

# **The vanishing discipline: the threat to musicology**

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## **Abstract**

In recent decades the familiar discourse of musicology has been subject to profound upheaval, as the discipline has welcomed influences from literary studies, feminism, sociology, and a variety of hard sciences, to name just a few. A key moment in this process was the publication in 1985 of Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music*, which launched the movement known as New Musicology, among whose leading lights were Ruth Solie, Susan McClary and Philip Brett, among others. Each of these has imported into musicology its own discourse, its own norms of argumentation, its own conception of what counts as evidence, its own set of values – though given that these were themselves contested within each discipline, this process was bound to be uncertain and partial. These different discourses do not always live in amity under the sheltering umbrella of musicology. On the contrary, one can perceive a tendency among some of them to reconfigure and redefine the subject matter of musicology in their own terms, a tendency which, if allowed to proceed unchallenged, risks robbing the traditional discipline of musicology of its intellectual autonomy.

This paper uncovers this tendency in two influential texts, which arise out of two different sorts of discourse. One of them (Cook & Clarke, 2004), asserts the desirability of a hard science discourse, the other (Born, 2010) calls for a realignment of musicology along sociological and anthropological lines. I argue that both forms of discourse essentially reduce musicology to a secondary discipline, granted value only to the extent that it is willing to ape the discourse of others, and that the old form of musicology embodied a particular musical form of knowledge of its subject matter for which the new discourses can never be an adequate substitute.

## 1. Introduction

What are the values that drive the discipline of musicology nowadays? The question is fraught with the same difficulty that attends any enquiry into a field of human creativity, namely that the activity is itself the expression of a set of values. Musicians, of whatever kind and from whatever culture, are driven to do what they do by a plurality of motivations: economic necessity, duty (religious or social), a relish for and interest in the materials of music and the enjoyment of the skills required to make them audible, and that peculiar sense of psychic compulsion expressed in the phrase 'I make music because I have to.' But alongside these things there is a sense that that what they do is also valuable, even necessary. This sense of value *tout court* is the essential adjunct. By this I mean a conception, manifested in concrete observable behaviours as much as in 'states of mind', that music and music-making are worthy of immense time, effort and communal and individual resources, beyond what is required by the purely pragmatic uses of music in ceremonial, entertainment, ritual, etc. It may be objected that this conception is otiose, and that any given manifestation of music-making can be accounted for pragmatically—in other words, the value of music is precisely equivalent to the degree of its utility. But this is to declare the question of value closed and settled, before it has even been raised. We have enough evidence of many different kinds to suggest that music-making can acquire a value in itself, in other words that it can be, and often is, an intrinsic good.<sup>1</sup>

Not every act of music-making falls into that category. It is all too easy to find examples of music-making that fall into the opposite category of the narrowly pragmatic, or even cynically commercial. How can one distinguish between them? One might hazard the hypothesis that music-making takes on an intrinsic value only when the way in which it is carried out manifests other values beyond the purely pragmatic. For example, in the Western art tradition, the value of the music has often been bound up with its degree of professionalism, (though 'inspired amateurism' has at times been valued more highly), and in other cultures there are other, very different criteria of 'good performance.' But this is far from being the only criterion. To mention one other, it is also (in certain circumstances, at certain periods of history) bound up with the degree of originality it manifests, or to put it in another way, how far it tests the limits of a convention or genre. At other periods, such as in seventeenth-century Europe, the value of music has been judged by the criteria of seamliness or appropriateness.

So within a practice there may well be competing value-systems, which are reconciled not at the level of conceptual thinking but of practice. Practice can make ordered and meaningful in reality what at the conceptual level seems incoherent. The same plurality can be heard and felt in that all-important (but much contested) category of the Western tradition, the work.<sup>2</sup> Over time this became the locus of a new value: the supreme value of the work *qua* work. This may indeed have been monolithic, and wielded as a weapon to defeat rival sources

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<sup>1</sup> For an informative discussion of the issues see Noah Lemos, *Intrinsic Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> The work-concept in Western classical music was famously anatomised in Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: OUP, 2d rev. edition 2008), a book which has spawned a large critical literature. Notable examples are Michael Talbot, ed., *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), Gavin Steingo, "The Musical Work Reconsidered, in Hindsight," in *Current Musicology* 97 (2014), pp. 81-112.

of value (the spontaneity of improvisation, for example), as was shown by the increasing tendency throughout the 19th century for composers to encroach on the soloist's long-standing freedom to invent his/her own cadenzas.<sup>3</sup> But it doesn't follow that the work itself embodies, at the material level, a singular conception of value. A work can embody tensions within itself, between different values. An example: a work may manifest a high degree of professional finish, but be lacking in the accepted markers of originality, or vice versa. Another example: a work may make explicit or at least identifiable allusions to musical materials or structural processes well-established in existing traditions, but at the same time demonstrate no palpable characteristics which would distinguish it from a work which could have been composed in an earlier era. The accepted term for this sort of work is 'pastiche,' a term whose derogatory implications are a reminder that when a work does embody tensions between different values, one of those values tends to triumph. We admire the skill of the pastiche, but many of us despise its derivative qualities more.

The work, and the expressive act that makes it real, is, in short, a field of tensions, expressed at several ontological levels: motivation, causation, expressive affect. Despite its appearance of monolithic fixity, a work becomes plural the moment it enters the world of performance, as it will inevitably be heard in different ways by different audiences. To that plurality is added gradual decay, until the work is reduced to shadow or ruin by the slow attrition of time. Love is what rescues it from dissolution, and allows us to fix it if only momentarily as an object of experience in performance, and of incarnated meaning in the form of critical, verbal explication. Love may seem a curious concept to introduce into an essay on an academic discipline, but it will be central to the argument.

