Musicology as a Political Act

Author(s): Philip V. Bohlman

Source: *The Journal of Musicology*, Autumn, 1993, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 411-436

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/764020

Musicology as a Political Act*

PHILIP V. BOHLMAN

On Friday night, May 1, 1992, I was sitting in a bar in Lawrence, Kansas, watching MTV. This was already the third night of the Los Angeles insurrection unleashed by the Simi Valley acquittal of the four white policemen who beat Rodney King for a traffic violation. At 11:00 p.m. the "MTV News" came on, and, hardly surprising, the single topic of the evening was the protest in Los Angeles. During recent years MTV had increasingly been a site for social commentary, and voices of racial and class resistance regularly accompanied the music videos it broadcasts. In particular, MTV had become a site for the production, performance, and reception of rap, with its persistent politicization of voices from the African-American urban underclass. It would also seem hardly surprising that the commentators—that is, the mediators of the news—on May 1 were rappers and that the news consisted of a mix of well-known raps, spontaneously created rap-responses, film clips, and an immediate, direct conversation between the rappers and their viewers. Rap music had for years predicted the Los Angeles insurrection, particularly the confrontation between African-Americans and the policing of public

Volume XI • Number 4 • Fall 1993

* This article is an expanded and revised version of a position paper first delivered at the conference, "The Undisciplined Muse: Music among the Fields of Knowledge," held at the University of Chicago Humanities Institute, 29–30 May 1992. Special thanks are due to the Interim Director of the Humanities Institute, Norma Field, for creating a space in which critical inquiry of this nature could take place. I learned much from the three responses to the paper, prepared by Katherine Bergeron, Jean Comaroff, and Ruth A. Solie, and I wish to express my gratitude to the respondents. The article has gained much for the critical responses of Gregory Downey, Carolyn S. Johnson, Ann Morrison, Martin Stokes, and Michael Weber, and I thank each of them.

urban spaces, and this was the moment in which those predictions were coming true.[1]

LA was in crisis, which is to say, the long history of racial injustice and the hopelessness of a race-determined underclass in the United States had reached the point of uncontainable crisis in Los Angeles. Rap had long signified on this history and this crisis-waiting-to-happen; in many ways, rap had embodied the profound tensions of this history in its own discourses, and black music had become a simulacrum for the contestation of public space by groups forced to compete for the limited resources they offered.[2] By May 1, rap had

[1] Examples of the references to the conditions of eventual insurrection abound. In some cases, they are self-referential, drawing attention to the discourse of rap as a means of avoiding the inevitable clash over the contested public spaces of the city. In "_____ 'Em," to take one well-known example, Ice Cube claims that, had anyone listened to his recordings prior to the insurrection, it would have become clear that the conditions leading to a racial underclass in Los Angeles would also lead to racial resistance and insurrection (cf. Nick De Genova, "Rap Music, Black Nationalism and the Culture Industry: Commodification as Mass Enlightenment?" [MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1991]). Ice Cube enjoins the listener, moreover, not to forget that sense of urgency inscribed by rap. "Everything I said on record before the riot, you know, anything you wanted to know about the riots was in the records before the riots. All you had to do was go to the Ice Cube library and pick a record, and it woulda told you. . . . I've given so many warnings on what's gonna happen if we don't get these things straight in our lives. The clash is that, you know, that Armageddon is near" (Ice Cube, "_____ 'Em," 1992).

There is no absence of recordings by other rappers with overt predictions of the insurrection, describing the conditions that would make it inevitable, as in NWA's "Fuck the Police" from 1988 (see Daniel Weisberg, "Rap Music and the Mainstream Media: The Pursuit of Social Truths in Post-Rodney King America" [BA thesis, University of Chicago, 1993]). Tensions between blacks and Korean-Americans in Los Angeles, moreover, had already found their way into rap, but so, too, had enjoinders for recognition of racial and ethnic unity among diverse ethnic and racial communities in Los Angeles, for example in Ice-T's "Gotta Lotta Love" and "Race War." That rap consistently addressed the conditions that would make the insurrection inevitable escaped the attention of most of its critics, whose gaze could never penetrate beneath the surface of rap music, its presumed obsession with obscene lyrics and sexually explicit public performances.

[2] Historically, rap has not only been a voice for the empowerment and resistance for African-Americans mired in poverty; see Mark Costello and David Foster Wallace, *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present* (New York, 1990), and Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy* (Chicago, 1993). Rap has recently demonstrated an ability to signify upon some of its own historical limitations, notably the macho images of a male-centered, anti-female and homophobic referential vocabulary; see, e.g., Havelock Nelson and Michael A. Gonzales, *Bring the Noise: A Guide to Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture* (New York, 1991). For an incisive study of the problems embedded in shaping a discourse of black nationalism in rap see De Genova, "Rap Music" (1991). The failure to perceive difference within rap, moreover, is characteristic of white reception of African-American musics, which historically regards the blues or gospel as limited to discrete social themes. Houston A. Baker, Jr., among others, has argued for processes of differentiation within rap music ("the creative and ever-expanding world of rap"), particularly the proliferation of subgenres that respond to criticism of rap from within different black communities; see Baker, *Black Studies* (1993), pp. 74–75.

already begun to signify on the crisis itself, moving it quickly to a new discourse within the African-American community, thereby empowering rap to communicate the crisis beyond the public spaces occupied only by black rappers and black audiences. Several days later, reporters from Chicago's television stations had also found that blacks in that city were not simply commenting on the Rodney King verdict with words of disapproval, but were responding on the street, to the reporters and cameras, with rapping. The city's el-trains became stages for rappers, who jumped on trains and performed for the riders during the course of several stops, then disembarked before taking the stage on the next el. In this way, rappers reconfigured the public spaces of the entire city, confronting all who traveled through these spaces, with the politically charged news of the Los Angeles insurrection. The message, then, did not simply fester in the impoverished neighborhoods on Chicago's South Side. Black residents from these neighborhoods spilled out of them and signified on the LA protests by rapping, by moving their response to crisis through music to a discourse and moving it through the urban spaces they shared with non-blacks.[3]

Musicology in Moral Panic and Political Crisis

The Los Angeles insurrection unleashed new forms of response to racial injustice in the United States, and in so doing ushered in a new phase in the history of racial and class relations, a phase marked by resistance. One of the strongest voices of this resistance was music: music not only as the texts and lyrics of rap songs, but music as an arresting form of attention, a means of commanding public spaces, and a context for the narration of history. Within a year, in April 1993, the Simi Valley verdicts were overturned at a federal trial, at least in part, when two of the four policemen present at the beating of Rodney King were indicted for depriving King of his human rights. During the course of this year, rappers, drawing on several traditions of African-American vocal music, focused on the issues of race and poverty at the center of the Los Angeles—and urban American—insurrection, and insisted that they

[3] Ethan Nasreddin-Longo rode the els with some of these rappers and has commented on their constant mobility even within the train, moving from car to car, thereby disciplining the spaces of their own performance by continually changing them and rendering them uncontrollable by the authorities patrolling the trains; see Ethan Nasreddin-Longo, "Selfhood, Self-Identity, Complexion, and Complication," paper delivered at the Workshop on the Anthropology of Music, University of Chicago, 12 November 1992.

be heard as counterpoint to the first King verdict and its public attempt to police black Americans. Rap acquired considerable power as a voice of resistance, not only because of its mobilization of African-Americans, but also because, as a popular music, it captured the attention of intellectuals, ranging from the radical left[4] to the conservative right, and academics, who saw the public sphere created by rap music spilling over into the institutions of higher education.[5] Rap had come to symbolize not only the political crisis at the center of the Los Angeles insurrection, but the moral panic that had immobilized American intellectuals.

