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# ***Biography and the New Musicology***

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While modern musicology has seen the frequent exploration of issues of historiography and canonicity, biography itself has largely eluded critical investigation until much more recently. The discipline has lately challenged the aesthetic of musical canon, for many decades a largely uncontested phenomenon, as well as that of the Great Composer.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarship has similarly addressed the matter of the writing of music history from a critical standpoint, and examined the relationship between canonicity and other important literary modes such as music criticism.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, current musicological discourse has seldom engaged with a literary genre so rich for its documentary significance as musical biography, which provided an ideal means by which to debate the claims of specific composers and their works to the available cultural ground as well as yielding firm foundations on which to construct modern music history. Conversely, the present trend within the so-called “New Musicology” towards the exploration of musical contexts, prompted by Joseph Kerman’s renowned critique of the discipline and the anti-formalist stance cultivated thereafter, has actively encouraged its practitioners to take into account issues of biography in relation to studies of music.<sup>3</sup> But the ideologies of musical biography themselves remained largely unexplored, and in consequence, musicology may have unwittingly absorbed wholesale many of the tendencies and preoccupations that have accumulated within the genre in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The omission on the part of modern scholars to subject musical biography to timely critical scrutiny is unsurprising given that the academy at large has been slow to embrace the genre for its literary and historiographical value, coupled to musicology’s notorious tendency to lag some years behind developments elsewhere in the arts and humanities. Having long been rejected by Anglo-American literary trends such as New Criticism, which asserted its dominance in the mid-twentieth century, biography has more recently come under fire from the “death of the author” movement and other thought-provoking critiques. The genre has also suffered in the past from being considered an inferior, simplistic form of educational writing, produced for the populus as a commercial venture rather than for the advancement of scholarship, and hence supposedly unworthy of academic interest. Among the factors that have led to this opinion’s becoming outmoded are the more inclusive outlook developed within academia following the postmodern critique, and an increasingly scholarly approach taken within the genre itself. Moreover, while the origins of modern biographical theory extend as far back as early twentieth-century writers such as Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, critical research on the subject has only truly flourished in the last two decades or so, primarily within the fields of literature

and history.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, certain humanities disciplines presently possess a much greater understanding of such matters as the ways in which biography handles aspects of its subjects' lives, the etiological strategies by which their conduct was explained, the impact of the different stages of the history of the genre, its relationship to the culture of the day, and its consequent development over time. While many of the questions explored within the theoretical literature on biography also have wider application to other kinds of factual narrative and hence receive articulation elsewhere, notably in the domains of the practice and philosophy of history, the study of biography yields many unique insights given the genre's uneasy positioning between fact and fiction.

As various scholars have noted, the discipline of musicology has long possessed its lone voices interested in theoretical issues in biography, including Hermann Abert, J. H. Elliot, Jacques Barzun, and Walther Vetter.<sup>5</sup> Carl Dahlhaus's groundbreaking study *Foundations of Music History* made limited consideration of biography, largely confined to questions of whether an understanding of composers' lives is necessary to that of their works and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> However, only in recent years have we witnessed a notable increase in the number of critical studies in musicology on aspects of biography: surveys of the changing ways in which specific subjects have been depicted, and the development of their biographies; studies that investigate the cultural significance of the portrayal of a composer within a given time and place; explorations of specific biographical issues through close analysis of available accounts; challenges to commonly-held misconceptions and assumptions in the biography of a particular composer; discussions of biography within the context of feminist or gay and lesbian musicology; and even scholarly responses to populist film biographies of composers.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these studies essentially represent scholarship focused on a single composer, or within a particular area of musicology; while they raise a multitude of valuable insights that may legitimately be transferred to other areas of research, often the nature of their enquiry is such that their value in critically examining the genre of biography of itself is understandably limited. The one full-length project that has appeared to date, Hans Lenneberg's *Witnesses and Scholars: Studies in Musical Biography*, has undeniably contributed to a greater understanding of the genre although the approach taken towards its subject matter is primarily historical rather than critical; in addition, the period of the nineteenth century to which modern musical thinking is so strongly indebted is given relatively short shrift.<sup>8</sup> Research on musical biography has lately been fostered by an Annual Conference of the UK's internationally-recognized Royal Musical Association dedicated to the subject (not to mention the conference whose proceedings appear in the present volume), as well as the appearance of Jolanta Pekacz's edited *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*.<sup>9</sup> Despite the subtitle of Pekacz's pathbreaking anthology, however, I find it somewhat limited in its discussion of the implications of its findings to future scholarship. For example, it overlooks the recent proliferation of hermeneutical

readings of music according to such attributes as gender, sexuality, race, class, and ideology, which surely constitutes the most fascinating new development in the use of biographical information within musicology (and one by no means limited to the classical sphere). This trend seems to have been recognized as one of musicology's "new paradigms" for biographical study by at least one of the contributors, Michael Saffle, while Pekacz elsewhere provides extensive discussion of methodological issues in the current writing of musical biography.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, as the volume's editorial introduction acknowledges, the first stage in activating new directions for musical biography is a detailed re-evaluation of the assumptions that have traditionally underpinned the genre; and this would appear to be the primary function of its historical case studies.<sup>11</sup>

My intentions in this essay are to advance discussion by illustrating elements of the indebtedness of recent biographical and hermeneutical scholarship to various predispositions of traditional musical biography that have hitherto been identified primarily or exclusively as historical phenomena. In the following position statement of my current thinking on musical biography and its relationship to modern musicology, I outline the findings of a number of aspects of my continuing research, the evidence in support of which is too large to be presented in full in a study of this scope. By surveying some of the important biographical debates of recent years in light of musical biography's historical ideologies, I reveal a wider grounding in these preoccupations than has previously been explicitly acknowledged, thereby probing the extent of the present-day continuation of the cultural work they performed in the past. Ultimately, as hinted, my purpose is to identify the extent to which modern musicology has unwittingly "fallen into" a form of engagement with biography that has inadvertently accepted certain of its long-standing assumptions uncritically, notwithstanding refreshing evidence that others have been resisted. By way of conclusion, I tentatively suggest how musicologists working on issues of biography might endeavor to be more critically sensitive in the future, given the more pluralistic scholarly environment presently offered by the academy. Thorough investigation of the effects of the lingering tendencies of musical biography within the discipline, and proposition of potential solutions, is obviously rather more wide-ranging than the proportions of this study permit. As such, the following discussion should be considered only an initial and rather incomplete response to questions for which much more extensive examination is now overdue. If the names of certain scholars surface on more than one occasion in the course of this essay, it should be considered an indication as to how thought-provoking and influential their research is, rather than a judgment upon its relative value or a refutation of its contents.

That musical biography came to enforce the nineteenth-century aesthetics whose domineering influence has plagued scholarly thought up to the present time was inevitable considering the backdrop against which it emerged. The importance to the biographical project of pioneering

musicologists such as Friedrich Chrysander and Philipp Spitta places it close to the heart of the modern origins of the discipline.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the advent of mature musical biography following the deaths of Mozart and Haydn, and its subsequent proliferation, meant that the genre evolved in tandem with the nineteenth-century tenets of musical thought that it correspondingly enforced. The point is confirmed by my wider historical work on biographies of canonical composers: the myths they recount and the tropes they exemplify, the development of both across time, and the relationships constructed across life-writing on different subjects. As an example, several of musical biography's most famous stories that were originally on aspects of performance subsequently evolved into tales concerning composition, thereby insisting upon the aesthetic of the work-concept that has received recent discussion by Lydia Goehr, Jim Samson, and others.<sup>13</sup> Judging from the earliest documented sources, the young Mozart's accurate memorization of Allegri's *Miserere* from little more than a single hearing derived at least some of its value as an illustration of his perfectly capturing the nuances of the performing practice of the Sistine Chapel, rather than for the mere recollection of the notes themselves; while the story of J. S. Bach's extemporization of a six-part fugue for King Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1747 was reinterpreted in at least one major biography so as to present it as a version of the piece subsequently written down as part of his *Musikalisches Opfer*.<sup>14</sup> Possibly the most famous instance of a number of episodes in which composers have expressed conviction in the perfection of their scores as originally written is Mozart's claim to Emperor Joseph II that *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* contained exactly as many notes as were musically necessary, in response to the notorious "too many notes" criticism. Yet my analysis of the development of biographical accounts of this anecdote has not only determined that there may have been some foundation for the Emperor's reported observation, but has even uncovered the presence in early biographies of indications that Mozart might have agreed with him.<sup>15</sup>