This leads us to the question at the heart of this essay, namely: should musicology share in the values of the music it is studying? To put it more strongly, should musicologists be motivated by a love for the thing studied?<sup>4</sup> The answer increasingly is 'no,' as we shall see, and this 'no' could be seen as a sign of the powerful influence of sociology on contemporary musicology. It was after all one of the founding fathers of modern sociology Max Weber who put forward the notion that fact and value should be kept strictly separate, in an effort to create a discipline that would be *Werturteilsfreiheit* (free of value judgements).<sup>5</sup> That attitude is faithfully maintained in the work of one notable sociologist of music, as we shall see. However, the question of whether musicology can be 'value-free' as if it were a species of sociology is actually one of the questions at issue. So we cannot assume the truth or even the utility of the *Werturteilsfreiheit* ideal at the outset. In any case, in the early decades of musicology the answer to the question of whether the discipline should share in the values of the music it was investigating was an unequivocal 'yes,' and I will argue that without that 'yes,' the ostensible subject of study becomes a chimera, always threatening to vanish from our gaze.

## 2. The Old Musicology

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<sup>3</sup> Eva Badura-Skoda, Andrew V. Jones, and William Drabkin. "Cadenza," in *Grove Music Online* (2001) (<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043023>), accessed January 3, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Cook would say emphatically not; see his "On Qualifying Relativism," in *Musica Scientiae*, Vol 5, No. 2 (September 2001), pp. 167-189.

<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and eds. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949).

In time, this internalising of the values of art music was shown in the most obvious way, by the choice of subject matter. It is true that the founders of the discipline of musicology envisaged that the whole of music would be its subject-matter – it was to be *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*. But though some pioneering work was done in the study of non-Western musics, the focus for of the discipline was overwhelmingly on Western art music.<sup>6</sup> This is not the place to rehearse the immense consequences for the discipline of that choice. However, there is one aspect of that focus which is insufficiently remarked on. Just as art music itself was a conjunction of practices which can be separately studied and mastered, each carrying a set of values which can be in a degree of tension with the others, so musicology was itself a bringing together of a number of disparate practices, each with its own standards of excellence, its own skill-sets, its own 'culture,' one could say. To mention just a few in Adler's formulation, there were palaeography, acoustics, organology and diplomatics.

Recently more tools have been added to the musicologist's armoury, such as analysis, a field pioneered by such thinkers as Hugo Riemann, Heinrich Schenker and Rudolph Reti.<sup>7</sup> Just as it was at the level of practice that a unity was forged out of competing values in the art of art music, so in musicology it was at the level of the total practice that a unity was forged out of this apparently incoherent yoking together of sub-disciplines with no common conceptual root. In that respect, the discipline internalised the essential, irreducible pluralism in the values of the thing studied, not merely by studying that plurality of things that embodied Western art music's value-set, but by enacting it, through its own plurality.

What grounded the plurality was a deeply felt engagement with the subject matter, mediated in part through a degree of practical engagement with its materials. This accounts for a feature of the university and conservatoire curricula of 'old musicology,' which the advocates of more recent forms of musicology find embarrassing, namely the incorporation of significant elements of practice. Undergraduates were expected to master harmony and counterpoint, which included such demanding skills as composing a five-part mass in the style of Palestrina, or sight-reading a Strauss opera, or harmonising a chorale. These skills are disdained nowadays by many new musicologists as useful only to church organists or repetiteurs in opera companies.

What that view overlooks is that gaining even a modest proficiency in these skills brings in the vital element of embodied knowledge, for which discursive knowledge can never be a complete substitute. The basic idea of embodied knowledge, which is that we 'know more than we can tell,'<sup>8</sup> goes hand-in-hand with the notion that to acquire it, one has to commit, if only

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<sup>6</sup> Musicology might from the outset have taken the whole of music as its subject matter, had the lead of the French/Belgian 19<sup>th</sup> century school of musicology been followed (see François-Joseph Fétis, *Histoire de la Musique*, 1869-1875). In fact, the discipline followed the lead of Guido Adler in his "Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft" in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1885), pp. 5-20. His vision for the discipline hides a bias towards Western art music under an appearance of a systematic investigation of the entire realm of music, a bias which was perpetuated in the subsequent development of the discipline for at least a century. The existence of a separate discipline called ethnomusicology since the 1950s is sufficient evidence of this.

<sup>7</sup> Hugo Riemann, *System der musikalischen Rhythmik und Metrik* (Leipzig, 1903), Heinrich Schenker, *Fünf Umlinie-Tafeln* (Vienna, 1932); rev. 2/1969 by F. Salzer as *Five Graphic Music Analyses*, Rudolph Réti *The Thematic Process in Music* (New York, 1951).

<sup>8</sup> To use the well-known formulation of Michael Polanyi in his *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 4.

temporarily, to a particular stance towards the world.<sup>9</sup> One cannot attempt to 'hypothetically' play a piano, or a West African thumb-piano – one has to commit oneself to making a genuine attempt to play the instrument, in order to succeed in playing it (or indeed to fail to play it). Only then will we gain the embodied form of knowledge that a musical instrument can give us (along with many other kinds).<sup>10</sup> Music, more than most other disciplines, shows how the act of commitment is an indispensable pre-condition for gaining a certain kind of knowledge.

Still, the skill-set taught in music faculties in the bad old days was indeed narrow, which is why it was enlarged over the decades, to include such things as the study of performance as well as scores, atonal harmony, electronic music, studio production and (more recently) music software, and of course the broadening of the curriculum to take in popular and non-Western musics. The ostensible motive for this enlargement was to demonstrate that university music courses were still 'relevant.' But the fact that these new skills took their place alongside the old ones, only partially displacing them, and the fact that they sat side-by-side in the curriculum with courses bearing such names as 'Understanding Music History'<sup>11</sup> perhaps shows something else; that the academics and practitioners who shaped these courses adhered to the belief that a set of practices can incarnate a set of values or – to put it more strongly – that the values inherent in a musical culture can only be understood by being first internalised and then asserted, through a set of practices.