Now more than a year after the Los Angeles insurrection, rap music has yet to stir much of a response from the disciplines of musical scholarship. Although a discourse of resistance quickly took shape through the transformations of American public spaces and opinions through rap music, musicology did not act quite so quickly to move its response to the LA insurrection through music to its discourse. Indeed, musicology has not been a field wont to respond to social and critical crisis, much less to any sort of crisis that we might call discursive—that is to say, a crisis that might lie within itself as an intellectual discipline. Critics of the field had observed an uncanny ability to remain oblivious to intellectual ferment, particularly as it took politicized forms in other disciplines. Susan McClary, for example, found it necessary to frame an apologia for the benefit of feminists reading *Feminine Endings,* explaining that musicology had comfortably slept during the period when the most trenchant issues of feminist criticism were shaped into a concerted discourse. "It almost seems that musicology managed miraculously to pass directly from pre- to postfeminism without ever having to change—or even examine—its ways."[6] Is it even fair, then, to expect musicology to respond to crisis, political or otherwise?

Musicology, however one might respond to such a question, is in crisis, and it has foundered in moral panic for quite a while, despite its insistence that its preoccupation as a field with music immunized it from the crises affecting other disciplines within and without the academy.[7] This belief in self-immunity has historically led to a remark-

[4] See, e.g., Zbigniew Kowalewski, *The Revolutionary Message of Rap Music* (San Francisco, 1993).

[5] E.g., Baker, *Black Studies,* and Costello and Wallace, *Signifying Rappers.*

[6] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1991), p. 5.

[7] I use the word "crisis" in this paper in a manner similar to Patrick Brantlinger, that is as a condition that requires a "critical response"; see Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (New York, 1990), pp. 1–33. The inability to respond to a particular crisis accords with what Stanley Cohen has called "moral

able capacity to imagine music into an object that had nothing to do with political and moral crises, which we witness, for example, in the *wertfrei* confessions of European musicologists who had provided Nazi Germany with the necessary musical objects to eliminate those who would experience music in any other way. This was another crisis in musicology, of course, though one only very recently being addressed by a few musicologists in North America and by a younger generation of musical scholars in Germany.[8] The specific institutions of German academic musicology may have been somewhat different in kind, but the discipline of musicology itself, as a locus of power and discipline, was the same, and it was precisely because its ideological self-reflection was the same and could sustain its belief in self-immunity that the political crisis in musical scholarship during the 1930s and 1940s was ineluctable and the present crisis may now be unstoppable: crisis and moral panic have moved to the discourse of the field itself.

Crystallizing the present crisis and serving as a simulacrum for the moral panic has been the response of musical scholarship to feminist theory. When confronted by the possibility that feminist theory would invade musicology's discourse, musicologists have expressed their sense of crisis and panic in a rhetoric to fend off feminist theory (and feminists), but have succeeded instead in intensifying the crisis. The work of Susan McClary has placed this crisis in the foreground, especially *Feminine Endings* (1991), her formulation of a sweeping feminist music criticism that pertains not just to specific topics—say, the music of women composers—but to the entire field of musicology.

panic." Although a moral panic comes into existence when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (cited in Baker, *Black Studies,* p. 19), potential action may freeze into inaction, as if caught in the glare of spotlights to whose origins one is hopelessly blinded. This being the case, it is important to recognize a similar call-to-action through criticism in musicology in Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).

[8] The first attempts to draw attention to the profound political ramifications of German academic musicology came largely from outside Germany; see, in particular, Pamela M. Potter, "Trends in German Musicology, 1918–1945: The Effects of Methodological, Ideological, and Institutional Change on the Writing of Music History," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1991). Recently German musicologists have been courageous enough to direct criticism against the almost unassailable institutions of *die Musikwissenschaft;* see, in particular, Albrecht Riethmüller, "German Music from the Perspective of German Musicology after 1933," *The Journal of Musicological Research* XI (1991), 177–87, and Eckard John, Bernd Martin, Marc Mück, and Hugo Ott, eds., *Die Freiburger Universität in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1991). German folklorists and ethnologists, in contrast, have recently interrogated the institutions of German social science; see, in particular, Helge Gerndt, ed., *Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus: Referate und Diskussionen einer Tagung* (Munich, 1987). Hans Lenneberg has edited a special edition of *The Journal of Musicological Research* devoted to *Musicology in the Third Reich* (Vol. XI, 1991).

McClary criticizes not only the neglect of women as makers of music, but also the construction of certain musics and music histories as if they had nothing to do with women (or men), or with issues of sexuality. In a bold, if sometimes initial and provisional, fashion McClary takes musicology into domains where few scholars have dared to tread, and it is hardly surprising that the book makes many uncomfortable. It is meant to, and it therefore forcefully asserts that musicology should discomfit. The book is a relentless and personal critique of the field and its intellectual history, and for these reasons and more the response to *Feminine Endings* has been swift, relentless, and personal, coming in a growing number of publications from every corner of the field.[9]

Emblematic of the response to McClary's foregrounding of musicology's crisis has been Pieter van den Toorn's response to McClary in the Summer 1991 issue of this journal.[10] Van den Toorn begins his article by establishing the aesthetic premise that each listener has the right to experience music itself, that object musicologists describe and obscure by borrowing the German *die Musik an sich*. Van den Toorn envelops this aesthetic premise with an impermeable skin of passion, whereby he apparently intends to beat Susan McClary at her own game, that is her call for understanding music's affects and for locating music in the body. I should like to quote van den Toorn at length, here, for his insistence on the "object" music, borrowed from Eduard Hanslick, is something to which I shall return at several points in this essay.

> The assumption here, age-old and thoroughly conventional, is that the source of the attraction, the source of our conscious intellectual concerns, is the passionate nature of the relationship that is struck. But this relationship is given immediately in experience and is not open to the inquiry that it inspires. Moments of aesthetic rapport, of self-forgetting at-oneness with music, are immediate. The mind, losing itself in contemplation, becomes immersed in the musical object, becomes one with the object. And the experience would seem to

[9] Rumors proliferate almost daily as to who will be the next to take on McClary in this book or that article. Many of those, who are not themselves taking McClary on in print, engage in vicarious chop-licking that others are "proving McClary's outrageous claims wrong." A different form of criticism has begun to emerge from those who argue that the claims made about music and sexuality privilege what has been called heteronormativity, thereby limiting gender and sexuality to quite specific categories. Such responses, from both conservative and radical voices, illustrate the significance of the domains of musical scholarship that *Feminine Endings* has, in fact, identified and confronted.

