

Specters of Sex

Tracing the Tools and Techniques of Contemporary Music Analysis¹

Danielle Sofer

Music has often served as a vehicle for sexual expression. But within a musical context saturated with many sonic phenomena, music-analytical tools can be limited in their ability to pinpoint evidence of sex acts, pleasure, or satisfaction. Centering on sonic experience and perception, this article challenges the common trope of the disembodied and disinterested music theorist by proposing that, rather than neglecting sexual discourses, like-minded music theorists have instead established a veritable field founded on the commonly-held belief that sex and music are (in some cases) interchangeable. The article proposes that the meta-theorization of these engagements constitutes a discursive “social epistemology” thereby positioning such diverse contributions as part of the core music-theoretical “standard” of what was once called “mainstream music theory.”

Musik hat oft als Mittel für sexuellen Ausdruck gedient. Doch können musikanalytische Werkzeuge innerhalb eines musikalischen Kontexts, der von einer Vielzahl an Klangphänomenen erfüllt ist, in ihrer Fähigkeit eingeschränkt sein, sexuelle Handlungen, Genuss oder Befriedigung festzumachen. Dieser Artikel untersucht, fokussiert auf das Erleben und Wahrnehmen von Klängen, sexuell inspirierte Musik und vergleicht sie mit erfahrungsorientiertem sexuell-verkörpernten Schreiben über Musik. Durch eine Auseinandersetzung mit analytischen Ansätzen zu musikalisch-sexuellem Engagement, zeigt der Artikel auf, dass Musiktheoretiker*innen Diskurse über Sexualität kaum vernachlässigt haben, und hinterfragt so das Stereotyp des körper- und interesselosen Musiktheoretikers. Gleichgesinnte Theoretiker*innen haben hingegen einen Forschungsbereich entwickelt, der auf der Überzeugung basiert, dass Sex und Musik (in manchen Fällen) austauschbar sind. Der Artikel verdeutlicht, dass die Entwicklung einer Metatheorie für dieses Engagement eine diskursive „soziale Erkenntnistheorie“ konstituiert. Damit erweitert der Artikel diese vielfältigen Beiträge und positioniert sie als Teil des Kerns musiktheoretischer „Standards“ innerhalb der einst sogenannten „mainstream music theory“.

Schlagworte/Keywords: Diversität; diversity; Männlichkeit; masculinity; music theory; Musiktheorie; orientation; Orientierung; queer; sex

As LGBTQIA+-identifying academics, women, people of color, and the university’s otherwise marginalized laborers, we are so often expected to convey our various and variable personal identities to people everywhere we go. For many of us music scholars, it is in our jobs that we seek to set aside these identities, to focus for a moment on music, on something other than what aspects or orientations define us *personally*. And yet, when our mu-

1 This essay is indebted to the wonderfully supportive online community of music scholars. I wish to thank Eamonn Bell and Ezra Teboul, who encouraged me, through their newly formed group blog on sound and technology TAXIS, to combine my love of music theory with my aspirations for compassionate and transparent socio-technical systems. I also want to thank Emily Gale and Hannah Robbins for volunteering their time and for providing valuable feedback in later stages of revision. Lastly, I am grateful to Christian Utz for inviting me to write on this topic and for providing a supportive platform in which to express my frustrations with music theory’s past while guiding my reflections with the hopeful promise of a more socially aware music theory. I extend my profound gratitude to Sophia Leithold for her assistance with the German translation of the abstract.

sical life intersects with our sexual life, it can be expected that we will speak candidly about our research – our music – while also being prepared to speak vulnerably, to expose intimate aspects of our identity in the context of this very focused and somewhat publicly visible exchange. My own research into sexuality in electronic music is inextricable from these vulnerabilities and often appears to solicit and invite inappropriate comments from colleagues who might otherwise have avoided remarking on my sexual interests. I often weigh the value of my work against the risks and sacrifices that accompany any blurring of my personal and professional identities. To quote the opening of Suzanne Cusick’s momentous article “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight”: “I have great fear [...]. To speak publicly and truly about my own musicality (as private a part of me as my ‘sexuality’ – and frightening to speak of for that, but more frightening still because it is more completely a part of me than that which the world calls ‘sex,’ being also the fabric of my public life).”² Cusick exposes her vulnerability when writing about her need “to understand what relationship, if any, I could suppose to exist between my being a lesbian and my being a musician, a musicologist.”³ Whereas Cusick’s intention was that her investigation would amount to “an assemblage of notes that constitute the less private parts of an interior conversation among the several selves I am, several selves I have been [...],”⁴ her candidness resonated so strongly with her musicological colleagues that many of us since have embarked on similar expeditions of self-discovery.⁵

One understands Cusick’s hesitation when considering that, when *Queering the Pitch* (the book in which the quoted essay appears) was published in 1994, music scholars were embroiled in bitter debates about the merits of embodiment in music, of whether and how bodies figured into musical performance as well as the merits of acknowledging the sensory and, therefore, bodily necessity of engaging listening as a scholarly practice. These debates came relatively late to music theorists. Ellie Hisama remembers her introduction to “feminist music theory” – feminism being the common disciplinary lens through which music scholars encountered issues of gender and sexuality:

As an undergraduate music major interested in graduate study in music theory, I asked Joseph Straus, with whom I was taking an independent study in music theory and feminism, if he knew of any published work in feminist music theory. The only relevant writing he could think of was Susan McClary’s “Pitches, Expression, Ideology,” from the little-known journal *Enclitic* (1983). After reading this article (which I still reference when teaching Schubert Lieder), I corresponded with McClary, and we set up a meeting during her visit to New York [...].⁶

McClary’s incomparable achievements and impact as a music scholar, through her contributions from early music to dodecaphony, from analysis to cultural studies, within and outside of music, and subjects far and in between, caused an immense shift in rhetoric and even gave rise to new definitions of musical scholarship in the twenty-first century.⁷ Her monumental book *Feminine Endings*, first published in 1991 (reissued in 2002), wres-

2 Cusick 2006, 67.

3 *Ibid.*, 69.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Taylor 2012, Wilbourne 2015, Maus 2019.

6 Hisama 2018, 81.

7 Indeed, it seems likely that James Hepokoski was inspired to expand the notion of sonata form in light of McClary’s findings in his article “Masculine. Feminine” (Hepokoski 1994, 494n2), a predecessor to the more encompassing theory later penned with Warren Darcy (Hepokoski/Darcy 2006, 146–147).

ties with music's hermeneutics of sexuality in that each of its seven chapters takes to task sex in its literal, figurative, metaphorical, and physical manifestations *through* music.⁸ Inspired by McClary, I have aimed through my own work to redraw an interdisciplinary axis of inclusion that insists on sexuality as a crucial and robust paradigm at the intersection of music, society, and technology, a task I do not see as necessarily distinct from music theory's core endeavors.

This article offers a critical overview of sexual discourses in music theory, analytical strategies that, when collected together, illuminate how a social epistemology has emerged in the last thirty years since the publication of McClary's *Feminine Endings*. In what follows, I introduce a number of analytical contexts that seem to diverge stylistically and chronologically. However, the literature reviewed below, following Cusick's proposition, shares inspiration from musico-sexual encounters that, together, define a clear historical impetus for experiential sexually-embodied writing about music. Amassing several such contributions together, I show how, more than merely self-indulgent, McClary's and Cusick's respective contributions serve as ground upon which they, alongside other like-minded theorists, established a veritable field of sexually-oriented music theory. Given this field's diffusion of thought, I take the task of parsing musico-sexual discourses and suggesting why, despite approaches to music theory that are conscious of difference, these writings have been slow to compel women, LGBTQIA+-identifying people, or those identifying with the demographic labels of Black, Brown, Asian, and the infamous "other" category (commonly subsumed under the "Race and Ethnicity" section of census surveys) to stick around.⁹

MUSICO-SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS

In his 1993 essay "Masculine Discourse in Music Theory," Fred Maus presents two strands of music theory discourse that had become apparent by the 1980s and 1990s: (1) the "mainstream music theory" strand, which valorizes "technical" approaches advanced by music theorists advocating for the discipline's scientific affiliations, including Milton Babbitt and Peter Westergaard; and (2) "non-technical" approaches, or what Maus terms "literary theory" approaches or "nontechnical writing" about music evinced by John Rahn and Benjamin Boretz (both students of Babbitt's), as well as music theory's "contextual" and "phenomenological" approaches.¹⁰ We can decipher yet a third "embodied" discurs-

8 McClary 1991.

9 Historically, the social sciences have used "race" to refer to a person's biological origins as compared to the socio-cultural origins of one's "ethnicity." However, in Denton and Deane's (2010, 68) observation, "At the most basic level, even the distinction between race and ethnicity is not clear. [...] The conceptual distinction is easily challenged when we consider, for example, that African Americans, dark-skinned Caribbeans and black Nigerians will identify (and be identified by others) as members of a shared race, essentially having their ethnicity racialized." Anecdotally, I experience this tension when, as a Jewish person, I face discrimination from Ashkenazi Jews for my Sephardic Mizrahi (i.e. "oriental") heritage, a distinction that is biological as well as socio-cultural (see also Roby 2015, 172–173). Given such complications, particularly as "ethnic" categories become racialized in the reception and categorization of music, I use the terms "race" or "racialized" throughout this article when referring to difference or exclusion on the basis of (actual or perceived) physical features, including skin color, appearance, or otherwise.

10 Maus 1993, 267. Maus's essay focuses primarily on music theorists employed and/or educated like himself at Princeton University, where he admits that, as a graduate student, he was hardly aware that

sive strand emerging from Maus's own narrative. Positioning Maus alongside Cusick, Joseph Straus describes this third vein as one that understands music "through our prior, intimate knowledge of our own bodies [...] by encoding bodily experience."¹¹ Whereas Maus lumps the second and third strands together as "alternative approaches [that] persist, dimly, naggingly, around the edges of the professionally central technical theories,"¹² it is my feeling that work that explicitly names gender and sexuality, as well as race – which I deem inseparable from discussions of gender and sex in music – is now deserving and requiring of special disciplinary consideration. This is the task of the present article.

