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A discussion on the position of critical ethnomusicology in contemporary musicology

By Olle Edström

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It's bad enough, Edward exclaimed, that one can no longer learn anything for life nowadays. Our forefathers kept to the education they received in their youth, but we have to relearn everything every fifth year if we are not to be left hopelessly behind the times.

(J. W. Von Goethe, from *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, 1809)

Introduction

It always seems to be more difficult to understand our own times than to understand the past, our history. In fact, what we understand is always in the past. To a greater or lesser extent the act of understanding also tends to involve organizing time in periods. When did modernism begin, and when did it end – if it *has* ended? When did post-modernism begin and has it ended? Such questions tend to produce different answers. According to Fred Ingles, the modernist period stretches from 1914 to 1989:

The heavy machine guns of August 1914 ended one epoch; the enormous, peaceable and irresistible crowds in Leipzig, Prague, Budapest, Berlin and elsewhere throughout the course of 1989 ended the next. (1993:3)

Other writers, such as John Docker (1994:xviii), would put the onset of modernism earlier, in the 1890s, while Meaghan Morris detects signs of postmodernism as early as the end of the Second World War (1988:186). According to the recently published National Swedish Encyclopaedia, “the term has been in use since the 1970s” (vol. 14, 1994:241). Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* is mentioned as the igniting spark for many people¹.

There is nothing particularly remarkable in this. Theorists have “always” been unable to agree on limits and labels and it would be equally easy to find any number of other definitions of when modernism or postmodernism might have begun, just as it is simple enough to give different examples of when the Romantic epoch is considered to have begun and ended. Most people today are probably not even aware that they

1. For a more comprehensive historical survey, see Milner 1994:139.

are living "in postmodern times", and we can assume that a very small part of the population of the 19th century knew that they were living in the Romantic era².

One of the issues which I shall address in this article concerns postmodernism and musicology. Another issue is whether today's music in general has changed radically compared with the music of a few decades ago, which one might well assume if one tunes in to certain radio stations. But my ambitions with this article are more far-reaching. As the title implies, I aim to construct a contemporary musicological jigsaw puzzle³. As is already apparent from the above references, I have however found it necessary to widen my horizons to include other important fields of cultural studies. The various jigsaw pieces can be described as fragments from different academic disciplines, but I hope that in the end they will fall into place to form a decipherable pattern

The article can also be seen as an attempt to stake out my position within the critical tradition of music sociology, or rather ethnomusicology, in which I work. This tradition has at times been referred to as the "Gothenburg School", and since most English-speaking musicologists are unfamiliar with this school, I consider it imperative to include a short overview of our research. Bearing in mind the confines of this article, my aim is to discuss how the Gothenburg tradition relates to certain important aspects of contemporary musicology and cultural studies. This ongoing work is of a kind which up to now has seldom been given priority among Swedish musicologists.

New Musicology

While we all have cause to wonder how widespread awareness of our postmodern times is, we musicologists also have reason to reflect on a new term within our circles, namely New Musicology. This question has in fact recently been raised in a critical review by Richard Leppert (1995) where he alleges that musicologists have shown themselves incapable of keeping abreast of contemporary cultural theories. In analogy with what has just been said, we are the academic peasants of the humanities, who

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2. The intellectual élite was small in a Europe whose population consisted to a very large extent of peasants and a gradually growing proportion of industrial workers. In Sweden, which was industrialized relatively late in comparison with England, c. two-thirds of the population made a living from farming and subsidiary occupations as late as the close of the 19th century, while in England at the beginning of the 20th century the corresponding figure was c. 10%.
 3. These jigsaw pieces have been particularly selected from the field of 'New Musicology', a contemporary approach which is dominated by American theorists. This means that I have purposely omitted other recent approaches or methods of analysis that have been developed within music theory. For a short overview as well as a discussion of the relationship between music theory and new musicology, compare Agawu (1996).

have never, or only rarely, bothered with modern cultural theories – with structuralism, poststructuralism, feminism or postmodernism.

Leppert compares this with the situation in art history⁴. He finds that 20 years ago their studies rested on three legs:

- a) surveys of Western art,
- b) a myriad of studies about specific artists, styles or periods and
- c) a smaller group of studies on the meaning/content of paintings and pictures.

Since then, Leppert writes, art history has slowly grown a fourth leg which has meant that it has also become firmly established outside academic circles. As a case in point he mentions John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972):

I mention this little "classic" in particular because the principal issues it addresses will sound familiar to those following current musicological debates; it marks the start of... a large body of new work that has steadily transformed the field by challenging the discipline's epistemological foundations and, equally important, by seeking to define and critique art history's function within the social formation of the current moment. (1995:237)

Leppert also maintains that it is only now that works of serious intent like Berger's have been written within musicology, and as an example mentions *The Last Post: Music after Modernism* (1993 ed. Simon Miller) which Leppert regards as an important contribution to New Musicology. So, what is new about New Musicology?

The Last Post comprises eight essays. Simon Miller himself has written a historical survey of theorists' views on the position and meaning of music throughout the history of Western art music. When he comes to the 20th century he introduces such theorists as Adorno (compare below), Eisler, Foucault and others.

Miller, in his turn, mentions Hal Foster's book *Postmodern Culture* (1985) as an important starting-point for the new musicology:

Hal Foster argues for what he calls a postmodernism of resistance, a position which is predicated on a recognition, or celebration, of diversity and difference. It is within such an understanding of 'otherness' that a new musicology should be situated. (1993:20)

Miller regards postmodernism as the crisis of modernism rather than as a complete break with modernism. However he does not regard postmodernism as a universal

4. Compare Leppert's recent works, *Music and Image – Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-cultural Formation in Eighteenth-century England* (1988) and *The Sight of Sound – Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (1993) where he combines contemporary cultural theories with a musicological and art historical interpretation of the social significance of music in the preceding century.

remedy which will enable us to find a new synthesis in our attempt to understand the place of music in society and its significance/meaning for individuals and groups, but considers that with the help of postmodernism we can break away from the idealistic and formalistic research tradition. What Miller considers essential is to discard such artificial conflicts as “music versus society, autonomy versus society”, but that other dichotomies in use in ‘modernist musicology’ (‘tradition/innovation, ‘high’/‘low’ culture, reaction/progress, right/left etc.’) can be retained if they “operate across such boundaries in a way which does not automatically privilege one over the other (à la Derrida).” (ibid:23)

In the next chapter, “Postmodernism and art music”, Robin Hartwell presents an overview in which he in a somewhat similar manner presents his own definition of the boundaries between modernism and postmodernism. While art music and its cousin “authentic performance practice” are found to date back to the modernistic idea itself, which in all essentials viewed music as a historical object, in postmodernism *all* music is regarded as existing in the present, both in time and in the way it is experienced. He also observes that today “all” music is readily available, due to technology and the market, and sets the following criterion by which to determine whether a work composed today is modern or postmodern: a postmodern work must consist of disparate styles, or rather of stylistic incongruities. Even if it is possible to interpret the ‘intention/meaning’ of the music, it should be understood as something artificial and constructed. Similarly, style (in the sense of older classical styles) appears to be buried under layers of irony: “Thus I would see postmodernism as dealing in negations of the meaning of music”. (ibid:44). To sum up, he says that:

The use of a variety of musical styles within a single work attacks the aesthetic of the unity of the art work... The postmodern work accepts the modernist position of the arbitrary connection between the sign and the signifier but does not offer the consolation that we are at least coherent within ourselves... Neither can we force the sign to bear our meaning. On the contrary, we are an inconsistent, incoherent mixture of external forces, absorbed to varying degrees. Postmodernist music is mimetic in that it attempts to present a picture of this incoherence and the play of these forces. (ibid:50)

Even if these two essays stand like postmodernistic portals in relation to the remaining essays in the book, most of the other writers also begin by stating their standpoint in relation to this pivotal term. Peter Jowers describes the background and development of the British world music organisation WOMAD. World music is seen here as a postmodernistic means of expression. Amon Saba Saakana’s article deals with African music in Western cultures, Alexander Laski discusses homosexual disco music, there is also an essay on sexuality in musical styles (Derek Scott) and the last essay contex-

tualizes the role and development of technology, in particular with regard to popular music, during the 20th century (Paul Théberge).

In his review of *The Last Post*, which for the most part is highly positive, Leppert states that the various authors (just as in art history 20 years earlier) have chosen to focus on other subjects than those which are more usual in the Old Musicology, since: "Musicology continues using a paradigm that not many people outside its academic parameters experience as real". He considers that the essays in *The Last Post* show that it is necessary to make a break with the historical tradition of musicology, which is a legacy from the Enlightenment/Modernism. It is high time to cease reaffirming already established categories of values to such an extent, not least because:

– we experience musical past and present, the musical Us and Other, in the perpetual present and immediate presence. (1995:242)

He also writes ironically about the rigidity of this legacy, of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven as universal yardsticks – that Brahms is fairly good, Respighi is fairly bad and that Puccini did, after all, write some nice tunes.

Furthermore, he considers that musicology is isolated from the rest of society and from the postmodernistic situation in particular and gives the following disparaging description of the musicologist's approach to his subject: "(1) Find facts, but don't tell us what facts might mean, and (2) in lieu of facts, say nothing, because no other kind of knowing is possible" (ibid:248).

The Gothenburg horizon

Besides regarding *The Last Post* as an important contribution to New Musicology, Leppert also mentions three American researchers, namely Lawrence Kramer, Susan McClary and Gary Tomlinson, as representatives of this school. We shall return to the first two shortly, but at this point I would like to compare the picture painted above with how Swedish musicology, and in particular musicological studies in Gothenburg, can be viewed from this perspective. First of all, as a factual basis, the studies in the Department of Musicology's series of publications since the start in 1977 are presented according to the various musicological fields to which they belong (I have not included congress reports):

Table

Western art music	7 (including 4 artistic-creative dissertations)
History of musical instruments	3 (including 1 artistic-creative dissertation)
Ethnomusicology/sociology	9
20th century popular music/ the music of the popular movements	8 (including 1 artistic-creative dissertation)
Music education	2 (+ 1 licentiate thesis)
Women's music-making/history	2
Other	2

It is thus evident that one-third of the studies/dissertations (Western art music and the history of musical instruments) fit into the category that Leppert regards as the traditional musicological canon. The remaining dissertations deal with subjects within ethnomusicology/sociology, present-day popular music⁵/the music of the popular movements, music education, women's music-making/history and "other subjects" (Sten Dahlstedt /1986/ on Swedish musicology and Wallin /1982/ on music neurology).

By way of introduction to a course in methodology in the spring of 1992, Jan Ling, Head of the Gothenburg Department of Musicology from 1968-1992,⁶ discussed an article on different approaches in research and problems concerning the theory of science in Swedish musicology, written by Sven Dahlstedt (1990), at that time a junior research fellow in Uppsala. Dahlstedt considered that Ling, unlike his colleagues (Sven-Eric Liedman and Kurt Aspelin, for example), had only to a limited extent tried to integrate structuralism (Roland Barthes and Louis Althusser) with sociological and anthropological perspectives (1990:104). Dahlstedt (like Leppert in his discussion)

5. In the first dissertation in this field ("Kojak – 50 seconds of Television Music – towards the Analysis of Affect in Popular Music"), Philip Tagg presented an innovative theoretical-semiotic model for musical analysis, a model which deservedly attracted considerable attention.
6. Ling took up the post of Head of Gothenburg University in the autumn of 1992. I have been Acting Professor from this time and a member of the permanent staff since the 1st August, 1994. Previously I had worked at undergraduate level and with postgraduate studies since the university year of 1986/87.

considered that the explanation for this was the weak standing that such theoretical scientific discussions on the whole have had in musicology. Instead, Dahlstedt considered that the Gothenburg musicologists attached considerable importance to reflecting outer causal connections in musical culture in their studies, as well as to expanding the previously narrow field of subjects, which logically “paved the way for future ambiguities and contradictions concerning fundamental theoretical relationships.” (ibid:106)

Dahlstedt discovered two main channels in the Gothenburg research; one which was dominated by historical descriptions of an anthropological nature, and one – despite what he had said previously – which was characterized by an interest in the theory of communication and in theoretical, aesthetic, cross-cultural perspectives. In conclusion Dahlstedt then added the following paragraph, which Ling quoted and placed at the head of his invitation to the spring method course in 1992:

Two problems merit special attention in connection with the Gothenburg research. The break with the discipline's traditional method and orientation, as already indicated, did not mean that young musicologists were automatically able to apply logically thought-out, comprehensive theoretical perspectives. Failure in this respect usually resulted in misleading shifts of perspective or in eclecticism, which at worst implied fundamental self-contradictions. The second problem is related to the first and also concerns the choice of theoretical perspective, ontology and language. (ibid:106)

Ling, however, claimed that most of the dissertations that had been written in Gothenburg displayed a remarkable awareness of method, but he also emphasized that the methods were never an end in themselves. Instead he considered that many of the dissertations had resulted in the forging of new tools with which ‘to unravel previously unsolved problems’ in musicology. He also wondered whether the time had not come for the Gothenburg School to formulate its aims more clearly so that its model should be more easily discernible.

The literary historian Jan Thavenius (1987)⁷ has also reflected on similar formations of theories within his discipline. At one extreme, research consists of circumscribing, of defining, and of testing hypotheses according to a strict theoretical system, while at the other extreme, theorists pose questions with the help of vague concepts that do not always generate the expected answers. In this school, Thavenius writes, it is more important to take in large parts of reality rather than to make it researchable in the former sense (ibid:70). Quite simply, it is more important to keep the door open rather than shut. A howling draught toughens one up, if nothing else.

7. My thanks to Lars Lilliestam who insisted on my reading this work, which I in my turn would like to recommend to others.

As a consequence of this debate, at my first seminar as Head of Department I defined my scientific approach in broad outline (compare also my book on Gothenburg, 1996). For me it was obvious that there are two fundamental pitfalls which have to be avoided. On the one hand there is a risk of painting oneself into a corner, and, moreover, with a scientific paint which never seems to dry. It is difficult to retreat from this position and one is forced to devote a considerable amount of energy to defending the advantages of the ideological colour of the paint. A scientific tenet which is a misconstruction of existential beliefs in the supremacy of a force is always inhibiting.

On the other hand, the belief that it is possible to have a completely unconditional approach to theory and method – that it is not necessary to formulate one's scientific approach – is a pleasing thought but an erroneous one. As a cultural being one always has an understanding of theory and method which, even if one has not been forced to formulate it, nevertheless influences one's thoughts and actions.

Well aware of these pitfalls, I realized when planning the postgraduate autumn seminar in 1995 that for me the significance and meaning of music is created, like everything else, in its social environment. We learn our culture as social beings; it is something which is already in existence when each one of us enters the arena. I saw, and see, no reason to make the already complicated more difficult by imagining ourselves in a cave, like Plato, where reality is reflected as shadows cast by what is going on outside.⁸ Nor is there any reason to see the solution, as Descartes did, in a dualistic conception of the world, doubting the relevance of impressions from the outside, that is to say, "cogito ergo sum", or, like Kant, to believe that it is possible to discover eternal and immutable forms or patterns which *à priori* must always have existed, programmed in our understanding/brain, so to speak. For Kant, human concepts, such as time, space, cause – not to mention taste – could be explained by his own thoughts/experiences. It is not easy to comprehend his solution; that we cannot understand the thing itself – "das Ding an sich", where its form and expression derive from the object itself – but that our understanding is determined by the previous presence of inner and natural properties in the object.⁹

8. In his book *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (1993), the philosopher Richard Shusterman describes how the term *theoria* was developed by Socrates and Plato as a definition of ideal knowledge; "the model of knowing as detached contemplation of reality rather than active interaction" (ibid:35). The creative activities of poets and musicians were placed on a lower level. It is always fascinating (and at the same time bewildering) to refresh one's knowledge of Plato's thoughts: the inferior position of the arts in relation to philosophy and theory, aesthetics as a lower form of knowledge than science and metaphysics (see for example Lippman 1992:3-16).