[10] Pieter C. van den Toorn, "Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory," *The Journal of Musicology* IX/3 (1991), 275–99.

> define a bonding that transcends separation, that defies the subject-object, inner-outer polarities, the rift separating consciousness from the world in which consciousness finds itself.[11]

Such arguments for the individual's right to experience music her own way are, so one might think, unobjectionable. Objection arises, however, when this "age-old and thoroughly conventional . . . assumption" fails to sustain itself against McClary's challenge. This, in the end, becomes too much for van den Toorn, who collapses into defending the music object by turning to those undermining it with fear and loathing. It is precisely this fear and loathing, this spurning of feminist scholars and uppity women in general, that signals musicology's crisis. "What do feminists really want?" would seem almost a rhetorical question, with the implication being that "we've" already given "them" everything they could possibly want: quotas, jobs, the chance to prove that women's music could also be studied. That this is not the question that they—these discursive, feminist Others—have been asking, is precisely the point that van den Toorn finds unimaginable. The question of a critical feminism in musicology is but the tip of an iceberg that McClary has exposed. In no sentence does she state the crisis—hers and musicology's—more trenchantly in *Feminine Endings* than when she admits: "I am no longer sure what MUSIC is."[12] The identity of music is the sacred issue. That women, working-class laborers, gays and lesbians, blacks, religious or ethnic communities, or anyone else should identify music in some other way or imagine music to embody completely different and differentiated cultural spaces, that becomes blasphemy against "what MUSIC is." Imagined in this way it may not be MUSIC anymore.

Whose Musicology/Whose Crisis?

If I take the opportunity of this article to argue that musicology has fallen into a profound moral panic, it is only fair that I locate myself and some of the projects with which I have been involved in relation to such a claim. Let me start with the ways in which I have chosen a discursive vocabulary for the article itself. Though at first glance my title may have suggested that I was to concern myself here with "music as a political act," I doubt that any reader believes at this point that I meant anything other than "musicology as a political act." I do mean "musicology," and I mean it in a way very different from the more common discussions of "music and

[11] Ibid., p. 276.
[12] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, p. 19.

politics,"[13] "political music,"[14] or even the "politics of music."[15] The focus of such discussions is music and the use of music toward political ends. Most discussions of this sort rarely go beyond the description of political music, the assumption being that music has the potential to voice a political message, just as it usually conveys an aesthetic message. Discussions of music and politics necessarily retain and enforce a different kind of separation of the former from the latter. By enforcing the separation through scholarly disciplining, one continues to make music the object studied by musicology.

I prefer to think of musicology as a reflexive process, a moving of music into discourse. I underscore this reflexivity with the second part of my title, "political act," whereby I mean to suggest agency rather than a notion of music and politics as objects. These various concerns with naming stem from the constellation of meanings surrounding the "discipline" of musicology and the "disciplining" of music, meanings which contradict and unsettle us in our reflections on music. Because music and musicology both enter domains marked by performance acts and language about musical practice, boundaries between them become blurred, and assurances about how one is differentiated from the other collapse. The title of the present article is meant to decenter, to make us wonder, like Susan McClary, if we know what MUSIC is anymore.

It is also important for me to say at this point that I mean musicology in a broad rather than narrow sense. As it did in *Disciplining Music,*[16] musicology in this article includes ethnomusicology, music theory, and music criticism.[17] I also include emerging musicologies, whether or not they have acquired the trappings of an academic discipline, or even whether their practitioners may take pains to circumvent such a status. The point is, then, that I am not concerned primarily with critical practices limited to the study of Western art music or any other specific repertory of music. My own primary discipline of ethnomusicology, too, has often demonstrated a primary interest in the music object, witness the insistence on presenting and

[13] E.g., Rudolf Stephan, ed., *Über Musik und Politik* (Mainz, 1971); and Otto Kolleritsch, ed., *Die Wiener Schule und das Hakenkreuz: Das Schicksal der Moderne im Gesellschaftspolitischen Kontext des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 1990).

[14] E.g., Tibor Kneif, *Politische Musik?* (Vienna, 1977).

[15] E.g., Michael Meyer, *The Politics of Music in the Third Reich* (New York, 1991); and Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge, 1987).

[16] Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons* (Chicago, 1992).

[17] Cf. Philip V. Bohlman, "Epilogue: Musics and Canons," in Bergeron and Bohlman, *Disciplining Music,* pp. 197–98.

commodifying music in Western notation, recordings, or world-music courses that fulfill the same curricular requirements as Western-music courses.[18]

And so I name myself. I recognize the ways in which I am implicated by and within the moral panic of musicology. As an ethnomusicologist with, it is fair to say, particularly cross-cultural and interdisciplinary concerns and research I have not stood aloof from the crisis in musicology, but have been swept up in it. This is not someone else's musicology. Musicology is not just the discipline of "others" who work primarily with Western art music; my criticisms, here, are themselves self-reflexive. Again, my goal is to decenter and to move us constantly to questions of discipline and discourse. To imagine that one discipline or another within musicology had avoided or could avoid the crisis would be to deny the very responsibility that the crisis demands.

The Political Act of Depoliticizing Music

Musicology has reached a state of political crisis, despite the best efforts of many musicologists to design a field that was immune to the vagaries of politics, ideologies, and the insistence of numerous Others to experience music differently. I should like to argue in this essay, therefore, that it is because musicology has insisted on its apolitical status—call it positivistic, call it value-free, call it aesthetically independent—that the field has come face-to-face with its own political acts. Moreover, I shall push my point even further and argue that the reason for the field's imagined escape into a world without politics results from its essentializing of music itself. This act of essentializing music, the very attempt to depoliticize it, has become the most hegemonic form of politicizing music.

There is no single way in which music becomes essentialized into the object of musicology's study. Indeed, each of the subdisciplines of musicology privileges different forms of essentializing, all of them, however, rallied with the intent of understanding something uncritically called "music." Music exists "out there." It has a metaphysical

[18] Here, I cannot help but name my own name, in particular, as the founder and Series Editor of "Recent Researches in the Oral Traditions of Music" at A-R Editions. The intent of this series is to publish critical editions of non-Western, folk, and popular musics, consciously extending a publishing genre that has served historical musicology, even becoming the emblem of positivist musicology. Whereas most of the editions in the series will aim to include "indigenous notation," and whereas the editions make it possible to understand a broad range of musical practices that otherwise would remain largely unknown outside their own time and place of performance, it is music itself, reified through notational conventions, that will dominate each edition.

presence and ontological reality that the singularity of its name assures. Even when musicology makes gestures toward the interdisciplinary, it presumes that music interacts with other objects of culture, whether literary texts or the structures of ritual or dance.[19] I should like to turn briefly to several of the most common modalities of essentializing music, most of which are shared by the different subfields and canonic practices of modern musical scholarship.

