—an evocation of something uncanny, totally strange, like the surreal imagery of dreams.²¹ (Or like the sound of Verdi to the teen audience for MTV's soft rap videos.)

Whether or not we can identify the opera in question, the grand operatic voice as "numinous intruder"—whether from the beyond, or from the Lacanian imaginary—is a phenomenon familiar to musicological discourse; there are many analogous moments in the avant-garde canon.²² It might behoove a popular music scholar to inflect the material class and race oppositions that spring immediately to mind (*rap* is to *opera* as *low* is to *high* as *black* is to *white* as *poor* is to *rich*) with insights from musicology, where opera has been studied both as a medium for the display of wealth and power and as a direct route into the depths of the collective (and perhaps culturally constructed) psyche.

It is probably not possible for black artists to invoke European concert music without at least some class and racial tension; but some middle-class whites these days can achieve a perfect indifference to classical music that is chilling and at the same time oddly refreshing. Consider "High 5 (Rock the Catskills)," from Beck (Hansen)'s second album (*Odelay*, 1995). As in the best Beck tracks, a thrift-shop cascade of five sampled musical styles, including '60s bossa nova lounge guitar, vocoder-inflected '80s rap, and funky orchestral hits from '70s soul, is crammed into less than two minutes. The last sample is al-

ways shocking to musicological audiences: a moment of electronic noise ushers in a brief, bleeding chunk of the year 1822, as Beck samples the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony.

What does this piece of the masterwork canon signify? As far as I can tell, it can best be translated by that all-purpose '90s interlocution: "Uh, yeah; whatever." By the time Schubert shows up, we have been so pummeled by stylistic overload that we'll accept whatever comes next. And, conversely, the sound of the symphony orchestra is so gloriously out of any possible context that it has a hallucinatory immediacy—for a minute, before recognition sets in, we hear the raw sonic impact of the classical canon without its distancing cultural halo of "significance." How foreign, how *different* it sounds! (Kind of like a dream; thus Puff Daddy, above.) This is what Cage was aiming for when he claimed to be interested in the Beethoven symphonies only if he could play them all at the same time. A different strategy, but the same decanonizing (or postcanonic!) overload.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that the Schubert quote stands for "high and/or serious art." We are given absolutely no sign during the rest of the song that the classical sample is to be considered special, that it is any more prized or stigmatized than the rest of the cultural detritus that blows through Beck's sound collages. Surprisingly enough, given his media status as vacant slacker icon, Beck can claim his own, quite different avant-garde pedigree: his grandfather was a minor neo-Dadaist, and his mother hung out at the Factory with Andy Warhol. The closest he has ever come to identifying with a "classical" musical style was his association with the early '90s LA neofolk scene; it seems that Delta blues and acoustic slide guitar (remember "Loser"?) are the sound of "the classics" for Beck. Schubert is just . . . *whatever*.

As a final example, I would adduce the complete indifference to canonic boundaries within the ambient-techno scene. As everybody knows by now, ambient has its roots as much in the avant-garde canonical experiments of Brian Eno (and behind him the American pulsed minimalists, La Monte Young, and, ultimately, John Cage) as in the "chill-out" rooms of underground raves.²³ Sometimes the hybrids are obvious to even the low-resolution ear. Enigma's spectacularly successful packaging of a standard DJ cool-off trick, the layering of Gregorian chant over spacious mid-tempo dance tracks, epitomizes "ambient" for many. But quite a few ambient and techno musicians seem to know as much about American minimal music as the best-trained musicological specialists. It takes an extremely discriminating ear to spot the cross-breeding and insider references, because we are now talking about "pop" musicians quoting "classical" composers in a context where there is little or no clear-cut sonic dif-

ferentiation between the styles. One has to be able to identify the sound of dance musicians quoting the marginal bits of the avant-garde canon that *already sound like dance music*.

Taking stock of this repertory does not require an amphibious musicologist, adroit at crossing heavily defended canonic boundaries; nor is it easily decoded by a pop-music-and-culture specialist, proudly uninterested in anything "classical." Ambient needs a music scholar willing to research as if there were no canonic boundaries, to see that for electronic musicians there is only one distinction that matters. There are people who use tape and electronics—you, me, the Chemical Brothers, 808 State, Steve Reich, μ -Ziq, Stockhausen, Public Enemy—and people who don't.

To map even the single interaction between ambient-techno and American minimalism is beyond the scope of this essay; all I can do is sketch in some relationships I have spotted and refer the reader to the select discography. The testimonial evidence is copious and unequivocal, as Kenny Berkowitz of *Option* magazine recently proved. In a clever piece of journalistic shuttle diplomacy, he first asked cutting-edge British techno artists like The Orb, Orbital, μ -Ziq, Aphex Twin, and Underworld what they thought of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. They all obligingly claimed pulsed minimalism as a formative influence and raved about their favorite pieces. Underworld's Rick Smith cherishes Reich's *Music for Eighteen Musicians*; Richard D. James (a.k.a. the Aphex Twin) is busily remixing the same piece for a proposed album. Alex Paterson of The Orb (age 37) boasts he watched *Koyannisquatsi* six times in one evening ("All my mates went out to play. They thought I was quite mad"); and Mike Paradinas of μ -Ziq (age 24) recalls "The first time I heard Philip Glass was in 1987. I was playing in a rock band, it was over a P.A. in the hall. It was 'Music in Twelve Parts, Part One.' And I thought, what the fuck is this? It's brilliant, and it hasn't changed for 12 minutes." Berkowitz then headed off to Reich and Glass bearing fan messages from the techno avant-garde and a fistful of CDs—but, ironically, the pioneers of minimalism remain underwhelmed by their electronic nephews and grandchildren. (Glass on Orbital: "It's really not very edgy, is it?")²⁴

That's okay, because techno artists aren't all that interested in the acoustic orchestral work Glass and Reich are doing now, either. They prize the early abrasive recordings with their fuzzy tape loops and buzzy analog synthesizers, aurally attracted to the style roughly insofar as it sounds like "electronica." Paterson's groundbreaking double album, *The Orb's Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld*, samples, among dozens of other things, the Allegri Miserere, Ennio Morricone's soundtrack for *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and Minnie Riperton warbling "Loving You (Is Easy 'Cause You're Beautiful)".²⁵ But when

the opening track, "Little Fluffy Clouds," seamlessly incorporates into its groove Pat Metheny's 1989 recording of Steve Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*, the resulting loop hardly screams "classical." Reich's original is scored for electric guitar; it is already funky, is already a loop, and is already built up out of overdubbed recordings. It fits right in. A sly vocal overdub points us toward the trans-canonic common denominator: as a plummy British voice intones over and over again, both minimalism and ambient work by "layering different sounds."

Sometimes the collaboration is more interactive. "ICCT Hedral" is a classic ambient track by Richard James, who records under the pseudonym the Aphex Twin. It was first realized using James's trademark recreations of classic analog synthesizers, and that is how you will hear it on his 1995 album *I Care Because You Do*. But the *Donkey Rhubarb* EP single from the next year contains a transcription of "ICCT Hedral" for chamber orchestra and electronics, in which guise it sounds uncannily like an excerpt from an opera by Philip Glass. The original track must have sounded uncannily like Philip Glass to Philip Glass, since the composer himself is credited with the "remix." When Glass's orchestration was released as an Aphex Twin single, it did not self-consciously "cross over" into ambient, aiming for the *frisson* attendant on anticanonic moves like the Kronos Quartet's transcriptions of Evans, Monk, and Hendrix. What the "classical" version of "ICCT Hedral" did was give Glass at least a provisional place *inside* the interlocking economy of remixes that helps cement relationships within the ambient/techno culture. (Glass actually dug up this remix to play for Berkowitz, who reports Glass seemed "genuinely disappointed that he liked it so much more than anything I'd played for him.")²⁶

There are even times when ambient music appears to make coded historical references to minimalism on the level of technique, as in "Time Becomes," the first track from Orbital's second album (*Orbital 2*, 1993). Most fans probably thought that putting the voice of Commander Worf through a phase loop was just a cool reference to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*; a few Orbital diehards would have recognized the gesture as a clever expansion of the vocal snippet that begins "Moebius," from their 1991 debut release. But a musicologist might identify a different precursor: the phase process is identical to that developed by Steve Reich in early repetitive tape pieces like "It's Gonna Rain" (1965) and "Come Out" (1966). It is hard to hear this as Art Rock. I doubt many ambient-techno fans care enough about the status of minimalist music within the Western canon—positive or negative—for it to matter. Nor does it seem that any of these bands are trying to claim some cultural prestige that "classical music" still holds for them. It seems rather that the distinction between classical and popular is totally irrelevant. Thus Paterson of The Orb: "I am

using sounds and styles that are so different to be able to obtain in the long run a music so peculiar and definitive that it would be pointless for the critics to try to label it."²⁷

The *ne plus ultra*: I recently discovered, quite by accident, that there is a track on *Sweetback*, the eponymous 1996 debut album by Sade's backing band, which samples and distorts the opening seconds of a performance of John Cage's 1956 "Radio Music" that took place in a Milan radio studio on April 5, 1974, and was released on the impossibly obscure Cramps label later that year. How did this snippet of aleatoric sound collage find its way onto a mainstream soul album? Who was supposed to recognize it? What could it possibly mean?