9. In addition, see below concerning Norbert Elias' research.

Furthermore, my materialistic tendencies also led me to claim that from a methodological viewpoint, it is necessary to try to understand cause, value, meaning etc. in a socio-historical context. At the same time it is important not to bias the process by focusing on separate individuals; one must also see each individual's socialisation/life-world as the sum of socially inherited knowledge/practices/ experiences. We must endeavour to explain/understand music by mapping out, describing, analyzing musical reality without erecting a wall between the subject and the object.

Too much of the one makes us narrow-minded empiricists or positivists who amass facts and causal connections that in some sense are already proven, without taking into account the processual nature of things. Too much of the other leads to our becoming short-sighted phenomenologists, encapsulated in an enclosed, subjective world, waiting for something (music) "in itself" to become clear to us. Scientific solipsism is of little interest to others and is an extremely dubious working method for all those who live on tax-payers' money.

This is why my attitude is basically positive, both towards the usual musicological tradition which analyzes the craftsmanship/musical structure (how it is done) and towards the hermeneutic tradition which interprets/associates from the perspective of the listener as a cultural being. However, I am nonetheless sceptical (though favourably disposed) towards phenomenological attempts to attain an experiential essence/purity, the object's "true" content, since I am basically an empirical ethnomusicologist. And I am of course particularly sceptical to the humanistic advantage of music theory methods which lack, or at least are unable to demonstrate, any correlation whatsoever to musical listening/reception.

I also concluded my article on the occasion of my installation in March, 1995, in similar spirit:

Above all we must base our outlook on meticulous studies of the function and meaning of music in the past (and present) /.../. Musicology is neither the history of the geniuses of Western art music, nor a discipline where it is of particular importance to disclose the structure of music, nor ...to interpret the music as text in a postmodernistic or deconstructivistic spirit. Instead I see my paradigm as one where an understanding of the relationship between our background and the role of music in our everyday life, of the structure of music, of where and how music is performed, can only be reached through alternating empirical and theoretical studies, that is to say, that a knowledge of the function and meaning of music, how it is listened to, our need of music and so on, springs from this crossfire of mutual contexts. (1995)

It is important that no one specific type of explanatory model is allowed to take on the character of a canon; in a critical spirit and by means of meticulous empirical studies, combined with processual theories, we must try to discover the best synthe-

sizing methods with which to understand social contexts. Science, like everything else, is an ongoing process.

Right or wrong

Since I was the first person to publicly defend my doctor's dissertation in musicology in Gothenburg with Jan Ling as supervisor, and since I myself have supervised approximately half the dissertations presented in Gothenburg, I am not in a particularly good position to determine what is "right or wrong" in Dahlstedt's or Ling's approach. Dahlstedt, in true philosophical spirit, gives no concrete examples; instead he sticks to the level of principles in his discussion, which makes it difficult to attack his arguments. What obviously is right in Dahlstedt's analysis is that most dissertations have been written from a socio-ethnological perspective, without this having been proclaimed in a theoretical introduction as a meta-theory or "grand narrative". In this respect the authors have been driven by completely opposite aims: they have had an enormous interest in their material, regardless of whether it has been the blues (Lilliestam, 1988), women musicians (Myers, 1993) or Allan Petterson (Barkefors, 1995), and have then developed a method which could be used both in a forward and in a backward direction to corroborate the respective aims and results of the dissertations. That they have rarely, or never, seen themselves as hostages to a theoretical method is presumably one of the main reasons why the "Gothenburg School" has been so productive and been able to introduce new knowledge, not least in marginal areas of musicology.

But let me now discuss our general outlook (which is more important than continuing to compare the "Gothenburg School" and the "Uppsala School") in relation, among other things, to the research projects which Leppert describes as New Musicology. Firstly, a few words must be said about Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (a name which, paradoxically, also always seems to crop up in popular music research /compare Middleton, 1990, Longhurst, 1995). In *The Last Post* which I mentioned previously, Miller not surprisingly characterizes Adorno as "the central figure in modernist debates about the nature and role of music." (1993:15)

"Is negative dialectics all there is?"

In Swedish musicology the interest in Adorno has fallen into two periods. The Swedish translation of his *Sociology of Music – Twelve Theoretical Lectures* (1976) was quite widely read towards the end of the 1970s and led to many people also reading other works by Adorno in German, in particular *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (1949 and reprints). Since the Gothenburg School at that time was permeated with an interest in Marxist cultural theories, while at the same time most of the post-graduate students

were involved in the jazz/rock/pop of that time, the study of Adorno resulted in an intellectual appreciation of his dialectical method while questioning his reasons for rejecting *our* music.

Although Adorno taught us to be aware of the complexity of things, of the connection between music and society and music's influence and significance, we realized that there were considerable discrepancies between his thoughts and experiences and ours. It was easy to lose track of his eternal, dialectically constructed counter-arguments, and we felt that when it came to popular music his chain of thoughts was no stronger than its weakest link: as one of the postgraduates at that time put it (Stig-Magnus Thorsén, if I remember rightly), Adorno didn't know what it meant to dance a "jolly waltz". He simply didn't understand what he was talking about in such drastic terms.

In addition, due to the fact that we were involved in various empirical sociological projects (charting people's tastes in music and musical practices in Gothenburg, Ste-nungssund and Halmstad) as well as a more ethnomusicologically oriented project in Västergötland, we gradually gained a deeper insight into the pointlessness of instituting theoretical discourses on music without a solid ethnomusicological knowledge of the everyday usage, function and meaning of music (compare Thorsén, 1980).

The second Adorno wave reached us at the end of the 1980s. Paradoxically enough, it was probably more difficult to detect than the first since it was broader and covered a wider scientific area than just musicology. Furthermore, there was an increasing interest in cultural theories altogether, which was largely due to the spread of the subject Cultural Studies.¹⁰

Besides this, Adorno's name not infrequently appeared in articles and books within the musicological study of rock/pop, for example by such an influential writer as Simon Frith (1981, 1988 and also *On Record – Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, 1990, which includes an article by Adorno).

As I mentioned earlier, Richard Middleton also devoted a lengthy section of his important study (1990) to Adorno's theories. But one also began to come across musicologists (such as Rose Rosengard Subotnik) outside this circle of popular music researchers who often referred to Adorno in their work.¹¹ Perhaps the fullest discus-

10. By contrast with the first wave, the language in which Adorno's thoughts were now debated was always English, not German or Swedish. Among the relevant literature Aronowitz (1994) Docker, J (1994) Eagleton (1990, 19991) Inglis (1993) Wolin (1992) and Zuidervaart (1994) can be mentioned.

11. The book *Music and the Politics of Culture* (1989) is also permeated with a mental tussle with Adorno's spirit. Several of the authors, such as Christopher Norris and Alan Durant, are primarily literature historians ("cultural studies" theorists).

sion of Adorno so far is the music sociologist Peter Martin's recently published study (1995) which I discovered in the final stages of my work on this article (May, 1996).

When my generation of musicologists first came across Adorno's thoughts 20 years ago, our insight into the fact that his pre-understanding was so different from our own was limited. Nowadays it is easier to understand how his world of ideas was created in a Germany that was lacerated both materially and spiritually by the First World War. We now have a better understanding of how, as a gifted intellectual child of his time, he came to be the bearer of a traditional German cultural tradition. Basically, these values had become second nature to him through the socialization process, but in his scientific work in the Frankfurt School he was of course constantly forced to reassess them. Put simply, the aims of the Frankfurt School were to understand and to establish a dialogue with the German working class.

With such a background it is easy today to understand why he so obstinately chose such a thorny path. Had we read Elias's article (1977) when it was first published, however, we would already have come across similar insights. But in the 1970s we did not realize just how shaky the empirical foundations of the Frankfurt School's theories could be (compare Wolin 1992:44-59). Like a stubborn dialectician, Adorno launched an assault on everyone and everything in a bitter – not to say negative – aesthetic duel. Richard Wolin expresses this well:

A dialectician's dialectician, he plays the apparent antagonism between culture and barbarism for all its worth. He tries to stake out a position between the aesthete or *Kultur Mensch*, who invokes cultural privilege as a sign of superiority, and the modern-day philistine, who, upon hearing the word 'culture', immediately reaches either for his revolver (reputedly, Göring) or checkbook (Hollywood). Both extremes must be foresworn. (1993:xii)

Even if we can fully appreciate Adorno's choice (the aesthete), the fact still remains that the manner in which he expounds it in many respects casts a dark shadow over his arguments. In other words, what 20 years ago was basically an existential attitude (Adorno doesn't know how to waltz) can today be explained more circumstantially. However, we can follow the logic in his thought processes, a) that man's rational thinking has not brought him to the Enlightenment's promised goal of liberty, equality and fraternity, b) that instead mankind, by means of industrialism, has not only defeated nature but also, through the very same scientific/technological development, has defeated himself. and c) we are satisfied by substitutes, served up by the indefatigable machinery of production.

The enigma as to why the German working class did not revolt against the rise of fascism, or why the Western European working class did not take up the gauntlet of revolt which the students threw down at the end of the 1960s, receives the same answer in principle: the working class (and the middle class in the 60s) were too busy

consuming empty goods to have time to question what was going on. Besides: as Adorno writes in his aesthetic theory (in a commentary on Hegel), all this was taking place simultaneously with the possibility that the content of art:

- might precisely be art's mortality. Music is a case in point. A latecomer among the arts, great music may well turn out to be an art form that was possible only during a limited period of human history. Whether art will survive these developments is anybody's guess. (as quoted in Aronowitz 1994:14)

As we have seen, the fact that Adorno saw the spirit of Western music end in Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique, a style that the majority of students both then and now were bewildered by, and his assertion that popular music (including the youth music that was then developing) was devoid of any content, were the main reasons for our scepticism towards his eminence. That he rejected the music of such composers as Sibelius and Stravinsky, music that we liked, did not make things any better. Above all, we did not see ourselves as imbecilic listener types simply because we liked Cannonball Adderley or the music of the Beatles. When Martin (1995) summarizes his many points of criticism in his comprehensive study, he also draws attention to the problem of Adorno's categorical opinions. Martin particularly accentuates three problematical issues; that Adorno claims that a) there is a special cultural sphere of works which are "Art", b) the structure of these works is in opposition to dominating cultural institutions and c) they nevertheless represent the objective substance of these institutions (1995:121ff)

Finally, to return to Aronowitz's question which has been used as the heading for this section ("Is negative dialectics all there is?"), the answer is no:

When we seek to explain social relations, we must go beyond negative dialectics. From critical theory's own perspective, what lies beyond must necessarily be historically and practically situated [...] We can no longer characterize entire societies by divisions into sectors, orders, or invariant relations of determination such as infrastructures or Great Ideas. [...] As Derrida once readily acknowledged, we are not able to avoid logocentric Western culture, among whose leading themes is the high value placed upon intellectual knowledge and its core of abstract universals. It was, after all, in consideration of the dangers entailed by such use of science that schools of social inquiry, including Marxism as well as positivist social science, bid us return to the concrete. (Aronowitz 1994:130)

This does not of course diminish Adorno's eminence. For many generations to come he will probably continue to be the subject of the most diverse interpretations. One of the problems with his way of working, the many nuances and complexity of his ideas, is that different researchers will presumably always be able to find support for the most divergent theories. As Max Paddison has perhaps shown better than any previous theorist, there are no convincing links between a) Adorno's technical/structural

analyses, b) his sociological critique (in my view his lack of empirical knowledge), and c) his philosophical-historical interpretations (1993:276).

Our understanding of Adorno has obviously been affected over the years by a number of new influences, and here we return to the promised comparison with New Musicology. But we will also examine the relationship of musicology (both the new and the old) to contemporary cultural theories, such as structuralism and poststructuralism. Maybe after that we can try and fit in another piece of the jigsaw, namely the postmodern piece.

Musicology excepted?

In *The Last Post*, certain names are mentioned (such as Foucault and Derrida) which do not appear in any of the studies in the Gothenburg Department of Musicology's series of publications. Nevertheless, they are without doubt two of the most controversial cultural theorists since the 1970s whose work has attracted considerable attention. If we assume that their absence in the Gothenburg School's research cannot be explained by ignorance, we must find other explanations.

One obvious explanation lies in the Gothenburg School's scientific profile. As we have already seen, interest has been directed to a great degree towards taking the Others' music seriously. Foucault's obsession with the abnormal, the different¹², and his studies of the Enlightenment's episteme (that stifling constraint of thought which has held Western civilization in dictatorial leading-strings) contain thoughts and theories which in their extremism most likely repel more theorists than they attract¹³. This may also apply to musicologists in general, but not, apparently, to theorists within New Musicology.

It is not difficult to see Foucault's point that people in the Age of Enlightenment always used forcible means to build a wall between themselves and the abnormal and that they needed to believe in the total sovereignty of rationalism. Most musicologists

12. In the preface to *The Foucault Reader* (1984) Paul Rabinow gives a summary of the areas which Foucault concentrated on: "The most famous examples from Foucault's work are the isolation of lepers during the Middle Ages; the confinement of the poor, the insane, and vagabonds in the great catch-all Hôpital Général in Paris in 1656; the new classifications of disease and the associated practices of clinical medicine in early nineteenth-century France; the rise of modern psychiatry and its entry in to the hospitals, prisons, and clinics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and finally the medicalization, stigmatization, and normalization of sexual deviance in modern Europe".

13. His works include *Madness and Civilisation: a history of insanity in the age of reason*, (N.Y. 1965), *The Order of Things – an archaeology of the human sciences* (N.Y. 1970), *The History of Sexuality* parts 1-3 (1980, 1986, 1987) and *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (N.Y. 1982).

are well aware of the mechanisms of demarcation which endowed art music with its special nimbus; an Art which presupposed an autonomous way of listening as well as the attitude that music, with its inherent eternal values, stood beyond the vulgar demands of competition and profit of everyday bourgeois life¹⁴. Neither is it difficult to understand Foucault's importance as a source of inspiration for musicologists with a gender perspective (including bi/homosexual perspectives) in the present or past.

This does not mean to say that it is a simple matter to combine Foucault's world of ideas with musicological issues, which in itself is obviously due to the fact that Foucault embraces history¹⁵, philosophy, sociology and cultural theories in a way which has caused his reasoning to stick in the throat of each respective research tradition. Besides this, his varied and sophisticated ideas make him problematical to follow, as can be deduced from the fact that his life work has generated an enormous amount of secondary literature which almost amounts to a whole industry of interpretation. Marshall Berman (1982), for instance, considers that Foucault helped the generation of the 60s to understand their feeling of helplessness. They knew that there was no real freedom, that everyone was sitting in the same "iron cage" – Western society. When we realize how completely meaningless everything is, Berman writes, we can at least sit back and relax (ibid:32).

