simply because it has served as the object for such a diverse array of relevant interpretive and analytical studies. The final chapter summarizes and draws together the arguments developed in the preceding material. It is worth pointing out in advance that rather than building systematically toward a clinching concluding argument, the book's principal claims are bound up with, and emerge from, the text considered as a whole.

In developing these arguments, I have not – and could not – restrict myself only to those issues that are internal to the study of music alone. In fact, in many respects, it would be more accurate to describe this book as a critique of academic discourse which happens to take the study of music as its focus. Of course, to put it this way is to invite an obvious rejoinder: am I not in danger of making presumptive, generalizing claims about academic discourse based merely on an engagement with the study of music, while simultaneously making claims about the study of music that are themselves derived from an idealized, abstract notion of a generalized academic discourse? While this represents an important cautionary note for any enterprise such as this, I would contend that the argument developed here, and especially the central claim, is only really available from a position external to any individual disciplinary context. The challenge then becomes one of mediating between that which is a necessary condition of any academic discourse and that which, in this case, is unique to the study of music. Similar concerns might be voiced about the extent to which this book draws on specifically philosophical arguments: is such material relevant to the study of music and, in any case, is a nominal *music*ologist really equipped to deal with it? Again, while these certainly represent legitimate and pertinent questions, I would suggest that any inter-disciplinary study is inevitably caught in this kind of paradox – where the level of expertise required to move within any one field seems always to place insurmountable intellectual demands on any one writer or reader who seeks to move within several. However, while it is true that one cannot engage with a particular disciplinary topic without a reasonable grasp of the theoretical framework(s) in which it is ordinarily articulated, one must also be careful to avoid a reification of means that serves simply to congeal an otherwise beneficial and reciprocal exchange, or that closes off perspectives that would otherwise remain unattainable. To put it another way, musicology has not asked these kinds of questions and philosophy has not asked them of musicology.

Chapter 1

A New Musicology?

It is now something of a cliché to observe that over the last decade or so musicology has undergone some kind of paradigmatic transformation.[1] The more crude, reductionist account of this development is sometimes presented in the manner of a quasi-redemptive narrative: once upon a time scholars laboured under outmoded, ideologically tainted, patriarchal, hegemonic, imperialistic, Western, positivist, formalist – in short, 'modernist' – presumption(s); until, some time around 1990, a handful of 'new' (mostly US) musicologists, armed with a battery of 'postmodern' and other literary or cultural theoretical devices, came forth to save musicology from itself. Just as once, on the very cusp of modernity, Kant had urged us to release ourselves from our self-imposed tutelage, from our dependence on tradition and myth, so now, with the 'dialectic of enlightenment' turned full circle, and not without a certain irony, the 'new' musicology urged that we throw off the insidious shackles of the 'modernist' orthodoxy. Many of our most cherished concepts were revealed to be problematic fictions – 'truth', 'structure', 'musical facts', the 'music itself'. In their place a new and exotic vocabulary infiltrated the hitherto austere domain of musicological discourse; the talk was now of 'contingency', 'plurality', 'locality', 'difference', 'heterogeneity', 'dissemination', 'iterability', 'semiosis'. Of course few, if any, scholars would actually adhere to such a simplistic account of recent disciplinary developments; indeed, pointing up the clichéd nature of such accounts has become a kind of second-order cliché in itself. Yet whatever the claims and counter-claims, whatever the polemical rebuttals or reconciliatory gestures, the account of musicology's transition from 'old' to 'new', from the 'modern' to the 'postmodern', has nevertheless secured a certain orthodoxy, especially at the more subterranean level of the disciplinary self-conscious.

Most historical accounts of the emergence of a 'new' musicology tend to locate the first proper articulation of its motivating impulses in Joseph Kerman's article, 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out' (1980)

1 For general accounts of recent disciplinary developments see: Cook & Everist, 1999, [preface]; Kerman, 1991; Lochhead, 2000; Lorraine, 1993; McCreless, 1997; Miles, 1995; Powers, 1993; Samson, 1999; Scott, 2000 [introduction]; Treitler, 1995 & 1999; Williams, 2000 & 2001.

and his book, *Musicology* [published as *Contemplating Music* in the US] (1985). While the attempt to identify a 'prima causa' for any historical development inevitably risks sliding toward an untenable determinism or over-simplification, it is difficult to deny the part played by Kerman's texts, even today, in consolidating the image of an 'older' (conservative, reactionary) discipline – defined by a musicological 'positivism' and an analytical 'formalism' – and the correlative need for a 'newer' (critical, progressive) direction. As Kofi Agawu argues: 'His [Kerman's] book of five years later, *Contemplating Music*, enabled a crystallisation of the offending categories as "positivism" and "formalism". Although these terms carry considerable semantic and ideological baggage, their complex histories were subsequently suppressed in the drive to inform about the limits of theory-based analysis' (Agawu, 1997, p.299). If, on the one hand, Cook and Everist rightly caution that 'we seem to be well on the way to creating a disciplinary myth that divides musicological history into two discrete ages, the old and the new, separated by Kerman's opening of Pandora's box (or rather his public announcement that it was being opened)' (Cook & Everist, 1999, p.viii), so, on the other hand, Jim Samson, in his contribution to the same edited collection, suggests that 'the debates about formalism and positivism (the two were unhelpfully associated by Kerman) did indeed signal the end of a particular project, one of those mysterious caesuras which punctuate intellectual history and which no amount of context can fully explain' (Samson, 1999, p.54). Of course, Kerman's original texts preceded by some years the advent of a recognizable and self-consciously 'postmodern turn' in musicological practice; and in many ways his original blueprint for a more 'humane' form of music criticism now appears rather conservative, perhaps even tame, when compared to the rapid developments that have taken place in some areas of the discipline: 'The type of criticism Kerman recommends is more like what used to be mainstream literary criticism – a patchwork of analysis, criticism, history and, possibly, aesthetics that would link music to underlying human values' (Williams, 2001, p.6). It is instead with a cluster of influential texts, particularly Lawrence Kramer's *Music as Cultural Practice* (1990), Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) and Carolyn Abbate's *Unsung Voices* (1991) – there are undoubtedly others – that a 'new' musicology really began to take shape, albeit that its chief protagonists would deny that it ever had any real unifying shape. That this particular period can justifiably be considered one of those points in the development of a discourse when a paradigm shift becomes properly aware of itself is evidenced not only by the appearance of self-consciously 'new' musicological writing in the early 1990s, but also by a marked increase in self-reflective discourse – for example, the 'Approaches to the Discipline' edition of *Current Musicology* (**53**, 1993) and the special edition of *The Journal of Musicology* (**15** (3), 1997). Further evidence is provided by the fact that the

alleged paradigm shift itself became the target for a less proliferate, though at times no less polemical, 'counter-reformation' – typified, for example, in Pieter Van den Toorn's *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (1995) or Kofi Agawu's 'Analysing Music Under the New Musicological Regime' (1997). It is a sign of the cyclical rapidity with which intellectual trends (or fashions) develop and recede – perhaps mirroring the world at large – that the 'new' musicology is now seen by many as itself a historical moment already passed; and it is surely a sign of some considerable disciplinary dislocation that while some have navigated through and (well) beyond it, some continue as though it had never happened. Whatever one's personal proclivities and whatever one's evaluation of recent developments, one cannot ignore the radical disjunction not only between the objects of contemporary study but also between the very fundamental bases on which that study depends. If Cook and Everist are right in observing that 'conquest is giving way to colonization, which is to say that controversy is giving way to compromise' (Cook & Everist, 1999, p.x), it is not so clear that the fundamental issues on which that controversy depended have yet adequately been resolved, nor that the terms of a provisional compromise are coherently sustainable. The debate may indeed be 'in danger of growing wearisome' (Samson, 1999, p.54), yet rather than acting as a stimulus to a productive exploration of tensions that remain latent in disciplinary presupposition, a reconciliatory (or resigned) pluralism may well serve simply to sidestep what remains an entirely necessary and critical encounter.

Definitions

The attempt to represent, or account for, recent disciplinary developments is not helped by the manner in which the labels 'new', 'postmodern' and 'critical' are used, on some occasions and by some writers, to refer to quite distinct methodological or theoretical frameworks and yet are employed, on other occasions and by other writers, as relatively interchangeable. Hence, rather than it representing an unnecessary exercise in semantic pedantry, devoting at least some attention to the complex and often contradictory use of these various terms can help both to clarify the nature of recent disciplinary developments as well as to point to the manner in which those developments are self-reflectively perceived, or framed, by those involved. As has already been suggested, the phrase 'new musicology' has itself become rather 'old'; perhaps we have witnessed 'the ageing of the new musicology' – as Adorno might have put it. It seems to refer more to the fruits of a particular historical moment than to an underlying movement that has continued into the present, albeit that this may have less to do with its substantive impact and everything to do with the well-documented

terminological paradox that inevitably befalls the historically 'new'. The label 'postmodern', however, has lost none of its actuality, even though it is more often than not closely associated, if not directly identified, with the 'new' musicology: 'Since the mid-1980 ,another and mostly different group of authors have developed a "postmodern" musicology, defining new paradigms of understanding music in general. The resulting "New Musicology" has indeed generated vital debate ...' (Lochhead, 2002, p.2). While some of that which came to be called 'new' musicology was certainly influenced by, or partly dependent upon, 'postmodern' theory in one form or another, it is also clear that the ramifications of postmodern theory extend well beyond the localized historical (and geographical) context with which the 'new' musicology is, or was, typically associated, and in such a way that the two terms can no longer be conceived as mutually exhaustive. In fact, if one considers that Susan McClary, for example, was writing from a feminist perspective that made no explicit reference to 'postmodern' theory – in fact, the feminism underlying her earlier work is sometimes criticized precisely for its alleged 'essentialism' and hence ultimate dependence upon 'modernist' epistemology – and that Lawrence Kramer, for example, at least in his earlier work, sought to synthesize hermeneutics, 'thick historicism' and speech-act theory – albeit the latter incorporating poststructuralist adaptations thereof – then it remains less than clear why this 'new' musicology is so often directly conflated with an alleged 'postmodern turn'. Nevertheless, fervently embraced by some, and studiously avoided by others, the term 'postmodern' undeniably has played a significant role in determining the focus and trajectory of a significant part of contemporary musicological study. Yet whether serving as a rallying call for a 'new' type of musicology, as a stylistic category for a 'new' type of music, or as a useful term of abuse for all that is superficial, faddish and basically wrong with the contemporary study of music, the term's import remains infuriatingly imprecise. Genealogical complexity, interdisciplinary assimilation and, it has to be said, wilful ignorance on the part of some have all contributed to a situation in which the term 'postmodern' seems increasingly to refer to so many things that one might reasonably argue it can no longer be said usefully to refer to anything; and the situation is exacerbated, from a musicological perspective, by the fact that 'postmodern' can refer to the object studied, to the theoretical assumptions underlying a particular way of engaging with an object or to the general condition of the discipline itself. In this respect the term has become less than useful and the principal aim in this chapter is to argue that the deployment of the term is often unhelpfully, if not wilfully, misleading – especially in its implicit dependence upon, or retro-active construction of, a supposedly 'modernist' musicology against which it is then seen to react or beyond which it is alleged to have 'progressed'.

