Analysis as Ethics: Experiments with Music Loving

by

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Abstract

In response to critiques of music theory following Joseph Kerman’s “How We Got Into Analysis and How to Get Out,” theorists often hail the virtues of analysis to defend our position in music studies. In addition to enriching musical experience and our sense of self, analysis matters because it involves a concern with caring for and understanding music on its own terms. My dissertation expands on the ethical potential implied in this last argument for analysis. Drawing on feminist music theory, I propose that we can locate this potential in the very relationships that animate analysis: music loving. Taking seriously this pervasive yet under-theorized concept, I consider how we might rethink music loving to better articulate the ethics of our work.

In chapter one, I explore how music theorists frame the purpose of analysis in the stories we tell about our discipline. These narratives, I argue, locate an analytical ethics in the separation of music from context, which I liken to Lauren Berlant’s notion of cruel optimism—strategies of hope that cause harm rather than good. This dissertation then offers other stories that reconsider how analysis can make better subjects and worlds.

Chapter two draws together the two central frameworks of this project—feminist music theory and new materialisms. In particular, I focus on Suzanne G. Cusick and Marion A. Guck’s writings on our embodied relationships with music, in which music acts on us and generates pleasure that motivates our scholarship. These writings present a way into a new materialist ethics that acknowledges the dynamic flow of agency across human and nonhuman bodies, such as musical works.
Chapter three expands the concept of love to theorize this version of ethics. First, I demonstrate how a particular image of love as an interaction between only two bodies—the theorist and the music—remains at the core of our understanding of analysis and its purpose. Then, in order to more adequately answer feminist music theory’s call for diverse accounts of music, I propose another version of love. I draw on Deleuze and Guattari as well as new materialist expansions of their work to redefine love as a relationship among assemblages—heterogeneous networks of bodies, forces, and things. In the context of music theory, this kind of analytical loving would involve analysts, recordings, scores, theoretical apparatuses, and many other things. Through grappling with this idiosyncratic understanding of love, I suggest that theorists could experiment with the production of new disciplinary practices and ethics.

Chapter four offers analytical writing from this philosophical orientation. I draw on affect theory and anthropology to demonstrate how affective autoethnography serves as a valuable method. In a series of autoethnographic vignettes about making a Schenkerian analysis of J. S. Bach’s Prelude in B-flat Minor, BWV 891, I perform the ethos of experimental music loving, evoking jolts of joyous potential and paranoid scholarly habits that strike during analysis.

Chapter five concludes by situating this loving ethics of analysis alongside recent perspectives on the effects of music scholarship. Referencing musicology’s reparative turn toward questions of ethics, love, and care, I argue that music theory’s analysis-oriented ethics offers special insight in these conversations. From this site of commonality, we can collaborate on new stories about the value and sustainability of music studies.
Chapter One
The Stories We Tell

We like to imagine that our life follows some kind of trajectory, like the plot of a novel, and that by recognizing its arc we might, in turn, become its author. But often what we feel instead is a sense of precariousness—a gut-level suspicion that hard work, thrift, and following the rules won’t give us control over the story, much less guarantee a happy ending. For all that, we keep on hoping, and that persuades us to keep on living … We continue to write, even if it occasionally feels as though we were spinning our wheels, and we continue to live, even if it means giving up the certainty that our story is going to end the way we want it to.¹

Origin Stories

Let’s begin at a moment of disciplinary rupture, well-cited and well-traced—Joseph Kerman’s “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out.”² Among music theorists, this moment is often characterized as a test of endurance and survival from which we forged a stronger disciplinary identity.³ Here is how the story is often told:⁴

³ I suggest there is a shared motif in the stories that we tell about this Kerman moment that we can liken to test narratives in folklore. In particular, there are similarities to themes of testing endurance and the power of survival classified under H1500—H1549 in the Aarne-Thompson motif-index of folklore. Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends, rev. ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1955–58), http://pm.nlx.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/xtf/view?docId=motif/motif.00.xml;chunk.id=div.motif.pmpreface.1;toc.depth=1;toc.id=;brand=default.
Once upon a time, in the late 1970s to be exact, there was an academic discipline called “music theory” that was just beginning to define itself. However, just as music theorists were starting to form their professional identities as distinct from musicologists, a challenge to their autonomy appeared. In an article published in Critical Inquiry, musicologist Joseph Kerman took to task the explanatory power of music analysis, a method of closely engaging with music associated with the new field of music theory. The problem of music analysis, for Kerman, was that it was too wedded to the logics of nineteenth-century German organismism. And by adhering to this image of organismism, music theorists were complicit in ideologies of formalism and positivism. As a result, music theory’s investment in analysis closed the discipline off from fully addressing the complexities of musical experience beyond the limitations of these values.

Hoping to incite change, Kerman suggested a better path for future music scholarship, one that could lead us closer to understanding music properly—what Kerman called “criticism.” This call for a new kind of critical music research drawn primarily from literary theory in the humanities, launched music theory and musicology into a crisis. For two decades, there were battles over the merit of context versus text and of New versus Old musicology and music theory. Ultimately, through perseverance and unwavering faith in the practice of music analysis, music theory made it through these contentious debates triumphant and resolute.

In response to Kerman’s and subsequent critiques of music theory, music theorists still hail the virtues of analysis to defend our unique position in music studies. We have argued that the practice has been unfairly mischaracterized. We have engaged with the charges of organismism, formalism, and positivism through debates about musical unity.\(^5\) We have argued for the merits of subjective versus objective perspectives in analysis.\(^6\) We have expanded the

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\(^6\) See also Martin Scherzinger’s critique of the anti-formalist fallout after Kerman in “Negotiating the Music-Theory/African-Music Nexus: A Political Critique of Ethnomusicological Anti-Formalism and a Strategic Analysis of the Harmonic Patterning of the Shona Mbira Song Nyamaropa,” *Perspectives of New Music* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 5–117.

canon and methods to increase the diversity of identities and musical genres. Through scholarly proliferation, we have shown how analysis, and as a result, music theory, do indeed matter.

In this dissertation, I take our discipline’s steadfast commitment to music analysis as a starting point. How have we understood the purpose of analysis? And how might we continue to argue for its cause?

As a music theorist, I too am invested in the practice as a productive mode of musical engagement. However, instead of constructing even more distinct disciplinary lines as past responses to Kerman have offered, my defense of music analysis explores another possibility. As I will labor to show throughout this dissertation, one value of analysis lies in its ethical potential, which I locate in how analysis requires us to intimately relate to other bodies with love and care. But while we have celebrated analysis for its enrichment of musical experience and subjectivity, we have yet to fully consider music-analytical loving and its capacity to do good. In this chapter, I will illustrate strategies of storytelling and survival

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that inhibit our acknowledgement of this ethical possibility in analysis. From this moment of disciplinary impasse, this dissertation will then intervene by offering other stories instead.

In particular, drawing on the opening quotation from this chapter about Lauren Berlant’s affect theory, I wonder if the established stories that we tell about the threat of musicological invasion function as a performance of cruel optimism, a type of relation formed while hoping for something that is better for us but that is in fact harmful. As Berlant defines this concept:

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially.9

So let’s begin again from Kerman’s article, this time reframed as a tale of optimism once good and now harmful.

Despite the antagonistic title, Kerman’s writings also contain moments that suggest that he did not entirely want to get out of analysis. In his book-length critique of academic music scholarship, Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology, he describes the powerful potential of music analysis to expand rather than limit musical inquiry:10

Qua criticism, musical analysis is limited and limiting; yet it is also capable of more rigorous and powerful determinations in its own sphere than are available to formalistic criticism in any of the other arts. That is why the serious critic cannot help being both fascinated and exasperated by analysis. The potential of analysis is formidable, if it can only be taken out of the hothouse of theory and brought out into the real world.11

If only music theory could rethink its parameters for understanding music, then music theorists could do better, Kerman urged. But our resistance to this vision of analysis did help

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11 Ibid., 18.
us to maintain and flourish in a separate disciplinary space. We needed the difference afforded to us through asserting that music analysis need not worry (at least too much) about things we deem outside of music, such as history, culture, and politics. Without this boundary between music analysis and “the real world,” we would have been subsumed back into musicology, a field that subsequently embraced questions of context. And for a time, it appeared that our strategy worked. After all, in our stories that are summarized in this chapter, we emerge victorious after the trials of new musicology.

But with this method of survival, we have imposed a limit on what music analysis is and what it can and should address—in other words, its purpose. Richmond Browne’s speech in celebration of the Society for Music Theory’s (SMT) twenty-fifth anniversary in 2002 embodies these limitations. In his reflection on the “controversial and confrontational” formation of the SMT in 1977, Browne expresses concern and the need for sharp disciplinary lines:

We hoped [in 1977] that there would be theorists 25 years later who knew and respected each other and who had achieved academic respect by virtue of the efforts of SMT. That has clearly happened … We are now vindicated (at least in part). That is to say, we may continue to be vindicated if the current SMT develops along clear and pragmatic lines. Otherwise I think the whole theory enterprise may yet founder.  

With the threat of disciplinary dissolution, the lines that we must maintain surround our identities as analysts and a particular image of what analysis is and can be. Browne ends his speech with a warning:

A theorist is a master analyst—certainly of tonal music, preferably also of 20th century music, and preferably of some other historical or contemporary genre. The proliferation of worthy topics like jazz, feminism, world music or cognition is welcome and adds to the value of music education in itself—but the rock of theory is analytic mastery. To the extent that the SMT as a group of individuals who call

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12 Ibid.
13 This speech was published in Music Theory Online. My citations reference this published version. Richmond Browne, “The Deep Background of our Society,” Music Theory Online 9, no. 1 (March 2003): [2], http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.03.9.1/mto.03.9.1.browne.html.
themselves theorists, walk away from the analytic agenda, so much do they and we risk marginalizing ourselves. Diversity cannot be a cover for the SMT becoming an orphanage.

My advice may seem harsh, but it is given out of love for all who preceded us, for everyone here tonight and for all who will continue to work in the name of theory.\textsuperscript{14}

As a gesture of love for his fellow music theorists, Browne urges us to maintain our borders and be wary of losing the core of our identity to “jazz, feminism, world music or cognition.” Although Browne does not specify how these particular topics threaten traditional music analysis, the reason might be that analysis of this sort might become too easily entangled with questions of race, gender, colonialism, and the body—issues that might complicate the lines we have drawn around our object of inquiry, the music itself. But with this statement, I contend that Browne’s and other similar perspectives from music theory have turned our method of survival inward toward the diversifying undercurrents of the SMT and of the transformative potential of analysis itself. With these limitations, I suggest that our tale of optimistic separation might produce harmful effects. More specifically, if music analysis is a practice of caring for music, then what are the ethical ramifications of limiting the kinds of music that we love and our modes of loving professionally?

I wonder, then, if there can be other stories to tell about analysis and our discipline. Are there other ways that we can envision hope and survival in music theory? What if, instead of a story of destruction at the moment of Kerman’s intervention, we told a tale of possibility—of reparation and alliances with different perspectives?\textsuperscript{15} If so, how might

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., [13–14].

\textsuperscript{15} Kerman also employed divisive strategies in his critique of music disciplines as evidenced by the organization of \textit{Contemplating Music} into separate chapters for ethnomusicology, musicology, and music theory. See Michael Cherlin, “Why We Got Into Analysis and What We Get Out of It,” review of \textit{Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology} by Joseph Kerman, \textit{Theory and Practice} 11 (1986): 55.
analysis be placed in closer conversation with other disciplines today? And from here, what might analysis have to offer?

Returning to my assertion that analysis can be an ethical practice of relating with care and love, this introductory chapter will trace how this potential has been implicit in our defense of the practice. I begin with Kofi Agawu's reply to Kerman in “How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back In,” in which Agawu tells a tale of survival like the one summarized at the beginning of this chapter. I then turn to a more recent example of a similar story, Steven Rings’ “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments (and Music Theory’s),” a paper presented at the plenary session of the Society for Music Theory’s (SMT’s) fortieth annual meeting in 2017. In my reading of these two essays, I identify an implicit ethics of analysis connected to the positive affects, such as joy, pleasure, and love, that arise through our close, embodied relationships with pieces. However, I also demonstrate that, although these two essays offer a roadmap toward an ethics of music analysis, our cruel, optimistic tale of disciplinary separation presents an obstacle on this path.

Agawu: Guilty Pleasures


of music theorists is rooted in Kerman’s fundamental ambivalence about the merits of analysis.\textsuperscript{18} Contrary to readings of Kerman as anti-analysis, Agawu notes that Kerman did not advocate for the complete negation of the practice. Instead, he was actually “profoundly ambivalent” about it. This conflict is evidenced by the conflict between Kerman’s acknowledgement of the powerful potential of analysis and its “myopic” deficiencies that he attempts to solve with criticism.\textsuperscript{19} For Agawu, Kerman’s observations on the supposed insufficiencies of analysis are premised on an unfairly one-dimensional understanding of the practice.

So although analysis continues to thrive after Kerman, Agawu asserts that its true purpose and value remain dangerously unarticulated. And in order to bolster the practice against future attacks, we must work out a definition that more accurately reflects its complexities and significance to the academy. In my reading of this text below, I will illustrate how the ethical potential of analysis underlies Agawu’s response to Kerman.

In this section, I focus on two points to illuminate ethics as a central component to Agawu’s defense of analysis. First, Agawu openly celebrates music analysis as a dynamic, never-ending process in which an analyst must continually strive toward but yet never reach the truth content \textit{[Wahrheitsgehalt]} of a work, a concept that he borrows from Theodor

\textsuperscript{18} Agawu, “How We Got Out,” 269.

\textsuperscript{19} “For if the musicologists’ characteristic failure is superficiality, that of the analysts is myopia. Their dogged concentration on internal relationships within the single work of art is ultimately subversive as far as any reasonably complete view of music is concerned. Music’s autonomous structure is only one of many elements that contribute to its import. Along with preoccupation with structure goes the neglect of other vital matters—not only the whole historical complex referred to above, but also everything else that makes music affective, moving, emotional, expressive. By removing the bare score from its context in order to examine it as an autonomous organism, the analyst removes that organicism from the ecology that sustains it. It scarcely seems possible in this day and age to ignore the fact of that sustenance.” Kerman, \textit{Contemplating Music}, 73.
Second, in journeying toward truth content, analysis is an activity that produces pleasure and joy.

Agawu begins his corrective to Kerman by expanding the definition of analysis as an open-ended study of music that begins from the music itself. This assertion counters some common stereotypes of the practice as a search for the singularly correct interpretation of a piece. Rather, Agawu insists that any conclusions made in a written analysis can only ever be provisional. “In an ideal world,” he writes, “analysis would go on always and forever.”

In the many acts of analysis that will take place in a music theorist’s career, what matters the most is that the practice constantly improves our perception of musical works. With each attempt at analyzing a piece, we may get closer to sensing its truth content, which Agawu represents as the mutable surplus (or potential) within a composition. From this discussion of the relationship between perception and truth content, the faint outlines of an ethics of music analysis emerge.

On perception, Agawu notes that analysis makes better listeners by requiring an analyst to closely engage with the most fundamental materials of music, “the strictly musical facts.” An analyst brackets off other details related to the work, such as the composer’s

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22 Agawu, “How We Got Out,” 270.

23 Ibid. My reading of truth content in Agawu is more concerned with the work that this concept performs in his vision of music-analytical ethics rather than in its fidelity to Adorno’s definition.


biography and historical context, so as to not overwhelm the music itself and drown out the truths that it would like us to know. Such an intensely-focused and intimate experience with the piece, which Agawu likens to embarking on a spiritual journey, will undoubtedly leave its mark on a listener’s subsequent hearings of the piece. But since the work of analysis is never finished, its value also lies in its capacity to help us continually change our perception of a work, hopefully deepening our appreciation each time. For Agawu, this openness to the possibility of different hearings makes analysts more accountable to music because they do not impose fixed interpretations onto a piece.

For Agawu, the limitless interpretive possibilities in analysis are rooted in its connection to truth content—how analysis works toward the unique and fundamental problem that each piece of music poses to the listener. However, though we continually reach for a composition’s truth content, we can never grasp the entirety of it. It is, rather, “a constantly receding target, an object that becomes more elusive the closer one gets to it.”

Acknowledging that the term “truth content” is neither straightforward nor popular in current times, Agawu nevertheless finds the concept useful in terms of its ethical resonances. He writes:

Metaphors of ascension to an elusive “truth content” enshrine a strategic process of deferral. Internalising this strategy—which also entails resisting the easy temptations of attaining closure—is a prerequisite for adequate analysis. The truth content is not necessarily a literal, empirical truth but rather a dynamic, motivating truth designed

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25 Ibid.
26 “Its [analysis’s] task, therefore, is not to describe the work—and with this I have really arrived at the central issue concerning analysis generally—its task, essentially is to reveal as clearly as possible the problem of each particular work. ‘To analyse’ means much the same as to become aware of a work as a force-field [Kraftfeld] organized around a problem.” (Adorno, “On the Problem of Musical Analysis,” 181).
partly to anchor listening in specific sociocultural and historical moments even while—and this is the paradox of it—releasing the analyst from the dubious responsibility of having to establish the authenticity of the analysis. All of this boils down to an attitude, an ethical attitude perhaps.\(^\text{29}\)

After this momentary arrival at ethics, Agawu then moves away from the specifics of an ethics of analysis.\(^\text{30}\) What we can glean from Agawu, however, is that the “ethical attitude” of analysis starts from an orientation toward the truth content of a musical work and an understanding that any knowledge that we gain from such an experience is always partial and dynamic.

Furthermore, alongside this struggle to open oneself up to a work’s truth content, Agawu likens analysis to performance as a hands-on, embodied activity that generates pleasure. Analysis provides us with an opportunity to

inhabit temporarily a certain sonic world—and to enjoy the sensuous pleasure of so doing... In the analytical moment, we push through the labyrinth of technical structure towards Adorno’s truth content. We push forward in a compositional mode, playing with elements, rearranging them to see what might have been, and entering into rigorous speculation about music as intentional discourse. This is hands-on, parasitic inquiry of the first order. It guarantees nothing save the pleasure—or edification, if you want to get pious about it—of doing.\(^\text{31}\)

Not only does analysis “edify” by creating good, accountable subjects and knowledge, but it also \textit{feels} good. In fact, the capacity of music analysis to modulate how we feel appears to be central to its value. The aim of analysis “is not to explain or teach as such; it is rather to overwhelm, entertain, amuse, challenge, move, enable indeed to explore the entire range of emotions.”\(^\text{32}\) The merit of analysis seems then to be tied to its capacity to affect.

\footnotesize
\(^{29}\) Agawu, “How We Got Out,” 273.

\(^{30}\) Instead, in a footnote, he invites other scholars to consider this topic more thoroughly in the future and points toward some scholarly performances of ethics in published analyses. Ibid., 284n26.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 274–75.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 280.
But Agawu’s celebration of analytical pleasure is also tempered by fear. An open admission of these affective possibilities might lead to our disciplinary demise. Agawu cautions that:

Advocating hands-on activity in a capitalist, material economy is fraught with difficulty. At a time when university and government administrators, citing budgetary constraints, insist that professional activities have specifiable outcomes, portraying analysis as a never-ending quest with sensuous as well as intellectual benefits will seem strange, mystifying or even irresponsible … But if we consider the disincentives to imaginative indulgence placed on us by such bureaucratic hurdles, then we should properly be working towards undermining them.33

To counter the devaluation of analytical pleasure (and its ethical possibilities), Agawu suggests forging alliances with musical disciplines, particularly performance and composition, rather than the external disciplines suggested by Kerman. In a final jab, Agawu writes “pace Kerman, then, the issue is not how to get out of analysis … The issue, rather, is finding the most creative musical ways of remaining in, with or under analysis.”34 To properly argue for the merit of analysis, we must look within musical contexts rather than outward to culture, history, and critique as Kerman suggests. By suggesting that only other musical fields can understand and care about the materiality of music as theorists do, Agawu further reifies the fantasy of a divide between music and the world in order to matter—a habit of cruel optimism that also runs through my reading of Rings below.