However, the example I have given reveals that this assertion is becoming more and more a forlorn hope. Fifty years ago, the patchwork of disciplines could make sense. To pass from the study of Frescobaldi's notation, and thence to his harmonic practice, and thence to an unravelling of the cultural background to his organ music, and finally to playing it at the organ, is a coherent enterprise (as is a course connecting the history, analysis, and creation of electronic music). The forms of approach to the materials are mutually supporting. Fast forward to today, and we encounter curious clashes which are far from mutually supporting. To pass from an introductory course in the morning on 'Music and the Brain' to a course on Renaissance counterpoint or studio production or jazz improvisation in the afternoon is to risk a state of profound confusion. There is no affinity at the level of concept or practice between these activities. What binds them together? 'Music', of course, but it is striking that just as the concept music is being called on to work harder than ever, to hold together these increasingly disparate areas of knowledge and practice, it is being eviscerated from within. Intellectual history is full of ironies.

### 3. From Practice to Criticism

It was this situation, *in statu nascendi*, that prompted Joseph Kerman to write his anxious survey of musicology entitled *Contemplating Music*.<sup>12</sup> Kerman could see that the discipline he had been trained in was losing its coherence. Its various sub-disciplines were in danger of

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<sup>9</sup> The literature on embodied knowledge is now vast. Key texts are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), Andy Clarke, *Being There: Putting Mind, Body and World Together Again* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997). For a measured view of the more extreme claims of embodied cognition, see Fred Adams and Kenneth Aizawa, "Why the Mind is Still in the Head," in Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 78-95.

<sup>10</sup> For an example of this, see David Sudnow, *Ways of the Hand*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Compulsory first-year module for BMus students at Newcastle University 2019-20  
<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/w304/#d.en.296264> accessed 27 September 2019

<sup>12</sup> Known in the UK as "Musicology". Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press, 1986).

becoming so elaborate, so sealed off in their own area of technical expertise, that they would soon lose touch with each other. Kerman instanced analysis as an example of a sub-discipline that was increasingly locked up within its own discourse, its findings shrouded in such a technically forbidding jargon as to be inaccessible to anyone but analysts.

By this date (Kerman's book was published in 1985) the idea that musicology might derive part of its coherence from a set of practical skills, which all its practitioners would share at some level, was already starting to look dated. The suggestion that musicology should properly be regarded as a branch of ethnomusicology (a term whose definition, scope and methods were and remain contentious) was already in the air,<sup>13</sup> and if that suggestion were generally accepted, what possible use would a grounding in H & C have? Would it in fact not prove to be a liability, giving a sense of being grounded in 'nature' to ways of thinking about musical material that were in fact local and contingent and very far from natural?

Although Kerman never puts it in this way, his book could be seen as an attempt to provide a substitute for the old grounding in practice. That substitute was criticism, the act of critical appreciation and judgement that would bring together the scattered insights of the analysts, historians, organologists and so on. This unifying act of criticism presupposed a deep personal engagement with the music under discussion, an engagement which was even then thought to be a failure of scholarly decorum. Kerman noted the tendency among some of his colleagues to separate off their musical insights and passions from their scholarly work. 'I believe this is a great mistake,' he asserted stoutly. 'Musicologists should exert themselves towards fusion, not separation. When the study of music history loses touch with the aesthetic core of music, which is the subject matter of criticism, it can only too easily degenerate into a shallow exercise. At the same time, I also believe that the most solid basis for criticism is history, rather than music theory or ethnomusicology.... What I uphold and try to practise is a kind of musicology oriented towards criticism, a kind of criticism oriented towards history.'<sup>14</sup>

It is significant that Kerman opts for history as the basis of his interpretative form of musicology. Presumably he means that history of which the musical work forms a part, which is by and large an Occidental history. This would ensure that the two discourses (of criticism as applied to the work, and the history that supplies the grounding) are mutually supportive, avoiding on the one hand the analytical wastes of theory, and the relativizing gaze of ethnomusicology. No wonder Kerman's project for musicology now seems so forlorn. It is

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<sup>13</sup> The ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl was a pioneer in the application of the ethnomusicological perspective to Western music, in e.g. "A Technique of Ethnomusicology Applied to Western Culture (Comments on Merriam, "Purposes of Ethnomusicology")," in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1963), pp. 221-4. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the view that this was a necessary and inevitable development, long overdue, was widespread, as reflected in the title of Nicholas Cook's article "We Are All (Ethno)musicologists Now," in Henry Stobart, ed., *The New (Ethno)musicologies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), pp. 48-67. [Other key texts in the history of this process: Robert Faulkner, "Orchestra Interaction: Some Features of Communication and Authority in an Artistic Organization," in *Sociological Quarterly* 14 (1973), pp. 147-57; Catherine M. Cameron, "Dialectics in the Arts: Composer Ideology and Culture Change" (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL, 1982). Modified version published as *Dialectics in the Arts: The Rise of Experimentalism in American Music* (Westport, CO, and London: Praeger, 1996); Klaus Wachsmann, "Applying Ethnomusicological Methods to Western Art Music," in *World of Music* 23 (1981), pp. 74-86; Christopher Small, "Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the Nature of a Symphony Concert," in Avron Levine White, ed., *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 6-32; Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, & Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988)].

<sup>14</sup> Kerman, op. cit., pp. 18-9.

politically unacceptable, on two levels. It reaffirms the importance of the work, an Occidental concept if there ever was one, and it privileges the Occidental history which creates the meaningful context for interpreting those works.

