Just Vibrations

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Introduction


2. Paul de Man once called the advent of literary theory a “paper tiger” for its perceived threat to traditional critical methods. His description pokes at broader quirks in the metaphor: “If a cat is called a tiger it can easily be dismissed as a paper tiger; the question remains however why one was so scared of the cat in the first place. The same tactic works in reverse: calling the cat a mouse and then deriding it for its pretense to be mighty. Rather than being drawn into this polemical whirlpool, it might be better to try to call the cat a cat” (*The Resistance to Theory* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986], 5). See also Molly Andrews, *Narrative Imagination and Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25–33.


5. For the Kleinian subject (versus the Freudian subject), Sedgwick notes that “omnipotence is a fear at least as much as it is a wish” (“Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106 [2007]: 631). See also Meira Likierman, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context* (London: Continuum, 2002), 100–143.


8. Sedgwick elaborated: “To call paranoia a strong theory is, then, at the same time to congratulate it as a big achievement (it’s a strong theory rather as, for Harold Bloom, Milton is a strong poet) but also to classify it. It is one kind of affect theory among other possible kinds, and by [Silvan] Tomkins’s account, a number of interrelated affect theories of different kinds and strengths are likely to constitute the mental life of any individual. Most pointedly, the contrast of strong theory in Tomkins is with weak theory, and the contrast is not in every respect to the advantage of the strong kind. The reach and reductiveness of strong theory—that is, its conceptual economy and elegance—involves both assets and deficits. What characterizes strong theory in Tomkins is not, after all, how well it avoids negative affect or finds positive affect, but the size and topology of the domain that it organizes” (“Paranoid Reading,” 134).


14. Lydia Hamessley, “How Did This All Start? Toward a History of the Feminist Theory and Music Phenomenon” (2009, revised 2015), http://www.femtheorymusic.org/fmt-history, quoted with permission. In an article about the underrepresentation of women composers in the music history curriculum, Rosemary Killam pointed out that “those who know both me and my writings know that when I write or speak in anger, I use a tone in which I am explicit about such anger” (“Response to Professor

15. On scholars’ social responsibilities, Elaine Scarry writes: “The main work of the humanities is to ensure that books are placed in the hands of each incoming wave of students and carried back out to sea. Probably, though, teachers and readers need to do more. We should give more attention to making clear the lines of responsibility to real-world injuries and the call to that work that is embedded in the three key features of literature [its invitation to empathy, its reliance on deliberate thought, and its beauty]” (“Poetry, Injury, and the Ethics of Reading,” in *The Humanities and Public Life*, ed. Peter Brooks with Hilary Jewett [New York: Fordham University Press, 2014], 47).


22. I include here three excerpts from the American Musicological Society’s “Guidelines for Ethical Conduct” as they appear in 2016 (last updated in October 1997 upon formal adoption by the board of directors). These excerpts are among the most relevant ones pertaining to AMS members’ social and pedagogical duties. First, in the preamble: “Since the behavior of musicologists, in whatever professional capacities they serve, affects the well-being and reputation of the entire profession, members of the Society are expected to uphold these principles not only in their scholarly work but also in all their professional capacities” (*American Musicological Society 2015 Directory* [2015], http://www.ams-net.org/administration/ethics.php, xxx-
iv). Second, in a section on harassment: “Members of the AMS are therefore obliged not to abuse the power with which they are entrusted, but rather to create professional settings that foster respect for the rights of others. Furthermore, members of the AMS should neither condone harassment in any form nor disregard complaints of harassment or inequitable treatment from any person or group involved with the AMS and its activities” (xl). And third, in a section on teaching responsibilities: “In their roles as teachers, AMS members should maintain a strictly professional relationship with students while in a position of power over them, judging each student on merit alone. They should promote an atmosphere of respect for the personal difference and dignity of each student, and protect students’ rights to confidentiality and privacy. The conditions for free exchange of ideas can be created only when such rights are observed” (xli).

23. Cynthia Wu, “Tenured and Happy,” Inside Higher Ed (30 March 2015), http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/03/30/essay-earning-tenure-and-considering-responsibilities-faculty-life. Wu continues: “My biggest concern as I face down another 25 years or so in this profession is not that I will become disaffected or stalled in my research. It’s whether or not I can convince my fellow tenured colleagues to agree that we not pull the ladder up behind us and abandon the others in the interest of careerist gain. I don’t find tenure depressing. I find it sobering. We need to use that sobriety to take collective responsibility for making the academy more livable for everyone.”