Rings: Stubborn Enchantments

The world, the academy, music scholarship—they have all become disenchanted. This dark image of current times is where Rings’ plenary presentation begins despite the

33 Ibid., 276.
34 Ibid., 280. Emphasis Agawu’s. In an earlier section, Agawu also implies that the true musicality of music theorists is why they have been entrusted with teaching the rudiments of music: “Kerman missed the entire pedagogical value of analysis, a value which, in the United States at least, accrues from the teaching of undergraduate music theory, and is in that sense tied to the acquisition of basic musical literacy, a task that is normally entrusted to theorists, not to historians or musicologists,” “How We Got Out,” 269.
celebratory atmosphere of the occasion (SMT’s fortieth anniversary). Following Max Weber’s commentary on modernity’s disillusionment with the world, Rings describes how cold rationality and skepticism now reign across the academy. It seems that there is no room left for wonderment and magic.

In the humanities especially, disenchantment is the norm:

Indeed, the postmodern humanities can often feel doubly disenchanted, for here, the aesthetic, too has lost its aura: it turns out that that book you love, or that painting, or that poem, is not so innocent after all. Our fallen world contaminates the text: inequities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability; the relations of production and the depredations of capital; and all manner of political violence, power, and abjection leave their imprint.

But amid scholarship that imposes these horrors onto our beloved texts, it appears that music theory remains immune to the trend. Unlike our colleagues in the humanities who have taken to critical disenchantment, we music theorists “are, on the whole, a rather wide-eyed, enthusiastic bunch” more concerned with experiencing and understanding how music works its magic on us. Referencing our story of foundational disciplinary separation, Rings notes that this difference is especially apparent in our relationship with musicologists, who have been urging us for decades to give up the pleasures of analysis for “puritanical” criticism.

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35 The transcripts of this three-part plenary, which also included papers by Gretchen Horlacher and Michael Tenzer, were published in the March 2018 issue of Music Theory Online. My citations of Rings draw on this published version: Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments (and Music Theory’s).” Music Theory Online 24, no. 1 (March 2018), http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.18.24.1/mto.18.24.1.rings.html.


37 Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments,” [1.1].

38 Ibid.

However, with everyone else on the other side, Rings asks if it is ethical for music theorists to maintain the status quo:

Should we be worried about that? These are dark days, after all. In the wreckage of world events, what are the ethical stakes of theorists remaining in such beguiled proximity to musical sound? Should we—once and for all—put our pleasures aside and join our disenchanted colleagues?\(^{40}\)

Declaring that perhaps music theorists are “terminally enchanted,” Rings assuages our fear of being unethical by expanding Agawu’s observations on analytical pleasure as ethics and Marion A. Guck’s work on our personal relationships with music.\(^{41}\) Our pleasure and immersion in music, our “involved proximity” as Rings calls it, are actually where our capacity to do good can be located.\(^{42}\)

Drawing from political theorist Jane Bennett’s work on minor enchantments, Rings clarifies an ethics of music analysis premised on musical-magical intimacy. Despite how skeptics can characterize enchantment as escapist and unjust, Bennett notes that its potential resides in how it can generate new capacities for change: “one must be enamored with existence and occasionally even enchanted in the face of it in order to be capable of donating some of one’s scarce mortal resources to the care of others.”\(^{43}\)

Rings places Bennett’s argument in dialogue with music theory in the conclusion of his talk. If we “must be enamored with”—be filled with love for—living in order to continue on, then analysis is one practice that helps us perform and maintain this love. Perhaps, he suggests, the enchanted music theorist might “take up Bennett’s wager—her bet that

\(^{40}\) Ibid., [1.3].


\(^{42}\) Ibid.

enchantment can provide the somatic and affective fuel for interpersonal generosity and real-world political action.” In that way, the pleasure and love that arises from our work might already have profound effects in the world.

To further situate my project, I would like to build on this turn to Bennett at the end of Rings’ paper to complicate his tale of music theory’s stubborn enchantments. Bennett presents her political theory of enchantment as an “onto-story,” a tale that helps us understand the nature of the world and how we exist and act within it. While Rings and Bennett share an investment in the ethical potential of joyous encounters in the everyday, their onto-stories are rather different, opposing even.

Throughout Rings’ onto-tale of music theory, sharp distinctions are drawn all around music theory’s relationships with other people and things. I have described above how Rings draws on the established separation between music theory and musicology. He also describes caricatures of academic disciplines: the geeky enchanted music theorist “dancing awkwardly over by the speakers” while judgmental Marxists and Bourdieusians look at us at a distance, arms folded in disdain. Divisions also abound in Rings’ analysis of Wilco’s “Poor Places” at the center of his paper.

In this performance of enchanted analysis, Rings continuously marks lines to keep out possible disenchanted stories about this song “about flows of global capital and the downstream effects of corporate merges; about whiteness in indie music; about tangled actor networks in the recording studio; about unnerving coincidences with September 11th.”

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44 Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments,” [3.10].
46 Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments,” [3.3].
48 Ibid., [2.2].
Even within the music itself, Rings divides the song, separating the dissonant intro and outro sections from the consonant and pleasure-inducing interior.⁴⁹

Rings then shares and explains the magic he feels in this middle section of “Poor Places” with many traditional tools of analysis: diagrams of musical form, harmonic analysis, and spectrograms of timbre. His analysis focuses on how the gradual accumulation of wonderment through these parameters leads to a sensation of epiphany at the moment that the chorus appears.⁵⁰ Example 1 summarizes the overall form of “Poor Places.”⁵¹

At the arrival of the chorus, Rings describes how the acoustic guitar “gleams” and “shimmers,” how the harmonics feel “extravagant” and the timbres “lavish.”⁵² But the noisy chaos of the outro ultimately takes over and dissolves our moment of joy. Distorted guitars and a sample of wartime shortwave radio code—a mechanical woman’s voice repeating “Yankee hotel foxtrot”—invade.⁵³

The joy that Rings feels while immersed in the middle section of “Poor Places” provides reprieve from the horrors of the framing sections of the song, of its larger context in the world.⁵⁴

A fragile, luminous interior enveloped by sonic negation—it’s hard to get more disenchanted than that. But I feel quite the opposite when I’m analyzing the song. The pleasure of that moment is both musical and music theoretical: sounds, ideas, and their representations—each with their own aesthetic attractions—circulate tenuously, in a kind of free play.⁵⁵

And as an audience member at Rings’ plenary talk, I too was convinced of and felt this pleasure, sitting in a large hotel ballroom with hundreds of other music theorists. As I

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⁴⁹ Rings excises these noisy moments and presents them as excerpts to be listened to separately in the online version of the article. See excerpts provided in [2.3].
⁵⁰ Ibid., [2.8].
⁵¹ Example 1 summarizes Slide 1 in Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments,” [2.4].
⁵² Ibid, [2.8–2.9].
⁵³ The outro starts at 3:33 in the recording.
⁵⁵ Rings, “Music’s Stubborn Enchantments,” [3.1].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Sections</th>
<th>Incipits:</th>
<th>Time Points from Recording:</th>
<th>Rings’ Analytical Descriptions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0:00–0:11</td>
<td>Signals and noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 1</td>
<td>It’s my father’s voice dreaming of</td>
<td>0:12–1:04</td>
<td>“Jeff Tweedy’s voice over sonic haze, clicks/beeps, perfect 5th drone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2</td>
<td>There’s Bourbon on the breath</td>
<td>1:05–1:48</td>
<td>“Instruments more audible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 3</td>
<td>Someone ties a bow</td>
<td>1:48–2:29</td>
<td>“Quasi-minimalist piano layering, building to first appearance of acoustic guitar [at chorus arrival]; strummed sounds replace struck.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>And it makes no difference to me</td>
<td>2:30–2:48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2:48–2:58</td>
<td>“Verse-based” material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outro</td>
<td>They cried all over overseas</td>
<td>2:59–end</td>
<td>“Interlocking piano arpeggios (via delay). Tweedy’s voice re-enters, then ‘Yankee—hotel—foxtrot’ shortwave radio sample. Noise envelops all, except for YHF example.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLE 1.** Summary of Rings’ formal analysis of “Poor Places.”
followed Rings’ analysis, I become sensitive to all of the unexpected musical transformations in this Wilco song.

It was only recently that I shifted my attention to the words of the chorus. In Example 2, I have provided a transcription of the lyrics beyond the jubilant chorus through the outro. The text is presented as a dialogue between Wilco’s lead singer, Jeff Tweedy, and the shortwave radio code sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeff Tweedy:</th>
<th>Radio Code Sample:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus:</strong></td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot[^56]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And it makes no difference to me</td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they cried all over overseas</td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s hot in the poor places tonight</td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going outside</td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yankee hotel foxtrot (x9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yankee hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outro:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They cried all over overseas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes no difference to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it’s hot in the poor places tonight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s hot in the poor places tonight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLE 2.** Transcription of lyrics of the chorus and outro in Wilco’s “Poor Places.”

Despite Rings’ efforts to contain the magical middle, pivoting my listening to the music-text relationship shatters my experience of pure, absolute joy. The suggested pain of others in the world (“they cried all over overseas”) now colors the triumphant music of the chorus.

[^56]: Each insertion of the radio code sample overlaps with Tweedy’s voice.
Expanding on Ring’s analytical narrative, listening onward into the outro would reveal that such separations of enchantment and disenchantment can only be temporary. The noise of the opening and the radio sample have the last word in the song, as Tweedy’s voice and its dreams of escape fade away. Despite the resistance of the song’s protagonist who insists on staying inside (“I’m not going outside”), ultimately the world pulls us back in to remind us that we exist within it.

My belated experience of “Poor Places” tinged with musical joy and world-wariness made me wonder if there is another way in which we could practice analytical enchantment and ethics, one that could account for the entanglement of pleasure, horror, and the whole spectrum of affects in between. Must we maintain the border between musical enchantment and disenchantment in order to sustain our discipline? With that question, let’s turn to Bennett’s onto-story, a tale about enchanted or vibrant materialisms.

Bennett’s stories, which she expands in her most recent book, *Vibrant Matter* (2010), focus on the vibrant agency of things, such as “a dead rat, a plastic cap, a spool of thread,” that are often excluded in established theories of the political. These often-neglected things are the central characters of her version of onto-stories that hazards an account of materiality, even though it is both too alien and too close to see clearly and even though linguistic means prove inadequate to the task. The story will highlight the extent to which human being and thinghood overlap, the extent the us and the it slip-slide into each other. One moral of the story is that we are also nonhuman and that things, too, are vital players in the world. The hope is that the story will enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology.57

Whereas Rings emphasizes boundaries in his story of enchantment, Bennett’s account brings out the interconnectedness of things and the magic that emerges within these networks of

thing-relations. Hoping for something different, in Bennett’s work, means attuning to how “the us and the it slip-slide into each other” and the webs of connections between many bodies. The continual openness to a deeply entwined world produces pleasure and wonderment that fuels our love affair with living. This orientation outward is integral to the dynamic and distributed ethics suggested in Bennett’s work. Our continued adherence to a form of optimism that enforces disciplinary and musical separations then appears to diverge from Bennett’s suggested ethical force of enchantment, of the stories that she wishes we could tell about our entangled world.

Other Stories: Chapter Overviews

In my readings of Agawu and Rings, I have demonstrated how both authors point to the powerful potential of analysis to elicit musical pleasure, joy, and love, positive affects that activate our bodies in new ways. In Agawu, this pleasure sets us apart from capitalist logics of productivity and provides us with a purpose to remain distinct from musicology. In Rings, music-analytical pleasure as enchantment is situated outside of a disenchanted academy. The power of analysis, in Rings’ view, lies in its ability to sustain and equip us with a love of living so that we can better intervene in the world. But, as I have suggested throughout, these optimistic stories of disciplinary divisions might also limit these possibilities of music analysis and our argument for its value. If the purpose of analysis is to produce an enchanted ethical attitude, then we need to also tell stories about how exactly analysis motivates us to act in the world rather than outside of it.

As Berlant and Kathleen Stewart note, storytelling is about the bringing together of “word and world” so that maybe we can imagine other worlds, better ones.\textsuperscript{58} With that hope, my dissertation experiments with telling other kinds of stories toward life, optimism, and

\textsuperscript{58} Berlant and Stewart, \textit{The Hundreds} (Durham: Duke University, 2019), 131.
survival. My writing then dissolves some disciplinary lines established by our onto-tales to contemplate the capacity of music analysis to make better subjects and worlds.

To realize this aim, I will bring together two areas of thought outside of mainstream music theory—feminist music theory and new materialisms. Drawing feminist music-theoretical work on our personal relationships with music, I offer stories centered on analysis as a practice of love and care in order to clarify the concept of musical pleasure shared across Agawu’s and Rings’ analytical ethics. As I will show, the concepts of pleasure, joy, and love are all entangled in our relationships with music, and thinking with these related terms could illuminate the ethical potential in our work. Then with new materialist perspectives, such as those offered by Bennett, Berlant, and Stewart, I will expand the notion of loving music-analytic relationships to include dynamic, networked relations between multiple human and nonhuman bodies. With these two frameworks, I write a story about an ethics of music analysis as a continual practice of forming and re-forming one’s loving relations with “assemblaged” worlds. In the following chapters, I will weave these connections between feminist music theory, new materialisms, and music analysis to clearly develop this ethics.

**Chapter Two: Music-Theoretical Bodies**

This chapter demonstrates similarities between feminist music theory and new materialisms through their shared concern with relational materiality. To highlight these connections, I draw on philosopher Elizabeth Grosz’s three categories of feminist responses

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59 Here I reference Maus’ distinction between “mainstream” and “marginalized” music theory in “Masculine Discourse in Music Theory,” Perspectives of New Music 31, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 264–93.

In this project, I follow the practice of pluralizing “new materialisms” in order to emphasize the multiplicity of approaches and concepts that fall under this category. See, for example, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 4.
to the Cartesian mind/body problem—egalitarian feminism, social constructionism, and feminism of sexual difference—to contextualize feminist music theory within the larger history of Anglo-American feminism. I align Susan McClary’s methodology that posits music as a passive object mediated by social forces with social constructionism. In contrast, I connect Suzanne G. Cusick’s and Marion A. Guck’s emphasis on music’s power in personal experiences of music with feminisms of difference—a precursor to new materialisms. This chapter concludes by building on the affinities between Cusick’s and Guck’s emphasis on situated readings of musical works with new materialisms. Specifically, I view these authors’ writings as an opening for me to consider the possibility of a new materialist ethics in music analysis, in which we can account for the agency of nonhuman bodies and forces in our work.

Chapter Three: Music Loving

My third chapter examines the affective relationships in these music-theoretical assemblages through the concept of love. First, in a comparison of Pieter van den Toorn’s 1991 critique of feminist music studies and contemporaneous feminist music-theoretical writings, this chapter illustrates how love, while under-theorized, remains a central figure in music theory. I argue that both traditional and feminist music theorists privilege a particular image of love as an interaction between only two entities: the theorist and the music. In order to more adequately answer the call of feminist music theory for more diverse accounts of musical engagement, this chapter suggests that understanding love beyond this two-part relationship is necessary.

In the second half of this chapter, I take inspiration from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s insistence that “we always make love to worlds” to explore what might happen if we viewed love not as relations among two, but within and among assemblages—
heterogeneous networks composed of analysts, recordings, scores, analytical apparatuses, writing implements, and many other nodes. Here, I draw connections between their writings on love and their more established philosophy of desire to illustrate two ideas: 1) love, like desire, is a vital, productive force with the potential to generate new relations, bodily capacities, and concepts; and 2) acts of loving in this view are experiments. The productive potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of love has inspired philosophical, political, and feminist writings of late. Similarly, this chapter suggests that through grappling with this idiosyncratic approach to love, music theorists might experiment and foster the production of different disciplinary practices, concepts, and ethics. I suggest that writing these multiplicities into analyses further accounts for the diverse ways in which music theorists construct disciplinary knowledge and identities, thereby contributing to a key goal in feminist music theory.

Chapter Four: Analyzing

This chapter serves as an example for writing otherwise. I focus on love’s role in undertaking an analysis of J. S. Bach’s Prelude in B-flat minor from volume two of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Using Schenkerian analysis as my methodology, I examine how a loving, embodied enactment of the Schenkerian notation system itself—the writing out of prolongational slurs and stems as well as physically aligning multiple interpretive levels on staff paper—shapes music theorists’ bodily capacities and orientations. Drawing specifically on Berlant and Stewart’s ethnographies of the ordinary as models, I attempt to write through the development of my analysis while attuned to affect and embodiment, thereby performing ideas about ethics and music loving outlined in prior chapters.
Chapter Five: Hoping

This chapter concludes my dissertation by reflecting on autoethnography as one process of attuning to the ethical, loving possibilities in music analysis. I suggest that reflections on music theorists’ every day enactments of music analysis possess the potential to motivate change within and beyond our disciplinary boundaries. By clarifying the ethical merit of music analysis as loving experimentation, this dissertation aims to position music theorists in conversation with scholars from other disciplines on the value and precarity of close engagements with musical works, texts, and other objects of study in the academy. To move us closer to this goal, I end by suggesting other hopeful stories to be explored in future music-theoretical work.
Chapter Two
Music-Theoretical Bodies

I believe in one matter-energy, the maker of things seen and unseen. I believe that this pluriverse is traversed by heterogeneities that are continually doing things. I believe it is wrong to deny vitality to nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, and that a careful course in anthropomorphization can help reveal that vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds my comprehensive grasp. I believe that encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all this is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests.

With a written recitation of Jane Bennett’s revision of the Nicene Creed, this chapter introduces the fundamental premises of new materialisms, one of the two primary frameworks of my dissertation. While new materialist perspectives vary since they traverse many academic disciplines from mathematics to philosophy and feminist theory, Bennett’s creed joins together a number of commitments shared by these different approaches: (1) an understanding of matter as a dynamic and entangled process that continually shapes and reshapess all forms of life; (2) a rethinking of materiality, life, and agency beyond its traditionally anthropocentric definitions; and (3) an investment in taking our embeddedness in an intricately-enmeshed world seriously in the formation of theories, politics, and ethics.

These philosophical tenets serve as the basis for two additional perspectives on the nature of bodies that are relevant to this project. First, through a redefinition of matter as an active process of becoming, new materialists question established assumptions about the ontological status of the body. Rather than positing bodies as pre-cultural, fixed, passive, and

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1 Portions of this chapter were presented at the 2017 annual meetings of the American Musicological Society, Feminist Theory and Music, Music Theory Midwest, and the Society for Music Theory.

2 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 122. Emphasis in original.
implicitly human following the humanist tradition, new materialists draw on the writings of Baruch Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s extension of Spinoza’s thought to attend to the dynamic materiality and distributed agency of bodies and subjectivity.

Following Spinoza’s reorientation of philosophical inquiry from “what is a body” to “what can a body do,” Deleuze and Guattari state that:

[A] body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the function it fulfills … a body is defined only by longitude and latitude: in other words the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude).³

Through referencing spatiality in their idiosyncratic borrowing of geographical terminology, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the importance of the particular location of a body as well as its particular capacities at a given moment (its latitude) and its external relations to other (human and nonhuman) bodies afforded by its position in this specific space (its longitude).⁴

For Deleuze and Guattari, these formational, ever-changing, and open-ended webs of relations among and within bodies are called “assemblages” [agencements].