The aesthetic that musical biography came to insist upon most emphatically, however, was that of absolute music. Indeed, Wagner's implication in the origination of and discourse surrounding the concept, as discussed in an influential study by Carl Dahlhaus, provides a direct link to nineteenth-century biography and autobiography.<sup>16</sup> That may go some way to explaining why extraordinary measures were taken within the genre in an attempt to divorce art, and its corresponding artists, from any external referents that might have been seen to render it impure. It is in this light, for example, that I read the tension that has surrounded Beethoven's Third Symphony, in terms both of the composer's intentions in apparently writing a piece on the subject of a great political figure, and of the resultant meaning of that music. Thus the famous episode of his cathartic removal of the original dedication to Napoleon Bonaparte functioned to sever the link between the work itself and its interpretation either as a description of the politician or as a reflection of Beethoven's own ideological persuasion. Though the tale may appear to be extremely convenient to biography for ostensibly

separating politics from art, the irony is that the historical record suggests otherwise: as Barry Cooper has recently noted, Beethoven still considered the symphony to be named in Napoleon's honor some months afterwards, and financial reasons underpinned its ultimate dedication to Prince Lobkowitz.<sup>17</sup>

Historically, explicit involvement in politics has created particular tension within musical biography, especially when ideology has demonstrably factored into the works themselves; examples include Wagner's political activities and strongly-held convictions, and Verdi's position with respect to patriotism and the Risorgimento movement, though both are somewhat out of place in a discussion of absolute music (a point addressed, of course, by Wagner's own writings).<sup>18</sup> This avenue of enquiry may, however, help to explain more recent controversies in Shostakovich studies: the question as to whether the composer's music was written as an obedient servant of, or in defiant but subtle opposition to, the prevailing Soviet regime has latterly featured much discussion of possible subtexts and hidden programs in his Fifth Symphony, as debated by scholars including Ian MacDonald and Richard Taruskin.<sup>19</sup> (I shall return to this fascinating discourse towards the end of this essay.) Another composer whose music has lately come under the microscope for its political content is William Byrd, who survived repeated allegations of recusancy towards the end of the Elizabethan Era; while scholarly discussion hinges on readings of his Latin motets and Catholic liturgical settings rather than on absolute music, I mention it here for its centrality to current trends towards contextualization in musicology, since both are indebted to the work of Joseph Kerman.<sup>20</sup> Under normal circumstances, biography would have been extremely receptive to subjects who righteously employed their gifts in the service of the Church or otherwise held devout religious beliefs (Bach and Haydn are both paradigmatic examples); however, Byrd's activity concerned politics as much as it did religion.

An additional irony presents itself in considering the uneasy relationship between musical biography and the aesthetic of absolute music. Music's specialist nature has necessarily limited the scope for discussion within biography of composers' works and achievements, particularly in relation to their life, in terms meaningful to its general readership. Yet any biographical endeavors that aimed to promote the historical significance of their subjects, in order to state their case for inclusion within a musical canon, would necessarily have striven to be accessible to as wide a target audience as possible and thus required that technical description be kept to a minimum. That led to musical biography's favoring those composers whose music relied upon literary elements such as programs and libretti, since works that incorporated explicitly extra-musical content could be easily discussed in terms that made them more accessible to the lay reader through such means as stage descriptions and plot summary. However, as Dahlhaus's study reminds us, the nineteenth century idealized absolute music – the very pieces that are ostensibly free from such external reference, and which therefore resist verbal exegesis. Thus the works considered the greatest of all by virtue of their autonomy were also

the most difficult to discuss (and thereby canonize) within literature written for a broad, non-specialist readership. Attempts to circumvent this issue have resulted in the emergence of a strong tradition within musical writings, still very much alive today, of supplying stories to fit a given work in order to explicate its meaning (whether related to the composer's life or not) by way of verbal analogy – but compromising its existence as absolute music in the process. As Hans Lenneberg has observed, “We anthropomorphize absolute music... In popular biographies, journalism, even in scholarly monographs, writers about music have often linked the mood of a work to an event in the composer's life or to secret programs.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, given that biography is a genre founded on the provision for the reader of fresh insight into the works of its subjects through exploration of their lives, it would seem actively to encourage the drawing of connections between the two, particularly when the former yield descriptions or synopses that admit direct comparison with the latter. The practice has been enhanced in recent composer life-writing by the advent of the so-called “critical biography”, which explicitly aims to relate life and works (and which would seem more appropriate to, say, literary biography than to its musical counterpart). Some parallels may be defensible – it is difficult, for instance, not to find echoes of Britten's own feelings for young boys in the plot of *Death in Venice* – while others are surely over-reaching, such as reading reflections of Tchaikovsky's sexuality in the literary stories associated with *Romeo and Juliet* or *Eugene Onegin*. More generally, such suggestions sit somewhat uneasily with the widespread scholarly recognition that there may be no such entity as (say) distinctly homosexual music, and that even if there were, composers would not necessarily write works that reflected their own biographical perspective and might even use their art as a means to explore experiences to which their lives did not otherwise yield access.<sup>22</sup> Of the many musical critics who have drawn attention to the fallacy of the assumption that the author's life should be reflected in the work, the point is perfectly encapsulated by Joshua Kosman, who (at the risk of taking his remarks out of context) commented that “‘Susanna’ no more suggests that Handel was celibate than ‘Messiah’ suggests he was the Redeemer, or the Royal Fireworks Music that he was a Roman candle”.<sup>23</sup>

Such transliterations of music into words permit explicit links between the two to be constructed, but potentially only at the expense of one of the aesthetics most fundamental to musical thought. Thus alternative strategies have developed within biography in order to explain the relative greatness of specific musical works in relation to the composer's life, as I have elsewhere discussed with reference to the earliest incarnation of the celebrated “Master Musicians” series (1899-1906).<sup>24</sup> Some of these signifiers were locally-sensitive; for instance, given the series' late Victorian readership, one marker of greatness was yielded by the establishing of connections between particular works and England itself, as with Handel's oratorios or Haydn's “London” Symphonies. Others, such as the added

significance with which music on religious themes was invested, possessed a more general application that extended beyond nineteenth-century Britain (indeed, Schumann himself wrote that “a musician’s highest aim is to apply his power to religious music”<sup>25</sup>). By far the most important device in this respect, however, was the one that I have come to term the “paradigm of continual development”: the assumption that composers’ genius developed progressively throughout their lives, such that later work meant greater work. This teleological model resonated with the traditional periodization that biography, however incorrectly, inherently imposes upon the composer’s output; within the Victorian context of the *Master Musicians* series, it was surely also influenced by the contemporary fascination with evolutionist theories, which had received application to music history at the hands of Hubert Parry.<sup>26</sup> More widely, it was of major consequence for the opportunities it afforded to relate biographical and stylistic histories, since, as Carl Dahlhaus has discussed, writings on music incorporate both historical and aesthetic elements that do not necessarily sit comfortably with one another.<sup>27</sup> It was also invaluable to music criticism as an interpolatory device by which to deal with large corpuses of works such as Haydn’s symphonies, the actual music of many of which remained long unknown – and in any case it would not have been feasible, within the context of biography, to have discussed each work at sufficient length to do justice to them all. The paradigm of continual development, however, enabled authors to sidestep such problems by making sweeping statements about quantities of music composed over significant spans of the subject’s life, without requiring knowledge of many of the works themselves on the part of writer or reader alike. Doubtless similar preoccupations led to such past assumptions as that Bach’s Leipzig cantatas were composed in a steady stream throughout his time in the city, rather than in an intense creative period in the first few years of his tenure as Cantor, as Alfred Dürr has since definitively demonstrated.<sup>28</sup> This supposition gives added weight to Joseph Kerman’s suggestion that Spitta’s miscalculations in establishing the chronology for Bach’s chorale cantatas represented wishful thinking in order that the biographer might present his subject’s career as having culminated with the genre most explicitly associated with Lutheranism.<sup>29</sup> While it owes much to the frequently-encountered trope of the relative value of religious music (especially towards the end of composers’ lives, as I shall discuss momentarily), the desirability of viewing Bach’s output as having ended on such a strong note is clearly indebted to notions advanced by the paradigm of continual development too.