Welcome to the brave new postcanonic world.

*Love Me Tender (Postcanonic Notes toward
an Erotics of Popular Music)*

Canon and Method

QED, I hope. The collapse of the canon has left bits and pieces of classical music all over the place, and you never know when you might need a musicologist to help you sort them out. But that is hardly all that is at stake. The distinction between canonic Classical music and its Others also has traditionally enforced methodological choices that separate the musicologist from the pop-music scholar—especially when they engage in analysis.

Battles over analytical methodology have been some of the most bruising interdisciplinary engagements within musical academia in the last fifteen years; and yet it seems that one of the most controversial and significant paths between musicology and popular music studies cuts right through those contested relationships between musical sounds, structural abstractions, and social meanings. Of course, analysis of musical texts is only one of the things musicologists do, and it is worth pointing out that much of musicology's methodological toolchest has already been productively applied to popular music. The rubric under which this journal is published—*American Music*—has traditionally defined an area where musicologists and their historiographic techniques could participate unproblematically in the study of both folk and commercial repertoires. (The exemplary work of Charles Hamm, H. Wiley Hitchcock, and Richard Crawford is musicology, as are Gunther Schuller's magisterial studies of *Early Jazz* and *The Swing Era*.) Similarly, the paleographic and philological skills practiced on vellum and parchment have been employed to catalog vinyl; and chronicling the day-to-day operations of a major record label poses no fundamentally different documentary problems than

sifting through the musical and financial records of a minor German principality.

But (and we narrow our focus decisively here) analysis is different. It has been different within academic musicology for the last twenty-odd years, ever since the institutionalization of a burgeoning discourse of structuralist analysis within a secessionist Society for Music Theory. One of the unfortunate effects of naming a New Musicology is that it erroneously implies the existence of a self-consciously reactionary Old Musicology, against whose canonic rigidity and "positivism" the new paradigm would naturally battle.²⁸ Actually, the fights within historical musicology have mostly been pragmatic struggles over limited resources on program and tenure committees. The truly rancorous ideological battle is not between New and Old Musicology, but between competing definitions of the New: the 1978 New (structuralist/music-theoretical) *versus* the 1988 New (poststructuralist/feminist/cultural). The ground of the battle is analysis, and the most powerful ideological fireworks erupt when the New Musicology challenges Music Theory for analytic authority over canonic musical texts.

The basis of the challenge will seem quite familiar to popular music scholars:

If the musicologists' characteristic failure is superficiality, that of the analysts is myopia. Their dogged concentration on internal relationships within the single work of art is ultimately subversive as far as any reasonably complete view of music is concerned. . . . Along with preoccupation with structure goes the neglect of other vital matters— . . . everything else that makes music affective, moving, emotional, expressive. By removing the bare score from its context in order to examine it as an autonomous organism, the analyst removes that organism from the ecology that sustains it.²⁹

At the end of the chapter in *Contemplating Music* from which the above is taken, the author, Joseph Kernan, calls himself a "traditionalist critic" prone to scolding "formalists."³⁰ Identifying analytical formalism as myopia, as the ideological buttress of an extraordinarily, even dangerously narrow musical canon, and calling for an analysis that was less formalist and more critical, older musicologists like Kernan and Leo Treitler prefigured a full-blown assault on formalist music theory and analysis by younger musicological critics (McClary, Walser, Richard Taruskin, Lawrence Kramer) who are anything but traditional.³¹ (More on that below.) Ironically enough in the present context, Kernan has always been rather pointedly elitist in his musical tastes. ("For better or worse, I am not very much interested in non-Western music or in the popular music of the West.")³² But the cri-

tique of formalist canon worship coming from *within* musicology has found powerful echoes from without, as popular music scholars translate arguments about how to discuss “great” Western music into wider multicultural and subcultural contexts.

Both of Kerman’s central complaints about music theory’s approach to the classics—that formalist analysis assumes the musical text as autonomous and transcendent, thus severing musical structure from cultural context; and that formalism obsesses over structure while neglecting how music makes us feel—immediately arise whenever popular music scholars consider “musicological” analysis of rock and pop. Middleton’s musicological problem (“[musicology assumes that] works are autonomous; art has transcendent qualities; listening should be detached and contemplative, and analysis therefore text-centered”) echoes quite precisely the first point of Kerman’s indictment. McClary and Walser, on the other hand, saw Kerman’s second charge as evidence of a full-blown analytical defense mechanism: “No wonder so many products of musicology seem so obfuscating. They aim precisely at displacing and obscuring the focus, at diffusing the music’s energy.”³³ (At our current level of disciplinary focus, “products of musicology” in the above should probably read “products of music theory.”)

It seems that a key aspect of the “musicological problem” is actually a *music-theoretical* problem: how to deal with the ideological dangers of unrestrained analytical formalism. New Musicology has been wrestling with this problem as it relates to canonic repertoires for some time. But popular music scholars sometimes seem blissfully unaware of this deep unease over formalist music theory. Assuming that anybody studying music formally must be a formalist, they dismiss all technical discussion of music, popular or classical, as “musicology”—and they want none of it. The following is, of course, a caricature-composite of many more nuanced views, but some variant of this dichotomy has been the basic starting point of almost all recent discussions of analytical methodology and popular music:

1. Canonic “classical” music rewards *formal* analysis. It is thought to have complex structures which are essentially autonomous of society and deal with abstractions that transcend culture. It thus naturally has moved musicologists, especially music theorists, to develop and refine elaborate structural methodologies. The question from this side is: “Don’t popular music scholars want to know how music works? Why won’t they accept our powerful tools?”
2. Popular (jazz, folk) music, like noncanonic classical music, rewards *hermeneutic* analysis. Embedded in culture, its primary significance is as a carrier and constructor of social meanings and identities. It makes no pretense to autonomy or transcendence: in fact, its value

is thought to lie in the cultural specificity of its message and effect. It naturally has moved scholars to develop complex readings of musical texts as cultural signifiers, and to research the material specifics of production, dissemination, and consumption. The question from this side is: "Don't musicologists and music theorists want to know how music works *in culture*? Why must they parade their irrelevant expertise in parsing forms?"

Thus, within the academy, discrimination between high and low musics still appears to be made primarily on the grounds of *form*. An emphasis on form, and the analysis of formal structures, marks one as a devotee of Art Music; an emphasis on content, particularly as it intersects with social structure, predisposes one toward Popular Music.

I want to problematize this all-too-easy set of matched binarisms. (That might well be another handy definition of a "New Musicologist": someone who goes around problematizing things his colleagues thought were just fine the way they were.) All discussion of musical form need not be formalist. Nor need the divide between formalist and hermeneutic approaches coincide with the crumbling divide between the Popular and the Classical. There is no longer any agreement within musicology (new or old) that formalist analysis is the best way to approach classical music—nor has there ever been unanimous consensus that cultural hermeneutics is the best way to account for popular music. Let's take a few historical turns around what will turn out to be a dialectical spiral.