Second, a new materialist perspective on matter and bodies challenges traditional hierarchical divisions of mind/body, culture/nature, and discourse/matter, wherein bodies, nature, and matter are viewed as secondary and mediated by language and culture. Instead, tending toward porous boundaries and entangled relationality, new materialisms investigates how the specificities of bodies/nature/matter affect and are affected by processes that form knowledge, culture, and discourse. The body in this view is not inert, raw material from


⁴ This earlier passage from A Thousand Plateaus further clarifies Deleuze and Guattari’s idiosyncratic use of latitude and longitude: “We call the latitude of a body the affects of which it is capable at a given degree of power, or rather within the limits of that degree. Latitudes made up of intensive parts falling under a capacity and longitude of extensive parts falling under a relation.” Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 256–57. Emphasis mine.
which social and political forces generate meaning. Rather, the body also actively participates in these processes. Resistant to dualisms, new materialisms complicate and collapse binaries—mind/body becomes embodied knowledge, culture/nature becomes natureculture. In response to the opposition between discourse and matter, Karen Barad, in her theory of agential realism, coins the term “material-discursive practice” to emphasize the entanglement of matter and meaning, of ontology and epistemology. From this perspective, Barad insists on the inseparability of ontology and epistemology with ethics in her hyphenated term “ethico-onto-epistemology.” Our notions of life and knowledge are unavoidably wrapped up in how we act in the world.

Mapping these philosophical commitments onto the discipline of music theory, this dissertation investigates how perspectives from new materialisms might facilitate a reconceptualization of the field as a material-discursive practice, in which our practices of meaning-making inform and are informed by our material connections in the world. In turn, these practices also inform and are informed by ethics—how we relate to and affect one another. How can we understand the practices of music theory with this understanding of the world? What kind of music theory would result if we were to thoroughly attend to materiality, which includes the vital and always changing bodies of nonhumans (sound, music, writing devices, and so on) in addition to that of the humans involved in our discipline (professional music theorists, listeners, performers, and our students)? I argue that

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such a new materialist perspective might complicate music theory’s recent “embodied turn” and lead to alternative interventions in these established critiques of the mind/body, gnostic/drastic, and analysis/performance binaries in our discipline.  

To begin this work, this chapter re-contextualizes the concept of the body in contemporary music theory. In her 1994 article “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem,” Suzanne Cusick identifies Cartesian mind/body dualism as a key philosophical issue in music theory. Drawing on feminist critiques of this hierarchical division between mind and body, Cusick highlights the consequences of music theory’s uncritical adherence to this philosophical premise. She writes that by positing music theory as a solely mind–mind practice:

[w]e have changed an art that exists only when, so to speak, the Word is made Flesh, into an art which is only the Word. Metaphorically, we have denied the very thing which makes music music, the thing which gives it such enormous symbolic and sensual power.  

Against this erasure of our personal, bodily experiences from our work, Cusick advocates for a new music theory—in particular, a feminist and embodied music theory that foregrounds the force of bodies in musical experience and knowledge production.

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Since this disciplinary intervention, accounts of bodies now proliferate across diverse areas of music theory. The performer’s bodily movements play an important role in performance and analysis studies. The listener’s physiology and bodily capacities are explored in both music cognition and phenomenological approaches. And music-analytic metaphors of well-formed versus deformed sonic bodies have been critiqued in recent music and disability research. With the pervasiveness of bodies in contemporary music theory, it might be tempting to argue that we have answered Cusick’s call to resolve the mind/body problem.

However, in this chapter, I elicit and problematize a ubiquitous understanding of the body across music theory by historicizing the concept within a currently unacknowledged philosophical tradition in music theory. While Cusick’s “Mind/Body” article is often cited as a foundational text in embodied music theory, we have yet to recognize and engage with the

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history of feminist philosophy that shaped her critique, and I argue, subsequent accounts of bodies in music theory. With this argument, I will introduce the second primary framework of my dissertation, feminist music theory.

To trace this connection, I turn to a feminist music-theoretical text that precedes Cusick’s essay, Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings.* While often cited as a significant contribution to new musicology, I argue that McClary’s text also influenced subsequent music-theoretical approaches to the body. As I will demonstrate using philosopher Elizabeth Grosz’s critical narrative of feminist approaches to the body, *Feminine Endings*’ assertion that music is fundamentally a bodily practice—which then opened a space for Cusick and embodied music theorists—is connected to a long history of feminist responses to the Cartesian mind/body problem.

I then read the writings of Cusick and Guck as alternatives to McClary’s version of feminist music scholarship. Viewing these authors’ writings as proto-new materialist, I explore how matter (bodies), discourse (minds), and the agency of nonhuman subjects are redefined and merged within one another in this formulation of feminist music theory. Here, I return to my search for other music-theoretical stories of survival by bringing Cusick’s and Guck’s ideas into dialogue with new materialist perspectives on the body.

Grosz’s Feminisms

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To begin, I draw on the work of Grosz to contextualize the various strands of feminism within the history of the body in philosophy. Like Cusick, Grosz also argues that contemporary thought across all academic fields continues to wrestle with our inheritance of René Descartes dualistic philosophy, which posits a fundamental separation between “two distinct, mutually exclusive, and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body.”\(^{15}\) In this assumed dualism, the mind and consciousness are privileged over the body and corporeality. Furthermore, this hierarchical binary is deeply attached to gender, where the mind is associated with the masculine and the body with the feminine. As a result, the theorization of the body has a particular significance in feminist theory, since the body as an implicitly feminine and inferior concept has historically been used to contain and limit women.\(^{16}\)

For Grosz, feminist theory must move beyond three contemporary and interrelated perspectives on the body that stem from Cartesian dualism. In the first view, the body is assumed to be a passive and straightforward object for study—“an object like any other.”\(^{17}\) This perspective assumes a universal status of the body as “brute, inorganic matter” and ignores the distinctive complexities and multiplicities of different kinds of bodies. The second viewpoint treats bodies as tools and instruments of a subject’s consciousness, “a vessel occupied by an animating, willful subjectivity.”\(^{18}\) Here, bodies remain passive objects that are inhabited and disciplined by a subject’s mind. The third perspective conceives of the body not just as an object that is controlled by a subject but also by the external world. The body is understood as merely a transparent conduit between a subject’s interior psyche and exterior forces of the world. In this view, the body is uncomplicated and does not assert its

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\(^{15}\) Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 6.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 9.
own agency on the internal psyche or the outside world in its two-way transmission of information between these two realms.

Grosz then provides a summary of three categories of feminist theory that have attempted to address all three Cartesian-influenced perspectives of the body: egalitarian feminism, social constructionism, and sexual difference. In egalitarian feminism, characterized by the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, and Mary Wollstonecraft, in addition to the writings of liberal and ecofeminists, the biological body is viewed either negatively or positively as the site for political transformation. With de Beauvoir, Firestone, and other related authors, the biological capacities of women's bodies, such as menstruation and pregnancy, are seen as a hindrance that must be overcome with technological mediation. In ecofeminism and some strands of feminist epistemology, these biological capacities are celebrated as the source for women's unique insight on the world that is beyond men's capabilities for knowing. In both these negative and positive theorizations, bodies are viewed as biologically determined, fixed, and universal among all women (and all men). Sexual difference in this category of feminism is strictly and straightforwardly a binary between male and female bodies.

Social constructionism, the most influential category of feminism until the mid-1990s, spans the work of many feminist psychoanalysts and Marxist feminists. Here, conceptualizations of the body shift from biology—which naturally dictates differences between male- and female-sexed bodies—to society—which imposes gender differences onto neutral and equally capable bodies. According to this category of feminism, it is not biology itself that oppresses women, but rather the social systems which organize and give meaning to the biological body that limit women's full participation as free and equal subjects in the world. The body remains in this perspective the "biologically determined,
fixed, and ahistorical” base from which social forces and ideology impose meaning.\textsuperscript{19}

Therefore, in this view, the political agenda of feminism must focus on the transformation of attitudes, beliefs, and values that inscribe meanings onto the body, rather than the body itself.\textsuperscript{20} Once again, the specificity and complexity of bodies and biology as well as their agency are precluded in this kind of feminist theory.

While egalitarian and social constructionist feminisms differ in many ways, these two categories also share two significant commitments. First, the different sites for political action championed by these two feminisms—the biological body for egalitarians, and society and ideology for social constructionists—reinforce yet another binary that is implicated in the mind/body split, the sex/gender distinction. Egalitarian politics focus on sexual difference as a universal binary that differentiates male from female bodies. The biological sex of bodies, particularly female bodies, must be amended or celebrated. Social constructionism, on the other hand, focuses rather on the eradication of gender difference, a difference that is not predicated on bodies, but rather on historically-specific discursive and ideological practices which gender masculine versus feminine subjects.

Second, both categories employ the same notion of difference in their formation of theory and politics. These methods understand difference in negative and oppositional terms: women's bodies are different from men's bodies, or women's positions in society are different from men's positions. For both egalitarians and social constructionists, this kind of difference is the source of women's oppression that must be eradicated. Since these two categories of feminism share the desire to erase or overcome hierarchical gender or sexual difference, Grosz identifies both egalitarian and social constructionist feminisms as “feminisms of equality.”

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 16–17.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 17.
Grosz’s third category of feminist theory, sexual difference, responds to these two prior feminisms. Sexual difference or feminisms of difference seek: 1) to dissolve or at least critique the fundamental binaries of mind/body and sex/gender in past feminist and philosophical traditions; and 2) to embrace an alternative understanding of difference as “pure difference,” a positive and productive resource for theoretical and political transformation.  

This final category traverses a number of feminist approaches including *écriture feminine* developed by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig; Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity; and Moira Gatens’ Spinozist feminism. The body in these feminisms of difference is neither merely innately biological nor passive and socially determined. Rather, these authors refuse to comply with the division of sex as given and gender as socially-constructed categories. They embrace instead difference in and among bodies as a complicated mess of both biology and culture. Difference, such as the “fundamental, irreducible differences between the sexes,” is an inescapable way of life for these feminist theorists. Thus, the efforts to erase or overcome difference in feminisms of equality are ultimately ineffective according to feminists of difference. Instead, we should embrace difference as the origin of creativity and political action. New materialisms, as I will illustrate at the end of this chapter, extends this third category of feminist thought.

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21 Ibid., 21.


McClary: Social Bodies

By situating McClary’s *Feminine Endings* within this highly contentious historical moment, I wish to challenge earlier critiques of her text as a surface-level appropriation of the gendered essentialisms prevalent in the French feminism of the 1970s. Instead, I read McClary’s methodological inconsistencies as a result of a conflict between her primarily social-constructionist perspective and moments of egalitarian feminism. In particular, I argue that her preference for social constructionism prohibits reconciliation between two central aims in *Feminine Endings* regarding the nature of music—that music is both a social and a bodily practice. Her investment in social constructionism, wherein the body is always a neutral object subordinate to and mediated by social forces, clashes with her theorization of musical sexuality, in which she implies essential, sexually-differentiated human bodies that inform music’s sexual, social, and political meanings.

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25 Ruth Solie’s response to Pieter van den Toorn’s scathing critique of McClary notes the ambiguous essentialism in *Feminine Endings*. Solie predicted that it would be a topic of serious debate for feminist music scholars: “One debate that I predict will soon take shape around McClary’s work will have to do with the degree to which she is seen to essentialize gender, or (to the contrary) to historicize and critique the musical-semiotic processes she discusses.” Solie, “What Do Feminists Want? A Reply to Pieter van Den Toorn,” *Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (1991): 406–407.

However, as exemplified by the reviews cited in the previous footnote, McClary’s essentialism remains mostly unquestioned.

26 For an example of a more straightforwardly social-constructionist perspective in feminist music theory see Ellie Hisama’s *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Hisama’s work avoids the tension between social-constructionist feminism and bodies by mostly avoiding discussions of biology and
I also root this tension in McClary’s thought as an example of the changes occurring to feminist philosophy at this time. Written between 1987 and 1989, the essays of *Feminine Endings* appear at the cusp of a major ideological shift in Anglo-American feminism. Social constructionism, a movement that highly discouraged theorizing about women and their bodies, dominated at this moment. Reacting against patriarchal traditions that rooted women’s subordinate social role in biological determinism, social-constructionist feminists downplayed or even avoided the body entirely in an effort to escape the fixity of biology, essences, nature, and universals that had historically limited women. Acknowledging a bodily basis or force in meaning making could then be met with charges of essentialism. Instead, all meaning (including seemingly-natural truths regarding gender difference) arise from social forces.

At the same time, a return to the body and materiality was also occurring in reactionary feminist work by Grosz, Butler, Haraway, and many others. These authors challenged social constructionists’ compliance with the Cartesian mind/body split by positing the body as a passive object acted on by ideology. Instead, they focused their efforts on redefining rather than neglecting bodies entirely. The vacillation in McClary’s text from invocations of the anti-essentialist, socially-contingent body to the “essentialist,” biologically-sexed body perfectly encapsulates the contentiousness of talking about the body at this

sex: “By the term ‘gender’ I mean, following historian Joan Scott’s definition, the social organization of sexual difference; under this definition, gender is regarded as distinct from biological sex.” Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism*, 2.

27 McClary herself seems to be aware of this, as she noted in a retrospective piece on *Feminine Endings* twentieth anniversary: “But just as *Feminine Endings* appeared, a new generation of scholars—heralded most prominently by Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*—had moved on to what they consider the next stage, which involved questioning the very category of ‘woman’ and leveling the charge of ‘essentialism’ at anyone who would undertake gender-based analysis.” McClary, “*Feminine Endings at Twenty*,” *Transcultural Music Review* 15 (2011): 2–3.

For context, see also Vicki Kirby’s comparison of Anglo-American feminisms at the time in “Corporeal Habits: Addressing Essentialism Differently,” *Hypatia* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 4–24.
moment in feminist theory. I will now examine excerpts from the introduction and fifth
chapter of Feminine Endings to illustrate this philosophical tension.

McClary’s introduction starts strongly with a social-constructionist tone. A part of
the then-burgeoning field of new musicology, McClary is similarly concerned with
challenging the established assumption of the asocial and apolitical status of musical
works—the autonomous and essential nature of “the music itself.” She expresses outright
her dissatisfaction with traditional musicology’s and music theory’s neglect or even
prohibition of understanding the full extent of music’s effects. She writes:

To be sure, music’s beauty is often overwhelming, its formal order magisterial. But
the structures graphed by theorists and the beauty celebrated by aestheticians are
often stained with such things as violence, misogyny, and racism.28

In pure social-constructionist fashion, McClary asserts that music and its meaning are
never universal and never beyond social structures that may oppress and control. Rather,
musical practices are always implicated in the specific social contexts in which they are
created and experienced:

Like any social discourse, music is meaningful precisely insofar as at least some
people believe that it is and act in accordance with that belief. Meaning is not
inherent in music, but neither is it in language: both are activities that are kept afloat
only because communities of people invest in them, agree collectively that their
signs serve as valid currency. Music is always dependent on the conferring of social
meaning.29

Thus, in order to do justice to the fullness and diversity of musical practices and meanings,
music scholars must consider the historical, social, and cultural conditions of their
production and reception. According to McClary, music scholarship has ignored two
especially important factors in musical practices—gender and sexuality. This turn to gender
and sexuality brings conflict to McClary’s desire to adhere to a social-constructionist method.

28 McClary, Feminine Endings, 4.
29 Ibid., 21.
First, to legitimize feminist music criticism, McClary argues that music often expresses societal fears associated with gender and sexuality, which she identifies as a fear of women, which is connected to a fear of the body: “And perhaps more disturbingly still to those who would present music as autonomous and invulnerable, it also frequently betrays fear—fear of women, fear of the body.”

Here, by forging a link between the oppression of women and the body in musical discourse, McClary treads on dangerous ground for a social-constructionist feminist. Recall that from this perspective, any theorization that calls attention to bodies, especially women’s bodies, is potentially problematic since talking about bodies could easily fall back on assumptions about biology and essences that have historically limited women. However, McClary’s motivations behind this turn to the body and thus, her conceptualization of the body itself remains unclear at this moment in the introduction. She instead quickly moves away from the topic.

The body appears again as McClary outlines the first of her five central areas of inquiry for feminist music criticism, musical constructions of gender and sexuality. In this section, she unpacks her definitions of the terms “gender” and “sexuality,” both of which rely on theories of social constructionism. Gender and gender difference for McClary are particular social codes learned and informed by cultural practices, such as music. The meaning of gender difference and the practices that contribute to its meaning are not immutable and vary across time and cultures. Thus, the study of musical codes that gender operatic characters, for example, can further inform our understanding of the musical composition itself and also the particular moment of social history from which this work was composed.

30 Ibid., 4
31 Ibid., 7–8.
Here, in her definition of gender, the body in nowhere to be found. This is likely due to the fact that *Feminine Endings* was written before Butler’s theory of performativity had achieved its influential status in feminist theory. As a result, McClary had not yet encountered a theoretical perspective that could help her attend to the body’s performance and maintenance of these social codes.

While McClary excludes the body from her definition of gender, she seems to assign the body an ambiguous role in her perspective on sexuality in music. At first, maintaining a wariness of a biological and essentialist understanding of the body, McClary positions the concept and its relation to sexuality as a matter of social construction:

Music is also very often concerned with the arousing and channeling of desire, with mapping patterns through the medium of sound that resemble those of sexuality. While the topic of sexuality is rarely broached in musicology, it has received considerable attention to recent literary and film theory. As a result of this investigation, *much of what had been assumed as biological and immutable in human sexual experience has been radically reinterpreted as socially constructed.*

Drawing on the writings of literary theorist Stephen Heath, McClary asserts that “there is no such thing as sexuality”—no fundamental sexuality that can be accessed without social and symbolic mediation. Our embodied experiences of sexuality are actually “fabrications” formed by the “semiotics of desire, arousal, and sexual pleasure” specific to our cultures. The body’s supposedly natural knowledge and experiences of human sexuality are always then the product of social forces, no matter how unmediated our experiences may seem.

In the context of music studies, McClary cautions against assuming a universal, bodily basis for the eroticism of musical works such as the prelude to Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and Madonna and Prince’s duet, “This Is Not a Love Song.” Such musical works seem to transcend culture in order to resonate with our own embodied experiences of sexuality.

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32 Ibid., 8. Emphasis mine.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 8.
Our bodies themselves seem to know and recognize something deeply and naturally erotic in these pieces. However, McClary undermines the force of bodies almost immediately by reversing the relation between bodies and social meaning. She warns that such feelings of innate erotic musical experience “are in fact constructions”, an illusion produced by the social.\textsuperscript{35} The passivity of bodies suggested by this understanding of music’s meaning is complicated a few pages later in \textit{Feminine Endings}. After setting up the remainder of her five central questions for feminist music scholarship, McClary turns to music as an undeniably and perhaps, fundamentally, embodied practice:

By far the most difficult aspect of music to explain is its uncanny ability to make us experience our bodies in accordance with its gestures and rhythms … If music were not able thus to move us, the human race would not have bothered creating any of it for formalists to dissect, for musicologists to catalogue, or for sociologists to classify.\textsuperscript{36}

McClary once again situates her position in opposition to traditional music scholarship. Mapping the mind/body distinction onto the objectivity/subjectivity binary, she asserts that established musicological and music-theoretical perspectives have been too fixated on the mind and “objective, positivistic methodologies” to attend to music’s bodily and subjectivity qualities.\textsuperscript{37} Feminist music criticism’s investigations of musical sexuality could help scholars to understand the importance of the body in the production of musical meaning and critique these binarisms.