In a similar vein, in the absence of knowledge as to the exact time at which specific works were produced, writers have often been led into the realm of conjecture based on evidence of stylistic evolution, with varying degrees of success. Such speculation intersects with a wider issue that has received much discussion in theoretical literature on biography and history: how to deal with lacunae caused by such epistemological problems as lost, non-existent, or otherwise inaccessible evidence. The matter is compounded since the numbers and dates that composers themselves supplied for their



works, on their manuscripts and elsewhere, have sometimes proved unreliable. Historically, we have seen the phenomenon emerge in the rather confused systems of numbering of works such as Dvořák's symphonies, not to mention the practice of assigning opus numbers only to those pieces that were deemed truly worthy of them, which has been widespread since its inception under Beethoven. But it remains very much a concern of current musicology too, having been recently brought to the fore by such scholarship as that of Maynard Solomon on Charles Ives, the chronology of whose output is further clouded by his ardent reworking of pieces.<sup>30</sup> On one hand, Solomon's research raised important questions concerning autobiographical revisionism, which have subsequently been taken up with reference to other composers, such as by Elizabeth Wood (and latterly myself) on the inveterate memoirist Ethel Smyth.<sup>31</sup> On the other, however, the implicit assumption that the more radical elements of Ives's *œuvre* were the result of subsequent reworking of more conservative music (thereby postdating parallel innovations in Continental Europe and compromising Ives's own historical significance) seems indebted to the paradigm of continual development – particularly as further research, by Carol Baron and Gayle Sherwood, has viewed more favorably the chronology claimed by the composer himself.<sup>32</sup>

The recent (and continuing) revisions to the dating of the works of Josquin des Prez is even more telling given the added problems of under-documentation and lack of knowledge that are inherent to the study of earlier periods of history. The 1990s witnessed the surfacing of new information, notably as a result of the archival research of Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley,<sup>33</sup> indicating that Josquin's year of birth was a decade or more later than had hitherto been believed<sup>34</sup> – a biographical revision that has actually helped to make greater sense of the known events of his life and some of the influences that shaped his development.<sup>35</sup> It was a revolutionary discovery for Josquin scholarship, affecting our entire understanding of the composer and necessitating a fundamental reconsideration of the chronology of his works.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, it forced the abandonment of attempts to establish such a chronology based on the influence of different musical traditions, for it revealed that Josquin had successfully synthesized them throughout this career. Joshua Rifkin's exhaustive re-evaluation of Josquin's motet *Ave Maria*, for example, has confirmed that the composer's earliest firmly datable extant music, though written later than previously thought, is nevertheless notably mature in terms of its musical style.<sup>37</sup> In this instance, then, the emergence of external historical evidence has now necessitated resistance to suppositions of obviously unilinear stylistic development in assessments of Josquin's music.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, the paradigm gave rise to the trope of the “great last work”, privileged as the epitome of a composer's musical output and the fullest realization of their artistic genius purely on the basis of their appearing as a final product prior to death. As I have discussed in more detail elsewhere,<sup>39</sup> the

famous story of the commission and genesis of Mozart's Requiem is entirely characteristic in this respect: the composer reportedly possessed an obsessive presentiment of his imminent demise; he therefore focused all his energies on the piece, in an apparent effort to give his final, greatest music to the world in the short time remaining to him; in toiling so feverishly, he even supposedly precipitated his premature death. Its many beguiling aspects have been abundantly exploited by biographers in order to meet the reader's expectations of a compelling end to the life story, augmented by the broad air of mystery surrounding the commission and the tragedy of the premature demise of a genius amid suggestions of foul play. The currency that the anecdote has retained in this respect is demonstrated by the cultural impact of its latest invigoration in the form of Peter Shaffer's play and Milos Forman's film *Amadeus*,<sup>40</sup> academic responses to which have focused on its veracity rather than engaging critically with the issues presently under discussion.<sup>41</sup> Yet the longevity of, and public fascination with, this story demonstrates the residual presence of assumptions deep-rooted in the paradigm of continual development: while the Requiem is indeed well-matched to the notion of the great last work in terms of its associated biographical narrative, it is totally unsuited on artistic grounds. Rather than demonstrating the peak of the composer's musical development befitting a great last work, the Requiem instead exhibits indebtedness to earlier pieces extending back to the Baroque Period;<sup>42</sup> nor is it representative of Mozart's mature output, in that he had completed very little church music for over a decade prior to its composition; nor, of course, was it entirely his own creation, in that (despite early claims to the contrary) it remained unfinished at his death.

Tension over this matter, while it persists today, is almost as old as accounts of the story itself. In one of his celebrated anecdotes on Mozart (1798), Friedrich Rochlitz described the Requiem as "among the most perfect that the most recent art has produced"; in another, however, he adduced the Requiem as evidence of Mozart's keen understanding of J. S. Bach, whom he tellingly described as an "ancient contrapuntist".<sup>43</sup> However, Mozart's Requiem has provided the standard for a number of subsequent instances of great last works in musical biography that, ironically, match the paradigm more aptly. One case in point is Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*, which was the subject of the much-mythologized "farewell concert" that took place the year before the composer's passing and has the flavor, if not the essence, of a death scene;<sup>44</sup> another, somewhat later, is Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the favorable reception of which was inextricably tied to its composer's untimely demise and spawned still-current theories of its being some kind of musically-encoded suicide note. The latter issue has recently resurfaced following the emergence with Alexandra Orlova of the notorious "court of honor" theory, which has generated much scholarly debate between David Brown and Alexander Poznansky in particular.<sup>45</sup>

Another important marker of greatness in musical biography that my wider research has uncovered is the portrayal of specific female characters as inspiring a composer to more significant feats of creativity and heights of genius through the love that connected them. This notion, which I have termed the “muse paradigm”, served to enforce the androcentricity of the musical canon in that it effectively denied women the possibility of artistic creation in music (as distinct from mere reproduction of these works in performance), while simultaneously linking them inextricably to such activities undertaken by their associated male composers. Writers on music thus subscribed to the traditional assumption that Christine Battersby, in her landmark study of women’s exclusion throughout history from concepts of genius, succinctly described with reference to the work of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung: that “a woman’s creativity reaches only as far as *inspiring* a man to productive activity”.<sup>46</sup> Examples of the paradigm abound in Western music history: the dynamic between Robert and Clara Schumann has traditionally been portrayed as an ideal union of composer and performer; Janáček’s association with Kamila Stösslová was, conveniently, coincident with the most productive twelve years of his life;<sup>47</sup> and Nadezhda von Meck’s patronage of Tchaikovsky may also be viewed in this light, given the similarities between the rhetorical function played by Meck within Tchaikovsky’s biography and that of Clara Schumann in accounts of the life of Brahms, or of Fanny Mendelssohn in biographies of her brother.<sup>48</sup> The muse paradigm likewise remains inscribed in some of the musical canon’s most significant works: Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* was famously tied by its program to the composer’s then unrequited love for Harriet Smithson; Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* was said to have reflected his love affair with Mathilde Wesendonck; overtones of Schoenberg’s burgeoning relationship with Mathilde Zemlinsky have been read into the programmatic *Verklärte Nacht*; and the celebrated “Adagietto” from Mahler’s Fifth Symphony was held to have been a love letter to Alma Schindler, whom the composer married soon thereafter.<sup>49</sup>