Music theorists have embraced embodied perspectives of music analysis since the discipline's scholarly beginnings – even those Maus might have envisioned as subscribers to his "technical" category. Already in 1967, Edward T. Cone (like Babbitt, Westergaard, Rahn, and Boretz – the theorists Maus mentions – based at Princeton) elevated music-theoretical discourses through a rhetorical investigation into the experiential nuances of Schoenberg's *Klavierstück* op. 33a, in a hypothetical test of the divergences between listeners' hearing of the original composition and its inversion or "mirror" structures.¹³ Cone intended to point out how (a poor) analysis might ignore the experiential facets of listening – what he termed "orientation" – by attending too closely to geometric figurations of the work's construction. In distinction from such a simplistic interpretation, Cone envisioned "orientation" as "[resting] not on the internal consistency of the system, but on some connection between the axioms and rules of inference on the one hand, and the external world on the other – whether that world is represented by acoustics, psychology, physiology, or history."¹⁴ That is, music on its own does not determine one's analytic orientation; rather, listeners intuit musical structure by negotiating the "axioms" intrinsic to the musical composition simultaneously shaped by the situation within which one hears this music. Not only do individual musical works imbue qualities from compositional context – when, where, and how the music was composed – but Cone expected a successful analysis to take stock of "the external world" – whether by way of "acoustics, psychology, physiology, or history" and the analyst's own "orientations." This latter proposition reads as an invitation to examine and assess music theorists' variable "orientations" as valid meta-theoretical grounds for understanding the state of the field.

Cone concludes that analytical "conventions" tend to emerge only after listeners receive enough reinforcement for certain tasks, through repetition of analytical actions or listening behaviors. In the late 1980s, just before Cusick's and McClary's respective contributions mentioned earlier, two theorists embarked on empirical investigations to prove Cone's intuitions (not mentioned explicitly) about listening orientations and their reinforcement through repeated action. Mária Sági and Iván Vitányi performed "psycho-sociological" experiments over fifteen years to prove listeners' "generative" musical ability – the ability to synthesize musical style to create minor musical variations. The investi-

there could have been other perspectives driving music-theoretical discourse. To some extent, Princeton's theorists did hold a heavy hand in controlling the direction of pedagogic and scholarly music-theoretical inquiry (Shreffler 2000); and yet, whether or not this trend was truly global is questionable, my primary contention nevertheless is that this is certainly no longer the case.

11 Straus 2006, 121.

12 Maus 1993, 267.

13 Cone 1967.

14 *Ibid.*, 47.

gators concluded that “generative ability determines also the spectrum of receptive experience.” In cases where

the “vocabulary” of the listener’s generative musical ability and the composition listened to have nothing in common: in such cases no receptive experience comes about. These are the impressions of a listener brought up on Classical and Romantic music when hearing the works of, say, Webern or Bartók (not to speak of Boulez, Stockhausen, or Ligeti). He does not meet a single familiar structure: he feels as though he were in a barren desert.¹⁵

So, if listeners are exposed to music outside of their *idiolect*, or range of musical experience,¹⁶ they will be hard-pressed to comprehend its structure; but if, conversely, intimately familiar – say a post-graduate student or professor of this music – these structures will be so engrained as to “appear” forthright, even intuitive. Where Sági and Vitányi were concerned with the synthesis of *music-compositional* generative ability, Cone was more interested in a kind of *analytical* generative ability, the ability to elucidate musical meaning by investments in a practiced music-theoretical “standard,” a term he had introduced already in an earlier essay.¹⁷ Combined with Sági and Vitányi’s findings, there may even be grounds for concluding that composers or artists who listen to a lot of sexually-inspired music would generate music along similar compositional constraints, perhaps using cognate expressions by mimicking the gait, pulsation, timbre, rhythm, or tensions of previous works. Likewise, music theorists who devote considerable attention to experiential sexually-embodied writing *about* music would adopt idioms familiar to that discourse such that these gradually acquired notions about music may appear intuitive; such assumptions could become stagnant and staid.

Cone likely would not have taken Cusick’s musico-sexual path, but his proposition almost thirty years prior appears to break ground for her exposition. From the personal narrative in my introduction, it may be obvious I was drawn to Cusick’s work because of my own sexual curiosities, on account of my desire and longing for a musicology that centered my own identity. Less obvious, perhaps, is my interest in Cone. His facetious experiment with Schoenberg’s piece may most immediately have been aimed at critics of his advocacy for “technical” writing about contemporary music (recalling Maus’s terminology above), and, like Babbitt’s infamous “Who Cares If You Listen?” article,¹⁸ aimed to position composer-theorists in a particularly advantageous position (something I discuss more thoroughly below). However, reading his words as a graduate student in the 2010s, I was struck by his insistence that no music is impervious to or “Beyond Analysis,” as is his title. Through his winding rhetoric, Cone had actually declared that there are destructive consequences to decentering one’s own analytical orientation. The implications here are wide-reaching and, within my own work, I have taken up Cone’s suggestion in developing analytical tools and techniques that are not (or not merely) score-based, pursuits that have been especially fruitful in the analysis of sexual “expression” and meaning derived from electroacoustic music, which usually has no score at all.¹⁹

15 Sági/Vitányi 1988, 193–194.

16 Meyer-Eppler 1968, 8.

17 Cone 1960.

18 Babbitt 1958.

19 Sofer 2014.

PITFALLS OF MUSIC THEORY'S HOMONORMATIVE DISCOURSE

Cone's advocacy of "orientations" builds on a previous assertion he made, that many music critics assume a "good" analysis is determined by inherently good music, that music theorists serve only as passive receivers who intuit musical qualities as they exist in the work. Notably, Cone does not agree. He proclaims,

The good composition will always review, on close study, the methods of analysis needed for its own comprehension. This means that a good composition manifests its own structural principles, but it means more than that. In a wider context, it is an example of the proposition that a work of art ought to imply the standards by which it demands to be judged. Most criticism today tacitly accepts the truth of this statement and sets about discovering the standards implied by a given work and testing how well it lives up to them. For investigation of this kind, analysis is naturally of primary importance.²⁰

We might understand this statement as a rhetorical move aimed at distancing Cone from those whose "criticism today tacitly accepts the truth of this statement." Immediately clear in this quote is the presumed collapse of *material* and *value*, where the material justifies its value, but implicit here also is the given that there are actual individuals responsible for determining what the "methods of analysis" are and what we mean by "comprehension." In this light, the passage reads as a warning to fellow composer-theorists as the essay was first published in *Problems of Modern Music*, edited by Paul Henry Lang – a crucial volume featuring contributions on the subject from other Princeton notables, including Babbitt and Roger Sessions, as well as Elliott Carter, Vladimir Ussachevsky, and Ernst Křenek. It is this critical "orientation" – an advocacy for criticism that centers the critic's own actions – Cone expands in the 1967 article "Beyond Analysis" quoted earlier.

I see Cone's aspirations here to center an embodied music criticism that accounts for the analyst's own assumptions which require contextualization by way of "acoustics, psychology, physiology, or history." Maus, however, identifies these kinds of appeals as merely defensive against the "passive, receptive role" listeners typically inhabit, and regards such appeals with suspicion. For him, the listening analyst's "passive, receptive role" capitalizes on a trope central to the guise of "masculine discourse in music theory," where he explains that "an overemphasis on active listening can serve as a masculine denial of the listener's feminized role. A listener is always less active, in comparison to performers and composers."²¹ He regards this early generation of contemporary theorists as conflicted about the implicit emasculation that comes with embracing one's listening as "passive," a behavior Maus recognizes as contrary to normative masculinity in "the dominant stereotypes of contemporary North American culture."²² Maus suggests that perhaps men in the profession cling to and bolster "the distanced, technical, nonexperiential modes that prevail in recent professional theory and analysis"²³ – traits that are stereotypically associated with men – in order to compensate for and recover from their imagined inadequacy, that is, their failure to meet stereotypical expectations for men. Whereas Maus relies on stereotypes of heterosexual masculinity at this point – which we

20 Cone 1960, 187.

21 Maus 1993, 282.

22 Ibid., 272.

23 Ibid., 266.

might dub “straight” orientations – he later performs a close reading of an essay by music theorist John Rahn to elaborate on how the passive receiver is very much an expression of masculinity when considering this role’s (homo-)sexual connotations – which we could call “queer” orientations – portraying Rahn as a listener who is penetrated by and possibly even enjoys receiving music in this way.²⁴

In his generous re-reading, Gavin Lee’s recent account identifies Maus’s description as one particular music-theoretical vantage point, that of the “gay bottom.” Though Maus takes care to explain that his gendered meta-analysis of qualities that may define a “masculine discourse” do not pertain only to men in the field, Lee instead emphasizes the centrality of men’s roles in this discourse to argue that “gay bottom subjectivity allows us to illuminate certain practices of listening and thus constitutes one form of the practice of queer music theory that is based specifically in the embodied experiences of gay persons *but can also* speak to the musical experience of music theorists at large.”²⁵ Lee rightfully recognizes that, when the receiver invites and even enjoys it, “the gay bottom allows us to reconceptualize the supposed passive receptivity of the listener as a form of agential perception.”²⁶ Lee maintains Maus’s passive/active dichotomy, but flips the script to embrace queer notions of active musical engagement. I do, however, doubt whether Lee’s analysis could truly “speak to the musical experience of music theorists at large,” as I question the presumed universality of his theoretical orientation.²⁷ What is missing for me in Lee’s account is his justification for “queer music theory,” for *why* his notion of queerness must form alliances with people who are “white and/or non-LGBTQ-identified.”²⁸ In seeking to align queer or “anti-normative” interests with their logical opposition to what is “normative, dominant, and oppressive in society,”²⁹ I think we often forget to acknowledge that what is normative is relative to each person’s situation and the respective orientation we take in terms of what lingers within our horizon and what escapes the outer limits.