While the label 'critical musicology' avoids the historical paradox of the 'new' and some of the semantic ambiguities inherent in the 'postmodern', it nevertheless suffers some complexities of its own. In a rather basic sense it can tend to imply that other 'traditional' approaches are innately un- or non-critical, when arguably all scholarly work is by definition critical in intent – one need only think of that hallmark of 'positivist' scholarship, the 'critical edition'. The term 'critical' has also been used interchangeably with 'new' (or 'postmodern'). Stephen Miles, for example, views the work of Rose Subotnik, Lawrence Kramer and Susan McClary as paradigmatic instances of 'critical musicology' (Miles, 1997, p.722). However, critical musicology is more typically understood to have clear etymological and historical links with 'critical theory', in which case 'critical musicology' simply and obviously refers to the application of critical theory within a musicological context. Yet critical theory itself can refer to two different, if inclusively related, bodies of thought. In its narrower sense, 'Critical Theory' proper (often capitalized) tends to refer to a quite specific German tradition that is normally associated with the various 'generations' of the so-called Frankfurt School – whose leading figures include Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (first generation) and Jürgen Habermas (second generation). At a more generic level, however, 'critical theory', especially in the arts, humanities and social sciences, tends simply to mean 'theory' per se – a general body of inter- or supra-disciplinary material that incorporates everything from postmodern and poststructuralist theory through to postfeminist and postcolonial theory (notice the 'posts'). As Martin Morris observes, 'the appellation critical theory has proliferated in recent decades. It no longer primarily refers to the Frankfurt tradition but can apply to diverse theoretical perspectives and preoccupations in fields such as sociological theory, historiography, literary theory, and aesthetic criticism' (Morris, 2001, p.3). If one then considers that some Frankfurt Critical Theory – on which some musicology has drawn – is explicitly opposed to several tenets that are central to much postmodern or poststructuralist discourse – on which much musicology has drawn – then the semantic and theoretical confusion appears complete. At its worst, the phrase 'critical musicology', like 'postmodern musicology', appears to signify only negatively what it is not. Robert Fink, for example, has described the 'new' musicology as a 'gawky, speculative set of interdisciplinary trends that bore little resemblance to the traditional discipline whose methodological and ideological rigidity popular music scholars have feared and shunned for decades' (Fink, 1998, p.137). Yet any conception that is able to include within its scope such diverse, disparate and often contradictory theoretical orientations as post-Marxist cultural theory, French poststructuralism or Lacanian psychoanalysis is surely impoverished, especially if it depends upon a correlatively crude depiction of that which it is not – the 'traditional

discipline'. I will return to this point toward the end of the present chapter.

The semantic ambiguity alluded to above also serves to highlight an interesting (inter)national or geographical perspective. The general paradigm shift referred to here – whether designated 'new' or 'postmodern' – was, and in some respects still is, a predominantly Anglo-American affair, and one mostly internal to the musicology of Western 'high-art' culture. Many of its claims to originality depend upon a notably insular conception of its own disciplinary tradition(s). As Alastair Williams notes, for example, 'the new musicology's "discovery" that music is a contextual art is strikingly ironic when one considers that the most developed existing theory of modernism – Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* – was written by a man fascinated by the intersections of music, sociology and philosophy' (Williams, 1998, p.281); and 'popular musicology' and ethnomusicology had both presumed the equal scholarly worth of studying all music(s) long before post-modernism appeared on the scene to 'problematize' the high–low divide or deconstruct underlying canonic presuppositions. Yet even within the Anglo-American orbit there remain notable distinctions. The 'new' musicology is, or was, primarily a US phenomenon; and the 'postmodern' discourse on which it and those influenced by it drew tends often to have been filtered through US literary and cultural studies. Adam Krims, for example, has noted that 'specifically literary forms of post-structuralist theory have been more influential in "New Musicology"' than they have been in popular music studies (which is not to say that there has been no literary-theoretical influence in the latter). Thus, issues like pleasure and sexuality, along with the manners of speaking culled from French traditions, predominate more in the scholarship of classical, than of popular, music' (Krims, 2000, p.22). While one cannot overlook obvious commonalities of approach or reciprocity of influence, developments in the UK have tended to take a slightly different path. Derek Scott observes that 'critical musicologists in the UK are generally agreed that the biggest problem facing current musicology is the collapse of the binary divide between pop and classical; it is the fundamental importance accorded to this perception that *sets them apart* from the "new musicologists" of the USA, who tend (with few exceptions) to concentrate on canonic works' (Scott, 2001, p.145, my emphasis). While this may be true of those whose primary interests incorporate 'popular' music(s), there is also an identifiable British tradition, often focused on twentieth-century 'high-art' music, which tends to synthesize formal analytical concerns with a range of critical perspectives drawn more from German or post-Marxist thought than from the French-oriented (post)structuralist frameworks typically adopted by 'new' or 'postmodern' musicologies.

A final feature of the 'new' musicology, and a significant part of more

recent musicology, is a kind of second-order or 'parasitic' appropriation of theoretical frameworks that were originally developed with things other than music in mind. Joseph Kerman once famously observed that 'nearly all musical thinkers travel at a respectful distance behind the latest chariots (or bandwagons) of intellectual life in general' (Kerman, 1985, p.17). If, in the meantime, musicology has made up some considerable ground, as Kerman himself later acknowledged (Kerman, 1991), then the discipline still appears, even at the time of writing, to suffer from a noticeable 'trade deficit' in respect of the flow of ideas. Musicology may well have 'caught up with the times' in respect of its having advanced beyond a tentative encounter with phenomenology or early structuralism and toward a more comfortable accommodation with the central tenets of, say, poststructuralism or postfeminist discourse. Yet one rarely hears of psychoanalysts, anthropologists or sociologists mining the resources of contemporary musicology; one is far more likely to encounter a paper on 'Schumann and the Lacanian "Real"' than on 'Structural Signification and Prolongation: A Schenkerian Take on Adolescent Angst'. As Kerman also observed, 'it seems to me that the most fruitful grafts upon recent musicology have come not from other music disciplines; rather they have come from areas of thought outside of music, in the humanities and social sciences' (Kerman, 1991, p.132). Whether or not those grafts have proved entirely 'fruitful' remains an open question; nevertheless, Kerman was certainly right to point to contemporary musicology's apparent dependence on 'foreign imports'. Hence, it is pertinent not only to seek out the factors behind this asymmetric crisis in methodological confidence but also, as is the aim here, to examine some of the difficulties that are encountered when an explicitly self-reflective musicology fails to reflect on problems that remain latent in those extra-musical appropriations. Harold Powers offered the following explanation for this apparent disparity in interdisciplinary influence: 'Maybe people who take up the academic study of music are just naturally a bit slower and duller than their quick-witted colleagues in other humanistic fields. Perhaps I shouldn't dismiss the possibility; but I think it more likely that musical data are more resistant to verbal explication than the data in other humanistic domains' (Powers, 1993, p.6). Certainly, a significant number of the theoretical frameworks appropriated by the 'new' musicology originated in, or were filtered through, branches of literary or cultural studies that were themselves influenced by poststructuralist theory – Krims again notes that 'much of the analysis-oriented music theory and musicology has tended to gravitate toward critical theory that is directed toward the literary text' (Krims, 1998, p.298). Hence, its adaptation for the purpose of musical interpretation often involves a kind of 'two-step' manoeuvre in which music *first* has to be parsed, conceptualized or packaged as (though it were) a 'language', or at least conceived as a semiotic field with its own semantic

or signifying plane, before it can *then* be interpreted in accordance with the relevant theoretical framework. Yet it cannot simply be, as Powers suggests, that musical data are strictly more resistant to verbal explication – musicologists have always found more than enough to say about music – but rather that musicology, precisely because of music's lacking an explicit semantic dimension, *already* comprised a number of highly developed (sub-)disciplines – theory, analysis, sketch-study, biography – each of which had its own particular set of methodological assumptions and, in some instances, its own specialized vocabulary. To put it another way, it is not so much that musical data are strictly resistant *to* verbal explication, but rather that they are more resistant to being *treated as* verbal (semantic, signifying, communicative) data. Of course, those who are sympathetic to recent developments would most likely argue that it is precisely the notion of music's unique 'autonomy' that they are challenging; that it is not so much that music really *is* more resistant to being understood as a cultural text or as a semiotic field, but rather, due to complex historical and institutional factors, the (Romantic/modernist) ideology of aesthetic autonomy is or was more deeply ingrained in the musical and musicological consciousness. I will return to this argument in Chapter 3.

Nevertheless, the appropriation of 'theory' for the purpose of musical interpretation – rather than for the self-reflective critique of disciplinary practice – has often proved less than convincing. Indeed, one of the more disconcerting aspects of this 'discursive kleptomania' is the way in which various figures or 'thinkers' – the latest 'big things' on the intellectual scene – are so quickly appropriated and then subsequently discarded. It is worth pointing out, in advance, that I have in mind here the appropriation of various critical theoretical or conceptual frameworks for the interpretation of particular musical works or utterances. Some might argue that this would appear to implicate the significant reference to, and use made of, the work of Jürgen Habermas, especially in Chapter 2. However, I there engage with one specific aspect of Habermas's theory of communicative discourse in order to develop my own argument concerning, precisely, the nature of institutional discourse. No doubt the imperatives of grants, tenure and promotion play a role in compelling scholars both to carve out an original niche or 'disciplinary identity' for themselves as well as to remain conversant with the latest trends. Yet it can sometimes appear as though musicologists are simply ransacking the library of twentieth-century thought as part of some elaborate exercise in which musical works are pushed through a variety of theoretical sieves in the hope that something of interest might emerge on the other side. Alan How, for example, rightly warns against 'the production and commodification of ever new ideas, concepts and authors' and suggests that while society and those of its objects deemed worthy of study may change, 'disciplines that merely mimic this tendency through their own self-proliferation weaken themselves by ignoring the accumulated wisdom of their own hard-won insights' (How, 2003, p.171). One feels compelled to ask why it is the case, if some proponents of the 'new' or 'critical' musicology are to be believed, that musicology is now only able adequately to deal with music by rejecting its own traditional precepts and highly developed and sophisticated methodologies and replacing them with this or that theoretical or conceptual framework appropriated from the ever-growing pantheon of 'key thinkers' – most of whom are the subject of innumerable 'short introduction' or 'companion' series ('buy Foucault and Lacan and get Derrida free!'), and none of whom are musicians or musicologists. Of course, none of this is to imply that musicology should immediately close, or re-close, those genuinely inter-disciplinary borders across which it might seek a reciprocally beneficial dynamic; it is to urge caution, however, that individual theoretical or conceptual frameworks are not simply so many convenient, revitalizing tools that one can empty of content (and history) and then bolt on to whatever subject matter one happens to be dealing with.

