

(We) encounter a piece of music  
Today the "we" → "whose knowledge"? or knowledge from where (positionality)

Standpoint epistemology — Insider epistemology  
"other" ways of knowing — In most of these, Central move → rejecting rational/detached inquiry in favor of more participatory, group-oriented, experiential, body modes of knowledge  
- Today: overviews of feminist theories of 2 fields: aesthetics (Korsmeyer) epistemology (Code)

Specifically feminist, but the arguments could be used on behalf of any subaltern epistemology or standpoint epistemology: gender / feminist / gay-lesbian / African-American / postcolonial / etc. Structure of argument seems always to be the same (dismissal of linear, rational, analytical)  
So → Structure of argument will matter, as will its content + range of applicability.

[ Presentation ]

① Both articles indict pre-existing Western modes of perception as flawed and partial  
E.g. =

a) Korsmeyer → Aesthetic system is gendered ("hidden", 146) in such a way as to exclude women's characteristic modes of perception -- or the modes that have been attributed to "concepts of femininity" (149)

1) sight, hearing = "distance senses" (149) = male ["cognitive senses"] altered w/ reason 148

2) touch, taste, smell = pleasurable but lesser (female)

→ Male <sup>p. 152</sup> gaze = distanced, neutral, male-pleasure-oriented, claim of <sup>150</sup> disinterestedness, neutrality, "universal", etc. = <sup>155</sup> autonomy as male

- "feminine aesthetic" — releases what was suppressed (152)

- the <sup>153</sup> body + <sup>153-54</sup> physicality — "positivity" (154) — Discuss?

transgressing boundaries (art, non-art 155, 156) — recovery of craft as an "art" 157 —

Participatory, emotive, touch (158-59) — release of <sup>163</sup> emotion  
& theories of emotion. "The body, feeling, and emotion" 166

a newly varied reinscription of the old Nietzsche trope? (Apollo-Dionysus) — or something else?

— Holsinger — 3:00

— denigrating the corporeal —

Music — a product of human bodies

(cf. Turgenev/aesthet)

traditional music analysis → non-embodied + hence homophobic —

- also masculine (anti-feminine)

- white professional

— corporeal devaluation among music historians — "inherent eroticism" of vocal polyphony  
"act of resistance to ideology" ... TRUE? MARGOT?

Musiology of Empathy } we should be sincere" ? or is this "Verstehen" / Gadamerian  
- identify with them.

Does not take the challenge

Does not argue for his claims — rather asserts them —

BIASED? SPECIAL PLEADING?

Not reading Rick Cohn

"analyze and p. 156  
→ deconstruct concept of 'art'"

7/2

② Korsmeyer on Art → If the argument is contra distanced observation, neutrality, "disinterested observation of the "public object" (159) and pro-participation, intimacy, touch, the body, and spontaneous emotional flow (considered here as feminine)

Does this mean:

- For MUSIC the proper mode of behavior is <sup>ONLY</sup> performance:
  - Performance w/ close personal bonding, making "neutral" words + descriptions unnecessary? (This intuitive approach, indeed, is from the performer's peculiar attitude)
- Is Music Theory (or Hist) inevitably concerned with neutral things distanced as objects (159)? Masculine? Or is this a call for a Music Theory that begins with the personalized performative act? (or one's performance experience?)
- Is that Music Theory? Or is Music Analysis a participatory, tactile (or can it be?)
- Or is Korsmeyer merely calling for a diff. standard of evaluation? (Don't criticize X+2 when they do that or don't do that?)

Heidegger's Vorhandenheit?  
Barthes "words" (paternal law)

Is the separation of knowledge implicitly demeaning for both men + women?

② Code - call for standpoint epistemology, a stairied epistemology where the positionality of the observer is crucial (no single true story)

Contra → empiricist neutrality-claim; "ideal knower" (male) verifiability principle (210); abstracted individual (212!) rationalist appeal (212)

Procedure: Pro → plurality of knowledges; telling of one's own "story" + experience; "oneness of things" + interconnections - [Huh?!]  
P. 214 - tell reader who you are + where you're coming from  
alliance with Kuhn 218 - Rorty - Quine [?] - Foucault  
Derrida (219)

allia w/ Julia  
IMPORTANT  
READ

READ (p. 221) → "situated" knowing (220) → value-laden epistemologies (221) → knowledge of community (222)

NB → Cross → "bias"? what about appearance interdependency? (221!)

Code: points + questions.

- ① 222 - groups, not individuals, know — 223 knowledge made, not found
- 221 - value-laden epistemology / empiricism may be better.

Back to one of our opening ideas in this seminar

∴ Trump Card is <sup>page 224, 9 down</sup> precisely that of ~~that of Holmgren? Elgin's~~ ~~Pure Procedural Epistemology~~ [Read] or coherentism, consensus, contextualism... No truth outside the group... outside group-consensus truth, <sup>no external checks</sup> [Read] [description of Holmgren's project ??]

no Popper checks

which is why theories of truth (dry?) wind up as central to all inquiry. What Code opposes <sup>-indicts</sup> → foundationalism and <sup>even</sup> that more modest middle ground ~~that Elgin calls imperfect procedural epistemology~~ <sup>of a slightly modified mix between the two</sup>

— And although one may lobby <sup>on</sup> one side or another, the issues at hand are complex + philosophically enormous. (e.g., Elgin opposes Code; so does Susan Haack)

Obv. some women philosophers oppose Code's coherentism

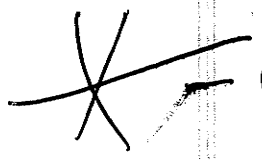
Same issue

- ② Issue → Again, 2 or 3 quotations (222 - groups knowledge)
- 221 - value-laden yet rigorous empiricism, informed by commitment
- 224 - "Knowledge claimants are as accountable to their communities of inquiry as to the facts." (!!!) [over-the-top?]

→ !!!

↓ Before jumping to a quick agreement, a good test is: "OK, that's fine for my group's choice... But how would I react if a group that I oppose or despise used this exact argument?" <sup>3rd trial!</sup>

→ K. Popper insisted that to be counted as knowledge an observation had to be potentially falsifiable...



Falsifiable only within a consensus group of knowers?  
 Would a standpoint epistemology reject ipso facto any attempt at falsification that comes from outside the group?  
 If so? (SELF-IMMUNIZING STRATEGIES)

How can it be that Crichton mimics Butler?

1:10 starts w/ Butler

purely performative - no identity -  
- oversimplifies Butler -

but Crichton maps perf as feminine

important gendered - notion of mind + score

I take it you reject things of love

Result: - gender in musical performance

Butler - aggregate / complex of activities -

- musical performance w/ gender performance -

Can this argument be pursued in way that would more str. for you?

Never

Conventional music theory?

w/o body, a gendered reader

This understands nature of music?

Music's existence in the abstract?

Scores are not music?

Janet's argument?

But Abstracting the "work" (apart from performance) is just what she objects to.

Binary is necessary

→ as a heuristic

RAMESEY - Ashley

→ An agenda

Black music matters

— strength + pitfalls —

If so - why is that not the most appealing area of st.?

Relationship between public discourse

relationship = "cultural work" → as "social space"

Ramey → activist side of debate

— tears out cultural work

Ch. Bantam → play of the system → as social responsibility

critiques Walter (not Taylor)

Ramey → criticism Schiller - not historically situated  
professional vs. confessional

AUTHORITY

be up front to reader -  
but can a white author do this satisfactorily?

Why should a reader believe an author?

Problems → conflict of status + authority ... chilling effect on scholarship + discussion -

Potential claim of exclusivity

Write article → Can one claim to understand? but only if it has a

UNITARY MEANING

↓ "my dialogue w/ the music"

optimistic confessional  
of bias

who is a native informant

1. I see → everyone must go Mon 4:00 - (arrive early)
2. Next week — possible visitor — come very prepared + speak up!  
— 12:00 session instead of 1:00 —

Jan on (Code, Kosmeyer, Butler) — Cusick

① Performer → always gendered feminine (as body)? P. 46 but ESP 50! (hypothesis)  
 | What makes her think that this is so? How does she get here?  
 Butler! bodily performative acts → gender  
 pivot p. 43 Cusick All bodily performative acts → [ ] → gender (fem)

② "Feminist music theory" — sketched out (mind-body Nietzschean jans  
 - wholeness — 45-6, mid bp)  
 1) p. 44 → from standpoint of bodies  
 2) pp. 46-48 — 3 or 4 features of "feminist music theory"  
 [Practical?]

- Kosmeyer → p. 159 \* Is this precisely what Cusick calls for? does?
- Kosmeyer → what about her stark divides within the aesthetic system

| Even senses (sight, hearing)  
 touch, taste, smell  
 Essentialist? Reductionist? Demarcating to both men + women?  
 Or only calling for a diff mode of evaluation?

→ better for Ranso,  
 Code → standpoint epistemology, "storied" where the "story" of the observer  
 is crucial

(to summary, yellow sheets, p. 2)  
 — Read 221 crucial summary —  
 — agree? to "bias" issues? "Value-laden"?

