

for the Gay & Lesbian Study Group
of the American Musicological Society
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Our objectives include promoting communication among lesbian and gay music scholars, increasing awareness of issues in sexuality and music in the academic community, and establishing a forum for the presentation of lesbian and gay music studies. We also intend to provide an environment in which to examine the process of coming out in academia, and to contribute to a positive political climate for gay and lesbian affirmative action and curricula.

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*Welcome to the Spring 2004 issue of the Newsletter of the Gay & Lesbian Study Group of the American Musicological Society (AMS). This issue marks the 10th anniversary of *Queering the Pitch* with papers from a plenary session organized by Sheila Whitley for the 12th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. Five of the original contributors to *QTP* delivered these essays at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 4 July 2003.*

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Past, Present and Future***

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Introduction

Sheila Whitely

As a feminist musicologist with strong research interests in issues of identity and subjectivity in popular music, organizing a theme for the 2003 Biennial Conference for the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) offered a rare opportunity to wrench queering from the doldrums of generalized gender debates and to foreground current issues—not least those concerning ethnicity and class. At the same time, the conference provided a special space to revisit *Queering the Pitch: the new lesbian and gay musicology* (Routledge, 1994), to evaluate the significance of the original text and to update the debates with specific reference to popular music discourse.

Queering the Pitch is today recognized as a seminal text in queer musicology, and the IASPM Conference was privileged to have five of the original contributors on its Plenary Panel: Karen Pegley, Jennifer Rycenga, Suzanne G. Cusick, Martha Mockus and Paul Attinello. As Philip Brett (ed. *Queering the Pitch*) wrote shortly before he died, “they are an extraordinary group and will have something very pertinent and authoritative to say. I think between them, they will make a stunning panel.” His accolade was certainly borne out by both the passions and intellectual insights offered by the panelists, and it was obvious from the start that the audience was both captivated and inspired by the telling anecdotes and the sense of nostalgia of the occasion. The presentations recalled the very real problems confronting gay and lesbian musicians in the early 1990s, not least in their own personal lives, and why the publication of *QtP* in 1994 was both a radical and timely intervention—confrontational to the establishment; and welcoming to the gay and lesbian community who could recognize and affirm their own special relationships to music in its personalized chapters. It was also obvious,

from the moving tributes from panelists, that the visionary thinking and inspiration behind *QTP* was Philip Brett who, as Paul Attinello recalls, was at the historical center of gay and lesbian music studies from their beginnings in the 1970s.

It is not often that a panel attracts uniform praise from delegates—and with founding members of IASPM as well as young researchers and scholars among the audience this would not have been a foregone conclusion. It is also encouraging that the thirty or so papers presented in the conference’s “Queering the Practice” stream demonstrated the very real and continuing commitment to issues in sexuality and popular music. Freya Jarmen-Ivens’ paper “Human Nature? Madonna’s queer(ing) identities,” for example, was singled out as one of the highlights of the five-day conference by John Shepherd in his closing address. Other of many exciting moments included Jason Lee Oakes’ paper “Night of a Thousand Stevies” and Shana Goldin-Perschbacher’s “‘Unbearable Intimacy’ and Jeff Buckley’s Transgendered Vocality.”

With IASPM publishing the proceedings of the conference later this year, I am hopeful that the contributions made by the panel, together with selected papers from the conference, will also become the basis of a new publication, *Queering and Popular Music* (see the call for proposals, p.16). Issues addressed in this volume will relate to sex and sexuality, teasing out connections between sexuality and gender, whilst maintaining the centrality of queerness within the discourses surrounding popular music. This will involve investigations into cultural production and the nuances of sexual meanings, especially those concerned with race, ethnicity, class and transgendered identities. As such, the planned book, like the conference stream itself, will provide specific insights into the intellectual roots of the field, the conditions that made it both possible and critical, and the significance of queering to contemporary popular music. *Queering and Popular Music*, like the IASPM conference stream and panel contributions, will be dedicated to the living memory of Philip Brett.

Queer Like Canada

Karen Pegley

I would like to begin by thanking those who invited me to speak in honor of Philip and in celebration of *Queering the Pitch*. Virginia Caputo, my collaborator in this volume and I would also like to express our appreciation for the tremendous generosity of the editors of *QtP*. We thank them for their courage and encouragement.