Indeed, a second and related problem stems, ironically, from the comparatively 'uncritical' manner in which various 'critical' theories have been mobilized for the purpose of interpreting music. The standard template for much of this kind of work typically requires that one summarize the basic idea or set of axiomatic concepts – say, 'difference', 'sign' or 'power' – and then proceed to map the latter onto the interpretation of a given musical work or utterance. However, a more critical reflection on the appropriated theoretical or conceptual framework itself is often lacking. That the work of a Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, Kristeva or Zizek is typically received with greater sympathy *outside* of, rather than within, the disciplinary context in which it originated should at least give some pause for thought. For example – taking just one figure who has figured heavily in recent musicological discourse – many of Jacques Lacan's principal texts, certainly those that incorporate the material most often adopted for the purpose of musicological application, were written some several decades ago; his theory developed over time, is one among many and remains highly contentious within the psychoanalytic community itself; and an extensive secondary literature includes a number of complex and critical studies mounted from a variety of psychoanalytical, philosophical and critical-theoretical perspectives. Yet it can sometimes appear as though some musicologists have absorbed their knowledge of Lacan not from a detailed exploration of the original texts themselves, but from a cursory study of a comparatively limited secondary literature; or have appropriated it via assimilative work undertaken in other disciplinary fields (this, incidentally, would go some way to explaining the notable literary or cultural studies inflection that often appears to inform musicological appropriations

of Lacan's work). Such appropriation can, on occasion, amount to little more than a standard summary of the 'three registers' (the 'imaginary', the 'symbolic' and the 'real') – of the sort typically encountered in those numerous 'short introductions' or 'companions' – followed by a tentative attempt analogically to map them onto the interpretation of a particular musical work. One is far more likely to encounter a statement of the type, 'Lacan teaches us that the Real is forever out of our grasp and can only be encountered in moments of traumatic disassociation. The intrusion of the dissonant melody in bar fifteen could be interpreted in precisely these terms', than of the type, 'Lacan's notion of the Real is but one component within a highly contentious and problematic theory. Before attempting coherently to interpret any piece of music in these terms it is necessary to consider his work as a whole and, more importantly, to consider the many objections that have been levelled at his theory, especially by those who remain actively engaged in contemporary psychoanalytical or philosophical research.' It is as though a scholar of, say, Romantic literature were to appropriate Schenker's theory, perhaps through an introductory textbook or through one particular analytical instance, and then proceed to read off 'structural levels', 'middleground neighbour motions' or 'linear progressions' in various literary or poetic works of the early nineteenth century. Of course, one should not prejudge the utility or viability of such an enterprise, yet it would appear no more abstruse, and no less in need of the most careful elaboration, than the attempt to appropriate the work of Derrida, Kristeva or Deleuze for the interpretation of a Beethoven piano sonata. Hence, while it is certainly true that our understanding of music can be, and has been, enriched by an expansion in the interpretive and analytical methodologies available to us, we should remain alert to the complex of problems that are encountered whenever 'new' theoretical frameworks are brought to bear on objects originally conceived apart from them.

The developments alluded to above are often portrayed as a necessary 'overcoming' of the limitations of a more traditional musicology. In the remaining sections of this chapter I consider a number of 'critical issues', supposedly intrinsic to an alleged paradigm shift within musicology, with a view to suggesting that some of them are not quite so 'new' or quite so 'postmodern', or indeed quite so necessary or desirable, as is sometimes suggested.

Positivism

If one were asked to vote for *the* musicological 'straw target' of the past two decades, then 'positivism' would surely prove a strong contender. Having entered into the musicological consciousness largely as a result of

Joseph Kerman's *Musicology* (1985), the term continues to serve as a convenient epithet for all that is 'old' and outmoded. It tends to evoke images of musty archives, austere leaden papers and a suffocating attention to detail – all in marked contrast to the exhilarating interpretive flamboyance of the contemporary critical enterprise. However, before examining 'positivism' as it typically relates to musicological enquiry, it may be useful to locate the term within a broader historical and philosophical context.

As a distinct 'school of thought' positivism was originally associated with the doctrines of the nineteenth-century French philosopher and sociologist Auguste Comte, who sought to establish a form of sociological enquiry that operated in accordance with the presuppositions and dictates of the natural sciences; later, and within the narrower context of the Vienna Circle, what is commonly referred to as 'logical positivism' (or logical empiricism) dictated that what is knowable and hence ultimately meaningful is limited to that which is either empirically verifiable or logically self-evident. However, as Brian Fay suggests, 'in contemporary thought the term "positivism" has come to refer to a broadly empiricist approach to knowledge rather than the specific doctrines of Saint-Simon and Comte ... or the logical positivists of the so-called Vienna Circle' (Fay, 1996, p.90). At a philosophical level it is closely related to the move away from a speculative, world-disclosing or system-building mode of thought and toward what effectively becomes either a philosophy *of* science or even a philosophy *as* science; philosophy no longer claims to disclose (necessarily metaphysical) truths about the world, but instead concentrates on analysing and understanding how science can justifiably claim to know the world. As Paul O'Grady puts it: 'It was thought that philosophy could help the pursuit of the absolute conception of reality first of all by supplying epistemological foundations for it. However, after many failed attempts at this, other philosophers appropriated the more modest task of clarifying the meanings and methods of the primary investigators (the scientists)' (O'Grady, 2002, p.7). In whatever cast, positivism is clearly related both to a longstanding empiricist tradition as well as to twentieth-century Anglo-American 'analytical' or 'ordinary language' traditions.

The term 'positivism' also has a long, complex and often contentious history of use in the social sciences – albeit that this cannot be viewed apart from the philosophical context just outlined. Where the social sciences are specifically concerned, positivism has typically come to refer to what is best comprehended as a particular epistemological or methodological orientation that serves to underpin a certain type of sociological study. Its characteristic tenets are usefully summarized by Thomas McCarthy:

> 1 The unity of scientific method ... the methodological procedures of natural sciences are applicable to the sciences of man.

> 2 Scientific investigation, whether of social or non-social phenomena, aims at the discovery of lawlike generalisations that can function as premises in deductive explanations and predictions.
> 3 The relation of theory to practice is primarily technical ... no 'ought' can be derived from an 'is', no 'value' from a 'fact'. Scientific inquiry is itself 'value-free'; it strives only for objective (intersubjectively testable) value-neutral results.
> 4 The hallmark of scientific knowledge is precisely its testability (in principle) ... the empirical basis of science is composed of observation statements ... that can be said either to repeat perceptual experiences or, at least, to be motivated by them. (McCarthy, 1978, pp.138–9)

It is unlikely that many scholars strictly and explicitly adhere to such a set of axioms; and, in practice, where the humanities and social sciences are concerned, it would seem that applications of positivism tend instead to vacillate between a less commonly encountered strong(er) version, which advocates the extension of a strict natural-scientific method into all realms of human understanding – or at least its acceptance as a precondition for meaningful knowledge – and a more commonly encountered weak(er) version, which emphasizes the virtues of empirical verifiability and value-free enquiry.

Of course, one of the key objections to a positivist conception of knowledge, especially where the social sciences are concerned, is that the objects of study – social, cultural and historical phenomena, or at least those aspects thereof that are of primary interest – are not themselves subject to causal laws; hence they cannot adequately be grasped by the kind of hypothetical or causal–predictive theoretical constructs that are typically associated with the natural sciences. A second objection, albeit related to the first, is that where such phenomena *are* treated in this manner – as they are for example within certain strands of cognitive psychology or empirical sociology – such methodologies tend to objectify individuals in such a way that, whether intentionally or not, the latter are rendered (more) pliable to the demands of instrumental or administrative control. This was, of course, one of the motivating factors behind the Frankfurt School's dismissal of positivist social science in favour of a 'critical social theory'; and it remains a key component in the long-running German debate concerning the respective status of the *Geistes-* and *Naturwissenschaften* (see especially Adorno, 1976). In this context, it is worth emphasizing another fundamental distinction between Frankfurt Critical Theory and 'post-modern' theory: their respective response to, and criticism of, positivism. Whereas postmodern theory tends to reject positivism because it also rejects, among other things, the traditional notions of 'truth' and 'reality' on which the latter depends, Frankfurt Critical Theory rejects positivism because, in seeking only to convey the world 'objectively' or 'as it is', positivism – or a positivist social science – actually serves to occlude a

deeper reality and to promote an adaptation to, or an acquiescence in, a seemingly inevitable status quo that is in fact contingent and (potentially) mutable. Critical Theory, as one would expect given its Freudian–Marxist heritage, does not start out strictly by questioning the notion of there being a true 'reality' in itself or by challenging the belief that one can ever ascertain the 'facts' about a given state of affairs. Instead, its aim is to disrupt the process through which 'facts' become reified affirmations of 'what is' at the expense of 'what could be (otherwise)'. Hence, for Critical Theory, society must be conceived as a dynamic totality – a concept, incidentally, to which most postmodern sensibility is antipathetic in the extreme; for Critical Theory, society must become the object of a 'dialectical' critique that is able to reveal its immanent contradictions. For 'postmodern' theory, however, there is no pristine 'reality' lurking beneath the veil of ideological deception because, ultimately, there simply is no 'beneath'. However, this fundamental, axiomatic distinction is often occluded by talk of a 'new' or 'critical' musicology. In some respects, the differences between Critical Theory and 'postmodern theory' are actually greater than those between a 'traditional' historical musicology and certain manifestations of a nominally 'new' one. Indeed, the radical differences that exist between a number of intellectual currents that are typically described as, or included within the ambit of, 'critical' or 'postmodern' theory suggest that far greater care should be exercised in delineating their various applications and appropriations in the context of contemporary musicology.