[First Turn.] Against Interpretation: From Content to Form

Given the current anxiety over formal analysis of popular music, it may come as a surprise to remember that at the moment when rock burst onto the cultural landscape, the main obstacle to understanding it was thought to be an overemphasis on *content* in art. The key text here is Susan Sontag's 1966 collection of essays, which bore the programmatic title of its lead essay, *Against Interpretation*. Sontag saw rock music—along with happenings, minimalism, and New Wave cinema—as evidence of a "new sensibility." This new sensibility, with its emphasis on new varieties of sensation, and its cool indifference to what Sontag dismissively called "the Matthew Arnold idea of culture"—art as a "species of moral journalism"—completely effaced the prevailing distinctions between high and low culture. The final sentence of Sontag's book: "From the vantage point of this new sensibility, the beauty of a machine or of the solution to a mathematical problem, of a painting by Jasper Johns, of a film by Jean-Luc Goddard, and of the personalities and music of the Beatles is equally accessible."³⁴

The reason contemporary critics had missed this new sensibility

was their retrograde obsession with content. Capital-A-Art was tied to a lofty yet narrow didacticism, and the demand that all art be *about something important* led to a smoggy miasma of interpretations: "Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities."³⁵ Sontag despised the kind of Great Books readings of art where every novel or play turns out to be about "man's inhumanity to man." (The recrudescence of the Great Books propadeutic in the 1980s, right alongside hysterical denunciations of rock and roll—cf. Allan Bloom and William Bennett—proves that the "old sensibility" is very much alive and kicking.)

The cure for this "philistinism of interpretation"? A cool, analytical emphasis on *form*:

What kind of criticism, of commentary on the arts, is desirable today? . . . What is needed, first, is more attention to form in art. If excessive stress on *content* provokes the arrogance of interpretation, more extended and thorough descriptions of *form* would silence it. What is needed is a vocabulary—a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive, vocabulary—for forms.³⁶

Rock music, the epitome of the new sensibility, cannot be understood or canonized by *interpreting it*. Sontag, had she troubled to read them, would have been appalled by the irrelevance of (to take a notorious example) Wilfred Mellers's overheated hermeneutic excursions into Dylan and the Beatles.

Nothing could be stronger evidence for the truth of Sontag's position than the hash the old sensibility makes of popular music in a neoconservative diatribe like Martha Bayles's *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (1994). As one might expect from the tendentious juxtaposition of abstract nouns in her subtitle, she lays waste to large tracts of American popular music by demanding that its Beauty come from its Meaning—in other words, that it always display affirmative content, full of "the triumph of the human spirit" and the "transcendence of suffering." Everyone has to be Louis Armstrong, all the time. Even the most powerful formal innovators are ruthlessly dismissed if their politics are wrong, or even just muddled; if their anger and hopelessness are too corrosive; if they seem too anarchic in their embrace of hedonism; if their critique of white middle-class mores and institutions is too "perverse."

On the other hand, it is not clear that Sontag would have appreciated Hebdige-style subcultural theory either. Interesting sociology, she might murmur, but bad aesthetics. In other words, too much (subcultural) content, not enough form. As an exactly contemporary pun-

dit of the new sensibility put it, stop looking for the message—the *medium is the message*.

When l.p. and hi-fi stereo arrived, a depth approach to musical experience also came in. Everybody lost his inhibitions about “highbrow,” and the serious people lost their qualms about popular music and culture. . . . Depth means insight, and insight is a kind of mental involvement that makes the content of the item seen quite secondary.³⁷

According to the new sensibility, the way across the old cultural divide between high and popular music was (and is) to move away from content and toward form, away from shallow, bodiless interpretations (what Sontag saw as “the revenge of intellect upon art”), and toward the physical depth of real musical experience. We must stop asking *what rock means* and start asking *how rock makes you feel*. We need to know how rock musicians engage in the key activity of the new sensibility: “the programming of sensations” (Sontag, again). This form-to-sensation path is not the only one into popular music—it ignores a whole spectrum of sociopolitical significance—but I think we can all agree on a gut level with Sontag that it is one of the most promising.

[Second Turn.] From Form to Form-as-Content

Interestingly enough, when Sontag praises examples of this new formal criticism she mentions analyses of film, drama, painting, and literature. Writing about music, pop or classical, is conspicuously absent, and this even though Sontag accords the Beatles, Pierre Boulez, and John Cage prominent positions within the new sensibility. Ironically, if she had looked over at what academic musicology was doing, she would have seen a veritable explosion of formalism. Between 1955 and 1965, new vocabularies for describing form were springing up like weeds, and cultural hermeneutics of music was in deep disrepute. This period saw the founding of the first periodicals devoted primarily to pure musical analysis (the *Journal of Music Theory* in 1957, and *Perspectives of New Music* in 1962), and the first breakthroughs into the academic mainstream of all the seductively powerful abstract formal vocabularies that still dominate analysis of art music today—whether tonal (the voiceleading theories of Heinrich Schenker), atonal (Alan Forte’s theory of set-classes), or serial (the mathematical invariance theories of George Rochberg, Milton Babbitt, and David Lewin).³⁸

So academic musicology should have rushed to embrace the analysis of rock music, since we were already asking the right—that is, the right *formal*—questions. Or were we? One of the effects of the collapse of the classical canon has been to leave formalist musical anal-

ysis open to intense self-critique, as well as an accelerating barrage of criticism from musicology. Let me be clear here: it's not that the continuing cultural prestige of Classical Music was buttressing the very idea of doing formal analysis—and vice versa. The point of bringing up Sontag and McLuhan was to show how abstract formal analysis was first seen as deeply *subversive* of that canon. What the prestige of the Classical Music canon was actually shielding from critique were some fundamental ideological assumptions about music itself; these assumptions both validated the pursuit of formalist musical analysis and forced it into a mold relatively hostile to the understanding of popular music. (And, if you are a New Musicologist, "classical" music, too. But that's another, intramural battle.)

It would not be the best use of my space here to rehearse this argument at length; there are many full-blown accounts in print.³⁹ A schematic outline of formalist ideology might run like this: There is a complex of deeply held beliefs about abstract instrumental music in the academy that can be traced back as far as the early Romantic period. They boil down to an assertion that *music is valuable insofar as it exhibits the qualities that also define bourgeois subjectivity*: autonomy, organic unity, hierarchical depth, and long-range teleological patterns of tension and release. If these formal conditions are met, as in, say, a symphonic movement by Beethoven, music can have transcendental immediacy: it is directly present to us without cultural or bodily mediation, and with the force of a profound and timeless human truth. If the conditions are not met, as in almost all popular music, the music is inferior. Most of the key qualities of music that enable immediacy are not directly perceptible during ordinary listening—in particular organic unity and hierarchy—so it is the task of formal analysis to demonstrate their presence axiomatically and thus validate the music.⁴⁰ Analysis upholds the cultural prestige of the canon, and maintains a powerful hierarchy of taste, based on the ability to create and perceive complex forms.

At this point, one of the truisms that all music students imbibe in analysis classes—that in abstract music, *form is content*—takes on the sinister ring of the "old sensibility." (It is a very old sensibility indeed, traceable as far back as Eduard Hanslick's 1854 essay *On the Musically Beautiful*.)⁴¹ Musical form, thus constructed, has little to do with Sontag's "programming of sensations"; it is pressed into service, just like content was in the bad old days, to transmit cultural capital, cultural truths, maybe even some suitably abstracted version of "the triumph of the human spirit" (cf. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony). The kind of hard-headed and specific description of material sensations and structures that Sontag wanted has little to do with what all but the most progressive music theorists today practice as "formal analysis."

They may think they are looking for objective *form*, but what they are finding is subjective *form as content*—and a particularly midcult-ish, affirmative content it turns out to be, time and again. In the world of the masterwork canon, every great piece is formally perfect and complete, and every perfect form is hierarchically, organically unified. Thus every formal narrative, however complex, has a simple and obligatory happy ending: *it worked*. All the notes are accounted for and, one more time, the triumph of the human spirit is assured. The relevance to popular music has been, for all practical purposes, nil. In general, popular music, whose forms almost never exhibit complex hierarchic depth, organic unity, or long-range patterns of tension and release, is as badly served by this cultural construction as it was by the old Matthew Arnold idea of culture as moral journalism.