When preparing what I might say today I found it much easier to speak of the contributions made by my colleagues here (Suzanne, Martha, Jennifer, Paul): their work has shaped my research, teaching, and thinking on queer topics and beyond. Virginia's and my contribution was a modest one: straight and queer reflections on music and consumption practices. We endeavored to situate music in our lived experience as listeners, performers, and consumers, recognizing ourselves as active agents of cultural practice. We examined how this activity in turn informed our personal sense of gender and the ways we performed gender in shifting and varying contexts. We were motivated initially by the realization that the differences of which we spoke were not evidenced in the musicological literature; instead, we found musical consumption amongst females to be described as homogeneous and restrictive. While our work contributed to interrogating the presumed homogeneity of a unified female ear by pointing out the straight and queer perspectives, we did not interrogate these categories further. We again ended up with "lesbian identity" and "straight identity" as unified categories. While we did move the debate from sameness to difference, we did not move far enough to thinking about diversity and we hope that new third wave writings with their emphases on agency and activism will help us understand issues of gender for both girls and boys that are intertwined with, and not extracted from, other social lines of difference. Despite these limitations we believe we helped raise questions

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around music and difference. We also made a number of other contributions that I'd like briefly to summarize.

First, "Growing up Female(s)" was, within musicological scholarship, methodologically unusual: it was an auto-ethnography for which we interviewed one another about our musical preferences with the assistance and observations by a third party, ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond. This strategy was important not only for what it uncovered about our differences; returning to those early years, making lists of pieces, and carefully contextualizing them with both joyful and painful memories was a profoundly moving process for us as budding ethnographers. Our article was offered, in part, as a pedagogical tool, and over the years folks have kindly related that they use this article in their undergraduate courses as a window for students to engage self-reflexively with their music-sexualities and to learn about the ethnographic process. In this regard, we believe the article has been successful.

Second, it was important for us because it dealt with girls' subcultures—how we as girls were socialized, when we assimilated and where we resisted—and this area of study has flourished through the 1990s. Moreover, it was one of only a few articles that addressed popular and childhood music, the latter of which is usually discarded or overlooked in favour of music of the world of adults. Our discussion of children's songs dispelled for us the "naturalism" or "innocence" surrounding this music and the connection with what we had envisioned between children's songs and a homogeneous "girls culture." Finally, our

article helped push the boundaries within queer musicology, for, while the most important queer debates (and certainly the most prominent ones) to that date addressed rehearing and rereading music by and writings about particular composers (Schubert and Handel, for instance), 'queeries' of pop music and children's music, doubly and triply marginalized within professional circles like the AMS, were welcomed here.

Third—and this is a point that could have been taken further in the article—it is significant that I came out in our article as a fan of the Bay City Rollers (which was almost as hard, I would add as coming out as a queer). This was important because as the only Canadian contributors to the collection, I wanted to point out that part of the reason I was drawn to the Rollers was precisely because they were *not* American. As such, I was able to enjoy the cultural capital they had as Scots; I felt that since we were all part of the Commonwealth, I had a more significant, shared connection with the band than did my American peers. I believed that the Rollers and I stood outside their US fan base and that we had a common, if distant, history. This was despite my unsuccessful efforts to find a "Pegley" tartan, which I simply dismissed as unimportant.

What I didn't know at the time was that it *was* important: this connection I fabricated with the band was fictitious, unstable, and, at some level, I knew that. But holding that place of instability was part of my Canadian identity even at an early age: in the era of official multiculturalism and bilingualism, I remember standing in my public-school classes awaiting my national anthem every morning, uncertain of which language to sing. English? French? Which would it be today? There we stood, 30 of us, frozen and mute through the instrumental introduction until we heard the first words. (Some years the languages actually shifted midway through.) This is a country where national identity is always uncertain—this has in fact become part of its identity—and where our identity is often produced discursively in relation to that of the

United States. We are unstable: our maps changed in 1999 to reflect the incorporation of Nunavut, the newest of Canada's northern territories, a result of an Inuit land claims settlement, and the question of Quebec sovereignty always looms. But this "instability," of course, is also our power, because it disrupts. For instance: during the last Quebec referendum economic uncertainties raised problems for American investors. I vividly recall one American politician in the news telling Canada to "get it together boys" and regain our security (along with American confidence in our economy). This was a moment for me mixed with anger and pride: the debates over the sovereignty of Quebec were important and I didn't want the US to determine the outcome. I remember smiling at the television and mumbling: "We're here, we're Canadian, get used to it." In our comedy, in our political stances, and yes, even ironically in Ontario's new legislation on same-sex marriages, Canada has tremendous potential to differ from, reflect upon, irritate and queer the United States, and in the process to help reveal how the attitudes of many folks south of the border have become naturalized through the ubiquitous American media.