McClary then quotes Mark Johnson’s embodied philosophy of the mind to further complicate these dualisms. Johnson writes that the purpose of his project:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 8–9.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 26.
\end{itemize}
is not only to argue that the body is “in” the mind (i.e. that these imaginative structures of understanding are crucial to meaning and reason) but also to explore how the body is in the mind—how it is possible, and necessary, after all, for abstract meaning, and for reason and imagination, to have a bodily basis.\textsuperscript{38}

This quotation appears to be at odds with McClary’s previous invocations of the body and sexuality discussed above. Whereas Johnson posits bodies as the foundation for knowledge production and experience, McClary seems unwilling to acknowledge any notion of the body’s influence in the creation of music’s (erotic) meaning. Social processes in her earlier discussion only create the illusion of a pre-social, bodily kind of knowing. Thus, for McClary, it is not so much that the body is in the mind as it is for Johnson, but that the mind is in the body.

Rather than dwelling on this conflict between Johnson’s thought and her own, McClary goes back on her earlier argument by now suggesting that bodies do in fact contribute to meaning:

[T]o say that one hears sexual longing in the \textit{Tristan} prelude is not to introduce irrelevant “subjective” data into the discussion. Surely that is the point of the opera, and we are missing the point, if we fail to understand that. The process by means of which Wagner’s music accomplishes this is not at all mystical. In part, his music draws on his own (excessively documented) experiences in the sexual realm, and we as listeners perceive longing in his music likewise because \textit{we are human beings with bodies who have experienced similar feelings firsthand}.\textsuperscript{39}

The body according to this statement is far from inconsequential. Wagner’s sexual messages, which stem from his own bodily experiences, are transmitted and received across time and cultures by current listeners because they too possess bodies with similar sexual capacities and knowledge. The body here becomes a universal and shared site from which composers and listeners form and comprehend music’s meaning.


\textsuperscript{39} McClary, \textit{Feminine Endings}, 24–25. Emphasis mine.
However, McClary’s momentary celebration of the body immediately dissipates. Sensing a resultant anti-essentialist backlash, she reasserts the social as the underlying force that controls meaning. In this return to social constructionism, she writes:

But this is not to suggest that music works on the basis of essences or that this communication between bedroom and ear happens without extensive symbolic mediation. Wagner’s music relies heavily on the traditional semiotics of desire available in the musical styles he inherited, and listeners understand his music in part because they too have learned the codes … Indeed, music is a powerful social and political practice precisely because in drawing on metaphors of physicality, it can cause listeners to experience their bodies in new ways—again, seemingly without mediation.  

While McClary returns to denouncing the innate power of bodies as mere socially-constructed fantasy, her stance on bodies as straightforward social objects has been compromised. In particular, she has evoked a fundamental issue in the social-constructionist methodology itself—its foundational dichotomy between constructionism and essentialism is not truly an opposition. As Grosz notes in her history of the body in feminist theory, “constructionism is inherently reliant on essentialism” because construction must assume and name the “raw materials of its processes of construction”—the essential or “real” biological body.  

McClary’s Tristan example illustrates a similarly essentialized bodily foundation on which her observations on musical sexuality stand. Underneath a culture’s specific semiotics of sexuality, she assumes a common and universal body with similar basic capacities for sexual experience. This kind of body is central to her vision of musical sexuality, since it serves as a necessary conduit that transmits meaning between a composer and the listener.

By the end of her introductory chapter, McClary’s conceptualization of the body and its relation to feminist music criticism remains vague. Despite McClary’s desire to unlink

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40 Ibid., 25.
41 Grosz, Volatile Bodies, 213n20.
sexuality from the biological body and its essentialist trappings, her idea of the body seems to possess some constant universal qualities. These capacities help the body function as a medium from which musical and sexual meanings can be communicated across different historical moments. Furthermore, McClary has yet to address or acknowledge any differences—biologically determined, social constructed, or otherwise—among bodies and embodied experience. In now turn to the fifth chapter from *Feminine Endings*, “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman’s Voice in Janika Vandervelde’s *Genesis II*,” to illustrate the ambiguous role of sexual difference in McClary’s theory of musical sexuality.

One of the most significant contributions of this particular chapter is its exposition of McClary’s theory of musical pleasure and desire, which she maps onto an opposition between feminine and masculine erotic experience. For McClary, these two prominent erotic metaphors appeared in the seventeenth century. The first category, pleasure, spanned musical techniques such as modal ambiguity and ostinati, which were used to evoke qualities of “timeless, sustained hovering” in ambiguous pleasure-pain.\(^{42}\) Such images of pleasure, as McClary observes, were often associated with female operatic characters, and thus, social representations of the feminine.

In contrast, desire represented a teleological and sometimes violent striving for a musical goal, the tonal cadence—a satisfying climactic, tonality-clarifying moment that represents the male orgasm.\(^{43}\) Musical representations of desire, which gained primacy during the Common Practice Period, often accompanied male characters in order to support their

\(^{42}\) McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 125.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
embodiment of other masculine qualities associated with the Cartesian mind/body split:
“their rationality, their rhetorical prowess, their ability to set and achieve long-term goals.”

Using this theory, McClary presents an analysis of contemporary composer Janika Vandervelde’s piano trio, *Genesis II*, as her central example of this gendered opposition. For McClary, Vandervelde’s piece conveys a narrative that draws on and ultimately resists the desiring, masculine values of traditional musical discourse. The piece begins with a repetitive, clockwork pattern which McClary identifies at first as the “pulsation of a fetal heartbeat” and the “intensifying strains of labor.” As a representation of childbirth, McClary interprets the opening section of *Genesis II* as gendered feminine, since, as she states, the process of giving birth is a uniquely feminine experience.

The feminine, clockwork music is juxtaposed against musical gestures in the strings associated with the masculine, goal-directedness of Western classical music. While initially these two musical qualities coexist peacefully, the piece enacts a violent overtaking of the feminine clockwork music by the masculine desiring music. Ultimately, the piece resists the phallic desire for climactic closure. Vandervelde ends *Genesis II* with a return to “sustained, pulsating” music gesturing toward “the embryonic promise of a new and perhaps different scenario.”

Throughout her analysis of *Genesis II*, McClary attempts to stay within the boundaries of the social. As noted above, she is careful to situate the development of the feminine pleasure/masculine desire binary within historical and ideological shifts. McClary also attempts to deny the role of gender or sexual difference in Vandervelde’s ability to critique traditional masculine discourse. She cites a similar merging of masculine and feminine

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44 Ibid., 126.
46 Ibid., 121.
qualities in Philip Glass’s music to show that “one need not be a woman” in order to write against phallic musical tradition. To further reify the power of the social, the chapter concludes with an anti-essentialist disclaimer regarding musical representations of sexual difference:

But the significance of Vandervelde’s achievement is not simply that she has revealed as phallic and sexually violent man of the “value-free” conventions of classical form … Nor is it that she has introduced for the first time some universal, essential woman’s voice. For even though our obsession for classifying all musical stylistically might make us want to jump impulsively at the chance to codify the distinctive characteristics of a “women’s music,” there can be no such thing, just as there is no universal male experience or essence.

Despite these claims, however, McClary does not successfully escape the specter of essentialized sexual difference in her discussion of the body and musical sexuality. As illustrated in the quotation below, McClary’s privileging of the social breaks down as she uses a pedagogical anecdote to illustrate the marked differences in her students’ experiences of Genesis II:

I have had Vandervelde present Genesis II to several of my classes. Interestingly, many women students recognize in the clockwork an image of female erotic pleasure—pleasure that is not concerned with being somewhere else, indeed, pleasure that need not even be thought of as tied specifically to sexual encounter, but pleasure that permits confident, free, and open interchange with others. They also recoil in horror when the clockwork is subjected to the assault of the violent string parts. By contrast, many of the men in the classes often report having heard the clockwork as a “void,” and they tend to be relieved when strings rush in to “make something happen.” Usually the two groups gaze at one another in bleak disbelief, as though they have just discovered that they are irreconcilably of different species.

But where exactly does this difference in musical experience come from? McClary does not explicitly name a biological cause behind her students’ oppositional hearings, nor does she state that these reactions are strictly a result of socialization. While McClary’s critics often cite these ambiguous moments as instances of scholarly imprecision, I suggest an alternative

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47 Ibid., 123.
48 Ibid., 131.
49 Ibid., 124.
reading. The opacity of this moment is rooted in a methodological prohibition, which has grounded my reading of McClary—the anti-essentialist and anti-body perspective of social constructionism limits McClary from fully talking about the bodily and sexual aspects of musical engagement.

This perspective restricts her ability to concede that her model of feminine pleasure/masculine desire might have an essential, biological basis rooted in the tradition of egalitarian feminism. In McClary’s implicitly egalitarian perspective, women listeners possess biological bodies that are capable of childbirth—a capacity that informs their ability to associate with the feminine aspects of Vandervelde’s work. Men listeners, on the other hand, lack this bodily capacity and therefore, are not sensitive to the musical violence enacted upon the opening feminine, clockwork music. Similarly, male listeners possess the capacities for ejaculation, the central image of masculine musical experience, and women listeners do not. As critics of McClary rightly point out, these associations between biological abilities and gendered musical experience are dangerously reductive, resulting in the exclusion of experiences that fit outside of this binary of sexual difference.

According to Grosz’s third category of feminist thought, feminisms of difference, these suggested connections between biology and musical meaning are not limited or problematic simply because they rely on biology and sexual difference. Rather, they are problematic due to a flat understanding of the biological aspects of bodies as fixed and dualistic—a perspective that was prominent at this point in feminist history. But what if we exploded the binary of sexual difference and attended to the concept as a multiplicity instead of avoiding such a topic entirely? As Elizabeth Grosz proposes, from this view of a “thousand tiny sexes,” what kind of theory of musical sexuality might arise?

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Cusick and Guck: Subjective Bodies

The feminist writings of Cusick and Guck offer an alternative perspective on sexuality and the body that is more amenable to these questions. In this section, I briefly compare Cusick's and Guck's similar visions of feminist music theory with McClary's perspective before expanding on the proto-new materialist ideas of Cusick and Guck.

Published a few years after Feminine Endings, Cusick’s and Guck’s formational essays on feminist music theory engage thinkers associated with Grosz’s feminisms of difference, such as Butler and Haraway. Thus, despite sharing the same object of critique—traditional music theory's commitment to “objective” analyses of “the music itself”—, McClary's response, premised on social constructionism, differs significantly from that of Cusick and Guck. As noted above, McClary demystifies the transcendent musical work and the purely objective music scholar by situating both music and humans in the social, which she views as large-scale, historically-contingent institutions of power and control. Her feminist methodology centers on the illumination and critique of these broad systems that produce gender oppression and how they affect musical discourse. Music, in this view, is an object acted upon by social, human forces. Cusick and Guck, however, move their critique from the social to the subjective, and, in doing so, understand music too as an agent in our personal listening experiences.

In order to combat the mind/body and masculine/feminine hierarchical binaries latent in our discipline’s preference for objectivity, these authors argue that the force of both human and nonhuman bodies must be acknowledged in our professional practices. In their writings, these authors share two arguments. First, they advocate the proliferation of different, individual accounts of embodied encounters with music, in order to emphasize the inescapable entanglements of theorists and their scholarship with their objects of study. And
second, Cusick and Guck recognize one specific nonhuman entity, music, and its agency in our processes of knowledge and subject formation. I will unpack these shared points and weave in their resonances with new materialist thought below.

Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges is featured in both authors’ critique of music theory’s preference for objectivity. Foreshadowing new materialisms’ central belief in an unavoidably entangled world, Haraway’s idea of situated knowledges suggests that our conditions for knowing (epistemology) can never be separated from our conditions for being (ontology) in a world of humans and nonhumans.\(^1\) From this networked perspective of subject- and meaning-making, the traditional notion of objectivity with an all-seeing, and thus, all-knowing subject is unmasked as an elaborate fiction—a “god trick.”\(^2\) She argues that objectivity and its related sensorial metaphor of vision must be reclaimed rather than simply critiqued, in order to reveal the embodied and partial nature of any claim to objective knowledge. Haraway phrases her intervention thusly:

I want a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasizes vision again, because we need to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the visualizing tricks and powers of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates. We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not so perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see.\(^3\)

\(^1\) In particular, Barad explicitly builds on Haraway’s merging of epistemology and ontology in much of her work. See for example, Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity;” and Meeting the Universe Halfway.


\(^3\) Ibid, 189–90.
Here, Haraway expresses a kind of ethics similar to that proposed by subsequent new materialist philosophies—a posthuman ethics that stresses accountability to the world, to other humans, and to nonhumans.\textsuperscript{54} Human practices, knowledge, and discourse are decentralized as the all-knowing, implicitly human subject is placed back into the world with “dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name.”\textsuperscript{55} And the human body-subject who sees and knows becomes an amalgam of his/her interactions with the nonhuman—such as animals and technologies that allow us to see with “primate color and stereoscopic vision”—as well as other humans from different locations.\textsuperscript{56} Through writing in this situated, embodied fashion, the practices of knowledge production in feminist theory, science, philosophy, and many other fields could have significant consequences.\textsuperscript{57}

Like Haraway, Cusick and Guck seek to acknowledge not only the location of musical works and humans within social and political strata, but the location of particular human subjects and their bodies alongside music as well. Despite music theory’s traditional tendency toward a historically masculine notion of objectivity as absolutely impersonal and non-bodily, both scholars argue that disciplinary discourse always begins from a personal and embodied interaction with music. As quoted earlier in this chapter, Cusick argues that music theory creates a false image of itself as a “mind–mind game,” thereby denying the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} See for example, Rosi Braidotti’s Deleuzian, nomadic ethics outlined in \textit{The Posthuman} (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{55} Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 190.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Haraway uses the figure of the cyborg in her other writings to represent this assembled posthuman subject. See especially “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in \textit{Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature} (Routledge: New York, 1991), 149–81.
\end{itemize}
undeniable power of music to affect our bodies. Guck also problematizes music theory’s erasure of the personal experience as impossible. She writes in “A Woman’s (Theoretical) Work” that

[i]t is unusual in music theory to speak overtly, as I have, about personal experience. In music theory it’s just not done to speak personally. Public presentations are usually rhetorically dissociated from the cares, concerns, and particular perceptions of the individual, though life as a musician and indeed each analysis, grows out of a personal relationship with individual pieces. Yet, whenever someone stands at a podium or publishes a paper, she or he is telling us about her or his personal perspective on the musical world, however rhetorically covered the first-person perspective may be and however much the subject seems to be defined by disciplinary conventions.

Due to the unavoidable embodied and subjective interaction between music and scholar that is required in our disciplinary work, Cusick and Guck assert that any claim to objectivity is false—we can never fully detach ourselves from our relations with music in order to gaze down on it. For Cusick, such a separation of the music theorist from music and the body is our discipline’s version of Haraway’s “god trick.” Further expanding on the connections with Haraway’s metaphor of vision, Cusick’s and Guck’s work argues that there is no disconnected objectivity, no infinite vision that sees everywhere from nowhere, and no fixed, transcendent qualities of music for theorists to discover at a distance. Music and our knowledge of it only arise from our personal, material, and sonic encounters with it.

The issue of ethics is also significant to Cusick’s and Guck’s situated feminist music theories. In “Music Loving, Or the Relationship with the Piece,” Guck expresses a concern with music scholarship’s policing of objective versus subjective discourses. Like Haraway who views the act of situated writing as a means for political transformation, Guck seeks to

60 Cusick, “Feminist Theory, Music Theory,” 16.
61 I expand on this reading of Guck in the following chapter.
open up a space for more diverse and accountable kinds of musical writing to emerge, in order to combat our discipline’s moralizing tendencies.

Guck offers the following rephrasing of Haraway’s thought that contrasts the accountability of traditional versus feminist objective work.⁶²

[O]mission of musical experience from analysis places the analyst in a position of seeing without ever being seen, of authority beyond observation; inclusion of musical experience makes both piece and analyst visible, makes the individual analyst's location and perspective evident, and thereby makes the analyst personally responsible for analytical choices.⁶³

Thus, I read Cusick and Guck as suggesting that a more ethical account of music would recognize the central role that embodied interactions with musical works play in our professional work and would specify the location from which individual theorists produce their knowledge. Furthermore, I argue that such a methodological approach is premised more on the concept of pure difference championed by Grosz’s feminisms of difference. Rather than employing a dualist, masculine/feminine understanding of difference in musical experience as McClary does, Cusick and Guck move toward a multiplicity of different, subjective, and ever-changing engagements with music in their feminist methods. No two scholars can share the same location or the same history with a piece of music. Even a single music theorist can have varied experiences with the same musical work through different moments in time.

Drawing on Lorraine Code’s feminist epistemological work, Guck presents the relationship between music and the analyst as friendship that deepens with each listening encounter:

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⁶² Cusick and Guck do not actively reclaim the word “objectivity” as Haraway does. Instead, both prefer to use the terms “private” and “subjective” to describe their feminist interventions. I suggest, however, that there are similarities between Haraway’s situated knowledges and Cusick and Guck’s subjective methodologies.

The musical object becomes the musical individual; the process of analysis is the means to become increasingly well-acquainted with that individual. The analytical text is a characterization of that individual and of a relationship one might have with it. Theories grow out of individual experiences of knowing and contribute to them. This perspective—that relations between people and things are dynamic, intimate, and formational—resonates with the new materialist understanding of the world.

Cusick’s and Guck’s proposed ethics also openly acknowledges the power, agency, and vibrant materiality of music itself. This identification of music as a vital, material agent is the second point of emphasis that Cusick and Guck share. Both scholars highlight music’s power in our bodily encounters with it, which they characterize as loving and erotic in nature. In Cusick’s writings, the relationship between humans and music is theorized around a broader definition of sexuality as “a way of expressing and/or enacting relationships of intimacy through physical pleasure shared, accepted, or given,” which she condenses into the term, the power/intimacy/pleasure triad. Guck cites and builds on Cusick's triad by naming music theorists' loving relations with music as a defining practice of our field in “Music Loving.”

In her description of our sexual encounters with music, Cusick ascribes a body to music that interacts with and shapes human subjects and knowledge in significant ways. Her article “Feminist Theory, Music Theory” details the allure of music that pulls in performers’ bodies and minds: “For music draws its performers’ (and possibly its listeners’) bodies into enacting physical and psychic intimacy with … music's body, sound itself.” In another essay, “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight,”

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66 Guck, “Music Loving,” [34].
Cusick expands her discussion of bodily relationships between music and humans by discussing how music's body also interacts with listening bodies.

These two essays also celebrate the physical labor that human bodies perform in their engagements with music. On performance, Cusick emphasizes the work that her body does to release the power of music and its messages of musical pleasure and joy. These sensations not only enter and change “her own ears and mind,” but also that of her listeners’ ears and minds too.68 Through acts of listening, she emphasizes the bodily position of lying on one’s back and the effort it takes to lovingly receive and attend to music’s sonic body:

I teach music as the lover, the active force that generates pleasure, that leads one body and soul into an alternate reality … I ask my students to open themselves to the music they hear, to let music “do it” to them, to become more intensely aware (physically, emotionally, intellectually) of what's being done to them.69

Guck herself also describes the pleasurable, bodily work that she does in acts of listening and writing about musical experience. In “A Woman’s (Theoretical) Work,” she writes:

And doing this work [writing about one's personal experience with a piece] gives great pleasure. I make myself all ears, give myself up to the piece, let it carry me away. When the sounds of the piece end, I carry myself back by asking “just what was that like? What could I tell someone else so that they too could hear that effect?” I play it at the piano, I make up momentary dances—I give myself up to it now as it has become a part of me.70

In these intimate performing, listening, and analytic relations, the continual flow of agency and power is emphasized. According to Cusick, notions of self and knowledge are broken down and transformed during these moments: “power circulates freely across porous boundaries; the categories play and played, lover and beloved, dissolve.”71 Cusick describes her personal experiences in which the animacy of music—its agential capacities—affirms her

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69 Ibid., 74.
70 Guck, “A Woman’s (Theoretical) Work,” 38.
liveliness as well: “the joining of my body to the music in which ‘who’s on top’ keeps changing … I have felt most fully alive, most fully myself … when I have become the music.”