Thomas McCarthy has observed that 'the term *positivism* now functions more as a polemical epithet than as a designation for a distinct philosophical movement' (McCarthy, 1978, p.137) – and this is certainly true of contemporary musicology. As has been noted, Joseph Kerman played a significant role in crystallizing the terms in which an 'older' musicology would come to be understood in relation to subsequent disciplinary developments. The following provides a reasonable summary of what he intended by a 'positivist musicology': 'The emphasis was heavily on fact. New manuscripts were discovered and described, archives were reported on, dates were established, cantus firmi traced from one work and one composer to another. Musicologists dealt mainly in *the verifiable, the objective, the uncontroversial and the positive*' (Kerman, 1985, p.42, my emphasis); and this would appear to be what the majority of musicologists have in mind when they refer to 'positivism'. Kerman cites R.G. Collingwood's account of nineteenth-century German historiography as an apt depiction of musicology in the 1950s:

> Historians set to work to ascertain all the facts they could. The result was a vast increase of detailed historical knowledge, based on an unprecedented degree of accurate and critical examination of evidence. This was the age which enriched

> history by the compilation of vast masses of carefully sifted material.... But all through this period there was a certain uneasiness about the ultimate purpose of this detailed research. *It had been undertaken in obedience to the spirit of positivism according to which the ascertaining of facts was only the first stage of a process whose second stage was the discovery of laws.* (Cited in Kerman, 1985, pp.43–4, my emphasis)

However, for Kerman, the 'second stage' in this process was not to be 'the discovery of laws', but instead, as previously noted, 'criticism'. Hence, in Kerman's scheme, positivism is effectively stripped of its causal–predictive, (quasi-)scientific properties and instead is identified with what one might simply term a kind of flat 'historical description'. As Leo Treitler observes: 'Since the publication of Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music* [*Musicology* in the UK], a *watered-down notion of positivism* has gone into the label "positivist musicology", applied to that branch of musicological activity that entails "the presentation of the texts of early music and facts and figures about it"' (Treitler, 1999, p.376, my emphasis). It is interesting to note that in Treitler's gloss on the impact of Kerman's intervention, 'positivism' is associated not only with a particular epistemological or methodological orientation, but also with a quite specific object-domain – 'early music' – and a quite specific set of variables or data by means of which the objects within that domain are to be studied – 'the facts and figures about it'. It is likely that this perception derives in part from the nature of musicological research in the era that served as Kerman's primary focus; having said that, it is equally *un*likely that many musicologists would now actually understand 'positivism' as somehow uniquely bound to the study of 'early music'. Instead, the term's primary import appears to be methodological or epistemological; it is supposed to describe a particular way of doing musicology, a particular set of aims and assumptions. Yet a lack of clarity in arguments relating to positivism from an epistemological or methodological perspective – or indeed its simplistic and wholesale rejection – has rendered much contemporary discussion unwilling, or perhaps unable, to determine whether 'positivism' is an inherently inappropriate paradigm for the study of music per se, an inappropriate paradigm for the study of some aspects of music but not for others, or a necessary (first) component within a more complex and systematic framework of interpretive understanding. On the one hand, if one insists that (a rigorously conceived) positivism is an 'all or nothing' doctrine that must by definition encompass all conceivably meaningful knowledge, then clearly it cannot function simply as one component, element or stage within some broader epistemological or methodological scheme. On the other hand, if one accepts a more deflationary notion of positivism as merely determining the epistemological conditions for, or constraints that are enacted upon, a certain kind of knowledge – say, knowledge of how things in an empirical, 'third-person'

world must necessarily be presumed to be – then this would appear to render it more than relevant to any form of academic discourse.

There is a tendency, in at least some 'new' or 'critical' musicological writing, to imply that positivism is simply and inherently a 'bad thing'. As Terry Eagleton observes, in relation to the study of history, 'there would also seem to be those for whom utterances like "Lord John Russell then became Prime Minister" are insidious instances of "positivism"' (Eagleton, 1996, p.12). Yet it is clear that the weak(er) version of 'positivism' can actually incorporate a strikingly diverse range of research activities. For example, it might include: establishing the provenance of a given work, the biographical details for a given composer, or the financial transactions of a seventeenth-century opera-house; collating data on the educational arrangements at a medieval cathedral or the sales figures for a particular genre of popular music; or investigating, at an empirical level, the emotional or cognitive reaction of listeners to a particular piece of music. Although such undertakings might be categorized as historical musicology and the sociology or psychology of music respectively, they all embody a common set of methodological and epistemological assumptions. They also account for a very significant proportion of contemporary musicological research; in fact, it is difficult to envisage any research project that does not in some way, at some level, in relation to some of its material, rely upon a weak positivism in establishing its basic terms of reference.

While it is certainly true that, traditionally, historical musicology (or positivist musicology in Kerman's terms) focused on a relatively narrow range of musical production and did so in a relatively narrow way, this could just as easily suggest that the positivist ideal was itself distorted by ideological currents external to it. The exclusive focus on specific repertoires – Western European, classical, high-art – and the way in which these were usually articulated in terms of a uni-linear flow of stylistic influence along a chain of individual masterworks and great composers has usefully and rightly been challenged. Feminist critique (the topic of the next section) has interrogated the exclusion of women's music from the canonic pantheon of great works; ethnographic critique has questioned the exclusion or portrayal of non-Western music; within the 'canon' there has been an ever-increasing attempt to foreground or investigate once marginalized or 'minor' composers; and 'popular musicology' is compelling a gradual, if at times rather grudging, acceptance of popular music as a viable object of musicological study. Yet many strands within feminist, cultural, post-colonial and various other forms of musicological 'critique' can and do operate quite comfortably within the traditional methodological assumptions of the 'old', 'positivist' musicology. Hence, it is inaccurate to attribute the fact that historical musicology traditionally focused on a narrow repertoire to some suspect ideological bias inherent within the positivist methodology

itself. On the contrary, there may be an element of inconsistency or even hypocrisy in the argument of those who reject an allegedly 'positivist' paradigm by means of a reified categorization that tends to flatten out and ignore the sophistication of the methodological reflection that has shaped, and continues to shape, particular modes of historical enquiry. The next two sections will seek to elaborate this point in more detail.

Gender

'Gender and representation' is typically viewed as one of the defining issues for the 'new' or 'critical' musicologies. While it is impossible coherently to subsume within the ambit of a unified 'feminist' musicological practice the many and often disparate interests and approaches that are, and have been, taken up by scholars working in this field, it is nevertheless clear that they are seen by many as at least united in a shared rejection of older 'positivist' or 'objective' musicological practices, in which the issues of gender and representation were considered irrelevant or actively suppressed. My aim in this relatively brief section is not to provide a comprehensive overview of feminist scholarship in contemporary musicological practice – this would most likely require more than one book in itself – but instead to focus on one very precise issue: the extent to which a concern with 'gender', or the 'representation of gender', can justifiably be deemed an inherently 'new', 'critical' or even 'postmodern' development.

In her book, *Feminine Endings*, Susan McClary lists five groups of issues that she deems relevant to, or constitutive of, a feminist-oriented musicological practice: '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' (McClary, 1991, pp.7–19). These might be compared with the three principal categories of feminist art history identified by Karen-Edis Barzman: a focus on 'female producers of material culture ... and on female-produced objects and their texts ...'; a consideration of 'women as the object of the look rather than as the subject of the look – not women artists but Woman in representation'; a shift from 'an exclusive focus on material production to one that includes or even privileges reception' because 'if what happens at the moment of reading is as important in the process of meaning-production as the conditions and events surrounding the creation of the object/text itself, then audience, address, and reception are legitimate and necessary objects of our inquiry' (Barzman, 1994, pp.328–31). We might also consider a feminist critique of the institution of musicology itself (see, for example, Cusick, 1999).

By combining, refining and reordering the above it is possible to derive

at least seven issues, strategies or emphases that are relevant to a feminist or gender-oriented disciplinary practice – the logic behind the ordering should become apparent in the ensuing commentary:

1. the discovery or rediscovery of music composed by women;
2. the history of the roles that have been played by women in the production, reproduction and consumption of music;
3. the use of gendered codes in the description and technical explication of music;
4. the portrayal of women in music with explicit textual content;
5. the implication of gendered codes in (un-texted) musical material;
6. the role or significance of music in actively shaping, constructing or resisting particular forms or notions of gendered identity;
7. the extent to which women have been excluded from, or treated unequally within, the institutional framework of musicology itself.

It is clear that grouping together all of these issues or categories as simply so many constituent components within a unified and coherent 'feminist musicology' only serves to efface some very real differences between them. It is therefore worth examining each of them in greater detail.

1 The Discovery or Rediscovery of Music Composed by Women

This undertaking generally appropriates the traditional tools of, and operates in accordance with the traditional precepts of, historical musicology; it collates historical and biographical facts pertaining to the composition of music by women. The *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* is a good example of the kind of publication in which this type of scholarly work might result. It remains 'non-critical' to the extent that it satisfies itself with historical or factual description – albeit that it may be motivated by an underlying reaction to the way in which music composed by women has been suppressed as a viable object of musicological investigation. As Williams observes: 'Given the overwhelming gender imbalance in the canon, it was not surprising that the first efforts in feminist musicology followed the lead of literary theory and were directed at the study and documentation of female artists. Such projects dispute unstated priorities, ***but can use standard procedures to investigate music by women without immediately threatening positivist methodology***' (Williams, 2001, p.49, my emphasis). Of course, the example afforded by the *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* also points up a kind of double-bind in which such enterprises almost inevitably find themselves: they risk re-inscribing the very distinction they are attempting to efface – in short, there is no *New Grove Dictionary of Men Composers*. The more fundamental point, however, is that from a *methodological* perspective

there is nothing particularly 'new', 'critical' or 'postmodern' about enlarging the domain of music deemed 'eligible' or 'appropriate' for musicological study to include that composed by women.

2 The History of the Roles which have been played by Women in the Production, Reproduction and Consumption of Music

This is closely related to (1), 'the discovery or rediscovery of music composed by women', and will typically employ similar forms of historical and documentary research. In fact, an interest in the exclusion of women from, or the institutional suppression of the roles played by women in, the production, reproduction and consumption of music generally dovetails with the (re)discovery and critical editing of music composed by women. As Cusick puts it: 'The feminist musicologies that ask, Where are the women? seek to rescue from obscurity the women and the women's musical work (compositional or otherwise) that have been marginalized in musicology's narratives. This attempted rescue is avowedly performed for the sake of giving musical women in our time an empowering awareness that they are part of a tradition' (Cusick, 1999, p.484). Again, from a methodological perspective, there is nothing to distinguish this from other forms of historical research. In fact, both of these undertakings – researching music composed by women and researching the roles played by women – may ultimately serve to reinforce several of the methodological or even institutional frameworks which they are sometimes alleged to challenge.

3 The Use of Gendered Codes in the Description and Technical Explication of Music

This refers to the way in which music, whether in academic or general discourse, is sometimes described or accounted for through the use of terms that are explicitly gendered or that carry implicit gender connotations. Although examining the deployment of gendered terminology in the description or technical explication of music – musicological or otherwise – will rely in part upon conventional historical and documentary research, there is an important difference between this and those undertakings outlined in (1) and (2). A convincing account will necessarily depend upon a robust theoretical framework within which, or in accordance with which, the function of such codes can be related to identifiable and demonstrably ideological gender constructions which, in turn, can be shown, implicitly or explicitly, to reinforce particular constitutive moments within an encompassing set of patriarchal assumptions. For example, the observation, 'in his treaty of 1834 x refers to masculine and feminine themes', is empirically verifiable in a way that the interpretive claim, 'this demonstrates how patriarchal values manifest themselves in writing about music', is not, unless furnished with coherent theoretical support.