Kerman's was the most recent attempt to suggest an overall stance or orientation for the discipline of musicology, which is still focused on one particular tradition of music-making. It's fair to assume it will be the last. These days, musicologists eschew any grand ambitions of that kind. It is assumed that music (considered globally rather than through one tradition, an attitude which is now a given) is plural in its essence, a process with many modalities of existence, each of which is amenable to a different form of investigation, carried out in its own special discourse. This is profoundly different to the old dispensation, where the approaches to music were indeed many, but the thing studied was thought of as possessing the nature of a singularity, revealed – if only momentarily – in an act of imaginative engagement, performative or critical. It was in truth that thing named 'music', which when considered dispassionately 'from the outside' revealed itself partially, in many facets, each of which had to be approached in a different way.

This may be admirably democratic, but two problems arise, one epistemological, one political. The epistemological one is that, in a field where numerous mutually untranslatable discourses flourish, the idea that there is nevertheless something called 'music,' of which all these different discourses are the subject, starts to seem incoherent. How can we know there is something called 'music' existing prior to the various discourses, which so to speak underlies and unites them? There is no longer an unquestionable grounding of the discipline that stands outside any of the discourses that make it up – the 'absolute presupposition,' to borrow Collingwood's phrase<sup>15</sup> – and such things are now definitely out of favour.

The political problem is that, intellectual life being what it is, the ideal democracy of the discourses cannot be the truth of the situation. In the fight for academic prestige and funding, some discourses will always turn out to be more favoured than others. If the field of study has already been so disposed as to render the actual music invisible, then music will be among the losers, in that battle for existence in the academy. To survive it will need to hitch its wagon to a stronger discipline, more able to withstand the rough-and-tumble of academic life, and that creates the problem that, in allying itself to a politically more attractive discipline, musicology will end up being swallowed by it. There will be no shortage of contenders to fill that space in musicology that was once filled by a shared practice, through which a set of values was manifested.

#### **4. The claims of Empirical Musicology**

We see one of the most powerful contenders in that branch of musicology known as 'empirical musicology.' Here the guiding paradigm is the scientific one, and no form of discourse has so much prestige and academic clout as this. So one should not be surprised to see a tendency within empirical musicology for the scientific form of discourse to assert its dominance over

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<sup>15</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (1940; revised ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998).

others. One can see this it very clearly in the tendency's foundational text, *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospects* (2004), edited by Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook.<sup>16</sup>

The authors begin by questioning the findings of old musicology, which they admit was empirical at the most general level of description, but which—they say—tended to transfer habits of large risky generalisation learned in data-poor fields to data-rich ones. 'There may be many musicological certainties that would not survive a systematic engagement with the available data,'<sup>17</sup> they declare. The constant reiteration of the term 'data' carries the mind willy-nilly towards the new more favoured form of discourse, one where 'data' counts for more than any other source of knowledge. Using that term presupposes that musicology derives its knowledge from data, but that is a presupposition that could be questioned. It could be argued that in many cases the units of knowledge of musicology – the facts it deals in – are essentially qualitative, mediated in some way by an act of interpretation.

This opening gambit is typical of the way statements that once belonged to an interpretative discourse are briskly re-described in the language of science. There is another on the previous page, where the authors characterise '...the trial-and-error process by which music-analytical interpretations develop, with observation leading to interpretation and interpretation in turn guiding observation' as 'a model of close, empirically regulated reading.'<sup>18</sup> There is something intuitively odd about this formulation. Perhaps this is how the authors feel music-analytical interpretations really ought to develop, but the model seems implausible when applied to any notable musical-analytical interpretations that actually exist. It's hard to see any evidence of the 'trial-and-error' method in Lawrence Dreyfus's explication of Bach's rhetorical view of music,<sup>19</sup> or Susan McClary's interpretations of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italian madrigals<sup>20</sup> – not to mention Donald Tovey's explication of Beethoven's string quartets.<sup>21</sup>

These examples remind us – if we need reminding – that musical-analytical interpretations are an untidy mix of different sorts of evidence and different styles of reasoning, which cannot be assimilated to an empirical method, however generously that term is interpreted. They carry conviction by their power to give explanatory coherence to a range of phenomena, not by being proved or disproved by the patient enumeration of thousands of confirming or disconfirming instances, each of whose status as such will in any case remain arguable.

A humanistic interpretation invites assent for its explanatory power, particularly if it proves that the interpretation can be fruitfully applied to new bodies of evidence. But Cook and Clarke want to go further. They want the predictive power of a proper scientific theory, and suggest it could have such a power, in their discussion of Marion Guck's thought experiment about a key harmonic move in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of Mozart's G Minor Symphony K 550. The move hinges on a surprising intrusion of a Cb, which first appears in bar 2, and then more strikingly at bar 53, where it launches a startling new harmonic trajectory. They tell

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<sup>16</sup> Erik Clarke and Nicholas Cook, eds., *Empirical Musicology Aims, Methods, Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Susan McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Donald Tovey, *Essays in Music Analysis: Chamber Music*, ed. H.J Foss (Oxford: OUP 1944, new ed., 1966).

us that Guck 'likens the Cb to an 'indomitable immigrant,' 'conspicuously foreign to the tonal environment of the movements, but eventually assimilated within it and even ultimately serving to transform it...' <sup>22</sup> They conclude that Guck 'describes a way in which she can hear the music, and invites her reader to share her experience.'