Foucault's world of ideas has caused many headaches. Many people are therefore sceptical towards his project. Andrew Milner, for example, writes:

The structuralism of this entire project should be readily apparent. Despite Foucault's profession as a historian, his work remained radically anti-historist, unable to judge between *epistemes*, or to explain the shift from one to another ... Moreover, Foucault pursues a typically structuralist demystification. (1994:86)

The main problem for his critics is how one can feel any confidence in the scientific basis of Foucault's project, which in accordance with the logic of the argument on which it is founded must itself be interpreted within the same socio-historical development or "discursive episteme" (ibid.).

On the other hand, Richard Wolin (1992) sees Foucault as a poststructuralist whose thinking is closest to that of the Frankfurt School, and from among Foucault's labyrinthine thoughts Wolin has isolated a concrete example, namely the theme of "the sovereign enterprise of unreason" in *Madness and Civilisation*. As an example of this

14. Compare Edström (1992, 1995)

15. Reactions from representatives from the respective disciplines have varied. Some have had plenty to say about Foucault's at times audacious use of methods and sources. McNay (1994) gives several examples of historians' critique, for instance Middlefort who "concludes that many of the arguments of *Madness and Civilization* 'fly in the face of empirical evidence' and that many of its generalizations are based on serious oversimplifications" (1994:25)

he mentions Goya's painting *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*. In other words, Goya's work, like that of de Sade's, Nietzsche's and others, can attain what Wolin in summing up describes as:

- écriture: poésie pure, a chain of self-referential signifiers whose 'sovereignty' consists in their capacity to burst asunder the trammels of referentiality, that semiotic prison-house of the *episteme*. (1992:175)

As Wolin points out, to Foucault it is obvious that the refinement or sublimation of madness that the work of art achieves "represents the secret triumph of unreason over the constraints of bourgeois aestheticism or art for art's sake" (ibid:177). This means, Wolin writes:

- that the sovereign enterprise of unreason, which reason falsely believes it has condemned to silence, gains new life in order to indict that world of logic and propriety from which it had been unjustly banished. For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, the moment where the work of art steps out of itself and into the world is a moment of world-historical import. It represents the return of the repressed, the enunciation of a Dionysian truth, a possible sign of the end of reason's long-standing nihilistic reign. (1992:177)

Foucault does not give any music-historical example (neither does Wolin), but it is apparent that Foucault, in these real and fundamentally important cases that he discusses in *Madness and Civilization*, regards Reason as temporarily banished by "the sovereign enterprise of unreason". Wolin adds:

The spirit of aesthetic modernism gives rise to an 'adversary culture' in which the traditional value-opposition between reason and its other undergoes a portentous and far-reaching transvaluation. (1992:178)¹⁶

In all likelihood this lack of reference to music is not so much because music was expected, but rather because of the elusive semantic status of music and its ephemeral nature which makes it difficult to be more concrete (compare, however, the discussion of Kramer's analysis of Chopin's Prelude below).

From my perspective I could conceive the following musicological hypothesis: that the stylistic change from the music of the Age of Enlightenment to post-war serialism and to today's computer-programmed music can be understood as rationalism's self-induced death, something which can be seen, in the spirit of Foucault, as unreason's hidden victory. Other music, such as the repertoire primarily recorded by the Naxos

16. Contrary to Milner, Wolin's attitude towards Foucault's legacy is not pessimistic. Wolin discusses how Foucault in his last works (which Berman cannot have read, compare Berman's opinions above) tested a synthesis between aesthetics and ethics which had a different and more positive keynote. (cf Wolin 1992:191). Compare also McNay who is fascinated by this change, but is nonetheless critical of Foucault whose reasoning had so little concrete base (McNay 1994:154-157).

record company and of course present-day popular music, has, however, survived¹⁷. Where Foucault is concerned, from a musicological perspective I consider that his lack of interest simply lies in the subjects that he has chosen to discuss and the epistemological content and abstruseness of his thoughts.



Goya's etching The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters gives "a brutally naked picture of the human suffering which ensues when prejudices, fears and fancies are permitted to triumph over reason", according to A History of Ideas Reader II (1982:134)

17. Miller (1993:21f) refers to a discussion between Pierre Boulez and Michel Foucault. As I understand the discussion they are constantly talking at cross-purposes. There is no real discussion. As Miller has pointed out, Foucault had an open approach to rock and other music, while Boulez's reaction to this is: "Will talking about music in the plural and flaunting an eclectic ecumenicism solve the problem? ... Ah! Pluralism! There's nothing like it for curing incomprehension. [...] Be liberal, be generous toward the tastes of others, and they will be generous to yours. Everything is good, nothing is bad; there aren't any values, but everyone is happy. This discourse, as liberating as it may wish to be, reinforces, on the contrary, the ghettos... The economy is there to remind us, in case we get lost in this bland utopia: there are musics which bring in money and exist for commercial profit; there are musics that cost something, whose very concept has nothing to do with profit. No liberalism will erase this distinction" (as quoted in Foucault, 1988:316f).

The reasons why Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist thoughts seldom crop up in musicological publications are in all probability similar. Derrida is primarily a philosopher, but his thoughts have also had considerable impact in the fields of literature history and cultural theory. It is however possible to see clear parallels between music-theoretical theories which are designed to reveal the structural organization of music by different methods and the works of various structuralistic and poststructuralistic authors (French-based authors in particular)¹⁸.

With regard to structuralism/poststructuralism, Andrew Milner has drawn up a scientific theoretical model which can help us to see what they have in common. They are 1) anti-historical and they take little or no account of socio-historical time but have as their point of departure a "never-ending theoretical present", 2) they tend towards mystification ("the politics of mystification"), 3) they are theoretical – in fact, according to Milner they are often anti-empirical and 4) they are anti-humanistic.

He then adds that:

- if neither change nor process nor even the particular empirical instance are matters of real concern, then the intentions or actions of human subjects, whether individuals or collective, can easily be disposed of as irrelevant to the structural properties of systems. In this way, structuralism notoriously 'decentres' the subject. (1994:82)

The combined criticism in these four points could equally well be fired at music-theoretical systems, whether they be harmonic, like Riemann's functional analysis, melodic-contrapuntal like Schenker's or mathematical-reductionistic like Forte's "pitch class system". To a very limited degree they all have empirical starting-points, but they do not question theory's perceptual soundness and they take no account at all of the different socio-historical conditions which form a human being, as for example the difference in knowledge/habitus of a person living in a rural area in Saxony in the 1650s compared with a town-dweller in Gothenburg in the 1990s.

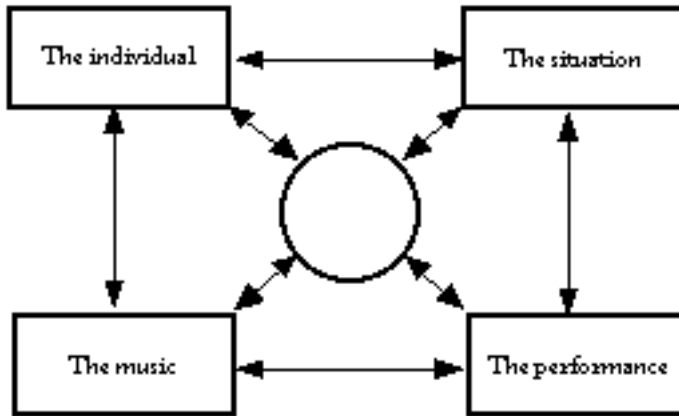
I therefore consider that the Gothenburg School's insistence, where possible, on the contextualization of musical analysis is a crucial reason why the above examples of music-theoretical systems (and other similar systems) have never been given a prominent position¹⁹. In those cases where musical material has been analyzed, the starting-point as a rule has been to hermeneutically or positivistically describe what has been heard – and therefore only to a very limited degree, what has been *seen!*²⁰ In this respect, Derrida, with his method of intervention (where he constantly questions logocentric knowledge by means of deconstruction and focuses on differences [*différences*])²¹ that

18. To draw sharp lines between these schools is problematical, but it is possible to place the perhaps most well-known representatives in the following approximate order (from structuralism to poststructuralism): Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida.

create new meaning) is not that far removed from certain musicologists' hermeneutic interpretations of musical works. Anyone who undertakes a hermeneutic interpretation knows that it is both contextual and subjectively relative and that it has many openings. This is particularly true of the intangible sound world of purely instrumental music. Derrida's words, that "deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards *the other*" (1984:249, my italics) do not therefore at first glance appear so revolutionary, at least as long as we do not lose sight of the social context. We must not forget that every human being is a bearer of his/her own culture, which means that his/her interpretation is by no means free. Text without context is an illusion. The way each one of us reads a book or listens to music is influenced by cultural conventions. Therefore, whether or not the composer or the listener is dead (compare "the death of the civilization of the book" /Derrida/), the way one hears/interprets/performs music is affected by the culture (upbringing, age, gender, profession, domicile) one has absorbed and is also dependent on the structure of the music

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19. In Eero Tarasti's formal report on the appointment of a Professor of Music in Gothenburg in 1994, there is a resigned comment which indirectly refers to this fact. Seven of the nine applicants belonged to or came from the Gothenburg School. One of the remaining candidates (Bengt Edlund) was quite rightly judged to be a prominent music theorist. In connection with Edlund, Tarasti let fall the following cynical comment, which the rest of us could take to heart if we felt it was applicable: "I wonder whether he would be the only one capable of analyzing a Mozart or Beethoven score of the candidates...".
 20. Tagg (1979), Reimers (1983), Fornäs (1985), Bernskiöld (1986), Åhlén (1987), Öhrström (1987), Lilliestam (1988), Davidsson (1991), Edström (1989, 1992) and Barkefors (1995).
 21. As Milner points out, Derrida has inherited: "the Saussurian notion of language as founded on difference, but [he] coins the neologism, *différance*, to stress the double meaning of the French verb, *différer*, as both to differ and to defer or delay" (1994:88). Even if this explanation seems straightforward enough, the term has come to be interpreted in many different ways depending on which theory or discipline the respective author starts out from. An insight into this growing jungle of different interpretations is provided by the musicologist Ruth A. Solie's introduction to *Musicology and Difference* (1993). The philosopher Richard Shusterman (1992:70ff), in his discussion of the term, takes as his point of departure an in-depth reading of Derrida's (and Saussure's) definition. Shusterman's conclusion is that *différance* is a structure and a movement in a systematic play of differences: "In other words, since any thing or element depends for its individuation and meaning on its differential interrelations with other elements, it follows that what any thing is, is essentially a function of what it is not" (ibid.). As far as I can see, this French term, in company with so many other French terms, is cut out to become one of the classical contested concepts.

and the situation in which it is performed. These factors are all closely connected and influence each other (compare Edström 1992, 1996).



To sum up, I consider that the Gothenburg School's disinclination to absorb structuralism and poststructuralism is not so much due to its lack of interest in theory (compare Dahlstedt above), as to its lively interest in music sociology /ethnology/popular music, which in turn generates an interest in the Others, the Others' music and our music²² on the one hand, and the belief that music-theoretical methods tend to lead to a short circuit between the structure of music and its significance/meaning.

Back to the postmodern

One symptom of the postmodern age, Stanley Aronowitz claims, is the dissociation of American audiences from art music ("classical music"). He states that the time has passed when composers tried to preserve the autonomy of art music by continuing in the Schoenberg tradition:

Today composition, even if retaining some of the dissonance characteristic of high musical modernism, is prone to cross over between 'classical' and popular genres – jazz, 'folk' idiom and, more recently Latin and rock 'n' roll. For example, the line between the 'serious' music of Philip Glass and Steve Reich and the neo-rock minimalism of Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, and John Cale is effectively blurred. (1994:6)

22. As is already indirectly apparent, the Others and the Others' music, which the Gothenburg School has devoted so much of its energies towards, is not the same as Foucault's Other, but rather the music of those groups who previously have been unfairly treated or attracted scant interest: the yoik of the Sami people, music in television series, the songs and music of Free Church groups, tango in Sweden, the Eurovision Song Contest, women composers during the 19th century, Swedish folk music and so on.

In this context I would add that the contemporary European art music that does appeal to today's listeners, and which has actually managed to increase the interest in this type of music (which up to now has been extremely limited), consists of works (mostly late works) by such composers as Preisner, Gorecki and Pärt, not to mention such Swedish representatives as Sven-David Sandström and Jan Sandström.

Furthermore, Aronowitz draws attention to the fragmentation of the entire popular music culture. From being the exclusive property of the younger generation during the 50s and 60s, rock/pop and other contemporary popular genres now appeal to an audience which, in ethnic background, age, class and domicile, is as varied as the music itself.

In other words, it is evident that in the field of music the concept of postmodernism to a large degree has been affected by the incredible number of music styles that have developed since the 1950s and also to the fact that, due to the global mass media industry, music from virtually every culture in the world is available in the record shops of towns like Gothenburg. This of course is particularly true of the music which comes under the heading of "world music", which mostly consists of a mixture of art music or folk music and contemporary forms of popular music. What is new about world music today is not so much the hybrid forms themselves as their constituents. Thanks to modern recording and sampling techniques, it is now possible to create hybrid forms of music in completely new ways. In all probability world music is the music form which has grown fastest during the 1990s, both in commercial value and in the variety on offer.

Other combinations of folk music, popular music and art music (often referred to as cross-overs in English) have also been on the increase during the last five years. The choice of examples vary, depending on the outlook and musical taste of the person concerned. In my case, opera singers who sing pop songs and other popular music to the accompaniment of a symphony orchestra come to mind on the one hand, like Kiri Te Kanawa and also the three tenors, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo and José Carreras. On the other hand, I have heard Barbara Streisand sing Handel arias and *Lieder* by Schumann while the jazz pianist Keith Jarrett gives classical recitals.

Other examples are the violinist Nigel Kennedy who also plays rock, Sinéad O'Connor who sings standards with big bands, the Take Six singers who have arranged arias from Handel's *Messiah* (actually arranged by Mervyn Warren – [Reprise 7599-26980-2]) and Michael Jackson who samples passages from the works of Beethoven and Mussorgsky and other composers on his two most recent CDs (compare Edström 1992). Examples from Swedish spheres of music are Eva Dahlgren's collaboration with the composer Anders Hillborg in a "cross-over venture" which caused a considerable stir and which to all appearances has also been a commercial success.²³

One question which arises – and which I shall leave open – is: when did “postmodern” hybrids first crop up and what is their exact musical significance? The article on postmodernism in the National Swedish Encyclopaedia (1994) states, among other things, that in art music postmodernism denotes a technique “whereby widely divergent styles become musical building blocks without necessarily resulting in pastiches or quotations from specific works.” Works by Schnittke are given as an example. This music is “less abstract” and kinder on the ear (than serial music, presumably, although this is not specifically stated). It is to be noted that works by such composers as Arvo Pärt and Sven-David Sandström, for example, are not necessarily postmodernistic, but are nevertheless “kind on the ear”.