James Allan writes that these days: "it seems very Canadian to be queer, and very queer to be Canadian." I would like that to become more evident. What questions might then arise? How might music be used differently in a more queer country? Or by queers within that queer country? Surely there are better examples than me and the Bay City Rollers.

And that is where I would have liked to have done more, and I hope that reflections on Canada and queers will become more visible in future music studies as it has become within Canadian film and literary scholarship. In *Queering the Pitch*, we only scratched the surface. Our contribution, nonetheless, made space for discussions on music's formative power, ethnography, girls and queerness. These are discussions of which we are very pleased to have been a part.

Passionate Gratitude

Jennifer Rycenga

*I theorize queer existence
emerging in the dialogic
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and silence.*

When I wrote the paper that eventually became my article in *Queering the Pitch*, I feared this specific sort of future colloquy—the moment when I would have to come clean, in public, about the fate of my operatic composition. By the time the book came out, I already knew the planned opera could not be finished anytime soon, or perhaps anytime, because my own compositional/ethical conditions were impossible to meet under the burdens of full-time teaching, the tenure clock, moving, politics, relationships, etc. All of these things had undermined my musical communities, or at least their continuity. So I must confess (bad habit left over from being raised Catholic) that the opera remains a collection of fragments (albeit fragments I love).

Yet this does not bother me as I feared it would—I feel no humiliation about it, because the *ideas* I developed in the article are, for me at least, still fecund. Among the reasons why this is so, I would highlight the extraordinary mentoring of Philip Brett, whose life and work are honored in this colloquium. Philip's accomplishments as a scholar of many styles of art music are well-known and celebrated. His pioneering work in establishing gay and lesbian and queer musicology garnered notice in the headline of his obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*—certainly a sign of the visibility and credibility of this field. What makes Philip's legacy important to celebrate at an international festival on *popular music* (IASPM), is how he exemplified the radical equality of all musics. He never held art music as superior, nor the opposite attitude of denigrating art music in favor of popular or folk. He would listen to any music—and anyone discussing that music. Philip made possible truly interdisciplinary queer studies in music—

interdisciplinary not only in topic but in methodology. This is obvious in the pages of *Queering the Pitch*, and in the *Groves* article he co-wrote with Liz Wood.

Philip expressed to me a dislike of the term “the *new* musicology.” Aside from the fact that it was expressly confrontational to the establishment, Philip's dislike was philosophical—that the term reproduced rather than exploded the paradigm. This reflects some of the tensions of the time, in the early 1990s. *Queering the Pitch* and the inaugural Feminist Theory and Music Conference are forever connected. Those days in the hot Minneapolis summer of June 1991 were early in the saga of queer theory: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* had not yet gained its ironic iconic status, for instance (does anyone else think it funny that Butler is now in the Norton Anthology – she *is* the canon!). Bill Clinton hadn't happened, and the reality of President George H. Bush was horrific enough that no one extrapolated to the apocalyptic sequel we are now experiencing.

Suzanne Cusick's presentation—“On a Lesbian Relation with Music: A Serious Effort not to Think Straight”—made a major impact on many attendees, myself included. I can recall a physical sense of release that came with her naming the physical, musical, lesbian realities I had experienced. The fact that her paper was an affirmation rather than an idiosyncratic perspective, can be seen in nearly every article in *Queering the Pitch*. What we were “on” to—each in our own way—was how lesbian and gay life was its own language, and how music was likewise its own language, and how these languages could hear, and speak to, each other. Assuming Gramsci's notion that the philosopher

must know the contradictions and know herself as part of these contradictions, we sought to be visible to ourselves, not to triumph over others, but to co-exist, to suggest other streams and dreams of possibility. Coming to voice as we did in *Queering the Pitch* was not simply about representation, nor about rights. It was about expanding, experimenting, existing.