— p. 224 on responsibility to groups (222 — group knowledge)

# Ramsey

- Is this (sprawling) essay merely critical (by + large) of everyone who writes on jazz (esp. white authors) — giving the sense that the topic is too "hot" + "important" to be handled (except, perhaps, by Af-Am writers)?
- What is his criticism of Truism?
  - of Walter (ind.-group bind)
- How CAN one escape from this?
  - More "cultural dialogues" that thematize more clearly where writer is coming from? But why?
  - Is this really needed — Are we all so mutually suspicious? (Reading white writers w/ herm. of suspicion?)

(cf. Code on "storied" epistemologies ) 205, 207, 208, 214  
+ to plurality, 215  
scientific "voicelessness" to code (+ circle) is mind/male  
to Ramsey — it's white male, prof. academics, professionalization

Ramsey → Why wouldn't + (or couldn't) a Gadamerian perspective work with this? (Af-Am music) — or would it?

SESSION 7—NOTES 2002  
 (FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY, BUTLER, CUSICK, RAMSEY, HOLSINGER)

In her article an ideal  
 "storied epistemology"  
 called for by Cade.

CUSICK

sleight-of-hand pivot on "performance," p. 44 top (extending Butler)  
 (no. 2 below)

1. Does she ultimately "drop" the problem of the Fanny Mendelssohn Trio midway through the article (saying that she could not resolve the problem adequately through the appeal to differing textures and textural strata, without being "boring"—p. 44)? Her preferred solution would seem to be overly general, namely that it is bodily performance that is the feminine gender-metaphor in it (the composer as Mind and masculine—p. 45—and the performer restoring the feminine and the bodily—pp. 45, 50). But that begs the question of the Hensel Trio!! The original problem was that of the woman-as-composer (in a man's world of composition)...and now Cusick suggests that her role is ipso facto gendered masculine (p. 45). And the same enactment of the mind-body dialectic would be played out in every piece by every composer, regardless of the sex (or gender) of the composer and the performers? So of what use is this theory to feminism, except to claim a vital part of the musical territory as its turf?

cf. Butler

Go through her  
 4 (??) prescriptions,  
 pp. 46-48  
 (first = elide most of  
 trad. music theory?)

2. Treatment of Butler and performativity. (Via Joan Scott). What is Butler's sense of performativity (cf. J.L. Austin and the Oxford 'ordinary-language' movement in philosophy, *How to do Things with Words*—constative utterances (describing some state of affairs, "The sky is blue," because it refers to some outside reality) vs. performative utterances, "I christen, I name thee, I baptize, I take you as my wife... you're fired!"... things that embody and accompany the doing of an action) Main distinction was to suggest that not all utterances actually refer to outside things, with predicates... Does the shift to musical performance slip through only because the word "performance" is used for both phenomena? (sleight-of-hand, p. 44, top?)

3. But more interesting → Kallberg ("The Harmony of the Tea Table" in Chopin at the Boundaries, p. 44) and his observations on of "retrieval" of Chopin Nocturnes from the "women's sphere" and in effect the attempts to reclaim them for the masculine (remasculinization, JH term) performances—he mentions Artur Schnabel—and in modern "difficult" analyses—he mentions Schenker and Leichtentritt as "validating" the discredited nocturne, all avoiding the earlier ties with "feminine imagery." (Nocturnes had feminized as "detail" oriented, embellished, gentle, resonant, sensual, erotic, salon style, often played by women, etc.

Or → Different repertoires for female pianists in 19<sup>th</sup> century—the gendering of the repertory itself as, in Katharine Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," JAMS 50, Nos. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1997), pp. 353-385 (feminine: Mozart, Bach, lighter pieces; masculine: Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, "heavy lifting" on the piano... the cult of the heroic virtuoso...) Masculine and feminine conceptions of differing types of symphonies, etc. (Notley in JAMS)... All of this Cusick cuts through with the simplistic declaration that composition is "implicitly always gendered masculine" [45] and "the hypothesis that in our time [why only then?] musical performance is always gendered feminine because it so involves the body" [50]. Incredibly simple-minded and generalized.



## RAMSEY (MQ 2001)

In part, a survey of how black music has been dealt with.... a historical overview of positions.

1. Issues of **canon**. (Dahlhaus, Chapter 7, on Value Judgment.... There Dahlhaus distinguishes between the larger canon of available pieces [of art music] for us, the canon "aus dem man wählt"—which is *predetermined* by the tradition within which we reside [p. 96, 13 up, p. 97... we do not compile it so much as to encounter it"... this canon is very difficult to alter in significant ways, almost virtually impossible, because it has already happened, outside of our control] and the more limited canon "dem man wählt" (what you happen to select for your survey syllabus or own research purposes)

—the selection that we choose locally, historically, for our own immediate purposes.—CD refers, of course, to art music. Are popular music, blues, jazz, rock, rap, extra-canonical in not belonging to this tradition at all? Or are they to be included within it??? Maybe we have separate canons for separate, or minimally intersecting, spheres/strata of European and American music? So maybe the problem is not that the "canon" (read "of the specific tradition of art music") should be expanded, but rather that we need to recognize the existence of multiple canons and traditions with minimal intersection—and probably each with more or less its own standards of approach and valuation?

—problem... "The discipline" grew historically as a set of methodologies to explore one particular canon that had developed a particular prestige in important circles of thought. Is it the goal of "other" canons to try to get incorporated into that canon (jazz is a kind of "classical music"—Broadway is America's "classical music") in order to share its already-established prestige? Or is this a doomed task?

NB → —Why do we want to know "classical-music" sorts of information/analysis about other canons???? Only to demonstrate our attentiveness to that canon... and to grant it the prestige of our time? Etc. And if not (Ramsey's question!!) WHY AND TO WHAT ENDS SHOULD WE STUDY THIS MUSIC AT ALL? THE CLOSEST HE COMES IS... TOMLINSON'S *CULTURAL DIALOGICS* [24] (note at end, p. 41, "a true and balanced dialogic fulfilling the goals of equality we all share"... i.e., a rich and balanced, even troubled and honest, conversation among Americans, "interracial cooperation," p. 39 in order to "continue to transform America," 39, about 14 down) ALONG WITH THE GENERAL SOCIOLOGICAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THIS IS MUSIC THAT MATTERS—MATTERS TERRIBLY—NOT ONLY TO OUR AESTHETIC SENSE BUT TO THE SENSE OF WHAT AMERICA IS AS A NATION OF DIFFERING PEOPLES.

transformation and hypothesis

2. Issues of **Identity and Self and Authenticity** —always an issue among groups that perceive themselves as non-members of the hegemonic "mainstream" (especially clear in his discussion of Walser, 26-31: you recall that Walser issues a critique of Billy Taylor because Taylor had "praised individualism" instead of "collaboration" and group orientation... thus [in Ramsey's reading] suggesting that Ramsey had really thought that "jazz had no social content," something to which Ramsey vehemently objects. (All this is on pp. 28 and 29). p. 28-29

This issue—playing itself out here—is the problematic claim of *individual vs. group* identity. (Walser, within his own discursive network, obviously sought to ally himself with the postmodernists, Ramsey does not, and was apparently criticized on this very point, "undertheorized" or "not being theoretical enough," as on p. 37!!!)

- On the one hand, standpoint epistemologists wish to make strategic alliances with certain strands of postmodernist thought insofar as that thought is directly critical of liberal-humanist disciplines and rational inquiry, from which the subalterns have felt (or been) excluded. (the enemy of my enemy is my friend.) (And postmodernist fragmentation and decentering of the subject is the strongest weapon here: the nuke.)
- On the other hand, standpoint epistemology must take as an axiom that its group is not decentered, that it has an identity and place (and voice) that is uniquely its own. (Otherwise the standpoint axiom collapses.) In this respect, it must be wary of postmodernist fragmentations of their own identity.
- But once this hurdle is cleared, another one emerges: what is the identity of this group and how, precisely, does it differ from that of the hegemonic disciplinary powers. The trap here is essentialism and “standpoints of difference” that are too sharply defined, that seek to turn the old negative stereotypes into positive attributes. (Ramsey rejects racial essentialism, p. 33.)

what Foucault called "reverse discourse" (Hist. of Sexuality, vol. 1)

3. Most important: Ramsey's solution at the end—that which he calls a *mixture* (36, 5 up) of **professional blackness** (adopting the discourse of the common language of scholarship, some postmodern things, etc., pp. 36-37) and “**confessional blackness**” (define). N—But it is the confessional blackness that seems the real point here... thematizing and problematizing where one is coming from, identifying your own standpoint and situation in print, your childhood and formative experiences (35, 36... for white scholars too, “theorizing other areas of white-lived experience,” p. 40)

—NB NB: How does this position differ from:

—Lorraine Code's [feminism's] “storied epistemology,” p. 205 et seq. (207: “experiential stories of how it is for cognitive or moral agents to be located as they are, and to experience the world from there.”) —Remember, that Ramsey wants all of these things to occur in print, not merely in hall- or bar-conversations, because [“what counts most . . . is what debates take place in print.”] [Was Suzanne Cusick's essay an example of storied epistemology? Didn't she tell the story of how she came to her point of view? Wasn't it a narrative?]

→ p. 37, 14p

—Habermas's theory of Knowledge and Human Interests?

—Gadamer's theory of the inescapability of one's own horizon?