Where popular culture is concerned, under the same heading of postmodernism Alf Björnberg writes that popular culture/music has long been characterized by “pastiche technique, eclecticism and a jumble of aesthetics and commercialism”. He prudently adds that this makes it difficult to pinpoint what the term actually stands for in different stylistic periods (NSE vol. 13, 1994:241). As an example of postmodernism in popular music, however, the music of the rock group Prince is mentioned. In both cases (art music and rock music) the music under discussion is from the last two decades.²⁴

However, it is not possible to interpret the increasing breadth of combinations of genre and style in folk music, art music and popular music as a result of postmodernism, nor the other way round. It is not a hen-and-egg dilemma! The social processes which have brought about these changes were underway long before the term itself first arose. The broadening of styles in popular music that took place hand-in-hand with the increase in sales of records and tapes, the variety of music on offer in the media, and technological development, did however provide the necessary conditions for experiments with a far greater number of style combinations than before (compare the discussion on world music above).

Like many “successful” terms, postmodernism can be used both as a backward-looking and as a forward-looking term/agent; both as a corroboration that something has recently taken place and as an affirmation that postmodern works are being created at

23. These hybrid forms are by no means a post-war phenomenon, however; in the period between the wars, art music was not infrequently used as the basis for ragtime and foxtrots and was also used for dancing and other forms of entertainment. Farther back in time there are countless examples of folk tunes and other popular melodies that have provided inspiration for classical works. There is nothing unusual in classically schooled musicians also switching between light music, dance music and art music.

24. Andrew Goodwin (1991) discusses the term postmodernism in pop and rock in an article and claims that it is often unclear whether the term refers to the aesthetic form of the music or to its cultural capital and that in consequence the debate is often muddled.

the present time and will be created in the future. We have also seen that postmodernism has been endowed with a technical-craftsmanslike dimension (compare the above definition in NSE), but the question is; is postmodernism also a scientific method, a method which among other things is characterized by “pastiche technique, eclecticism and a jumble of aesthetics and commercialism”?

Mode or method?

The term postmodernism has rapidly infiltrated most cultural spheres, and equally rapidly it has become impossible to keep track of all the literature that has been written on the subject. Aronowitz (1994:ch. 2) discusses the term using the anthology *The Anti-Aesthetic* (1983, ed. Hal Foster) as his starting-point, an anthology which includes contributions from Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Jürgen Habermas, Edward Said, Craig Owens and others who each have their own starting-point. Again, as in the case of Leppert’s review of *The Last Post*, I can only refer briefly to points that are relevant for my subsequent musicological discussion.

What the authors have in common, according to Aronowitz, is that they refuse to make any distinction between: “art and politics, high culture and pop culture, philosophy and criticism”. With the exception of Habermas who still defends modernistic criticism, their aim is to promote a critical theory of oppositional postmodernism, using the following formulation as a starting-point:

Postmodernism is nothing if not ironic; its entire enterprise is to deconstruct the solemnity of high modernism, to show the sutures in its wounds. Yet the irony does not degenerate into cynicism; post-morality can be released from their separate worlds and once more become part of everyday life... It blasts rules, but makes a series of anti-rules, which are rules all the same. (1994:40)

Aronowitz considers that Craig Owen’s article, *Discourse of Others* is the most radical in the anthology – a manifesto for the Others. Owen’s point of departure is that women cannot be understood or represented by men, Blacks cannot be understood by Whites, musicians by critics, etc. None of the meta-theories – Marxist, modernistic or otherwise – are applicable anymore, claims Owen, and he welcomes what he regards as their collapse. The Others want to represent themselves, and in doing so challenge “in one stroke both the universal claims of art and Western patrimony” (ibid:41) Owen considers that men’s cultural oppression of women is revealed by the male gaze: women are regarded as “narcissistic perfect specimens of male desire” (as quoted in Foster 1994:41). Here Aronowitz points out that it is one thing how women are represented or portrayed by men (in thoughts, pictures or ideas), and quite another how they themselves react to these representations: “When women and Blacks employ conventional art forms, the effect is different from those male white visions subjected to

Owen's analysis" (ibid:42) What Owen – like a genuine postmodernist – has forgotten is the old truth, well-known within the sociology of knowledge, that when old forms are used in new situations, their meaning changes. In other words, to quote the sociologist Karl Mannheim himself:

Each idea acquires a new meaning when it is applied to a new life situation. When new strata take over systems of ideas from other strata, it can always be shown that the same words mean something different to the new sponsors, because these latter think in terms of different aspirations and existential configurations. This social change of function, then, is... also a change of meaning. (1952/1968:188)

There is also an idealistic element inherent in the postmodernism which Owen represents, namely a disinclination to see the artistic discourse as one of many forms of power. It may seem somewhat ironical that postmodern theorists themselves replace previously accepted "truths" with their own truths. To some degree, the ideas and concepts of poststructuralism and postmodernism overlap: both favour theoretical relativism and cultural pluralism. Even so, it is difficult to believe that postmodernism, in the same way as poststructuralism, is a method, a theory. On the other hand, neither is it just a fashionable mode. According to Andrew Milner, postmodernism is an established movement among artists, critics, cultural commentators and academics (!) who create, take part in and write about contemporary cultural movements which stand in opposition to modernism's Scylla and Charybdis: in our case, modern art music ("High Art") and its antithesis mass culture ("Porno Pop") (1994:135-40).²⁵ But Milner does not consider that postmodernism offers a feasible ideological path forwards: "postmodernistic culture has on balance proved unfavourable to the left". He feels that the only possible direction left open to us is the one staked out by Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution*: we have to start out from existing conditions, we have to realize that we still have a modernistic and elitist culture and that mass culture has certain manipulative elements, but we should not submit to this. Instead we should create a third alternative – a democratic culture (compare Milner 1994:153-56).²⁶

25. Postmodernism is therefore not a post-populist theory: "Campbell's soup is indeed a mass commodity, but Warhol's prints are not" (Milner 1994:144).

26. Milner formulates both Williams's view and his own: "Even in the midst of alienation, the vast majority of human beings still live out considerable portions of their lives through face to face networks of kinship and community, identity and obligation, friendship and love. Indeed, this is what most of us mean by 'life'. The ideal of a common culture which Williams here invokes is, in my view, neither inherently reactionary, nor inherently utopian. Quite the contrary, it represents the only possible alternative, within the space of postmodernity, to a radical commodification which will eventually entail the effective absorption of the cultural into the economic" (1994:155f).

Christopher Norris's *The Truth about Postmodernism* (1993) offers a further critique of postmodernism's theories and ideas. Time and again he dismisses the idea that rationalistic "Enlightenment" thought is in itself the reason for the various forms of oppression directed towards the Others and their culture/ideas. Norris considers that postmodernism as a theory can never be anything more than a chimera, since in the final outcome its pluralistic message about differences only generates a defence for a New Pragmatic standpoint – and here Norris introduces the American philosopher Richard Rorty's proposal:²⁷

– that we should cultivate the private virtues – maximize the range of aesthetic satisfactions, autonomous lifestyles, modes of individual self-fulfilment etc. – and cease the vain effort to square those virtues with a sense of our larger (public, social, ethical or political) responsibilities. (1993:287)

For Norris it is a matter of course that postmodernists also need such tools of rationalistic tradition as "logic, reason and reflexive autocritique". That it has been possible to use and propagate anti-rationalistic values with the help of rationalistic arguments shows that it has been possible to "betray" these values. Like Habermas, Norris therefore considers that postmodernism:

– is a retrograde cultural phenomenon which unwittingly runs into many of the dead-end antimonies encountered by thinkers in previous phases of anti-enlightenment reaction. Worst of all, it embraces a through-going version of the Nietzschean-relativist creed according to which there is simply no difference between truth-claims imposed by sheer, self-authorizing fiat and truths arrived at by process of reasoned debate or open argumentative exchange. (ibid:228)

Norris's critique is important because it points out that there must always be a balance in the discussion between the individual's/ the group's understanding and truth, and society's collective understanding. That he should give Adorno as an example of a musicologist who, despite being near despair, never gave up the Kantian idea of both being able to think as an independent, reflecting individual and at the same time to function as a member of society whose importance and significance outweighs the conflict between the individual and the collective, gives us plenty of food for thought. Nothing could be more foreign to Adorno, Norris writes, than the kinds of irrational anti-rational rhetoric – "which currently pass for advanced wisdom in many quarters of the postmodern cultural scene" (ibid:287).

In conclusion: we have established that postmodernism undoubtedly is a present-day way of dealing with and understanding the pluralism of values, norms and styles

27. Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and other works were the subject of intense debate, due to their radically relativistic message. For an introduction to this debate, see also Wolin (1992:150-169) and Norris (1994: ch.5) A different view is presented in Shusterman (1992:x, 238-259).

which surrounds us today. It shows us that the Romantic dream of Art as a true, uniting force in a society pervaded by economy and politics, and modernism's hope that the work of art, struggling against growing commercialism, would be able to preserve its truth and its autonomy, have been supplemented by other processes and values. In the postmodern world of market economy the objectification of culture has perhaps gone *too far*. There is an obvious risk that culture's unifying qualities will disappear if its goal no longer is to give people the chance to *cultivate* their own cultural interests. Milner strongly emphasizes the unifying power of culture:

The problem with any radical commodifications of culture, such as entailed in postmodernism, is not simply the perennial failing of all markets, that they confer the vote not on each person but to each dollar and thereby guarantee undemocratic outcomes, but also the much more specific failing that the market undermines precisely what it is that is most cultural with culture, that is, its sociality. (1994:151)

As we have seen, postmodernism's methodological stringency has little to recommend it, and there is not much we can do about this since it is part of its nature. That there are many people who consider that it represents the Western world's triumph over Culture is one thing: that postmodernism nevertheless has not succeeded in vanquishing rationalism's fundamental ideas and patterns of thought is another and far more important matter, as I intend to show.

The old lives on – at least in part

In earlier articles (Edström 1989b, 1992 and 1993) and, most recently, in my book *Gothenburg's rich musical life* (1996), I have tried to show how the hegemony of bourgeois thinking has affected the overall way that generations of people have thought about and evaluated music in terms of "High" (Ernste Musik, serious music, art music etc.) or "Low" (Unterhaltungsmusik, light music, popular music etc.). Although a large majority of the people in my studies played and listened to what I have referred to as *middle music*, this standard of values still applied. Until the 1950s, middle music can be negatively defined as all forms of music with the exception of traditional folk music and longer, complicated chamber works and symphonic music, including modern opera. All other music: marches, the Vienna waltz, "classical gems", characteristic pieces, overtures to operettas and operas, choral music, solo works for various instruments, songs, popular medleys etc. constituted the common or garden, completely natural, musical diet. From the 1930s onwards, due to mass media (gramophones, radio and sound-film) in combination with general socio-economic changes, new musical tastes and practices were gradually formed which divided people into strictly segregated groups. However, the post-war segmentalization of cultural habits, and above all the postmodern ideological matrix has made it more difficult to discover today's middle music – if it still exists.

The examples of cross-overs mentioned earlier: the Take Six Handel arrangements, Michael Jackson's *Will You Be There* which opens with a one-minute-long sampling of the last movement from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony²⁸ and Eva Dahlgren's collaboration with the composer Anders Hillborg, are all well-liked, commercially successful examples of popular music; music which by various techniques has been brought into line with a broad, common, present-day musical mother tongue. But it is also possible to find contemporary examples of the earlier form of musical hotch-potch which constituted older generation's middle music. I am primarily referring to the instruction manuals intended for people who want to learn the piano or some other keyboard instrument. While those generations who learnt to play in the 1960s and 70s used a traditional piano school to which was later added a book of classical pieces and – if one had a teacher with very advanced ideas – another book which contained arrangements of pop tunes, today it is becoming more and more common to find all this combined in one and the same book. Even the piano schools have a broader repertoire²⁹. The successful piano album TEMA TANGENT (Gehrmans Music Publishers, 1992) is a good example of such a mixture. On the back cover, alongside a smiling photo of the editor/arranger/composer Åse Söderquist-Spering, there is the following description:

KEYBOARD KEYS – a delectable assortment of pleasant and easy arrangements – which makes life more fun again for all keyboarders! /.../ Here's a bit of everything! Popular tunes from our own times, mostly... Joplin, Gershwin, Bacharach and Taube, Peter Lundblad, Khachaturian, J:son Lindh... But also classical favourites by Bach, Handel and Haydn...

There is no apparent alphabetical, chronological or stylistic logic in the order of composers, beginning with Joplin and ending with Haydn! There is music for every season alongside music for special occasions, folk music, Golden Oldies, waltzes and popular songs, a funky tune *Mercy, mercy, mercy* as well as popular classical melodies by Bach, Handel and soon.

The choice and arrangements are not only intended to provide the piano pupil with beautiful melodies but also to give him/her a thorough dose of traditional piano technique: polyphonic playing in Bach's Preludes, an Alberti bass in a Sonatine by Kuhlau, simplified dramatic figurations in the left hand à la Revolutionary Study in Söder-

28. On the CD 'HIStory, a few bars from Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition have been sampled in the tune 'HIStory' and a longer section from Maurice Duruflé's Requiem ("Pie Jesu") in the tune 'Little Susie'.

29. This also applies to song-books used in schools: *Sånggävan /The Gift of Song/* (Almquist & Wiksell), *Våra skolsånger /Our School Songs/* (1992 – Edition Reimers) and *Numusik 1,2,3 /Music Now/* (Almquist & Wiksell) all have an extremely varied repertoire (My thanks to Börje Stålhammar for the tip!).

quist-Spering's own *Ballad* and more modern rhythmical devices in a Josef Zawinul tune as well as some boogie-woogies.

Sonatine

Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832)

Op. 20 nr 1

Bearb: Åse Söderqvist-Spering

Allegro

Ballad

Åse Söderqvist-Spering

Mercy, Mercy, Mercy

Josef Zawinul

Arr: Åse Söderqvist-Spering

Spela Jämna åttondelar!

Intro.

Examples from Åse Söderqvist-Spering's "delectable assortment of pleasant and easy arrangements"

Judging from the repertoire in TEMA TANGENT, it seems that even today the middle music of previous generations plays an important role in young people's musical socialization. The chronological span has also increased in piano schools and now stretches over a period of at least 250 years. This does not mean that the middle music

of the 1930s and the mixed assortment in TEMA TANGENT are exactly the same thing. While we had *one* predominant musical mother tongue in the 1930s, we now talk “with forked tongues”.

In other words: while people up until the 1950s felt at home with almost all forms of music³⁰, musical styles have since expanded. At the same time there has been a levelling and segmentalization of values. Our mother tongue now has different dialects: a) middle music and b) a more recent stylistic dialect – “*common music*” (Gemeinsam Musik), constructed from post-war youth music and popular music (hit tunes, rock ‘n’ roll, pop, rock, dance band music, tunes from musicals, happy jazz, fusion etc.) Musical forms that still remain outside these two dialects include lengthy, complicated art music works, extremely aggressive rock music, punk and similar styles, traditional “archaic” Swedish folk music and non-European folk music and art music in general. World music is the latest style that is beginning to work its way into common music. We can therefore regard the music in TEMA TANGENT as a mixture of earlier middle music and present-day common music.

Middle music still holds its own among older generations. For those who were born before the Second World War, this music is a matter of course, while those born in the 40s and 50s unconsciously take it for granted. But it is probable that in the next century, concurrently with the disappearance of the middle music generation, common music will become the unifying cultural cement.