I theorize queer existence emerging in the dialogic tension between passion and silence. At our best, our most alive, our passion is exuberant (as brilliantly developed by Bruce Bagemihl in his survey of non-reproductive sexual behavior in animals, *Biological Exuberance*). Conversely, there are always factors telling us to be less exuberant, to stop talking about ourselves, to go hide, to not ask and certainly not tell. Thus, politically, the recent United States Supreme Court decision (Lawrence v. Texas) invalidating sodomy laws, is a triumph for gay rights, but tangential to queer existence. The decision stresses the right to privacy, not the cultivation of passion.

Queer existence, though, also has proven to have its limitations. The ultimate promise of the word “queer” was its non-assimilability. If you were queer, you were definitionally not normal, and could not become the mainstream. Yet there are contradictions in the word queer which have bit us in our heels – obviating the radical nature of the term. First, it has been too easy to substitute “queer” for the more explicit and specific terms of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, Two Spirit, and more. In other words, the term easily devolved into a dilution of our diversity. Second, our current economic system thrives on novelty, so the oppositional quality of “queer” was too easily transferred to all that was trendy and marketable, and thus co-optable and assimilable. While I would make no claim for an uncorrupted essence behind normalization, the dynamic activity of resistance needs to be retained if social transformation is to happen, and queer has proven to be better as a marketing tool than as a political strategy (compare the

trajectories of Queer Nation and Queer Eye for the Straight Guy). Finally, I would concur with both Martha and Suzanne that *Queering the Pitch* (and many other queer tomes) had an insufficient analysis of race and class, which may point again to the homogenizing effects of a word intended to embody outsider status.

For all that I can be critical of the book now, the place of *Queering the Pitch* in the life of gbltq musicology cannot be doubted. It played the role that groundbreaking books often do: it launched more questions than answers, it provoked and prodded others to write, and it still has something to offer us today, ten years after. For me, a refugee from music departments because of the narrowness of their perspectives in the 1980s, *Queering the Pitch* liberated the physical and the passionate as topics for musical research and philosophical/musical speculation. And for that I am eternally grateful.

[This is a slight adaptation and editing of a presentation on a plenary panel at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, July 2003]

The risk, the treat that “queering” represents may be to uncover for music’s lovers what it is we generally repress in thinking about our experience of music: our emotional attachments to music, our needs met by music, our accommodations to society through music, our voices, our bodies.

—QtP, ix

Queering the Pitch... 10 years later

Suzanne G. Cusick

1. Why was *Queering the Pitch* so important?

This is how it seemed to me: In the fantasy theme park of the mind that was AMS-style music scholarship in the late 80s and early 90s, *Queering* was an important enterprise because it acknowledged the broad spectrum of musical experiences that Audre Lorde might have called *erotic*, and thereby both restored the legitimacy of our musical passions and authorized us (queer or not) to talk and write about them. Furthermore, publication of *Queering* threatened profoundly an institutional power structure in that same AMS-centered fantasy world that bound all our tongues with a harsh rope wound of misogyny and homophobia, both internalized and expressed. [I might add that breaking free of that obnoxious, doubled bondage into deliberately extravagant queer speech was terrifically important to feminist music scholars in AMS-land, both because the institutional alliance between feminists and queers created a larger community for both kinds of work and because the misogyny and homophobia had long been mutually reinforcing structures that supported a fantasy of musicological manliness determined to deny effeminacy in all its possible embodiments.] As a result of acknowledging the erotic and scaring the erotophobes, I think, *Queering* seems to have radically opened the borders of what had been a claustrophobic, insular, parochial music scholarship, and by that opening of borders it seems to have granted exhilarating access to new voices, perspectives, repertoires, methods, ways of writing, talking and thinking in relation to our musical experiences.

My essay, entitled "On a Lesbian Relation with Music: a serious effort not to think straight" was conceived as a script for oral delivery at the now-

legendary Minneapolis conference Feminist Theory and Music, in June 1991. I meant to advance a conversation about "lesbian aesthetics" that had seemed to me stuck in a rut. I meant my words for the lesbians in that conversation, for closeted lesbians I could see in my mind's eye (some known to me, some only imagined) whom I hoped to encourage into speech, and for women feminist colleagues who I thought might want to know how the music-scholarly world might look if any of us lesbians decided to examine it with lavender-colored glasses. I meant it as a *lesbian* essay through and through, not especially as a queer one, and I therefore wrote from the part of my sensibility where most men seem emotionally unreal creatures with whom I deal every day, but on whose approval I depend hardly at all. But I did mean to do queering work: I meant totally *to queer* and, by queering, to dismantle the normative paradigm in (white) academic thinking about music that privileges the *listening relationship* above all others.