These moments when music and human merge produce not only pleasure, but also an opening for political and disciplinary transformation. Cusick writes:

I suspect for all of us the originating joy of it [interacting with music] comes from assuming more varied positions that we think we’re allowed in regular life, positions that enable us to say yes or no, to immerse, to initiate, to have simultaneous but independent climaxes, to escape a system (maybe it was always the phallic economy) of bewildering fixed categories, to wallow in the circulation of pleasures that are beyond danger and culturally defined desires.

Through writing and reading others’ accounts of this joy, we might finally arrive at ways of not “thinking straight,” and thinking instead in new and queer ways.

In summary, the definitions of the body and materiality suggested by Cusick and Guck provide several paths for future new materialist work. My reading brought out how these authors’ shared emphasis on situated readings of musical experience resonates with new materialisms’ preference for networked relations. I illustrated how these authors’ descriptions of the force, materiality, and animacy of music—the way in which music is imbued with life and how it affirms our own liveliness—relates to the new materialist understanding of matter itself as an active and dynamic force that constitutes all kinds of life. Finally, both authors argue that our pleasurable and loving relationships with music can fuel transformation in our discipline.

Conclusion: Music-Analytical Bodies

In this chapter, I explored how foundational feminist music theorists defined and employed the concept of the body in their political and methodological interventions.

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
Reading McClary’s *Feminine Endings* through Grosz’s critique of social constructionism, I noted the tension between a desire to attend to the social *and* the physical qualities of music-human relations. I argued that McClary’s social-constructionist framework limited her ability to fully theorize music’s effects on the body. I then examined how the writings of Cusick and Guck reopen the discussion of the body through invoking subjective musical experience in their analytical writings. I suggested that through theorizing around individual bodily relations between music and humans, these two authors open a space for a new materialist interrogation of music theory.

One path that Cusick and Guck leave open for new materialist work is the exploration of music analysis itself as an embodied, material practice. While Cusick and Guck primarily discuss human-music relations in acts of listening and performing, I propose that individual moments of music analysis are significant events too. Music analysis is a shared practice among most professional music theorists—we analyze and write analyses for our own research and/or in our teaching. Instead of viewing this practice as an act of musical dismemberment as Cusick does, or as a reflection of previous, erotic listening and performing relations as Guck does, I want to approach analysis itself as an enactment of affective and productive flows of power between bodies—of loving in a new materialist-ethical sense. My next chapter will work toward theorizing these affective relationships in analysis by expanding the concept of music loving from Cusick’s and Guck’s work.

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75 Ibid., 77 and 80; and Guck, “Music Loving.”
Chapter Three
Music Loving

Through examining the concept of music loving in the feminist music-theoretical writings of Marion A. Guck, Suzanne G. Cusick, and Fred Everett Maus, this chapter will demonstrate an implicit ethical critique of music theory that underlies this work. From this reading, I argue for a displacement of a moral commitment that pervades music-theoretical practice in favor of an ethics in the Deleuzian and new materialist sense of the term. To contextualize the difference between morality and ethics from this philosophical orientation, I begin this chapter by detailing an affinity between Gayle Rubin’s essay “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” and Guck’s “Music Loving.”

Although these two essays come from and address two seemingly unrelated disciplines—anthropology and gender studies for Rubin and music theory for Guck—I nevertheless sense a similar wariness of morality: the policing of what ought to count as the right and wrong ways to act, and, especially, of what ought to count as the right and wrong ways to love.

In Rubin’s case, morality determines what constitutes normal versus deviant sex acts. Drawing connections between the sexual peril of the feminist anti-pornography movement in the 1970s and 80s and the contemporaneous “erotic hysteria” of American right-wing...
politics, Rubin illustrates the restrictive sexual morality that underlies these two opposing political movements—a morality that universalizes the definition of good sexual practices based on one's own particular sexual preferences.³ She writes:

Most people find it difficult to grasp that whatever they like to do sexually will be thoroughly repulsive to someone else, and that whatever repels them sexually will be the most treasured delight of someone, somewhere … Most people mistake their sexual preferences for a universal system that will or should work for everyone.⁴

This approach to sexuality, according to Rubin, punishes people who form “bad” sexual relations that stray from our idealized model of sex. This resultant persecution of sexual “deviants” was evidenced at the time of her article by the slew of anti-homosexuality legislation proposed by American conservatives, and also by the exclusionary politics of anti-porn feminism against BDSM, fetishism, and other practices and identities. Neither group could understand how such sexual practices and relations could possibly be anything other than immoral, lacking in mutual love and consent. To combat these ungenerous and harmful views of alternative sexualities, Rubin calls for the development of a radical theory of sexuality that embodies a “pluralistic sexual ethics” rather than a universal morality. Such a sexual ethics would center on “the concept of benign sexual variation” and take variation itself to be “a fundamental property of all life, from the simplest biological organisms to the most complex human social formations.”⁵

³ Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” and her other early publications emerged out of the highly charged sexual-political climate of the 1970s and 80s. Rubin played a significant role in the feminist sex wars—a series of contentious debates that occurred between anti-porn and sex-positive feminist movements. Anti-porn feminists viewed pornography and BDSM practices as irrevocably harmful to women, while sex-positive feminists argued that such a viewpoint restricted sexual freedoms. “Thinking Sex” also critiques the anti-homosexuality politics represented by the formation of the “Save Our Children” campaign in Dade County, Florida; the Family Protection Act of 1979; and the emergent panic surrounding the AIDS crisis.


⁵ Ibid.
Responding to the debates within and between new musicology and music theory in the 1990s, Guck’s article observes a similar moralizing tendency regarding the delineation between proper versus improper kinds of music scholarship. In fact, Guck begins her essay by likening these disciplinary disputes to the sex panic of American politics at the time. Like Rubin’s observations about the universalizing approach to sexual morality quoted above, Guck problematizes the practice of measuring the merit of scholarship based on one’s own preferences:

Lately I’ve been struck by the realization that we music scholars have an inclination to legislate against work different from our own. From my perspective as theorist, I see that some theorists would like the writing of personal accounts of musical experience to go away. On another side, musicologists interested in hermeneutics will often take time at some point in their papers to complain that theory and analysis detach musical works from their contexts, or to call theory and analysis formalist or positivist … What’s thought-provoking to me is the fact that people are not content to regulate only their own work, they also wish to regulate the work of others. It’s a bit like the Republican inclination to legislate sexual morality, and it makes me wonder what sense of danger is being responded to.6

Guck asserts that the “danger” is partly rooted in our discomfort with the origin of our disciplinary identities in our formative and ongoing loving relations with music. She writes:

Though presumably we all came to our present positions through a strong attraction to music and to specific pieces, most theorists and musicologists, whether old or new, are not comfortable with “music loving.” Or perhaps I should say I think that no one is comfortable with “loving.” We do not call ourselves music lovers; we call amateurs music lovers. My title was difficult to settle on because I kept finding it embarrassing.7

For Guck, openly divulging these personal practices of music loving can be too threatening for a number of reasons. I wish to highlight two such reasons here. First, talking about music loving would force us to admit that we are not always in positions of power when we deal with music. Citing Gary Tomlinson, Maus, and Cusick, Guck argues that

7 Ibid., [7].
writing intimate accounts of musical experience makes us acknowledge the ways in which music wields power over us, and how we might enjoy the sensations afforded by our receptivity to music’s dominance. Such an image would shatter the façade of the objective, emotionally-detached scholar that many musicologists and music theorists have labored to cultivate.

Aside from the possible shame and embarrassment in outing our peers and ourselves as music lovers, there is also the fear that brazen celebrations of music loving might also harm our beloved “music itself.” To demonstrate this perspective, Guck references the dispute between Tomlinson and Lawrence Kramer on the value of intimate accounts of music in new musicological research. While Kramer suggests that “the last thing a postmodernist musicology wants to be is a neo-Puritanism that offers to show its love of music by ceasing to enjoy it,” Guck writes that Tomlinson stresses the sublimation of our desires for the sake of music—“the rerouting of Primitive and powerful energies into rational, culturally sanctioned enterprises.” To not regain control of ourselves and of the music after intense, private moments of music loving would be, for Tomlinson, to fail to properly engage music primarily as a cultural and socially-embedded object.

Guck’s article concludes with a critique of this either/or morality: “[W]hy does the cultural pre-empt the personal?” Why must certain ways of loving, experiencing, and talking about music negate others? Guck cautions that if we continue to regulate academic discourse, we might silence the vibrant, differing voices that were just beginning to emerge at this moment—especially, the then-new perspectives offered by feminist music-theoretical

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and musicological writings. Like Rubin’s call for a pluralistic sexual ethics rather than an all-encompassing morality, Guck and other similarly aligned feminist music scholars, such as Maus and Cusick, advocate moving away from placing restrictions on what counts as legitimate music-analytical and musicological relations, thereby opening up a space for more diverse accounts of music loving to emerge.

I suggest that Rubin’s and Guck’s preferences for a varied ethics in lieu of a universal morality resonates with Gilles Deleuze’s vision of ethics, which he elucidated throughout his career from his own writings to his collaborative publications with Félix Guattari. Deleuze defines morality as the judgment of actions and intentions by measuring them against a “set of constraining rules.”¹¹ The rules of a morality are transcendent—they are universal and conceived on a plane outside of or beyond our particular worldly existence. In contrast to this transcendent morality, ethics for Deleuze must be thought of as immanent, as embedded in and contingent on our particular location in the world. Expanding on Spinoza, Deleuze argues that what is good and what is bad is determined within the specific conditions and relations formed among various (human and nonhuman) bodies at a given moment. Taking inspiration from Spinoza’s version of conatus—the fundamental nature of all things to strive [conatur], to preserve in their being—Deleuze approaches ethics as how certain actions increase or decrease a body’s capacities to strive, to affect and be affected by other bodies.¹²

Thus, an action is bad for a certain body when it limits the striving of this body; that is, when it decreases its capacity to affect and be affected. Conversely, an action is good for a certain body when it increases its capacities. The capacities and power of particular bodies are limited or enhanced when they enter into what Deleuze and Guattari term “assemblages”

[agencements]—dynamic, decentered, and ad-hoc groupings of entities. This notion of ethics as contingent and distributed has influenced much new materialist thought, such as Jane Bennett’s work on vibrant matter.

This chapter explores the possibility of building a feminist music-theoretical ethics that is relational and immanent around redefinition of music loving. First, through a comparison of Pieter van den Toorn’s critique of feminist music studies in “Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory” and Guck’s “Music Loving” paper, I interrogate the central concept of love that pervades mainstream and feminist music-theoretical perspectives, but that also remains underdeveloped. While van den Toorn takes a considerably more moralistic tone in his version of love than Guck, I argue that both traditional and feminist music theories remain fixated on a particular image of love as an interaction between only two entities: the theorist and the music.

Second, taking inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that “we always make love to worlds,” I explore what might happen if we viewed love and more specifically, music loving, not just as relations among two (a person and a piece). Instead, what would result if we understood music loving among and within dynamic assemblages—networked, vibrant landscapes [paysages] comprised of many people and things. Here, I draw connections between Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on love and their more established

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philosophy of desire to illustrate two central ideas: 1) love, like desire, is a vital productive force with the potential to generate new relations, bodily capacities, and concepts; and relatedly, 2) acts of loving in this view are experiments [experiences] through which we may “provoke a novel occurrence, to elicit a new event, to produce a new body.”

Van den Toorn

Van den Toorn’s 1991 article has received a fair amount of attention due to its anti-feminist sentiments. A reactionary piece denouncing the merits of feminist music scholarship, particularly the writings of Susan McClary, this essay is often read as a product of its time—a defense of tradition as new methods from critical musicology were beginning to take hold, or in the context of this dissertation, as an enactment of our discipline’s cruel optimism. Feminism, according to van den Toorn’s piece, is best left for “practical” matters, such as the elimination of discriminatory hiring and wage practices, and certainly not musical concerns. But putting this article’s notoriety aside, I would like to focus on van den Toorn’s surprisingly candid statements regarding music, love, and sex. I suggest that

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20 McClary, *Feminine Endings*.

21 “The interests of feminism are best served, it seems to me, in practical, down-to-earth terms. The arguments about sex and music are largely a form of propaganda, an attempt to advertise blanket claims of special disadvantage and oppression which, in contemporary life in the West, generally, are dubious and farfetched.” Van den Toorn, “Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory,” 297.
these moments betray a particular kind of loving relationship between music and music theorist often privileged in traditional music theory—a celibate, transcendent mode of loving.

For van den Toorn, music theory must be premised on an understanding of the relationship between immediacy and reflection. On immediacy, van den Toorn writes that as “objects of affection, faith, and love,” musical works speak to and engage with us directly; in a natural, free, and spontaneous fashion, and without any sort of mediation. Van den Toorn characterizes the immediate relation between music and the theorist-listener as a loss of the self, an immersion in the musical object, and even “becoming one with the object.” These relations are the inspiration for our analytical work.

After we have “known” the music in this unmediated, intimate way, the job of reflection—of formalist music analysis—is to accurately represent what we have come to learn about the music. The purpose of analysis is “to sustain the relationship, maintain contact by drawing the details into sharper focus, attending above all to the particulars that would seem to have ignited the engagement from the start.” In other words, music analysis as reflection, for van den Toorn, is the outward, professional expression of our personal moments of music loving.

Up until this point, van den Toorn’s approach does not appear to be entirely antithetical to McClary’s work on music’s sexual-political significance. His summary of the immediate interaction between music and theorist seems unabashedly sexual. What, then, are

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22 Ibid., 275.
23 Ibid., 276.
24 Ibid., 277.
25 Van den Toorn is primarily responding to McClary’s essay “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman’s Voice in Janika Vandervelde’s Genesis II” from Feminine Endings. For a summary of this chapter, please refer to the McClary section in chapter two of this dissertation.
McClary and other feminist music scholars doing wrong by exploring these gendered and sexual dimensions of musical experience and meaning making?

The problem for van den Toorn is that McClary’s theory of musical sexuality is too imposing. Of course, as van den Toorn himself acknowledges, we can easily describe music’s qualities with sexual metaphors. But to argue that sex is central to music’s meaning is to unjustly limit its potential. Despite its sexual allure, music and our encounters with it are about much more than carnal pleasure. Our loving interactions also bring about spiritual and aesthetic pleasures. Good professional music lovers don’t just love music for its body. They love it for its spirit and mind too. In fact, the relation of sexual imagery to music is simply too dangerous. We could get carried away in our revelry: “Once ignited, the sexual image is not easily contained. It tends to spread like wildfire, in fact, a tendency that radical feminists have been quick to exploit.”

Thus, van den Toorn stresses self-sacrifice, maturity, and self-control in the practice of analytical reflection. He celebrates Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg, and Leonard B. Meyer as exemplary models of his musical-sexual morality. For example, although Meyer’s influential theory of musical expectation invites sensual metaphors of desire and satisfaction, he practices “real maturity, real caring” by denying himself the explanatory power of sexuality. Like a spiritual practitioner of celibacy, Meyer suppresses and rechannels the sexual energies of his relationship with music into a deeper and more legitimate devotional practice. Quoting Meyer himself, van den Toorn notes that this “suffering”—this withholding of our musical-sexual urges—“encourage[s] a higher level of consciousness and a more sensitive, realistic awareness of the nature and meaning of

27 Ibid., 281–83.
28 Ibid., 283.
existence.”

By removing ourselves from our analytical descriptions of immediate musical experience, we can create better and more responsible accounts of our beloved music.

According to van den Toorn, McClary, in contrast to Meyer, is too immature and self-indulgent. By fixating on sexual metaphor, she violently imposes on and hinders music’s potential. McClary “tyrannizes” the music itself. Reacting particularly to her infamous reading of Beethoven’s Ninth as sexual violence, van den Toorn reverses the identity of the aggressor from phallic musical codes to McClary herself. He writes, “Beethoven’s music, deprived of its aesthetic ‘space,’ its measure of autonomy, its ability to make something of itself, ceases to be something distinct, unique, and transcending.”

Measured against van den Toorn’s moralistic standards, McClary, at best, can be viewed as a selfish music lover, and at worst, a music violator.

In summary, van den Toorn’s moralistic music loving is very much centered on imposing boundaries and self-control in order to gain transcendent knowledge. Music has distinct borders that contain its unique characteristics. Through coming into relation with a musical work either through an immediate listening experience or through the reflective process of analysis, music theorists must be careful to respect music’s boundaries and to not impinge on the will and integrity of the music itself. We must remove ourselves from our analytical accounts, lest we risk overwhelming music with our sexual-romantic urges. To adequately adhere to this proper kind of music loving, van den Toorn advocate distant, neutral, and objective analyses.

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 294.
Guck

Guck’s essay on music loving, however, posits that such a distance between a theorist and a musical work is impossible. For her, the relation between the two is always unavoidably entangled. She asserts that:

Scholarly rhetoric creates a fiction whereby one speaks purely about a piece, out there, lying on a desk perhaps, unperceived by anyone. As if one really could stand at a distance from it. This is an illusion … Music exists only in the interaction between sound and the body-and-mind of an individual. There is paper and ink and there is sound separate from individuals, there is not music.\(^{31}\)

Through unpacking the key points in this statement, I will use Guck’s work as a bridge between the traditional music-theoretical loving exemplified by van den Toorn’s writing and the Deleuzian version that I will discuss in the last portion of this chapter.

I begin with some general similarities between Guck’s perspective and the assumptions underlying mainstream music theory. Like van den Toorn, Guck still views music loving as an involvement between only two entities, the music as a merging of sound and listener, and the individual as a listening and receptive “body-and-mind.” She explicitly excludes other entities, such as “paper and ink,” as genuine participants in the music-loving process. Relatedly, Guck’s intervention insists on the same starting point for music-theoretical writing—the listening experience, previously described in van den Toorn’s article as the musical immediacy that must precede all good analytical reflections. Guck still privileges a similar kind of deeply attentive, intimate, and embodied merging of the theorist-listener and the music as the ideal relation from which music theory’s production of discourse should arise.

The centrality of the this particular two-entity relation in Guck’s point of view is exemplified by her intricate analysis of the opening of the Adagio of Mozart’s Piano

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\(^{31}\) Guck, “Music Loving,” [13–14].
Concerto in A Major, K. 488, in which she recounts the pleasurable experience of relating to the first solo and subsequent tutti sections. On justifying the purpose of this kind of analytical account, she writes:

I wanted to understand the extreme sense of intimacy one can feel for a musical work—an intimacy akin to that one feels for a lover—as well as some of the powers of music, powers of attraction, engagement, the power to care for the listener … Analysis is for me is the articulation of a process of growing awareness, increasing closeness, of “immersion in pleasure” (29), to quote Cusick—or so I prefer it to be.

Analyses here remain, as they are for van den Toorn, reflections that capture the affects and qualities generated from our personal moments of listening-loving with the piece.