Probably no form of essentializing music is as widespread as *notation*. Notation represents oral traditions or the composer's intent or the publishing industry's commodity, and therefore it exhibits remarkably diverse capabilities of disciplining music. Notation insists on the music's right to be just what it is, black on white, notes on the page, music as object. Notation removes music from the time and space that it occupies through performance, thereby decontextualizing it. Choices about notation usually detextualize it as well, for example by unraveling "the music's" relation with other texts, the myth of Javanese *wayang* or the political novel or dramatic piece that provides the libretto to nineteenth-century opera.[20]

In the hands of the musicologist, notation yields to another modality of essentializing, namely *analysis*. Among the goals of analysis is to represent form, and when it cannot represent form, it ascribes form, thereby providing a means of containing music as music. Analysis allows us to imagine that we understand music, sometimes tautologically and sometimes by relieving us of the responsibility of experiencing what we do not understand.[21] Analysis makes classification of oral traditions possible, together with the construction of genealogies and putative melodic families, in which one song spawns another.

[19] See, e.g., Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley, 1990). Non-musicological scholars are perhaps even more wont to leave the metaphysical reality of music unquestioned. Platonists and structuralists alike recognize the presence of music in the association of pre-existing conditions (e.g., of mathematically realizable harmony) or structures. Claude Lévi-Strauss, surely the leading anthropological structuralist in the late twentieth century, cultivated a lifelong passion for music, fetishizing its structures at least as extensively as those of South American myth. He even went so far in *The Raw and the Cooked (Introduction to a Science of Mythology, I,* trans. by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman [New York, 1969]) as to dedicate the book itself "to music" and to structure the book according to the formal structures of Western music.

[20] See, e.g., Jane F. Fulcher, "Charpentier's Operatic 'Roman Musical' as Read in the Wake of the Dreyfus Affair," *19th-Century Music* XVI/2 (1992), 161–80.

[21] Many of the critiques of Susan McClary's work arise from the fear that she has used analysis—and she herself claims that she grounds all her arguments in what she experiences analytically (e.g., *Feminine Endings*, pp. 20 and 35–52)—to ferret out something that the composer did not intend, in other words, which is not in the music itself. Implicit in these critiques is that analysis necessarily involves rightness and wrongness, and that these are mutually exclusive.

And yet the analysis of oral tradition freezes it, renders it no longer oral, and arrests entirely the aural experience.

Yet another essentializing modality is the *search for the authentic.* I need not rehearse here the debates in mainstream musicology about the nature of the authentic,[22] but I think it particularly important to point out that ethnomusicology and folk-music scholarship have been at least as obsessed with a searching-out of the authentic, whether a "real Hungarian Old-Style folk song" or the purest version of a North Indian *rāga* used in a noble form of classical music, such as *drhupad.* It is important that I not forget ethnomusicology because that field has contributed in several ways to the tendency to essentialize music in the past forty years. This tendency is at present evident in the assumption that a late-twentieth-century globalism provides a context for studying "all musics," swept up in some sort of gigantic global net.[23]

Globalism is the current form of a more persistent ethnomusicological framework, *relativism,* which we might understand as the seemingly innocent and generous claim that "all cultures have music." With this gesture, music becomes a relativized and universalized object, as necessary to the existence of "culture" as eating and biological reproduction. Because all cultures have music, so it goes, we are justified in studying music as music. By no means does this relativism prevent the anthropological ethnomusicologist from formulating his or her own essentializing modality, which, in the past decade or so, has taken the form of equating "music" and "culture," observing the two interacting in neat packages in which "sound structure equals social structure."[24]

My essentializing modalities have brought us from a philologically-impelled need to notate to an anthropologically-informed need to treat the world of music as symbols. Notes and symbols—the representations of music and of culture—are not so very different. Symbols of all types become attempts to universalize, to spread things out across many cultures and historical periods. Accordingly, symbols strip music (or culture or history) of politics and organize them in

[22] See, e.g., Nicholas Kenyon, ed., *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium* (Oxford, 1988).

[23] Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover, 1993).

[24] With considerable frequency the presumed parallelism of sound and social structure leads ethnomusicologists to inflict visual models on the music, for example, circles and cycles for a socially egalitarian society. In effect, new notational conventions are invented to relativize music. For a critique of the ways in which notation was used to level difference in African-American spirituals see Ronald M. Radano, "(De)Noting Difference: The Writing of the Slave Spirituals," paper delivered at the conference on "Singing the Sorrow/Bringing the Noise: Black Music from Slavery to Rap," Center for the Study of Black Literature and Culture, University of Pennsylvania, 16–17 April 1993.

free-floating universes devoid of ideology. Adorno was perhaps the first to recognize the Western tendency to locate symbols at the surface of music, an act he referred to as the fetishization of music.[25] Thus in film music or on recordings, music could be attached to just about any context and could signify just about anything.[26]

An even more penetrating critique of the ways in which an insistence on perceiving the world as symbols politicizes while claiming to universalize is to be found in Johannes Fabian's critique of anthropology.[27] Fabian observes that "the detour through the symbolic study of primitive culture leads one to discover a universal and transhistorical mode of existence of all culture."[28] It then becomes possible to invent and package discrete domains of culture as cultural systems—Fabian identifies "religion, art, and even ideology,"[29] and we could surely do the same with music. The symbols of musicology allow us to do the same, to find the "authentic version" of a "piece" of music, thereby linking it with its "real composer" and filling in the gaps of "the history of music." The history of music may even result from representing history with as many critical editions as possible, the amassed symbols serving as a bulwark of convincing evidence. Ultimately, musicology has become a field obsessed with essentializing the symbol, which has encouraged the field to go on imagining and possessing the universal, containing it in a field of symbols called music.

Making Musicology's Object

Musicology relies on a metaphysical notion of free-floating, universally valid symbols to create its object. One of the greatest fears of many musicologists is that these symbols are no more than representations, no more than one means of disciplining music among many others. I should even go so far as to say that there are times when musicology is driven by the fear that someone is "not really talking about 'the music' " or, even more ludicrously, that an article or book does not use sufficient musical examples to be about "the music." Musicology students struggle under the prerequisite of finding enough "music" to make their dissertations valid. Would that

[25] Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York, 1978), pp. 270–99.

[26] Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976).

[27] *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983).

[28] Ibid., p. 125.

[29] Ibid.

validity were only a matter of evidence about the domains in which musical practice takes place, for "enough music" inevitably means notated or notatable examples. For more analytical work, this prerequisite amounts to finding the right music to make an irrefutable argument, that is, not to create a situation in which one extends one's arguments beyond the existing evidence. These conditions also pertain, of course, to the published works in the field. I have repeatedly heard Lorenzo Bianconi's *Music in the Seventeenth Century* dismissed in this way, just to give one example often claimed not to concern itself enough with the music.[30] It would be even easier to draw examples from the marginalized fields of musicology (e.g., popular music studies), in which the pressure to work with the music causes one to struggle even more futilely with the dilemma of finding music deserving of notation at all.