Recent years have seen an increasing awareness that while some of the emergent feminist trends within musicology have served to demonstrate the various ways in which women have historically been excluded from mainstream music history,<sup>50</sup> others have taken the alternative approach of working from within. In particular, Susan McClary has famously challenged the very roots of the discipline from the feminist perspective with reference to its greatest (male) figures such as Beethoven, Brahms, and Schubert,<sup>51</sup> with the ironic consequence that the traditional canon has been re-inscribed as fiercely male-oriented.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, McClary’s deconstructive engagement with women has been primarily in terms of figures such as Madonna, thereby marking a departure from canonic traditions and timeframes (if not also from acts of composition) and precluding direct comparison with her work on male composers.<sup>53</sup> Though its primary focus is hermeneutic, McClary’s enquiry is also deep-rooted in biographical issues in at least two of the aforementioned instances;

hence biography remains complicit in enforcing both musicology's inherent androcentricity and the assumptions that have led to its fundamental reliance upon a select number of great heroes.

The canons of music – etymologically, the art of the muses – may therefore more usefully be opened up in terms of gender through explicit acknowledgement and critique of the muse paradigm, by way of loosening the alarming stranglehold that it appears to have retained within the modern discipline. This is indeed the approach taken by some modern studies, such as Ruth Solie's reading of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und -leben* song cycle with reference to the composer's association with Clara and its influence upon his creative output.<sup>54</sup> However, others merely continue to investigate women as muses to their attendant composers. The paradigm may, for example, go some way towards accounting for the long-standing fascination with Beethoven's "unsterbliche Geliebte". The identity of an unnamed recipient of a single, cryptic letter that may not even have been sent<sup>55</sup> would not normally occasion such considerable interest, especially given the extent to which unanswerable questions relating to minutiae pervade any biography. Yet it has elicited a plethora of scholarship over the decades, arguing the case for various candidates while by no means having laid the matter to rest;<sup>56</sup> and the topic has lately been fuelled anew with the appearance of Bernard Rose's fictionalized film, Gail Altman's book-length study, and the continuing work of Maynard Solomon.<sup>57</sup>

Since the muse paradigm is fundamentally founded on the dynamic between male composer and an associated female, this preoccupation may also help to explain the continuing tension surrounding sexual difference in canonical composers, an issue much explored in the more liberated climate offered by the New Musicology. One case in point is Tchaikovsky, whose music has recently been subject to scholarly scrutiny for its sexual resonances by Timothy L. Jackson and Susan McClary.<sup>58</sup> That both studies revolve around the Fourth Symphony reflects residual indebtedness to the muse paradigm, not because of its composition against the backdrop of Tchaikovsky's failed marriage so much as because of its inextricable connection with the commencement of Meck's patronage.<sup>59</sup> Another quite contrasting instance, and one that has proved much more revealing for its having taken musicology by storm in recent years, concerns Maynard Solomon's suggestion of Schubert's sexual difference.<sup>60</sup> Some of the debate's situation in historical preoccupations has indeed been recognized: subsequent research by David Gramit and others has traced the trope as having its origins in Schubert's positioning as feminine in relation to the masculine norm epitomized by Beethoven, in the writings of Schumann and George Grove in particular.<sup>61</sup> However, as I have argued at greater length elsewhere,<sup>62</sup> it has not considered the larger context of the development over the decades of an extensive nexus of biographical myths that collectively sought to associate Schubert with Beethoven, and in which these very same authors are complicit. That tradition is itself situated within wider tendencies in writing the history of Western art-music around composers grouped together in pairs. It

is a history that runs broadly from Léonin and Pérotin in the early medieval period to Boulez and Stockhausen in the present, with many additional examples of composer couplings identifiable within interim epochs: Dunstable and Dufay, Palestrina and Lassus, Tallis and Byrd, Bach and Handel, Mozart and Haydn, Chopin and Liszt, Brahms and Wagner, Ravel and Debussy, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and so forth. Moreover, the practice of historical writing framed around pairs of important figures is itself as old as Western canonical biography, extending as far back as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and it has retained much currency in modern times.<sup>63</sup>

Of all of the composer pairings, however, the greatest tension surrounded Beethoven and Schubert, as evidenced by the strikingly large and complex collection of stories that advance tenuous connections between them that are unsupported by definitive documentary evidence. These historical preoccupations suggest that there may be a much broader foundation than hitherto recognized to such hermeneutical essays as Susan McClary's study of Schubert's music as representing a different construction of masculine subjectivity from that of the ostensible norm epitomized by Beethoven.<sup>64</sup> Mention should also be made of Philip Brett's reading of Schubert's four-hand piano works as exemplifying his homosexuality through his music, since the piano duet is the one genre encountered time and again in the course of the mythology by which the two composers are linked. Perhaps for this reason, Brett wrote that at the juncture at which he interpreted Schubert's music as irrevocably homosexual, the climax of the second movement of the "Grand Duo" Piano Sonata, it was no longer possible to draw connections with Beethoven.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, Beethoven has been conspicuous by his presence from the beginnings of the modern discourse on Schubert and sexual difference. Solomon claimed that his hypothesis puts us in "a better position to understand why Schubert... failed to visit Beethoven"; his suggestion that to view the composer in this manner uncovers "a heroic region in Schubert's personality" seems to appeal to the rhetoric of heroism more usually associated with Beethoven, as recently explored by Scott Burnham.<sup>66</sup> And it is surely more than mere historical coincidence that Solomon's theory was originally proposed in an article that appeared just two years after he had published an essay offering an extensive investigation of the relationship and possible points of contact between Beethoven and Schubert.<sup>67</sup>

The apparent omission on the part of the scholars who have contributed to the Schubert debate to address the wider web of stories by which the composer was connected with Beethoven has, therefore, actually resulted in its implication within this mythology. Consequently, the hotly-debated suggestion of sexual difference in the younger of the pair may inadvertently have become the latest biographical gambit by which these two composers are associated. Yet it is not the only one to have emerged in recent years; another takes as its point of departure Otto Erich Deutsch's unsupported claim that Schubert was "certainly" present at the 1824 première of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.<sup>68</sup>

Acknowledging that Deutsch provided no basis for this assertion and that it is problematized by the lack of knowledge as to Schubert's activities at the time, Beth Shamgar subsequently added further weight in favor of this possibility.<sup>69</sup> In consequence, Robert Winter's biographical article on Schubert for the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* seemed simply to assume that he had indeed attended the concert in question, stating that "Schubert may have been further stimulated... by his attendance at the première on 7 May 1824 of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. ...[He] cannot have failed to be moved by the sight of the ageing composer having to be turned around for a bow."<sup>70</sup> These lines of enquiry would seem to reflect a continuing search for precisely the same kinds of vague connections between the two composers that have preoccupied authors for over a century and a half, not least because such tales have long been a convenient means of filling lacunae in Schubert's biography. Moreover, Winter's inclusion of Schubert within an episode that proved important in lives of Beethoven itself has a wider grounding in historical tendencies. The practice of progressively writing a junior canonical composer into a story from which that character was originally absent is also encountered within Beethoven biography, in retellings of Haydn's last public appearance at the previously-mentioned performance of *The Creation* in 1808: the earliest life-writing on Haydn referred only to the presence of other musicians such as Salieri, whereas the figure of Beethoven came to be foregrounded in later accounts.<sup>71</sup> Only time will tell whether the newly-emerged Schubert myth continues to develop along similar lines to those of its Haydnesque precedent.