4 The Portrayal of Women in Music with Explicit Textual Content

This theme is closely allied with that outlined in (3). Although it, too, will involve historical, documentary or analytical research, at least in establishing its terms of reference, its ultimate intent is to develop a critical account of, or oppositional challenge to, the way in which women are typically represented in music (in canonic works typically composed by men). Cusick, for example, claims that 'it is all too clear that many canonic works that overtly represent women also represent institutionalized misogyny' (Cusick, 1999, p.482).

5 The Implication of Gendered Codes in (un-texted) Musical Material

This is similar in some respects to (3) and (4), although it is likely to involve a greater emphasis on close reading or some form of analytical work. More importantly, the comprehensibility of its claims will depend upon its establishing a convincing theoretical account of the mediating mechanism(s) by virtue of which particular constructions of gender manifest themselves within the fabric of the musical material itself.

6 The Role or Significance of Music in Actively Shaping, Constructing or Resisting Specific Gendered Identities

This is the most common contemporary concern – and the most complex. It is seen by many to represent a necessary move beyond the 'essentialism' implicit in attempts to interpret particular musical structures as concretely and immutably 'gendered'. Again, as with (5), the comprehensibility of its claims will depend upon its successfully establishing or appropriating a convincing theoretical account of gender construction in addition to its furnishing a verifiable account of the mechanisms or processes through which music actively works to shape, construct or resist particular notions of gendered identity.

7 The Extent to which Women have been Excluded from, or Treated Unequally within, the Institutional Framework of Musicology itself

This differs from the topics (1) through (6) in so far as here it is musicology, rather than music, that serves as the explicit object of study. To that extent this belongs to what I have termed 'meta-discourse'.

Taken as a whole, the list demonstrates how misleading and

inappropriate it is to refer to 'feminist critique' as one unified element within an encompassing 'new' or 'critical' musicology. While it is true that all of the issues or strategies described above share certain assumptions about the role of (ideological) notions or constructions of gender in maintaining and reinforcing a particular set of patriarchal power-relations or values – whether through the exclusion of women from the institutions of music, the suppression of music composed by women, the portrayal of women in music, or the description and hierarchical devaluation of supposedly feminine attributes in music itself – nevertheless, within the framework provided by those common assumptions, one can discern a diverse range of often quite incompatible methodological, theoretical, epistemological and normative presuppositions.

This renders misleading, and perhaps even obsolete, their straightforward inclusion within the binary taxonomy of 'old' and 'new' musicologies; and it is even less obvious how the 'postmodern' is to be located in relation to the various strands of feminist discourse. Presumably those scholars who appropriate or integrate postmodern (or postfeminist?) precepts into their critical interpretations would consider themselves proponents of a 'postmodern' musicology, yet clearly there is nothing intrinsically 'postmodern' about a concern with gender. Hence, just as acknowledging that an allegedly 'positivist' musicology traditionally focused on a relatively limited range of music does not, in and of itself, necessarily implicate positivism, as a set of epistemological or methodological assumptions, in the ideological or institutional factors that sought to determine which music was to be deemed a valid object of academic study, so the disciplinary exclusion of music composed by women likewise does not necessarily implicate, as a determining factor in that exclusion, the actual methodological frameworks within which that discipline operated. Hence, contrary to Cusick's claim that 'feminist musicologies' rejection of autonomy and objectivity, both as epistemological positions and as motivations, contribute to a regendering of the persona of musicology' (Cusick, 1999, p.485), a number of strands within that contemporary musicological scholarship which is labelled 'feminist' or which is concerned with issues of gender and representation can and do operate in accordance both with an epistemologically motivated notion of objectivity and with a methodology that is closely allied to that of an 'older', 'positivist' musicology. (I return to this issue in Chapter 2 where I theorize in greater detail the distinction between, on the one hand, the epistemological framework in which claims to musicological knowledge are forwarded and validated and, on the other hand, the normative framework in which the object and purpose of musicological research is contested.)

It cannot be over-emphasized, at this point, that none of the above is to deny the entirely indefensible way in which, historically and still to this day,

music composed by women and the historical roles played by women in musical institutions and practices have been excluded from the domain of objects and topics deemed acceptable for musicological study; nor is it to ignore the way in which issues of gender have likewise been suppressed; nor is it to overlook the obvious fact that musicology, as an institutionalized discipline, was, and, in part, inexcusably remains, determined or defined by particular patriarchal assumptions or prejudices. However, it is to maintain, by way of summarizing this section, two basic assertions: firstly, it is inaccurate to associate directly, especially in a causal sense, particular epistomological or methodological frameworks with the disciplinary exclusion of music composed by women or with the suppression of issues of gender; secondly, it is likewise inaccurate simply to associate the inclusion of music composed by women or issues of gender with a 'new', 'critical' or (especially) 'postmodern' musicology.

Canon

> It is important to understand that a linear paradigm works to exclude or marginalise certain figures. ... Canons imply an autonomous cultural development, and those who fail to participate in that particular development, or who seek alternatives, are marginalised, as were Weill and Eisler for rejecting modernism. Someone who is seen to be part of a line, like Mussorgsky, is moved up, while anyone not part of the line, like Rimsky-Korsakov, is downgraded. (Scott, 2000, pp.6–7)

In addition to the critique of positivism and formalism, another development typically associated with a 'postmodern' musicology is a new disciplinary openness to 'all' musics. As already noted, the latter typically include: the music of 'marginal', 'lesser-known' composers, who nevertheless still count as composers of 'high-art' music; genres previously considered less worthy of study – jazz, popular, folk, film, stage – that nevertheless remain 'Western' in origin and orientation; and the music of 'other, non-Western' cultures and traditions. For complex reasons – certainly more complex than is sometimes implied – the academic study of music has, until relatively recently, tended to focus on a narrowly circumscribed range of music, on a 'canon' of select musical works deemed more worthy of academic study. Now, however, it is opening its 'disciplinary doors' to all forms of music, as the value distinctions on which canonic legitimacy depends are variously problematized. However, a number of points are worth making. Firstly, while there were some, even many, types of music that were clearly excluded as viable or appropriate objects of study – at least where academic *music* departments were

concerned – the 'canon' was never quite so immutable or exclusive as is sometimes claimed. It has always been dependent upon time, place and individual or institutional proclivities. Secondly, it is evident that individuals and institutions tend to vary in their openness to, and tolerance of, non-canonic repertoires. One musicologist's model of 'progressive' inclusivity may well represent another's notion of restrictive 'conservatism'. An analysis of research interests, undergraduate taught modules and research grant recipients across the Anglo-American sector would most likely reveal that the 'hegemony' of the Western 'high-art' canonic repertoire remains rather more resilient in practice than reports of its imminent or actual collapse tend to suggest in theory – indeed, it is worth considering that were musicology adequately and proportionately to reflect 'real' musical life, both past and present, then Western 'classical' or 'high-art' music would probably account for little more than 10 per cent of all institutionalized research and teaching, and consume a similar proportion of overall funding. Thirdly, as was noted in the introduction to this chapter, the celebrated pluralism of a 'postmodern' musicology depends upon a relatively insular conception of its own disciplinary tradition(s). Ethnomusicology is arguably as old as musicology itself and the academic study of 'popular music' precedes the arrival of a 'postmodern' musicology by some decades – albeit that, until recently, such study often took place not in music departments but in departments of anthropology, sociology or cultural studies.

What is clear is that *the* canon, or the notion of a canon in general, is almost always perceived in a rather negative light – as something to be exposed, challenged, deconstructed and overcome. Katherine Bergeron, for example, in her 'prologue' to *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons* (Bergeron & Bohlman, 1992) – one of the texts that helped advance the issue of canonic presupposition toward the forefront of the (new) musicological consciousness – proposes a 'disciplinary' account of the canon. She is concerned with the 'ideological and social practices that inform the disciplining of music' and with the 'relation that obtains between the concepts of canon and discipline, a relation that orders the behaviour of social bodies (our scholarly "societies") and the individuals within them' (Bergeron, 1992, p.1). Drawing on Foucault's description of Bentham's Panopticon, she describes 'inmate-players [who] learn to conduct *themselves*, so to speak, according to the canons of performance they share' and the player who is 'entrapped by an acoustic constraint; he cannot escape his own audibility' (Bergeron, 1992, p.4, original emphasis). The language and choice of analogy tend to imply that the role of the conductor and the actual physical arrangement of the players in an orchestral ensemble somehow represent a slightly insidious exercise of power. Bergeron continues the (double) analogy by asserting that scholarly 'fields' are 'enclosures *in very much the same sense*, distinguished from one another

principally by the nature of the conduct they foster. A field is, in other words, a site of surveillance, a metaphorical space whose boundaries, conceived "panoptically", are determined by the canon that stands at its centre' (Bergeron, 1992, p.4, my emphasis). However, there is a danger that this argument serves to highlight the disabling effect of an alleged exercise of 'power' at the expense of acknowledging the enabling effect of collaborative discipline. As Bergeron herself notes, 'the band thus implicates the musician in a network where acts of mutual surveillance serve to maintain the musical standard' (Bergeron, 1992, p.4, my emphasis). In other words, there may be a positive or necessary aspect to the exercise of disciplinary 'power'. Without some constraints – in the form of commonly agreed norms, conventions or standards that can serve as the enabling condition for any kind of comprehensible communication and dialogue within a given discourse – it is difficult to envisage how musicology might continue as a coherent practice. Hence, recourse to post-Foucaulian theories of 'power' can, at times, appear a little like bemoaning the fact that when we communicate with one another we are 'constrained' by the language we use, as though the latter were some insidious imposition. In any case, it is questionable whether the 'discipline' that is required of an orchestral or ensemble player can so easily be equated with the 'disciplinary' imperatives or conditions that are unique to a particular discursive environment or field. The practical and technical requirements of ensemble performance are hardly the same as those imposed by academic or scholarly stricture. Having said that, just as the physical spacing of ensemble playing may derive from a necessary and enabling 'discipline', so musicological canons may derive, in part, from pedagogical or institutional necessity. There is a difference between, on the one hand, challenging a canon of 'masterworks' that simply serves to conceal the way in which certain arbitrary and ideological value systems are maintained and transmitted as though universal and immutable and, on the other hand, recognizing that some music or some works may be more significant for, or more appropriate to, particular pedagogical or institutional requirements.