I tried to craft two formal trajectories. One moved from queer social relations to queer musical ones. The other tried to move away from the musical relationship called "listening", that I conceived of as an entrapment of musicality in a libidinal economy of listening where we are either "tops" who analyze or "bottoms" who receive; and it tried to move toward the musical relationships of ecstatically uncontrolled, emotionally and erotically dense complexity in which we engage when we make music, alone or with others, poorly or well, as a way of *performing ourselves audibly* swirling through the force field of human energy we sometimes (with poverty of imagination) call power. I meant to move beyond the listening relationship because I think that the listening model is a regulative concept for musicality that operates as a homology to heteronormativity's regulation of sexuality (and gender). Therefore I think queering the one (revealing explicitly its violences, and its ways of channeling our polymorphously perverse exultation in the erotic potential of sounds we communally create and exchange) is necessary to the political work of queering the other.

Because I expected no half-life or afterlife for my words, I have been in a condition of shocked (though naturally pleased!) disbelief about the piece's reception ever since; I have felt a responsibility toward those whom my essay seems to have deeply touched, and I have felt blessed to have been able to touch so many lives in a freeing way.

2. The race for race in the race for theory: or, what I did wrong in *Queering the Pitch*

Today I want to confess a sin of omission, because my sin might stand for a sin of omission in the whole of *Queering*. Moreover, it's a sin on which I was first publicly asked to comment in Montreal, at McGill: "Why," my interrogator wanted to know, "didn't you talk about race?"

My quick answer was that I had thought about it, and then decided I had too much that was too weird going on already... And that was true. It had seemed to me, then, that what needed to be foregrounded and made unavoidable by music scholars was the nexus of differences that came into view when "sexuality" and "sex" (as processes rather than ontological conditions) were added to "gender." Partly because it never occurred to me that my talk would go into print, partly because it wasn't clear that the fantasy some of us had of creating a community of feminist, gay and queer music scholars would be realized, I thought that Minneapolis moment might be the only moment we'd ever have to make *lesbian* perspectives and realities present to some part of the music scholarship world. I didn't want to risk confusing anyone, or leaving anyone the reception option of wandering off into what might have been, by comparison with lesbian sexuality, the comfortable byways of class and race. Heaven knows, white people in the United States (especially those with middle-class pretensions) have a long history of nattering on about class and/or race without ever changing our mental images of who and what we mean by those categorizing words. And I expected my audience, drawn from the AMS, SEM and SMT crowd, to be overwhelmingly white. Whoever

they would be, I wanted to confront them with lesbian words, lesbian ideas, lesbian experiences, lesbian questions, lesbian musicalities and a lesbian body... confront them so that they could never again ignore the possibly frightening presence of lesbian realities all around their own.

The second part of my answer to the question at McGill was to say that race had been there, and so had class. Falling in love at age 2 with Patti Page's *Tennessee Waltz* was so much the erotic fantasy displacement and identity-forming cathexis of a little *white* girl with decidedly non-elite Southern roots, for heaven's sake. To have confessed that publicly was so much more *embarrassing* than to declare myself a lesbian (even if declaring oneself a lesbian was more frightening), because it was to confess that my earliest and most profound musical experience was that of a person with no taste, no class, no business being in the business (musicology) I might have seemed to be in. (In fact, I was then working as a church organist and neither expected nor hoped to get back into musicologyland). What, I ask you, could be less hip than the *Tennessee Waltz*? Given my age and childhood listening habits, I could easily have claimed some recording of Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn or Mahalia Jackson as the *urtext* of my lesbian love for music, and thereby pretend by my cross-race identification to the *hipness* that for many people of my generation (though not for so many girls) substituted for "taste and refinement" as a sign we could rise through a meritocracy from consumers of tacky pop culture—however girlie and therefore suspect—to become kiddie and adult performers, or even to become scholars with a right to theorize about the music we loved. But the awful truth was that I was and remain as much a class/race mistake in musicologyland as ever I was a sexuality mistake by being a lesbian (in a gay man's world masquerading as a straight white man's world). Since I meant to speak only for myself, it seemed important to tell the truth, and also, like a girl, not to dwell on it. (I will skip a long meditation on the complex ways hipness and taste served dubiously-classed white kids of my generation as blackface served past

generations, providing us culturally liminal masquerades that we used as class escalators on the way to specific gendered and sexualized positions of cultural authority.)