For instance, where Lee and Maus collapse all orifices as equally penetrable (ears as anuses), I think it is important to consider the qualitative differences of content, both in terms of musical vs. bodily penetrators, and the sites of penetration. Maus and Lee endeavor only to theorize the minority male aspect of “getting fucked”³⁰ when the majority female perspective has long taken such penetrations, both physical and metaphorical. Habitual omissions of women’s perspectives seem particularly suspect when performed with claims toward expanding the range of “mainstream music theory” while centering the viewpoints of those forced to its margins. Such approaches actually underscore the notion that music theory prioritizes men’s viewpoints over women’s, as, for example, Lee does when he reads “David Lewin’s theory of musical phenomenology through Sara Ahmed’s ‘queer phenomenology,’” as I explain below.³¹ Maus flags this limitation of his article in his “Afterword” – actually he acknowledges unpublished personal communica-

24 Rahn 1979.

25 Lee 2019, 149, emphasis original.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., see footnote 25.

28 Ibid., 147.

29 Ibid.

30 Maus 1993, 273.

31 Lee 2019, 143.

tions with Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, who raises the provocation that his focus on the bounded pairs center/margin and domination/subordination simply reinscribes the power of the status quo.³² And, again, Lee's article also maintains these oppositions. Oppositions, including the active/passive dichotomy, rely on men's narratives and experiences while reinscribing the status quo, even if they cite people who are not men. In such instances men only cite non-men in service of advancing men's careers and their dominating forms of critique. In the Afterword to "Masculine Discourse in Music Theory," Maus includes several unpublished "reactions" to the article from colleagues – many of whom are women – reactions that raise serious issues surrounding the logic presented throughout the article, especially regarding how women's perspectives are presented, all while women are overlooked in the main text of the article.³³ Although I reiterate some of the points raised in these reactions, my intention is not to restate these valid criticisms but only to highlight how consulting the women who articulated the points prior to publication and citing them properly may have yielded more transparent acknowledgement of the author's own biases, though, admittedly, this is one way to include perspectives from as yet unpublished authors.

We may forgive Maus, whose analysis anticipates the critical discourses of masculinity studies, while Lee's newest contribution – twenty-five years later – is not so apologetic about its recapitulations of men's disciplinary centrality. Delimited and construed once again in terms of male-ness, such analytical thrusts, while enticing men to languish in queer alternatives, also reiterate disciplinary exclusivity on gendered terms such that men occupy both center and margins – what in Queer Studies is called "gaystreaming" or "homonormativity," a grave impediment for women, nonbinary and trans people, and another occupying a non-male role.³⁴

Significantly, Lee's article makes no effort to articulate his own analytical orientation, nor does the article express the epistemic roots of its author's own investment in this discourse, despite purporting to challenge the stereotypical guise/gaze of the disinterested and disembodied music theorist.³⁵ The article instead invokes the term "embodiment," a slippery concept in the history of gender theory and sexualities studies, as justification for inviting queer notions into music theory. Later in this article, I will show, through writing from scholar and artist Annie Goh and philosopher Robin James, how "embodiment" participates in a habitual abstraction that actually moves to orient music analysis away from the work of the very queer women of color Lee claims to center, for example, Sara Ahmed and myself.³⁶ I argue that theories of "embodiment" use inclusivity and diversity as a form of virtue signaling aimed at elevating the status of an individual scholar in a way that does not actually raise up those individuals who continue to be marginalized in music theory as a discipline: primarily women, individuals who identify with labels under the acronym of the LGBTQIA+, racialized individuals, and individuals otherwise minoritized on account of ethnicity. In summary, theorists can be *orientated* (statically) toward particular individuals (other theorists) or objects (music), and thus become engaged in a

32 Maus 1993, 278.

33 Ibid., 278–283.

34 Duggan 2002.

35 Lee 2019, 145, quoting Lewin 1986, 382.

36 Sofer 2014.

kind of metaphorically embodied perspective without actually betraying how one's body comes to be oriented within and among academic and scholarly spaces.

Such is the critique Ahmed levies against the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, recalling a famous encounter in *Ideas* in which Husserl orientates his body toward different objects in his field of vision as he writes:³⁷

The familiar world begins with the writing table, which is in 'the room': we can name this room as Husserl's study or as the room in which he writes. *It is from here that the world unfolds.* He begins with the writing table and then turns to other parts of the room, those that are, as it were, behind him. To make this turn, we might suppose that he would have to turn around if he is to face what is behind him. But, of course, Husserl does not need to turn around as he 'knows' what is behind him.³⁸

Like Jacques Derrida, Ahmed laments that Husserl does not articulate his prior knowledge in a satisfying way, but rather accepts this knowledge as "self-evidently" familiar.³⁹ She locates trouble in this methodology, in that our own image of Husserl's room is distorted by the deliberate abstraction of his own situated knowledge, where his phenomenology is a mere geometrical proximal description rather than any true acknowledgement of his privileged position as transcendental knower: "The objects that first appear as the 'more and less familiar' function as signs of orientation: being orientated toward the writing table might ensure that you inhabit certain rooms and not others, and that you do some things rather than others."⁴⁰ Ahmed points specifically to Husserl's neglect of more typically feminized spaces and his deliberate attention to the writing desk, an emphasis on the relative stasis of "inhabiting space" that ignores the mobility, flexibility, and temporally unfolding activity of "doing things." Ahmed recalls Iris Marion Young's "phenomenological model of female embodiment," stressing that orientations are not "simply given" but defined by what we *do*.⁴¹ That is, neither musical language nor musical expression is simply given, both are co-constructed simultaneously by "things" and those of us "doing things" with those things.

In my view, Lee's "Queer Music Theory" fundamentally misinterprets Ahmed's critique by confusing the stasis of "embodiment" with the fluidity of Ahmed's "orientations," possibly because of the way in which "orientation" has previously been used in music-theoretical discourses, for example by Cone. Without a fairly substantive explication of Lee's own involvement, his experiences as a music theorist, and his investments in *queering* (doing) music theory, he is right that his theory practices "embodied" ways of knowing – the premise at the heart of Ahmed's queer critique. Lee conveys as much when assessing Maus's contribution, which he says shows "how *practices of music theory* are themselves gendered and sexual"⁴² – but these theories are not in *themselves* gendered or sexual; rather, they are *made* so by *someone* who *does* theory and, in doing so, scripts familiar language about music from a particularly gendered and sexualized perspective.

37 See Husserl 1962, 117–118.

38 Ahmed 2006b, 28–29 emphasis original.

39 *Ibid.*, 43; see Derrida 1994, 149.

40 Ahmed 2006b, 30.

41 *Ibid.*, 60.

42 Lee 2019, 146.

So, to reiterate, where does work like Maus's and Lee's leave women, trans-feminine, and non-binary people? Would we be so supportive of Maus's and, subsequently, Lee's interpretations had they not centered (sex) acts performed by men? Could we in good conscience equate a woman's desire to become a music theorist with her desire to be passively "fucked"? Indeed, *this* description begins to resonate a bit too closely with the narrative of Milton Babbitt's electronic composition *Philomel* (1964). Whereas Maus and Lee are orientated more toward music-analytical process than music-compositional product, McClary's analysis of *Philomel*, which I review below, shows how asserting particular analytical constraints becomes problematic for how music-compositional products are assessed, valued, and ultimately, remembered.

In what follows, I introduce analyses by theorists who are well aware of the consequences of masking one's analytical biases: McClary's work on *Philomel*, Judy Lochhead's analysis of Berg's opera *Lulu*, Hazel Carby's and Angela Davis's respective accounts of the history of the blues in the 1920s and 30s, a brief summary of Patricia Hill Collins's musically-oriented theorization of *Black Sexual Politics* throughout the twentieth century, and bell hooks's theorization of the black woman as spectator. Each analysis centers the analyst's own personal stake in her drawn conclusions and serves to preface my argument about what is at stake when theorists propose supposedly novel approaches to music analysis that simply reinscribe the status quo, to recall Kielian-Gilbert's criticism of Maus's essay. I find value in these analyses as each identifies gender and sexuality as more than hermeneutics, like Maus and Lee, but instead centers musico-sexual performances by women, women of color, and/or queer women of color, as core constraints in how music conveys meaning to listeners. The analyses take care, like this essay, to center the perspectives of those whose work is being analyzed and therefore prioritize the performers' orientation alongside the theorist's own express experiences.

COMPOSING SEXUALITY IN THEORY⁴³

Susan McClary's feminist evaluation of modernist composers argued that certain composers employed difficult techniques like atonality and serialism because they sought to limit listeners to a circle of their obliging critics.⁴⁴ Pointing to the "sets" demographic of Maus's quip about "mainstream music theory" engaging primarily in "Schenker and sets"⁴⁵ – that is, the heritage of compositional rigor employed by Babbitt, Westergaard, and others in their expansion of Schoenberg's twelve-tone "system" – she examines how these composers aspired to assert a barrier between audience and specialist in order to secure their "terminal prestige" over a (supposedly) inexperienced, unskilled, and, in short, inexpert audience. McClary challenged the alleged autonomy of musical works and raised awareness of biases operating within music theory as an institution by holding composers – that is, people, not works – accountable.⁴⁶ Referring to Babbitt's *Philomel*, a serialist work setting an Ovid-inspired text detailing the violent rape of and aggression against the title character, McClary characterized this work as "an especially sympathetic instance" of avant-garde musical repertory in which a woman's experience is fairly represented. Ra-

43 A portion of this analysis appears in Sofer 2017.

44 McClary 1989, 61.

45 Maus 1993, 267.

46 McClary 1989, 62.

ther than the typical repertory, which “both flaunts and conceals its misogynist content,” *Philomel* “can be read quite straightforwardly as an *anti-rape* statement, in which the victim is transformed into the nightingale to sing about both her suffering and her transcendence.”⁴⁷ Contrary to her hearing, she chides Babbitt, whose “writings discourage one from attempting to unpack his composition along these lines. Indeed, he warns us not to get hung up trying to map the events of pieces onto the ‘mundane banalities’ of real life, for it is in this objective, unsentimental attitude that prestige resides.”⁴⁸ She then raises a memorable provocation, “But if content is really not at issue, why such horrendous subject matter?”⁴⁹ Her point is that, despite these composers’ hopes that listeners hear music *only* by structural components, the subject matter of their works necessitates deeper engagement. Certainly, we must accede that McClary’s analysis is made possible by what exists already in Babbitt’s tragic work, though her observations, drawing from feminism, cultural studies, musicology, and even music theory, push beyond the sounds of the music in themselves.