But Guck’s argument differs from traditional music theory in three significant ways. First, as I have already noted, Guck denies the possibility of a distant relationship with music, of a distant analytic account of music. Recall, that music, for Guck, only exists when sound and a particular individual interact. That is, as feminist theory Donna Haraway might put it, theorists and music are always situated with and within one another. Analytical knowledge, like all modes of knowing, is situated. We can never do what van den Toorn prescribes—detach ourselves from this messy relation in order to gaze down on music. There is “no infinite vision,” no disconnected objectivity, and no fixed, transcendent qualities of music for us to discover at a distance. As discussed in chapter two, this connection between Guck and Haraway is an important juncture on the way to Deleuze and new materialisms. Similar to Deleuze’s critique of transcendence in his immanent philosophy, Haraway’s idea of situated knowledges suggests that our epistemologies,

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32 But as I will note below, Guck’s description of music loving actually involves other entities aside from herself and the piece. In her account, she also includes the recording, the performers on the recording (the orchestra and soloist), the various musicians whom she converses with about the piece, and the piano on which Guck comes to know the piece “through touch as well as sound.” “Music Loving,” [22] and [22–34].

33 Ibid., [34].

34 Haraway, “Situated Knowledges.”
ontologies, and ethics are never transcendent. Our conditions for living and relating are always contingent on where we are situated at a given moment.

Like Haraway, Guck seeks to acknowledge not only the location of musical works and humans within social and political strata (as Tomlinson, Kramer, and other critical musicologists have urged us to do), but the location of particular human subjects and their bodies alongside music as well. Despite music theory’s tendency toward a historically masculine notion of objectivity as absolutely impersonal and non-bodily, Guck argues that disciplinary discourse is always enmeshed not only in our embodied interactions with music, but also in our analytical language that draws on these experiences.

Second, by placing music and human listeners alongside one another, Guck’s work more explicitly acknowledges the power, force, and agency of nonhuman actors, particularly music, in our loving disciplinary practices. She writes that “music has the power to strongly control or fill up one’s consciousness and, in the process to affect one’s physical state; it has the power to engage the whole individual, mind and body.”

Such an experience of music’s power is central to Guck’s version of music loving. Citing the work of Cusick and Audre Lorde, Guck paints the act of listening as a deeply erotic experience in which physically intimate and pleasurable relationships might form. In these acts of listening-loving, Guck emphasizes Cusick’s depiction of a constant flow of power, intimacy, and pleasure between the theorist-listener and his or her beloved piece.

Third, Guck asserts that such relations are dynamic and formational. Music and our relationship with it shape and are shaped by music analysts’ particular histories and identifications with the piece, which are constantly changing. She writes:

35 Guck, “Music Loving,” [17].
We sometimes acknowledge that pieces change for us over time. Because musical works come into being as music only after they have entered us, to say that a work has changed is to say that I have changed. This no doubt could be disturbing to my sense of autonomy.  

The similarities and differences in van den Toorn’s and Guck’s respective types of disciplinary music loving involve particular prescriptions regarding who is involved in these exchanges of power and agency, and the directions that these flows of power can travel. In van den Toorn’s version of music loving, an affective flow from the music enters the theorist-listener. And then the theorist-listener works to study aspects of this flow’s effect on him- or herself. This is a two-part, unidirectional relation. In Guck’s version, we begin similarly from an affective flow from music entering the listener, but at the same time, an intentional flow from the listener modulates the musical flow. This is a more dynamic, multidirectional flow, but it remains between two. With Guck’s definition of love as a dynamic, constituting force—a flow of power—I have arrived at the Deleuzian and new materialist intervention that I wish to make.

**Deleuzian Love**

What kind of work could we do by thinking about music loving alongside Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of love and desire—a philosophy that emphasizes dynamic, entangled relations between and within bodies as the inescapable conditions for creativity, life, and the world? What kind of alternative disciplinary ethics might we form in orienting to this version of love? Before I address these questions in this chapter’s conclusion, I must first unpack Deleuze and Guattari’s redefinition of love. In my overview of this concept, I draw on John Protevi, who defines Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of love as a form of their

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37 Guck, “Music Loving,” [16].
more established concept of desire. I also reference Elizabeth Grosz, who takes their philosophy of desire into the realm of feminist new materialisms. In their critique of psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari present two forms of love and desire: Oedipal/paranoid and revolutionary/schizo. The Oedipal model of love/desire, which Grosz traces through Plato, Hegel, ad the psychoanalytic theorist of Freud and Lacan, is fixated on the belief of desire as a fundamental lack. Desire, in this view, is trapped in a never-ending process of replicating itself. Since this mode of desire “can only function if it remains unfulfilled,” its object of desire can only be another image of desire. Oedipal/paranoid desire, then, is stuck in the realm of representation, creating an endless chain of equivalences exemplified by Freud’s Oedipal complex, wherein the child “relinquishes its incestual attachments with the creation of an endless network of replacements, substitutes, and representations of the perpetually absent object.”

Furthermore, all relations as viewed through the Oedipal lens are closed-off relations between two entities. The relationship between a subject who desires and the object of desire is mapped onto the relationships between son and mother, husband and wife, and the analyst and patient. For Deleuze and Guattari, love and desire of this sort is negative, unethical, and even “sick,” since it limits the capacities of certain bodies to an endless repetition of the same limited narrative of lack.

Van den Toorn’s legislation of what counts as loving music-analytical relations fits comfortably into this category of love. Although he describes and celebrates moments of

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41 Ibid., 176.
42 Ibid.
freely intimate love between music and analyst, van den Toorn reins in these relations in his call for theorists to sublimate our desires into chaste reflective prose. This privileged method of loving limits music theorists to repeating the same kinds of relations over and over again: immediate loving followed by reflective sublimation followed by immediate loving followed by reflective sublimation, *ad infinitum.*

In contrast to this version, Deleuze and Guattari offer the concept of revolutionary or schizo love-desire. Outside of the constraints of the “bed of Oedipus,” of the familial and personal model of desire, revolutionary desire flows in “wide-open spaces,” in multiple directions, and among many entities rather than simply two. Revolutionary love moves beyond established modes of engagement in order to make new relations and things.

Desire, in this view, is imbued with potentiality and experimentation toward the production of these new relations and capacities. As Grosz writes, Deleuze and Guattari’s positive version of desire “does not provide blueprints, models, ideals or goals. Rather, it experiments, it makes: it is fundamentally aleatory, inventive.”

This definition of love and desire as ongoing processes of production is further elaborated in the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus, A Thousand Plateaus.* Here, as Protevi notes, love is a vital force that breaks down (deterritorializes) established (territorialized) patterns that might limit a body’s potential: “love is the release of multiplicities from their servitude.” Reframed around Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza’s *conatus* and ethics, love in this sense is about dynamic flows of love/desire that break down established patterns and create new relations in order to enhance a body’s ability to strive and develop new capacities to affect and be affected.

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44 Ibid., 116.
Even in the final years of Deleuze’s career, love and desire remained key philosophical concepts. In an interview with Claire Parnet for the television series *L’abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* [The ABCs of Gilles Deleuze], Deleuze defines his and Guattari’s concept of desire in the following manner:

> There is no desire that does not flow—I mean this precisely—flow within an assemblage [un agencement]. Such that desire has always been for me … it has always been constructivism. To desire is to construct an assemblage—to construct an aggregate [un ensemble]: the aggregate of a skirt, of a sun ray, of a street, an assemblage of a woman, of a vista, of a color, that’s what desire is: constructing an assemblage, constructing a region, really, to assemble [agencer]. Desire is a constructivism.  

To summarize, Deleuze and Guattari’s vision of love and desire centers on two aspects. First, love is a dynamic force that brings together not just two bodies, but many bodies into heterogeneous assemblages. Love is about multiplicities: multiple bodies, multiple relations, multiple flows. Second, loving is about experimentation. This aspect of loving is deeply connected to Deleuze’s ethical project centered around Spinoza’s conatus: through loving, we come into new relations with new worlds, bodies, and context that may enhance our capacities to affect and be affected.

For Grosz, a reorientation toward the latter aspect of love and desire—experimentation and the production of the new—can be potentially fruitful for feminist theory and practice. She writes:

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47 Deleuze and Parnet, “D for Desire.”


At its best, feminist theory is about the invention of the new: new practices, new positions, new projects, new techniques, new values … there needs to be not only the production of alternatives to patriarchal (racist, colonialist, ethnocentric) knowledges but, more urgently and less recognized, a freedom to address concepts, to make concepts, to transform existing concepts by exploring their limits of toleration, so that we may invent new ways of addressing and opening up the real, new types of subjectivity, and new relations between subjects and objects.49

I similarly hope to encourage us to grapple with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of love as it relates to current music theory, so that we might foster the production of new music-theoretical practices, concepts, and bodily capacities to affect and be affected.

As noted through this dissertation so far, music-theoretical scholarship has acknowledged the great pleasure and joy that we feel when we analyze music. But theorists have also expressed a fear of celebrating musical pleasure outright because doing so could devalue our work in the modern academy. From this concern, the joys of analysis are often sublimated or made implicit. I argue, however, that understanding our analytical pleasure with Deleuze and Guattari’s version of love provides a way to more clearly articulate the contributions of our discipline in ethical terms. Within this philosophical context, analytical pleasure-love possesses the power to increase our bodily capacities to affect and be affected. And through our continual orientation toward this potential through experiments with analysis, we might strive toward this version of ethics. I conclude this chapter by suggesting some paths for such music-theoretical experimentation toward the new. I will then follow some of these lines of thought in the following chapter.

First, like Bennett, Grosz, and other new materialists who have extended Deleuze and Guattari’s thought in response to their own disciplines, I suggest that music theory might also rethink the givenness of what we take to be the ordinary subjects, objects and

Movida” and “Revolutionary Force: Connecting to Reality” in Methodology of the Oppressed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 139–158 and 159–78.
49 Grosz, Becoming Undone, 83. Emphasis in original.
practices of our field. Doing so, we can provide a space for new, differently oriented music theories to take shape. Here, I embrace Kathleen Stewart’s definition of the ordinary as “a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life.” The ordinary in this sense is an animated network of many things and forces that can potentially generate change or reinforce the status quo. The work of attending to the ordinary in music theory means exploring and writing through our daily enactments of music loving while staying attuned to the constituent forces, disjunctures, and histories that pull us toward creating the new or the same.

While I will provide more detailed accounts of music-theoretical experimentation in chapter four, I would like to offer Maus’s “Love Stories” as a suggestive example that might direct us toward one line of potential exploration. In the second of three autobiographical vignettes, Maus details his loving relationship with Busoni’s Piano Concerto. Enamored particularly with the passage right before the first entry of the soloist, Maus details the intensely intimate mode of listening around this moment, which he repeats over the course of several months. Toward the conclusion of his story, Maus recounts one specific instance that jolted him from his usual listening-loving routine:

I remember one afternoon when I wanted to listen to the piece. I was alone at home. I closed the curtains and started the recording; I lay on my back on the floor, in the dark, with my feet toward the speakers. It seemed comfortable and appropriate. I was lost in the piece when, abruptly, someone came in the front door and turned on the light—it was my brother-in-law, Steve, the one who had once owned a racecar (but by now, one of his friends had stolen the car and totaled it while fleeing the police). Steve didn’t say anything; he just looked at me with what I took to be unsurprised disgust and went on to the back of the house. I was upset and embarrassed … Steve’s presence had given me a glimpse of myself from a

50 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, viii.
perspective of normative masculinity, and I could not tell whether I now found myself ridiculous.\textsuperscript{53}

Up until this moment, Maus’s vignette centered on the reification of his subjectivity through his listening relations with the piece: “I was trying to understand the concerto as completely as I sometimes wished someone would understand me.”\textsuperscript{54} In this final scene, we first get a glimpse of the listening-assemblage that Maus repeatedly entered into so that he could structure his sense of self: drawn curtains, darkness, the floor, speakers, a particular recording of the Busoni, the device to play the recording, Maus’s body, and its orientation toward the speakers. But just as ordinary practices might produce and affirm identities, they can also disrupt and even tear down connections between things. Beyond the control of Maus himself, a new body with its own histories and capacities—his brother-in-law—is suddenly thrown into the mix, generating new affects and rewiring future iterations of Maus’s relationship with the piece and his identity.

Unexpected encounters and flashes of affect also happen when we practice other music-theoretical activities. Such everyday practices to be rethought include not just acts of listening, but also individual acts of analysis—of meaning making—happening in our classrooms, in our offices, and wherever else the practice of analysis might happen upon us. Analyses need not be thought of as reflections of previous erotic-listening relations.

Instead, we could approach the practice of music analysis as an enactment of love—of affective and productive flows that animate numerous bodies and things. The collectives that emerge through analysis-loving include not only the theorist-and-the-music dyad, but also other bodies—our peers, students, theoretical apparatuses, papers, pencils, and laptops. Traces of these multiple loving relations already appear in some published analyses. In

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 91–92.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 90.
Guck’s account of the Mozart concerto movement in “Music Loving,” for example, interactions with performers, instruments, recordings, and other publications, named mostly in the footnotes, all contribute to her relationship with the piece. Missing in this account, however, are the particularities of these interactions—the flows of affect, histories, and potentials that undoubtedly shaped Guck’s published prose.

Following Stewart, I wonder what we might produce if we “slow the jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us.” What kinds of music-theoretical writing might happen then? Our experiments might resemble Maus’s autobiographical vignettes or Stewart’s fragmented ethnographic accounts. Or they might result in other forms of writing entirely, depending on our own preferred modes of analysis-loving.

Second, in attending to the everyday, we might consider how the repetition of our love-making or discourse-making shape and re-shape our specialized bodies and their capacities. In Deleuzian terms, we could think about how the repetition of our disciplinary practices territorializes our bodies. As noted above, van den Toorn’s ideal practice of music loving involves a ceaseless repetition of the process of immediate music loving followed by reflective sublimation. Continuing along the line of other music scholars who have observed and critique the split between mind and body, I argue that such repetitions produce not just discursive, but also bodily and worldly effects that enhance certain capacities and limit others. In the realm of Deleuzian-Spinozist philosophy, this way of understanding in terms of increasing or decreasing bodily capacities in our practices is an ethical matter. Attending to the affective histories of our disciplined/disciplinary bodies as well as the bodies that we

56 Abbate, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?,” and Cusick, “Feminist Theory, Music Theory.”
encounter might produce new kinds of writing, modes that further elicit the ethical potential of our analytical encounters.

Sara Ahmed’s observations on the ongoing materiality of philosophy-making could serve as a useful example of this possibility:

I type this now, using a keyboard placed on a computer table, which resides in the study, as a space that has been set aside for this kind of work. As I type, I face the table, and it is what I am working on. I am touching the object as well as the keyboard and am aware of it as a sensuous given that is available for me. In repeating the work of typing, my body comes to feel a certain way. My neck gets sore, and I stretch to ease the discomfort … I huddle over the table as I repeat the action (the banging of keys with the tips of my fingers); the action shapes me, and it leaves its impression through bodily sensations, prickly feelings on the skin surface, and the more intense experience of discomfort. I write, and in performing this work, I might yet become my object and become a writer, with a writer’s body and a writer’s tendencies … Our body takes the shape of this repetition: we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of the work.57

An experimental music theory in the same vein might ask: What and where are the tables that music theorists work from and how did they come to be? How are these tables oriented and how do their orientations affect what we see and do? What are the specific repetitive acts that happen on these tables, which shape and reshape theorists’ bodies and make them “stuck”? And how might we experiment with new actions and loving relations with our tables, music, and other apparatuses in order to reshape our bodies and our discipline?

In chapter four, I experiment with some of the questions and lines of thought outlined above. I will document and theorize the assemblages produced in analytical encounters through a mixture of autoethnographic prose, music-analytical language, and diagrams. I will tap into and describe the worlds that unfold from spaces of analysis and how we make love to them. In doing so, I hope to connect the concepts of bodies, love and ethics that I have offered in these previous chapters.

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Chapter Four
Analyzing

Autoethnography, in other words, is one way of reimagining the subject-object in scenes of the composition of some kind of world, whether that world is a lived identity, a prismatic structure of feeling or thought, a historical present, or the force of potentiality animating something. The objects of autoethnography are tellingly diffuse yet precise—a tone of voice, a form of labor, a sleepless night, unsignified intensities. An attachment circulates across bodies of all kinds—human bodies, bodies of thought, plant and animal bodies, bodies of pain and pleasure—assemblages of histories and politics, forms of caring and abuse solidified into models.1

Prelude

If analysis can be a loving practice that brings together and forms worlds, how might we write about it?2 This chapter explores this question by experimenting with autoethnography, a self-reflexive method of writing about experience. Since there are many versions of the practice across the humanities and social sciences, I will focus on one definition of the method from Kathleen Stewart’s work, which aligns with the philosophical orientation of my dissertation. As quoted above, Stewart’s version of autoethnography is a kind of writing that homes in on the formation of temporary affective worlds in the everyday. Autoethnographic writing taps into the affects, histories, and possibilities in these moments of “worlding” so that we continually rethink our assumptions about the nature of the world and our lives within it.3 From this inquiry, we can then continue to labor toward


2 Here, I’m referring back to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion that “we always make love to worlds,” which I discuss in chapter three. A Thousand Plateaus, 283.

an ethics that understands all relations to be dynamic and contingent. This approach to autoethnography resonates with how I seek to understand the kinds of affective flows that occur when we produce an analysis.

This chapter brings these ideas to music theory by sharing instances of “worldings” around a Schenkerian analysis that took shape over several months (December 2018–February 2019). This is my site of the music-analytical ordinary. The piece at the center of this experiment is Johann Sebastian Bach’s Prelude in B-Flat Minor from the second volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier. This piece and I have a history from my past training as a pianist. I became acquainted with the Prelude from the many hours that we spent together in the practice room, in lessons, and performances during the early 2000s. But it is also a piece that I do not know well in a music-analytical sense. I have never attempted to graph it, nor have I thought through it substantially with music-theoretical concepts. In this way, my relationship with the Prelude contains both an accumulation of old habits and a potential for the new.

I also have a prior relationship with my chosen method of analysis, Schenkerian graphing. I became familiar with foundational ideas from Schenkerian theory early on in my studies. Through my development as a theorist, I have formed an attachment to the method by developing a specific analytical process—or as I describe it below, a ritual. This ritual is

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4 As someone with a research interest in the relationship between performance and analysis, I find this failure to have analyzed a piece that I have performed a little embarrassing to admit.

5 “The potential stored in ordinary things is a network of transfers and relays. Fleeting and amorphous, it lives as a residue or resonance in an emergent assemblage of disparate forms and realms of life.” Stewart, “Potential,” in *Ordinary Affects*, 21.

an accumulation of my studies with various Schenkerian mentors and their preferences, as well as my own.

The autoethnographic vignettes in this chapter try to approach both past and emergent affects that arose from my repeated analytical encounters with Bach’s Prelude. In reference to the ethics that I have theorized in prior chapters, my use of “approach” is an honest admission that I cannot see, understand, and describe all that happens.7 Instead, this word connects my project to notions of situated proximity, intimacy, and care (to approach with caution). The writing here comprises my various attempts to approach the something—the some-world—that made itself when I started analyzing.

Writing while trying to stay attuned in this particular way has been difficult for a number of reasons. First, writing to adequately evoke the sense of time and bodily comportment of an analysis required experimentation with different literary styles.8 How could I convey the slowness of developing an analysis—the almost time-stopping attention to detail required during graphing? How can I make legible the bodily sensations and positions that happen during this process? There are moments of boredom, distraction, and embarrassment, as much as there are jolts of insight and pleasure. How can I write these moments in a way to make them come alive both to myself and to others? In the form of a dissertation no less?