As the history of musical biography has shown, attempts to correct the mistakes of past authors can sometimes merely alter the trajectory of an episode's subsequent elaboration in ways that may ultimately turn out to be equally misguided.<sup>72</sup> While biography has evolved considerably since the fanciful hagiography of the nineteenth century, the recent appearance of Schubert in stories of the première of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony suggests that the danger of inscription of one misconception in place of another remains very much a modern-day concern. Another such instance is identified by Matthew Head, who has noted that Maynard Solomon's revisionist Mozart biography, while endeavoring to expose one set of myths in life-writing on the composer, merely "ushers in another" in their place.<sup>73</sup> It is in a similar light that I read such hermeneutical studies as McClary's and Brett's on Schubert, which, while providing much-needed resistance to the aesthetics of absolute music and autonomy, remain indebted to nineteenth-century ideologies in other ways. McClary's post-Adornian reading of Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto, meanwhile, yields a particularly distinctive example, not least owing to the opposition she encountered from within mainstream musicology in interpreting social elements in a repertory traditionally held to be free from historical and cultural associations.<sup>74</sup> While breaking new ground in terms of exposing the fallacy of one of the discipline's fundamental assumptions, McClary's study seems simultaneously to perpetuate another of

the long-standing tendencies that have accumulated within musical biography: the trope of the Great Composers as collectively able to exceed the boundaries of the classes into which they were born, thereby progressively changing altogether the social status accorded to the artist and eventually leading to their perceived total independence from aristocratic patronage in the nineteenth century. In a similar vein, McClary contended that the unexpected emergence of the harpsichord (the composer's own instrument) as principal soloist in Bach's concerto reflects the rising of the artist from the ranks of the servant analogous to the continuo player's more usual supporting role. The work chosen as a case study itself might give cause for concern on historical grounds, having appeared at a time (1721) when Bach had yet to break free from the social constraints of his employment; in this respect another harpsichord work, such as the "Italian" Concerto (1735), might perhaps have been a more apposite choice (particularly as it provides an effective illustration, within the context of the genre of concerto, of the possibilities for this instrument to dispense with the orchestra altogether). Moreover, McClary's reading would seem to be influenced by nineteenth-century assumptions concerning the overall direction taken by composers of the generations that followed, anachronistically mirroring the triumph of their subversive struggle within society. Had music history taken an alternative course, then the piece would doubtless have been interpreted quite differently.

If scholarship is to continue to advance in its critical engagement with musical biography, it is clearly desirable for musicology to avoid such pitfalls, and in the remainder of this essay I shall briefly consider two avenues via which the discipline might better support future biographical enquiry. The first is through increased awareness of the development of analogous tropes within different composer biographies and of the implicit cross-pollination between them, since issues emerging from life-writing on one subject may often shed much important light on those embedded in another. The recent proliferation of scholarly activity in the area notwithstanding, the discipline presently suffers from a dearth of critical-historical research in which biography itself (as opposed to writings on a specific individual) is subject to rigorous comparative investigation, such that the focus is not on figures whose lives are chronicled so much as on the texts themselves.<sup>75</sup> Yet the tension generated historically over specific corners in composer biography, for instance Beethoven's relatively late development, may helpfully be understood as having arisen in direct response to prominent counterexamples elsewhere (including, in this case, Mozart and Schubert).<sup>76</sup> It is a phenomenon at which I have already hinted, both in arguing that Mozart's Requiem yielded the prototype for the trope of the great last work that subsequently migrated into the biographies of other composers, and in outlining how the cross-hatching of Beethoven and Schubert biography contributes greater insights into the mythology that connected them.

In researching the latter, I was struck by the superficial similarity of two episodes told of subjects steadfastly refusing to alter their own scores at the request of performers: firstly, that of Beethoven's ignoring the complaints of the soloists Henriette Sontag and Caroline Unger that parts of his Ninth Symphony were unsingable; and secondly, that of Schubert's declining to alter some operatic music he had composed which its intended singer, Nanette Schechner, apparently found too difficult. These stories exhibit other similarities aside from their content, as they were said to have taken place only two years apart, the former in 1824 and the latter in 1826; in addition, both were associated with prominent Vienna venues, namely the Kärntnertortheater and the adjacent Imperial Opera House. Further investigation uncovered that both originated with Anton Schindler – whose early writings, on Beethoven especially, set the agenda for much Romantic myth-making – and that the biographer had actually drawn explicit comparisons between them, thus making apparent a link that has since been displaced.<sup>77</sup> More recently, Maurice Brown has compellingly demonstrated the tale associated with Schubert to have been fabricated,<sup>78</sup> which suggests that the instance represented an attempt on Schindler's part to spread a trope from life-writing on Beethoven into that of his greatest contemporary. Such conscious adoption of comparative approaches towards musical biography may lead to the expansion of existing knowledge of the historical preoccupations that accrued within the genre, hence yielding the recognition necessary for musicology to resist the continuation of these same tendencies in future scholarship. The scholarly value of casting one's proverbial net widely may, at the very least, be sufficient to raise a note of caution with respect to any inclinations within modern musicology towards working too narrowly within a strictly-defined field, such as a single composer or a ten-year time period, without taking fully into account the broader issues at stake.

The second process from which musicological study on aspects of biography would benefit is a thorough consideration of the extent of the implication of the authors within their work. While the matter of identity politics is a wider concern of all musicological and historical research (if not of narrative in general), it is particularly pronounced in those cases that embrace biographical issues given the extent of the possibilities for authorial identification with the subject. Personal interest is very often a key motivating factor for the pursuit of a particular biographical endeavor, with writers frequently finding themselves identifying more and more with their protagonist(s) as their work progresses. The matter again extends as far back as Plutarch, who wrote "It was for the sake of others that I first commenced writing biographies... But I find myself proceeding and attaching myself to it for my own; the virtues of these great men serving me as a sort of looking-glass, in which I may see how to adjust and adorn my own life".<sup>79</sup> It also emerges strongly from modern biographical theory, both in contemplative essay collections including *The Craft of Literary Biography* and *The Art of Literary Biography* and in full-length critical studies such as Paula Backscheider's *Reflections on Biography*.<sup>80</sup>



While on one level, this is simply another instance of the life's being reflected in the work, it has recently assumed a potentially ideological angle given the trends towards epistemic inclusivity that have admitted discussions of aspects of biography on an unparalleled scale within musicology, some of them doubtless over-compensating in their attempt to redress past imbalances. Personal identification with the subject would certainly help to explain, for instance, Philip Brett's interest in Britten or Elizabeth Wood's in Ethel Smyth, both of which centralize issues of gender and sexuality.<sup>81</sup> Indeed Brett, in the watershed text *Queering the Pitch*, openly admitted that his approach to scholarship had been to study what he described as "the music of my own tribes", namely, "the English and homosexuals".<sup>82</sup> As another example, authorial preoccupations are very much apparent among the principal contributors to the Schubert sexuality debate: Lawrence Kramer described Andreas Mayer's early dismissal as having an "obvious and chilling" political agenda, while James Webster suggested social and political agendas on both sides, represented by Susan McClary as endorser and Rita Steblin as rebuttalist.<sup>83</sup> It is certainly difficult to reconcile such claims as Philip Brett's that Schubert is a "newly arrived if anciently recognized homosexual", and that this is "a publicly acknowledged and newly validated view of the composer and his music", with Steblin's opposing view that "there is no evidence that Schubert or the members of his circle were homosexuals".<sup>84</sup>