If people and not works are responsible for music’s interpretation, then it stands to reason that theorists could very well disagree with composers’ own words about their music. Such is the counter critique Arved Ashby proposes to McClary. Rather than continue the feminist path of analyzing the work by way of her own experiential criteria, McClary is too quick to distance herself by prioritizing her interpretation of the composer’s intentions. Ashby argues that Babbitt’s “arrogance” is no reason to limit one’s hearing of the piece: “[T]he interpretive approach she [McClary] suggests, whether better or worse than what music theory has to offer, begs important questions: why hold the composer responsible if you should choose to limit your reading of the piece? Why fault the composer’s critical monism and at the same time thrash about in it?”⁵⁰ Indeed, Maus’s close reading of Rahn’s essay goes above and beyond its original author’s intentions by teasing out a metaphor of the gay bottom from Rahn’s choice of language, including likening a listener’s experience with music to “penetrating” and a theorist’s purview to “ripening.”

Surely anyone can propose any theory whatsoever, but a reliable and convincing analysis is grounded in compositional context, if not the composer’s own purview then some historical or socio-cultural background situating the music. What’s more, Babbitt’s influential role as teacher and scholar paved the way for other analyses of his work, for example, Richard Swift’s contribution to the special issue of *Perspectives of New Music*, “a critical celebration of Milton Babbitt at 60.” Swift’s essay features a memorable analysis addressing “Some Aspects of Aggregate Composition” in *Philomel* that begins: “*Philomel* (1963–64), for voice, taped voice, and synthesized music on tape, employs twelve-voice canons in the taped music, in which each voice contains the ordered first hexachords of I and eleven I_t, while the twelve voices taken together produce vertical statements of P and five P_t.”⁵¹ The essay continues in like fashion for five pages.⁵² At no point does the analysis mention rape or even hint at the text’s subject. Swift’s analysis of

47 McClary 1989, 74–75.

48 *Ibid.*, 75; quoting Babbitt 1987, 182–183.

49 McClary 1989, 75.

50 Ashby 2004, 37.

51 Swift 1976, 241.

52 *Ibid.*, 241–246.

Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* in the same article similarly omits details of the Jewish perspective of surviving Nazi concentration camps.⁵³

McClary does not aim to pathologize sexuality either as a perversion of typical masculinity or as a "cure," to use another term from Maus's account;⁵⁴ she asks that theorists acknowledge the prominent role sex plays in music as well as the real consequences of experiencing such works. She points out that, even when the composer and theorist are one and the same, the latter persona takes measures to "bracket out" sexual content perhaps, I would suggest, out of fear of legitimating more robust theories of music's sexual significance. Indeed, omitting any and all mention of sex allows music theorists to collapse together sexual pleasure and sexual violence, such that *Philomel* could be assessed on a level playing field with any other work of Babbitt's, programmatic or not.⁵⁵ Whether it was Babbitt's intention, many analyses of the work present accounts of the structural or geometrical workings of *Philomel*, whereas McClary emphasizes, perhaps somewhat in danger of a gendered essentialism resting in stereotypes, that

Many of my female students have trouble listening passively to *Philomel* as yet another instance of serial and electronic manipulation: they have difficulty achieving the kind of objective intellectual attitude that would permit them to focus on considerations of sterile compositional technique. For to most women, rape and mutilation are not mundane banalities that can conveniently be bracketed for the sake of art: especially an art that attaches prestige to the celebration of such violations.⁵⁶

Because Maus is methodologically concerned more with process over product, in his words, he acknowledges gender as one consideration in developing his own discursive style,⁵⁷ but rather ignores the content of individual musical compositions or how such discursive considerations might be executed in analytical practice. Indeed, he tacitly ignores *music* that centers gender and sexuality, turning his focus instead toward performing a sort of literary meta-analysis of theoretical writings that seemingly have no connection to sex. Reading McClary, we see that bracketing out sex does not just leave out the analyst's perspective but also threatens to gloss over or entirely omit the subjectivity of those the music supposedly represents.

In a radical analysis of Alban Berg's opera *Lulu* (1929–34), music theorist Judy Lochhead addresses a contradiction in music theorists' critical views of the opera, pointing out that, though many of them contend that "analysis [is] of primary importance," they subscribe to an implicit epistemological hierarchy in which they position themselves as oracles for what about the music is "good," recalling Cone's usage. Within this logic, if the critic should be in search of the "right" hearing of a work, this hearing should not yield original insight but only "reveal" something bestowed by the music and its creator.

53 Ibid., 238–239; a more situated and contextualized analysis of this work appears in Calico 2014.

54 Maus 1993, 274.

55 In electronic music, women's voices sound overwhelmingly more often than men's, something that points to composers' desires to "fix" women's voices (drawing on the notion of fixed media) (Bosma 2003). In this sense, cutting, pasting, sampling, and thus manipulating a woman's voice to produce a piece that elicits sexually connotative meaning or erotic overtones could be likened to sexual coercion on a plane with the rape that occurs in the *Philomel* myth. For additional analysis on this point, see Chapter 1 of Sofer forthcoming.

56 McClary 1989, 75.

57 Maus 1993, 277.

Lochhead argues that “good” music, because it is assumed to be “right,” can impose biases regarding gender and sexuality, biases that penetrate what are supposed to be mere geometrical aspects of the music, specifically its tonality.⁵⁸ Accordingly, “What the music ‘means’ must be qualified by *for whom* and *when*.”⁵⁹ The character Lulu’s leitmotifs have typically been portrayed as more tonal in comparison to Berg’s compositional palette throughout the work and elsewhere to equate her music’s relative tonality with more overt emotional expression. But, as Lochhead shows, Berg uses recurring associations between “the opera’s main characters with a pitch-class [...] and tritone, and from a layering of dramatic meanings generated by prior occurrences of the Freedom Music,” using the same musico-dramatic mechanisms for other major characters as well as the atmospheric texture throughout the opera.⁶⁰ Once disproving that Lulu’s music is no more, no less tonal (as if such a comparison were possible), Lochhead asserts that the character’s emotional affect is presumed simply because she is constituted as a woman, arguing firstly that most analyses of *Lulu* rest on entrenched gendered stereotypes, such as attributing women with a disposition that is naturally more emotional than men’s.

Crucially, Lochhead then abstracts the critique of gendered stereotypes plaguing *Lulu*’s reception to argue further that criticisms of Berg’s opera “implicitly and partially take over strategies used to denounce the ‘new music’ of the early twentieth century: it has none of the emotional force of the prior, Romantic tradition.”⁶¹ Lochhead determines that what masquerades in music criticism as a misogynistic denunciation – the dismissal of Lulu’s emotion – in fact reveals a more complicated musical ideology of the time: the early seeds of a movement against “new music” that would plague the remainder of that century and which lingers still today. She raises a provocative question: “Given Berg’s history, why isn’t the nontonal music heard as emotionally charged since it could be construed as his legitimate (and hence authentic?) mode of musical expressivity?”⁶² Lochhead’s point is that tonal music could be perceived by listeners as emotionally expressive in the context in which that emotion is readily received – nineteenth-century orchestral music, for example. Whereas, non-tonal music ought to be more emotional for composers for whom that idiolect is more idiomatic.

Similar to the collapse Lochhead identifies in *Lulu*’s reception, in his essay “Sexual and Musical Categories,” Maus complicates Babbitt’s role as an authoritative composer by “queering” popular reception of his music. To me, this reading simultaneously compromises the fair reception of these compositions while reinforcing exclusionary language that threatens to further distance actual queer individuals from music theory as a discipline. In this account, Maus identifies the minoritarian subset of non-tonal compositions by Babbitt and his sympathetic colleagues with the term “queer,” first boasting: “Perhaps it is already easy to see that non-tonal compositions are queers in the concert hall, without any special argument on my part.”⁶³ Later Maus reiterates: “While it is undeniable that Babbitt achieved a position of great privilege for himself, as did some other like-minded composers, I am suggesting that he sought this privilege in part as a shelter for the queer

58 Lochhead 1999, 252.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 242.

61 Ibid., 236.

62 Ibid.

63 Maus 2004, 159.

music he wanted to make.”⁶⁴ Maus intends the term “queer” as an appeal to and defense of Babbitt’s work, ascribing the composer’s music as minoritarian within the broader contemporary musical landscape; however, though Babbitt’s music was (and remains) no doubt marginal from musical interests both in and outside concert halls, he is in no sense “queer” in the way individuals who reclaim this term intend its use, namely as a description of sexual orientation that is marginal to sexual expressions and behaviors acceptable to the dominating heteronormative mainstream. Babbitt is not “queer” in this sense and he has even complained about a “homosexual” majority among musically engaged individuals, against which he situates himself.⁶⁵ In this sense, using the term “queer” for Babbitt’s music is a form of appropriation that further excludes LGBTQIA+ individuals, since by casting Babbitt in a queer light, Maus even goes against how Babbitt regarded himself and his own work. Because of this, we might interpret Maus’s use of “queer” here not simply as a means of bracketing these pieces off, but as a slur used to deride Babbitt.