In Ramsey's essay, just about everyone, black and white, is criticized —

HOLSINGER

Also found in Korsmeyer, Code, Cusick, Lawrence -

the orthodox - more ("mind/number" indictment in favor of body)  
 on, e.g. p. 7, p. 11 (10 down), p. 16 ("sodomity" not work)

1. How is his "body argument" different (or his mode of treating it) from, say, Cusick's? Or is it?

- As in Introduction
- Body, skin, blood, pain, etc., with distinctly post-Foucauldian relishing of the flesh and its punishments and pleasures (*Surveiller et punir, The History of Sexuality*)
  - But with resonances, one might think, historically, the proto-fascist aesthetic of "vitalism"—rejecting liberal humanism, academic disciplines, rationality, neutral debate and compromise in favor of a recovery of action, physicality, the body, etc. (All post-Nietzschean concerns...) Within a 20<sup>th</sup> c context, these are not unfamiliar arguments, but they were originally associated with anti-liberal rightist thought—often the hard right of fascism or proto-fascism. What's curious, with the moral discrediting of fascism after 1945, is the mutation of these anti-rationalist values under the supposed shelter of the left. (Cf. the remarks on Code below, last page.....)

2. How would you evaluate Holsinger's method of selecting and interpreting evidence? (and translations!!! including throwing as many words (ww) with physical implications.) Coded-language from Ovid; readers of the Amores, etc. etc. (Even when the allusions are absent! P. 146—"artful dodging may be just the point" or p. 147, top..... or contravened altogether (criticisms of the "gens sodomitica" in Leoninus are instances, p. 154, of "Peter's antisodomitical phobia," "a sadly ironic internalization of homophobic sentiment." Thus when one finds contrary evidence, it is turned into positive evidence of a sad "internalization" of his society's unjust views?)

Peter the Chanter canon at N.D. cathedral p. 153

non-falsifiable?

3. Citations and sources of authority—with whom is he having this conversation? On which figures and ideas does he build his most essential arguments? Here the citations are invaluable. True, there are a few "traditional" musicologists cited, when needed (Craig Wright for the possible i.d. of Anonymous IV's "Magister Leoninus" and "Leonius" the poet... crucial footnote 19, p. 383, for all of the "personal/biographical" argument of Holsinger hangs on it!!). But the real fuel for Holsinger's argument comes from a collection of books, all of which are cited uncritically (they are team-players) such as:

- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, & Homosexuality* (Medieval) 1980
- Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex* (1985)
- Nicky Loseff, *The Best ConCORDS* (Garland 1994—about polyphony in 13<sup>th</sup>-c Britian)
- D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (1988, for the "open secret" argument")
- J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (1982, for annulus, culus, etc.)
- John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex* [France ca. 1300] (1994)
- Ralph Hexter, "Ovid's Body" in *Constructions of the Classical Body* (1999)
- Betsy Bowden, "The Art of Courtly Copulation," (1979)
- Stephen C. Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (1999)
- Jonathan Goldberg, ed. *Queering the Renaissance* (1994)
- David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (1988)
- Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (1997)
- Etc.

- Responsibility to scholarly community or to the group? (!) Cf. Code, p. 224 for the locus classicus: “Knowledge claimaints are as accountable to their communities of inquiry as to the facts.”
- Is this what Holsinger is doing? (What is his book really about? Aboutmedieval period? Or about positioning himself within a community? Writing for approval and praise within his own subgroup? Is he really interested in the medieval period?
- Ingroup? (“Closed shop”?) instead of opening the argument to the larger community of medieval scholars? (Intellectual Ponzi Scheme. E.g., subgroup of fifteen scholars build on each others’ scholarship, largely uncritically, in order to build up the cash value of the argument. B cites A, C cites them both, D and E build on A, F and G build on B, H cites them all... all the while ignoring input and potential objections from outside the investment community. Not uncommon: Relatively small subgroups of self-promoting members.)
- Cf. Popper...the other point of view : intersubjective criticism within a research community—where different points of view are encouraged, positions stated in falsifiable ways, etc.
- NB (JH). If we are prepared to reject the principle of a genuinely diverse group intersubjectivity within larger disciplines (music history, music theory)—if instead we prefer the “multiple-truth” commitments of smaller subgroups, each of which rejects criticism from outside—then what are we left with? Who decides which of these group voices is to prevail, to get published, to be promoted, to be heard, to lead the debate? (For those decisions will be made in one way or another.) In the absence of an outside principle of self-regulation, the only answer can be POWER and CONTROL OF THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVERS OF POWER. (Administrations, journals, committees, memberships, awarding of degrees, etc.) Cf. Ginzburg, p. Welcome the diversity of mutually exclusive voices, etc., but when groups do not accept critiques from outside their subgroups, this comes in a benign and a “ferocious” mode.
- Thus: individual subgroups, to survive, must immunize themselves against outside critique by undermining the conceptual sources of that critique—most normally (with formerly suppressed voices), through the strong assertion of *moral* grounds, implying that to criticize work within their subgroup is to reject the subgroup as persons... to align oneself with the oppressors and in opposition to the main goal of liberation. Ultimately, the aim is to silence all criticism through the process of moral intimidation. (Political correctness.)

4. **Musicology of empathy** (Holsinger, p. 348)—define... appeals to “tranhistorical listening communitas that medieval music continues to forge today...” (348). “An empathetic musicology in turn will be honest and straightforward concerning our love and even desire for the music we study. . . ‘our personal, private, and pleasurable relations with the musical....’” (348) **Principal source:** Karl Morrison, “*I Am You*”: *The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art* [Princeton, 1988], which is obviously the springboard for Holsinger’s term. Cf. p. 350, bottom: “In short, a musicology of empathy. As Morrison writes of empathetic inquiry, ‘Formal disciplines that require detachment also require a degree of deafness to the call within the words, ‘I am you.’”

Is this a restatement of the old Diltheyan principle of *Verstehen*? How is it different? How different from Gadamer and Horizon? (No references to Gadamer in Holsinger’s book. Why not? [Emeny camp...])

Thus three main sources for this last chapter: Karl Morrison, Christopher Page, and theorists of the body, esp in Queer Theory.

The Danger →

NB →

“aesthetic  
presence”?

- cf. aesthetic presence*
- Cf. Page and his claim of transhistorical humanness
- Page- Bent-Wegman-Weller debate from mid-1990s. (Started with Christopher Page {Gothic Voices, performer} book *Discarding Images: Reflections of Music and Culture in Medieval France* [1993]. Very controversial at the time, and central to any methodological argument. Central repertory considered: ars nova motets. Main points:
- sharp critique of existing musicology (needs to be decentralized, expanded, become less exclusive, more complex, more “messy”...needs strong methodological challenges)
  - strong appeal on behalf of the performer and performers’ knowledge (as often superior to that of the merely abstract musicologist—integration of music with “real life,” more “human,” more “self-aware,” “thicker” contexts, etc.
  - it is the informed performer (someone who actually does something active) who will be able to do this most clearly, through the “evidence of modern performance.”
  - “This book takes a historicist viewpoint in the sense that it assumes the existence of a ‘transhistorical humanness’: an appreciable continuity of human thought and feeling from age to age. . . .” (p. 199) i.e., do not “diminish” the “full humanity of men and women in the Middle Ages.” And it is interacting with the music via [bodily] performance, literally hearing and creating real sound appreciating the music “inwardly,” that provides this awareness of transhistorical humanness.
- Bent countered in *Early Music* (1995) that we should not assume the many things that Page assumes. (“What emerges is an image of medieval aesthetic sensibility that is recognizable and consoling, since it is basically an image of ourselves.”—Bent, p. 311...cf. Holsinger’s reply, 349) Philip Weller in *JAMS* 1997 “Frames and Images”—“Falling into the trap of psychological identification....” [p. 50]

[Cf. Gadamer—is there a fusion of horizons if we do not acknowledge the radical alterity of the other?]

## CODE

Contra any claim to **objectivity** (the “view from nowhere” or the abstract [male] post-Enlightenment individual—Code, p. 212, e.g.,...the knower without any personality or self-thematization, except [for Code] that he is gendered male.) A common refrain against non-[personally]-situated knowledge: “Whose knowledge? From what position? Who is claiming the knowing for others, etc.”—Hence Code’s claim for a storied and personalized epistemology, etc. Note also the implicit rejection of Enlightenment ideals. (Similar is Korsmeyer’s attack on the supposedly disinterested pleasure of the masculine gaze, etc.)

Original impetus for this view, quasi-scientific. To seek to minimize the vagaries of one’s own “accidental” circumstances of birth, position, etc.... in a sense, to seek to filter out as much of this as possible (even though the task is, as everyone agrees, impossible) via appeals to shared principles of reason, of scientific inquiry, of criticism within research communities, and so on. Not so much to impose a point of view as to avoid imposing it? It is this viewpoint that the standpoint epistemologists seek to discredit (as male, as white-European, etc.)

NB (again): How does this (“storied epistemology”) differ from:

Habermas’s theory of Knowledge and Human Interests?

Gadamer’s theory of the inescapability of one’s own horizon?

Ramsey’s “confessional blackness”

Cf. Dahlhaus, FMH, p. 88: “The Marxists deny the claim of non-Marxist theorists of history that detachment from interests is possible at all. Yet far from saying that we cannot rise above our prejudices, what they actually mean is that we should not rise above them.” The question is: does Dahlhaus’s criticism undermine Holsinger? Ramsey? Cusick?

not believe, with, why for believers? with music about something other than gender.