31. Akemi Nishida, “Neoliberal Academia and a Critique from Disability Studies,” in Occupying Disability: Critical Approaches to Community, Justice, and Decolonizing
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46. A professor (writing under a pseudonym) describes the challenges of care-work in her encounters with students and colleagues who regularly come to her with dilemmas: “Just listening is the best you can do. With student mental-health issues on the rise and faculty stress running high, there is more and more care-work to do. While it would be nice if colleges and universities could find a way to recognize this as service work, the personal, confidential nature of these conversations makes that unlikely” (Myra Green, “Thanks for Listening,” Chronicle of Higher Education [19 October, 2015], http://chronicle.com/article/Thanks-for-Listening/233825).


50. The scheduled panelists were Clara Latham, Elias Krell, Samantha Bassler, Margarita Restrepo, Nina Treadwell, Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, and Cari E. McDonnell; Honey Meconi served as chair.

51. Carol Hess remarks: “How did musicology, so broadly defined in 1939, change to the point that we now feel compelled to distinguish ‘public musicology’ from . . . what? Some other kind of musicology? Program notes, pre-concert talks, writing articles and blogs for lay audiences may well be the forms of public musicology most familiar to us. But curating, government work, archival work, and oral history are other possibilities that greet those trained in our discipline. Do we need a theoretical underpinning to pursue these interests? Have our activities become constricted over the years—frozen in the academy, as it were—or have they expanded, even in these challenging economic times?” (“Public Musicology . . . 1939,” Musicology Now [15 November 2013], http://musicologynow.ams-net.org/2013/11/public-musicology-1939.html). The blog post is excerpted in part from Carol Hess’s “De aspecto inglés pero de alma española’: Gilbert Chase, Spain, and Musicology in the United States,” Revista de Musicología 35 (2012): 263–96.

52. In 2014, the Musicology Now blog of the American Musicological Society released a four-part video series of musicologists explaining what they do; Andrew Dell’Antonio and Felicia Miyakawa began to edit a blog with W. W. Norton, The Avid Listener, which propounds that “music criticism can be literate and fun to read, . . . foster[ing] weekly discussions between scholars and novices alike” (see http://www.
theavidlistener.com/about.html, with Michael Fauver, managing editor); and W. Anthony Sheppard delivered a Tedx Talk titled “Pop Orientalism” as well as recorded a short video unraveling the musical magic of the hit song “Let It Go” from the Disney film *Frozen*. In early 2015, Westminster Choir College of Rider University hosted a three-day conference, “The Past, Present, and Future of Public Musicology,” organized by Eric Hung.


55. The blog *Musicology Everywhere* features stories “on careers outside of, overlapping with, adjacent to, and beyond the academy” (http://musicologyeverywhere.wordpress.com).


63. On the queer precarities of childhood, see Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer
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Chapter 1


10. An example of a creatively organized and rhetorically diverse volume is Phil Smith, ed., Both Sides of the Table: Autoethnographies of Educators Learning and Teaching with/in [Dis]ability (New York: Peter Lang, 2013). I thank Andrew Dell’Antonio for recommending this book.


12. See William Cheng, “My Students Never Use the First Person Voice. I Wish They Would,” Slate (11 June 2015), http://www.slate.com/blogs/lexicon_valley/2015/06/11/my_students_never_use_the_first_person_voice_i_wish_they_would.html. The title I originally wanted to use (before it was changed by editors) was “For Students, What Letter Trumps an A?”


14. Joseph Straus, email correspondence with author (17 November 2013), quoted with permission.


24. In an iconic essay, Susan Sontag advised that people who study art “must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more” (*Against Interpretation and Other Essays* [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966], 14).


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***Chapter 2***


10. Allegations against ocularcentrism pop up frequently in sound studies and in musicology. See the respective introductions to Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stan-


12. On how gamers and academics face comparable accusations of losing touch with reality, see William Cheng, Sound Play: Video Games and the Musical Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 15–16. Gamers are often asked why they spend so much time in virtual worlds, roaming fantastical lands and seeking castles in the sky. And at times, scholars—especially those in the arts and humanities—likewise get called out for holing up in ivory towers, debating anddiscussing about a subject rather than really doing something about it (say, via social intervention, political activism, or obvious material contribution). In short, both groups are routinely charged with playing at something almost real, but not quite.