TEMA TANGENT therefore shows that a larger proportion of young players and listeners (despite the number of radio stations that play hits from the 1980s and onwards) are still socialized into the earlier middle music through the various instruction manuals (as well as the musical structures in the cross-over records mentioned above) than we perhaps have realized. Today’s musical world is segmentalized, but not into such hermetically sealed, postmodernistic groups with distinct musical tastes as we are inclined to believe³¹.

Susan McClary – feminism

After this survey of cultural theories and methods, it is now high time to return to our opening discussion on New Musicology and, more precisely, to Susan McClary and Lawrence Kramer. As mentioned previously, McClary and Kramer, together with

30. Modern art music (Schoenberg, Bartok etc.) and the “highest” forms of music (that is to say, chamber music and symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner and other composers) on the one hand, and “lower” music such as simple hit tunes and folk music on the other, were not part of the middle music language. As always, this division was determined by a combination of musical and social criteria (for more details see Edström 1996).

Tomlinson, are considered by Richard Leppert to be three of the most prominent representatives in this field³². Kramer and in particular McClary are both very well-known in the musicological community.

What follows here is a discussion of their methods of working. That I have chosen to focus on two articles (see below) that I find somewhat problematical is only natural; it is the best means to generate a fruitful discussion. Since I touch upon their use of music theory, these sections inevitably cover several pages. As a researcher with an ethnomusicological approach, the questions which I will primarily focus on are: to what extent can their views be shared by others – in other words, how large are their respective groups/clans/tribes – and to what extent does the music in their discourse become an independent entity, an agent that works on its own without a social context.

In the introduction to her collection of essays, *Feminine Endings* (1991), McClary divides certain musicological issues into five groups which she addresses from a feminist perspective. The five aspects, which she goes into at some length (ibid:10-19), and which can be seen as the foundation-stones of a provisional methodology, are:

- Musical constructions of gender and sexuality
- Gendered aspects of traditional music theory
- Gender and sexuality in musical narrative
- Music as a gendered discourse
- Discursive strategies of women musicians

In connection with her discussion of these five foundation-stones, McClary paints a feminist musicological panorama. She examines the situation of women musicians and composers in a socially constructed male-dominated world. She discusses how the use of language in music theory – terms, attitudes to form – in fact our whole cultural way of thinking, has been steered and controlled by masculine-bourgeois models. Mc-

31. In this context, a methodologically interesting report from the Danish Radio's Development Unit is worth mentioning (That's what they like – and that's what they want, November, 1994). In order to find out which pieces of music suit which target groups, an evaluation system was constructed consisting of seven parameters, among which the parameters "power" and "rhythm/melody" were considered the most important. 70 different musical examples of middle and common music were all graded according to these two parameters. The musical examples were then presented to 500 listeners and for each example they were asked to say a) to what extent they knew of this type of music ("Never heard of it – > very familiar with it") and b) to what extent they liked the music ("Can't stand it – > like it very much"). Among the 15 most highly appreciated pieces were "Don't cry for me Argentina" from the musical *Evita*, "Dream a little dream" by Henry Mancini and Saint-Saëns's "The Swan". My thanks to Alf Björnberg who drew my attention to this report! For a German comparison see Gembris (1995).

32. I am aware that Kramer, McClary and Tomlinson are by no means the only musicologists in this field. Several important authors and articles can be found in the volume *Musicology and Difference* (ed. Ruth A. Solie, 1993 /see below/).

Clary considers that in musicology (unlike literary studies and art history) feminist criticism was virtually non-existent until the early 1990s: “musicology managed miraculously to pass directly from pre- to postfeminism without ever having to change – or even examine – its ways.” (1991:5)³³ I can easily concur with this analysis – at least at the time at which it was made.

There are, and have been, many different branches of feminist studies. In his overview of scientific theory, Andrew Milner shows how feminism as a theoretical programme has changed since the Second World War (1994:107-134). Basically, the aim of feminist criticism is to challenge and break down the patriarchal Western way of thinking, an aim which is understandable enough. Among the branches that Milner discusses are early French feminism as represented by Simone de Beauvoir, Anglo-American researchers such as Elaine Showalter and Kate Millet, Marxist theorists (such as those involved in the literature collective at Essex University), French feminists like H el ene Cixous and Julia Kristeva and feminists who are influenced by post-structuralism and postmodernism. There are many other researchers with a broad feministic base which McClary can relate to. The extent and quality of her reading on this subject is immediately apparent in the works she has published.

To return to the five foundation-stones mentioned above, we find that McClary adds further conditions, one of which is the necessity of creating “an entire theory of musical signification” which turns away from traditional formalism – without actually throwing the score overboard:

Far from setting the score aside and concentrating on extramusical issues, my work is always concerned with explaining how it is that certain images or responses are invoked by particular musical details. (ibid:20)

An example of McClary’s way of working appears in the third essay, *Sexual Politics in Classical Music* which contains an analysis of the first movement of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony, which McClary contrasts with Bizet’s opera *Carmen*. McClary’s main source, from which she has taken most of the factual basis for this essay, is David Brown (1982)³⁴. She writes that “Tchaikovsky was still very much under the influence of the opera [*Carmen*] when he wrote this symphony, and the ways he reconstitutes the gender politics of both *Carmen* and of sonata conventions for this movement make it a fascinating study” (ibid:70)³⁵. When I read such a sentence it strikes me how important our use of language is, and how vital both form and formulations are. Mc-

33. As mentioned above, two dissertations ( hrstr m 1987 and Myers 1993) with feministic perspectives (albeit different perspectives) have been presented at the Gothenburg Department of Musicology.

34. The following quotation from a letter can also be found in Brown (1982). However the translation and other details vary, as will be shown subsequently.

Clary does not enlarge on what is meant by “influence”, but through the construction of the sentence she leads the reader to believe that there is a connection between the first and second half of the sentence. That Tchaikovsky in all probability was influenced by Bizet’s music (“was still very much under the influence of the opera”) and also by a lot of other music is one thing³⁶, but it is a different thing altogether to say that (*consciously or unconsciously*) “he reconstitutes the gender politics of both *Carmen* and of sonata conventions”. But perhaps McClary means that “the ways /*the music*/ reconstitutes...” which is a third possibility, that is to say, how her interpretative reading of the significance/meaning/ of Tchaikovsky’s music can be understood in the light of her interpretative reading of Bizet’s *Carmen*. Besides this, naturally enough, everything is viewed from the interpretative angle and awareness of a contemporary feminist musicologist.

The hermeneutical (read: sexual-political) interpretations that McClary arrives at are frequently illustrated with passages from the score. Here is another fundamental issue which needs to be addressed. As a rule in this sort of context one often talks of “readings”, that is to say, interpretative readings of music – as a parallel to literary models. But I wonder if the term “listenings”, interpretative listenings, wouldn’t be more apt in musicology, or better still, that both terms should be used. “Readings” could then perhaps be reserved for a music-theoretical/analytical understanding.

As many people (including myself in other contexts) have pointed out, the understanding which can be arrived at through reading a score and studying the music is very different from the understanding which the ordinary listener reaches purely through listening (compare Björnberg 1995, Cook 1990, Edström 1989). In the latter case there is a crucial limit to how many different musical parameters that can be cod-

35. In Brown’s presentation (1982:58f), it appears that Tchaikovsky had received a copy of the opera two years earlier, in the winter of 1875, that he saw the opera in Paris the following winter, and that he was most impressed by it. In a letter dated 1880 he describes it as a masterpiece and prophesies that within ten years it will become one of the most popular operas in the world, despite the fact that it had had no success at all in Paris (Volkoff 1975:287). Brown also draws attention to a similarity between one of Tatyana’s melodies in Eugene Onegin and the Fate theme in *Carmen* (1982:199f). In his letter from 1880, Tchaikovsky writes that Bizet’s music is ‘one of those rare pieces which are destined to reflect most strongly the musical aspirations of an entire epoch...’ (as quoted in Brown 1982:59). Volkoff’s translation is similar, but here the quotation continues: ‘It seems to me that our period differs from earlier ones in this characteristic: that contemporary composers are engaged in the pursuit of charming and piquant effects, unlike Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann. What is the so-called New Russian School but the cult of varied and pungent harmonies, of original orchestral combinations and every kind of purely external effect?’ (as quoted in Volkoff 1975:287).

36. Brown shows, for instance, that there are strong similarities between Wagner themes and the opening motive in Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony (1982:168).

ed and remembered. To make a fine point, one could say that in the former case a meeting takes place between “literacy” and “orality”.

A composer or a musicologist can choose which strategy to adopt, but as far as I can see, McClary’s analyses are often interpretative “readings” in the literary sense of the word! To point out the most obvious differences: when studying a score one can freeze musical processes, read them backwards, omit sections, study melody and harmony separately etc.

This means by extension that another question must also be raised: how many members of the audience were, or are, capable of understanding McClary’s interpretative readings while listening to the music (“readings while hearing”). The answer of course is that nobody knows! Thirty percent? Maybe more? And moreover, how big was/is this group in relation to the population as a whole? One percent?! Even if we don’t have the answers to these questions, the influence of music (in this case Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony) and the effects of its reception in a historical perspective since its first performance must be illuminated and discussed.

Brown (ibid:161ff) shows that Tchaikovsky was aware that the first movement of his Fourth Symphony was unusual and that its form was considerably nearer perfection than anything he had composed previously. One month after the first performance Tchaikovsky had written a letter to his colleague Taneyev, who had been somewhat reserved towards the work as a whole. In a letter to Tchaikovsky Taneyev had among other things said that the trumpet signals that open the symphony and which reappear later on, plus the changes of tempo in the first movement, led him to presume that it was programme music. Tchaikovsky answered:

As for your observation that my symphony is programmatic, I completely agree. The only thing I don’t understand is why you consider this a defect... my symphony is programmatic, but this programme is such that *it cannot be formulated in words*. /.../ In essence my symphony imitates Beethoven’s Fifth: that is, I was not imitating its musical thoughts, but the fundamental idea. /.../ I’ll add, moreover, that there is not a note... which I did not feel deeply, and which did not serve as an echo of sincere impulses within my soul. The exception is perhaps the middle of the first movement, in which there are contrivances, seams, glueings together – in a word, *artificiality*. (ibid:162f /the first italics are mine/)

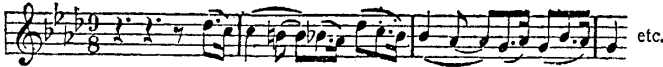
The statement in the letter: that the programme of the symphony cannot be formulated in words, may seem odd in the light of the fact that Tchaikovsky a week or so earlier had written a letter to his benefactress Nadezhda von Meck in which he described just such a programme (see illustration 3 below) This was because she had asked him what the symphony meant when he dedicated it to her. It emerges clearly

in the letter that no such programme existed at the time when Tchaikovsky was writing the symphony.

The introduction is the *seed* of the whole symphony, without a doubt its main idea:



This is *Fatum*, the fateful force which prevents our urge for happiness from achieving its end, enviously watches lest our welfare and peace should become full and unclouded, hangs over our head like Damocles' sword, and constantly, unceasingly, poisons our soul. It is unconquerable, invincible. One has to resign oneself and to languish aimlessly.



Discontent and despair grow stronger, become more scathing. Would it not be better to turn one's back upon reality and plunge into dreams:



O joy! At least one sweet and tender dream has appeared. Some beatific, luminous human image flies by, beckoning us on:



What bliss! How far away seems now the obsessive first theme of the allegro. The dreams have, little by little, entirely overpowered the soul. All that was gloomy and joyless has disappeared. Happiness is here, it has come. . . !

No! They were only dreams, and *Fatum* awakes us:



So life itself is the incessant alternation of painful reality and evanescent dreams of happiness. . . . No haven. . . . Sail on that sea until it encompass and drown you in its depth. Such, approximately, is the programme of the first movement.

This illustration, taken from Volkoff (1975:318) is a quotation from a letter by Tchaikovsky to Countess Nadezhda von Meck.

Tchaikovsky's programme has often been quoted – and should be an integrated factor in the study of performances and reception of the symphony in the past. It is included

in the pocket score to which I have had access, but unfortunately there is no mention of how long this has been praxis.

Consequently, when Susan McClary discusses the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony she starts out both from the programme and from Brown's comments. McClary considers that the motto of the movement has obvious military connotations and observes that for Tchaikovsky it symbolized fate³⁷, after which she continues with the following observation:

Against this oppressively patriarchal backdrop, the principal 'masculine' theme enters. In contrast to the more typical heroic opening themes, this appoggiatura-laden, limping theme is hypersensitive, vulnerable, indecisive. It is marked with yearning, with metaphysical angst in search of a moment of rhythmic or tonal stability. (McClary 1991:71)

Tchaikovsky does not provide a lengthy explanation of how this theme should be interpreted. He just says, by way of introduction to the second musical example (see illustration 3 above): "You can only reconcile yourself to it [fate] and languish fruitlessly" (Brown's translation). That McClary sees this as a masculine theme – even if less markedly so – probably has to do with late 18th century theorists' practice of referring to the traditional first and second subject in sonata form as "masculine" and "feminine" (Ratner 1980:219f). But, as we have already seen, the form of the movement, in Tchaikovsky's own words, was "out of the ordinary". Brown, on the other hand, takes Tchaikovsky's words as his starting-point when he describes the theme which he says "convincingly begets a sense of frustration – in this instance an inability to escape the workings of an implacable fate" (see also Brown 1982:167).

While Tchaikovsky introduces the second subject by writing: "Is it not better to turn away from reality and submerge yourself in daydreams?", by analogy McClary interprets this as the feminine theme. She has discovered "an attempted futile escape to A minor"³⁸ but when this fails "our protagonist desists; and in that off-guard condition, he encounters the second theme". Like the masculine theme, this is "no simple feminine theme"; instead, like Carmen's, it is "sultry, seductive, and slinky. Its contours are marked with chromatic slippage..." (ibid:71). Unlike the goal-orientated

37. In monotheistic religions, the force of destiny is a parallel to the power of god (God = man), while in the polytheistic system of Greek mythology, Ananke was the special god of fate.

38. Brown notes that the music starts off on 'a tonal expedition which has reached as far as a firm A minor'. The transition to A minor occurs in bar 70. Brown also shows that the movement has a clear harmonic plan: an excursion from mediant to mediant: F – A flat – C flat/ B – D – F (for graph see p. 170). This shows that Tchaikovsky did not in fact intend to establish the key of A minor but that the harmonic development that takes place in this lengthy development-like section finally comes to rest in the key of A flat minor.

masculine theme, McClary writes, the feminine theme is more static and irrational (just like Carmen's theme when she seduces Don José).

The fate of the main character ([the protagonist] = the man = theme 1) is similar to José's. His theme, McClary writes, "reappears inside this sensual, alien, terrain", but has now been tamed and paralyzed. This I do not understand, or rather, I cannot find any trace of theme 1 in theme 2 (see also below). McClary continues:

An even more languid theme (in the key area a sinister tritone away from the tonic) toys with him, much like a spider with a trapped fly. All thought of metaphysical quest is expunged. (ibid:71f)

As McClary herself mentions, her interpretation does not tally with Tchaikovsky's own account of the second theme ("He ascribes nothing negative to this part of the piece"). Instead he regards it as an illusory happiness, doomed to be crushed. It is difficult to understand how McClary can talk about "happiness" which is "crushed" here, words which in Tchaikovsky's commentary do not appear until the return of the Fate theme (compare illustration 3).