Critique of theory - very well... dominated by visual side... they -> music as mind.

- feminine, bodily side of music...

"grace" as a message to the body

\* performer knows what music feels like.  
\* But how can you use this as music theory?  
in practice?

All performers, are theorists? Envy of Philosophy problematize "mind"/"body"

silly metaphor.

\* [Korsmeyer + Code] should question this more...

- abstracted these terms than to feminist movement  
} are entirely resuscitated?

### Holsteyls

- How this is affecting the discipline of musicology?

- visceral force of music

Levin

embodied existence -> body as series of codes, theoretical focus

discursive construction of the body

Butter-based

bibliographical studies  
Foucault is absent

1) production 2) signifier 3) power 4) the self

- Musical body as technology of the self

Complicates medieval musicology  
- musicology of empathy -

Sympathetic to project but how does he carry it out?

sondij (writing) (phys in the domain)

signifying(s)

capital S

Walter

paradigm shift

vagueness  
signifying(s)

undefined term (vague)

The multiracial, mix-gendered composition of the emerging "school" of contemporary black-music critics, together with the aggressive, individualist attitude that the academy fosters, makes building a sense of unity among these and other scholars a more difficult task. Join all of these problematics to the most important issue here, the combustible issue of black identity, which all of this work addresses to some degree, and it becomes clear why the territory feels somewhat constrained. I should make my comparison between the feminist musicological project and black music criticism more explicit. Although great enthusiasm surrounded the 1988 AMS meeting, I have read few references to and rarely heard mentioned casually, for example, the importance of the 1993 National Conference on Black Music, sponsored by the Center for Black Music Research and featuring an interracial slate of scholars. Few have called this conference an awakening in the black critical project, although the whole point of the meeting was to spawn the type of research these scholars do. (In fact, one black scholar has all but dismissed the conference as a Johnny-come-lately project.<sup>73</sup>) Why does the project seem rather disconnected? Could it be that the paucity of black music scholars, indeed the lack of a critical mass, undermines the effort to lay a foundation upon which unity within this collective could be achieved?

These scholars draw heavily on the work of black literary theorists such as Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates, especially as this body of scholarship relates to European cultural theorists like Bakhtin, Bourdieu, and Foucault. By combining musical analysis with these other theories, scholars of black music seek to decipher the codes and gestures present in black vernacular music and show how the music acts as a kind of public forum for the practice of African American identity. I want to briefly explore some of this work because I believe their collective analyses are important. It may indeed lay the groundwork and patterns for future theoretical excursions into the relationship between black music and African American identity; it begs critique in the interest of the development of this important line of inquiry.

Finally, these writers address a scholarly audience about African American music and its meanings. Inherent in their positions is the almost inevitable stance of a cultural translator who is explaining "blackness" to the academy. The white scholars in this group (Brackett, Monson, Radano, Taylor, Tomlinson, and Walsler) surely understand the problematics involved in that role, especially given the intense conversation about authority, race, and identity politics in the academy over the last few years.<sup>74</sup>

### Signifyin(g) with Miles: Complicating Blackness in the 1990s

Shelly Fisher Fishkin, an American studies and English professor, has identified the early 1990s "as a defining moment in the study of American culture."<sup>75</sup> Two simultaneous trends in scholarship marked the moment, in which "our ideas of 'whiteness' were interrogated, our ideas of 'blackness' were complicated, and the terrain we call 'American culture' began to be remapped." Indeed, she surveys more than a hundred books and articles from numerous disciplines in which these two agendas are rigorously pursued. I am particularly interested here in the complicating blackness part of this equation. Fishkin sees many of the activities in which black scholars engaged in the field of literary studies in the 1970s and 1980s as operating within an "essentialist paradigm" that gave way in the 1990s to a more inclusive or "complex" view of African American culture. This complexity manifested itself, according to Fishkin, in how critics sought to explain the "white side" of things—the interplay of the cultures within American letters and life.

While I remain skeptical that every aspect of this "new complexity" should be viewed as the thoroughly innovative moves that Fishkin suggested—in fields such as anthropology and music, for example, the syncretic nature of African American culture has been an enduring field of debate—a shift, nonetheless, did occur. This development can be clearly seen in the jazz studies wing of black music inquiry. The life, career, and, indeed, the complexity of the jazz trumpeter and composer Miles Dewey Davis (1926–1991) has provided scholars with plenty of grist for the complicating blackness mill.

If James Brown emerged as a musical symbol of black power during the 1960s, then Miles Davis became in the 1990s a compelling figure for theorizing among contemporary cultural critics in the academy. The reasons for this interest are many. It is difficult, for example, to identify one area of Davis's life or work that did not attract some degree of controversy. Born in St. Louis to a middle-class family, Davis moved to New York City in the mid-1940s, just as bebop was emerging as the avant-garde voice of jazz. After spending his apprenticeship years in that scene, Davis went on to compose, spearhead, and participate in many of the stylistic shifts that occurred in jazz, including the cool jazz, hard bop, modal jazz, and jazz fusion movements. His signature sound—a lamenting, sighing muted trumpet—arguably became one of the most recognized "voices" in jazz history. Furthermore, Davis's apparel became legendary fashion statements, and his image became among the most

Thanks!!  
Shelly!!



photographed in jazz history. In spite of these (and many other) lofty accomplishments, Davis is also remembered as one of the more controversial figures of jazz, and perhaps even of twentieth-century American music in general.

I turn now to critiques by two scholars who discuss some of the more controversial issues touching Davis, his jazz-rock experiments and his solo rhetoric. Each scholar uses various contemporary critical tools to shed light on controversial elements of the "Miles mystique." These interventions are excellent examples of an important critical turn in African American music inquiry. They also bring into high relief some issues regarding the politics of identity in contemporary black music scholarship.

Gary Tomlinson goes right to the heart of the matter, subtitled his engaging essay "A White Historian Signifies."<sup>76</sup> Tomlinson is not speaking negatively about anybody's mother here, a key rhetorical practice of Signifyin(g). Rather, he finds interpretive value in the more academic concerns of Henry Louis Gates's theory, Signifyin(g), which outlines a way to discuss, among other things, the repetition and revision practices prevalent in many black artistic forms, including literature, the visual arts, and music. Tomlinson wants to show the implications of Gates's work for postmodern theorizing and its benefits for black musical studies. Specifically, his essay treats Miles Davis's late-1960s and early-1970s jazz-rock experiments as models of cultural dialogics. To its credit, the article painstakingly delivers a point-by-point explanation of how the characteristics (tropological, archaeological, and dialogical) of Signifyin(g) relate to the major postmodern theories that have reshaped the human sciences in recent years. Praise comes easily for Tomlinson's work, for it is among the first of its kind in black musical studies. It seems headed for canonical status: it is cited often and has appeared in a subsequent anthology in revised form.

But as students of African American culture know (or should know), every public act of signifyin(g) necessarily invites a response. It is an irresistible antiphonal call begging response, in fact. (Any black scholar worth his or her weight in citations relishes such challenges, especially those of us who grew up participating in and witnessing these verbal rituals of wit and virtuosity.) As I work out my ideas on paper, I cannot help thinking about the Signifying Monkey tales Gates's theory and Tomlinson's riff and revision implicitly reference. In those oft-revised oral poems, the monkey through his signifying instigation tricks an unsuspecting and, importantly, much more powerful lion into a physical confrontation with an elephant. The fight occurs and the elephant goes

but repetition  
& revision  
are also central  
to all "pop"  
music  
(maybe to  
all music)

"to town . . . [and] whup[s] that lion for the rest of the day." The monkey finds the scene hilarious and chides the lion:

The monkey got to laughing and a' jumpin' up and down,  
But his foot missed the limb and he plunged to ground,  
The lion was on him with all four feet  
Gonna grind that monkey to hamburger meat.

The monkey looked up with tears in his eyes  
And said, "Please Mr. Lion, I apologize,  
I meant no harm, please, let me go  
And I'll tell you something you really need to know."<sup>77</sup>

This Signifyin(g) tale is about power relationships; its lesson seeks "to achieve or reverse power, to improve situations, and to achieve pleasing results for the signifier."<sup>78</sup> Tomlinson's varied and daunting accomplishments in musicology have established for him an impressive profile. To personalize and extend my metaphor (signifyin(g) is, after all, always personal), and to illuminate just one aspect of the power relationships at hand, I write these passages as a junior faculty member seeking tenure at an Ivy League institution at which Tomlinson holds a named professorship in the humanities. I would not even think about instigating a fight here, especially given our lack of "elephants"—black scholars whose position in the field of musicology is similar to Tomlinson's.<sup>79</sup>

Tomlinson is careful not to claim expertise either in black literature or in the black vernacular languaging upon which Signifyin(g) is based. His authority derives from what he calls his own vernacular: "My Signifyin(g) and the theorizing that results from it will manifest my own vernacular as it intersects with other vernaculars. I make no presumptuous claim to blackness in my presentation, but at the same time I do not undervalue the potential dialogical richness of my interlocutions with African-American culture from a position outside it."<sup>80</sup> Despite this statement, we get only a glimpse, near the end of the essay, of Tomlinson's personal investment (dialogic richness) in defending Davis's fusion style against the damnation of jazz critics. He discloses, parenthetically, that he was one of many "venturesome white rockers" who found Davis's interethnic musical dialogue formative to his own musical and cultural identity during college.