[Third Turn.] *Against Against Interpretation:*
Letting Content Be Content

There have been two basic reactions from the New Musicology. One is a full-throttle return to hermeneutics. If form is being asked to do the job of content, and the form-as-content that is uncovered is, often as not, “this piece mirrors what I value about my own subjectivity back to me, and is thus great,” and you don’t care anymore whether it is great or not—why not go in search of a funkier, more satisfying hermeneutic? Start from Adorno rather than Hanslick; assume that cultural and political content is immanent in musical structure, and that music is a signifying cultural production that does cultural work. Music’s formal abstraction—its supposed inability to represent anything outside itself—is a defense to be breached, not a Grail to be worshipped. Readings of canonical works in terms of body politics, sexuality, religion, race, and so on have lent a new fascination to the content of musical artworks. This project has allowed us, as one (old, perhaps new) musicologist said, not to “get *out* of analysis, but *out from under*.”⁴² The suspicion has arisen that overemphasis on the form-as-content of musical works has displaced more challenging contents. There has been a concerted effort to reenergize the history and criticism of music by recapturing their power to be the history and criticism of culture.

This puts the New Musicology directly in sync with the prevailing paradigms of popular music studies, where discussion of music in terms of politics, race, class, gender, and sexuality is refreshingly unproblematic and central. This is why I began by defining a New Musicologist as someone who looks at academic musicology from the inside the way popular music scholars look at it from the outside. If you fear that a call to master complex technical vocabularies, to con-

centrate on formal abstractions, to consider music as autonomous and transcendent of culture, is a call to strip it of cultural content, fill it with reified form-as-content, and to inscribe it in an already-collapsed canon—well, the New Musicology is intimately familiar with these anxieties. We're not here to "help" you by handing over our advanced technology, in the blithe certainty that it will solve all your interpretive problems. We now know that those tools come with a price, and an agenda. And that agenda is singularly hostile to sensation—and to popular music.

[Fourth Turn.] Dancing about Architecture, or,
Toward an Erotics of Music

And yet—we are still musicologists, and we do have something to offer *as musicologists*. It may seem that I am working my self-abnegating way toward a proposal to eliminate all the Departments of Musicology and Music Theory and replace them with programs in Music and Cultural Studies. But that would be the easy way out. Before we all gather at the cultural-studies river, we have to acknowledge that popular music study, no less than classical music study, is still struggling to answer Susan Sontag's demand for a descriptive vocabulary of form that can give insight into the new sensibility—in particular, into the way popular music works materially to "program sensations." The common goal is a formal vocabulary developed free of the compulsion to produce form-as-content, and free of the crippling burden of validating the canon of Great Music. That formal vocabulary may be verbal, but the words may not be the ones with which classically trained musicologists are familiar. It will have to do with our complex system of Western notation, but only in places: the places where the creators and consumers of popular music avail themselves of its powers.⁴³ Perhaps the vocabulary will be mediated by recording and digital technology, so that a specialized training in the transcription of Western classical music is no longer the back-breaking (and mind-bending) prerequisite to any formal description of the world's music.

The experience of trying to forge the new vocabulary of sensation out of the pieces of the old vocabulary of canonic validation is what New Musicology can bring to the table. Another Susan, Susan McClary, echoed Sontag's call for formal investigation of pop music as sensation a quarter century later:

What musicologists can contribute to the study 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 only as flexible backdrops, up against which the noise of the piece can reverberate.⁴⁴

Here the New Musicology and popular music studies confront each other directly. Many popular music scholars are familiar with McClary's stinging critiques of formalist analysis, and her repeated assertions that an understanding of how any music constructs bodily desire ("kicks butt") must be the goal of any analytical description. The most successful moments of the New Musicology are when analytical tools, partially reconfigured to capture some aspect of music as a construction of physical desire (the "flexible backdrop"), ground a sexual-political hermeneutic, some specific cultural content, in equally specific and perceptible features of the musical experience. Success along these lines is hardly automatic, and much of the work still feels provisional or exploratory compared with the hermetic elegance of traditional form-as-content analyses. (The criticism from within academic musicology has been withering.) But these provisional successes are probably the only ones that can be transferred into the world of popular music.

They may also provide an alternate model for popular music analysts who seem quite eager, sometimes, to generate their own kind of distancing form-as-content. There are those who argue passionately and by example that we should apply music theory's full arsenal of analytical methodologies forthrightly to rock, but Schenkerian reduction graphs will probably always be a hard sell within popular music studies.⁴⁵ Still, the kind of analysis that popular music scholars do today, even as they self-consciously step around the musicological quagmire, sometimes seems just as likely to grind the musical experience to pieces. This may be the last thing you expected to hear from the keepers of the canon, but there are moments when a little *less* rigor might be nice.

Philip Tagg's justifiably celebrated attempt to exhaust the semiotic field of the *Kojak* theme may stand as paradigmatic.⁴⁶ Here we certainly avoid the musicological problem: there is no truck with ideologies of genius and expression, no bias toward large-scale narratives, no compulsion to produce the complex, hierarchical forms that serve as content for canonic classical music. On the other hand, Tagg's rigorous structuralism generates what we might call *code-as-content*: again, the immediate experience of the music disappears, not behind an architectonic form, but behind a complex semiotic web that has to be built up from scratch, museme by primitive museme. The code is a significant advance over musicology's reified forms, since it incorporates and integrates both musical and cultural constructions; but

in its attempt to show the whole structure within which musical meaning comes to exist, it risks spreading the musical experience so thin that we are just as effectively alienated. Musicology has been guilty of welding refractory pieces of music into falsely organic fetish objects, but popular music scholars sometimes seem overly fascinated with analytical methods that pulverize them into ever-more-fundamental structuralist primitives—often as a conscious outflanking maneuver:

The basis of syntactic structures in music lies in metamusical processes of the human mind, either innate or connected with very deep levels of psychological development. And it is in this more general area—where cognitive science, experimental music psychology, and artificial intelligence theory come together—that work is going on which may eventually not only reveal a universal framework underlying the different types of musical structure and sense, but also provide both ethnomusicology and popular music studies with the weapons that will dethrone traditional musicology from the center of the analytical stage.⁴⁷

A fascination with cracking deeply embedded cultural codes energizes the most ambitious attempts at pop-music analysis. If musicologists seem overanxious to mystify canonical music from high above, popular music scholars often seem to think that they can best surprise their pop quarry from far below. When David Brackett spends forty-one riveting pages dissecting Elvis Costello's "Pills and Soap" in *Interpreting Popular Music*, he is deliberately taking on the suspicious pop intellectual who famously dismissed all writing about music as useless, like "dancing about architecture." But Brackett is not intimidated. He has just brilliantly sidestepped the musicological problem by interpreting the complex proportional symmetries uncovered in a performance of James Brown's "Superbad" not as (reified) form, but as cultural code, signifyin(g) on both themselves and the classical canon. He now provides an exhaustive phenomenological description of "Pills and Soap" in terms of musemes and their complex signifying codes, down to the unanswerable level of adducing spectrum photos of the registral variation in the overtone patterns of Costello's voice. Coming up at Declan McManus from below, he demolishes the ambivalent artist's claim to an impossible semiotic innocence: "Without mastery of a code, creative work is impossible. But the very fact that a narrative is 'coded' means that it lends the appearance of the natural to the artificial, thereby rendering form invisible in a novel or pop song."⁴⁸

Let me erect a flimsy binarism for which Brackett need accept no direct responsibility. It seems that art ("artificial") music is *formed*, while popular ("natural") music is *coded*. The musicological problem

can then be defined as attempting to describe visible, autonomous form where there is only invisible cultural code. Ascribing formal autonomy to popular music can fatally entangle the analyst in a morass of nineteenth-century German idealism with little or no explanatory power when faced with the material reality of popular music. It can also make him look like a colonializing chump, projecting his own arty artificiality and canonic preoccupations onto cultural productions which use deeply embedded codes precisely to communicate with a carefully constructed (and fiercely defended) “effortless naturalness.”