Musicology is not the only field to discipline and control by essentializing the object of its study. The academy, with its reproduction of great books within core curricula, has to a large degree normalized the essentialization of many domains of knowledge. Musicology is, however, surely one of the most extreme cases in the academy of the 1990s. I have become increasingly aware how anachronistic, even within the academy, musicology's fetishization of music is. If I look around me at the University of Chicago, itself a bastion of great books and core curricula, I observe many departments in which colleagues no longer teach and do research on the objects identified in their letterheads. My neighbors in the English Department, teach everything from film to feminist theory to the Frankfurt School; whether my neighbors in the Anthropology Department teach anthropology or culture or kinship systems or linguistics or geography, I can no

[30] Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. by David Bryant (Cambridge, 1987). Musicology's obsession with notes has often scared off outsiders, who would seek an interdisciplinary discourse with musicology. I constantly try to convince colleagues in anthropology that we do not really have to talk about notes when exchanging ideas, very often to no avail. A few of these outsiders have begun to speak up, calling musicology on its unwillingness to broaden its discourse. Among these, Edward Said has been the most vocal, though it is too soon to tell whether musicologists are willing to listen to him in significant numbers; see his *Musical Elaborations* (New York, 1991), in which he writes "true, things [in musicology] are changing, but, in the main, professional musicology is like any other field in that it has a corporate or guild consensus to maintain, which sometimes requires keeping things as they are, not admitting new or outlandish ideas, maintaining boundaries and enclosures. And while I am very far indeed from rejecting all, or even a significant portion, of what musicologists do by way of analysis or evaluation, I am struck by how much does not receive their critical attention, and by how little is actually done by fine scholars who, for example, in studying a composer's notebooks or the structure of classical form, fail to connect those things to ideology, or social space, or power, or to the formation of an individual (and by no means sovereign) ego" (pp. xvi–xvii).

longer really tell, because their disciplinary boundaries are so incredibly slippery. Music, in fact, is taught and researched in both of these departments, albeit as a component of film studies or popular culture. I sense, therefore, that the intensive self-examination and criticism in both departments has replaced any forced adherence to a single departmental focus, English literature or anthropology. After all, a colleague in English once told me, there was no such thing as an English Department a century ago, so why should there be at the end of the coming century? The same could be said, of course, for anthropology. And, it becomes evident, for music and most certainly for musicology.

Clearly, musicology's insistence on maintaining music as its value-free object of study is not just an accident. There are extreme ideological reasons driving this insistence and investing those who maintain it with the power to discipline the field. By making and essentializing its object, musicology situates itself in a particularly Western position of wielding power. Notation, for example, becomes a convenient way of collapsing time and space, thereby removing all sorts of Others—Western and non-Western—to the plane of the universal. By rendering all musics in Western notation, one creates a universe of music and then succeeds in controlling it. The search for authenticity allows one to imagine the past and replicate it in the present, with original seventeenth-century or Central Javanese instruments.[31] It is a supreme act of disciplining, one which conflates power and knowledge in a Foucauldian sense.[32]

By controlling the object music more and more through our knowledge of it, we acquire increasing measures of power. By transcribing and notating music from oral tradition, we demonstrate our power and knowledge, but ipso facto keep the transmitters of oral tradition from acquiring the same measure of power. And by using the analysis of chord progressions to show that a passage in Beethoven has nothing to do with sexuality but everything to do with a set of obvious, though still brilliant, compositional decisions, we continue to keep the body out of Western music. These acts of keeping politics out of music, however, do not prevent musicology from being a political act. Quite the contrary, they assure that every apolitical agenda acquires an even greater political immediacy.

[31] One might argue that musicology imagines presents from pasts and musical communities by collapsing time and space in the music itself (cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [London, 1983]). As in the coterminous narratives of a novel, different musical practices may cohabit the same time and space by finding the genres and techniques that permit them to be thus rendered, for example, by claiming that each is authentic in its own right.

[32] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* (New York, 1980).

Westernizing Music/Colonizing Music

It was through an act of decentering and de-essentializing music that feminist critical theory emphasized musicology's crisis. Susan McClary puts this act up-front, that is, she makes it clear in the subtitle of *Feminine Endings,* "music, gender, and sexuality." The perspectives she musters for the book, therefore, go beyond music, or, they don't stop with music. That feminist critical theory was able to articulate some aspects of musicology's crisis would have been predictable, I think, had musicologists read an earlier monograph that with equal incision and power decentered the study of music, Sophie Drinker's 1948 *Women and Music,*[33] which Ruth Solie has discussed in *Disciplining Music* and elsewhere.[34] Drinker's musicology was simply too different in the way it suggested alternative historiographies derived from women's social and physical experiences. Being "too different," however, was a necessary component of Drinker's strategy, for reproduction of the dominant historiographic tropes would render her proto-feminist music historiography futile. By commenting on Solie's comments on Sophie Drinker, I should like to argue even further for the ways in which the de-essentializing of music acquires the potential to refocus the entire field of musicology.

My concern at this point is primarily with the Western bias of musicology's essentializing modalities. In her exegesis of Sophie Drinker's *Music and Women* Ruth Solie perceptively detects and describes a completely different epistemology, an epistemology, that is, different for both women and Drinker. This different way of understanding the relation between music and women, Solie queries, might be taken to explain the perplexed responses to the book—the fear and loathing of another generation—and might also necessitate a decentering so radical that the book no longer belongs to musicological discourse at all. The dilemma faced by Drinker, so Solie argues, was how to avoid abandoning musicology altogether.

> It may seem, since Drinker's book is finally so alien to the musicological tradition, that an interrogation of ethnomusicology and its history would be a surer route to the sources and the natural disciplinary home of *Music and Women.* It seems clear that many of the book's presuppositions—about communal values, about caste and

[33] Sophie H. Drinker, *Music and Women: The Story of Women and Their Relation to Music* (Washington, D.C., 1977; orig. 1948).

[34] Ruth A. Solie, "Sophie Drinker's History," in Bergeron and Bohlman, eds., *Disciplining Music,* pp. 23–43.

> class, about the embedding of musical expression with culture—will appear considerably more familiar to scholars of anthropological bent than they do to Western musicologists.[35]

I both agree and disagree with this observation about the audiences that will be most familiar with, hence best understand, Sophie Drinker's musicology. I agree that ethnomusicologists will unquestionably recognize Drinker's decentering and recontextualizing of music as familiar. I disagree insofar as I do not want to let historical musicology off the hook by splitting anthropologies of music and histories of music between ethnomusicology and historical musicology.[36] And Solie makes this point, too, in the concluding paragraph of her article. My further point, however, is that Drinker is even more radical in her decentering, for she draws our attention to the ways in which music as object, when used to describe peoples, cultures, and histories, also colonizes them.[37] The danger is that we allow ourselves to ghettoize, to allow certain musicologies to examine certain musics, or to move the study of certain musical practices to other areas of the academy, for example black music to black studies. Music, alone as an essentialized symbolic system, is a construction of the Western image of itself. Other peoples can be fitted to this system, but they must march in Hegelian fashion through history toward the Western privilege accorded by Central Europe to itself.

The essentializing modalities are themselves also rife with colonizing potential. Notation, for example, appeals to the colonizer and the colonized because it seemingly can underscore the integrity of another musical system by establishing its relation to the Western symbolic system. Various forms of notational colonization were imposed on African musics, whether Hornbostel's scoring of rhythmic polyphony or the musical conversion that Christian hymnals brought about.[38] One of the most sweeping impositions of Western notation

[35] Ibid., p. 38.