Don Michael Randel, in an essay from the same collection, is certainly right to observe that 'we tend to constrain not only how things can be studied but what can be studied at all. We sometimes give the impression that other things are not even worthy of study' (Randel, 1992, p.11). However, it is not so obvious that 'the canon expanded, then, not to include a greater diversity of works so much as to appropriate and dominate a greater number of works and make them behave in similar fashion' (Randel, 1992, p.14). Randel is here referring to what he describes as the 'musicological canon' or the 'canon of acceptable dissertation topics' and, in particular, the extension of traditional philological techniques and other research tools to repertories beyond those of the Medieval and Renaissance

periods – to begin with, the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This process has continued at a notable rate and, at present, allowing of course for institutional allegiances and prejudices, there are few repertoires considered *universally* unsuitable for musicological study. Yet surely such developments require, and deserve, a more sophisticated, and perhaps more charitable, analysis than one which simply chalks them up to the imperialism of a monolithic discipline grudgingly accepting the inclusion of other musics all the better to control them as its own.

While many scholars, although by no means all, welcome the ongoing 'deconstruction' of traditional canonic presupposition, there is clearly a tendency to conflate a challenge to (the possibility of justifying) the notion of hierarchical value per se with a challenge or reflective alertness to the way in which particular value hierarchies are produced and reproduced in given (local) contexts. One can discern a number of strategies that are employed in dealing with canonic issues:

1 the first strategy represents a kind of revisionist critique, a kind of 'fiddling at the canonic margins'. In this case, the basic premise of a canon will remain intact, as will the criteria that determine entry into it; one simply argues that some music, currently included, should not be, or that some music, currently not included, should be. This is not too dissimilar to what Mark Everist labels a 'conservative critique': 'The conservative might happily speak of the Kleinmeister, and identify works that might have been popular in their time, but now – with the aid of our greater sensibilities and critical awareness – can be judged as being of less value than canonical works' (Everist, 1999, p.389);
2 the second strategy can accept the basic premise of a canon (or canons) but will seek to demonstrate that the value criteria determining entry into the canon are inappropriate. For example, one might argue that notions of organic structural unity, complexity or formal innovation tend to favour certain forms of music at the expense of others – typically the Austro-Germanic repertoire from Bach to Schoenberg. This will often lead to a kind of 'third-way' model involving multiple canons. The notion of a canon will remain intact, but it will typically be relativized, or localized, to particular social, cultural or historical contexts. Value will be examined, and perhaps respected as a reflection of a given musical tradition, but no one set of canonic values will be promoted, as though universally valid, at the expense of others;
3 a final strategy is simply to dismiss the notion of a canon or canons altogether on the grounds that there are no 'objective' criteria in accordance with which one can legitimately order or value music in the first place. Everist appears drawn to this position by what he considers the immanent contradiction inherent in the liberal critique: 'If one asks that certain works should now be admitted to the canon on the basis that they are as good as those already included, and have only been excluded because they are by women, Caribbean authors, or for indeed any other reason, this is as much as to say that objective value may be identified not only in the works for which admission is sought, but also in its existing members' (Everist, 1999, p.390).

In other words, any (well-meaning) attempt to adapt canonic presupposition in order to admit previously excluded music may simply rebound upon itself. There is also a danger that one may simply construct a new kind of 'negative' canon: the canon of traditional Western 'high-art' music is 'bad', in so far as it, and the institutional and cultural power with which it symbiotically exists, functions to include or exclude certain forms of cultural expression on the basis of implicit universal norms that are at best contingent and relative; yet (any) other newly conceived canons are 'good', in so far as they represent sites of legitimate resistance to that same institutional and cultural 'hegemony'.

A further problem stems in part from the fact that there are very few cultures, or 'sub-cultures', that do not incorporate, or depend upon, their own set of what are effectively 'canonic' presuppositions – in so far as the latter is taken to refer to the belief that some groups of works, for reasons that transcend the merely personal, are to be valued more highly than others. Derek Scott, for example, notes that 'the argument over high and low art, a familiar component of elitist and mass-culture views, is, ironically, repeated within the very areas of music which are so often attacked as being low. In jazz, the debate concerns the difference between true jazz and dance band music. In rock there is an attempt to distinguish between serious rock and brash, commercial pop' (Scott, 2000, p.2). In one sense, then, a challenge to the concept of hierarchical value judgement per se may itself depend in part upon precisely that cultural- or ethno-centrism – in this case, a kind of paradoxical 'liberal elitism' – that it was intending to overcome.

The critical point, however, as it was with the issue of 'gender and representation', is that debates surrounding 'canonicity' do not necessarily impact upon the epistemological or methodological framework within which a particular musicologist may choose to work. Indeed, the demand that musicology embrace 'all' music – itself a rather positivist sentiment – and the accompanying critiques that are typically directed at the various 'ideologies of exclusion', need not necessarily suggest an antipathy to the positivism that is so often predicated of precisely that old musicology against which a supposedly 'new' or 'critical' musicology reacts; and so Boismortier receives an expanded section alongside Bach, the Beatles precede Beethoven, and the music of the indigenous peoples of Borneo takes its rightful place before Borodin. As Lochhead observes:

> This new postmodern musicology entails on one hand, a methodological shift in its approach to canonic works of the Western concert tradition and on the other, an embrace of music in the popular and jazz traditions as well as music outside of the West. In the latter case, the music may be approached with either the new methods *or more traditional, 'modernist' ones.* (Lochhead, 2002, p.2, my emphasis)

Hence, while it is certainly true that the traditional Western canon derived in part from the imperatives of 'positivist' or 'formalist' preconception, it is nevertheless quite possible to continue operating in accordance with particular positivist or formalist assumptions even after a 'postmodern' challenge to canonic certainty has expanded the object-domain of viable study to include precisely that music originally excluded by those very same assumptions.

Formalism

If 'positivism' has served as the primary target for a 'postmodern' critique of historical musicological practice, then 'formalism' has played a correlative role in the critique of analytical or interpretive practice. Jim Samson was certainly right in observing that the two 'were unhelpfully conflated by Kerman' (Samson, 1999, p.54), albeit that Kerman's characterization does remain fairly ensconced in many accounts of disciplinary development: 'If musicology has traditionally been *positivistic*, music theory and analysis have been, and continue to be, *formalistic*' (Lorraine, 1993, p.238, my emphasis). However, the association of positivism and formalism is misplaced not only because each relates to a quite distinct sub-disciplinary discourse with its own complex development and institutional history, but also because each refers to a quite different moment within that respective discourse – positivism, primarily to a particular set of methodological and epistemological assumptions; formalism, primarily to a particular conception of the musical object. Moreover, both positivism and formalism are often portrayed, mistakenly, as straightforward constitutive components within an older 'modernist' musicology. In this respect the attack on formalism, especially when mounted from an allegedly 'postmodern' perspective, is as misconstrued as that on positivism.

Nearly all criticisms directed at analytical practice tend to include, whether explicitly or not, a challenge to 'modernism' and its associated conceptual vocabulary. Although he was writing almost a decade ago, Leo Treitler's pointed comments retain a contemporary prescience:

> One of the root points of contention in the current discussions ... concerns the conception of the autonomous and epistemologically self-contained character of the musical experience. Cling to that and you will never extricate yourself from the web of modernism. ... You will be committed to the aestheticist, transcendentalist, internalist, essentialist, and, yes, *formalist* ... beliefs that raged under *modernism.* (Treitler, 1995, p.12, my emphasis)

In many ways, the kind of desire that Treitler is alluding to here – the desire to escape the sins of an encompassing 'modernism' and its various constitutive '-isms' – can be viewed as one of the connective threads binding together the otherwise myriad disparate trajectories that comprise the 'new' or 'postmodern' musicologies. It is clearly present, for example, in Gary Tomlinson's attempt to develop, and promote, a kind of 'thick contextualism'. In what has become a famous and oft-cited exchange, in which Tomlinson locked horns with Lawrence Kramer over the future direction of what was then still an embryonic postmodern turn in musicological enquiry, the two were clearly in agreement when it came to locating 'the origins of what we may call *modernist* musicology in *nineteenth-century* views of the signifying distance between music and words' (Tomlinson, 1993, pp.18–19, my emphasis). Crucially, for Tomlinson, and for many others, the origins of a 'modernist' musicology are not strictly concomitant either with aesthetic 'modernism' or for that matter with European 'modernity', but are identified with elements internal to, or coincidental with, specific strands in nineteenth-century aesthetics. Yet if there are some compelling reasons for viewing modernism, at a stylistic level and especially in its earlier expressionist guise, as a kind of intense, self-negating extension of late Romantic sensibility – as exemplified in, say, Schoenberg's *Erwartung* or his Op.11 piano pieces – it remains questionable whether one can simply transfer such a schema onto a theoretical, historical, socio-cultural or, for that matter, an institutional or disciplinary level without enacting a rather crude and potentially debilitating conflation of what are complex and contradictory patterns of intellectual and artistic development.

To be sure, the partial derivation of *formalist* presumption from certain aspects of nineteenth-century thought is widely attested and relatively uncontroversial. Lydia Goehr, for example, in a comprehensive historiographical study, has traced the development of the 'work-concept', the view of music as a delimited, objective 'in and for itself' – on which depends much formalist presupposition – both to a number of strands within nineteenth-century Romantic thought as well as to particular social and cultural developments peculiar to that period of (bourgeois) European history (Goehr, 1992). Yet, in an important sense, this is precisely the point. It is the easy association of formalism, not with Romanticism or with elements of nineteenth-century thought, but with 'modernism' per se or, in particular, with a purportedly 'modernist' musicology, that remains

fundamentally problematic. This can be illustrated by turning to one idea in particular: the concept of 'organicism'. The assumption of, or the search for, underlying, autotelic unity in a musical work is often closely associated with formalism. Its subterranean traces are still deeply rooted in contemporary analytical presupposition; and it is doubtful they could ever be entirely expunged, even if that were desirable. Yet while analytical 'organicism', so often a key target for critical rebuke, may well have been partially cleansed of its (explicit) metaphysical or biological trappings – such that it has mutated into a kind of paradoxical 'inorganic organicism', a structuralist functionalism predicated on techniques of hierarchical reduction – the concept of organic unity, closely bound up as it was with the development of German idealist thought, represents not so much an analogical *counterpart* either to the modern Enlightenment project or to aesthetic modernism, but arguably derived, in significant measure, from a romantic *aversion to*, and desire to transcend, the social anomie unleashed by precisely that industrial, urbanized, technocratic instrumentalism with which modernity in general is typically associated. As an underlying aesthetic conception, it is part of a tradition leading from Goethe, through Hoffmann and Hegel, to Schenker himself; a tradition, moreover, which itself lies quite some way from the objectifying, quasi-scientific methodology with which (late) twentieth-century analytical formalism is also typically equated.