By saying this the authors of *Empirical Musicology* acknowledge what is obvious to the reader, namely that Guck's suggestion is an admirable example of good old-fashioned criticism, carried out with enormous skill and poetic suggestiveness. But they want to move us on from that view. So they re-describe it as 'a discovery procedure resulting in a replication of experience,' which could lead to a measure of 'intersubjective agreement.' <sup>23</sup> In the space of a few lines we have been transported into an entirely different discourse, one with an appealingly scientific ring, which will lend Guck's statement an entirely different form of authority. The key word is 'replication,' but it's surely the wrong word in this context, because every listener will experience that 'immigrant' Cb in a different way. The experience of hearing and understanding such a complex phenomenon as a harmonically vagrant note requires a sophisticated grasp of tonal grammar and a particular 'cultural competence.' Given that every listener's musical experience and 'competence' varies, there's no way such a complex cognitive operation could be 'replicated.' If it could be, the experience of hearing Mozart's G minor symphony would never change, and the history of music reception would grind to a halt. It should be said that Guck herself has an old-fashioned positivist view of her craft, as befits a disciple of Milton Babbitt, and so slips sometimes into scientific-speak herself – as when she declares 'if your hearing matches mine, my description ... provides a means, however implicit, to codify it' <sup>24</sup> A code in information theory is a way of specifying an algorithmic relationship between the members of one set of symbols and a set of 'referents,' or another set of symbols. It is therefore essentially mechanical. What Guck offers is an imaginative re-hearing of a piece of music, which by its nature can never be reduced to a code. This suggests that the empirical-scientific strain in musicology today has its ancestry in positivist ways of thinking of the mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century—which these days we are sternly advised to eschew. Another irony of intellectual history!

The confusion of discourses revealed in this passage is a problem everywhere in musicology, which is now a babble of competing schemes of explanation and interpretation. To which some might retort—what's new? Did I not begin by asserting that musicology has always been a babble of discourses, to honour the hybrid nature of music itself, which is at once a cultural artefact, a form of social interaction, and a conceptual apparatus with elaborate formal properties? Indeed I did; the essential difference with respect to the situation today is the erosion of the bedrock that once supported that plurality. It is this that makes musicology's current predicament new and dangerous. That erosion has created a power vacuum, which explains why some of the discourses in the babble are not content to live alongside the others. They want to rule the roost, and—as already pointed out—their power is as much political as intellectual. The tendency of the scientific discourse to re-describe the humanistic one in its own terms is one example, but this at least leaves the musical object (whether conceived as text

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<sup>22</sup> Clark and Cook, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Marion Guck "Rehabilitating the Incurable," in Anthony Pople, ed., *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 64.

or the act that renders the text into sound, or performance *tout court*) intact, as an entity to be responded to, criticised, interpreted, analysed, or whatever.

## 6. The claims of sociology

More insidious is the attempt to reconceive musicology as a species of sociology. This threatens to dissolve the musical realm into something else; a set of social actions together with their associated meanings. First comes the switch of attention away from musical objects to musical performances, the so-called 'performative turn' Nicholas Cook describes the turn well in his essay 'Between Process and Product'.<sup>25</sup> He sums up the shift of focus this turn entails as follows:

...instead of seeing musical works as texts within which social structures are encoded we see them as scripts in response to which social relationships are enacted: the object of analysis is now present and self-evident in the interaction between performers and in the acoustic trace that they leave.<sup>26</sup>

For anthropologist Georgina Born this doesn't go far enough. In her 2010 essay 'For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn' she advocates a more thorough-going encounter between musicology and the many intellectual resources so far untapped in sociology and anthropology. This will not be, cannot be, a simple purloining of the insights of one discipline by another. Rather, what is needed is something she admits will be difficult for many to accept – '...the radical stance of the agonistic-antagonistic mode, which suggests that addressing music as immanently social and cultural requires a break – an epistemological shift in our understanding of all musics, an approach that is irreducible to the addition of the antecedent (sub)disciplines, since all will be changed in the process.'<sup>27</sup>

It's an intoxicating prospect, but once the delirium has worn off, hard questions present themselves. One is the nature of the contribution that 'old' or even New Musicology could make in this Grand Concert of the disciplines. Born tries to reassure worried musicologists, by asserting that music has plenty to offer. She declares that 'anthropology, sociology and history stand as much to be transformed by an orientation towards music and music's mediation of social, cultural and temporal processes as do the music disciplines through growing exchanges with the social sciences and history.'<sup>28</sup> But note the asymmetry of this relationship. She names three disciplines which stand to be transformed by an encounter, not with the discipline of musicology, but with music – music as already reconceived in the sociological and anthropological ways Born is advocating in her essay.

It's a tiny slippage, one that could pass un-noticed, but it is actually very revealing. The skill set of musicology, and the forms of embodied, institutionalised knowledge that it has built over the generations, would stand in the way of this conceptual realignment. So they would surely be an early casualty of it (ironically enough, a striking piece of evidence for this lies in

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<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Cook, "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance," in *Music Theory Online*, Vol 7 No. 2 (April 2000), [www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html), accessed October 10, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Georgina Born, "For a Relational Musicology; Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 135, No. 2 (2010), pp. 205-243.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02690403.2010.506265>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p 23.

Born's well-known study of IRCAM, whose chief flaw is its lack of a solid grounding in the musical substance of the work undertaken in the institution she criticises).<sup>29</sup> The physical manifestation of this knowledge, in such things as scholarly editions, libraries and faculties of music, practice rooms, auditoria and studios may also be under threat in a world of 'relational musicology' that has no use for them.<sup>30</sup> There is a further aspect, one which brings us to the nub of this essay. This is what one might call the disposition or motivation of the practitioner. People who become musicologists have in the past done so because they have an enormous love for music *per se*, a love which in their case happens to express itself through intellectual curiosity rather performing or composing, though they may have these motivations too (the fact that traditional definitions of musicology place the discipline alongside these two activities in a triumvirate nicely illustrates the point that they have a common root).<sup>31</sup>