This ambiguity is explained, however, when we subsequently discover that McClary has interpreted the fourth musical example as belonging to theme 2 (compare her example 4b, p.73), unlike her guide Brown who refers to this theme as theme no. 3 (musical example 4, compare the illustration above. Even Tchaikovsky distinguished between them!). Thus we can now explain her idea that the protagonist's theme is to be found in a tamed and paralyzed state in this sensual and strange terrain (see also below). What is more, the example that Brown gives as theme 3 (example 128d in Brown and example 4b in McClary) is not the same as Tchaikovsky's (musical example 4 in the illustration above).

The reason for this confusion, Brown writes, was a mental aberration on Tchaikovsky's part when he wrote his letter to von Meck: "[his] memory for his own themes is not always infallible" (ibid:163). A similar comment is given in my score (Heugel) in connection with the fourth musical example. Firstly Tchaikovsky's words are quoted: "What joy! A tender and gentle dream appears. A human figure, serene and beneficent, passes rapidly and seems to call to us" – to which is added: "But here the composer, who is quoting from memory, makes a mistake, and does not refer to the 3rd theme until its repetition by the woodwind (bar 127) instead of mentioning it when it first appears (p. 22 bar 121)". If we compare this with the version of the letter in Volkoff (see above), this certainly seems to be the case; Tchaikovsky has written out the flute melody (bar 127) in his letter.

On the other hand, as mentioned previously, Brown illustrates Tchaikovsky's words with completely different bars, bars 134-137 (musical example 128d in Brown and musical example 4b in McClary). Brown has discovered that this third theme – an

amalgam of earlier ideas, including the Fate theme – is anticipated in the cellos (bar 121 /*ibid*:171/). Brown has a point when he identifies the actual presentation of the theme in bar 134: the theme is preceded here by an upbeat which is identical to the second theme's, while at the same time leading to a new key (C flat major = B major). For the listener this is easy enough to hear. McClary, however, does not comment on this at all. To her this passage is part of the feminine theme, which as we have seen was significant for McClary's interpretation.

Following this theme Tchaikovsky comments that: "The dreams have little by little, entirely overpowered the soul... Happiness is here, it has come...!" (Here, then, is the word "happiness" which we shall immediately find "crushed" by fate.) Unlike Tchaikovsky, both Brown and McClary attach particular importance to a figure (or theme) in bars 161-162. To Brown this theme is generated from previous material; I understand it as the first part of theme 4 (the upbeat and following descending triad). McClary sees it as the closing theme (musical example 4c) and writes:

Yet eventually the hero manages with tremendous effort to come to his senses, to pull himself from this drugged state, and to emerge with a triumphal theme to finish the exposition. (*ibid*:72)

Furthermore, she considers that the protagonist's triumph soon falls under the military call to arms. This follows on a passionate sequential episode, which, after a scale-like passage in descending octaves which is so typical for Tchaikovsky (bars 189-196), leads to the return of the Fate motive. McClary concludes with the following words:

- the military call suddenly breaks in. A long violent struggle ensues between the military material and our hero... No solution is reached... And as the protagonist lies in helpless exhaustion, the sluttish second theme reenters – in the key of the raised submediant rather than under the hegemony of the protagonist's tonic, as convention would demand... At the end of the movement, the first theme is presented in all its anguish, its plaintive *appoggiaturas* still unhealed, its complicity with the violent closure as bitter as Don José's (*ibid*:75)

To tie up all the loose ends: we now know that Tchaikovsky after completing the symphony sent a letter to a friend containing a loose programme, illustrated by musical examples (themes). He was naturally well aware that the form, system of modulations and thematic content of the first movement were very different from traditional sonata form. Even if we know that his composer colleagues were taken by surprise by this, we have no idea what effect the form of the first movement had on audiences. They were not unfamiliar with Tchaikovsky's musical language (compare such obviously programmatic pieces as *Romeo and Juliet* or *Francesca da Rimini*). Moreover, we can assume that Tchaikovsky's programme, once it became known to conductors, affected their interpretations of the work, and that those members of the audience who were aware of the programme were also affected. But once again it is not possible to give an

exact opinion of what this has meant for the historical interpretation or reception of the work.

It is apparent that Brown and McClary (who frequently refers to Brown) have interpreted Tchaikovsky's programme and understood the formal and conceptual content of the movement – in fact the movement as a whole – in different ways. McClary wishes to understand the music in relation to her reading of *Carmen*, and also to the fact that Tchaikovsky was enraptured by Bizet's opera. This was sufficient reason for her to examine “the way he reconstitutes the gender politics of both *Carmen* and of sonata conventions”. I can understand her reasoning in the latter case. Concerning the former claim, I consider that McClary has projected her feministic reading on Tchaikovsky's structure (score/ “listening”). Admittedly, like McClary, I am aware that one can hear extramusical associations even in “obdurately” abstract music, but I feel the need of further discussion concerning the status of the objects under comparison: in the first case a stage work with a libretto and in the second a purely instrumental work.

We have seen how McClary's approach has led her to decide that the first theme has to be a man, regardless of how unmanly the theme may appear in relation to the traditional masculine first subject in sonata form (McClary renames the theme as “the principal “masculine” theme at first, and later on refers to it alternately as “the protagonist's theme” and “his theme”). The theme is in 9/8 time, the melody has no larger intervals but consists almost entirely of major or minor seconds, it takes the form of a descending arc, and it is first presented *piano* by the violins and cellos. I therefore find it hard to see any reason to interpret it as masculine, whereas the Fate theme which has already been presented in the opening bars has most of the characteristics of a masculine theme. That the first theme should be “obsessively goal-oriented” I find impossible to hear: instead, to quote Tchaikovsky, it “languish[es] aimlessly”.

The second theme, McClary's feminine theme, is hardly more singable than the first theme, and not unlike it in essence. Since McClary (as I understand her interpretation) wishes to draw a parallel between Don José's fate and that of the hero, she integrates theme 3 (musical example 4 in illustration 3 above) in theme 2 and can thereby interpret this two-part theme (where the second part is a short passage from theme 1) as the protagonist being encapsuled and trapped in the female net. Although McClary has already seen/heard that the movement does not adhere to the traditional tonal organization of sonata form (the Fate theme and theme 1 are in F minor – theme 2 in A flat minor) she feels that there is an ominous significance in the fact that the passage where the principal and secondary themes are combined (McClary's example 4b) is in B major, “a sinister tritone away from the tonic”. The number of people that are capable of hearing this relationship between keys in the symphony is no doubt negligible. As experiments in music psychology have proved (Edlund /n.d./ and Cook 1990), people do not generally think in such terms. Edlund, for instance, has shown that lis-

teners easily accept that a theme begins in one key and ends in another. It depends entirely on how the whole structure hangs together: that a listener after a hundred bars should be aware of this theme's tonal relationship to the tonic key of the Fate theme seems to me somewhat far-fetched.

So far I have not mentioned the fact that McClary also discusses Tchaikovsky's personal circumstances immediately preceding the composition of the symphony; that he had just entered into a marriage which was almost immediately annulled, and that this year "was a crisis year in Tchaikovsky's psychological development". However she immediately goes on to say that:

This is not to suggest that the piece should be understood only as the narrative of a homosexual male, or even less that what I have presented is the only possible reading from a homosexual viewpoint. The piece has long been admired by listeners of various orientations who hear it as resonating with their own emotional experiences, and there is no reason why that should change. (ibid:77)

And of course it is precisely this which is both the strength and the weakness of the music: McClary *wants* to show that to her the symphony seems to bring up the question of "this no-win situation for the nineteenth-century homosexual male superbly (if pessimistically)" (ibid:79). Perhaps she wants too much in this particular case. I do not find her reading particularly convincing. However my reservation is not due to her aim – to read the musical discourse from a different, expressly political-sexual perspective – but rather because I do not think that her opinions/claims hold water in relation to the dialectical relationships that she sees between the structure of the music, Tchaikovsky's personal life, the spirit of the times and her fundamental feminist outlook³⁹. In his sociological survey the musicologist Peter Martin (1995) (who I mentioned previously) also arrives at the same conclusion: that McClary wants too much. To Martin, who always emphasizes the importance of what has already been established (that the meaning of music is socially constructed) it is problematic that McClary sometimes says that certain passages of the music "require certain responses from listeners", or that she defines the fundamental meaning of a certain piece of music – that *Carmen*, for example, is "fundamentally a paranoid fantasy". Martin continues:

Equally troubling, from this point of view, is McClary's commitment to the view that music 'can tell us things about history that are not accessible through any other medium' (1991:30) and that its power as a medium of communication derives from the

39. I cannot refrain from wondering how many readers are convinced by McClary's arguments? A tacit, political, postmodern and poststructuralist dilemma lies at the root of this question: how segmentalized can opinions become in a society that must hold together socio-culturally in order to function?

fact that ‘most listeners have little rational control over the way it influences them’ (1991:15).⁴⁰

I feel that McClary tends to see music as an independent entity, an agent that works on its own. As an ethnomusicologist I find it hard to understand how this could have come about, that is, how music could have become such an “impossible object” (compare below!).

McClary seems to mean that if musicologists study works like *Carmen* and Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony critically:

far from destroying our appreciation, examining the treatment of such issues as sexuality in these pieces can cause us once again to take them seriously. [...] they might even contribute to the creation of new models of gender and desire: models that do not pit mind against body, that do not demand shame – or death – as the price for sexual pleasure (ibid:79)

Here again I have to admit that I find it very hard to believe in such idealism: no interpretative reading of an instrumental work has ever given us – nor will it ever give us new social models. Nor can it set in motion the sort of processes that could achieve what McClary is hoping for. That McClary, thanks to the breadth of her competence, her brilliance and her feministic outlook, has exposed relationships and proposed hypotheses in several other contexts in her book that to a large extent have previously been invisible, is another matter (compare her fascinating article in Leppert & McClary, 1987, and what I consider to be her best work, *the book* on Bizet’s opera *Carmen*, 1992).

The general aims of feminism as a cultural theory: to expose and revise patriarchal attitudes towards social and biological sexuality (gender and sex), and in consequence to establish a new ideology, new meanings and a new culture, are certainly fine, lofty aims. But I think one reason why feminism generally was accepted later in musicology than in literary studies lies in the fact that music is a very special medium: the meaning/message of instrumental music can never be unequivocally lucid enough for feministic musicology to realize these latter aims – which to me are purely idealistic.

To phrase it differently: the structure of music, while naturally being socially mediated like everything else, will always be *sufficiently interpretable* for musicologists and others, consciously or unconsciously, to claim a preferential right of interpretation. More often than not, however, the determining factors – to use Bourdieu’s terms – are misrecognized by the actors. Among the most obvious examples throughout the course of history are ideology, power/weapons/violence, gender/sex, class/party/social hierarchy, nation/tribe/group, age, domicile etc., not to mention the latest and at present most powerful factor, the market.

40. The references in brackets in the quotation refer to *Feminine Endings* (1991).

In his article *Gender and Other Dualities of Music History* (1993), Leo Treitler begins by observing that such terms as masculine-<-> feminine, European <-> oriental, have been used by several different musicologists who specialize in the music of the Middle Ages to characterize two separate plainchant traditions: "Old Roman" and "Gregorian", respectively. He also quotes Willi Apel who considered that the logic of the Gregorian hymns was as uniform as Beethoven's sonatas, and writes that Apel managed by these means to save Gregorian Chant from being associated with the Orient.

Beethoven, who epitomizes the rational, masculine composer, is the bridge which Treitler then uses to lead him to Susan McClary's book *Feminine Endings*. The assertions that he has chosen to discuss have fundamental relevance to my discussion above⁴¹. In the article which Treitler deals with, McClary writes about the music of the contemporary American composer Janika Vandervelde. McClary considers that where form, rhythm, melody etc. are concerned, Vandervelde's music has a thoroughly feminine character. Treitler compares this to McClary's views on Beethoven:

Beethoven's symphonies add two other characteristics to the history of styles: assaultive pelvic pounding (for instance in the last movement of the Fifth Symphony and in all but the 'passive' third movement of the Ninth) and sexual violence. The point of recapitulation in the first movement of the Ninth is one of the most horrifying moments in music... (as quoted in Treitler 1993:36)⁴²

Treitler is perplexed by how these gender-labels arise. He claims that on the one hand McClary criticizes these socially constructed labels (masculine <-> feminine themes, for example), and on the other hand attacks both the theorists who created them and the contemporary textbook writers who pass on the tradition. But McClary also launches an assault on composers and the tradition they represent, accusing them of upholding the gender constructions of their times. Treitler adds:

In doing so she must assert, implicitly or explicitly, that instrumental music can and does embody or express those constructions. How she arrives at that premise... is problematic... She seems to work in parallel with literary critics... but in the absence of counterparts in musical works... she must herself construct them out of the mu-

41. My thanks to Margaret Myers who told me about this article. I had previously only cursorily read Ruth A. Solie's introduction to this collection of essays, as well as Ellen Koskoff's article.

42. This version of this quotation is not in *Feminine Endings*, but was included in her earlier article on *Carmen*. Compare also the debate in the *Journal of Musicology* 1991 (vol. IX, no. 3) where a rather hurt Peter C. van der Toorn swings his masculine, ideological sword against McClary, but, as Ruth Solie shows, in doing so manages to wound himself rather than causing McClary any discomfort. In any case, I don't put much score by "heated" scholastic debates of this description (as it turns out Martin has also commented on this discussion, compare 1995:159).

sical materials. In doing so she adopts the very stereotypes that she has deplored... then it is no longer gender-labelling itself to which she objects, but the male-dominated, gendered scenarios that have filled European music since the Renaissance. (ibid:36f)

What Treitler basically seems to be warning us against is a one-track essentialism⁴³ and an inverse form of “genderizing”. But he also reflects on what he calls “the rules of the game”. It is evident that these formulations and views can be regarded as a new discourse within a genderized musicology, but he considers that something important has been lost in the process: “In fact, as a speech-act it challenges the authority of the phrase ‘the music itself’” (ibid:42). I have certain reservations towards this formulation – to me the phrase “the music itself” is a purely philosophical construction – but I realize where Treitler’s doubts are likely to lead us. As he points out, the critic/musicologist runs the risk of confusing himself with the object and ignoring the meaning of the structure.⁴⁴

It is predictable as a next step that criticism will replace music and composers as the occasions for criticism. Perhaps there will be talk of the death of the composer, as there has been about the death of the author.⁴⁵ (ibid:42)

A great deal could of course be said about this prophecy: from our Swedish perspective it is obvious that we have two types of critics (at least!): a) music reporters and b) the critic as star. The former category mostly advertizes concerts and upholds tradition, the latter not infrequently confuses himself with the work in question. With this in mind we can continue by introducing Lawrence Kramer, a skilful writer and versatile

43. Yet another controversial term. By way of introduction, Solie (1993) defines it as ‘the doctrine that certain characteristics are essential and innate to certain groups’ (ibid:3), but she widens the semantic field of the term considerably later on in her article. Attempts have also been made in philosophy (unsuccessfully) to define the essence of art simply and tangibly. Shusterman (1992) writes: ‘When mimesis eventually lost its appeal and authority, other theories were proposed, the most dominant being the theories of expression, form, play, and symbol. None of them, however, have satisfied philosophy’s traditional demand to define art as a special category of things and reflect its singular essence. All failed...’ (ibid:37). Compare also Dennet’s fascinating exposition on qualia, this something, material or spiritual, which must be the essence itself and which makes us enjoy a piece by, say, Vivaldi so much. As Dennet convincingly shows, there is no such ‘something’.