There is another awful truth, however, and that is that at the time I wrote the paper, in the edges of a blissful year in Italy supported by an NEH for independent scholars, I was so deeply immersed in the luxuries of white privilege that I *forgot*, sort of, to emphasize my class/race self-identifications enough that I might elicit similar self-identifications from my listeners and readers. I forgot what even a year earlier I might have remembered—namely, how deeply entwined with the raced identity of whiteness were the fantasies of cultural and physical mobility, of slipping into and out of cultures and cultural participation, and of borrowing solutions to one's own problems from other people's cultural practices. For me, seeming to be a little white trash baby dyke singing to the radio, or seeming to be a lesbian musicologist nonsensically reading nicely-accented Italian aloud were equally masks I could assume or discard. All the meanings attached to the paleness of my skin protected me from having *necessarily* to own and/or contest what other people might make of my performed identities. But delighting in slip-slidey identities is not a game everyone is allowed to play, something I forgot when the people I saw every day, in Italy, were people I had been taught to perceive as white like me, and people who, like me, benefited from a global power structure philosopher Charles Mills has called "the racial contract." So I *forgot* at the deepest level that the very slipperiness of identity that I wanted (in 1991) to claim as proper to a lesbian relationship—a slipperiness akin to that which soon became fashionable under the rubric "queer"—that very slipperiness was and remains entangled with experiences and assumptions of white privilege.

That entanglement of "queer" with the assumptions of white privilege pervades *Queering the Pitch*, I fear, making a book that seemingly opened all the borders of music scholarship actually close borders. A book that

ought to have elicited and empowered the voices of black lesbian jazz scholars and gay Asian-American hip-hop DeeJays instead entangles *them* in yet another wearying, backwards-and-forwards dance of identification, disidentification and disappointment. When I and people like me decided to focus on sexuality while muting the complexities of race present in our own texts, we clumsily created a queered pitch that had all but erased race, and therefore looked—uninvitingly—just like us. I fear we screwed up, and though meaning no harm nonetheless did great harm to our friends, colleagues students, and selves. I am convinced that the most important agenda before us now is to work toward a second decade of queering that queers *us* and *our parochially white queernesses*.

What if music IS sex?

If sex is free of the association with reproduction enforced by the so-called phallic economy (and it is, remember, exactly so for people called homosexuals as it has become in the last thirty years for people called heterosexuals who practice contraception), if it is then only (only!) a means of negotiating power and intimacy through the circulation of pleasure, what's to prevent music from being sex, and thus an ancient, half-sanctioned form of escape from the constraints of the phallic economy?..

What if ears are sex organs? What if music-making is a form of sexuality in which (as in some other forms of sexuality) the sites of giving and receiving pleasure are separated?

If music IS sex, what on earth is going on in a concert hall during, say, a piano recital? When the pianist is on a raised stage, in a spotlight while we are in the dark...are we observers of a sexual act? Are we its object? Why, exactly, are we in the dark?

—Cusick: *QtP*, 79

A Historical and Political Comment

Martha Mockus

When I got involved with *Queering the Pitch* (*QtP*) I was a very young graduate student in a cultural studies program working on queer and feminist issues about music from perspectives that were unwelcome in musicology. I wanted to address both the gender bias and the heterosexual bias in popular music studies. I was also interested in questions of how and why country music had a sizable queer audience: what was at stake in the intersection between the culture of country & western and the lives of its queer participants? What kinds of cultural needs were being met, for whom, and what were their political implications? k.d. lang was a visible and accessible case study for examining those questions at that particular time. The intellectual freedom I sensed then in the early 1990s was thoroughly contradicted by the larger political landscape of the United States. I was incredibly outraged at how much real damage the Reagan-Bush regime had inflicted on so many marginalized groups, including queer people, in and out of the university. Bill Clinton had not yet been elected president; hope and optimism were squarely out of reach. To ignore the devastating effects of the American political machine seemed untenable and unethical. Emboldened by the emergent work of queer studies, I was compelled to write about appropriation and resistance without apology. I was honored to contribute to a collective project of queer resistance and celebration, a project willing to take a stand on the necessity of politically progressive and committed scholarship. I am still honored, and humbled, to be part of this conversation today.