There are doubtless many enlightening perspectives that (say) a gay scholar can offer in providing a gay interpretation of a given composer or work, and my own feeling is that it is both problematic and potentially offensive to subscribe to the essentialist argument that a specific writer has adopted the position they have simply because of their sexuality, nationality, or political persuasion. (The recent disagreement as to whether Fanny Mendelssohn was indeed denied her musical career by her familial patriarchs is particularly fascinating in that it has emerged between two female scholars, Marion Wilson Kimber and Marcia Citron.<sup>85</sup>) Nonetheless, there certainly exists the possibility that such scholarship develops personal or ideological underpinnings. One case in point is the newly-emerged view of Shostakovich as political dissident, which originated in the memoirs written by the composer towards the end of his life that contradicted claims he had made in earlier periods.<sup>86</sup> It is not difficult to understand why his autobiography was quickly denounced by the Soviet authorities as having been fabricated by its amanuensis Solomon Volkov, as they would doubtless have been greatly undermined by the proposition as well as anxious to rehabilitate Shostakovich. Yet the constituency of the various factions embroiled in the debate is sometimes more complex than straightforward geographical delineation would suggest. For instance, Western scholars such as Christopher Norris and Malcolm Barry seem unconvinced by the revisionist view of Shostakovich and instead prefer alternative explanations, while Laurel Fay has also called the authenticity of the composer's autobiography into

question.<sup>87</sup> Conversely (and at least partly due to changing political climates), many of the contributors who sought systematically to defend Shostakovich's memoirs in Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov's edited volume *Shostakovich Reconsidered* are Soviet-era Russians, who have found both allies and opponents among Western commentators.<sup>88</sup> These various caveats notwithstanding, the major changes that have taken place within musicology in recent decades mean that the time is surely ripe for a detailed reconsideration of the politics of identity in current scholarship, one that would better enable researchers to theorize their own positions and readers to interpret their work in that light.

Definitive determination of the meanings of the music in relation to (and beyond) the composer's life will most probably forever vex the discipline; but it is clear that in today's academic environment, in which interpretation and contextualization are favored over positivism and formalism, issues of biography cannot simply be ignored. It is, therefore, now more important than ever that musicology develop the more explicitly self-aware stance necessary to cut loose from certain historical assumptions and tendencies that have been allowed to accrue essentially unquestioned over the decades. Otherwise, modern scholarship will remain indebted to the outdated ideologies of musical biography and will merely perpetuate the very nineteenth-century modes of musical thought that it frequently aims to challenge.

## Endnotes

This essay condenses much of the material presented in the conclusion (and, in its opening paragraphs, the introduction) of my doctoral dissertation, *Re-writing Composers' Lives: Critical Historiography and Musical Biography*, to which the reader is referred for more comprehensive discussion of many of the issues raised. My sincere thanks to my supervisor, Katharine Ellis, and to all the academic staff at the University of London for their invaluable input and advice; to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for providing financial support to enable me to pursue this research; and to Tatjana Marković and the other organizers of the "(Auto)Biography as a Musicological Discourse" conference for granting me the opportunity to present my work within such a lively and productive forum.

<sup>1</sup> On the former, see, for example, Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations", *Critical Inquiry*, X (1983), 107-25; Katharine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); William Weber, "The History of Musical Canon", in: *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 336-55. On the latter, see especially Jim Samson, "The great composer", in: *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. by Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 259-84.

<sup>2</sup> Notably, Carl Dahlhaus, *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne: Gerig, 1977), transl. by J. B. Robinson as *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, 1834-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), also publ. as *Musicology* (London: Fontana, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Scope does not permit me to enter into detail regarding the vast corpus of theoretical literature on biography and the writing of historical narrative; for a brief survey of the most salient scholarship, see Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 5-7.

- <sup>5</sup> Hermann Abert, "Über Aufgabe und Ziel der musikalischen Biographie", *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, II (1920), 417-33; J. H. Elliot, "Biography in Musicology", *Music and Letters*, XV/i (1934), 50-4; Jacques Barzun, "Truth in Biography: Berlioz", *The University Review: A Journal of the University of Kansas City* (1939), 275-80, repr. with revisions in: *Biography as an Art: Selected Criticism 1560-1960*, ed. by James L. Clifford (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 155-61; Walther Vetter, "Gedenken zur musikalischen Biographik", *Die Musikforschung*, XII (1959), 132-42. A later volume of collected essays by Barzun, *Critical Questions: On Music and Letters, Culture and Biography 1940-1980*, ed. by Bea Friedland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), also brought together biographical issues and musical ones, though the extent of their discussion in tandem is somewhat limited.
- <sup>6</sup> Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, 26-7, 45-6.
- <sup>7</sup> The categorization outlined above is explored in greater depth, and with reference to representative examples of scholarly studies that have recently appeared, in Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 7-10.
- <sup>8</sup> Hans Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars: Studies in Musical Biography* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1988). Another important source, albeit one whose discussion revolves almost exclusively around Beethoven, is Maynard Solomon's "Thoughts on Biography", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, V/iii (1982), 268-76, repr. in: *Beethoven Essays* by Maynard Solomon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 101-15. Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz's experimental study *Die Legende vom Künstler: Ein historischer Versuch* (Vienna: Krystall Verlag, 1934), though outdated, retains limited value in modern scholarship, partly due to its more recent English-language republication as *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*, transl. Alastair Laing and Lottie M. Newman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
- <sup>9</sup> The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Royal Musical Association, "The Theory and Practice of Musical Biography", King's College London, UK, 19-21 October 2001; Jolanta T. Pekacz (ed.), *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
- <sup>10</sup> Michael Saffle, "Lingering Legends: Liszt after Walker", in: *Musical Biography*, ed. by Pekacz, 89-110, at 91; Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Memory, History and Meaning: Musical Biography and its Discontents", *Journal of Musicological Research*, XXIII/i (2004), 39-80.
- <sup>11</sup> Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Introduction", in: *Musical Biography*, ed. by Pekacz, 1-16, at 8. I discuss this point further in my review of the volume in *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, XXX/ii (2007), 215-9.
- <sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Pekacz, "Memory, History and Meaning", 47-9.
- <sup>13</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See further, Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).
- <sup>14</sup> C. Hubert H. Parry, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Story of the Development of a Great Personality* (New York: Putnam, 1909), 514-5.
- <sup>15</sup> For further discussion of the various points raised in the above paragraph, see Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, esp. 63-6, 85-6, 132-3, 317-9.
- <sup>16</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, transl. by Roger Lustig (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989).
- <sup>17</sup> Barry Cooper, *Beethoven*, "The Master Musicians" series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141.
- <sup>18</sup> See, for example, Anthony Arblaster, "Verdi: the Liberal Patriot" and "Wagner: from Revolution to Racism", *Viva la Libertà! Politics in Opera* (London: Verso, 1992), 91-145 and 147-91; John Bokina, "The Utopian Vision of Romantic Anticapitalism: Wagner's *Parsifal*", *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 86-110; and John Rosselli, "Music and Nationalism in Italy", in: *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800-1945*, ed. by Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 181-96.
- <sup>19</sup> Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990), 120-34; Richard Taruskin, "Public lies and unspeakable truth: Interpreting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony", in: *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. by David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17-56; Ian MacDonald, "Naïve Anti-Revisionism: The Academic Misrepresentation of Shostakovich", in: *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, ed. by Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov (London: Toccata, 1998), 643-723.
- <sup>20</sup> Joseph Kerman, "William Byrd and Elizabethan Catholicism", in: *Write All These Down: Essays on Music*, by Joseph Kerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 77-89. See further, Craig A. Monson, "Byrd, the Catholics, and the Motet: The Hearing Reopened", in: *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Dolores Pesce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 348-74.