Tomlinson's insights would have been even more penetrating had he theorized a bit more about why he, a musician who would ultimately become a preeminent scholar of Renaissance music, found a controversial black jazz musician mixing jazz and rock idioms so compelling in the first place. (How many of us read patiently through Tomlinson's dense

!!  
the hammer-lock

GT  
does not  
tell us  
enough  
about  
himself

ND

theoretical positions just because we were eager to witness a white Renaissance scholar "do jazz" and jazz-rock—in public, no less?) I personally found myself wanting to learn more about Davis's cultural dialogue with "the white historian" in the title of the essay. That cultural interchange begs greater visibility in this article, especially given Tomlinson's speculations about Davis's "vernacular"—a black "middle-class ambivalence," a suggestion for which Tomlinson himself admits Davis's autobiography provides slim evidence.

should be more personalized

NB: this, ultimately, is Ramsey's larger solution

He should be applauded for calling our attention to the nexus of identity, class stratification, and jazz culture, because it is a useful and sorely underinvestigated site of analysis in African American music studies. But Tomlinson misses the possibility that Davis's fellow black musicians may have been gratified to meet the classically trained, middle-class Davis at Minton's. Or perhaps they could not have cared less. On another level, a more important missing theoretical perspective is the specific "vernacular" Tomlinson promised in the beginning of the essay. Did he bring those vernacular sensibilities—the adventuresomeness of a young, white jazz rocker—to his future work? As influential as this article is becoming, it would have been that much more so had even some of the complexity of the white historian been theorized into the authorial voice of the essay.

Robert Walser, another scholar who writes on an impressive range of topics in American music, also exhibits a small degree of "trouble in the critical jungle" when issues of audience, authority, and identity intersect. In his essay "Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis," Walser seeks to square Davis's undisputed position in the jazz canon as a bandleader and innovator with what some heard as the "glaring defects" in his trumpet playing.<sup>81</sup> For Walser, the "problem" of Miles Davis is one of critical assessment. In order to begin setting the criticism straight, Walser provides a transcription and analysis that illustrate specific details of Davis's musical rhetoric in a recorded solo, "My Funny Valentine."<sup>82</sup> This essay, in both its subject matter and its approach, presents an exemplary case study for talking about some pertinent issues raised by black music inquiry's new critical turn.

Walser takes few prisoners as he clears space for his interpretation. If I might extend my Signifyin(g) metaphor, he establishes his critical authority (powers of interpretation) by positioning his work against the previously circulated ideas of a rather diverse group of lions: jazz critics, scholars, and musicians. Whether a writer ignored altogether Davis's "missed notes" and "technical flaws," noted and accepted them as part of the allure of his artistic profile, or accepted them as evidence of his technical inadequacy, Walser upbraids him or her for being out of sync with

Main criticism: Walser - disses the modernist, then does much the same as they do

"the actual reception" of the music (167). His objections and antidotes cluster around two mutually exclusive notions. On the one hand, we have "modernist attitudes" and "modernist aesthetic theories," which, he argues, have dominated jazz studies.<sup>83</sup> He is especially skeptical of what he calls "classifying strategies": calls for the legitimating of jazz, especially through comparisons with classical music. Some of the other modernist attitudes include belief in the autonomy of the artwork with respect to everyday life, art's separation from mass culture and social content, and the critic's reliance on "certain standards of performance quality and authenticity, the latter encompassing technical accuracy, appropriateness to the style, and originality" (169).

NB

On the other hand, Walser finds a solution for "critical classifying" in Gates's theory of Signifyin(g), which "is opposed to the perspective of modernism" (168). He uses Gates as a way to explore "cultural difference on its own terms" and as "an antidote to theoretical assimilation" (172). While Walser's detailed analysis of the solo is illuminating—fun, even—I did not experience his transcription and lucid explanation as the dramatic departure from previous analyses that he claimed it was. Essentially, Davis's solo, including the missed or cracked notes ("spleaches," "clams," and "fracks," in trumpet players' parlance) are interpreted by Walser against the previously circulated versions of "My Funny Valentine" known by the listener or the performer. Most fundamentally, though, Walser argues that

i.e. Davis was signifyin' on "My Funny Valentine" [but so would every performer be?]

Davis is in dialogue with the basic features of the song itself, as jazz musicians would understand them, and as listeners would recognize them. The whole point of a jazz musician like Davis playing a Tin Pan Alley pop song could be understood as his opportunity to signify on the melodic possibilities, formal conventions (such as the AABA plan of the 32-measure chorus), harmonic potentials, and previously performed versions of the original song. (173)

These observations should not be greeted as news? I do not quibble, of course, with the basic point itself—that jazz is a "performance-centered" art; I disagree only with the idea that this analysis takes us (forgive the pun) miles beyond the critical assessments of previous work. The dialogic dissin', indeed, the serious Signifyin(g) taking place throughout this essay promised as much. I could elaborate further on this issue, but I want to move now to Walser's understanding of Signifyin(g) as pointing to "performance, negotiation, and dialogue with past and present as features of this mode of artistic activity" (168). Here I seek to pull the act of scholarship itself into the realm of cultural practice, to consider it as "performance, negotiation, and dialogue." Let us focus

Now to the larger issue

specifically on Walser's critique of the jazz pianist and educator Billy Taylor because it raises several issues with regard to African American cultural politics, which I read as a fundamental concern in both Signifyin(g) and in Walser's essay.

In 1986 Billy Taylor characterized jazz as "America's classical music," believing that within a jazz performance, an individual musician forwards what amounts to a musical "Self," an ideal that demonstrates "the concept of individual freedom."<sup>84</sup> Walser counters Taylor by arguing that

characterizing jazz in this way effaces both its complex cultural history, including the myriad effects of racism and elitism on the music and the people who have made it, and the dialogue that is at the very heart of the music. Taylor praised individualism. But what of collaboration—in collective improvisation, in composition, in the ongoing collective transformation of the discourse of jazz?<sup>85</sup>

Walser correctly detects, as I am sure other cultural critics will, more than a hint of the modernist sensibility shaping Taylor's views as represented here. The impulse of vindication, indeed the imperative necessity I discussed earlier, certainly rings loud and clear in the "jazz as classical music" chorus. But I could not help being struck by the critical leap of faith we are asked to take in order to accept Taylor's so-called attempt to erase out of jazz's history racism, elitism, dialogue, transformation, and collective sensibility. Although I am not advocating that we rescue wholesale Taylor's "classical" ideals, when we consider them more in context and in relation to Taylor's broader work, his subject position, and even to Walser's critique, a familiar pattern emerges.

Billy Taylor did not originate the idea that jazz was America's classical music. An earlier version of the notion, for example, appears in the work of the late Ralph J. Gleason. As a critic of jazz and rock (he was one of the founders of *Rolling Stone* magazine), Gleason, in his book *Celebrating the Duke*, credits the rock organist Ray Manzarek of the Doors with the jazz-as-classical-music idea.<sup>86</sup> Despite Gleason's pronouncement, he is abundantly clear: he is not, by any means, claiming that jazz had no social content. To the contrary, he maps its history against integration, civil rights, race politics, and art discourse. "Art," he writes, "precedes social change as well as mirroring the society from which it comes and the turbulence and strident tone that accompanies some of the black struggle for true freedom is found in modern jazz" (17). Nor does Gleason claim a separatist position for jazz away from other blues-inflected musical styles such as blues, rock, and soul.

Thus Walser "dared" to criticize Taylor for the latter's claim to "individuality"

contra individual "self"

etc -

Walser never fails

But why? → Obv. part of the postmodern anti-humanist faith

∴ Ramsey tries to reclaim indiv. traits + "self"

That said, it is difficult for me to believe that a black jazz musician, one who has performed throughout the last fifty years—roughly half of jazz's "complex history"—would not himself be aware of the cultural politics behind the jazz-as-classical-music ideal. In fact, some of his writings, while promoting the comparison of jazz to classical music, reveal this understanding. In his book *Jazz Piano: History and Development*, Taylor frustrates the particular point for which Walser chides him: individualism.<sup>87</sup> Taylor, engaging in some Signifyin(g) of his own, seeks to distinguish his work from "white 'authorities' who have either ignored or misrepresented important aspects of the history and evolution of various styles of jazz." He writes that

∴ i.e., here Taylor does write of jazz as a group consciousness.

such writers trace the history of jazz as the impact of one individual upon another; but that kind of historical treatment is fallacious. Jazz began as music created out of the black consciousness to fill needs basic to black existence in a repressive society. Though individuality rates high in its expression, in jazz the musical vocabulary and repertoire quickly becomes [sic] the common property of many musicians. The evolution of jazz styles does not progress only from one great individual artist to another . . . but rather from generation to generation.<sup>88</sup>

With these last words in mind, and with all due respect to Walser, I wonder whether the desire to create critical elbow room resulted in his collapsing too many subjectivities, criticisms, and cultural imperatives into a simplified "modernist attitude." Would acknowledging some of the details of Taylor's subjectivity and background (he earned a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts) have helped Walser reveal a quite powerful dialogic at work in this black musician's philosophical (albeit legitimating) stance?