25. On control, trust, and vulnerability, see Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and George W. Harris, Dignity and Vulnerability: Strength and Quality of Character (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).


32. One of the founding treatises for the Slow Movement was Carl Honoré’s In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004).


34. See Yvonne Hartman and Sandy Darab, “A Call for Slow Scholarship: A Case Study on the Intensification of Academic Life and Its Implications for Pedagogy,”


39. Felicia Miyakawa has described her decision to leave a tenured position in musicology as follows: “On the first day of the conference [on public musicology], I spoke about how/why I left academia. For the rest of the day and into the next, numerous people cornered me to tell me how brave I am. This is a comment I’ve been getting all too frequently since I quit my job. And it invariably comes from current academics who cop to sharing many of my experiences. I’ll admit I feel just a little worse each time I am called ‘brave,’ because this comment drives home to me just how many people are unhappy or frustrated in their academic positions but have little power to change their situation. I am ‘brave’ because I escaped, because I found a way out, because I was willing to take a big risk and walk away from a broken system. It saddens me to know that so many of my peers are so frustrated. Or maybe there’s a different way to interpret being brave. Let’s talk about it” (“Going Rogue: On Leaving the Academy and Taking Risks” [1 February 2015], http://fmmiyakawa.com/2015/02/01/on-being-brave-publicmusicology).


44. Scarry, On Beauty, 39. Scarry also writes: “It is the argument of this chapter that beauty, far from contributing to social injustice . . . actually assists us in the work
of addressing injustice, not only by requiring of us constant perceptual acuity—high dives of seeing, hearing, touching—but by the more direct forms of instruction” (42).


69. On battles for contingent faculty rights, see Bérubé and Ruth, *Humanities*, 121–41.
71. Emily Wilbourne, email correspondence with author (21 October 2015), quoted with permission.
Chapter 3

2. Avery Brown, email correspondence with author (28 May 2015), quoted with permission.
3. Berlant, Cruel Optimism, 123.
4. Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading.” 125–26. In a later essay, Sedgwick elaborated on the relationship between paranoia and queer theory: “I overlooked the crudest, most contingent, and probably also most important reason why paranoia seems so built into queer theory as such. To quite get that, I think one has to have experienced gay life in the 1980s and early ’90s, when queer theory was still a tentative, emergent itinerary. That was also the moment when AIDS was a new and nearly untreatable disease—bringing a sudden, worse than Euripidean horror into the lives of urban gay men and their friends. It was not an uncommon experience then to be in a room of vibrant young people, conscious that within a year or two, all but a few of them would have sickened and died” (“Melanie Klein,” 638).
12. In his Dewey lecture, Railton noted that radical upticks in polls on gay marriage came about through “experience-based moral learning” whereby “enough gay individuals courageously took things into their own hands and came out publicly” (“Innocent Abroad,” 13).
13. Home page of the Welcoming Committee; see http://thewelcomingcommittee.com/gqb.

15. Michael Snediker, Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 1. Snediker offers the concept of “queer optimism,” which “doesn’t aspire toward happiness, but instead finds happiness interesting. Queer optimism, in this sense, can be considered a form of meta-optimism: it wants to think about feeling good, to make disparate aspects of feeling good thinkable” (3).


33. Brett, “Musicality,” 17. On the “deviant” connotations of musicality, Brett has also remarked that “it is surely no coincidence that among the many code words and phrases for a homosexual man before Stonewall (and even since), ‘musical’ (as in, ‘Is he “musical” do you think?’) ranked with others such as ‘friend of Dorothy’ as safe insider euphemisms” (11).


35. Roger Mathew Grant, “The Queen of Music Theory Goes to Milwaukee City, or, Yes I Am a Music Theory Queen,” paper presented at AMS/SMT joint meeting in Milwaukee, WI (7 November 2014), quoted with permission.

36. I’ve ventured elsewhere that formal analyses, as much as any type of music
scholarship, “sometimes read and sound as if they’re talking around pleasure, circumventing the snares of emotional candor and its possible implications of irrationality, emasculation, and deficit of control” (Cheng, “Pleasure’s Discontents,” 842).