What strikes me now, nearly ten years after its publication, is the range of issues and debates raised by *QtP* and how active they continue to be in various branches of music and queer scholarship. The first is how “queer” was

The overly limited notion of “queer” as a white, middle class, gay or lesbian subject, derives from the near-exclusive reliance on postmodern and post-structural queer theory offered by Foucault, Lacan, Barthes, Sedgwick, Butler, and others. This is not in itself a bad thing... However, scholars in other fields like women’s studies and feminist theory have long insisted on the analysis of simultaneous forms of oppression in order to understand queer sexualities as they intertwine with race and class.

conceptualized and the ways it sought to challenge various disciplinary paradigms. In musicology in the early 1990s, *QtP* produced revolutionary intellectual, methodological, and epistemological interventions. At the same time, the newer field of queer studies concerned itself mainly with the social construction of queer subjectivities in modernity, postmodernity, patriarchy, local cultural contexts, etc. (but rarely capitalism or class struggle).

This body of work was, and remains, dominated by scholars in history, literature, and film, and therefore did not consider the role of music as a social force that constructs heteronormativity *and*, more importantly, resistant queer sexualities. *QtP* expanded queer studies by identifying music as a central “technology of desire.” Thus, the disciplinary interventions of *QtP* were twofold: a queer intervention in music studies, and a musical intervention in queer studies. In both contexts, the “queer” of *QtP* functions as a verb, to transform old ways of thinking in favor of asking and exploring different questions about music-making and music scholarship. Secondly, “queer” also functions as a noun to address the question of *who* we are: queer, as an umbrella

term of coalition, connects “gay and lesbian” to one another, linking the two terms politically in a co-gender collaboration—the first of its kind in music scholarship.

However, the “queer” of *QtP* remains problematic, and my brief critique is offered in full solidarity with the overall aims of the anthology and each of its contributors. For the problems I outline here, I hold myself accountable as well.

First, as an umbrella term, “queer” means much more than “lesbian and gay.” *QtP* does not include work addressing bisexual, transsexual or transgender issues, all of which are taken as relevant and important in the larger field of queer studies.¹ Even today, bisexual and transgender work remain very rare indeed in queer music studies. Who and what counts as “queer” needs to expand beyond “gay and lesbian.” For example, I think that future work on queer vocality and the sexual politics of the singing voice—especially the castrato, the soprano, the sapphic mezzo, voices that cross conventional boundaries of gender—would benefit tremendously from transgender and transsexual scholarship that works (on conceptual and material levels) to further denaturalize sex, gender, and sexuality as well as relationships to one another. In particular, work by Kate Bornstein, Leslie Feinberg, Jay Prosser, and Susan Stryker would surely facilitate transgender re-theorizations of music and voice.

Second, *QtP* failed to include work by or about queer people of color, and this failure, perhaps unwittingly, played into the perception of Queer Studies in general as a white-dominated project. Groundbreaking work from the late 1980s by Angela Davis on music and social consciousness; Hazel Carby on theorizing the sexual politics of the blues and the queer-friendly women who sang them; Eric Garber’s work that historicizes queer features of Jazz Age Harlem and Anthony Thomas’s work on house music certainly would have strengthened and complicated many of the arguments in *QtP* in productive ways. Thank-

fully, more recent queer analyses of disco and house music manage to take race and ethnicity more seriously (Currid, Hajdu, Hubbs, Krasnow, Mitchell).