But cultural code-as-content has its own complementary pitfall, which one might call the semiological problem: the claim that deciphering rock’s codes and identifying its low-level music-semiotic primitives is the same as understanding the physical message that this amazing, visceral medium is. As Costello said in 1983, putting rock music in a “frame”—attempting to exhaust its significance by modeling it completely, either as organic form or semiotic code—“only drags down its immediacy.” Brackett has little patience with this “romantic notion of unmediated artistic spontaneity,” and why should he—or any of us?⁴⁹ Musicology is stiff from centuries on its knees in front of the icons of Genius.

But when McClary and Walser talk about “constructing models that serve only as flexible backdrops,” the key word is undoubtedly *flexible*. Perhaps our common strategy should begin not with swallowing outmoded notions of artistic spontaneity, but with embracing a new-old ideal of *interpretive* spontaneity. This is the only real advice New Musicology, taunts of sloppiness and diletantism from our own colleagues ringing in our ears, has to offer pop-music scholars. *Loosen up*. We had analytical rigor, and it felt dangerously close to rigor mortis.⁵⁰ Avoid totalizing (framing) critical gestures altogether, whether in the service of autonomous form or cultural code; stop trying to put the entire piece together (musicology) or take it totally apart (popular music studies). Get in, say something that helps convey the immediacy of the musical experience, and *get out*. Stop marching through the music’s architecture—and *dance* a little.

Valedictory: Doing Elvis

I deliberately withheld Susan Sontag’s best line until now, because it prepares a particularly satisfying final cadence. Sontag ended her essay “Against Interpretation” with a famous and ringing assertion: “In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.” Let us by all means heed the call; but recent musicological history has shown us that formal analysis, segregated from the vital cultural content acknowledged by hermeneutics, is too easily co-opted. It becomes not the erotics that

Sontag wanted—the formal study of how art organizes our bodily sensory experience—but instead an ideologically driven, *antierotic* search for disembodied structures of transcendental form-as-content.

We really need both an erotics *and* a hermeneutics of music, together. There have been notable attempts to synthesize this unstable compound, to meld precise phenomenological description of musical effects with cultural interpretation: Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*; Roland Barthes' famous essay "The Grain of the Voice"; Greil Marcus's *Mystery Train*; to pick a random handful. But such work can hardly be said to be a main focus of institutionalized musicology and music theory—not yet. Rather than expound the virtues of such a mix in the abstract, I want to make a small valedictory intervention in the complex discourse around a famous piece of music whose erotic and hermeneutic fields are already inextricably mixed: Elvis Presley's 1956 recording of "Hound Dog." The aim is to explore how musicological analysis can help popular music studies "do Elvis."

"Hound Dog" is the song that earned Presley the moniker "Elvis the Pelvis." The sexual consequences of his 1956 live and televised performances of the raunchy novelty number have been inflated to near-mythic proportions:

ONE OUT OF THREE AMERICANS SAW ELVIS ON "ED SULLIVAN" IN 1956! And to paraphrase Texas songwriter Butch Hancock, Elvis wiped out four thousand years of Judeo-Christian uptightness about sex in fifteen minutes of TV. The King shook the fig leaf away and the kids of "The Donna Reed Show" would soon find themselves high as a kite and fornicating in the mud at Woodstock.⁵¹

If ever there was a promising subject for an erotics *cum* hermeneutics of music, this would be it. The search for the cultural context and hermeneutic content of "Hound Dog" has led Elvis devotees on dizzying intertextual journeys like the one chronicled in Peter Nazareth's "Elvis as Anthology," wondrous and complex stories that twist the simple binarisms of race, sound, and authenticity into unrecognizable knots.⁵² Begin with two New York Jews, Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller, who wrote an "imitation" rough blues number for legendary blues shouter Big Mama (Willie Mae) Thornton, a song which became a huge r&b hit in 1953. Elvis evidently knew that record, but only thought about covering the song during a disastrous Las Vegas engagement in April 1956 when he saw a (white) lounge act called Freddy Bell and the Bellboys do a comedy-burlesque "Hound Dog" with show-stopping va-va-voom choreography. Elvis started working the number into his live show as comic relief, basing the lyrics and his "gyrations" (to use the famous word) on what he had seen in Vegas. The song always got a big reaction, and it became Presley's standard

closer, a witty multiracial piece of signifyin' humor, troping off white overreactions to black sexual innuendo.

But nobody got the joke. Turning to Elvis's *recording* of "Hound Dog" allows the construction of another, tighter hermeneutic, one that situates the July 2, 1956, session within a short, bitter struggle over the performance of sexuality in America's mass media. On June 5, Elvis performed "Hound Dog" on the *Milton Berle Show*, gyrations and all.⁵³ The display was not taken as parody. "Hound Dog" confirmed mainstream America's worst fears about rock and roll, and sparked nationwide vituperation; for the first time, Presley, who in "Heart-break Hotel" had the number one record in the country, and who still saw himself as basically a good, churchgoing boy, was attacked in the media as a sexual exhibitionist with no musical talent. On July 1, Elvis appeared on the *Steve Allen Show*. It is still not certain whether Allen (a middlebrow jazz devotee) was intentionally trying to embarrass Elvis, but the format of his appearance ensured any dangerous sexual charisma was totally dissipated. Presley was dressed in the white tie and tails of a "high-class" musician, the clothes were intentionally made so tight he couldn't move freely, and—the crowning humiliation—he was immobilized completely during "Hound Dog," directed in a gesture of heavy-handed satire to address the tune to a real basset hound.

By most accounts Presley was a good sport about all this, but Scotty Moore has testified that when the band went into the studio the next day to record "Hound Dog," they were all angry about their treatment the previous night. Elvis drove the band through thirty-one takes, slowly fashioning a menacing, rough-trade version of the song quite different from the one they had been performing on stage. Nazareth quite plausibly interprets this as revenge on Steve ("you ain't no friend of mine") Allen, and as a protest against being censored on national TV.⁵⁴

The musicologist can provide the erotics to back this hermeneutic up. "Hound Dog" is notable for an unremitting level of what can only be called rock and roll *dissonance*: Elvis just shouts, leaving behind almost completely the rich vocal timbres ("romantic lyricism") and mannerist rhythmic play on added syllables ("boogification") that Richard Middleton identified as the cornerstones of his art.⁵⁵ Scotty Moore's guitar is feral: playing rhythm, he stays in the lowest register, slashing away at open fifths and hammering the strong beats with bent and distorted pitches; his repetitive breaks are stinging—and even, when he begins one chorus in the wrong key, quite literally atonal. (Moore, embarrassed, would later dismiss this solo as "ancient psychedelia.")⁵⁶ And the Jordanares, a gospel quartet who would provide wonderfully subtle rhythmic backup on the next song Elvis recorded at the session, "Don't Be Cruel," are just hanging on for the

ride during this one, while drummer D. J. Fontana just goes plumb crazy. Fontana's machine-gun drumming on this record has become deservedly famous: the only part of his kit consistently audible in the mix is the snare, played so loud and insistently that the RCA engineers just gave up and let his riffs distort into splatters of clipped noise. The overall effect could not be more different from the amused, relaxed contempt of Big Mama Thornton; it is reminiscent of nothing so much as late 1970s white punk rage—the Ramones, Iggy Pop, the Sex Pistols. (“Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s . . . *Elvis Presley?*”)

Or is it? Elvis asked for acetates from the July 2 session so he could learn to duplicate the sound of the recordings in subsequent stage performances. And it was this angry, hopped-up version of “Hound Dog” that he performed on September 9 when he appeared for the first time on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Even though sexual censorship continued during this pivotal appearance—reviewers noticed and commented on the fact that the camera cut away from Elvis when he went into his gyrations—by that point it didn’t seem to make any difference, the girls still screamed and wept. The sexual tension had been transferred into the music itself.