- <sup>21</sup> Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars*, 10.
- <sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Kofi Agawu, "Schubert's Sexuality: A Prescription for Analysis?", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), 79-82 and Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music", in: *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 205-33.
- <sup>23</sup> Joshua Kosman, Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 24 March 1991 (written in response to Nicholas Kenyon, "Virtue All Around in Handel's 'Susanna'", *New York Times*, 10 February 1991), quoted in Gary C. Thomas, "'Was George Frideric Handel Gay?' On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics", in: *Queering the Pitch*, ed. by Brett, Wood, and Thomas, 155-203, at 183.
- <sup>24</sup> Christopher Wiley, "'A Relic of an Age Still Capable of a Romantic Outlook': Musical Biography and The Master Musicians Series, 1899-1906", *Comparative Criticism*, XXV (2003), 161-202.
- <sup>25</sup> "Der geistlicher Musik die Kraft zuzuwenden bleibt ja wohl das höchste Ziel des Künstlers". Schumann to Lieutenant Strackerjan, 13 January 1851, *Robert Schumann's Briefe*, ed. by F. Gustav Jansen (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1886), 281.
- <sup>26</sup> See especially, C. Hubert H. Parry, *The Art of Music* (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), later revised as *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (London: Kegan Paul, 1896). Parry also made significant contributions to the first edition of George Grove (ed.), *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians (A.D. 1450-1889) by Eminent Writers*, 4 Vols. (London: Macmillan, 1878-90).
- <sup>27</sup> Dahlhaus, "The significance of art: historical or aesthetic?", *Foundations of Music History*, 19-33.
- <sup>28</sup> Alfred Dürr, "Zur Chronologie der Leipziger Vokalmusik J. S. Bach", *Bach Jahrbuch*, XLIV (1957), 5-162.
- <sup>29</sup> Kerman, *Contemplating Music*, 52 (cf. Pekacz, "Memory, History and Meaning", 52).
- <sup>30</sup> Maynard Solomon, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XL/iii (1987), 443-70. See further, Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York: Norton, 1996).
- <sup>31</sup> See especially, Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts", in: *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 164-83 and Christopher Wiley, "'When a woman speaks the truth about her body': Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf, and the Challenges of Lesbian Auto/biography", *Music and Letters*, LXXXV/iii (2004), 388-414.
- <sup>32</sup> Carol Baron, "Dating Charles Ives's Music: Facts and Fictions", *Perspectives of New Music*, XXVIII (1990), 20-56; Gayle Sherwood, "Questions and Veracities: Reassessing the Chronology of Ives's Choral Works", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXVIII/iii (1994), 429-47; ead., *The Choral Works of Charles Ives: Chronology, Style, Reception* (PhD diss., Yale University, 1995).
- <sup>33</sup> Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley, "Josquin Desprez and his Milanese Patrons", *The Journal of Musicology*, XII/iv (1994), 434-63. See further, ead., "Iudochus de Picardia and Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez: The names of the singer(s)", *The Journal of Musicology*, XVI/ii (1998), 200-26.
- <sup>34</sup> Evidence presented in Claudio Sartori, "Josquin des Prés, cantore del duomo di Milano (1459-1472)", *Annales musicologiques*, IV (1956), 55-83, had previously necessitated the setting of the composer's year of birth at c.1440.
- <sup>35</sup> See, for example, David Fallows, "Josquin and Milan", *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, V/i (1996), 69-80.
- <sup>36</sup> See especially, David Fallows, "Approaching a new chronology for Josquin: An interim report", *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, XIX (1999), 131-50.
- <sup>37</sup> Joshua Rifkin, "Munich, Milan, and a Marian motet: Dating Josquin's *Ave Maria...virgo serena*", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, LVI/ii (2003), 239-350.
- <sup>38</sup> I am indebted to Carlo Bosi, one of my colleagues at City University London, for the observation that there remains a certain fascination in Early Music studies with the uncovering of biographical minutiae concerning the foremost figures of the day, while either neglecting the large corpus of contemporary anonymous music or investigating it merely in an attempt to ascribe it to one of these major composers (personal communication, 21 April 2008). That would seem to reflect continuing indebtedness to the aesthetic of the Great Composer, as well as its anachronistic extension into earlier epochs of music history.
- <sup>39</sup> Christopher Wiley, "Mozart's Requiem, Musical Biography, and the Great Last Work", delivered at "Words and Notes in the Nineteenth Century", Institute of Musical Research/Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2-3 July 2007.
- <sup>40</sup> Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus* (London: Deutsch, 1980); Milos Forman (dir.), *Amadeus* (USA: Saul Zaentz, 1984).
- <sup>41</sup> Critical responses to *Amadeus* include Robert L. Marshall, "Film as Musicology: *Amadeus*", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXXI/ii (1997), 173-9 and Paul Henry Lang, "The Film *Amadeus*", in: *Musicology and*

- Performance*, ed. by Alfred Mann Lang and George Buelow (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 155-62.
- <sup>42</sup> See, for example, Richard Maunder, "Mozart's Models for the Requiem", *Mozart's Requiem: On Preparing a New Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 74-94.
- <sup>43</sup> Friedrich Rochlitz, "Verbürgte Anekdoten aus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozarts Leben: ein Beytrag zur richtigeren Kenntnis dieses Mannes, als Mensch und Künstler" and "Anekdoten. Noch einige Kleinigkeiten aus Mozarts Leben", publ. serially in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 10 October 1798-27 May 1801, transl. in: Maynard Solomon, "The Rochlitz anecdotes: Issues of authenticity in early Mozart biography", in: *Mozart Studies*, ed. by Cliff Eisen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 1-59, at 34, 28.
- <sup>44</sup> See Matthew Head, "Music With 'No Past?' Archaeologies of Joseph Haydn and *The Creation*", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XXIII/iii (2000), 191-217; Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 133-8.
- <sup>45</sup> Alexandra Orlova, "Tchaikovsky: The Last Chapter", transl. by David Brown, *Music and Letters*, LXII/ii (1981), 125-45; Alexander Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: the Quest for the Inner Man* (New York: Schirmer, 1991); idem, *Tchaikovsky's Last Days: A Documentary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); David Brown, "How Did Tchaikovsky Come to Die – and Does it Really Matter?" (Review-Article), *Music and Letters*, LXXVIII/iv (1997), 581-8; Correspondence between Alexander Poznansky, David Brown, and Richard Taruskin, *Music and Letters*, LXXIX/iii (1998), 463-9. See further, Alexander Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky's Suicide: Myth and Reality", transl. by Ralph C. Burr, Jr., *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XI/iii (1988), 199-220.
- <sup>46</sup> Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), 11, italics in original.
- <sup>47</sup> See, for example, Geoffrey Chew, "Reinterpreting Janáček and Kamila: Dangerous Liaisons in Czech *Fin-de-Siècle* Music and Literature", in: *Janáček and His World*, ed. by Michael Beckerman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 99-144. In their voluminous correspondence, Janáček himself frequently represented Stösslová as his source of inspiration; see John Tyrrell (transl. and ed.), *Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994).
- <sup>48</sup> Wiley, "A Relic of an Age Still Capable of a Romantic Outlook", 172-5, 177-9.
- <sup>49</sup> On wider issues of autobiography in Mahler's Fifth Symphony, see also Barbara Barry, "The Hidden Program in Mahler's Fifth Symphony", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXVII/i (1993), 47-66 and Constantin Floros, "The Fifth Symphony", *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, transl. by Vernon Wicker (Aldershot: Scolar, 1993), 139-59.
- <sup>50</sup> Notably, Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- <sup>51</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), *passim*, esp. 127-30; ead., "Narrative Agendas in 'Absolute' Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony", in: *Musicology and Difference*, ed. by Solie, 326-44; ead., "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music".
- <sup>52</sup> Paula Higgins, in an important critique of McClary's *Feminine Endings*, asked "Where are the women in this 'feminist' criticism of music?". Higgins, "Women in Music, Feminist Criticism, and Guerrilla Musicology: Reflections on Recent Polemics", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/ii (1993), 174-92, at 187, italics in original.
- <sup>53</sup> McClary's chapter on Madonna is possibly the best-known of several case studies of females in *Feminine Endings*, which also include Laurie Anderson and Janika Vandervelde. McClary, "Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly", *Feminine Endings*, 148-66.
- <sup>54</sup> Ruth A. Solie, "Whose Life? The gendered self in Schumann's *Frauenliebe* songs", in: *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. by Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 219-40.
- <sup>55</sup> Beethoven to an Unknown Woman, July 6 and 7, [1812], in: Emily Anderson (transl. and ed.), *The Letters of Beethoven*, 3 Vols. (London: Macmillan, 1961), Vol. 1, 373-6.
- <sup>56</sup> Maynard Solomon, "New light on Beethoven's letter to an unknown woman", *The Musical Quarterly*, LVIII/iv (1972), 572-87; Harry Goldschmidt, *Um die "Unsterbliche Geliebte": Eine Bestandsaufnahme* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1977); Marie-Elisabeth Tellenbach, *Beethoven und seine "Unsterbliche Geliebte" Josephine Brunswick: Ihr Schicksal und der Einfluss auf Beethovens Werk* (Zurich: Atlantis, 1983); Solomon, "Recherche de Josephine Deym" and "Antonie Brentano and Beethoven", *Beethoven Essays*, 157-65 and 166-89.
- <sup>57</sup> Bernard Rose (dir.), *Immortal Beloved* (USA: Universal/MCA, 1994); Gail S. Altman, *Beethoven, Man of his Word: Undisclosed Evidence for his Immortal Beloved* (Tallahassee, FL: Anubian Press, 1996); Maynard Solomon, "The Immortal Beloved", *Beethoven*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 207-46. See further, Lewis Lockwood, "Film Biography as Travesty: *Immortal Beloved* and Beethoven", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXXI/ii (1997), 190-8.