[36] At the very least, Drinker was not writing for anthropologists of music, or even for ethnomusicologists. A disciplinary notion of an anthropology of music did not emerge fully until the 1960s; an anthropological ethnomusicology, though forming rapidly in the late 1940s, would not yet have distinguished itself as a field devoted largely to cultural domains beyond music. Drinker's disciplinary motivation, then, was truly that of a radically alternative musicology.

[37] The Western attempt to create an historical framework to which Others either conform on their own or through colonization, intellectual or political, is the subject of Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1982). Katie Trumpener has recently demonstrated the ways in which Western historical narratives may erase the histories of cultural and ethnic groups in the West, for example Roma and Sinti peoples in Europe; see Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West," *Critical Inquiry* XVIII/4 (1992), 843–84.

[38] See Stephen Blum, "European Musical Terminology and the Music of Africa," in Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 3–36.

was the attempt during the twentieth-century centralization of Iran to transcribe and publish the core of Persian classical music as the *radif,* a single repertory of pieces, tunes, motifs, modes, scales, and improvisatory patterns.[39] In fact, throughout most of this century, Persian classical music was colonized by notation, until, that is, Persian musicians turned to other Western technologies to help them retain the integrity of oral tradition and until Islamic thought reasserted itself in Iran, resisted the impact of the West, and reproblematized the nature and notion of music itself.

Islam's Music: Musicological Hegemony and the Other

It is not by chance that I have arrived at Islamic thought as an epistemology with which music is decentered and decolonized. Indeed, I should like to examine the presence of musical practices in Islam in this section, as the first of three brief case studies that illustrate the political acts embedded in musicology's essentializing of music. The relation of music to Islamic thought further provides a valuable starting point for illustrations because it is in many ways the *locus classicus* for both the Western attempt to force music on Others, which then, I submit, becomes the musicological *locus classicus* of Orientalism.[40]

I shall state a simple tenet as a point of departure: Within Islamic thought music has no position. For many Western musicologists, however, this tenet seems absurd, for the fundamental text of Islam, the *Qur'ān,* sounds like music when recited. Moreover, the *Qur'ān* is always recited, either aloud or in silent reading to oneself, and the importance of performance is evident in the meaning of the word *Qur'ān* itself, which I shall gloss here as "that which is recited or called." This reciting employs discrete pitches and rhythmic patterns, which are immanent in the text itself. If we want to analyze these pitches, we can, and we shall discover that they fit into systems, an elaborate modal system whose components are called *maqāmāt* (sing., *maqām*). To recite the *Qur'ān* properly, one should correctly use the patterns of pitch organization, modulation, and form that are parts of the *maqām* system. Recitation (Arabic, *qirā'ah*) depends on improvisatory practice, which serves as a link to genres of instrumental

[39] Cf. Bruno Nettl, *The Radif of Persian Music: Studies of Structure and Cultural Context,* 2nd ed. (Champaign, 1992).

[40] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979). It is not just fair, but vital, to name names again. I have myself engaged in this Orientalism in my own writings, in particular my chapter on "Folk Music and Non-Western Cultures" in *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington, 1988).

music-making, for which foreign loan words, such as *mūsīqā* and *mūsīqi* are often employed.[41] One learns to recite through the study of specific rules, and there are distinct pedagogical paths to follow that make it possible to become a skillful reciter. The science and pedagogy of recitation, called *tajwīd,* begin with the most discrete sounds in the *Qur'ān,* the phonemes represented by certain letters in the contexts of specific passages, and then gradually expand until a complete system of recitation practices is achieved.[42]

The cultural reasons for claiming that the *Qur'ān* is music and that Islam includes music as a religious practice would seem to be just as obvious. From a relativistic perspective Islam is a highly complex cultural system, with a long history that is conveyed through various sciences and scientific texts. It has a political economy, which serves as the basis for religious states. From a globalist perspective Islam offers one of the most convincing counterexamples of a modern culture, in which local actions often exert international influences. Cassettes of quranic recitation, for example, enjoy wide distribution throughout the world, just as, at a local level, daily recitation has benefited from modern electronic media. It is hardly surprising, then, that we in the West are so insistent on studying the practices of performance and piety embodied by the *Qur'ān* as a source for the music of Islam. Even the rhetoric that I have drawn upon here to situate recitation in relation to a wide array of Western musical concepts demonstrates the extent to which I am trapped in this essentializing rhetoric myself.

The aim of such rhetoric is, of course, to discipline the recitation of the *Qur'ān* in such a way that it becomes music as we understand music. The complex modulations of a reciter are then comparable to those in, shall we say, Gregorian Chant, another Western construction of music as disciplined system. We want to think that it is generous on our part to talk about complex modulations, years of careful study, and great musicians. Is it so wrong to suggest that there is a position for music in Islamic thought? Is it so wrong to expose the world to the

[41] These terms mark and emblematize foreignness, hence secular and non-Islamic practices. Their association with instrumental music, which encodes foreignness in other ways, serves to articulate the space of contestation between Muslim religious practices and the musical practices of other religions and cultures.

[42] There is no single way of describing *tajwīd,* which itself plays a different role, depending on the particular set of Muslim religious practices to which one most closely adheres (e.g., regional differences or sectarian differences, as in the case of various Sufisms). Three approaches to the interpretation and implementation of *tajwīd* are those in Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an* (Austin, 1985), Mohammad Abul Quasem, *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an: Al-Ghazālī's Theory* (London, 1979), and Muhammad Ibrahim H. I. Surty, *A Course in the Science of Reciting the Qur'ān* (Leicester, 1988), the last of which employs recorded exercises on cassettes.

beauty of this music? These are the questions of a Western musicology, of course, not of Islam. They are questions a relativistic musicology needs to answer in order to justify its object and itself. Even as I have posed them as absolutely absurd questions, my colonial self cannot help but say that, when I listen to quranic recitation, I find the beauty staggering. By reifying the beauty of the *Qur'ān* I have controlled and disciplined "the music," and I have transformed it into an aesthetic object for my aural surveillance, but, I regret to say, I have come no closer to understanding meaning or spiritual intensity in Islamic thought, which is one of the fundamental powers recitation lends to the *Qur'ān*.

Teaching Black Music: Music as Power, Music as Loathing

Musicology's orientalizing of music in Islam is by no means an isolated phenomenon, and we might even wonder whether there is a form of resistance immanent in Islamic thought that prevents music in the Islamic world from entering the academy. Even the Middle East has relatively low status in Western ethnomusicology, and those few who do teach it often do so as only one component of a larger set of offerings. Complicating the ways we investigate the relation of musical practices to Islam is the larger problem of teaching music in relation to any religion, which also acquires low status the moment religious thought is introduced as a domain of understanding in itself.[43]

My second brief case study brings us to a different response from the academy and a different form of resistance. By no means could one say that rap has not entered the discourses of the academy. It is the subject of books and courses, conferences and interdisciplinary research projects. There can be no question that rap opens up a wide field for sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, political scientists, not to mention for specialists in African-American studies and literary theorists. A census of the academic groves in which rap has found a place, however, would fail, by and large, to mention musicology. Rap is not the first black music to find its way into discourses throughout the academy, while barely achieving marginal status in musicology.