The precedent had been set a month earlier, in Jacksonville, Florida. Elvis’s August 10 performances were accompanied by a carnival of sexual panic: the local representatives of the American Guild of Variety Artists (which represented exotic dancers) demanded that he join the union and post a bond, and a crusading local judge had warrants drawn up for Presley’s arrest if he “acted in a fashion that put vulgarity and obscenity in front of our children.” It was made quite clear in a meeting with the judge after the afternoon show that if Elvis so much as shook his hips once, he was going to jail. And so all physical movements below the waist were eliminated that evening. But, as Elvis recounted to his current girlfriend, the band found another way to get the point across: “Baby, you should have been there. Every time D. J. did his thing on the drums, I wiggled my finger, and the girls went wild. I never heard screams like that in my life. I showed them sons of bitches.”⁵⁷

The musicologist asks: what, exactly, *was* that thing D. J. did on the drums? Undoubtedly it was some version of the thing he does on the July 2 recording, a thing we might transcribe as:

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

Given that the whole idea of doing "Hound Dog" came from a moment of burlesque in a Vegas lounge, and that Presley and his drummer later colluded to slip the audience a musical sign for the sexy gyrations whose absence was enforced by the Jacksonville judiciary, we can hear Fontana's "angry" machine-gun drumming on the record of "Hound Dog" in a new way. His playing now sounds like an amped-up, rockabilly-speed version of the bump-and-grind triplets familiar to every drummer from decades of striptease performances. Mentally slow down the drumming on the record to half-time, as Presley usually did in live performance for his big finish, and the resemblance is inescapable. Elvis was repeatedly compared to a stripper during 1956; after the Berle show, for instance, the *New York Times* declared that "his one specialty is an accented movement of the body that hitherto has been primarily identified with the repertoire of the blond bombshells of the burlesque runway." Yes, well, that was the joke. The Gray Lady was sensitive to the presence of quite traditional musical erotics—formal devices that cued the performer and audience to experience their bodies sexually—but not quite hep enough to accept a *male* performer recycling these musical signifiers of sex back to a *female* audience.

Thanks to media treatment like this, there was very little tease left in the striptease by the time "Hound Dog" came to be recorded. Elvis and the boys' comic travesty of sexuality had melded with something fierce, angry, and real. Fontana's drums blast out of tired burlesque convention into an electrifying new erotic register: sexual availability tinged with sullen, inarticulate violence. Nothing like this had ever occurred in the Sun sessions; it was a fusion with explosive power. Not for nothing was Presley being touted as the new James Dean.

Elvis complained bitterly in a June 27, 1956, interview about being singled out as "obscene" for his *Milton Berle* appearance, when there had been a bona-fide burlesque queen on the same program: "This Debra Paget is on the same show. She wore a tight thing with feathers on her behind where they wiggle most. And I never saw anything like it. Sex? Man, she bumped and wiggled all over the place. I'm like Little Boy Blue. And who do they call obscene? Me!" Of course, Elvis was more than a little disingenuous; he went on in the same interview to throw the reporter what now looks like one of the biggest red herrings of popular music scholarship: "The colored folks been singing it and playing it just like I'm doin' now, for more years than I know. They played it like that in their shanties and juke joints, and nobody paid it no mind 'til I goosed it up. I got it from them."⁵⁸

This is a fundamental assumption of almost all Elvis reception, the basic matrix of ideas being neatly summarized in the title of a paper delivered at the First International Conference on Elvis Presley in

1995: "A Revolutionary Black Sexual Persona: Elvis Presley and the White Acquiescence of Black Rhythms." The African American author, Jon Michael Spencer, argues that "the syncopated leg and body movements that Elvis displayed [while singing "Hound Dog"] on television that evening [are attributable] to the rhythms that undergird African-American culture and give it its distinctiveness," and that these rhythms transmit "the attendant sexualities of the irrepressible black cultural presence in the South."⁵⁹ There is a general sociocultural truth here that no one can deny, but the specific case of "Hound Dog" subsumes itself under that rubric only with extreme difficulty. (Spencer makes no mention of Leiber and Stoller, or of Freddy Bell and the Bellboys.) According to this analysis, the consistent attacks on "Hound Dog" as (white) burlesque striptease are a racist cultural misreading; the correct reading was given by Elvis himself in the quote above.

One waits in vain for Spencer to articulate precisely the phenomenological outlines of black rhythm. In a gesture that would have Sontag weeping in frustration, he blithely turns away from the formal erotics of black music ("It is impossible to capture in notation the sexualities conveyed by the rhythms that have long brought the therapeutic black ritual places into existence") and starts analyzing the content of black blues lyrics.⁶⁰

I would argue that it is quite easy to discuss the sexualities conveyed by the rhythms of "Hound Dog"—you don't even need notation to do it—and yet Spencer may still be right, because *the distinctive rhythmic structures of that specific performance and recording of "Hound Dog" are irretrievably white*. Every time Fontana lets loose that tommy-gun burlesque lick—twelve nervous snare hits leading to a heavy bass thud—he creates a massive downbeat accent. In fact, he turns one entire unit of the song (snare) into a large upbeat to the next (bass drum). This is the crucial rhythmic gesture of the song, and it creates *no* syncopation and *no* polyrhythmic play. What it does do is create a rigid hierarchy of weak and strong units, and enforce a regularly recurring structural downbeat at the end of each verse. (That's why the whole band stops playing each time he does it.)

Such absolutely square delineation of upbeats and downbeats is not at all characteristic of African American rhythm. A. M. Jones completed his first pioneering studies of African rhythm in 1956, and the patterns he transcribed bear little resemblance to those underpinning what was then the current number two single on America's pop charts. African rhythm, in general, is *additive*, not *divisive*—it avoids strong hierarchies of beats, avoids strong coordinated downbeats altogether, and maintains an even fluidity through complex noncoincident polyrhythms. African American music has had to compromise with the rigid upbeat-downbeat structures that rule European forms

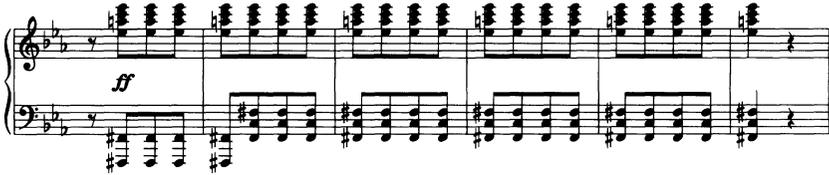
(see Gunther Schuller's *Early Jazz*, who makes this point in a still-useful introductory discussion of Jones);⁶¹ but—over its syncopated (and thus recognizably Afro-Caribbean) rumba bass, “Hound Dog” careens so far toward an angry, jerky, hierarchy-of-beat-dominated *whiteness* that it is impossible for this listener to hear the creation of any sort of “therapeutic black ritual space.”

All one has to do to hear the problem is compare Presley's version of “Hound Dog” with Big Mama Thornton's 1953 original. Of course Thornton did not sing the number in the uptempo rockabilly style—but her slower, more relaxed reading, with its flexible phrasing, just makes much, much less of the inevitable downbeats. She starts out, as does Elvis, singing each line as one long upbeat (“You ain't nothin' but a HOUND dog”); but as soon as the words change, she shifts the line around so that the “downbeat” falls at the beginning, with a remnant of the original end stress still perceptible (“You TOLD me you was *high-class* / But I can SEE through that), and sticks to that phrasing even when the opening text comes back (“You ain't NOTHIN' but a *hound dog*”). Each line has a focal accent somewhere (and never in the same place twice), but Thornton's elegant syncopations and micro-inflections of the beat keep the rest of the syllables energized, too. The overall effect of macro and micro flexibility is enticingly additive: Thornton loosens up the stress hierarchy of the text, evens it out, and lets it float sexily above the steady backbeat underneath.

Presley's reading of the song holds rigidly to end-accented phrasing (“You ain't nothin' but a HOUND dog,” every time). Each line has a clear feeling of upbeat leading to final downbeat, and when Elvis rhythmically activates some of the lines through “boogification” (“You-*ain't* ah-*nuh* thin-*but* ah-*hound* dog”) the link between his singing and Fontana's playing becomes clear: Each of them is enforcing a strict rhythmic hierarchy by making an entire phrase of weak upbeats lead inexorably to a heavily stressed downbeat. What happens very obviously in the recording is that the two are in a sort of rhythmic canon: Fontana's arrival on the downbeat always energizes Presley's leap toward the next stressed downbeat, as if the singer is being shot out of a cannon. (When Fontana launches Scotty Moore into his second solo this way, it's with a downbeat so strong that it throws the guitarist briefly into another key!)