Hence, in their critique of formalist presupposition, many advocates of a contemporary 'postmodern' musicology seek to fuse together two contradictory, albeit dialectically entwined, conceptions of the 'modern': on the one hand, an alienating and inappropriate 'modern' attachment to the quasi-scientific, empirical, objectifying strategies and faux-rigour of systematic theoretical–analytical practice; on the other hand, the notion of music as an autonomous 'in and for itself', which, while described as an ultimately 'modernist' conception, is then attributed to strands that originate in a nineteenth-century aesthetic sensibility that was, at least in part, 'anti-modern'. Hence, if formalism has *multiple* roots, in the procedural disinterestedness of a Kant or the wavering absolutism of a Hanslick, in the transcendent idealism of nineteenth-century Romantic expressionism, and in the presumed methodological objectivism of an institutionally arrayed research discipline, then it is wholly inaccurate simply to frame, and then dismiss, it and its key presupposition, the 'music itself', as the products of an outmoded 'modernist ideology' – Tomlinson speaks of categories that are 'darkly tinted for us with modernist ideology' and, on a number of occasions, accuses Kramer of betraying or revealing his underlying 'modernism' (Tomlinson, 1993, p.23). Indeed, as has been suggested, some of the principal concepts targeted by much contemporary 'postmodern' musicological discourse – among them, transcendentalism, internalism and

organicism – were in part reactive *against* early cultural and social modernity, while historically *prior* to aesthetic modernism proper.

If postmodernism has helped to collapse, or problematize, the binary distinction between 'high' and 'low', then the issue of formal close reading still remains central to debates internal to popular musicology. If Derridean-type deconstruction can be applied to the canonic masterpieces of the Western classical tradition and if the notion of unity or internal coherence, as traditionally conceived, can be suitably problematized, then the ensuing analytical work itself can still operate quite comfortably with the presupposition of an autonomous and self-relating structure of signification. The ideology or 'myth' that underpins the ceaseless search for fundamental synthetic unity amid even the most seemingly anarchic disunity may have been subject to trenchant critique – and rightly so (see, for example, Street, 1989) – yet the switch from a methodologically secured elaboration of subsumptive or reductive unity to a dialectically conceived mediation between part and putative whole need not necessarily collapse the formalist conception of music as an autonomous manifestation of ideal structural relations. Still, the straightforward association of modernism and formalism – and thus 'postmodernism' with 'post-formalism' – is so ensconced in certain strands of contemporary thought that the counter-argument bears some repeating. The notion of music as an autonomous manifestation of ideal structural relationships cannot be ascribed, simply and exclusively, to the same nexus of historical and philosophical circumstances with which cultural modernity or aesthetic modernism are respectively associated. By operating with a conception of music that is actually neither modern nor modernist but instead represents a complex concatenation of overlapping historical and aesthetic currents, is it not rather the case that formalist presupposition actually defies the kind of simple binary taxonomy that would allow one to place it firmly in the box marked 'modern(ist)'? It is only really with quite specific postwar developments, common to both fields, that, on the one hand, the normative–aesthetic aspect of compositional practice – the 'high-modernism' of integral serialism – and, on the other hand, the systematic aspect of analytical theory – the 'neutralization' of Schenker, the development of pitch-class theory, and, somewhat later, the appearance of structuralist semiotics – can be said to converge in such a way that they might be located appropriately within the ambit of an objective and recognizably modern(ist) form of reason; and this primarily at the level of methodological sensibility. In that sense, formalism represents a complex amalgam of, *among other things*, nineteenth-century Romantic transcendentalism *and* internalism *and* an aesthetics of procedural disinterestedness *and* a methodological objectivism *and* the development of an institutional context in which it was able to establish a recognizable disciplinary and pedagogical identity; and in its various guises it is likely that

a greater or lesser emphasis will be placed on any one or more of these.

Rethinking the 'Postmodern Turn'

As the above discussions have implied, the manner in which various ideas or theoretical presuppositions are represented and dismissed as constitutive components within an over-arching 'modernist musicology' betrays not only a reluctance to engage, in sufficient detail, with complex historical and philosophical currents, but also suggests the need to construct a suitably amorphous (straw) target for a subsequent postmodern assault. As Treitler notes: 'Primary among the postmodern traits of some recent musicology is its self-proclaimed mission to wrench the discipline free of the habits and beliefs, no, the constraints – the "discipline" (Foucault) – of modernism' (Treitler, 1995, p.10). It can seem, on occasion, as though a purportedly 'postmodern' or 'new' musicology must conjure up the spectre of a 'modernist tradition' simply as a foil against which to define itself. This in itself is a dangerous move. Martin Morris, for example, argues that 'the belief that a liberatory political project can be guided by theoretical critique without offering some kind of account of the metaconditions through which critique itself becomes possible is internally limited. *Such a position risks imposing a different ideology with a new set of blinkered dominations, exclusions and oppressions in the place of one discredited by the new, authoritative theoretical critique*' (Morris, 2001, p.42, my emphasis). It is for this reason that reflections on contemporary musicological practice – especially allegedly 'new', 'post-modern' or 'critical' practice – would benefit from a more sophisticated interrogation of underlying methodological and epistemological pre-suppositions than has sometimes been the case.

Despite the fact that a 'modernist musicology' is regularly evoked in order to distinguish 'that which we did' from 'that which we now do', the basis on which one can justifiably label an institutional discipline 'modern(ist)' or 'postmodern(ist)' remains rather unclear. For example, does a musicology become 'modernist' simply by virtue of its accepting the underlying convictions of enlightenment 'modernity'? To be sure, oriented methodologically toward the goal of scientific, technocratic control and epistemologically toward the notion of objective, value-free enquiry, 'positivism' is certainly a derivative of a (post-)Enlightenment, 'modern' sensibility. Yet, according to most accounts of the 'postmodern', so is Kantian transcendentalism, Hegelian idealism, Marxist political economy, Freudian psychoanalysis, Husserlian phenomenology and any other system of thought which seeks to establish foundational truths or delimiting 'conditions of possibility' or which continues to insist upon some kind of

distinction between what 'is' and what 'appears'. In that respect it is not immediately clear in what sense an academic discipline can be described as 'modernist' in the first place, or how, by virtue of rejecting a (weak) positivist concern with factual verifiability and scholarly rigour in favour of a 'postmodern' emphasis on indeterminacy and interpretive 'play', it could realistically and coherently remain one.

Conversely, one might ask whether describing a musicology as 'postmodern' is supposed to refer (1) to a condition of musicology itself – its disparate, fragmentary plurality of competing and intertwining interests and methodologies; (2) to its openness to all music in a 'postmodern' age when value distinctions and canonic hierarchies no longer hold sway; (3) to its concern with a recognizably 'postmodern' music; or (4) to its appropriation of recognizably 'postmodern' theoretical frameworks or assumptions for the interpretation of (any) music. This ambiguity is, of course, closely related to the general confusion surrounding the term 'postmodern' itself. To describe a discipline as 'postmodern' simply because it encompasses a range of competing or incompatible interpretive strategies would seem as analytically trivial as it is historically inaccurate – it is questionable whether musicology, as a whole, was ever quite so coherent or quite so dominated by a single over-arching (modernist) meta-narrative as is sometimes implied. To consider a musicology postmodern simply because it demonstrates a willingness to engage with all music(s) is similarly misplaced – a number of sub-disciplines have long been concerned with a range of non-canonic repertoires. Likewise, it is difficult to relate a 'postmodern' musicology to a concern with 'postmodern' music since, firstly, there is even less agreement about what constitutes postmodern music than there is about what might constitute a postmodern musicology and, secondly, the majority of work that is nevertheless typically associated with a postmodern musicology has generally focused on a segment of Western art music which, whatever the terminological ambiguity, is certainly not postmodern. Hence the fourth and final option – viewing a 'postmodern musicology' as one which appropriates, integrates within itself and employs recognizably postmodern concepts or which operates within, or in accordance with, recognizably postmodern theoretical frameworks – probably represents the most coherent, and least trivial, designation.

Nevertheless, Derek Scott appears to include, or at least to imply, most of the above characteristics, and some additional ones, when he suggests that a postmodern musicology might include the following:

> A concern with social and cultural processes, informed by arguments that musical practices, values and meanings relate to particular historical, political and cultural contexts; a concern with critical theory and with developing musical hermeneutics for the analysis of the values and meanings of musical practices

> and musical texts; a concern to avoid teleological assumptions of historical narrative ...; readiness to engage with, rather than marginalize, issues of class, generation, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in music ...; a readiness to contest the binary divide between 'classical' and 'popular' ...; a readiness to study different cultures with regard to their own specific cultural values ...; a readiness to consider that meanings are intertextual, and that it may be necessary to study a broad range of discourses in order to explain music ...; a readiness to respond to the multiplicity of music's contemporary functions and meanings.... (Scott, 2001, pp.145–6)

While some of these concerns can be seen to relate to, or derive from, ostensibly 'postmodern' theoretical positions, it is just as clear that a significant number do not – perhaps rendering problematic their straightforward designation as constitutive moments within an encompassing 'postmodern' musicology. For example, as has already been argued in this chapter, a 'readiness to engage with, rather than marginalize, issues of class, generation, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in music' is not an inherently 'postmodern' concern – one can adopt 'positivist' methods for the historical study of music composed by women or formalist precepts for its technical analysis. Equally, one can incorporate 'deconstructive' elements into hermetic close readings of musical 'texts'. 'Hermeneutics' pre-dates the 'postmodern' by more than a century and ultimately derives from a set of presuppositions that is at odds with underlying poststructuralist notions of meaning and signification. Finally, 'a concern with social and cultural processes, informed by arguments that musical practices, values and meanings relate to particular historical, political and cultural contexts' is hardly unique to 'postmodern' theory, having long served as a basic foundation for Marxist and post-Marxist modes of interpretation.

Hence, some of the terminological confusion surrounding developments in contemporary musicology would appear to stem from the way in which a critical challenge to the traditional exclusion of particular repertoires, issues or interpretive priorities is confused with the adoption of 'critical' (theoretical) interpretive strategies themselves. To return to one of the topics considered earlier in this chapter, there is a marked difference between a challenge to the exclusion of music composed by women from the 'canon' of objects of viable study – albeit that such a challenge may be motivated by 'critical' feminist concerns – and the adoption of a critical theoretical (post)feminist interpretive framework or set of methodological presuppositions for the purpose of understanding any and (potentially) all music. Likewise, it may be that, at a general level, certain 'postmodern' ideas or sensibilities have worked to transform underlying disciplinary presuppositions; however, this does not automatically render 'postmodern' any ensuing work that happens simply to have absorbed some of its implications.