During “Princeton Theory’s high-modernist moment,” in Scott Gleason’s elegant phrasing, “mainstream” theorist-composers like Babbitt used hypersexualized and homoerotic language to describe the experimental musical performances of those other “literary” composers, such as Boretz, from which the former wished to distance themselves.⁶⁶ And vice versa, composers like Boretz later embraced feminine-gendered prose as a subversive tactic to those supposed hyper-masculinist ideologies embraced by earlier high modernists, as for example in his multimedia work *music/consciousness/gender* (1994–95) – a piece that, in absence of women’s perspectives, has been criticized as “problematic.”⁶⁷ In short, the dichotomy between tonal and non-tonal, and between high-modernist and experimental aesthetics, rests on thoroughly entrenched gendered and sexualized dichotomies that, nevertheless, insist on an exclusion of input from those whose perspectives they supposedly espouse: women and “homosexuals.” Such notions of “feminine” and “queer,” though perhaps helpful at one time in discerning certain categorical differences, appear essentialist today in that both reduce queerness or femininity to tropes, and in effect implicitly bracket these notions out from women’s and/or LGBTQIA+-persons’ actual embodied experiences (of inclusion, exclusion, and/or of solitude). In all this talk of femininity, *where* are the *women*? To answer this question points to yet another trope of “masculine discourse” as Maus has defined it (and McClary takes him to task on this in her quoted response to his article):⁶⁸ how gender-critical language can be used to appear inclusive while reinforcing exclusivity. The theorists above address the demographic majority – often invisible and therefore assumed as universal or blank – aiming to counter these individuals (men) whom they envisage possess the most power.⁶⁹ This is to say that the theorists surveyed until now likely assumed a majoritarian target audience rather than those individuals who occupy the minoritarian role at the margins of

64 Ibid., 168.

65 Ellie Hisama (2019) recently revealed recorded interviews with Babbitt in which he describes nothing short of a conspiracy theory about a homosexual majority among music academics “who ran everything,” distinguishing himself and other “heterosexual academics” as relative minorities. A version of this talk is due to be published in *Music Theory Spectrum*.

66 Gleason 2013, 31.

67 Boretz 1999; see Scherzinger 2002, 168n1.

68 Maus 1993, 281.

69 Sofer 2018, 136–141.

“mainstream” discourses – even when those marginalized are themselves the subject of a musical analysis.

In the next section, I look outside music theory to a history of reception comparable to McClary and Ashby’s exchange regarding analytical encounters with Babbitt’s music. I examine contradictions between the intentions of blues performers and the way their music was marketed and later canonized. Revisiting observations from black women regarding spectatorship, I further interrogate Ashby’s suggestion for analysts to disavow composers’ intentions regarding their work to show how too liberal a reception could yield dangerous consequences.

RECORDING SEX (SOUNDS)

In my attempts to parse the apparent division between sexually-embodied writing *about* music, I came to wonder how music boasting sexual subject matter might fit into these meta-theoretical discourses. That there exists such a wealth of music boasting sexual subject matter is grounds in itself for determining broader generalizations about sexuality and its place in contemporary music-theoretical discourses. In this section, I introduce a few historical examples of music with explicit sexual subject matter, and analyses that account for the intersection of gender, sexual expression, and race / racism in how this music circulated, in how the performances were received then and now.

African American studies scholar Hazel Carby characterizes the burgeoning “Classic Blues” scene championed by black American women in the 1920s and early 30s as “a discourse that articulates a cultural and political struggle over sexual relations: a struggle that is directed against the objectification of female sexuality within a patriarchal order but which also tries to reclaim women’s bodies as the sexual and sensuous objects of women’s songs.”⁷⁰ Where the “patriarchal” order reduces expressions by women to inherently sexualized objects – even in the absence of explicit bodily performance – black women since the 1920s at least have reinvigorated their bodily autonomy, particularly in regard to vocal repertoire and especially in popular music arenas. Possibly because of the scarcity of black women in musicological and music-theoretical disciplines,⁷¹ the academy has not had comparable success sussing out and ultimately combating the gendered and sexualized biases simultaneously operating in European “classical” music, by which I mean university-sanctioned orchestral, chamber, electronic, and electroacoustic music – and, where this work has been performed, sexuality has not been investigated with the same rigor as in popular music studies, though this moment is upon us.⁷² Positioning the blues alongside mid-century debates about tonality (and, subsequently, the so-called new music) may seem somewhat “arbitrary,” given that, as McClary writes, these “highly con-

70 Carby 1998, 474.

71 Quoting from a recently released “Open Letter to the Music Theory Community” with 625 signatures: “The field of music theory has struggled with demographic imbalances for decades. The Society for Music Theory’s latest annual demographics report shows that as of October 2018, 84.2% of the SMT membership self-identified as white. Also, 62.5% of its members self-identified as male and 33.4% of its members self-identified as female (the remaining percentage of members self-identified as transgender or preferred not to answer). These statistics have remained roughly the same over the past five years, when SMT began to compile this demographic data as part of its membership process.” (Boyd et al 2019)

72 See for example the special issue on “Music, Race, and Ethnicity” (Lewis/Calico 2019).

ventionalized discourses” come “from two very distinct cultural contexts.”⁷³ And yet, within an article that offers a critical overview of recent discourses that stem in part from North American music theory, these two music-historical strands appear less distant and distinct considering McClary’s declaration that, “Among the musical cultures to which we in North America have access, none has influenced more profoundly our present day world than the blues and the European tonal repertory, and we need some idea of the social grounding of both in order to make sense of our own time.”⁷⁴ Perhaps even more compelling for our purposes is the prospect of comparing prevalent sexual debates surrounding these parallel musical heritages.

Philosopher, music historian, and activist Angela Davis reports that women blues performers “were the first to record the blues”; indeed they dominated the sound recording industry from the 1920s onward, with many examples, including “Alberta Hunter, Ida Cox, Ethel Waters, Lucille Hegamin, Edith Wilson, Victoria Spivey, Rosa Henderson, Clara Smith, Trixie Smith, Sippie Wallace, and many other less-known artists [...]. At the peak of the classic blues era, which loosely spanned the decade of the twenties, hundreds of women had the opportunity to record their work.” Yet despite this prosperity and women’s continued efforts to dismantle oppression, “In the 1920s, many black women were sought after – and often exploited by – burgeoning recording companies.”⁷⁵ While women blues performers used their platform to sound the conditions of their liberation, certain tacit entities were operating simultaneously to repackage and thus standardize this message of resistance against the performers’ intentions. Where listeners became accustomed to hearing women’s voices recorded, and blues singers were singing both openly or suggestively about sex (e.g., Bessie Smith singing “I Need a Little Sugar In My Bowl”), a standard developed in which women were expected to be the harbingers of audible sex, accompanied by an assumption that the music they performed was not of their own creation.⁷⁶ By the 1940s, women’s voices hardly needed to be sexually allusive to be heard as alluring. Instead of deviations, these recorded voices reinforced a presumed correlation between femininity and sexual *availability*.

Turning to the visibly sexualized images of musical performers, Patricia Hill Collins’s *Black Sexual Politics* opens with four wide-ranging musical case studies from three distinct time periods:⁷⁷ (1) Jennifer Lopez’s 2000 musical breakthrough on the heels of her successful role as influential Mexican-American singer *Selena* – “the uncontested Queen of hybrid pop culture”; (2) Destiny’s Child’s *Survivor* album from 2001; (3) Josephine Baker’s topless appearance in *La Revue Nègre* from 1925, and (4) early nineteenth-century exhibitions in Paris, London, and Ireland that placed excessive emphasis on the “freakishly” large nature of Sarah Baartmann’s buttocks.⁷⁸ Collins introduces these four examples as evidence of the global fascination with the sexuality of women of color and specifically black women, a fetishization of visible sexually explicit content that permeates twentieth-century visual culture: J-Lo’s butt, the animal print bikinis sported by the members of Destiny’s Child on their *Survivor* album cover, Baker’s bare breasts, and

73 McClary 2000, 63.

74 Ibid., 64.

75 Davis 1995, xii.

76 See Bradby 1993, Loza 2001, Stratton 2014.

77 Collins 2000, 25–27.

78 See also Stavans 1995, 24.

Baartmann's iconographic portrayal of the "Hottentot Venus." Collins presents these cases as evidence of how "women of African descent have been associated with an animistic, 'wild' sexuality, all encompassed by the proximity of these performances to music."⁷⁹ One of the wider claims of the book is that black women's sexuality has become so representative of a *certain kind* of sexuality in America that little attention has been given to the depth, breadth, and divergence of sexual experience among and between different women,⁸⁰ such that men's sexuality has been relatively neglected while women's so specially targeted as to become abstracted toward a particular ideal. For many years, if and when sexual qualities have been interrogated, women's performances were more heavily scrutinized than men's, and to Maus's credit he shifts this focus. Although Collins's examples in this section appear to focus more on visibly apparent sexual elements, we find a clear path from blues sound recordings to the realm of sexual fantasy extending from the visible, such that, in their proximity to sound, sexualized images of these performers must be analyzed *in conjunction* with the audible, where the latter realm is more typically the subject of music-theoretical inquiry.

In music theory, we encounter black women's voices most commonly in analyses of the audible and not typically in the form of published scholarly writing *by* black women. It is therefore necessary for us to look outside music theory to gain some understanding of a reception history that is not beholden to white music scholars. Looking to cinema reception, bell hooks writes that, as spectators, black women approach media "fully aware" of how performances by black women, when they appear, are cast and reframed to appeal to white and black men. hooks describes this alternative gaze to the typically envisioned audience as "oppositional," in at least three senses. First, in the absence of black performers, "To stare at the television, or mainstream movies, to engage its images, was to engage its negation of black representation."⁸¹ Second, by taking pleasure in casting a gaze as spectators, when the structures of domination inherited from slavery "repress our/black peoples' right to gaze," this "'gaze' has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally."⁸² Third, hooks observes that black women, in their absence or, alternatively, their idealization, tend to be ambivalent towards popular cinema, even when they themselves occupy the spectator role supposedly reserved for men.⁸³ Returning to music theory, we could use these three spectator positions also to explain the poverty of ethnically and racially "diverse" voices in music theory. To rephrase the above points from hooks: (1) when turning to music theory, black women note a "negation of black representation"; (2) by observing this poverty, black women spectators can exercise their right to actively gaze; and, therefore, (3) may become "ambivalent towards" a music theory from which their presence has been stripped.