43. One area where I feel How to Be Gay falters, irrespective of music, is its strategic yet impolitic neglect of queer categories and genres outside a predominantly privileged rubric of white, male, cis, middle-class, able-bodied, domiciled, youthful gays. As Halperin, at the AMS session, doubled down on the desirable aspects of embracing legible gayness, Stephan Pennington rose from the audience to voice the indispensable caveat that for many people—especially those who are, for example, trans, homeless, of color—markers of queerness can drastically heighten one’s susceptibility to violence and injustice. Not everyone, in other words, has the security or wherewithal to benefit from knowing what it means (or takes) to be straightforwardly gay in the first place. See Heather Hadlock, “‘How to Sound Gay’ at the AMS 2013 Meeting in Pittsburgh,” Still a Musicologist (12 November 2013), http://amsfellowtraveler.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/how-to-sound-gay-at-the-ams-2013-meeting-in-pittsburgh.


47. McClary recounts: “I had several occasions to stand in a long line in the women’s room, where I was privy to unrelieved carping about this woman who was ‘determined to drag our Schubert through the mud.’ [Maynard] Solomon’s article had been circulated in advance, and some of those who spoke during the course of the day deemed it appropriate to take gratuitous swipes at him (‘a pornographer’), with the obvious approval of the crowd” (“Constructions of Subjectivity,” 206). See also Elaine Barkin, “either/or,” Perspectives of New Music 30 (1992): 206–33.

48. Much ink has been spilled over how McClary’s studies of music and sexuality have been mischaracterized, misunderstood, and misappropriated. Suzanne Cusick calls McClary “one of the most misquoted musicologists in history” (“Gender, Musi-
cology, and Feminism,” in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, 488 n. 30); see also Robert Fink, “Beethoven Antihero: Sex, Violence, and the Aesthetics of Failure, or Listening to the Ninth Symphony as Postmodern Sublime,” in Dell’Antonio, *Beyond Structural Listening?*, 109–53. McClary has reflected on the wild reception of *Feminine Endings*, noting that “no one (least of all this author) could have anticipated that a drab-looking little book from the University of Minnesota Press would be cause for a twenty-year reflection” (“Feminine Endings at Twenty,” *TRANS: Revista Transcultural de Música* 15 [2011], http://www.sibertrans.com/trans/public/docs/trans_15_02_McClary.pdf).

49. Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading,” 134.

50. Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, vol. 2, *The Negative Affects* (New York: Springer, 1963), 404–5. Bruno Latour puts it this way: “As soon as naïve believers are thus inflated by some belief in their own importance, in their own projective capacity, you strike them by a second uppercut and humiliate them again, this time by showing that, whatever they think, their behavior is entirely determined by the action of powerful causalities coming from objective reality they don’t see, but that you, yes you, the never sleeping critic, alone can see. Isn’t this fabulous? Isn’t it really worth going to graduate school to study critique?” (“Critique,” 239).


**Chapter 4**


8. On music torture and sexual humiliation, Cusick explains: “The belief that music could torture emerges, in the blogosphere, among people who feel themselves to be ‘tortured’ by certain musics—rap music, disco, sentimental ballads, the music of Yoko Ono. Additionally, the idea that music could torture seems linked both to homophobia and to heterosexual fantasy; in fact, the most lively repertoire discussions propose as torturous popular musics easily associated with either homosexuality or the effeminacy perceived to come from being too emotionally engaged with women. These folk seem readily to imagine themselves moving from tortured to torturer, and imagine music torturing by either a racial/cultural affront or, more often, by feminizing and/or queerifying Muslim men: either way, detainees would be emasculated (and the bloggers’ masculinity, presumably, strengthened)” (“Music as Torture”).