These macho rhythmic gestures are *cadences*—alternations of tension and release—and they appear nowhere in Big Mama Thornton's conception of the blues. The drive of the twelve snare hits to the bass drum, of the “You-*ain't* ah-*nuh* thin-*but* ah-” to the “HOUND dog,” of the *grind* to the *bump*, is, like the drive of the dominant to the tonic, a feature of European music. And the bump-and-grind erotics of the tonic-dominant polarity are well established in the West.⁶² Elvis the

Pelvis is not necessarily out of Africa; he may well remind us of another sexually dangerous Western musical artist recently recognized as prone to pelvic pounding:



Roll over, Beethoven. You ain't nothin' but a hound dog.

Select Discography

- Aphex Twin (Richard D. James). "Ictt Hedral." Original 1994 track on *I Care Because You Do*, Sire 61790-2. 1995. Philip Glass orchestration from *Donkey Rhubarb* EP; easier found on *51/13: Aphex Singles Collection*, Sire WCPR-929 (WEA Japan import). 1996.
- Bang on a Can (Michael Gordon, David Lang, Julia Wolfe). *Industry*. Sony Classical SK 66483. 1995.
- Beck. "High 5 (Rock the Catskills)." *Odelay*. Geffen Records DGCD-24823. 1995.
- Branca, Glenn. *Symphony Nos. 8 and 10 (The Mysteries)*. Atavistic ALP12. 1994.
- Daugherty, Michael. *Elvis Everywhere*. On *Kronos: Released 1985-1995*. Nonesuch 79394-2. 1995.
- Daugherty, Michael, and Wayne Koestenbaum. *Jackie O*. Argo 455 591-2. 1997.
- Mackey, Steve. "Grungy." *Lost & Found*. Bridge 9065. 1996.
- μ-Ziq (Mike Paradinas). "Burnt Sienna." *Tango N' Vectif*. Rephlex CAT 103 CD. 1993.
- The Orb (Duncan Robert Alex Paterson). "Little fluffy clouds." *The Orb's adventures beyond the ultraworld*. Island Red Label 182-535 005-2. 1991. Contains a sample of Steve Reich, *Different Trains*, performed by Pat Metheny, on *Steve Reich: Different Trains; Electric Counterpoint*. Elektra-Nonesuch 9 79176-2. 1989.
- Orbital (Paul Hartnoll). "Time becomes." *Orbital 2*. FFRR 162 351 026-2. 1993. Expansion of the opening of "Moebius." *Orbital*. FFRR 162 351 001-2, 1991. Modeled on Steve Reich, *Come Out* (1966), re-released on *Steve Reich: Early Works*. Elektra-Nonesuch 9 79169-2. 1987.
- Oswald, John. *Plexure*. Disk Union Avan 016. 1993.

- Presley, Elvis. "Don't Be Cruel" b/w "Hound Dog." Matrix g2wb 5935-31, recorded July 2, 1956. Released as RCA 6604 in July 1956. Rereleased on *Elvis: The King of Rock 'n' Roll (The Complete Fifties Masters)*. RCA 66050. 1992.
- Sweetback. "Arabesque." *Sweetback*. Epic EK 67492. 1996.
- Samples and distorts a performance of John Cage's *Radio Music* in a Milan radio studio, 10:30-10:50 P.M., April 5, 1974, as it appears on Cramps CRSLP 6101. 1974.
- Thornton, Big Mama (Willie Mae). "Hound Dog." Recorded August 13, 1952. Released as Peacock 1612, February 1953. Rereleased on *Big Mama Thornton: Hound Dog (The Peacock Recordings)*. MCAD 10668. 1992.
- Underworld (Rick Smith). "Pearl's Girl [Tin There]." *Pearl's Girl [Tin There]* EP. Junior (Boy's Own) JBO 45 CDS2. 1996.
- Zorn, John. *Kristallnacht*. Eva Records WWCX 2050. 1993.

NOTES

1. David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19; Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 103; Susan McClary and Robert Walser, "Start Making Sense: Musicology Wrestles with Rock" (1988), in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 281.

2. Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 106-7.

3. The opening salvos came from Joseph Kerman, whose calls for a musicology oriented more toward criticism and dismissals of the quasi-scientific fact-finding he called "positivism," still rankle some today. His 1980 article, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out" (*Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 2, 311-31), was followed by a provocative book: *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). Janet M. Levy raised key ideological issues in a short but much-cited article, "Covert and and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music," *Journal of Musicology* 5 (1987): 3-27. Leo Treitler's collection, *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), disseminated twenty years of often idiosyncratic challenges of the status quo to a ready audience.

Much of the direct impetus for critical reevaluations within musicology came from investigations of politics, gender, and sexuality—subjects notably taboo in traditional musicological discourse. Susan McClary provided propadeutic essays for the English translations of two influential texts: Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), and Catherine Clement's incendiary *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). McClary's own collection, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), kicked things off in America, assembling most of her pioneering critical work from the 1980s. With the roughly contemporaneous publication of Rose Rosengard Subotnik's *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991) and Lawrence Kramer's *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), the paradigm shift that Kerman had been calling for appeared to be taking place. The American musicological response is

representatively, though of course not exhaustively, accessible in three important collections of essays that appeared in the early 1990s. Ruth Solie edited the first, *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Musical Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Beating her to press, though conceived later, was *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); both Bergeron and Bohlman contributed carefully worked essays which already show a self-critical awareness of the interdependence of canon and ideology that seemed so obvious—and so obviously unexamined!—to Richard Middleton in 1990. See also *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994).

A more general Anglo-American perspective, including wide-ranging reconceptualizing work by both musicologists and music theorists, can be found in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Richard Taruskin has filtered a fundamental critique of musicology through the lens of historical performance practice; see *Text and Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) for a collection of important work. Less easily accessible, but symptomatic, are early issues of the journal *repercussions: critical and alternative viewpoints on music and scholarship*, published since 1992 by the graduate students of the musicology department at the University of California, Berkeley. See especially Lawrence Kramer, "The Musicology of the Future," *repercussions* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 5–18, and the editorial by the present author in that inaugural issue. (Kramer went over some of the same ground again in his *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995], 1–32.)

The critique has not always been received gratefully: negative reviews of McClary and Kramer, to take the two most salient voices, far outnumber the positive. Perhaps the most passionate and systematic attempt to "refute" the calls for paradigm shift has come from music theory; see Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), and Kofi Agawu, "Does Music Theory Need Musicology?" *Current Musicology* 53 (1993): 89, and "Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime," *Music Theory Online* 2.4 (<http://boethius.music.ucsb.edu/mto/issues/mto.96.2.4/mto.96.2.4.agawu.html>, 1996). Coming full circle, one might check in with Joseph Kerman again; see "Musicology in Transition," in *Irish Musical Studies 4, The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995 Selected Proceedings: Part One*, ed. Patrick F. Devine and Harry White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 19–33.

4. Following the usage of most popular music scholarship, I will be using the term "musicology" to refer to the entire project of studying canonical classical music. When it becomes necessary to distinguish the goals and ideology of academic music theory, I will call out that discipline explicitly.

5. Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* (Secaucus, N.J.: Birch Lane Press, 1997), 386–91, 399.

6. David Schiff, "Classical Appeal," *Atlantic Monthly* 280, no. 2 (August 1997): 70–71.

7. For America, see the account in Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). For a European perspective, see William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris, and Vienna* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975).

8. Joseph Horowitz presents a useful roundup in the context of the Toscanini cult, including Adorno's key attacks on the "culture industry" and Virgil Thomson vs. the "Music Appreciation racket"; see his *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Created a New Audience for Old Music* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 229–50.

9. Some of the key texts: Bergeron and Bohlman, eds., *Disciplining Music*, especially the article by Bohlman on "Musics and Canons"; Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (1983): 107–25; Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Susan McClary, "Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Musical Composition," *Cultural Critique* 12 (Spring 1989): 57–81.

10. See Margaret Helfgott, *Out of Tune* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Warner Books, 1998).

11. Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini*, 22–42.

12. Lebrecht makes a rather coarse Jeremiah: "Inside the belly of the corporate whale, classical music nestled contagiously with its new bedfellows. The masturbating antics of Michael Jacksonish pop music, the moral decay of *Fatal Attraction* movies and the monotony of over-organized sport all left their mark on the classical slowcoach of the infotainment highway. When George Michael sneezed, classical recording seized up with pneumonia. Michael Jackson's arrest on child-sex charges precipitated emergency surgery at Sony Classical" (399). Is this just journalistic bombast—or (homo)sexual panic?