Writing in this way has also pushed against my training as an academic music theorist. The tone and form of these short pieces run counter to how I have been
comfortable with expressing myself. Years of training have helped me to hone a specific authorial voice. This voice is strong with its own tones and forms. Trying to write otherwise has been a painful experience of being caught between the safety of knowing how to sound and the precarity of needing to sound differently.

But there have been some helpful influences along the way. As mentioned in prior chapters, feminist and queer musical writings on our personal relationships with music serve as inspiration for my writing here. In addition to Cusick, Guck, and Maus, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert also experiments with the intersection between gender, sexuality, and creative modes of music-analytic writing. As well, I felt a pang of recognition while reading about Mary Greitzer’s anxieties of disciplinary legibility as she tried to talk about the affective dimensions of music and sexual trauma.

Alexandra Pierce’s and Diane Urista’s efforts to include the body in Schenkerian theory are models of infusing analysis with feeling. Roland Barthes’ *A Lover’s Discourse* and Elizabeth A. Povinelli’s *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* helped me to consider the relationship between love, intimacy, and care as they relate to the practice of writing. Since autoethnography can blur the lines between fictional and factual genres, the visceral descriptions in Carmen Maria Machado’s short-story collection, *Her Body*...

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10 On trying to produce an analysis of Milton Babbitt’s *Philomel*, Greitzer writes “i fear the lack of a unifying narrative … i feel unsure as to what i have achieved. my expectations in this matter are shaped not only by the immediate context provided by the other analyses comprising my dissertation, but by the norms of music-analytical discourse as i’ve internalized them … i thrash in writing about *Philomel.*” “Tormented Voices,” PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007, 106–108.


12 Thanks to Peggy McCracken for introducing me to these resources on love.
and Other Parties were also informative. Her writing led me to grasp how descriptions of sense and memory could be pleasurable, familiar, and unsettling all at once, which set me on a journey to find and bring words together to evoke similar feelings about analysis.¹³

Finally, the onto-stories of Jane Bennett, Lauren Berlant, and Stewart have provoked thought that shaped these vignettes.¹⁴ Drawing on Bennett, I experiment with stories that attune to the agency of things so that I can perform the distributed, posthuman ethics proposed by new materialisms. My writing is also inspired by Berlant and Stewart’s practice of autoethnographic writing as a way to approach everyday, ordinary scenes in which love and other affects circulate—to get a sense of the intensities of formed habits and unformed potential in everything that we do. For me as a reader, Berlant and Stewart’s work is a performance of theory. I take on, embody, and digest their words as I read. This process helps me grasp difficult concepts related to new materialisms—the sensations of potential hitting you, the agency of things pulling you this way and then that, and the constant threat of old habits taking over. Their writing performs and then elicits in me a new sensitivity to the others that affect us.

In the following vignettes, I try to embody the ethos of experimental music loving that I have theorized in previous chapters. To acknowledge the precarious nature of this work, my writing does not obscure the internal battle with my desire to return to my well-practiced, music-theoretical voice with its established forms of music loving. I attune to jolts of potential and paranoid scholarly habits that strike during the process of analysis.

¹³ “The baby’s head is bothering me because it’s like a piece of fruit gone bad. I understand that, now, in the middle of this endless desert of sound. It’s like the soft spot of the peach that you can just plunge your thumb into, with no questions asked, with not so much as a how-do-you-do. I’m not going to, but I want to, and the urge is so serious that I put her down.” Machado, “Mothers,” in Her Body and Other Parties (Minneapolis: Greywolf Press, 2017), 48–49.

¹⁴ Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life; Bennett, Vibrant Matter; Berlant, Cruel Optimism; Berlant, Supervalent Thought (blog), https://supervalentthought.com/; Berlant and Stewart, The Hundreds; and Stewart, Ordinary Affects.
As you read through the examples below, I invite you to follow the rhythms and
tones of my words, which I have strung together to conjure some sense of what happened.
Tune into the specific affects, memories, and desires that these vignettes generate in you—
good and bad. Consider when and how my stories resonate or rub up against your own
methods of analysis, your own attachments to certain practices, objects, and spaces—your
habits. Contemplate the bodies in your analytical networks, how they arrived in proximity to
you and the ones that have left your orbit. Think about the bodies that often make it into
your written analysis and the ones that don’t. Imagine what it would be like to write these
observations in, to think about how so many things can affect our work. Perhaps, feel
daunted by the ever-growing scope and composition of our analytical networks. And then,
try to write about it anyway. Following this journey of inquiry is how I began my experiment
here.

**Vignettes**

**Remembering**

Freshly-printed score.\(^{15}\) Four pages. Fanned out precariously. On the stand of the electric
piano.

through the opening in B-flat minor. Separate the quarter notes. Connect the eighth notes.
Contrasting durations.

Remember?\(^2\)

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\(^{15}\) For your reference, my graph is provided in the Appendix of the dissertation.
The thumb slides plotted before. Voices smooth and connected. Punctuated by arpeggiated quarter notes.

Shift weight toward my right thumb. Voice the melody. Glide. Threading a line to connect each occurrence of the theme. My hands try to recall.

A memory. A performance. In a church. Somewhere in Toronto. A competition. A struggle to keep lines effortless and distinct. Battle with the acoustics. My sounds linger too long, I think, because there are not enough bodies in the pews to help absorb them. A mass of accumulating notes forms around me. I respond with a desire to separate and maintain.

In the back of my mind, I also remember my fear of the instrument itself, the strange and new-to-me grand piano that I was only beginning to know. Competitors were scheduled back-to-back that day, so there was no opportunity for us to warm up on the instrument. A fantastical threat: A slip of a thumb. A too-responsive piano key. A loud clonk that knocks me from my memorization of the piece. And the sonic world created by the bodies in this space would be ruined. Affective networks can be so terribly fragile.

The memory of the labor of constantly adjusting my touch to each responsive sound from this piano still makes me tense up. How did I survive this?

Back to the safety of my own familiar instrument, an electronic keyboard with weighted keys. We respond well (enough) to each other.
G-flat major to E-flat minor.¹⁶ G-flat major is an extroverted triumph and I play it so. Loud and solid. The speakers of the keyboard blare back at me. E-flat minor requires a more contemplative and withdrawn sound. Flat fingers and a cautious pause with rubato. I think this was a favorite moment for me? I’ve always liked sudden modal shifts, so that would make sense.

Or was it this E-flat?¹⁷ In the left hand on the downbeat of measure 67. I think I liked this too. Booming and resonant below the upper voices. Delight.

At last, the dreaded parallel thirds. And sixths? Across the treacherous topography of a heavily flatted-key. My fingers try unsuccessfully to remember the peculiar combination of white-and-black-key shapes. The score and piano push back at me, making my want for smooth lines elusive. Hate.

Major-mode tonic at last. Do I usually embellish the last chord? Sustain this last sound. Stay here for a while as it fades.

There is relief. Not perfect, but remembering.

**Sticky**

The key of B-flat minor (five flats) is sticky. Hands arched slightly more inward, toward the black keys of the keyboard. B-flat minor helps me grip the melodic lines better. More control.

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¹⁶ Mm. 8 through 55.
¹⁷ Left hand downbeat of m. 67.
But the stickiness of B-flat minor also leaves me vulnerable to pianistic clumsiness. My fingers take a tumble, an over-under gesture between thumb and middle finger gone awry. Even years later, the threat of knotted fingers looms.

**Ritual I: Reduction**

My network of analytical items, accumulated from my time as a Schenkerian:

*Manuscript paper. 8.5 by 11. Landscape.*

- An electronic template that I have kept since my early days of studying Schenkerian analysis.
- Three pairs of staff lines with enough space between them for analytical annotations. Spacious margins. Full of possibility.

*Stainless-steel ruler. “HAWK, Made in China.”*

- After the many chips and scratches that have happened to my plastic rulers, I now rely on the relative sturdiness of metal. Precision.

*Pen. Micron 01. Black ink. Used to copy the rhythmic reduction at the base of my graphs.*

- Pro: Archival ink. Don’t want these foundational pitches to get erased while I work out different slurs and prolongational interpretations. Also, I like the feeling of the felt-tip pen on paper rather than lead pencils or a ballpoint pen. It doesn’t press and imprint into the paper surface.

- Con: Mistakes are inevitable when I copy out my reduction and have always forgotten to purchase White-Out.
Mechanical pencil for upper-levels, slurs, and beams.

Eraser for mistakes, re-interpretations, experiments in hearing and seeing in different ways.

Two versions of the score:

One marked preemptively with some Roman numerals, formal labels, question marks.

And the other from my performer days. Filled with notes on interpretation: “Keep quarter notes light.” “Let fingers release with less static movement.” “Establish tempo (not too slow . . . ).”

“Reach!”

Corrected version of my rhythmic reduction. Shamefully messy.

With these items set all around me, it’s time to begin.

Ready. Set. Start. Hunch over the staff paper.

Close. So close you can smell the paper? Clean. Chemical.

I stare at the rhythmic reduction.

Replay the piece in my head or else it doesn’t make sense.¹⁸

¹⁸ I think the version of the piece in my head is a hybrid of my own playing and my favorite recording by Angela Hewitt in track 91, disc 4 of Johann Sebastian Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier, recorded 2008, Hyperion CDA67741–CDA67744, 2009, compact disc.
Slow.¹⁹

Copy the draft onto the bottom staves. Pen in hand. Ruler at hand. Small, controlled gestures.

Slow.


Ritual II: Repetition

I often re-write my rhythmic reduction multiple times before graphing. It’s my way of checking my work—sketches of half notes in four-part chorale style on a grand staff, my summary of the foundational harmonies of the piece. Slowly replaying the music in my mind as I recopy the draft. Matching each half note to the faster durations of the score itself. Asking the piece if it agrees with my interpretation. Approval feels good.

It’s soothing to slowly acquire a sense of the music this way. Caring and being cared for by the music-as-reduction-and-imagined-sound. Following and checking in constantly to make

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¹⁹ On the slowed-down time of a Schenkerian analysis, Felix Salzer recalls: “I shall never forget the highly persuasive and artistic manner in which he [Schenker] explained particular sections or passages, playing them on the piano, sometimes in ‘slow motion,’ so as to make their voice leading clear. Thus it appeared the explanations and analytic readings grew, so to speak, out of the most inspired and lucid playing.” Introduction to Five Graphic Music Analyses by Heinrich Schenker (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 20.
sure that what I am doing is okay. Does my reduction sound like what the score wants to sound like?

But this work can be tiring. So it only happens when I’m in the mood to listen attentively and when the piece wants to cooperate. Otherwise, it can all fall apart. And we are left to pick up the pieces another time.

Is This Love?

If love is patient and kind, then I don’t think that’s what I’m feeling today.20

Paying attention is difficult. The graph and I aren’t seeing eye to eye. It wants me to find the multi-level connections, but I’m not there yet. And I’m tired of listening.

But if love is the everyday labor of constructing an empire, so that these moments of uncertainty can’t entirely topple us,21 then I suppose there is still love here.

(Love is precarious. Love has its bad days.)


The Slowness of Schenkerian Time: An Exercise

Materials:

• A computer or other electronic device with the capacity to stream YouTube videos.

• Headphones, optional, but preferable in a public setting. Be courteous of others’ sonic needs, please.

• This link to a recording of the Prelude starting at 0:32 (https://youtu.be/HRoBL-UqFvA?t=32)

Instructions:

• Click on the link and immediately pause it.

• Then click on the “Settings” button (the gear icon at the bottom right of the video).

• Select “0.5” as the speed.

• Press the play button.

• Listen. Trace the contrapuntal lines. Follow them as they weave together and apart.

• Pause and rewind if you have trouble following. Keep on going.

• Repeat until you are tired, run out of time or patience, or if you’ve managed to follow the voices through to the end.

• Write about your experience. Create a story.

• Jot down a list of feelings, things, and actions to approach what happened: The who, what, where, when, and how. String them together. Draw lines. Circle words. Form sentences. Untie the words and restring. Untie and restring until it feels close enough.
• Ask yourself: Where do you choose to begin? Why there? What would it be like to start someplace else? With someone or something else? What kinds of worlds does your writing evoke with each attempt? What kind of story did you tell?

Ritual III: Erase

Writing about writing-worldings and writing about analysis-worldings. A comparison.

Berlant and Stewart: For me, writing is necessarily recursive. Every day I start at the beginning, scoring words like a sculptor chiseling things neither here nor there. Working words is like feeling out the pitch of a note set by an imaginary tuning fork. Pockets of composition can produce worlds as if out of thin air but only because writing is a compression stretched by a torque. When writing fails the relation of word and world, it spins out like car wheels in mud, leaving you stranded and tired of trying.²²

Me: This always happens when I leave a draft unfinished the previous day: The middleground doesn’t make sense anymore. This time, I don’t remember how I arrived at the neighbor-note motion 3–4–3 as the upper voice of mm. 1–3. There are intricate, criss-crossed slurs and lines, imprinted deeply as if I had committed to this reading with such

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confidence. But now all these markings elicit is a sense of confusion. So I erase it and start anew.

I write over the newly blank staff lines. Build a new Schenkerian analysis-world, different slurs, new sensations. An octave displacement of the opening Kopfton, $\dd{3}$—$\dd{5}$ to $\dd{4}$—becomes apparent to me. A new feeling of line and connection forms. I can hear and play this relation. A new capacity realized.

But then I sit back and examine what I’ve drawn. Yesterday—me and her pencil have left the past engraved on the surface of the paper. Each new marking glides over the grooves of the old, slightly slowing down and impeding the smoothness of my new lines. Today—me can’t stop seeing the conflicting slurs. Now wavering between this hearing and that hearing. Stop.

**The Pen**

My preference for pen confounds some theorists. At best, I get comments about my boldness in jest: “I must be brave.” At worst, I get some raised eyebrows and interrogated about my choice: “What does the pen do for me and the graph?”

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23 Right hand, downbeats of m. 1 and m. 3.
The pen is a commitment to paying attention. It requires me to slow down and focus on every minute analytical decision in my graph. The pen makes me pause, check, then double-check each and every notational symbol before it goes down on the paper. The pen infuses each gesture with intention.

The pen is a commitment to my already-formed reduction. A commitment to the hours that I have already spent drafting, playing, and testing out my rhythmic reduction. It is an implement that signifies trust that I have done enough and can move on.

The pen is a feeling, an object that feels different from the mechanical pencil. The pen requires specific handling and movement to create precise marks on the paper. Press too hard and you get blobs of ink. And then the draft ruined. Or you might maim the felt tip and lose the day to procuring a new pen. (Yes, this has happened.) So the pen feels like caution, like slow and thoughtful care. The pen is a commitment to attentive intimacy as I work to understand the music.

**Analytical Stories**²⁴

The Prelude prolongs the *Kopfton* 3 (Db) almost until the end of the piece. The descent of the *Urinie* to 2 and then 1 happens in the last two measures.

The analytical narrative is a journey of how this Db finds and adjusts itself through a maze of different tonal areas and then arrives home.

²⁴ Guck, “Analytical Fictions.”
How do I write this story about the $\text{Db}$? Did it venture out and have its tonal-contrapuntal adventure on its own volition? Or were the circumstances of its travel more nefarious? Whisked away from its home by the threat of $F$ minor (mm. 8–15) perhaps?

Or should I avoid personifying pitches and reallocate agency to the composer? The analytical story is one of composerly invention then?

Bach prolongs the Kopfton $\hat{3}$ ($\text{Db}$) almost until the end of the piece. He intricately weaves the underlying motive of $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$ throughout the voice-leading levels of the Prelude. From the foreground, in which we experience the motive in mm. 1–3, to the background through the plagal motion to E-flat minor in mm. 55–61, right before the final return to the home key of B-flat minor and the opening theme. Bach keeps the neighboring tone, E-flat, in our ears even through the very last measures of the piece as the chordal seventh of $V^7$ in m. 50, right before we return to the Kopfton in the correct register in m. 51.

Or is this a story about my experience of the graph?

I hear a drama of octave displacements woven throughout the piece while following the opening $\text{Db}$. In my graph, I trace the many times that the two structural voices converge and diverge. I feel the continual dips downward and upward of these two voices as they hide within the middle range of the inner voices. I try to find them. Connect them with lines. Straighten them out in my middleground graph. Place them in the correct, obligatory register—the triumph of a unified solution.

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Or should the graph just speak for itself?26

**What About?**

Sometimes doing analysis is anticipating the “what-abouts.”

*What about this Kopfston reading instead?*

*What about this prolongation?*

*What about this entrance of the theme?*

Answering these imagined “what-abouts” will apparently make my analysis stronger.27

Forcing me to choose between certain either/or paths.28 Divide and decide.

I know it doesn’t have to be this way. Ambiguity and openness to alternate hearings is a part of our occupational ethics after all.

But the “what-abouts” pay service to an image of the perfect, intricately woven, immaculately unified graph. Every slur at every level connected together in this organic

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26 “The presentation in graphic form has now been developed to a point that makes an explanatory text unnecessary.” Schenker, *Five Graphic Analyses*, 9.


whole. I am guilty of wanting to realize this fantasy in my analytical work, even though I know that there will also be multiple ways to experience.

So the “what-about”s incapacitate. The tension between the in-the-music-ness of graphing and the all-seeing God-like view while channeling the fundamental structure. The fluctuating desire for a singular interpretation and then multiple. I can’t see all these ways at once. And when I try, I get cross-eyed.29

Method

“Analysis brings together worlds.” Let’s write from this statement.

Conjure the outlines of your analysis-world and the worlds within it. If you can, locate and go to your favorite analytical space. If you don’t have a favorite, then choose a convenient location that works for you. In a pinch, closing your eyes and imagining your space will do. Describe the shape and composition of this space and the things within it. Draw them out as a word map, if you like, connecting concepts, objects, and feelings. Where do words clump together? And where do they come apart? Detail the terrain that you have created. A world is forming.

Let’s Try Talking About Love Again

I can’t help feeling worried that I have shared too much. Habits of disciplinary professionalism, of what counts as good music-theoretical discourse impede.

29 Haraway, “Situated Knowledges.”
So let’s restart somewhere safe. A definition, perhaps.

Music loving is a flow of affects and potentials when we enter into an analytical-relation with many things. Writing about scenes of music loving then is a practice of tuning into these flows. What are their shapes? Where do they come from? Where do they go?

Sometimes my loving is joyful and productive. It elicits new hearings and wordings. Other times, it’s a terror of resistance, a lack of time, and murkiness. It slips away out of reach, or it hovers condescendingly. “What about?”

The things that are thrown together in a moment of music loving arise out of our particular histories and situation. I have shared mine. What about yours?

Provisional

“This experiment is provisional.” I have repeated this mantra since starting this project. It is supposed to bring comfort. A license to try.

“This experiment is provisional.” Embarrassment at the thought of sharing the raw, unwoven threads of this project. Hot and gut-twisty.

“This experiment is provisional.” If I can accept that an analysis is never finished, then perhaps I can accept this. There’s so much more to write.
“This experiment is provisional.” But my sentences are too short and jolt-y. And there is too much “I.” Why not “us” and “we”? Why not “she” and “her”? These are new habits and tones pushing against old ones. But I don’t think I like them.