NB

What is more, I find puzzling this aversion to the idea of individual voice in jazz, especially in the context of an article that wonderfully accounts for Davis's singular artistic statement in this solo. Walser provocatively describes Davis's solo in terms that ironically support Taylor's (and modernism's) vision of artistic individualism in jazz, a description that contains a hint of what he critiques in Gunther Schuller's work: the "modernist dual answer." He writes that "Davis does not present his audiences with a product, polished, and inviting admiration; we hear a dramatic process of creation from Davis as from few others. And as we listen, we can experience these feelings of playfulness, complexity, struggle, and competence as our own" [my emphasis].<sup>89</sup> In fact, every critic or musician referenced by Walser proclaims how individualistic and singular he or she found Davis's music. Whether we agree or disagree with these critical assessments is not the central question. We must take such ideas

∴ Ramsey chides Walser on 2 counts  
1) Taylor did NOT give short shrift to the group! and  
2) Hey, what's wrong with a black individual voice in jazz?

NB  
Conclusion

seriously because they constitute a part of the actual reception of Davis's work. Can we afford to silence (ironically) in the name of dialogics those who do not dance our paradigm shift—those who hear, believe in, and experience, to use a limited example here, artistic individualism?

I read with interest Walser's actual analysis of the solo: his careful attention to detail, his insightful accounting of the technical challenges of trumpet playing, and his insistence that the rhetorical power of some musical styles often escapes Western notation are laudable. But the aggressive Signifyin(g) surrounding it—and I return here to the notion of scholarship as performance, negotiation, and dialogue—serves to undermine the contribution. Voices are censored in the "dialogue." The history of an idea such as "jazz is America's classical music" is drained of the variety and nuance of the political imperatives driving it. The imperialist march of modernism is projected onto the pens of critics, who are then treated as caricatures, as honorary "dead white men" of the postmodernist imagination. This projection ultimately calls attention to a larger issue: the political and personal import of black cultural criticism.

While negotiating the tricky waters of academia, those of us interested in lending our interpretations a certain power and distinction cannot fall into the traps I have identified. I should point out that Walser censors himself along with Taylor and the other critics. We are never told, for example, that he is himself an accomplished trumpeter and therefore brings to the table a particular kind of ear, experience, and culture when he analyzes Davis's solo rhetoric. Missing as well is whatever personal investment he might have in using the recently developed tools of black cultural critique in this context. Perhaps interrogation of and grappling critically with this issue would have allowed him to avoid what I experienced as a kind of displaced hostility onto other analysts. The mere use of Gates's Signifyin(g) theory is not enough to fill this critical gap (where is "the actual reception" of Davis's music within African American audiences, for example?). Nor is "the personal" a sign of a lack of rigor; it is an unavoidable consequence of criticism. As Walser himself notes, "reactions to art feel personal, but they nonetheless reflect the ways in which even our most personal feelings are socially constituted" (169). Once we open the door for the personalized critical voice in scholarship, we of course make room to understand the positions of others. This move may help us to understand, for example, why a black jazz musician would make claims for his life's work being seen a statement of "individual freedom." Or why audiences and even musicians still clamor—despite our academic claims to the contrary—for "authenticity" as they understand it.

And what happens when this sense of authenticity is challenged? Pearl Cleage expresses outrage in a 1990 essay after learning in Davis's

Against  
one solution:  
Thematic one's  
one position +  
subjectivity more

autobiography that, in her words, "he is guilty of self-confessed violent crimes against women such that we should break his albums, burn his tapes and scratch up his CDs until he acknowledges and apologizes and rethinks his position on *The Woman Question*."<sup>90</sup> Cleage tries to reconcile her strong feelings of betrayal toward Davis because she had used his music, particularly his watershed recording *Kind of Blue* (1959), as background music for romantic interludes. In fact, Davis's music became the soundtrack for an important transitional moment in her life as a recent divorcee enjoying her freedom. "For this frantic phase," she writes, "Miles was perfect." As she eloquently explains, Davis's work became a metaphor for the "messages of great personal passions" she wanted to convey to her conquests.

Restrained, but hip. Passionate, but cool. He became a permanent part of the seduction ritual. Chill the wine. Light the candles. Put on a little early Miles. Give the gentleman caller an immediate understanding of what kind of woman he was dealing with. This was not a woman whose listening was confined to the vagaries of the Top 40. This was a woman with the possibility of an interesting past, and the probability of an interesting future. (214)

I find Cleage's critique one of the more profound testaments to the power of musical experience, one that I will deal with explicitly in some future forum. Throughout the essay, Cleage attempts to come to terms with her subject position as a black female and the ways in which she perceived that Davis's muse had "made" or shaped a most cherished aspect of her subjectivity. How could she accept Davis's "genius," she ponders, without becoming complicit in his self-confessed violence against women?

### The Politics of Writing Black Cultural Politics

I acknowledge that since I am a black scholar working in a field that is primarily nonblack, some of the observations that I forward here will have a specific kind of import. Therefore, I want to begin this next section with some qualifications. I believe that all of the scholars whom I am situating in this "new critical school" are indeed working against the notion of racial essentialism.<sup>91</sup> They believe in principle that African Americans possess multiple, complex identities that cannot and should not be flattened out into familiar stereotypes. The composer and musicologist David Brackett, in response to an uninformed critique of "romantic authenticity" in black music literature by Philip Tagg, argues that "simply admitting that a concept such as 'black music' exists need

The  
problem  
of  
essentialism

not mean that the music is any more or less 'authentic' than any other music.<sup>92</sup> That Brackett needed to make such a statement at this moment in African American history speaks volumes. This is especially true given the mountain of historical and "living" evidence that black music "exists." It points to one of the more fascinating aspects of African American blackness: the need to re-dress, re-announce, and reprise a definition of blackness in American culture. Terms such as "freedmen," "New Negroes," "colored," "black," and "African American" represent just a few examples of this sociopolitical imperative. And theorizing about this blackness does, in fact, present a special kind of writerly and professional problem. Writers must find a way to explain "blackness" in "black music" and somehow account for it as a tangible, material, and manageable presence.

Writing about music presents a formidable challenge to music scholars, and constructing a nonessentialized yet "authentic" and fluid yet "real" blackness in print, no less, may even surpass that challenge. While the notion of authenticity in African American cultural studies has attracted much attention, far less has been granted to how scholars authenticate and authorize their work in this field. We find two overlapping strategies for authentication in the new critical school, but they are cloaked in how these writers represent or, better, construct blackness in their literary texts. We might call these writerly strategies "professional" and "confessional" blacknesses.

Professional blackness emerges in this literature through writers' strikingly consistent use of sociolinguistic models for representing African American presence, sensibilities, and identity—a sociolinguistic blackness, if you will. The kind of scholarly (and personal) authority it grants comes by virtue of its claim to have been homegrown, cultivated and harvested from indigenous black vernacular culture. Inspired by the radicalized conception of blackness promoted in the 1960s, the work of the anthropologists and sociolinguists William Labov, Roger Abrahams, and Geneva Smitherman, among others, investigated speech patterns among African Americans and discussed how the rules and roles of syntax, performance, and social context contributed to black group identity.<sup>93</sup> Contemporary black-music critics have found these literary studies compelling. In fact, Gates's theory of Signifyin(g) exerts an almost hegemonic presence over this research.

I refer to this mode of sociolinguistic influence as professional blackness for several reasons. It consists of complex theoretical explanations of identity and culture that many of us—African Americans and non-African Americans—learned to untangle through, or in some cases in spite of, our professional training. Still others of us taught these theo-

ries to ourselves, either through trial and error or with the help of knowledgeable, widely read, and willing colleagues. I believe it is correct to assume that many of us working in this relatively new area would not have been introduced to this "black literary vernacularism" without the privileged access that our specialized training offers. Once this baptism by theoretical fire has occurred, sociolinguistic-literary blackness allows scholars to plunge headfirst into the depths and wonders of black identity, cultural politics, and subjectivity. I want to discuss briefly how this activity calls into question different sets of issues for African American and non-African American scholars. The cleft existing between these constituencies is overripe for analysis, and I hope my attempt at analysis will not be read as brute cultural chauvinism or territorialism. But the door has been opened for this kind of critique because many of the scholars I mention here not only recognize the significance of race but theorize it aggressively in their writings.

The black literary critic Henry Louis Gates's explanation of why he found contemporary theory useful for his graduate training at Cambridge University during the years of the black power movement provides a helpful beginning: "It was a device that enabled me to communicate with my professors in a more or less common language, even if I was attempting to speak in a critical dialect of Afro-American literature."<sup>94</sup> Gates believed that contemporary theory, in addition to its translating function, gave him a critical distance, the ability to "defamiliarize the texts of the black tradition, to create distance between this black reader and our black texts, so that I may more readily see the formal workings of those texts."<sup>95</sup> Many of us who have weathered the storm of rigorous graduate training can relate to Gates's desire to learn how to speak to his professors. And those who found themselves speaking (or, perhaps more appropriately, hearing) across social divides caused by ethnic, racial, gender, or even musical differences can relate to Gates's problematic. Can we assume, then, that the white and black scholars under discussion are similarly motivated to develop a common language with the disciplinary authorities? Are both groups seeking to achieve the critical distance—the defamiliarization—of which Gates is speaking here?