Art historian Ladi'Sasha Jones observes a similar response among black women visual artists, who, as a consequence of their ambivalence toward canonical art, took to cultivating new creative spaces altogether. In "The Public Spaces of Black Women," Jones investigates a tradition in New York City "of Black women artists and intellectuals organizing independent spaces," where "the convening spaces and public institutions estab-

79 Collins 2000, 27.

80 See Rose 2003.

81 hooks 1992, 117.

82 Ibid., 116.

83 Ibid., 119.

lished by Black women are structured around providing social services, developing intersectional discourses for political reform and resistance, and the advancement of Black art and cultural production.”⁸⁴ Black women have created flourishing cultural spaces in which to gaze at art and exchange mutual glances independently from the scrutiny of racial occlusion. This is to say that within such spaces the artists were free to sit passively or react actively to the art and not as subjects with pre-scripted or performative roles.

Reconsidering Maus, we might wonder whether a realm exists in which scholars marginalized by the “mainstream” are nevertheless practicing music theory.

UNPACKING NEOLIBERAL (UN)CONSCIOUS BIAS

In the time since McClary, Maus, Cusick, Lochhead, and others first intervened in the discourse, music theory has developed extensive sexual literatures quite apart even from what composers themselves have written musically and textually about their music. A broad purview of musico-sexual discourse therefore expands beyond motivations for individual analyses as a form of personal identity politics towards understanding sexually-informed music theory as constituting a coherent “social epistemology” – an effect of knowledge acquired via socialized systems that exceed the individual (listener, theorist, and so on). Also in the nearly thirty years ago since McClary, Maus, Cusick, and Lochhead began writing, music theory has purportedly become more inclusive. At least in the United States, more women are certainly vocal within the discipline than ever before, looking to the activities of the Society for Music Theory’s standing committees on the Status of Women and Race and Ethnicity, respectively, while the graduate student-led initiative Project Spectrum has been advocating at the forefront of every recent conference.⁸⁵ So why does reductive terminology persist, and, more importantly, why do precipitant and correlated real, existing inequalities still perpetuate with little change? In my view, individuals and institutions who aim to promote inclusiveness will likely fail the very individuals they hope to promote simply by speaking to the majoritarian, by not consulting with and amplifying the perspectives and experiences of those already marginalized and excluded from the particular spaces that would benefit from greater diversity.

Since the Society for Music Theory began collecting demographic statistics from its members in 2008, two-thirds of the society identified as male and over three-quarters as white;⁸⁶ other societies such as the Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie (GMTH) and the Society for Music Analysis (SMA) have so far neglected to collect such statistics. Since no statistics are provided on the societies’ respective members in the latter two cases, it remains unclear what if any tangible changes should be made either to improve or to maintain diverse demographic standings. Without concrete data on a society’s membership, we cannot act meaningfully on diversity initiatives because it remains unclear to what extent inequalities exist among members. And yet, some societies endeavor to voice support for

84 Jones 2016, 1.

85 <https://projectspectrummusic.com> (31 Mar 2020)

86 “SMT Demographics | Society for Music Theory.” <https://societymusictheory.org/administration/demographics> (31 Mar 2020).

diversifying musical disciplines;⁸⁷ in such instances, it is a mystery what exactly is meant by “diversity.”

Where “difference” was once the powerhouse of Marxist (post-structuralist and anti-capitalist) feminist strategies, the concept has been co-opted by economic strategists as a tool of capitalist exploitation. Possibly the most significant musicological text to “interrogate” the concept of “difference” was Ruth Solie’s edited collection *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, whose targeted essays drew attention to the myriad ways difference could also be wielded to assert sameness.⁸⁸ Solie locates musicology’s source of struggle with the concept “in the formulation of the most basic questions about what pieces of music can express or reflect of the people who make and use them, and thus of the differences between and among those people.” Yet she acknowledges thankfully that by then, writing in 1993, few “historians and critics” would cling to a “most extreme formalist position” that would deny this.⁸⁹ Solie also recognizes the threat of an *essential* insistence on difference. Feminist theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick determined such insistence as a response to prejudice in the late 1990s, in the apparent collapse of difference into extreme fragmentation. She writes that insistence on sexual difference becomes a “stylized violence of sexual difference” when difference “must always be *presumed* or *self-assumed* – even, where necessary, imposed – simply on the ground that it can never be finally *ruled out*.”⁹⁰ Framing the violence of sexualized difference within contemporaneous capitalist strategies, in his essay on the “Molecularization of Sexuality,” Jordy Rosenberg explains that “molecular ontologies” infiltrating the “Humanities’ ontological turn [...] mediate a dual intensification specific to the present: that of neoliberal forms of settler colonialism and financialized capital accumulation.”⁹¹ *Difference as fragmentation* disrupts alliances and hence collective bargaining, thus further marginalizing individuals by alienating us from one another. Namely, sexualized, gendered, and racialized prejudice in humanities scholarship replicates neoliberal capitalist systems of exploitation that have material effects on wage labor, work ethic, and any number of pragmatic values acted on by humanities scholars in the day-to-day.

“Interdisciplinarity” as a concept might seem to accomplish alliances of sameness that would combat fragmentation, and yet, because the onus of proof falls on individuals within the humanities and not the collective – with the single-authored monograph, as the sole instructors of record, and, ultimately, when the time comes to present a complaint should things go awry – interdisciplinarity from the perspective of academic labor becomes nothing more than another form of fragmentation, an infinitely accruing checklist of ways in which our work is used by, or only made relevant when, benefitting institu-

87 See the Editorial to the present issue, <https://doi.org/10.31751/1037>. The SMA recently appointed Anne Hyland as their Equality and Diversity Officer, and resultantly published an Equality and Diversity Statement proposing to cultivate inclusivity for “all people, irrespective of race, gender, age, or any other such characteristic by which people identify themselves or are identified by others.” (“SMA Equality and Diversity Mission Statement.” *Society for Music Analysis* [blog]. 8 February 2018. <http://www.sma.ac.uk/2018/02/sma-equality-and-diversity-mission-statement>, 31 Mar 2020)

88 Solie 1993, 1.

89 *Ibid.*, 3.

90 Kosofsky Sedgwick 1997, 11–12.

91 Rosenberg 2014.

tions that do not directly have scholarly employees' individual interests in mind.⁹² This may very well be the "standard" experienced by many academics, but individuals from minoritized backgrounds are hit hardest on these fronts, either because, as "diversity hires" we are expected to be *the* representatives of our particularities and thus own and display our difference for all to see at *all times*, or because, no matter what steps we take to fit in, we can never fully be a *good* fit, because what makes us different may never be contained within accepted norms of "standard" practice.

Critical momentum against neoliberal capitalism has illuminated financial incentives for celebrating plurality, including the economic advantages of "omnivorous" musical tastes,⁹³ "ubiquitous" musical listening practices,⁹⁴ as well as what was once termed "multicultural," now "diversity," initiatives launched at every level of a waged labor market.⁹⁵ Multifarious consumption is becoming increasingly compartmentalized such that minimally fragmented identities, tastes, and opinions have become maximally profitable: the more forms of "difference" an individual claims, the more means there are for exploiting individual consumer interests. Celebrating difference in everyone and every *thing* is not equitable, and has rather dire consequences for the people our discipline actually marginalizes – people of color, queer folks, women, women of color, and "queers of color" – whose inclusion our sedimented practices resist. Sara Ahmed investigates this paradigm in her book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, criticizing "the 'happy diversity' model, in which 'diversity talk' becomes 'happy talk,'" because such a notion of "diversity provides a positive, shiny image of the organization that allows inequalities to be concealed and thus reproduced."⁹⁶ In this sense, diversity contrasts with equality because of how it prioritizes and benefits the largest and most powerful entities, namely, staid institutions over individuals. Ahmed provides a musical metaphor that carries aptly into the present discussion, which I therefore quote at length:

The appeal of diversity might not simply be that it is a new word but that it shares an emphasis on the new: for example, by sharing the emphasis on the university as a form of business, in which the new becomes a core value or form of capital. The word 'diversity' is more in tune with the languages employed to redescribe what universities are doing. Institutional language can be thought of as a tuning system or as requiring attunement: if being incorporated by an institution requires that you are in tune, then being out of tune is to get in the way of its tune. What is out of tune is overheard; it sounds abrasive. Diversity offers practitioners a way of sounding 'in tune' and thus 'in place' by *not* sounding abrasive.⁹⁷

In a musical context, Jessica A. Holmes has demonstrated how the need to conform when singing "in tune," disproportionately affects people with disabilities. Holmes provides an account from "profoundly deaf professional opera singer Janine Roebuck," who testifies to being "petrified to sing out of tune" for fear of facing discrimination as her "hearing loss progressed."⁹⁸

92 An effect of what Graff terms "patterned isolation" (1989, 60).

93 Hubbs 2014, 45–49 and *passim*.

94 Kassabian 2001.

95 Drott 2012, Blake 2017.

96 Ahmed 2012, 72; quoting Bell/Hartmann 2007.

97 Ahmed 2012, 63.

98 Holmes 2016, 543.

Looking to popular music consumption, philosopher Robin James revisits the concept of “passivity” to turn a spotlight on ways in which feminist philosophers have reinforced a correlation between passivity and stereotypical white femininity by valorizing a cultural divide between “classical” or “serious” and “popular” music.⁹⁹ James understands this notion of passivity as stereotypical because it assumes women, both performers and spectators alike, act out or receive the music record executives promote without exercising “discrimination, judgment, and self-determination.”¹⁰⁰ Setting up Marx’s *Kapital* in “analogical” relation to Luce Irigaray’s critique of “Women on the Market,”¹⁰¹ James summarizes how women’s immaterial representation serves to undermine and ultimately dismantle women’s material power and work, writing:

Just as women and women’s work – the *oikos*, per se – have traditionally been relegated to the private sphere, an object’s gross materiality, its utility as a *thing* with *specific qualities*, is not admitted into the market economy proper. Accordingly, in the same way that the Modern subject emerges when Descartes supposedly thinks away his body and sense perceptions and makes recourse only to Reason, the commodity is first produced when an object is divested of all its tangible, useful properties and considered only in terms of its reference to some common denominator.¹⁰²

In James’s reading of Irigaray, Marxism employs women for their *utility* as transient commodities in “reference,” as James writes above, “to some common denominator,” while ignoring – in fact, deliberately veiling – women’s active contributions to the labor force because of qualitative differences between the kinds of work women and men tend to do. This veiling becomes an enigmatic question regarding use and value, the dichotomy between genders, transferred onto the work each respectively performs. While Lochhead’s critique clearly draws out this exploitative expression, her claims about what is at stake for music seemingly perform the same habit, moving from Lulu’s tangible form as a representation of woman to substitute her lyrical music, and thus shift the debate to questions of tonal versus atonal standards (about a composing man, no less). This shift could very well signal yet another substitution of what Irigaray terms “Women-as-commodities” who “are thus subject to a schism that divides them into categories of *usefulness* and exchange value; into matter-body and an envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private and social use.”¹⁰³ We can recall that Maus portrays the common perception of passive as emasculated *qua* femininity. The active is therefore also suspect in that it represents the hyper-masculine stereotype, such that James via Irigaray argues that typical juxtapositions of passive and active in “phallogocentric discourse” silence women “due to the lack of a positive definition of woman/femininity in its various specificities.”¹⁰⁴ I would add that such idealized binaries as Maus, Lee, and Irigaray present them do not contribute positively to notions of either women *or* men, or anyone, for that matter. James determines that women’s passivity is confirmed and reinforced by disregarding discursive qualities

99 James 2010, 94.

100 Ibid., 93.

101 Ibid; Irigaray 1985.

102 James 2010, 95.

103 Irigaray 1985, 176, emphasis added.

104 James 2010, 99.

between different forms of work, resulting in the “trivialization” of women’s judgments and ultimately of the kinds of music they value and enjoy:

Women are allowed to produce and exchange commodities, *provided that these goods are given no cultural significance*. [...] Women may be allowed a degree of agency, but never full access to the highest domains of intellect and culture; they may speak, but only a derivative, immature, unrefined discourse. This trivialization is one of the most common ways in which feminized/female culture production is abjected from “real” or “serious” culture.¹⁰⁵

The “serious,” “mainstream,” “active,” or “masculine” cannot exist without the oppositional hierarchy of these terms to their respective counterparts “frivolous,” “marginal,” “passive,” or “feminine.” James aspires to dispel the “absolute active/passive binary” that stabilizes such hierarchies.¹⁰⁶

Institutions, whether musical or otherwise, exploit the character of the minority as a sign representing some much greater obstacle to quantify – the quality of the music itself (in Lochhead’s critique), alternative masculinity (for Boretz, Maus, Lee, and others), or institutions themselves – universities as well as disciplines – as mainstays of exclusion. Lochhead’s analysis illuminates the “how” of the gendered specter, showing how analysis might privilege alternative modes of listening to the dominant way of composing or analyzing. Ultimately, though, pandering to the alternative or marginal may very well cause further fragmentation in that it presumes that those who espouse a “mainstream” outlook are not capable of such “queer listening,” to use another term coined by Maus, which he argues contrasts with “normative concert listening and the reflections on musical eroticism that appeared in U.S. musicology from the late 1980s on.”¹⁰⁷ Bracketing expectations of concert goes from the uncanny sense acquired of those who take notice of these “behaviors,” elevates queerness into a privileged way of encountering music, but one that, nevertheless, cordons off queer listeners as exceptional – the queer behavior as perhaps an unintended consequence of classical composition and therefore queer listeners as an unintended audience. While this observation may be valid, is there no other way? Is there no way to center queer experiences, women’s experiences, non-male experiences, non-heteronormative experiences, other than in opposition to the majoritarian? In the next section, I propose an answer to this question.

CENTERING THE USER IN MUSIC-THEORETICAL DISCOURSES

In some cases, composers *use* an “ideal listener” to help situate certain constraints for their compositional choices.¹⁰⁸ Often composers themselves, writing as theorists, use their own music to build more abstract theories, as in the case of Babbitt’s many writings. Cases where composers use their own music can elucidate compositional motivations and intentions for other listeners, providing insight into the composition’s inner workings. Since Cone and Babbitt, many theorists have expanded such auto-ethnographic approaches to investigate analytical orientations toward music that the theorists themselves had no hand in composing, analyzing another person’s works in service of “hear[ing] the

105 Ibid., 104–105.

106 Ibid., 111.

107 Maus 2013, author’s note.

108 See Sofer 2017.

piece better,” to quote from theorist David Lewin.¹⁰⁹ In short, the author’s envisioned audience has in many ways shaped the kinds of methodological approaches theorists have taken toward music. To recall Lochhead, “*What* the music ‘means’ must be qualified by *for whom* and *when*.”¹¹⁰ With this adage in mind, we could draw the analogy between music theory as *technology* and readers (whether theorists or not) as its *users*.

Within this technology-user dynamic, music theorists fall into the role of *engineers* of particular theories/technologies with certain *users* in mind, even when presuming to address some feigned universality. And while we may already acknowledge the historical feminization of our object of study – music¹¹¹ – and even our discourses, as detailed above, we must also acknowledge the registral dynamics at play in whom we target as “users” of our various theories. Despite established discourses in sister disciplines, as detailed above by Collins, hooks, Jones, James and Irigaray, I would venture a guess that with very few exceptions only a minority of music theorists write with a non-white, non-male reader in mind. Just as there is much we music theorists could learn about spectatorship and musical reception from scholars of Black Music, in this section I introduce a discourse from user interface design, which similarly interrogates reception not merely in terms of receivers but also in how a targeted audience could and should influence creators.

Lucy A. Suchman is a foundational anthropologist of science and technology who worked as a scientist at the XEROX Corporation’s Palo Alto Research Center for twenty-two years. Her investigation of this work in *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions* (1985) reconceived the creator-user dynamic in technology by proposing to apply social science – tasked with “interpreting the actions of others” – to “the design and use of interactive machines” or “human-machine interaction.”¹¹² Suchman’s central claim revolves around intuitions of the human-machine interface, explaining from the engineer’s perspective: “For practical purposes, user interface designers have long held the view that machines ideally should be self-explanatory, in the broad sense that their operation should be discoverable without extensive training, from information provided on or through the machine itself.”¹¹³ One problem is that “the degree to which an artefact is self-explanatory is just the extent to which someone examining the artefact is able to reconstruct the *designer’s intentions* regarding its use.”¹¹⁴ She goes on to explain that the human-machine relationship has been revolutionized recently with “the idea that the artefact might actually *explain itself* in something more like the sense that a human being does. In this second sense the goal is that the artefact should not only be intelligible to the user as a tool but also that it should be *intelligent*.”¹¹⁵ Clear parallels emerge between this rhetoric and that which science-minded composer-theorists have tasked for their music. To recall Cone once more, “The good composition will always review, on close study, the methods of analysis needed for its own comprehension.”¹¹⁶ Reading Cone through the

109 Lewin 1969, 63, Guck 1994; see also Lochhead 1982, Lewin 1986, and Cox 2016.

110 Lochhead 1999, 252. See footnote 58.

111 Brett 2006, 11.

112 Suchmann 2007, 29–30.

113 *Ibid.*, 43.

114 *Ibid.*, emphasis original.

115 *Ibid.*, emphasis original.

116 Cone 1960, 187. See footnote 20.

logic of an anthropologist of technology, we might understand “good composition” to mean the piece of music makes itself “intelligible” to users – whether other theorists, composers, or listeners at large.

In a revised edition published twenty years later in 2007, Suchman responded to criticism of the first edition explaining that her usage of the word “context” was insufficient for the kind of situatedness needed to address “the problem of human-machine communication” because “context” is too static a term to account for the complexity with which things are confronted in real-world situations. Observing “behaviors” as interactions between technology and users, Suchman explains,

I proposed a rewording [...] “that behavior can only be understood in its relations with real-world situations.” There are two changes here, one subtle, one less so. The more subtle shift, from “in the context of” to “in its relations with,” is meant to get away from the container-like connotation of the term *context* and emphasize instead that the structuring of behavior is done not a priori, but in reflexive relation to circumstances that are themselves in the process of being generated, through the same actions that they in turn work to make comprehensible.¹¹⁷

Suchman’s remarks bear a striking resemblance to Lochhead’s music-theoretical qualifications. Where the term “context” might evoke theorizations concerning both epistemic and ontological qualifications, “situated” rather requires embodied, temporal, and proximal theoretical engagement.

Suchman’s contemporary Donna Haraway expands these sentiments in her notion of “situated knowledges,” which she says are “about communities, not isolated individuals,”¹¹⁸ arguing in favor of “partiality and not universality.” Haraway continues emphatically, “I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.”¹¹⁹ Building on Haraway, media scholar and artist Annie Goh divides recent sound studies discourses into positions that subscribe either to the perspective of subject-centered epistemology or to object-oriented ontology, neither of which, despite practitioners’ appeals to the contrary, realize Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledge” because, as Goh explains, neither epistemic nor ontological investigations succeed in accounting for the theorist’s own situatedness.¹²⁰ For Goh, Haraway’s concept “juggles a seemingly impossible contradictory commitment to both positivism and relativism.”¹²¹ Comparably, “positivism” and “relativism” are two concepts always at the center of music theory’s formalist (or masculinist) enterprises.