44. An interesting 19th century discussion that touches upon this matter is reported in Bernd Sponheuer’s article ‘Der ‘Gott der Harmonien’ und ‘die Pfeife von Pan’ (1991).

45. This phenomenon, which Aronowitz (1994) calls “The Critic as Star” (ch.3) has long been in existence, however. I consider Adorno an obvious representative of this school. His perennial chipping away at his formulations to the point where the comprehensible begins to disappear in its own contradiction, appears to be his trademark. In Terry Eagleton’s terms: every sentence has to work overtime, every phrase is a dialectic miracle: ‘fixing a thought in the second before its disappearance into its own contradictions’ (1990:342).

musicologist. Or should we by analogy view him (and McClary) as *the musicologist as star*?

Impossible objects

Let me begin this section with a short quotation from Ludwig Wittgenstein: “All explanation must go, and pure description take its place.” (1992:§109). This apparently simple recommendation is probably one of the most radical pieces of advice that has ever been given to the philosophers and linguists that are involved in how our language functions, and, by extension, in how human communication and knowledge is formed. Wittgenstein advises us to give up looking for the solution to “the great problem” and instead study how speech acts and language games function within the human being’s life form⁴⁶. To follow Wittgenstein’s advice is a highly complicated undertaking, not least because our world has already been constituted, so to speak, by our use of language. Furthermore, there is a second basic tenet which John Shotter (1993) calls “the well-known Wittgensteinian slogan”:

In everyday life, words do not in themselves have a meaning, but a use, and furthermore, a use only in a context; as tools, or as instruments for uses in the ‘making’ of meanings – ‘think of words as instruments characterized by their uses’. (ibid:79)

If it is a complicated process to use language as a tool to understand language, the belief that we can use music to understand music would appear (a priori!) to be absurd (which is presumably why this idea is an apt metaphor for the poet Göran Sonnevi: “music cannot be gainsaid except by new music” /from *The Impossible*, 1975/!).

But of course this is not what McClary has done; she has done what musicologists have “always” done – she has interpreted music that has been mediated through society and translated it into words and concepts⁴⁷. And this is also what Kramer (1990) does. As Richard Taruskin formulates it (on the back cover), Kramer’s study is “the freshest approach to the cursed question of musical meaning... [and] a useful guide to current modes of literary-critical thinking”.

Kramer’s point of departure is that music means something that we can talk about. What he wants to do is to show:

46. Compare Wilhelmi (1995) who gives several illustrations of how problems have been solved by using Wittgensteinian working methods.

47. In discussing McClary I have indirectly taken a standpoint on the much-contested issue in musicology: does music actually mean anything – and if so, what does it mean – and furthermore, how do we understand what it means. Music is not just something that is stimulating and fun or horrible and depressing to play or listen to, music also ‘means’ something. (See also Fiske’s discussion below)

- that the semantic precision or imprecision of music simply does not matter. Music, among other things, is a form of activity: a practice. If we take it in these terms, we should be able to understand it less as an attempt to say something than as an attempt to *do* something. (ibid:xii)

Methodologically, in an interdisciplinary spirit, he aims to conjoin elements of post-structuralism and critical or nonidealizing historicism. He states that he wishes to confirm the premise that works of music have discursive meanings which are equivalent to those of literary texts. These meanings are not extramusical but are woven into the structure of the works, and are produced as part of the production and reproduction of culture.

After a brief (and in parts somewhat strange) discussion of Kant's views on music, Kramer ties together Austin's theory of speech acts with Derrida's critique of the same theory. On the basis of this he develops various concepts/tools which he compares to open hermeneutical windows which will help him to look inside the music. Apart from more traditional "windows" such as titles, texts or poetry set to music, programme notes and paintings, he introduces the term "structural tropes" (see below). Kramer himself emphasizes that his interpretations do not exclude the possibility of other versions, and adds:

Lacking the power of exclusion, interpretations must convince by other means. My claim in this book is that they convince by their power to sustain a detailed scrutiny of a text that also reaches deep into the cultural context. (ibid:15)

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Fr-a-g-me-n-ts" by Franz Schubert, spanning measures 1 to 23. The score is written for piano and is in common time (C). The tempo is marked "Lento". The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or F minor). The score is divided into six systems, each containing two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 1 through 23 are indicated above the notes. The score includes various musical markings: "p" (piano) at measure 1, "dim." (diminuendo) at measure 13, "slentando" (ritardando) at measure 18, and "sostenuto" at measure 21. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord in measure 23. A small asterisk is placed below the bass staff at the beginning of measure 19.

It is a simple matter to ascertain that Kramer's theoretical base is both well thought-out and well-planned, irrespective of how well-founded the reader (I myself, in this case!) may consider it to be. My main criticism, however, is that neither in Kramer's book nor in McClary's is there a theoretical discussion of the relationship between the listener in a social context, the structure of the music, and the historical process of change⁴⁸. The effect that the classical music that Kramer discusses has had since the end of the 18th century is always primarily dependent on how, why, when and where people have listened to it.

Kramer applies his method in various ways to several pieces and amongst these I shall refer briefly to his analysis of Chopin's Prelude in A minor (opus 28 /see illustration 4/), a piece which, due to its strangeness, has attracted a good deal of attention since its first publication.

We begin where Kramer finishes his chapter, since he waits until this point to inform the reader that Chopin was working on the preludes while staying in Majorca in 1838. His physical health was poor; he was coughing up blood, "which made him an object of 'horror and fright' to the local populace." A few months later, in a letter to a friend in which he refers to another "chaotic" work (the Polonaise in C minor), he compares himself to a mushroom whose appearance is deceptive: it looks edible but turns out to be poisonous when picked and eaten. Kramer speculates:

In writing strange music, then, Chopin finds a way to revalue the object of horror and fright that his body has so recently been. (ibid:101)

If we now return to the beginning of the chapter, we understand the title "Impossible objects" somewhat better. Thus the connection, which Kramer carefully avoids laying on the table at the outset but which must have affected his train of thought, resembles the classical issue of "intentional fallacy"; whether or not the composer's personal state/life and his/her intentions with the composition are directly reflected in the music itself.

Kramer begins by establishing that the Prelude must have appeared perplexing and deliberately ugly from an early 19th century perspective – and adds that it probably also appears so to us today:

Its harmonic processes are perplexing by any standards. (...) It is not riddling but disruptive: it repeatedly breaks away from structural or textual patterns while maintaining a deceptive uniformity in melody and accompaniment. (ibid:72)

48. Research into musical reception has admittedly been a neglected branch in musicology, but is now on the increase. One of the newer works which provides a deeper insight into the considerable relevance of this field is *Rezeptionsästhetik und Rezeptionsgeschichte in den Musikwissenschaft*, hrsg. Krummacher & Danuser, Laaber Verlag, 1991)

Kramer then asks himself what it is that keeps making the work break apart and here his reasoning glides imperceptibly; the reader is no longer quite sure from which time perspective the work is going to be viewed – purely (or as far as possible) by the standards of the 1830s, or from our contemporary perspective on the 1830s. Kramer's perspective (though not explicitly stated or discussed) appears to be a conflation of the two (and sure enough – Gadamer is mentioned in the first chapter!)⁴⁹.

After this, Kramer – like so many others before him (in footnote no.2 Kramer refers specifically to Subotnik) – makes a thorough analysis of the work. He bases his analysis both on a personal interpretative listening and on an interpretative reading. As in other theoretical works, it is tacitly implied that the fact that the work begins in E minor and ends in A minor is a problem. However, as I mentioned earlier, research in the field of music psychology has already shown that the ordinary listener does not find this in any way remarkable. It is easy enough to perform conjuring tricks with the harmonic cards with the help of modulations and structural processes.⁵⁰

Kramer problematizes the contrasts between harmony and melody in the piece in various ways. By comparing the prelude with the contents of two poems he finds support for his idea that the piece can be understood as “[a] web of dialectic reversals... [and a] self-interfering mesh of ironies”. He then asks himself what motivated Chopin to write in this manner and suggests that the position of the piece in the cycle of preludes is in itself designed to thwart expectations.

In the cycle the preludes are arranged around a double circle of fifths, where a prelude in a major key is followed by its counterpart in the relative minor. By suggesting the key of G major, he writes, “the prelude makes a feint at the wrong circle of fifths...” (ibid:83). To me, this statement is a typical example of theoretical listening: the “ordinary” listener, that is to say, a person with an average interest in music, clearly

49. In the field of scientific theory Daniel Dennet has given us a drastic example which points both backwards and forwards in time. The point of departure is that if we are to understand how Lutheran church-goers heard a church cantata in Leipzig in 1725, we have to recreate their ‘memosphere’ in order to be able to ‘respond to those tones with the same heartaches, thrills, and waves of nostalgia.’ But he also adds: ‘We can’t do the job precisely, but only because we can’t forget or abandon all that we know that the Leipziger didn’t know.’ And then comes his drastic example: ‘imagine that a musicologist unearthed a heretofore unknown Bach cantata. Everyone would be aching to hear it..., to experience for the first time the ‘qualia’ that the Leipzigers would have known, had they only heard it, but it turns out to be impossible, for the main theme... by an ugly coincidence, is the first seven notes of ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer’. We who are burdened with that tune would never be able to hear Bach’s version as he intended or as the Leipzigers would have received it’ (1991:387f).

50. A more exact answer as to how the ordinary listener experiences the key progressions in this prelude can only be obtained through empirical experiments.

hears that the piece begins in a minor key (E minor) and does not change to a major key until bars 4-5. The first impression is the most important. An alternative theoretical “reading” shows that the piece begins in the dominant minor and ends in the tonic minor (A minor). Listeners do not reflect on the cycle’s internal system of key relationships when they hear one isolated prelude, nor do they ask; “what is the tonal relationship between this prelude and the next one (or the previous one)?”.

Kramer, however, suggests an even more far-reaching interpretation; that Chopin is concerned with the relationship between subjectivity and time – “more particularly the too-keen subjectivity of dialectic – and musical time... time as harmonized” (ibid:83). In an extensive discussion Kramer then implies what this means in terms of harmony/melody (unfortunately it is impossible to make a brief summary of his reasoning), saying, among other things, that the silence in bar 19 is the peak of tension in the prelude, its unexpected climax.⁵¹

As Kramer immediately points out, he could go even farther in his interpretation. To make his reasoning clear I would like to quote a longer passage. First he poses two questions: why did Chopin incorporate so many dialectic patterns in such a short piece, and why did he combine so many different patterns, superimposing them in a sort of loose conceptual polyphony?:

One answer lies in the recognition of a structural trope that forms or pictures what might be called impossible objects – taking the term object to refer to the target of powerful feelings, as the phrase object of desire. Objects in this sense are usually symbolic representations of persons, in which form they figure prominently in psychoanalysis. What I call an impossible object is a body or a body-substitute... with three salient characteristics: 1) It is excessive either in beauty or deformity; 2) it arrests an observer by its irrevocable strangeness; 3) it exerts a fascination that arouses desire, repulsion, or both at once. (ibid:85)

Once again, Kramer points to analogous phenomena in literature and art that are both earlier and later in time than the prelude; Géricault’s *Study of Dissected Limbs* (1818-19), later novels by Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *A New Year’s Adventure*. His intention is to convince the reader that these works produce a similar reaction as the prelude. The works gave the audience “the epistemological confusion” which they desired (ibid:88)⁵². Kramer also counts virtuoso pieces from the Romantic era as “impossible objects”. To me these are “objects” of a completely different kind. But Kramer points out that composers/performers were ascribed superhuman qualities when they played these bravura pieces. I can understand the fascination that this

51. The silence is so supercharged, Kramer says, that more than one pianist has defended himself against it by holding the sustaining pedal down throughout the whole bar. This bar can obviously be understood in many other ways, for instance as a rhetorical transition leading to the relaxed and ‘harmonious’ ending.

phenomenon held for audiences of those times (which also applies to present-day audiences: Horowitz's performance of The Star-Spangled Banner, for instance, or Maradona's dribbling past five players in the World Cup in Mexico), but I consider that this admiration has little to do with the syntactical-semantic musical field within which Kramer previously placed Chopin's prelude.

Although I have to admit that I am impressed by Kramer, I think that he pulls the strings a little too dextrously and tries to incorporate too much. His deconstructivistic defence: "A chapter devoted to incoherence should not tie things too neatly" is less impressive.

Kramer's brilliant style of analysis makes considerable demands on his readers. Besides having a broad humanistic education they must also believe in the assumption that musical structure can be interpreted, reinterpreted and translated into our predominant method of communication – language. They have to believe Kramer's claims about the way the inner meaning of music is constructed (compare above and p.1 in Kramer) and so on. What is problematical, just as it was with McClary, can be expressed simply: how many people can follow Kramer's reasoning and are prepared to accept it? Remembering Wittgenstein's advice and knowing how difficult it is to solve the major issues (in our case the meaning of music), one would need to have a firm belief in the plausibility of Kramer's method, and preferably also be able forget certain epistemological problems (see below).

Of course one could say that Kramer's interpretations (which are basically hermeneutical) are not that different from Kretschmar's and others before him, but I consider that they are. Kretschmar's interpretations (in *Führer durch den Konzertsaal* 1887) were never as far-reaching and they were probably comprehensible to a relative-

52. Kramer could perhaps have discussed the term "the sublime" in this context. This concept became increasingly important to 19th century philosophers and music theorists, and seems to have certain properties in common with the 'impossible object' that Kramer describes here. Le Huray & Day write that the sublime could cause violent feelings and compare this with Hoffmann's famous article on Beethoven's instrumental music: "Hoffmann experienced fear, horror, suffering even, and a longing for the infinite that he felt was the 'essence of romanticism' " (1981:6). For Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770-1834), the sublime in music consisted among other things of figurations and harmonies which stimulated the fantasy beyond what was normal. Here there were no "flowing melodies and gentle cadences, but something that appears intractable to rhythmic laws". This could produce a terrifying effect (Michaelis in le Huray & Day 1981:290). In the middle of the 19th century Gustav Schilling (1803-81) describes the sublime object as being basically both attractive and repulsive at the same time (ibid:473). Another kindred concept is the grotesque, which is used as an explanatory metaphor in different branches of cultural studies, including Beinhorn in her analysis of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. Compare also Barkefors 1995:389.

ly large proportion of the middle class at the beginning of this century who had in interest in music.

My doubts about too far-reaching interpretative suggestions are also incorporated in Cook's (1990) critique. He considers that musicological listening and musicologists' ways of raising questions about music are totally different from most people's way of listening to and enjoying music⁵³. Alf Björnberg (1995) has recently discussed this problem complex from the perspective of popular music research where it has primarily taken the form of a conflict between musicologists and mass media theorists/sociologists.