That much could be said of any discipline. Chemists have a fascination for chemistry, lawyers for the law. What makes musicology different (though perhaps not unique) is the correlative emotion of pleasure. Musicologists very commonly take pleasure in musical patterns, at least some of them. The aspect of fascination or curiosity has a vitally instrumental function; without it the business of enquiry could hardly begin. The second motivation, that of pleasure, is more problematic, because it seems on the face of it to be at best dispensable, and at worse seriously misleading. It bestows a value on the object of study, without stopping to justify or even explicate that value. When it comes to musicology, we cannot decide what to do about pleasure. Kerman's stout defence of it, referred to above, had its defenders even among the New Musicologists. One of that tendency's leading lights, Lawrence Kramer, declared that 'the last thing a post-modernist musicology wants to be is a neo-Puritanism that offers to show its love for music by ceasing to enjoy it.'<sup>32</sup> In a debate with Gary Tomlinson in *Current Musicology* Kramer acknowledged the post-modernist imperative to treat musical works as 'worldly' through and through. At the same time he defended the critical approach advocated by Kerman, reminding us that 'we cannot understand music "in context," thick or otherwise, if we have no means of representing concretely what the music does as utterance,' and declared that close reading is important in order to 'trace out the interrelations of musical pleasure, musical form and ideology. Not to pursue that possibility is tantamount to denying...the two cardinal historically grounded truths, that music (or art) is meaningful and music (or art) gives pleasure.'<sup>33</sup> Gary Tomlinson, in his response to Kramer's essay, chides the author for offering 'a musicology still conceived as a means to illuminate our own aesthetic experiences,' and urges us to 'dredge up our usual impassioned musical involvements from the

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<sup>29</sup> Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995). See the review by Richard Hermann, "Reflexive Postmodern Anthropology meets Musical "Modernism"," in *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 3, No. 5, <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.97.3.5/mto.97.3.5.hermann.html>, accessed October 11, 2019

<sup>30</sup> It's worth pointing out that Nicholas Cook has proposed a different conception of relational musicology in "Anatomy of the Encounter: Intercultural Analysis as Relational Musicology," in Stan Hawkins, ed., *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 193-208.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Frank Ll. Harrison in his essay "American Musicology and the European Tradition" declares that 'Traditionally the function of musicology has been in the first place to contribute to the fostering of composition and performance by adding to the sum of knowledge about music.' In Frank Ll Harrison, Mantle Hood and Claude V Palisca, eds., *Musicology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "The Musicology of the Future," in *Repercussions*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1992), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "Music Criticism and the Post-Modernism: In Contrary Motion with Gary Tomlinson," in *Current Musicology* 53 (1993), p. 31

hidden realm of untouchable premise they tend to inhabit, and ...make them a dynamic force – to be reckoned with, challenged, rejected, indulged in, whatever – within our study.<sup>134</sup>

In other words, pleasure cannot be taken as a measure of interest or value, in and of itself. That would be to 'valorise one's aesthetic preferences,' something about which Born takes a more negative view. 'I am always struck,' she says, 'by the way colleagues in film studies will study only films that they intend to valorise aesthetically or politically.'<sup>135</sup> For her this is emphatically the wrong way round, and she has no hesitation in declaring anthropology's and sociology's stance on this issue to be ethically superior as well as epistemologically more fruitful: 'Anthropology and sociology—in their initial suspension of questions of value, in researching the nature and the differentiation of value judgments, the existence of local contestations and controversies over value in any culture, and in the possibility of an eventual return, after all this, to address value anew—in all this, I suggest, anthropology and sociology inhabit a less idealist and parochial, more informed and subtler epistemological universe, one that is emphatically non-relativist while being undergirded by value pluralism.'<sup>136</sup>

Here—if one can untangle the gnarled prose—Born reveals the nub of her project; to dethrone the value-system 'old' musicology shares with the other 'old' humanities, and install a new one, taken from sociology and anthropology. Should we follow her, agree that musicology's unthinking 'valorisation' of its subject-matter was always reprehensible, and admit that finally the truth is out?

Perhaps it is not so simple. That puzzling final phrase, with its assertion that value pluralism is 'emphatically non-relativist,' taken together with the reference to a mysterious 'return' to 'address value anew'—a 'return' which all the previous work of relativisation has surely rendered deeply problematic—should give one pause. They suggest at the very least that the question of value in the sociological enterprise is a difficult one, fraught with potential antinomies and pitfalls. What of the sociologist's commitment to his/her own set of values, above all the notion that the pursuit of truth is an absolute good, even though the truths revealed in any particular sociological enterprise will only be local and temporary? (If the sociologist is sceptical of the very idea of truth, taking the view that truth is only what is 'true-for-me,' or true within a certain discourse, that is still a commitment). Is this over-arching value to be put in inverted commas, along with the value-systems encountered in the social structures being examined, or does it somehow survive the sociologist's own relativizing gaze? If it does survive, it raises an interesting and challenging thought; that the sociological and anthropological enterprises are animated and guided by values which are not themselves explicable within the terms of the discipline itself. The pursuit of truth is not, ultimately, a value that can be subjected to a sociological explanation. It lies outside the purview of any particular sociological enterprise; it is a given, without which the whole enterprise would dissolve into a paralysed scepticism.

Musicology too has (or had) its given value, which lies outside any particular musical practice under observation, and is not explicable within it. It is the rock on which the enterprise is built, namely the musicologist's passion for music, embodied – as it must be – within one

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<sup>34</sup> Gary Tomlinson, "Musical Pasts and Postmodern Musicologies: A Response to Lawrence Kramer," in *Current Musicology* 53 (1993), p. 24

<sup>35</sup> Born, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

particular cultural manifestation, but not totally explicable within it, and certainly not forever limited to it. This is the over-arching truth to which he or she clings – the conviction that music *per se* exists, and that it has value by virtue of that independent existence. (It should be clear by now what I mean by music *per se*: it is that form of cultural activity which creates forms of ordered sound, whose sounding qualities and formal properties are a form of intrinsic interest, beyond any social or other function they may serve)<sup>37</sup>. It is a passion that serves the knowledge-gaining ambitions of musicology, just as surely as the sociologists' commitment to the notion of truth, or at least to following a particular knowledge-gaining method serves the epistemological ambitions of sociology. Without the promptings of pleasure and appetite and passion, the work of musicology cannot even begin; but it does not mean we have to rest content with their deliverances.