I want to make it clear that I share with both my black and my white colleagues a rejection of racial essentialism. And I realize that since my argument has speculative dimensions, I am skating on pockets of theoretical thin ice, certainly with regard to nonessentialist ideals. But I think it is important to recognize the body of academic work under discussion as a powerful social discourse in itself. This scholarship can be analyzed with respect to the cultural work it is performing for its creators and its audience, thus rendering it not unlike the black musical discourses,

musicians, and sensibilities it explores. It is also important for me to emphasize that black music does not exist as the sole territory and private property of African Americans. "Others" have flowed rather freely (pun intended) in and out of this music and have done so at all stages of the creation, mediation, and reception processes. As Ann duCille has argued about intertextual influence in black literature, "Intertextuality cannot be defined as movement solely from black text to black text, from one black author to another. Rather, such resonances must be viewed as cutting across racial identities, cultural spaces, and historical moments."<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, since these are American scholars working on American music, it is unnecessary for these white scholars to mask how intimately the "blackness" of African American music has inspired their admiration, attention, and professional involvement.

But therein lies a key problematic. Given the intense attention to African American cultural identity and politics in these studies, one would expect much more theorizing on how their own subjective, complex identities dialogue with their representations of blackness.<sup>97</sup> The absence of such speculation in work that seems to argue that "race matters," as Cornel West put it, is curious. I am not advocating that white (or black) scholars present autobiographical detail as a matter of course in black music research; sometimes that information is not relevant to a specific project. But in work that seems pressed to deconstruct and decode African American identity and its politics, white and, no doubt, black scholars' claims of access to such sensibilities need to be theorized more often and rigorously. And it should be done with the same enthusiasm that has made the intersecting of gender, race, and class at the corner of blackness and the academy such a busy intersection indeed.

### True Confessions: The Black Critical "I"

Samuel A. Floyd and Kyra D. Gaunt, two African American scholars in this new critical school, raise provocative issues with respect to this topic. They also use professional blackness in the ways that I have discussed above. Floyd's work is based on Gates's sociolinguistic-literary theory, Signifyin(g). If Eileen Southern believed that she could not (or should not) venture into a categorical definition of black music, Floyd's interdisciplinary study *The Power of Black Music* (1995) aims directly at that question.<sup>98</sup> Addressing the "absence of a thorough and specific aesthetic for the perception and criticism of black music,"<sup>99</sup> Floyd gives you a sense for the capacity of black music to circulate social energy, to em-

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Again conclusions

positions (P. Tinkin critique)

What is the relationship (+) the white to this issue of identity of white & black?

body cultural work, and to express the "struggles and fulfillments of existence."<sup>100</sup> Like that of Southern and Baraka before him, Floyd's thinking for the most part reflects the cohesive, unified black cultural nationalism of the 1960s, which shaped the views of a whole generation of writers and scholars. He explores how music has registered social developments among African Americans, writing, for example, that "a large part of Afro-America made a more or less gradual shift from a cosmos controlled by black mythology and African-American community to one dominated by individual determinism."<sup>101</sup> Floyd monitors this and other shifts—the African American journey from the African continent to slavery to freedom, their move from an African-based cosmology to a distinctly African American one—by tracing how musical values and approaches have transformed yet reproduced certain myths, rituals, and performance practices. Black music, in Floyd's view, can be defined not only by understanding what conceptual traits shape a musical work or style, but also by questioning why certain musical gestures are considered significant.<sup>102</sup>

To bolster his claims with musical evidence, Floyd puts forward a theory of musical and cultural interpretation that he calls Call-Response (not to be confused with the technique call-and-response). Call-Response, he argues, is the master trope of the African American musical tradition. Within this master trope Floyd subsumes the foundational and conceptual elements (or tropes) of African American vernacular music, including call-and-response, the heterogeneous sound ideal, musical individuality within collectivity, a dynamic approach to rhythm, oral declamation, and constant repetition, among other techniques. His theoretical model offers a useful vocabulary with which to talk about the cultural transaction occurring between black music and listeners knowledgeable about its signifying gestures.

But Floyd also establishes authority through a writerly-political strategy we might think of as "confessional blackness." For example, he states that his work is shaped not only by the tools of poststructuralism, but more fundamentally by his childhood experiences in southern African American culture during the 1940s and early 1950s. He describes himself as "a member of perhaps the last generation of African Americans whose parents and grandparents were intimately familiar with Br'er Rabbit, Legba, the Signifying Monkey, Stackolee, John the Conqueror, and other black folk characters and practices."<sup>103</sup>

Gaunt's work, although still in its formative stages and less widely known than Floyd's, discusses girls' games and their influence on the creation and reception of rap music by a specific community of listeners. I stress the word "specific" here because that goal distances much of the

"confesses" his own story and standpoint

professional-blackness work discussed above: for all the talk of "meaning" and "reception," these writers do not often specify who, beyond the musicians, is interpreting the "black" codes within the music.

Gaunt foregrounds her study, for example, by outlining how multiple facets and practices of her own identity—gender, ethnicity, consumerism, academic pedigree, and intense musical involvement—influence her work. She writes, "As an African American woman who adores hip-hop music, my experiences as a purchasing fan began in 1989 as a burgeoning student of ethnomusicology, although rap songs have dotted my musical tastes since 1979."<sup>104</sup> Gaunt's "confession" springboards the reader into broad identity issues and formal explanations of musical processes. As evidenced in the following passage, Gaunt gives weight to the role of gender and black female subjectivity in this study, adding a much needed gauge of difference within the black cultural nationalist sensibility that has predominated in black musical studies. Thus she engenders the black critical "I" and signifies on Floyd and other black writers who have given gender short shrift in their critical work:

I began to think about my own everyday experiences as a girl within the sphere of girls' musical games. In thinking about games that involved music, I thought of hand-clapping and double Dutch (jump-rope) game songs. The game-songs we performed beyond the public or mass-mediated realm resemble the music of hip-hop in various ways. For example, the sing-song, declamatory nature of the vocal line, the emphasis on rhythmic punctuation and style, the use of the musical break (or interruption of sound but not musical line), the emphasis on narration and linguistic play, and more. Rap music might be seen as a site for revisiting girls' play for African American women fans and performers, in addition to conventional uses of rap as dance music and as a site for cultural and nationalist impulses.<sup>105</sup>

I, too, am offering my own version of the confessional-blackness mode, in a larger study.<sup>106</sup> I explore some of the historical implications of my own subject position—especially my experiences during the 1960s and 1970s—through the oral histories of my extended family of origin. I try to make explicit how these experiences inform my interpretations of the music treated throughout the book.

My mixing the confessional and professional modes of blackness constitutes a kind of double gesture, one that seeks to capture the critical distance but also the familiarity that I am reluctant to even pretend to surrender for the unachievable cause of scholarly objectivity. The purpose behind this critical move can be seen in much recent scholarship in

Again —  
entry-ramp  
into the  
discourse via  
stoned confession  
(no ticket,  
no entry)

Solomon

the humanities and social sciences, in which scholars have moved toward a new self-reflexivity, recognizing the ways in which their own experiences shape their studies even in work portrayed as objective.<sup>107</sup>

### Knowing There: Native Knowledge and Productive Bias

On the lecture and professional conference circuit I have been accused more than once of not being "theoretical" enough when voicing concerns about some of the current strategies that some scholars use to explain black vernacular music. Yet few, if any, have noted what is missing in these theoretical dialogues. Because all the fields of musical studies are overwhelmingly made up of white scholars, we can observe an unconscious interpretive pattern even in research on black music. The white "vernacular" is "understood" as always-already present and therefore requires little explanation, theoretical or otherwise. We take for granted the white critical "I," and it operates as a familiar, naturalized voice in scholarly discourse. Scholars rigorously defend this transparent though powerful space of authority. One defensive tactic assumes that attainment of a Ph.D. erases a black subjective lived experience, varied as these experiences are. The only profit that such thinking might carry, however, is frustrating the development of a "musicology of experience," a development that can only benefit our illuminations of the wonder and power of musical experiences, which constitute, of course, the center and seat of our work as musicologists.

Yet verbal duels at lectures, conferences, and hotel bars are not lasting scholarly discourse and never will be. What counts most (at least to our professional work) is what debates take place in print. One African Americanist distinguishes between postmodern theoretical "discourse" and something she calls (quite sarcastically) "dat-course." Her comparison is instructive for my argument. Discourse stands for all the postmodern, postcolonial, poststructuralist, "sophisticated" methodologies to appear in academia in recent years. Dat-course, on the other hand, refers to that which is deemed "methodologically sloppy anti-intellectual identity politics."<sup>108</sup> African American critical perspectives will remain marginal in the field and not be given their just due until they move out of dat-course and into printed discourse. Many African American critical perspectives are little known, and they will not circulate outside of dat-course and into discourse until the demographics and thus the knowledge base of our discipline expands well beyond the status quo.

To ally with current academic "isms" + to enter into sophisticated discourse theory is to be co-opted by the academy?

Code stored epistemologies?

identify yourself!