While the former have focused on the music, the latter have regularly ignored the musical structure and concentrated on *all* extramusical aspects. According to Björnberg, this to a large extent is due to "the expert status of music-analytical discourse and the concomitant reluctance on the part of 'non-experts' to regard such analysis as relevant to a context-oriented understanding of music and its cultural significance" (ibid:1). In connection with Cook, Björnberg points out that music-theoretical tradition has focused on the production of music instead of its reception and that this disparity is due to the general problem of finding – "an appropriate verbal meta-language with which to account for and interpret musical experience"⁵⁴.

Björnberg entertains hopes that where popular music is concerned, musicologists will be able to find new pathways that lead forward with the help of semiotic and other newly forged musicological tools. And there is no doubt that all paths must be tried, but only on the understanding that the listener must not be left in the lurch. For however much we turn the concepts of music, musical meaning, and musical communication upside-down and inside-out, this complex is inextricably bound up with how music is used – its role and function – and how people listen to music.

As I see it, before very long there will be no difference between "New Musicology" and "New Popular Musicology". Within both branches researchers will assiduously attempt to conjoin cultural theories with musicology's traditional and analytical

53. Furthermore, Cook claims that the musicological way of analyzing/understanding music is only directed towards those who actively have a similar cultural knowledge. He refers to this as a mythopoeic and non-scientific form of explanation: 'Just as a musicological study of music should be musicological and therefore not scientific, so a scientific study of music should be scientific and therefore not musicological (1990:243).

54. Björnberg also quotes Barthe's formulation that descriptions of music often resort "to the poorest [of] categories: the adjective", an observation which of course many others have made. If we return to the time of Chopin we find William Crotch (1775-1847) who in 1820 or thereabouts wrote: "Music has been called the language of nature; but it is a very imperfect language; it is all adjectives and no substantives" (as quoted in le Huray & Day p. 436)

methods. Assuredly different researchers with different starting-points will interpret, listen to, and hear music in the most divergent ways. And maybe methods will also be developed which are founded on the special character of music, methods that must basically be musicological and not philological. For I am convinced that the phylogenesis of music, that is to say, the function of music as a factor in the biological development of the human race, is different from the function of language. Cultural development has not had the power to change this.

Norbert Elias – all's well that ends well

A great deal has taken place in society since Chopin played his prelude to his artist friends⁵⁵ in Paris over 150 years ago and this has naturally affected how we feel and think. That an individual's general disposition, his way of thinking and listening, is altered by the socio-historical process is one of many important thoughts in Norbert Elias's theoretical nexus, which I shall refer to by way of conclusion as a complement from the field of scientific theory to the Gothenburg School's ethnomusicological and critical profile.

One could perhaps describe Elias as a historically-oriented sociologist who attached great importance to combining empirical knowledge from different fields. Elias's sphere of activity was gigantic⁵⁶. He has even written a sociological study on Mozart which includes many of his central ideas.

Elias's theories, I feel, can help us form a basic scientific approach for social scientists as well as humanists. For Elias the individual was always inseparable from society, just as our language, our knowledge and our consciousness are all intimately connected:

No consciousness without knowledge, no knowledge without consciousness. Consciousness is merely another word for the condition in which stored sound-symbols, or in other words knowledge as a means of orientation, can be mobilized at will in the normal way. (1991:119)

55. Who knows how stylistically daring Chopin's improvisations were?! Chopin's harmonies were generally experienced as daring during his lifetime.

56. The *Civilizing Process* vol. 1 and 2, (1982), *The Symbol Theory* (1991), *The Court Society* (1969), *Involvement and Detachment* (1987) and *Mozart; on the Sociology of a Genius* (1991) are some of his most important works. The sociologist Stephen Mennell's unparalleled study *Norbert Elias – an Introduction* (1989) is recommended as a short cut to Elias's thinking. Of course, Elias's research has also been criticized. Mennell discusses, or rather refutes, the most common objections in his book (1982:227-270). Among the works and critics' opinions that Mennell discusses is the first part of Hans Peter Duerr's huge trilogy (1988). Duerr's later works (1990 and 1993) are not discussed (Mennell's second edition was published in 1992).

This means that previously accepted thought patterns/knowledge can only exist as a result of the cumulative capacity of human culture. Knowledge was built up slowly to start with, but the process has gradually accelerated (due to writing, books, computers etc. and the reproduction of printed publications). This long continuous chain of transmitted experiences and knowledge is a result of our biological malleability and capacity.

Like Wittgenstein, Elias was almost allergic to defining concepts; it was contrary to his conviction that everything is a process. A word always stands in a processual relationship to other words, in the same way that an isolated individual can never be understood without his social context. In Wittgenstein's words, private language games are nonsensical. A person is always influenced by the different types of groups that he is a part of – what Elias called *figurations*: families, groups, tribes, nations etc., within which processes of change take place. These processes, just like processes in nature, are blind and unpredictable.

Elias's time perspectives were enormous; it takes time for the results of processual change to become visible. But it was equally important to Elias to emphasize that people's way of thinking and acting changed concurrently: sociogenesis and psychogenesis develop hand in hand, a fact which is often forgotten in musicology. Musicologists have access to the music (Tchaikovsky, Chopin and so on) in its notated form and to recordings of the music, and are deluded into believing that the composers, the performers and the listeners of those times read/heard the music in the same way that we do, just because we today think that we are listening to it in the same way, or have arrived at a historically informed interpretation on period instruments. But this is not of course the case: as Elias's findings have taught us, a person's position in time and space influences his way of thinking, planning, understanding, interpreting, seeing, listening and so on. What looks/looked the same is/was not the same, what sounds/sounded the same does/did not sound the same.⁵⁷

The tempting ease with which theorists like McClary and Kramer slip from one century to another not infrequently makes me uncertain where they are – that is to say, where *I* am. The virtuosity of their literary style can – I fear – delude me into accepting their so-called privileged readings and/or interpretative listenings as feasible, or perhaps even reasonable – who knows? I might even find them correct!⁵⁸ I suspect

57. Similarly, in connection with Elias's so-called game model, Mennell points out that Elias distinguishes between “the unchanging form and the changing content of knowledge and identifies the form with an eternal ‘logic’ rooted in immutable a priori rules of human reasoning. Thus when ‘structure’ is identified with ‘logical order’ in this way, it acquires a peculiarly static connotation... [...] One theme of Elias's work is to lead sociologists to think in terms not of ‘change of structures’ or ‘structure and process’, but rather in terms of ‘structures of change’ and ‘the structure of processes’ ” (1989:264).

that their studies could be equally interesting to literary historians and other readers with a general cultural interest as to musicologists.⁵⁹

What Elias aimed to achieve with his research was to prove that social scientists and humanists theoretically/empirically can rise to a higher epistemological plane, where the air and the view facilitate the creation of constructive syntheses. In 1984 Elias wrote:

The theory of civilization and state formation, the symbol theory of knowledge and the sciences and, more broadly, the theory of processes and figurations that I have tried to elaborate are neither Marxian nor liberal, neither socialist nor conservative. The hidden party doctrines, the veiled social ideals dressed up in scholarly garb seem to me not only fake but sterile. That was – and is – undoubtedly one of the reasons for the difficult reception this theory, and the books in which it is contained, have had. (1994:134)

Since Elias wrote these words a quantity of works by him have been published, and before very long a large amount of secondary literature will undoubtedly be available.

For me his research has been a source of new inspiration and a new way of confronting reality.⁶⁰ By using a theory/method which is grounded in empirical knowledge and which presupposes an ethnological and empathetic aptitude, I consider that it is possible to interpret my own lifeworld and to describe the Others', so that the Others inversely can become acquainted with and understand mine, and also recognize their own.⁶¹

58. The relationship between form and content is an age-old issue. Today this as an exceedingly commonplace problem: the surface appearance of the packaging has become increasingly important as a sales argument. The scent of the perfume is confused with the seductive shape of the bottle. Advertising (and advertisements) also have their own discourse. These examples may seem a far cry from New Musicology and the above discussion, but they have several substantial points in common. A special discourse, or, if you prefer, a new language game is being created within musicology, which in part has been adopted from neighbouring disciplines. Those who do not know "the rules of the game" are perhaps more easily charmed by the form without fully understanding the content.

59. In a review of the anthology *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (1994), Mary Ann Smart discusses this "problem" in the introduction: "Many of the writers adopt a highly personal style... When academic discourse becomes personalized to this extent, however, literary skill takes on considerable importance." (1995, no. 4, p. 1280)

60. Compare Kilminster's preface in *The Symbol Theory*, 1991. Elias himself always denied that his research was an "ism" since he claimed that his research was not connected to any school or party. In the light of this, perhaps the tricky question as to whether his method is yet another Grand Theory or not can also be answered. For a postmodernist like Lyotard, Elias's research would presumably be counted as a modernistic meta-discourse (compare Lyotard 1984: preface /first published in French in 1979).

In conclusion: the Gothenburg School's ethnological interest led (implicitly and explicitly) to an interest in the Others, which contributed to the fact that the fundamental content of Foucault's discourse did not seem strange to us, even if the presentation and the language were. We also had a pre-understanding of structuralism, poststructuralism and deconstructionism, inasmuch as our music-theoretical handicraft had already taught us to "decompose" musical structure, but at the same time we were well aware that it was not the decomposition itself which gave the music its significance/meaning⁶². Our knowledge of music theory certainly led to an admiration for the enormously skilled craftsmanship which the composers exhibited. As a rule our admiration for our house gods grew even deeper during this analytical and interpretative reading. But our analytical proficiency did not alter the fact that music's significance/meaning is formed by the way people experience music in its socio-economic context. Besides, nearly all of us were actively involved in at least two musical traditions: not only art music but also jazz/rock/pop/, whose discourse, message and meaning are quite different.⁶³ Combinations of these forms also existed; during the 1960s and 70s mostly in the form of cross-overs between jazz and art music.

What I am saying is that we broke down what we heard in different ways according to our individual points of departure, and, equally obviously, we heard the music in relation to the conventions of the various different genres. From the point of view of communication theory, music is a far more redundant system than language. Just consider the constant repetitions – motives/phrases that are replayed again and again, repeated formulas and other recurring conventions. If the syntax of language had similar characteristics, we wouldn't get much said, or rather, we would never stop talking.

What happens when music communicates/means something and how this happens, is a problem that human beings have reflected on for thousands of years, and to which

61. To achieve this is by no means an easy task. As mentioned earlier, a short but excellent article by Ellen Koskoff which discusses this problem, that is to say, the difference between the ethnologist, 'the narrating self', and the things/individuals who are being studied, 'the carefully constructed Other', is to be found in *Musicology and Difference* (1993). Koskoff describes here how essential it is that different perspectives emerge in the theorist's descriptions and analyses. In conclusion she writes that she would like to -"call attention to the many intentional or unintentional biases through which so-called raw data, whether currently ethnographic or historic, are filtered, and to suggest that we begin to integrate perspectives so that we may better portray the wholeness of cultures, both observed and lived, rather than remain content telling stories that are less about the Other than about ourselves' (1993:163).

62. We were also aware that to a certain extent we heard the structure of the music in different ways on different occasions.

63. An unusual musicologist who is equally at home in 18th century classical music and the music of West Africa is Kofi Agawu (1991, 1995)

there is still no satisfactory solution. Music theorists, philosophers, semioticians, music psychologists and others persevere in their work of mapping out and decomposing this question. In a recently published work by Stephen Davies (1994), the reader is confronted in the usual manner by an assortment of theories concerning the parallels between language and music and the significance/meaning of music, including hypotheses proposed by Nelson Goodman, Eduard Hanslick, Peter Kivy, Susanne Langer and Leonard Meyer, to name a few of them in alphabetical order. Halfway through the extremely comprehensive and well-written book Davies writes:

I have suggested that music is not usefully compared to a natural language with respect to meaning. Neither does music comprise a special, nondiscursive symbol system aiming at denotation. Music does not have depictive content as paintings do. The emotions heard in music cannot be explained as those felt and vented by composers... Neither does the expressiveness of music consist in its power to move the listener, even if listeners are sometimes moved by music. (1992:201)

This quotation does not exactly produce a feeling of euphoria, but Davies finally offers the reader a sophisticated version of the argument that music, if listened to as music, presents “emotion characteristics” which the composers are trained to be able to convey (ibid:277, 325ff, 377ff). There is, however, a general lack of discussion on the relation between intra- and extramusical relationships, but as Davies himself points out, his book is mainly directed towards music philosophers (sic!).

In another work on the meaning of music, Harold Fiske (1990) discusses several of the theories mentioned previously from a music psychologist’s standpoint. Fiske shows that when it comes to understanding how music can transmit meanings there is in fact only one possible explanation. He arrives at the conclusion that expression in music is not part of the musical structure, that the listener cannot code the composer’s intentions, if any, from the sound structure itself, and therefore the only possible alternative left to discuss is what he calls the “appearance-value” of the music:

- [i.e. that] specific expressive reference originates with the listener in response to some life experience affect finding association with some particular realized tonal-rhythmic structure or some multi-structural relationship. (1990:125)

This “appearance-value” is of a connotative character and for the listener can vary from “a sense of emotional-tonal equivalence to the metaphorical”, which Fiske considers can never be the same from one individual to the next. Fiske draws what to an ethnomusicologist is the obvious conclusion:

Similar appearance-value seems to be a more likely possibility, particularly between individuals from similar environments *who have experienced the same musical language under similar conditions*. The result is an illusion of communication created by a co-incident event. (ibid:127, my italics)

Even if Fiske – from a scientific paradigm – considers that it is impossible to show how this actually takes place from an individual starting-point, I consider that his explanation is easily combined with Elias's thoughts and my ethnomusicological outlook. However, (in agreement with McClary's and Kramer's views) I am not prepared to abandon the idea that the structure of music has meaning in itself, given that meaning is created in the dialectical relationship between structure and individuals in their socio-political environment.

While the world in many aspects is shrinking, it is becoming increasingly common to say that everything and everyone is different. The question is: *how* different are we? Well aware that we *are* living in postmodern times, it would perhaps serve us better to focus on what is similar. As is by now apparent, I am not averse to the expansion of methods and approaches which the many-headed New Musicology school has involved. However I feel that there is a risk that interpretations of the meaning and significance of music may be based on a too personal and literary "reading" of the musical structure. I wonder what will happen when (if) a new approach, a new musicological discourse, gains the preferential right of interpretation, based on an altered ideology and new power factors.

This does not however prevent me from continuing to work towards finding new syntheses and trying to combine ideas from New Musicology, popular music research, deconstructionism, cultural theories and music psychology etc. In addition, since I am convinced that the meaning/significance of music is socially constructed, I shall not give up the project of trying to understand the function, role, reception, meaning and significance etc. of music as mutually dependent on the four factors shown in illustration 2 (see above): a) the Individual = the person's background, temperament and opportunities, b) the Situation = when and where the music is performed, c) the Music = the structure of the music, and d) the Performance = how the music is played and how it sounds.

This somewhat fragmentary survey of contemporary musicology and cultural studies strengthens my conviction that the critical and ethnomusicological method of working which from the start has been the hallmark of the "Gothenburg School" will remain the basis of our future studies.

Translation: Cynthia Zetterquist

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