Yet another definition is proposed by Gary Tomlinson, who states that 'in broad terms, a postmodern musicology will be characterized most distinctively by an insistent questioning of its own methods and practices' (Tomlinson, 1993, p.21). Contemporary musicology is undoubtedly characterized by an inherently self-reflective condition; it is often as concerned with problematizing itself as it is concerned with problematizing music – this book is of course a prime example. No doubt this is a symptom of disciplinary uncertainty, of the attempt to find one's disciplinary bearings amid the swirling eddies of intellectual trends as well as to remain reflectively alert to one's 'grounding' – especially in an academic climate acutely sensitive to the requirement that one do so. However, once again, its designation as 'postmodern' is problematic. For example, such self-reflection has long represented a defining moment in (post-)Hegelian or (post-)Marxist critical traditions. The latter have always demonstrated an acute, even painful, 'dialectical' sensitivity to the way in which the very theoretical framework or conceptual economy with which they seek to interpret a particular social formation is itself in some way determined, or enabled, by that same context – once again raising doubts as to the uniquely 'postmodern' condition of a musicology that 'insistently questions its own methods and practices'. Nevertheless, one might still worry that such a self-reflective turn will have the kind of effect envisaged by Scott Burnham: 'For as we become increasingly self-aware of the ways we talk about music, as talk about music eclipses music itself as the most fascinating object in the academic firmament, the history of such talk suddenly assumes a luminous relevance' (Burnham, 1993, p.76). One might then be drawn to the conclusion that 'we could become so wrapped up in critical theory that we lose sight of the *raison d'être* of our efforts: music itself' (Citron, 1993, p.74). In other words, musicology becomes more concerned with its '-ology' than its 'music-'. As Arnold Whittall argues: 'Just as music is best thought of as interacting with the structures of speech and language rather than as simply opposed to them, so the New Musicology is likely to be best served by the promotion of dialogue – dialogues about compositions, that is, even more than about the nature of musicology itself' (Whittall, 1999, p.99). One can sympathize, to an extent, with the concern expressed by Citron and Whittall – who presumably would be less than favourably inclined toward the purpose and content of this book. There is, to be sure, always a danger that self-reflection can spiral into regressive abstraction or dissolve the basic terms of reference on which rational discourse depends. However, as this chapter has (I hope) suggested, there is a clear and continuing need for a self-reflective discourse that is better able to differentiate between the normative, methodological and epistemological criteria that serve to demarcate 'old' from 'new' and 'modern' from 'postmodern'.

Hence, if meta-discursive reflection has served to render transparent particular institutional mechanisms which once served to restrict, and may continue to restrict, the types of music studied or the manner in which they are studied, it has yet to offer a plausible strategy for avoiding either the instigation of a new disciplinary orthodoxy or the descent into an incoherent, fragmented and ill-defined pluralism. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that much of the polemic or reciprocal misunderstanding that is characteristic of contemporary musicological reflection – especially in relation to 'new', 'critical', or 'postmodern' musicology – derives from a failure to examine and question, at a more fundamental level, the source of its own legitimacy. Summarizing developments in contemporary musicology, Renée Lorraine has suggested that

> If all these tendencies [in musicology] were to share space in a fluctuating stasis, one or another might rise to prominence for a time, but none would exercise ultimate authority. In a typically postmodern way, not only different ideologies but different paradigms would co-exist, even if they seemed mutually-contradictory. There would be criteria of truth, meaning and value, but these could be different or even irrelevant depending on the given paradigm. There would be no common language (at least that we can see at present), but multi-lingualism would become essential. (Lorraine, 1993, p.242)

This would seem an apt portrayal of contemporary musicology; many contemporary musicologists adhere to its underlying ethos. However, the claim that 'there would be criteria of truth, meaning and value, but these could be different or even irrelevant depending on the given paradigm' not only collapses under the weight of its own 'performative contradiction', but also undermines the very presuppositions or conditions of possibility which underpin the study of music as an institutionalized discourse: student – 'I object to this mark of 45 per cent on the grounds that in writing this essay I have adopted my own criteria of truth, meaning, and value'; scholar – 'I object to my article being rejected on the grounds that in writing this piece I have adopted my own criteria of truth, meaning, and value'. As Peter Dews warns:

> Such an admission of permanent instability, of lack of fit between what we feel driven to say, the means of saying it, and the available procedures of justification, should not be used to legitimate the deflationary short circuit currently proposed by thinkers such as Rorty. Such a short circuit seeks to eliminate all traces of transcendence, of an imperative source of meaning, through what becomes – paradoxically – *an objectivistic metaphysics of contingency*. (Dews, 1995, p.12, my emphasis)

In short, a trivial relativism, whether linguistic, epistemological, interpretive or moral, would always seem compelled both to recognize those very theories that deny its possibility and to cancel itself out by its own logic. As Thomas Nagel puts it: 'Many forms of relativism and subjectivism collapse into either self-contradiction or vacuity – self-contradiction because they end up claiming that nothing is the case, or vacuity because they boil down to the assertion that anything we say or believe is something we say or believe' (Nagel, 1997, p.6). While we may 'no longer know what we know' (Cook & Everist, 1999, p.v), a fear of enacting some kind of aggressive mastery should not confine us either to the mute immediacy of solipsistic introspection or to a kind of passive relativism. When it finally engages with music, 'postmodern' musicology tends always to stress the provisionality of its readings, the unavoidable plurality of interpretation or the contingent 'situatedness' of its multiple subject positions. Unease with the status of knowledge sees avowedly 'postmodern' protagonists battling with one another to prove their own brand of knowledge more reflective, more knowingly problematic and more absolutely non-absolute than any other. Yet, as I will argue in the next chapter, one can assert the individuality, subjectivity or contingency of some meaning or value only for so long before such assertions eventually undermine the legitimacy of the very discursive field in which they are ordinarily articulated. If no mode of knowledge is ever to be privileged over any other, and if there are no criteria in accordance with which we can (at least presume to) evaluate the legitimacy of particular discursive claims, then the study of music as an institutionalized discourse would appear to have little choice but to cancel out the very presuppositions or conditions of possibility on which its existence is predicated and effectively deconstruct itself out of existence.

A similar (moral) force is implicit in Peter Zima's argument that 'like every formalism, Deconstruction, marked by Nietzsche's extreme ambivalence, contains imponderables and risks. In view of such risks it seem important to insist ... on the importance of textual constants, depth structures and actant models in a text such as *Mein Kampf* and on the impossibility of dissolving them by shifts, contradictions and polysemies, whose existence, however, should not be denied either' (Zima, 2002, p.175). Transposed into the realm of music, one might well ask: 'What is the point of showing that the institutions of the canon are elitist and patriarchal if, at the same time, one supports a relativism that would grant elitist, patriarchal readings as much validity as decentred critique?' (Williams, 2000, p.386). It is a danger that is more than obvious to Terry Eagleton; his counter-critique of postmodernism's critique of generality is usefully disarming. It is indeed very much a universal human condition, for example, that we must eat, sleep, labour, reproduce, communicate and so on; and,

likewise, it is hard to envisage what is wrong with expounding such universal principles as 'torture is wrong' or 'a just society will be one in which everyone is equal before the law' (see Eagleton, 1996).

Lawrence Kramer also appears alert to this: 'Given the dangers of a social (de)formation in which mutually indifferent, incomprehending, or hostile groups blindly jostle together, it seems fair to say that this agenda [postmodernism] currently makes more sense conceptually than it does practically' (Kramer, 1995, p.9). Yet for postmodernism 'to make more sense conceptually than it does practically' appears not only to render it impotent – a common accusation to be sure – but to re-introduce precisely that family of modernist dualisms whose deconstruction lies at the very heart of his postmodern critique. Moreover, when Kramer supplies the caveat, 'the practical issue is not directly at stake here', he seems to be running counter to his previously expressed belief that 'without some appeal to standards of truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, reason and unreason, neither social institutions nor consensus beliefs can be competently criticised' (Kramer, 1995, p.9). The latter do seem rather 'practical' issues, however one presents them. It is thus no less confusing when, having suggested that 'postmodernism makes more sense conceptually than practically', Kramer then proceeds to assert that 'this epistemic shift [to postmodernism], however, *is practical* as well as theoretical; it has substantial moral and political implications' (Kramer, 1995, p.33). This is no dialectic reversal *à la* Adorno, but rather an inconsistency born of a parlous vagary that haunts much postmodern theory – its precise relation to practice. Essentially, it circles back to the point highlighted by Eagleton. When Kramer points out that 'binary thinking, in short, always has a moral dimension. It has underwritten dubious values far too often …' (Kramer, 1995, p.39), he is of course assuming a rather fundamental binary distinction himself – that between 'dubious' and 'non-dubious' values. Kramer does seem alert to this when he claims that 'not all dualities are automatically or consistently oppressive' (Kramer, 1995, p.38). However, what Kramer might be missing is that it is not just that binary thinking always has a moral dimension, but rather that moral thinking, and, for that matter, any kind of normative, prescriptive or imperative thinking, always (and necessarily) has a binary dimension. This latter point is the thorn in the side of a postmodern approach that seeks to apply deconstructive strategies born of (an often misappropriated) Derridean theory to the exigencies of concrete moral life. It also has ramifications for the political and ethical justification of musicological practice, to which I return in the final section of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Study of Music as an Institutionalized Discourse

More often than not, as the conclusion to the last chapter suggested, 'new', 'critical' or 'postmodern' musicologies claim to include within themselves an awareness of, and a self-reflective sensitivity toward, the institutional nature and function of their discipline. Postmodern, poststructuralist and other critical-theoretical frameworks are deployed not only for interpretive (musicological) ends; they have also encouraged musicologists to adopt a more self-consciously reflective attitude toward the very nature of discursive practices themselves. However, while a 'new' musicological self-awareness has manifested itself in a variety of forms – some of which have made a productive contribution to our understanding of institutional and disciplinary practice – insufficient attention has been paid to the manner in which quite specific epistemological, methodological or normative presuppositions might also determine the legitimacy of musicology as the source and ultimate arbiter of disciplinary knowledge. Rather more attention has been paid to challenging or questioning the assumption of disciplinary authority than to reflecting on the demands that such authority might place on those who assume it. Such language will most likely unnerve those of a more postmodern sensibility, and perhaps others too. The prevailing intellectual climate, especially in the arts and humanities, is less than receptive to notions of disciplinary 'authority' or institutional 'legitimacy'. Whenever issues of disciplinary authority are raised it is usually as a precursor to a critical deconstruction of the way in which a seemingly 'natural' or 'essential' state of affairs serves actually to promote or protect particular narrow or ideological interests – interests that are typically associated, where musicology is concerned, with this or that 'modernist' preconception. For example, Gary Tomlinson argues that post-Foucauldian histories 'have worked hard to show us the ways in which some of our most basic, apparently "natural" categories are local cultural constructs' (Tomlinson, 1993, p.23). To be sure, if revealing the contingency of categories that may previously have been considered universal and immutable serves to challenge, say, an untenable (and ideologically motivated) disciplinary emphasis on one narrow tract of Western 'high-art' music, then this would seem a laudable aim. However, as we have also seen