Goh invokes Haraway’s term “material-semiotic” as one way to enforce the embodiedness of epistemology while also retaining the “political-ethical demands of situatedness” to counter the presumed transcendental masculinist view, which Haraway terms the “god-trick.”¹²² In an extended passage, Goh makes these connections explicit:

117 Suchmann 2007, 19.

118 Haraway 1988, 590. See Judy Lochhead’s article in the present volume, <https://doi.org/10.31751/1031>.

119 Ibid., 589.

120 Goh 2017.

121 Ibid., 292.

122 Ibid., 289.

[T]he physical embodiedness of archeoacoustics research methods does not combat the “god-trick”. The aforementioned difference between embodiedness and situatedness is key: embodiedness alone does not prevent the traditional subject-object relations from persisting. A Harawayan situatedness would require not only a consideration of the body, but of the political-philosophical conditions in which knowledge production takes place. This includes a gendered, racialized and material engagement with knowledge production.¹²³

Goh argues that scholarly discourses need to amplify accounts that center and situate perspectives enforcing material-semiotic commitments, not by negotiating through bodies conceptually or metaphorically – as Maus does – but by regarding marginalized scholars as factually situated knowledgeable beings.

Where Suchman drew our attention to the absence of users in the engineering and design of new technologies in the 1980s, nearly two decades later, Nelly Oudshoorn, Els Rommes, and Marcelle Stienstra observed that “Concepts such as ‘user-centered design’ and ‘design for all’ are frequently used by designers and policy makers interested in equal access to new technologies, particularly new information and communication technologies (ICTs).”¹²⁴ Despite the conceptual preponderance of universal design, many failed at that time to consult users in the design stage due to the risk that doing so “may slow down the speed of development.”¹²⁵ As a consequence, “design-for-all” projects introduced unintended biases based on designer’s assumptions, whereby “technological artifacts [came] to incorporate barriers against specific groups of users”¹²⁶ – particularly biases that negatively affected women and people with disability or illness, such that users were expected “to articulate and perform identities that correspond with the identities anticipated by innovators.”¹²⁷ What’s more, “Technologies may create new identities, or transform or reinforce existing identities, by delegating and distributing specific responsibilities, skills, and tasks to users.”¹²⁸ This last observation, when read through a music-theoretical lens, explains why, even though women and other minorities have been consulted on disciplinary issues via, for example, SMT’s Standing Committees, the demographic statistics have hardly shifted. In other words, those who succeed as music theorists tend to adopt and adapt to the existing scripts enforced through a tacit acceptance of disciplinary standards.

Focusing on a comparison of economic incentives between the private and public sector, Oudshoorn and colleagues show that intentions to design for everybody instead default to methods of “designing for oneself,”¹²⁹ or what is known in the industry as “I-Methodology.”¹³⁰ Music theorists who claim to diversify the field topically but who nevertheless resist amplifying scholarly and musical work created by those individuals who remain marginalized in the discipline on account of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, access and class, or disability, simply reiterate an “I-Methodology” that only reinforces an individual theorist’s own assumptions of the needs

123 Ibid., 294.

124 Oudshoorn/Rommes/Stienstra 2004.

125 Ibid., 31.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid., 32.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid., 41.

130 Akrich 1995.

and interests of those who belong to other populations or subscribe to other identities than themselves – whether “feminine,” “queer,” or otherwise.

Francesca Bray examines similar findings within engineer-user relations, noting: “Once consumers (or rather users), like producers, were treated as rational actors embedded in complex sociotechnical and cultural systems, it became easier to explain their decisions to adopt or to refuse technology, as well as the degrees of ‘interpretive flexibility’ to which they might subject it.”¹³¹ This reflexive framing can prove useful for the field of music theory where there is still resistance to even acknowledging that systemic exclusions exist and that they occur because of the self-assumed learning curve enforced by the implicit “standard.”

To read these finding through a music-theoretical lens – substituting music theory for technology in the above passage – we music theorists should aim collectively to understand and continually interrogate who engages or disengages from our work or even the discipline at large. If theorists envision the “user as everybody,” they risk further alienating individuals while narrowing music-theoretical standards increasingly. A music-theoretical parallel to the term “interpretive flexibility” here might be what Dora Hanninen terms one’s “theoretic orientation,” informed by one’s interests and perceptual habits, their interpretive goals and one’s music context. As Hanninen laments, this remains one aspect often left unspoken in music analysis, and presumably if theorists were to acknowledge demographics, including gendered discrimination or racism, as markers not only of a theorist’s own orientation toward analysis but also their orientation toward a particular *audience*, there would be greater transparency regarding who really benefits from an analysis.¹³² Elsewhere Hanninen sees “theoretic orientation” as a way of expanding music-theoretical scope to “open up the possibility for precise and reasoned intersubjective discourse,” which I envision as a way of continuously disrupting the staid presumptions of analytic standards.¹³³

This is to say that, when writing about “queer listening” one cannot presume to speak for all queers alike, and when writing as a “gay bottom,” one cannot ensure that an analysis will actually “speak to the musical experience of music theorists at large,”¹³⁴ since no theory is “universally” understood, let alone accepted. Theory is always contingent, as are the identities of a theory’s theorists and its readership. If we only *use* women’s compositions or performances and do not explicitly name women as *users* of music’s *theories*, we necessarily exclude women from music-theoretical practice. Women may very well read and engage with music-theoretical research, but we do not see ourselves implicated in and impacted by this research. If instead we explicitly name women – who may also be black scholars, scholars from Asia or the Global South, and/or members of the LGBTQIA+ community – as part of the users of our theories, our music-theoretical objectives may very well change.

131 Bray 2007, 40.

132 Hanninen 2004, 150.

133 Hanninen 2001, 347.

134 Lee 2019, 149. See footnote 25.

CONCLUSION

Above, I examined the phenomenological distinction between “embodiment” and “orientations” in Sara Ahmed’s work, where the former takes as given the familiarity of one’s surroundings and objects that populate that ecology while seeking to bracket out an object’s “fundamental ontology,” to use properly Heideggerian terminology.¹³⁵ The problem one encounters is that there is nothing truly “fundamental” – in the sense of inherent – in an object without accounting for the observer, spectator, listener, or analyst’s own proximal orientation, without accounting for the ways in which theorists navigate the world, how we have arrived before the writing table, to return to Husserl’s example, or how we have come to know a particular piece of music, looking to music theorists. This personal history is all part of the concept of “doing things” Ahmed articulates, a concept she picks up again later in her monograph *What’s the Use? On the Uses of Use*.¹³⁶ In a blogpost preceding release of this monograph, Ahmed explains the book’s methodology in relation to her particular fascination with the word “use”:

[W]e learn about use from use: use is how we get a handle on things when we are occupied as well as offering a way of talking about occupations and handles. My aim has also been to widen the scope of what we mean by utilitarianism by thinking how the concept of utility exercised within that tradition relates to more ordinary uses of use. I also investigate utilitarianism as an administrative history that helps us to understand how use becomes a way of building worlds. I am especially interested in how a requirement to be useful falls unevenly on subjects, or how utility as a referential system (useful for, useful to) is tightened or loosened depending on one’s location in that system.¹³⁷

In the previous sections I examined a number of ways in which the word “sex” can be *used* as means toward music-analytical ends. Well, more accurately, rather than *analytical* ends, theorists use analysis *together with* sex to elucidate musical hearings. Ahmed’s method of “following words around” necessarily draws on her previous work around “orientations,” a related (though heavily updated) enterprise to Cone’s in the ways her notion of “orientations” bridges the pointillistic tasks of independent theorists with the macroscopic socio-historical action of queer discourses. Ahmed’s “orientations” tend to navigate discursive paths differently from the “straight and narrow” or “well trodden” routes sedimented by the demographic majority of a given society or intellectual discipline.¹³⁸

In this regard, a key difference Ahmed articulates between historical notions of “orientation” and processes that might *queer* orientations is in acknowledging how phenomenology is necessarily located, situated within the borders that define us as people of a particular place to *do* particular *things*. According to Ahmed, traditional notions of phenomenological orientation tend to bracket out crucial notions of identity, such as gender, sexuality, race, or more realistically, the many ways in which we find ourselves to be *gendered*, *sexed*, and *raced*. She asks, “If whiteness gains currency by being unnoticed, then what does it mean to notice whiteness? What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do?”¹³⁹ These questions become pertinent when pursuing

135 Heidegger 1996, 200–201.

136 Ahmed 2019.

137 Ahmed n.d., emphasis original.

138 Ahmed 2006a, 554.

139 Ahmed 2007, 149.

indictments against music theory's racialized and gendered insularity. Lee points out that, for Ahmed, a history of phenomenology from Husserl to Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulates modes of inheritance characterized as "lines of whiteness – the philosophers' thought expresses the *privilege* that comes from being white." Lee then contrasts this image of continuity with "the phenomenology of non-white bodies [which are comprised of] stoppage, obstructions, and obstacles – in other words, the *absence* of a line."¹⁴⁰ But actually, rather than pointillistic gaps, Ahmed speaks to the reach and limits of orientations; regarding the phenomenological horizons of such perceptions, she extends the existing phenomenological repertoire to enrich Husserl's philosophical investigations by queering them, by exposing the familiarity of whiteness to throw into question the "somatic norms" that make non-white bodies feel "out of place" by intervening her own positionality – exactly as I have done in this article, interspersing music-theoretical writings with musicological, sociological, and historical writing about sex in music by scholars whose work might ordinarily fall outside the bounds of music theory.¹⁴¹ I extend the music-adjacent queries to musically distant writing about sex in technology and philosophy both to position the words of women of color in proximity to music theory but also to show how using sex as common ground introduces an alternative scope for music-theoretical inquiry by providing nuanced scholarly expertise from fields that could enrich currently pervasive modes of musical analysis, even for those theorists who are already concerned about music's confluence with sex and gender.

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140 Lee 2019, 146.

141 Ahmed 2006b, 133.

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© 2020 Danielle Sofer (daniellesofer@gmail.com)
LGTBQ+ Music Study Group, Dublin

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