“This experiment is provisional.” I have yet to grasp the precision with which others write the world. So there is more to do and more ways to write through this. The work of loving experiments is open-ended and its potential fills me with joy and fear.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I experimented with autoethnography as a way to bring my ideas on music-analytical loving and ethics into practice. I attempted to write stories that brought together word and world, particularly the world that comes into being during analysis. A number of genres of autoethnographic writing arose from this work. And to close this chapter, I will now summarize these kinds of writing to suggest future paths for experimentation.

There were stories that detailed my analytical habits, such as ‘Remembering” and “Ritual II: Repetition.” In these vignettes, I focused on the network of different bodies that came together in my moments of analysis, from my body and the piano to paper, pencils, and pens. My writing tried to follow the emergent affects from these relationships, the shape and composition of my analysis-world. In “Remembering,” it was an interaction between the score, the electronic piano, and myself that brought about nostalgia, fear, and pleasure. In “Ritual II,” I homed in on responsive and distributed agency as it flowed across my rhythmic reduction, the piece, and my body.

Following past arguments from feminist and queer music theorists, these kinds of vignettes insist on performing the entanglement of personal experience with analytical writing as a way into rethinking structures of power and identity. Like these authors, I am trying to show how our disciplinary language both reflects structures of power, while also containing the potential to work against them. I share these vignettes on my own practice, then, as an invitation for readers to think about how their own analytical relationships and writing styles might reflect their understanding of the world, so that they could experiment with doing otherwise.

To further realize this goal, this chapter also contained instructional vignettes, such as “On the Slowness of Schenkerian Time” and “Method.” These stories further open the potential of autoethnographic writing outward by offering prompts for readers to explore and write about their own ways of doing analysis.

I meditated on the concepts of love and analysis in definitional vignettes like “Is this Love?,” “The Pen,” and “Let’s Try Talking About Love Again.” Love in these stories is depicted as an ongoing practice, a fluctuating flow of bodies continually orienting or being pushed toward different modalities of love. Sometimes loving points us toward potentiality, other times back toward the same. Sometimes loving leads to new ways of hearing and experiencing, and sometimes it leads to roadblocks and resistance.

And finally, there were vignettes that gave voice to my habitual desire to push against the new kinds of writing that I have produced here. With these stories, such as “What About?” and “Provisional,” I wanted to show how the intention to experiment offers no guarantee of escape. There will always be forces and bodies that want to pull us back in. But in my vignettes, I have also included moments of hope to fuel us to continue doing. After
all, this experiment is provisional and the paths offered here are just some of many. In the following and final chapter, I will sketch other opportunities for future analytical storytelling.
Chapter Five
Hoping

This dissertation began with a story of disciplinary optimism, a foundational split from musicology in search of “the good life.”¹ The practice of music analysis, according to this tale, provides music theory with a distinct purpose separate from those of other musical disciplines. Analysis helps music theorists listen fully and attentively to the music itself. As an intimate mode of engagement, it has the capacity to make us accountable and responsible to musical works. This activity then rewards our fidelity with pleasure, enchantment, and joy. As scholars and pedagogues of analysis, music theorists are tasked with imparting this capacity for musical joy to our colleagues and students.

While I also find value in the ethical potential of analysis, I registered a concern with our established strategy of hope. What if our stories about analysis and its effects have become a practice of cruel optimism—an attachment that once helped us flourish but now impedes our growth? What if our subscription to sharp disciplinary lines has precluded other kinds of stories and perspectives that would help us to continue to thrive? I then turned to two other perspectives—feminist music theory and new materialisms—to consider other stories we could tell about the ethical effects of music analysis. Doing so, I suggested, could help us further argue for the value of our disciplinary work.

In chapter two, I introduced and demonstrated the connections between these two areas of thought in order to clarify the capacity of analysis to make better subjects and

¹ With “the good life,” I am referring to Berlant’s definition of cruel optimism discussed in chapter one of this dissertation.
worlds. I showed that one of feminist music theory’s goals was to reveal how structural hierarchies of gender and sexuality affect musical practices. And with that, this scholarship advocated for inquiry that attends to the different kinds of bodies and subjectivities involved in music—from more diversity in the composers and genres represented in our research, to the modes of scholarship that are recognized in our field. Through reading Suzanne G. Cusick and Marion A. Guck in particular, I noted that one way to account for difference is to tune into how our disciplinary knowledge is motivated by our embodied relationships with music, in which music does things to us and generates pleasure. These writings served as an opening for me to bring in a new materialist understanding of ethics, in which the agency of nonhuman bodies, such as musical works, can be acknowledged.

I showed how new materialisms similarly orients the formation of knowledge, politics, and ethics toward difference—specifically, difference within and between many kinds of bodies, both human and nonhuman. Furthermore, new materialisms approaches the world as a dynamic and entangled network of bodies, as assemblages of many people, forces, and things that relate to one another. From this perspective, we could reconsider agency beyond the human when we think and practice ethics.

Chapter three expanded the concepts of love and ethics in order to further theorize the intimate musical relationships highlighted in chapter two. First, I demonstrated that a dyadic image of love dominates past perspectives on analytical relationships from both traditional and feminist scholarship. Then drawing on Deleuzian ethics and desire, I offered another version of music loving as a dynamic multiplicity, as assemblages of many bodies, forces, and things. This chapter argued that through grappling with the statement that “we always make love to worlds,” music theorists might experiment and foster the production of
different disciplinary practices and concepts. This experimentation might then help us arrive at an ethics that accounts for the many bodies that take part in our analysis-worlds.

Starting from this redefinition of music loving and ethics, chapter four explored autoethnographic writing as a way to approach this other kind of loving. Through experimenting with different genres of autoethnographic vignettes, I tried to evoke the worlds that analysis brings into being, worlds that include many bodies with their own histories and capacities to affect. This chapter also offered ways into vignette writing to help readers reflect on and experiment with their own preferred ways of analyzing and writing. To bring this dissertation to a close, I would like to reflect on what my autoethnographies of analysis might contribute to music theory and trace some possible optimistic stories to be explored in the future.

Hoping for inclusion

By foregrounding the affective excesses of analytical encounters—the feelings, thoughts, and activities that do not often survive in our published forms of writing, my autoethnographic vignettes invite us to more directly address how love plays a central role in the purpose of music analysis. In particular, my experiments present alternatives to our strategies of disciplinary and contextual separation so that we can better attend to how our loving analytical encounters with music elicit pleasure and build ethical attitudes.

Noting the joy of analysis is not a particularly new endeavor in music theory, as evidenced by Agawu’s and Rings’ essays discussed in chapter one. But these authors and others have argued that it remains difficult to admit the pleasures of analysis in professional settings. There is still a fear that by openly expressing our practices of music-analytical love we might harm ourselves in some way. Lynne Rogers’ piece titled “The Joy of Analysis”

embodies this concern in her description of the purpose of music analysis: “In the interest of full disclosure, I feel compelled to add the ‘because it’s [analysis is] fun’ and ‘because it’s enjoyable,’ which might better remain in the closet in the current climate.”

However, in calling attention to a surface-level idea of the joy of analysis or avoiding it entirely in our discourse, I argue that we impede our ability to fully argue for the value of analysis. Instead of keeping our love of music in the closet, this dissertation argues that openly theorizing and performing care in our analytical work can strengthen the merit of our work by making our discipline more accessible to wider audiences and perspectives. And with that, we could gain more allies and advocates for music theory.

This argument for a more open vision of analysis expands on feminist and queer music theory’s critique of the exclusionary effects of traditional music-analytical discourse. For these authors who are cited throughout my dissertation, the omission of music theorists’ affectionate engagements with music in professional writing produced harmful limitations on what counted as legitimate scholarship and who counted as music theorists. To combat these restrictions, these scholars argued for the acceptance of diverse accounts of music—in particular, writings that openly examined our intimate encounters with music and our identities as professional music lovers.

I view my project then as a continuation of these efforts to open up spaces for different identities and perspectives in our field. My purpose in presenting autoethnographic vignettes is to provide an opportunity for others to contemplate their own acquired analytical habits and preferences and to imagine what it would be like to write about them. I have shared one particular orientation to things and the world that can arise from doing

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analysis so that others might share their own. In doing so, we might construct new disciplinary worlds.

Specifically, reflecting on our analytical rituals through autoethnography might decentralize the image of a professional music theorist and what they do. First, autoethnographic writing could help us tap into our own particular histories and habits of analysis. As Stewart shows in her writings, these histories and habits in turn are shaped by larger social structures of power, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic class, as well as the micro-level of the personal. Writing autoethnographically about our analytical experience could provide us a way into thinking about this complicated entanglement of the social and personal—the melding of the broader and specific effects of our disciplinary work. It would help us understand how ordinary practices of analysis could reinforce certain subjectivities and orientations that preclude others, such as the patriarchal, heteronormative position that Fred Maus' work emphasizes. Autoethnography would contribute to this work by providing a way to trace the flows of agency and power in our practices. And from that practice, we could try to orient in ways that could include other perspectives and forms of agency. As a result, autoethnography might help us to address our ongoing issues of diversity in our disciplinary demographics and areas of study so that we can continue to matter and survive.4

But my hope for inclusion is also tempered by my knowledge of its risks—the possible loss or persecution of established ways of doing things, of disciplinary illegibility, of

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a failed experiment that dissolves music theory back into musicology. Throughout chapter four, I have demonstrated my internalization of these concerns that what I am arguing for might eventually cause harm to myself and others. With every optimism, there is a chance that it will reproduce or become a harmful fantasy. With each attempt of loving experimentation, we might end up reterritorializing an image of Oedipal desire. And with every encounter in the ordinary, everyday world, there is the possibility of being pulled back, “faltering and failing.”

However, as new materialisms points out, the unpredictability in the effects of our actions is an integral part of living in our dynamic world. Since agency is entangled and distributed, we cannot entirely control what happens next. This fact can be simultaneously liberating and frightening.

Furthermore, as feminist music theory has argued, the current way of doing things already enforces prohibitions on particular identities and orientations. No matter what we choose to do, we will affect and be affected. What my dissertation argues for, then, is a mutable ethics of analysis formed by continually checking in with the rhythms and resonances of our work with other bodies. After all, as Agawu has noted, the work of analysis is never done. We just have to keep on doing.

Hoping in the ordinary

By framing music analysis as a site of the music-theoretical ordinary, I also hope for new kinds of stories about how analysis matters. A part of this goal is to rethink the influence of nonhuman objects that shape our analyses. In that way, my dissertation aligns with a recent turn toward the agency of instruments in the production of music-theoretical

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knowledge. For example, Jonathan De Souza recounts how the objects that we use every day as music theorists, such as keyboards and headphones, play a vital role in grounding musical experience and concepts in our physical world:

> Music is fleeting. It disperses as it is heard. And though I sometimes feel its vibrations, I cannot touch, cannot see, and cannot hold them. Because of this, music has often been considered the most abstract, most metaphysical art. Yet at the same time, music is bound up with physical things: upright pianos and electric guitars, tambourines, turntables, violas, bagpipes, microphones, headphones … And all of these, in turn, are bound to human bodies.

In the embodied stories that De Souza tells about Beethoven, Bob Dylan, and himself, instruments and human bodies come together to form particular musical habits that offer new possibilities of relating to the world. Expanding De Souza’s and other theorists’ terrain of the music-theoretical ordinary, my dissertation approaches the ordinary more expansively to acknowledge that, in addition to musical instruments, there are many other bodies at work in analysis. With this, I encourage us to consider how many different kinds of bodies can influence the formation of our analysis-worlds.

While I offer some examples with my autoethnographic vignettes, there are certainly other methods and bodies that come together to shape our analytical stories. In future work, we might consider these other forms and spaces. I would like to sketch some possible spaces here.

In addition to individual acts of analysis, another space that can be viewed as a part of the music-theoretical ordinary is the classroom. I suggest that we also implicitly perform the relationship between analysis, ethics, and love here. For example, as an instructor in

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9 Ibid., 20.
musicianship classes, I teach students to hear and think music in a specialized way through various activities, such as singing and dictating melodies and harmonic progressions. These activities reinforce preferences for which sounds to attend to and which to filter out—the categorization of sounds into those that matter and those that do not. We are teaching a particular ontology of music.

I also teach students with the hope that they will acquire specific sensations associated with various music-theoretical concepts. I present the feeling of an augmented-sixth chord’s resolution as a gravitational pull. I call attention to the disruptive power of parallel perfect fifths and octaves by inviting students to slowly sing through examples of “bad” voice-leading. I am convinced that they can become better attuned to the textural hollowness of these intervals by sensing them in their bodies, and that this skill will enrich their capacities to be affected by music. We are teaching a particular loving orientation to music and sound.

An autoethnography of the music-theoretical classroom might closely attend to the particular bodies that come together and affect one another in this effort to love music. What are the forms of labor that we perform while experiencing music in this space? What are the histories and capacities of the bodies that are thrown together in the classroom and how might we address these differences as pedagogues? Writing through these questions with autoethnographic vignettes might help us contemplate the larger effects of our pedagogy and to further argue for music theory’s purpose.

As an example, I have provided a reflection on the pedagogical assemblages in my experience as an instructor:

Aural skills classes usually take place on the second floor of the music building. The even-numbered classrooms have very large windows that face a pond and the odd-numbered
ones have very small windows near the ceiling that do not let much natural light in. Up until
the renovations recently, aural skills instructors taught in both even- and odd-numbered
classrooms. But now, we only teach in the even-numbered ones. In the past, teaching in
classrooms on both sides of the hallway made me notice the influence of different spaces on
the formation of pedagogical-affective environments. Each classroom presented a different
kind of space for students and myself to respond to, and different sonic and visual elements
would “happen” upon us.

In the even-numbered rooms with large windows that almost take up the width of
the wall, we often contended with the sights and sounds of squabbling Canadian geese, the
construction of the new wing of our school, and the people who would walk past the
windows. In the mostly brick-walled odd-numbered rooms, we also worked against the
sounds of animals, machinery, and people, but we often did not know the source of those
sounds. In addition to the layout of the classrooms themselves, the success of my intentions
to generate particular sonic and conceptual experiences in the classroom depended on the
activities of many other bodies—the geese, the weather, and the willingness of my students
to respond and stay awake during a given class.

It has become a habit for me, developed through my own musical training, to label
such sounds as intrusions that I must filter out during aural skills activities, as if I have the
ultimate control over my (sonic) surroundings. And while I pass on this habit to my
students, I also question the efficacy and ethical consequences of teaching students to be
similarly resistant to these “external” sounds and the “external” world. I have witnessed the
resultant anxiety that flows across the classroom when we are unable to control certain
sounds that invade during dictations and performances. Sometimes our efforts to control
create bad affects. But what if we were to listen and engage differently, in a way that
acknowledged and worked with these sounds? What might aural skills pedagogy be if we attended to how the learning of concepts is fostered by dynamic, embodied relations between the environment, humans, music, and many other things?

Another space for autoethnographic experimentation could be the world that unfolds when we read another scholar’s analysis. Writing about this practice might lead us to slow down our engagement with a text so that we can understand how an author’s depiction of their experience affects us. We could note instances when our established habits of listening conflict with those presented by the author. We could describe how this disagreement feels and how we decide to resolve this tension. We might also attend to our own rituals of reading to include the other bodies that participate, such as the devices that we read from (laptops, Kindles, paper copies of journals) and the technologies that help us listen like the author (pianos, recordings, our singing voices). Writing about these preferences would require us to attune to how our bodies interact differently with these devices, how they acquire habitual shapes around these things. As well, we would have to find a way to acknowledge the agential roles that technologies play in how we are able to engage and respond to an analytical text.

Finally, autoethnographic writing might help us attend to spaces and kinds of listening that are often not analyzed in music-theoretical texts. These opportunities include music at sporting events, shopping malls, and the concert hall, which have been discussed more commonly in ethnomusicology and sound studies. What would it be like to analyze these moments with our music-theoretical apparatuses? And what kinds of musical

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experiences might result? Doing so might help us to contemplate and expand the sites that we study as music theorists, which then might help us to pursue my final suggested path toward hope outlined below.

**Hoping for repair**

An orientation toward music loving might help us enter into dialogue with musicology.\(^{11}\) In particular, this dissertation offers a tentative connection to musicology’s recent conversations on ethics, love, and care in music research—a turn that Cusick has called “reparative musicology.”\(^{12}\) With this term, Cusick references the work of queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on reparative as opposed to paranoid reading, which are scholarly practices that I will briefly summarize here. Paranoid reading relies on the production of negative affects—methods of coping with living in a dangerous world by a ceaseless anticipation of the world’s threats to us, real and imagined. Paranoid work rests on preventing these dangers through the production of impenetrable theories of exposure and demystification, which we then wield against those who might cause us harm.\(^{13}\)

Love, on the other hand, is the affect that fuels reparative work. Love appears to us in fleeting moments in order to sustain and offer us a guarantee to keep on living with the world.\(^{14}\) In the context of musicology, Cusick suggests that a reparative stance in the field would restore love for music; would reconstruct musical experiences so that we could love them (which is more than to appreciate them, more than to understand their functions, more than to feel their performative power or their saturation, with social, political, economic forces).\(^{15}\)

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\(^{11}\) As suggested in the prior section, music loving might provide ways for us to talk to scholars in ethnomusicology and sound studies too.


\(^{13}\) Cusick, “Musicology, Torture, Repair,” [19].

\(^{14}\) Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” 128.

\(^{15}\) Cusick, “Musicology, Torture, Repair,” [20].
Some of this reparative-musicological love happens in moments of specialized listening, as William Cheng notes:

As a musicologist, I've sometimes heard colleagues from other disciplines tell me how lucky I am to spend my days (they assume) listening to and thinking about music. Studying music, these envious comments imply, must be a labor of love. I've been led to wonder therefore, whether musical skills ever enable or prime us to listen better to people and to take up love’s labors more broadly. Do musicians and musicologists—having undergone so much ear-training—possess any specialized aural capabilities or inclinations when it comes not just to music, but also to human interlocutors (how they sound, what they say, and unvoiced concerns)? If part of musicianship can involve listening for better worlds, then musicology has the potential to initiate various progressive currents in ethics and critical thinking. To be clear, this isn’t saying that music makes us good people. It’s saying that certain aural positions may hold profound uses outside the music classroom, and that as much as anyone else, musicians and music scholars already recognize the immense challenges and rewards of listening creatively and caringly.16

I argue that music theory’s insistence on being separate from musicology has precluded our inclusion in these burgeoning conversations on love, care, and ethics in music scholarship. However, I suggest that as pedagogues and scholars of ear-training, music theorists can offer special insight to Cheng’s observations on the ethics of listening. For example, the ethical consequences of ear-training are also of concern to Mariusz Kozak in his tutorial on a way of listening to Penderecki’s Threnody.17 Kozak’s work in turn builds on a tradition of embodied and experiential concerns in transformational literature.18 Music theorists do care and have always cared.

From this acknowledgement, we could, to paraphrase Cheng’s inquiry, consider how our specialized training to lovingly listen to and care for musical works might contribute to creative ways of listening and caring for better worlds. Furthermore, if we acknowledged that musicologists also come to their work from a place of music loving (as Cusick and Cheng both suggest), what kinds of conversations might we have from this site of commonality? I wonder if the exploration of these questions would lead toward repairing our foundational music-theoretical/musicological rupture. Might we start seeing our fellow music scholars as allies after all? If we understand that our ordinary professional activities as music theorists inform, reinforce, and, perhaps even alter how we act in the world, then experimenting with new ways of doing music theory—of music loving—just might lead us to new ways of doing and holding ourselves accountable. In that way, we could more clearly articulate why music theory and analysis matter post-Kerman, to ourselves, to other music scholars and musicians, and to wider academic spaces.

Appendix
Analysis of J. S. Bach’s Prelude in B-flat minor, BWV 891.

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