12. “Sesame Street Music Torture,” Young Turks (3 June 2012), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJo0bOycf8, emphasis added.
13. Elaine Scarry remarks that “the human capacity to injure other people is very great precisely because our capacity to imagine other people is very small” (“The Difficulty of Imagining Other Persons,” in Human Rights in Political Transitions: Gettysburg to Bosnia, ed. Carla Hesse and Robert Post [New York: Zone Books, 1999], 285).
14. Exercises in selective imagination underscore the polemics of the infamous ticking time-bomb scenario (the hypothetical question of whether one would or should torture a terrorist who is believed to know the location of a presumed bomb about to go off in a city). Concerning moral and legal responsibility, Elaine Scarry notes: “It is a peculiar characteristic of such hypothetical arguments on behalf of torture that the arguer can always ‘imagine’ someone large-spirited enough to overcome (on behalf of a city’s population) his aversion to torture, but not so large-spirited that he or she can also accept his or her own legal culpability and punishment” (“Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz,” in Levinson, Torture, 282); cf. Alan Dershowitz, Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 131–63.
18. The song in this Homeland scene is “Orphan” by the band Gridlink.
19. In an odd admission, this is what the player-character Trevor says to the detainee following the torture sequence: “The media and the government would have us believe that torture is some necessary thing. We need it to get information, to assert ourselves. Did we get any information out of you? Exactly. Torture’s for the torturer . . . or for the guy giving orders to the torturer. You torture for the good times—we should all admit that. It’s useless as a means of getting information” (Rockstar Games, Grand Theft Auto V).
23. Pieslak, Sound Targets, 172. “If ‘I Love You’ were played repeatedly for an hour,” suggests Pieslak, “the complete melody would be heard 120 times and the
main melodic motive would be heard 360 times. Adding to the repetition, the singing style of the children, presumably Barney’s target audience of preschoolers or young children, seems unnaturally uniform and calm. It is hard to imagine a group of four- to six-year-olds singing with such precision, clarity, and restraint, and for me, the vocal performance is unnervingly artificial. The repetitive timbres of music intended for children make for a powerful source of antagonism” (171). Assuming a basic comprehension of English, moreover, a detainee’s idea of what love is might break down from being forced to listen to sing-songy reiterations of “I love you” at high volumes and for hours on end. Semantics and affects crash together, twisting one’s feelings and understandings of love even after the torture stops.


30. As Cusick writes: “Every amplified sound in these camps, and therefore every bit of music, is the United States’ transformation of the energy in Middle Eastern oil into violent, violating sonic energy aimed directly at the people whose land yielded that oil—people who are as powerless to resist our thirst for their lands’ resources as they are to resist the use of those transformed resources against them” (“You Are in a Place,” 18). See also Sally Macarthur, “Music and Violence,” Musicology Australia 34 (2012): 101–10.


32. Morag Josephine Grant states: “For the historical evidence suggests that as long as there is torture, there will be music used in the service of torture. The answer, then, is easy to say, but less simple to achieve: Show me a world without music torture,
and I will show you a world without torture” (“Pathways to Music Torture,” *Transposition* 4 [2014]: par. 37).


34. Yik Yak’s mottos include “Share your thoughts and keep your privacy,” and “Get a live feed of what everyone’s saying around you” (http://www.yikyakapp.com).


47. One person (username andrewkilroy5) on the simulation’s website wrote: “Should I laugh at this or should I be horrified by it? I am Autistic and I think this is terrible stereotyping.” To which creator Taylan Kay responded: “Hi Andrew. I’m very sorry that you found this horrifying. I understand where you are coming from and wish that we could have done a better job at describing your experience with autism. The reality of the situation though is that it is not possible to make this a 100% accurate simulation for everyone with autism, as there is a wide variation in how each person experiences hypersensitivity. Chances are someone else on the ASD would find your description of it incomplete as well. I will concede that the ‘Sim’ in Auti-Sim might have caused a different expectation, and it is a valid criticism. Going forward, we should consider doing a better job of communicating the goal of our project, which is to raise awareness of and empathy for hypersensitivity” (andrewkilroy5 and Taylan Kay, “Comments: Page 9,” *Game Jolt* [2 March 2013], http://gamejolt.com/games/auti-sim/12761?comment_page=9).


51. Susan Brison, “On Empathy as a Necessary, but Not Sufficient, Foundation for

Coda


12. See Lily Hay Newman, “This Is the Sound Cannon Used against Protesters in Ferguson,” Slate (14 August 2014), http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2014/08/14/lrad_long_range_acoustic_device_sound_cannons_were_used_for_crowd_control.html.

13. See Neil Davison, “Non-lethal” Weapons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–3. Even when an LRAD has been set to suppress mode, points out María Edurne Zuazu regarding Ferguson’s protests, the “tone not only marked out and showed the site-specific impunity of police abuse but, because of their much-publicized ruthlessness and of the mobile repeatability of the LRAD tone, also predicted more extraordinary episodes” (“Loud but Non-lethal,” 157).

19. See Harris, Dignity and Vulnerability, 115; and Sen, Idea of Justice, 390–92.
22. Halberstam, Queer Art of Failure, 3.