No tradition of African-American music serves better and longer to illustrate this exclusion (I hesitate, here, even to say "marginality")

[43] I am surely an example of this response to the immanent resistance in Islamic thought, for I almost always teach the musical practices in Islamic cultures within an area-studies framework, that is, in courses on "Music in the Middle East" or "Music of South Asia."

than the blues. At least since the 1940s, folklorists found the blues to be a rich field of study, and in the 1960s linguists and scholars in the nascent areas of American studies and popular culture turned increasingly to the blues. In the 1980s, the blues became a metaphor with which African-American studies could establish a black literary theory, which we witness most powerfully in the work of Houston A. Baker, Jr.[44] Musicology, however, has all but ignored the blues and has done so for reasons that are not hard to recognize: once one figures out the relation of a performance to the twelve-bar template and demonstrates how improvisation reinforces the presence of "African elements in America," there is not much more for musicology to say about the blues. The case of jazz is different because it is more easily co-opted to conform to the constraints of an essentialized music.[45]

Rap offers an even more vivid example of the problematic of a non-music music. Unlike the blues, rap won its way into the academy quickly, and therefore one cannot simply argue that it is excluded on racial grounds, if indeed the racial grounds on which its study has flourished have almost entirely been cultivated within black studies. Rap is, however, excluded on musical grounds, for musicology is at a loss for how to study it musically. What would one study as rap's music? What would we learn by transcribing rap performances, putting its notes on the page? What would we learn by unmixing the mix, cataloguing the recordings and motifs cobbled together by dj's and sound mixers? How would we handle its overt and violent political resistance? Rap music resists essentializing as "music." Its symbols are literary, ideological, and political, not the depoliticized symbols of a repertory or musical system. According to its own political tenets, therefore, musicology can find comfort that others are examining this music of the Other.

[44] E.g., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago, 1984). Baker has also been quick to move rap into the discursive domains of black studies and literary theory; see his *Black Studies* (1993), and his "Scene . . . Not Heard," in Robert Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising* (New York, 1993), pp. 38–48.

[45] Making it more politically correct to study jazz within musicology has been the persistent reference to it as "America's classical music." The Smithsonian Institution, for example, can release a recorded anthology of "classic jazz" and publish a critical edition of the complete works of Duke Ellington. Jazz receives considerable airtime on classical radio stations. The standard jazz historiography is just that, a canonic body of works that employs either the trope of great musicians or style histories. Accordingly, music appreciation textbooks now include sections and even entire chapters on jazz, according it treatment completely consistent with the preceding chapters on the periods in Western art music.

Music and the Body

I realize that, at this point in the present essay, I am dangerously close to slipping into a gappological mode of argumentation. More than a few readers might well be toying with a rejoinder to my claims that musicology has not found a place for the blues, rap, or the expressivity of Islam, a rejoinder that would argue "well musicology can't take on everything, so it has to make some choices." That rejoinder might not be unfair if it simply concerned the choices themselves rather than the ways in which choices are made. To illustrate what I mean by this and to bring me to my third brief case study, I shall return again to *Feminine Endings*. Today, two years after *Feminine Endings* appeared, to say that musicology should escalate its studies of the music of women would not be particularly radical; nor would it be, in itself, especially tenable. The copious footnotes in *Feminine Endings* draw upon an existing literature, even a substantial body of literature by feminist musicologists, that is impressive in breadth and impact on some areas of the field. It is also a literature that shows no sign of abating. *Feminine Endings*, however, is not just a call for redressing the historical lack of attention to women in music, for it grounds its call in a return of music to the body. It is this return—this move toward the body and toward sexuality—that has engendered such fear and loathing of the feminist project in musicology.

That we should experience the body—our bodies—in music is enormously difficult for many musicologists to accept. Rejection of the body has long characterized musicology's historiography, and I submit that there is no better evidence of this rejection than the failure of musicology to incorporate the study of dance.[46] When dance is studied, it is only as the result of essentializing: the formal properties of the musical representations of dance; the descriptive practices of Laban notation; or the iconographic symbols offered by visual depictions of dancing. Again, the difficulty is that of locating an essentialized music in dance. Or in the body. If one returns music to the body, does one also loosen its hold on the mind? Or the mind's hold on the music?

The critics of McClary's claims for sexuality in music find most disquieting the suggestion that, by losing control of one's body and by experiencing the sexual politics of music, one also loses control of the music itself. Accordingly, the move of music to the body disrupts the

[46] The failure to learn from performance studies, a natural disciplinary cohort for ethnomusicology, is a more recent historical rejection of the body in music.

coupling of power and knowledge so necessary for musicology's disciplining of music. It decenters music in personal as well as public ways and unleashes a proliferation of what music is and can be.[47] As a bodily and performative practice, music enters a very public and contested sphere, in which the political nature of its discourse can be hidden from no one.

Letting Go of Music

Returning the music to the body by necessity admits to the very political nature of music and musicological discourse. That political nature is multi-faceted and immanent at many different interpretive levels.[48] Accordingly, musicology would move music from the status of a "text-in-itself" to the "political unconscious," borrowing from Fredric Jameson, which "turns on the dynamics of the act of interpretation."[49] With the transformation of music's text into a contested political language, new contexts would accrue to music, indeed, would directly result from the power to interrogate public spaces that the political unconscious creates through its acts of interpretation. Musicology would then participate in the process of multiplying "musics and canons" that I addressed in the "Epilogue" of *Disciplining Music*.[50] Writing about the presence of musics and canons among us in that epilogue, I was rather more cautious than I wish to be in the present essay, for my argument in the epilogue was that musicology recognizes that a singular concept, "music" or *die Musik,* was insufficient to describe the musical phenomena in a modern or postmodern world.

In this essay I should like to take that critique a step further, arguing that musicology not only describes but prescribes through its acts of interpretation. Musics, like the symbols of musical texts, are not just products that are around us and among us, objects crafted by Beethoven or Madonna meant for us to gaze upon and decode. Rather, musics are also within us, within the experiences we embody through listening, performing, and interpreting music in order to situate it in the public spaces created by the interpretive actions of the musician.

[47] See Randy Martin, *Performance as a Political Act: The Embodied Self* (New York, 1990).

[48] These complex and different meanings derive also from the etymology of the word "politics," which recognizes the totality of the body politic (the Greek *polis* as city or state) or the individual (the Greek *politeia,* to be a citizen). This etymology also embodies one of the most basic Western notions of disciplining, which is evident in the word "police."

[49] *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981).

[50] Op. cit., pp. 197–210.

An embodied music is also a contextualized music, a music that recontextualizes the social space of which it is a part.[51] Recontextualizing music by moving it into a public space, furthermore, defetishizes it, for in the public space, music necessarily exists only in the context of contradictory ontologies. Music may, for example, recontextualize the public space by taking over certain parts of it. Town bands and summer orchestras have long transformed small-town and big-city centers in this way, using music as a metaphor for the order of the park as a context of order. In contrast, urban youths in the 1980s transformed and transported public spaces using the music produced by boom boxes, whose volume and portability endowed music with a capacity to create disorder and to undermine centralized public spaces.