Charles Rosen discusses this problem with that mixture of facetiousness and level-headed reasonableness that so exasperates the New Musicologists. He quotes Gary Tomlinson's observation that ethnomusicologists (of the old kind) tended to transfer 'onto the musics they study precisely the western presumptions – of internalism, formalism, aestheticism, transcendentalism – that we need to question.'<sup>38</sup> 'This transference does sound very wicked,' agrees Rosen, 'but of course the ethnomusicologist properly starts by trying to enjoy the music he is studying, relating it to the music he already knows, and he gradually widens his experience and loses his deplorable prejudices as he becomes more deeply involved with his field.'<sup>39</sup>

To declare, at the outset, that this self-enlightenment is impossible, and that to begin with a set of 'deplorable prejudices' means to be forever enslaved by them, is unwarranted pessimism. In any field in which aesthetics is involved, film studies as much as music, not to make use of one's passions is epistemologically debilitating – more than that, it is a denial of the essential self which in the long run can only be damaging to the researcher, and therefore to the work itself. One even wonders whether psychologically it is a sustainable option for a career, to be constantly putting one's appetites and preferences in inverted commas. It would be less painful to leave the field altogether, or move to a different part of sociology where questions of aesthetics do not arise. To quote Rosen again, 'without a passionate involvement in a particular form of music, an involvement largely unquestioned and unchallenged, the field of musicology will shortly become uninhabited.'<sup>40</sup>

Under the new dispensation, this would no longer be true. The field of musicology would be densely habited with sociologists and anthropologists. That being the case, knowledge of and practical competence in handling the materials of music (however conceived) will no longer be relevant. On the contrary, not to be well-versed in solfeggio will become a positive advantage, as it will reduce the danger that these new 'musicologists' (for once the scare quotes seem unavoidable) might apply the mind-set and values of this knowledge and skill set to the music they are studying. Musicology departments will over time become increasingly staffed by 'analphabetics,' well versed in the theories of Bourdieu and

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<sup>37</sup> For an elegant conceptual definition of music *per se*, see Jerrold Levinson, "On the Concept of Music," in *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 267–278.

<sup>38</sup> Tomlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Rosen, "The New Musicology," in *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 270.

<sup>40</sup> Rosen, *op.cit.*, p. 272.

Foucault but unable to say what counterpoint is, or to spell a G major chord, or hear the heterophony in a Balkan folk song.

## 7. Musicology in the post-disciplinary academy

These are the issues (some of them at least) raised by Born's somewhat scanty consideration of 'old' musicology, at the local level of the discipline itself, in her essay on 'relational musicology.' Then there is the global issue of disciplines in general, and how they are to be surmounted in the post-disciplinary universe that beckons. The transformation of musicology she says 'cannot be confined to the conversation between the music subdisciplines. Instead, they require us to look outside, beyond the archipelago, to the key adjacent disciplines – the next-nearest knowledge continents – that lie beyond musicology; that is, to the sciences of the cultural, social and temporal, which is to say, anthropology, sociology and history.'

In making her plea for musicology to become merely part of a congeries of disciplines, Born could be seen to be musicology's saviour. To flourish in the academy any discipline has to join the great interdisciplinary adventure, given that—to quote Julie Thompson Klein—interdisciplinarity has become 'ubiquitous, the "mantra du jour" in discussion of American higher education' (and not just American).<sup>41</sup> Disciplines are held by many to be relics of a bygone era, unfit for the modern era of 'post-modern knowledge.'<sup>42</sup> On all sides one hears calls for the 'post-disciplinary university.' As the *Introduction to the Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* puts it, 'attempts to understand the world or any part of it need to be inter- and transdisciplinary in nature – even if this means that we lose the comfort of disciplinary guarantees of expertise.'<sup>43</sup>

Given all this one cannot avoid the thought that in making her bid for relational musicology at precisely this moment, Born has demonstrated that her proposed new discipline is as much a product of political forces as intellectual ones. Relational Musicology would after all be the interdisciplinary discipline *par excellence*, calling on not just the sub-disciplines of popular music studies, practice studies, feminist music theory and ethnomusicology but also on the wider areas of sociology and anthropology. It claims to eschew value judgements about high and low art, a big advantage in an educational landscape where everyone – heads of faculties as well as research grant committees – is anxious not to be seen to be reinforcing old value systems and hierarchies.

It's hard not to imagine, when the time comes to allocate scarce research funds for musicology, that projects based on a 'relational musicology' stance would not sweep all before

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<sup>41</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Creating Interdisciplinary Culture: A Model for Strength and Sustainability* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010), p. 153, quoted in Jerry A. Jacobs, *In Defense of Disciplines* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016), p. 2

<sup>42</sup> In, for example, Paul Forman, "On the Historical Forms of Knowledge Production and Curation: Modernity entailed Disciplinarity, Postmodernity Entails Antidisciplinarity," in *Osiris* 27 (2012), pp. 56-97.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson Klein, and Carl Mitchem, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. xxxv. The slyly pejorative word 'comfort' encourages the view that adhering to a discipline is a moral as much as an intellectual failing. For a more balanced view of expertise, see Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

them. And if that happens, would relational musicology not become a discipline of its own, in institutional terms? As Jerry Jacobs remarks, 'rather than reverse (sic) the long trend towards ever greater specialization, the creation of the latest round of new fields only hastens its advance.'<sup>44</sup> It would surely not be long before relational musicology acquired precisely those institutional markers that devotees of interdisciplinarity insist should be relegated to history; scholarly associations, peer-reviewed journals, conferences, graduate courses. And with these would come claims on institutional funds.