The theoretical turn in black cultural studies has witnessed black scholars' inclination to write themselves into their criticism. I encourage this trend beyond this group because it can invigorate academia with fresh perspectives and political imperatives. The black law professor Patricia J. Williams notes of her desire to search her own legacy and to write her family history into her scholarship: "I decided that my search was based in the utility of such a quest, not mere indulgence, but a recapturing of that which had escaped historical scrutiny, which had been overlooked and underseen. I, like so many blacks, have been trying to pin myself down in history, place myself in the stream of time as significant, evolved, present in the past, continuing in the future."<sup>109</sup> Her work recognizes that not only does race matter, but the critic matters, too. Black music criticism can benefit from this imperative. As others have warned, we cannot kill the critic along with the author. We have not yet arrived at the best of all possible intellectual worlds.

Other disciplines can provide models for the kind of theorizing I propose here. The anthropologist José E. Limón's work on working-class *mexicanos* of south Texas represents an excellent model, and a brief description of it is helpful because so many of his concerns overlap with my own. Limón explores brilliantly the notion of the "native anthropologist" in his work on the expressive cultural practices of the *mexicanos*.<sup>110</sup> An anthropologist working in the cultural and geographical space of his birth and upbringing, Limón provides a deft critique of the interplay of his combined birthrights: *mexicano* and "child of the Enlightenment, of high literary modernism, of classical anthropology."<sup>111</sup> Limón interprets historiographical (previous and selective work on south Texas Mexican American culture) and his own ethnographic research on a number of expressive practices through his multiple lens, and the result is extremely useful for my larger project.<sup>112</sup>

In much the same way that I have discussed recent development in black music research, Limón does not simply provide a review of the literature. He discusses the works "as symbolic action, as cultural practices in themselves, as expressive culture about expressive culture."<sup>113</sup> He is especially concerned with how these previous ethnographies influence his own views—how he struggles against reproducing some of their underlying assumptions. Thus, Limón's historiographic work offers an interpretive history of the "writerly" (or written) culture about the *mexicanos* of south Texas.

Limón's ethnographic case studies are equally helpful. Though his topics of choice can hardly be considered an exhaustive list, he wants their study to gain him access to "large cultural patterns" in the same way that the Renaissance literary scholar Stephen Greenblatt does with

pure insider epistemology. But does one have to "go there" or "be there" in order to have a productive dialogue with "what's there"? Main issue: verb "know"  
Ramsey is here appealing to an irreducible AUTHENTICITY OF EXPERIENCE

his important work.<sup>114</sup> Limón borrows from Greenblatt the term "cultural poetics," an idea meaning "acts of cultural interpretation focused on aesthetically salient, culturally imbedded textualities and enactments."<sup>115</sup> Limón's cultural poetics of south Texas *mexicanos* considers a wide range of literary, folkloric, popular, economic, political, and his own cultural memories "in one interpretive universe."<sup>116</sup>

Black, white, and other scholars are similarly positioned to achieve this kind of work in black music criticism; we can all fashion a cultural poetics specific to our own scholarly and personal *productive* biases. But as Janie Crawford, Zora Neale Hurston's black female protagonist in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, admonishes, "You got tuh go there tuh know there."<sup>117</sup> In other words, our experiences and productive biases *do* matter. We should not bury them nor disregard those of "others." Through such efforts we might continue to transform America, this house that race built. We can, as the novelist Toni Morrison suggests, "convert a racist house into a race specific yet non-racist home," and encourage "race specificity without race prerogative."<sup>118</sup>

We will never attain these ideals within the realm of black music studies, however, without interracial cooperation. And that cannot be achieved without a dramatic increase in the number of highly trained black scholars who have been there and know there. And, of course, there is no single black "there." As black music research continues to cut the academic rug with its paradigm shift, we will need many more black scholars on the dance floor, saying it loud and intensively taking it to the bridge. Without African American critical perspectives we remain trapped in a familiar pattern, one in which "black culture is more easily intellectualized (and canonized) when transferred from the danger of lived black experience to the safety of white metaphor, when you can have that 'signifying black difference' without the difference of significant blackness."<sup>119</sup>

The stakes are high. As different sensibilities, knowledge bases, and intellectual interests join in the musicological project, and as the safety of white metaphor makes room for not only the black lived experience but the white as well, we will all benefit, intellectually and morally. "Racial constructs," as Toni Morrison argues, will be "forced to reveal their struts and bolts, their technology and their carapace, so that political action, legal and social thought, and cultural production can be generated sans racist cant, explicit or in disguise."<sup>120</sup> If we undertake this important project together all this revelation will no doubt carry with it some uncomfortable moments. Such critical self-reflection never comes easily. As more vernaculars reveal themselves in the new black music criticism, the language through which we communicate will certainly be

NB  
political change to academics  
NB



altered, and this shift carries with it the risk of misunderstanding. I will never forget when a senior, well-respected white colleague asked me at a conference if I thought that I was a "trickster figure" because of an observation I had made concerning a well-known black composer.<sup>121</sup> I hope I misunderstood. Where are the elephants when you need them?

### Who Will Hear?

This essay, although wide-ranging, has focused on two main concerns. The first addressed the need for more black scholars in the academic music fields generally and black music research specifically. Since we have decided that an increase in cultural diversity is desirable in the professorate, I questioned exactly what that might mean for the kind of work created from this demographic shift. One result might be something that I am sure some readers may have found disconcerting: my traversing the various vernacularisms reflected in my own admittedly complex background, an identity that is as much informed by my working-class, African American, Chicago-based experiences as they are by my training and professional affiliations. While it may be true that the leaderships and the rank and file of our professional music societies have remained committed to the ideals of cultural diversity, true diversity will mean a change in what counts as valuable knowledge in our professional discourses. New criticisms demand new attitudes.

The other thrust of this essay discussed a more contentious topic: the role of white scholars in the new black music criticism. Because I do not argue for a colorblind approach in identity politics, my views may be at odds with many of the leftist and progressive sensibilities driving the new cultural criticism. While it is highly improbable that the writerly stance I have called the invisible white critical "I" will become obsolete, I believe I have suggested a promising alternative. I want to make clear that I am not advocating a confessional mode among white scholars that smacks of the "I once was blind but now I see you" type of reflexivity so brilliantly critiqued by Ann duCille.<sup>122</sup> I argue, rather, for accounts that, while acknowledging white privilege, move into theorizing other areas of white-lived experience that will shed light on the complex reception histories of black music.

The nuts and bolts of this theoretical strategy must be done by white scholars themselves. I, for one, feel inadequate to this particular task because it is not my lived experience. And while I understand that this vacuum created by my white colleagues might, in fact, be a strategic silence, a political move to counter past wrongs, I still argue that we need this perspective in the discourse. But it should be forwarded in tan-

dem with the theorized experiences of a critical mass of black scholars. Only then can we achieve a true and balanced dialogic fulfilling the goals of equality we all surely share.

All of this means facing not only the music but also some difficult questions. Will we police the number of black scholars working with the polite nervousness that whips through a white suburban neighborhood when a black family moves in, fearful of lowered property values and scholarly standards? Will the few black scholars in the field be able to concede some of the authoritative voice that the inevitable condition of our tokenism grants us? Will theorizing black scholars make the turn from the "family romance" paradigm to a more diverse idea of blackness than the historical and practical work that our pioneer scholars advanced out of necessity? Will nonblack scholars greet black scholars' assertion of identity politics with the same enthusiasm they celebrate from the black musicians they study? Will such an assertion be considered white-bashing "Crow Jim"-ism or a reverse racism, in the same way that black feminism is often critiqued as anti-black male? Will the feel-good rhetoric of cultural diversity and multiculturalism be allowed to stand in for a thorough desegregation of our field's professional ranks? Will we achieve signifying difference without significant blackness? Will this new body of scholarship be "in the pocket"—heterogeneous yet composite? As we face this music, whose ears will hear?

### Notes

1. Philip Gossett, "New York—1995," *American Musicological Society Newsletter* [hereafter *AMS Newsletter*] 26, no. 1 (Feb. 1996): 1. One can get some sense of the official, yet somewhat marginal, "diversity discourse" in musicology by reading the *AMS* newsletters, especially from 1992 to the present. Since that time, the newsletter has chronicled how various *AMS* presidents, board members, and the rank and file have responded to various issues surrounding diversity, including the status of women, the curriculum, methodology, gay and lesbian studies, and ethics. Grassroots protest from within the society has inspired the leadership to address diversity issues directly. Writing in 1993, for example, Ellen Rosand, Gossett's predecessor, said in her presidential message: "I have to confess becoming aware of a certain amount of grumbling within the membership of the Society. Many of the negative vibes resonated on one issue: the sense of disenfranchisement felt by a number of you. In the Council it was the perception of the Board of Directors as an elite group drawn from the 'Eastern establishment' and therefore supposedly removed from—insensitive to—the concerns of 'the people.' In the Committee on Cultural Diversity it was a sense of alienation from many of the topics on the program." To these complaints, Rosand responded: "We try very hard to achieve geographical, biological, philosophical, cultural, and ideological balance on every committee, but we need your input." See "Presidential Message," *AMS Newsletter* 23, no. 1 (Feb. 1993): 3. In 1995 Rosand wrote about the "new musicology," a term that had become a way to describe certain shifts in the intellectual terrain of the discipline. The new musicology was "a

Practical Application?