It would not be difficult, in fact, to map the cultural geography of modernity—say, in the manner of Walter Benjamin for his "arcade project"[52]—thereby making music a metaphor for the public sphere, that is for the body of society itself. The musical domains on this map, however, would demonstrate an ever-increasing contestation, particularly as the modernity of the city gave way to the postmodernity of the mid-twentieth century. Just as the urban space of the park was recontextualized on summer evenings by the classical music of the summer orchestra (e.g., the Grant Park Symphony in Chicago), enclosed orchestral spaces must now demonstrate their ability to accommodate multiculturalism. It is a condition of the public space in the late twentieth century that it yields itself to no single musical ownership.[53] Few musical practices have proved this so persuasively—so publicly—as rap.

The music of the postmodern public sphere necessarily demonstrates hybridity, which inevitably affords its presence a political potential. Music-creator, music-maker, and music-listener are not just different, but the possibility of containing and limiting their differences disappears entirely. It becomes impossible to answer the question of "whose music?" because ownership no longer rests with any single individual or group. The political nature of the hybridity of the public sphere has recently attracted the attention of cultural critics

[51] For a brief survey of the musicological literature treating the body and social space as contexts for music see Philip V. Bohlman, "Viewpoint: On the Unremarkable in Music," *19th-Century Music* XVI/2 (1992), 213–15.

[52] Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk,* ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main, 1982).

[53] Cf. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *The Public Sphere and Experience,* trans. by Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis, 1993), and Miriam Hansen, "Unstable Mixtures, Dilated Spheres: Negt and Kluge's *The Public Sphere and Experience,* Twenty Years Later," *Public Culture* V/2 (1993), 179–212.

writing on the public sphere. Rather than isolated pockets occupied by distinct "ethnic" or "socio-economic" communities, public spheres have increasingly become sites in which cultural hybrids of all kinds are possible. They are spaces whose public culture, then, is performed and experienced through time as mixtures. That music lends itself to this performative, hybridized condition of postmodern culture is obvious—music takes place in time and therefore reconfigures it—but it is also disquieting because it defetishizes music, mapping it in radically different ways onto the bodies of those inhabiting the public spaces.

Music mixes the mixture, but by doing so it becomes a form of attention ideally suited to the public sphere. Hybridity immediately brings about contestation, which in turn results in a politicization of music. If musicology is to enter this public sphere—and it no longer can avoid doing so—it will perforce encounter a music that cannot be reduced to reified objects. Public violence, therefore, enters into music's mix, as does the reality of poverty that creates the disadvantageous hybrid of race and underclass. The music of the public sphere cannot just be a staged multiculturalism of black kids going to the symphony and white kids watching African-American dance troupes. It is a multiculturalism that politically interrogates the reasons that kids have to pass into and out of someone else's space to experience someone else's music.

Again, I return to rap music because it so powerfully became a "site of audition," for experiencing the racial and economic tragedy that is now inseparable from the history of the Los Angeles insurrection. Rap has become one of the most convincing ways of encountering history.[54] Rap is perhaps the most obvious and immediate example of a site of audition for musicologists, but alone it would hardly provide cause for moving music into the public sphere of political action. Other intellectual discourses have already entered that sphere, indeed, long ago. Feminist scholarship depends upon its entry into the sphere, and accordingly, it was inevitable that Susan McClary's reference and reliance on a non-musicological discourse would remind musicologists of where they were not. Edward Said, too, reminds musicologists of where they have not been, all the more so because Said has been one of the most outspoken critics of any scholarship that abdicates the responsibility of taking on public and social

[54] Houston A. Baker, Jr. has described the historical voice of rap in the following way. "A *hearing* of Rodney G. King can commence with a hearing of rap. The rest is history" (in "Scene . . . Not Heard," p. 48).

issues; according to Said, there is no escaping the "politics of knowledge," except by talking only to oneself.[55] The arguments for resistance, post-colonial discourse, and subaltern voices are already in the musics that surround us, and we ignore them only by not listening to them.

That musicology *can* respond to the transformation of music in the public sphere is evident by the ways in which a recent body of scholarship has reconfigured the internal spaces of the field itself. Feminist theory is not only here to stay, but its presence has meant that no music historiography can ignore the fundamental challenge to the representation of the past. This challenge has resulted not just in a wealth of recent publications on difference and gender in music, but in the redrawing of curricular boundaries in the academy, redrawing that includes far more than a token course on women and music. The borders between musicology and the public sphere have become generally more permeable, and new disciplinary dialogues have responded to the contested contexts of that sphere.[56] The different domains within the study of music, moreover, no longer simply coexist, but rather interact to change the spatial construction of the field. No domain is spared from the approaches of its discursive cohabitants—say, historical musicology from analysis, ethnomusicology from history, or music theory from cultural contexts. The reconfiguration of the discipline has even produced a tentative optimism in several recent assessments of musicology, particularly of the individual scholars who have effected new directions.[57] If the reconfiguration of spaces internal and external to musicology continues, the field will change, and it will surely become more difficult to address the hegemonic presence of "the field of musicology" as commanding any single, larger domain of knowledge. It is the nature of the resulting postdisciplinary musicologies that must concern us as we take stock of and comfort in current changes.

Despite my calls for de-essentializing music in order to listen to the political voices it already embodies, my argument in this essay has not been to avoid or abandon the music; in fact, I should argue to the contrary, that this is precisely what musicology has done in its attempt to depoliticize its acts of explaining what music really is. My plea,

[55] "The Politics of Knowledge," *Raritan* XI/1 (1991), 17–31.

[56] This is evident also in the musicology from the New Europe, which confronts the enormous impact of the public sphere on the radical transformation of its own history. Most recently, Christian Kaden dedicates his *Des Lebens wilder Kreis: Musik im Zivilisationsprozeß* (Kassel, 1993) to "the friends who spilled out onto the streets on November 4, 1989 to struggle for a different Germany."

[57] See, e.g., Joseph Kerman, "American Musicology in the 1990s," *The Journal of Musicology* IX/2 (1991), 131–44, and Said, *Musical Elaborations,* op. cit., pp. xii–xxi.

instead, is that musicology must begin to "face the music," that is, to confront it physically and politically, thereby to grapple with music's embodiment of self and Other. Musicology's current moral panic has, moreover, brought the field face-to-face with the reality that music can no longer be fetishized into a means of excluding—of excluding what's imagined not to be "our music" or what really is "their music." Musicology's crisis, therefore, confronts it also with a new responsibility to come face-to-face with the political nature of all acts of interpretation and with the political consequences of excluding for too long the musics of women, people of color, the disenfranchised, or Others we simply do not see and hear. To ignore this crisis, I wish to suggest in conclusion—to ignore the reality that musicology is a political act—can only be regarded as a supreme form of the irresponsibility of scholarship, the dire consequences of which in the late twentieth century are no longer avoidable.

The University of Chicago