- <sup>58</sup> Timothy L. Jackson, "Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Tchaikovsky", *Music Analysis*, XIV/i (1995), 3-25; Susan McClary, "Sexual Politics in Classical Music", *Feminine Endings*, 53-79, at 69-79.
- <sup>59</sup> Tchaikovsky believed that he was writing his Fourth Symphony for Meck, and frequently referred to the work in such terms in their letters; see *"To my best friend": Correspondence between Tchaikovsky and Nadezhda von Meck, 1876-1878*, transl. by Galina von Meck, ed. by Edward Garden and Nigel Gotteri (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). The score famously carries the dedication "To my best Friend".
- <sup>60</sup> Maynard Solomon, "Franz Schubert's 'My Dream'", *American Imago*, XXXVIII (1981), 137-54 and idem, "Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XII/iii (1989), 193-206. For rebuttals, see Andreas Mayer, "Der Psychoanalytische Schubert: Eine kleine Geschichte der Deutungskonkurrenzen in der Schubert-Biographik, dargestellt am Beispiel des Textes 'Mein Traum'", *Schubert durch die Brille*, IX (1992), 7-31 and Rita Steblin, "Franz Schubert und das Ehe-Consens Gesetz von 1815", *Schubert durch die Brille*, IX (1992), 32-42. See also the special issue of *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), ed. by Lawrence Kramer and including contributions from Rita Steblin, Maynard Solomon, Kristina Muxfeldt, David Gramit, Kofi Agawu, Susan McClary, James Webster, and Robert S. Winter.
- <sup>61</sup> David Gramit, "Constructing a Victorian Schubert: Music, Biography, and Cultural Values", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), 65-78; Robert Schumann, "Schubert's Grand Duo and Three Last Sonatas (1838)", in: *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*, transl. and ed. by Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover, 1988), 141-4; [George] G[rove], "Schubert, Franz Peter", in: *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Grove, Vol. 3, 319-82.
- <sup>62</sup> Christopher Wiley, "Biography, Historiography, and the Beethoven/Schubert Mythology", delivered at the 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, University of Durham, UK, 6-9 July 2004, and at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory, Seattle, WA, 11-14 November 2004. See further, idem, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 102-24, 335-44.
- <sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (c.45-c.120, also known as the *Parallel Lives*), transl. by John Dryden (modern republication by Encyclopædia Britannica of Chicago, 1990).
- <sup>64</sup> McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music" (for citation, see n. 22).
- <sup>65</sup> Philip Brett, "Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XXI/ii (1997), 149-76, at 164.
- <sup>66</sup> Solomon, "Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini", 205, 206; Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- <sup>67</sup> Maynard Solomon, "Schubert and Beethoven", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, III/ii (1979), 114-25.
- <sup>68</sup> Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, transl. by Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1946), 345.
- <sup>69</sup> Beth Shamgar, "Three Missing Months in Schubert's Biography: A Further Consideration of Beethoven's Influence on Schubert", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXIII/iii (1989), 417-34.
- <sup>70</sup> Robert S. Winter, "Schubert, Franz (Peter)", in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 29 Vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), Vol. 22, 655-729, at 668.
- <sup>71</sup> See Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 138-42.
- <sup>72</sup> For a fascinating instance in Bach biography, centering on Philipp Spitta's contribution, see Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*, 53-6.
- <sup>73</sup> Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1995); Matthew Head, "Myths of a Sinful Father: Maynard Solomon's 'Mozart'" (Review-Article), *Music and Letters*, LXXX/i (1999), 74-85, at 76.
- <sup>74</sup> Susan McClary, "The blasphemy of talking politics during Bach Year", in: *Music and society: the politics of composition, performance and reception*, ed. by Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13-62.
- <sup>75</sup> One exception is my own "'A Relic of an Age Still Capable of a Romantic Outlook'" (for citation, see n. 24); see further, Wiley, *Re-writing Composers' Lives*.
- <sup>76</sup> A recent philosophical study by Peter Kivy has explored Mozart and Beethoven as oppositional focal points for the developing understanding of artistic genius as articulated in musical writings of the last two centuries. Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- <sup>77</sup> Anton Schindler, "Erinnerungen an Franz Schubert", *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung*, V (1857), 73-8, 81-5, excerpted as "Memoirs of Schubert" in: Otto Erich Deutsch (ed.), *Schubert: Memoirs by his Friends*, transl. by Rosamond Ley and John Nowell (London: Black, 1958), 308-24, at 309-12.
- <sup>78</sup> Maurice J. E. Brown, *Schubert: A Critical Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 238-9.

- <sup>79</sup> Quoted in William H. Davenport and Ben Siegel (eds.), *Biography Past and Present: Selections and Critical Essays* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 11-2.
- <sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *The Craft of Literary Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1985); John Batchelor (ed.), *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 149-50.
- <sup>81</sup> Various writings pertaining to the former have been published collectively as Philip Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. by George E. Haggerty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). On the latter see, for example, Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian Fugue"; ead., "Sapponics", in: *Queering the Pitch*, ed. by Brett, Wood, and Thomas, 27-66; ead., "Performing Rights: A Sonography of Women's Suffrage", *The Musical Quarterly*, LXXIX/iv (1995), 606-43. (Such "personal identification" cannot of course be used to explain my own interest in Smyth, which has engendered criticism for this very reason.)
- <sup>82</sup> Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism and the Closet", in: *Queering the Pitch*, ed. by Brett, Wood, and Thomas, 9-26, at 15.
- <sup>83</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "Schubert: Music, Sexuality, Culture" (Editorial Preface), *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), 3-4, at 4; James Webster, "Music, Pathology, Sexuality, Beethoven, Schubert", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), 89-93, at 93.
- <sup>84</sup> Brett, "Piano Four-Hands", 176; Rita Steblin, "The Peacock's Tale: Schubert's Sexuality Reconsidered", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XVII/i (1993), 5-33, at 27.
- <sup>85</sup> Marian Wilson Kimber, "The 'Suppression' of Fanny Mendelssohn: Rethinking Feminist Biography", *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, XXVI/ii (2002), 113-29; Marcia Citron, "Feminist waves and classical music: Pedagogy, performance, research", *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, VIII (2004), 47-60; ead., "Straw Men and Suppressed Women: A Response to Marian Wilson Kimber", *19th-Century Music* (forthcoming).
- <sup>86</sup> D. Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*, transl. by Antonina W. Bouis (London: Hamilton, 1979).
- <sup>87</sup> See, for example, Christopher Norris, "Shostakovich: politics and musical language", in: *Shostakovich: the Man and his Music*, ed. by Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), 163-87; Malcolm Barry, "Ideology and Form: Shostakovich East and West", in: *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. by Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 172-86; Laurel E. Fay, "Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?", *The Russian Review*, XXXIX/iv (1980), 484-93.
- <sup>88</sup> Ho and Feofanov (eds.), *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (for citation, see n. 19).