13. Attali, *Noise*, 11–12.

14. Jacques Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), 11–12, 25.

15. Michael Daugherty and Wayne Koestenbaum, liner notes for *Jackie O* (Argo 455 591–2, 1997).

16. In *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (New York: Free Press, 1994), Martha Bayles argues at great length that the alternative aesthetic itself recycles old modernist riffs, but the point remains: modernism has to be filtered through "the alternative" before it can re-energize the postminimal.

17. "Bang on a Can" (Michael Gordon, David Lang, Julia Wolfe), liner notes for *Industry* (Sony Classical SK 66483, 1995); Stevan Keane, liner note for Steve Martland, *Crossing the Border* (Factory Facd 366, 1992).

18. Or did he? Alex Ross finished up a survey of Britpop for the *New Yorker* (August 29, 1997) by raving that the neo-Pink Floyd band Radiohead had "pulled off one of the great art-pop balancing acts in the history of rock." He then attempted to describe their "essentially indescribable" sound with the following amazing analogy: "I had one last idea while watching the very English spectacle of Diana's funeral: the varieties of lament heard during the service—an Elgar elegy, an Elton John ballad, an otherworldly contemporary dirge by John Tavener—could have been telescoped into a fairly typical Radiohead song." That Ross conceives of rock as having the stylistic range to encapsulate all of classical music, and not the other way round, is clear. What could be more powerful evidence that rock music has earned its new paradigmatic status? (Ross writes regularly on both classical and rock for the *New Yorker*.)

19. See Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, eds., *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Judith Tick, "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology," in *Musicology and Difference*, ed. Solie, 83–106; Maynard Solomon, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 443–70; Philip Brett, *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Richard Taruskin, "A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and 'The Music Itself,'" *Modernism/Modernity* 2 (January 1995): 1–26.

20. Mitchell Morris, "Black Masculinity and the Sound of Wealth: Barry White in the Early 70s," paper delivered at *Cross(over) Relations: Popular Music, Scholarship, and the Canon*, Rochester, N.Y., 1996.

21. One of the most overt recent uses of this symphonic surrealism is in Oasis's 1997 video for "Don't Go Away" (*Be Here Now*, 1997): somber instrumentalists in formal wear

file onto a hyperrealistic canvas *carrying black umbrellas*. (A shot of multiple floating men in suits with umbrellas á la Magritte immediately follows, proving that the director is one of those who likes his avant-garde references big and obvious.) As in rap videos, the string and horn lines in the mix are hardly prominent enough to justify the elaborate staging of "classical music."

22. Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). For avant-garde canonical examples, listen for the heartbreaking quotes of Isolde's *Liebeshod* in B. A. Zimmerman's *Requiem for a Dead Poet* (1969–71); and the oddly sweet liberties Charles Dodge's *Any Resemblance is Strictly Coincidental* (1977) takes with a 1903 recording of Enrico Caruso singing "Vesti la giubba."

23. See David Toop, *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound, and Imaginary Worlds* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995).

24. Kenny Berkowitz, "Minimal Impact," *Option 77* (Nov.-Dec. 1997): 50–55.

25. A material correlative for the boundary-erasing position of ambient: The Orb demanded and got pressings of *The Orb's Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld* on new vinyl so as to get the widest dynamic range. New vinyl is customarily reserved for audiophile classical recordings. See Vanni Neri and Giorgio Campari, *The Orb: The O.O.B.E. Adventure* (Stampa Alternativa Sonic Book SB 04, 1996 [unpaginated]).

26. Berkowitz, "Minimal Impact," 55.

27. Neri and Campari, *The Orb*; the quote appears to be a back translation from the Italian!

28. On "positivism," a still-controversial epithet, see Kerman, *Contemplating Music*, 31–59.

29. *Ibid.*, 73.

30. *Ibid.*, 112.

31. See the literature survey in Robert Fink, "Arrows of Desire: Long Range Linear Structure and the Transformation of Musical Energy," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1994, 1–23. The critique has been echoed vigorously from within music theory itself (yes, there is a "New Theory" also); the key recent work along these lines has been published by, among others, Fred Maus, Marion Guck, Marion Kielian-Gilbert, and Kevin Korsyn.

32. Kerman, *Contemplating Music*, 19.

33. McClary and Walsler, "Start Making Sense," 287.

34. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 304.

35. *Ibid.*, 7.

36. *Ibid.*, 12.

37. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 282–83.

38. Some representative references: Allan Forte, "Schenker's Conception of Musical Structure," *Journal of Music Theory* (hereafter *JMT*) 3, no. 1 (1959): 1–24; Forte, "A Theory of Set-Complexes for Music," *JMT* 8, no. 2 (1964): 136–51; Milton Babbitt, "Twelve-tone Invariants as Compositional Determinants," *Musical Quarterly* 46 (1960): 246–59; Babbitt, "Set Structure as a Compositional Determinant," *JMT* 5 (1961): 72–94; David Lewin, "A Theory of Segmental Association in Twelve-tone Music," *Perspectives of New Music* 1 (1962): 89–116; Donald Martino, "The Source-set and Its Aggregate Formations," *JMT* 5 (1961): 224–73; George Rochberg, "The Harmonic Tendency of the Hexachord," *JMT* 3 (1959): 208–30.

39. Ruth Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1980): 136–54; McClary, *Feminine Endings*; Robert Fink, "Going Flat: Post Hierarchical Music Theory and the Musical Surface," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Cook and Everist, 102–37.

40. This argument is made uncompromisingly in van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy*, 11–64.

41. Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Leipzig, 1854). See pp. 77–84 of *On the Musically Beautiful*, translated from the eighth edition (1891) by Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986).

42. Kerman, “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” 331.

43. It happens more than you might think; see Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1993), 57–107.

44. McClary and Walser, “Start Making Sense,” 289.

45. For a metatheoretical discussion, see John Covach, “We Won’t Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis,” in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture*, ed. David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian, and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 75–89; for a programmatic use of Schenkerian techniques of reduction, see Walter Everett, “Fantastic Remembrance in John Lennon’s *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Julia*,” *Musical Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1986): 360–93.

46. Philip Tagg, *KOJAK, 50 Seconds of Television Music: Toward the Analysis of Affect in Popular Music*, Studies from the Department of Musicology (Göteborg, 1979).

47. Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 191–92.

48. Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 157–98.

49. *Ibid.*, 157–59.

50. This point was made by Leonard Meyer, a musicologist passionately interested in analysis and criticism, during public discussion of the formation of the Society for Music Theory.

51. The speaker is Mojo Nixon, introducing *The Elvis Reader*, ed. Kevin Quain (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), xiv–xv.

52. Peter Nazareth, “Elvis as Anthology,” in *In Search of Elvis: Music, Race, Art, Religion*, ed. Vernon Chadwick (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 56–60, 69–70.

53. “With Scotty’s solo he lurches backward in what might be interpreted as an upbeat adaptation of the shrugging, stuttering, existential hopelessness of a James Dean, there is a jittery fiddling with his mouth and nose, and as the song comes to an end he is dragging the microphone down to the floor, staggering almost to his knees. [He] then goes into his patented half-time ending, gripping the mike, circling it sensuously, jackknifing his legs out as the audience half-screams, half-laughes, and he laughs, too—it is clearly all in good fun.” Description from Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 284. My brief narration of the events of the summer of 1956 is indebted to Guralnick’s.

54. Nazareth, “Elvis as Anthology,” 58.

55. Richard Middleton, “All Shook Up? Innovation and Continuity in Elvis Presley’s Vocal Style,” in *The Elvis Reader*, ed. Quain, 3–12.

56. Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis*, 298.

57. *Ibid.*, 321–22.

58. *Ibid.*, 288–89.

59. Jon Michael Spencer, “A Revolutionary Black Sexual Persona: Elvis Presley and the White Acquiescence of Black Rhythms,” in *In Search of Elvis*, ed. Chadwick, 110.

60. *Ibid.*, 118–19.

61. Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 10–22.

62. See McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 12–16, 68–69, 124–30.