To declare that the old dispensation of long-established disciplines had a political dimension is reasonable enough. What is not reasonable is to imply that politics is the only thing that has kept and continues to keep the disciplines in business. At the institutional level, the disciplinary model continues to prove its worth, as is shown by the tendency of interdisciplinary studies to replicate the institutional structures of disciplines. As Jacobs reminds us, 'communities of like-minded researchers develop norms regarding evidence and interpretation, values regarding the importance of problems to be solved and issues to be addressed, hierarchies of reputation and reward – in short, disciplinary-like systems of social control. Either interdisciplinarity recreates similar communities...or chaos ensues; no community, no rules, no boundaries, no differentiating good from bad, typos from intended spellings, enduring insights from implausible suggestions.'<sup>45</sup>

It can be further argued that the continuing success of traditional disciplines rests on a firm epistemological principle, namely that conceptual stability is the *sine qua non* of knowledge growth. Stanley Fish's 1989 essay 'Being Interdisciplinary is so very hard to do' may no longer be widely read, but it has lost none of its force. His argument is that interdisciplinarity offers the illusion of intellectual freedom, but in fact merely replicates the irksome confinement of the old disciplines, while offering none of their compensating advantages of conceptual stability. 'The interdisciplinary impulse finally does not liberate us from the narrow confines of academic ghettos to something more capacious; it merely redomiciles us in enclosures that do not advertise themselves as such.'<sup>46</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

The new enclosures so generously offered to musicology by the cognitive scientists and the sociologists and the anthropologists do indeed seem capacious, when compared to the musty confined 'ghetto' the discipline used to live in. But however diligently we explore these new territories, however many interesting incidental discoveries are made there, however far we pursue those ever-receding horizons, the possibility remains that one particular conceptual illumination – the most important one, surely, for any discipline calling itself 'musicology' – will remain forever out of reach. A genuinely new conception of what 'the musical' consists of will never be forthcoming, because such a thing requires at the outset a commitment both to a particular value system as enshrined in a particular musical tradition (a commitment which can be widened and surmounted, but never repudiated), and a love of the musical acts and occasions to which that tradition gives rise.

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<sup>44</sup> Jacobs, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>46</sup> Stanley Fish, "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard To Do," in *Profession* (1989), pp. 15-22.

Such a commitment would need to be tempered constantly by an awareness that the chosen musical tradition is a creation of historical contingencies, and that not all of its values will seem valuable from our standpoint. 'Reflective commitment,' making use where necessary of theoretical approaches is the ideal—a difficult task to be sure, but it will seem impossible only to those who prefer the easier and less personally risky course of keeping their distance from the tradition in question, by applying some form of catch-all empirical investigative method. Applying a *cordon sanitaire* around the subject-matter in this way is actually an evasion, and—to repeat—the work of musicology only begins with a commitment, an exertion of imaginative *Einfühlung* (feeling with) as originally described by Herder<sup>47</sup>, and embodied in more recent times in the interpretative discipline we call hermeneutics.

It is this critical/interpretative stance, practised alongside the acquiring of embodied knowledge by engaging with musical practices, that musicology needs to cling to. Without one or other of those approaches, or both, musicology will become a never-ending anxious search, pursued everywhere except the place where the desired thing might be found, perpetuated by an endlessly prolonged deferral of the personal engagement without which that thing can never become real.

This is not to assert that musicology could or even should return to a golden age before the practice and ethnomusicological 'turns,' a golden age which surely never existed. The investigation of music through the lens of other disciplines such as ethnography has already yielded a wealth of new insights. Musicology cannot stand aside from demands that curricula be decolonised, and in any case the globalised nature of musical production and experience requires an approach that is as pluralistic as the subject-matter has itself become in recent decades. But to admit all this does not in any way commit one to the further step, of denying the importance of that part of the musical occasion that is sung, or played on instruments, and which meets the ear. Laudan Nooshin warns against a 'fetishist focus on music as sound'<sup>48</sup> but it is surely an equally grave sin to discount sound completely – because after all the sound of music is never merely sound, it takes on formal and expressive qualities in the lives and ears and minds of those who make and witness it. It follows that an engagement with those sounds is essential, if music is to retain its ability to 'answer back' to the hypotheses of the ethnographer, the sociologist, the cognitive scientist or whomever.

The question then becomes: which or whose materials? I would say that it should be the aim of musicological departments to aspire to a condition of being musically polyglot, or at least bilingual. Students should be required to engage, in both a practical and critical way, with the musical materials of at least two widely contrasted traditions. This would inculcate a dual form of knowledge of each tradition, which is both engaged and embodied, and critical and distant. If the discipline embraced this aim it would, over time, lend a coherence to university departments and curricula which—in the no doubt laudable pursuit of methodological and

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<sup>47</sup> Most explicitly in "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity," in *J.G. Herder: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 272-358

<sup>48</sup> Laudan Nooshin, "Happy Families? Convergence, Antagonism and Disciplinary Identities or "We're all God knows what now" (Cook 2016)." Paper presented at the City Debate, 'Are we all Ethnomusicologists now?', City University London, June 1, 2016.  
<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/14817/1/Laudan%20Nooshin.%20Happy%20Families%3F%20Convergence%2C%20Antagonism%20and%20Disciplinary%20Identities.%20City%20Debate.%201.6.16%20.pdf>, accessed September 30, 2019.

cultural diversity—are threatening to become debilitatingly fragmented, rather than invigoratingly plural. Only through this many-layered comparative engagement with music’s materials, undertaken alongside approaches drawn from other disciplines, can musicology engage in a dialogue of equals with those disciplines rather than being simply swallowed by them.