In *QtP*, the lack of attention to race is compounded by a parallel lack of attention to class, particularly working class struggle and its overlap with queer struggle, not only on local levels but also larger-scale attempts to theorize the political economy of sexuality. This brings me to the third point in my critique: the overly limited notion of “queer” as a white, middle class, gay or lesbian subject, derives from the near-exclusive reliance on postmodern and post-structural queer theory offered by Foucault, Lacan, Barthes, Sedgwick, Butler, and others. This is not in itself a bad thing. Certainly in the discipline of musicology, poststructural and postmodern ways of thinking allowed for new liberatory paradigms of criticism and analysis that, as Philip, Liz and Gary state in their preface, “incorporate our selves as subjects in our work, including those parts of ourselves that have been kept invisible and thought unacceptable and unspeakable, both by ourselves and others” (viii). I agree with this. However, scholars in other fields like women’s studies and feminist theory have long insisted on the analysis of simultaneous forms of oppression in order to understand queer sexualities as they intertwine with race and class. Pioneers in queer-feminist intersectionality are Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, Dorothy Allison, Adrienne Rich, Richard Fung, Isaac Julien (to name just a few). Their work encompasses a wide range of queer issues, but for my purposes here today, I am mostly concerned with their consistent attention to how race and class intertwine with sexuality. Unfortunately, their ideas do not form a substantial voice in how “queerness” itself is conceptualized in queer music studies. Foucault, Lacan, Barthes, Sedgwick, *et al.*, are the dominant voices, not only in *QtP* but in much subsequent work. I am disturbed by the lack of critique of white bourgeois queer theory upon which so much work in music has relied (both art and popular music).

In their Preface, Philip, Liz and Gary write that the contributors to *QtP*

cull from a postmodernist vocabulary of violation, disruption, decentering, and dislocation new terms and different interpretive strategies, speculations, impressions and improvisations, which we can bring not only to our study of musical works and their production, but also to musical education, biography and history (ix).

The specifically *postmodern* energy is *QtP*'s greatest innovation and its greatest weakness. (I have to ask: which queer theories are utilized and whose interests are served?) This was not at all unique to *QtP*: in queer studies generally; in the rush to theorize queer identities and subjectivities, the political economy of sexuality was neglected. This is largely because the *discursive* features of music and sexuality were privileged over the economic. The dominant themes of queer identity, performativity, pleasure, consumption, and diversity are regularly explored in popular music studies—sometimes with great nuance and sophistication—and yet those same themes have addressed a very specific and privileged group of queers and have not acknowledged the systematic operations of capitalism (Hennessy 273). In the mid-1990s, marxist and marxist feminist scholars launched vigorous critiques of the dangers of what they termed “ludic queer theory”—queer theory that ignored and even opposed class struggle as part of its agenda. Theorists such as Donald Morton, Rosemary Hennessy, Teresa Ebert and Nicola Field, to name a few, are all deeply concerned about the loss of class analysis in queer studies and I share their concern. As Barbara Ehrenreich pointed out in her 1976 essay on socialist feminism, “Class struggle occurs in every arena where the interests of classes conflict, and that includes education, health, art, music, etc. We aim to transform not only the ownership of the means of production, but the totality of social existence” (68).

I would like to see future work in queer music studies strive for greater inclusiveness and widen its circle of solidarity. More specifically, I advocate a more conscientious theoretical grounding of “queer”—both as an umbrella term and its particular incarnations: bisexual, transgender, lesbian, gay, and S/M. We need to radically reconceptualize “queer” so as to connect queer identities/experiences/musical practices to race and class struggle. This has always been necessary, but it is especially so now in the U.S. where unemployment rates soar at an all time high, the labor movement is more fragile (workers are increasingly pitted against one another), racial and ethnic groups are more diverse and numerous than ever, and struggles of working class queer people are systematically ignored. Not all is lost. Excellent theoretical work by Lorde, Moraga, Hennessy, Morton (and many others; some of this was not available 10 years ago) engages the class issues at stake in queer theory and will enable us to restore greater attention to race, class, and the political economy of sexuality.

¹ Todd Borgerding's review of *QtP* in the *GLSG Newsletter* (March 1995) identifies the absence of bisexuality as a significant problem. Borgerding tries to connect this book, the GLSG, and queer activism in North America—a notable attempt to understand both the political context (history) and agenda (future) of *QtP*.

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About Philip Brett

Paul Attinello

I was writing an entry for one of those gay and lesbian culture encyclopedias that every publisher seems to want to put out these days – which reminds me of Philip’s gently exasperated comment, several months before he fell ill, that he had really had enough of dictionary articles for a while, by which I suppose he meant his Grove article – which, of course, was a magnificent piece of work and a triumph for anyone interested in queer topics. While I was writing my own entry, which was supposed to be on ‘lesbian and gay music studies,’ each turn of the story kept reminding me that Philip was not merely the kindest mentor and most heroic defender of gay and lesbian studies in all the musicologies; he was also undoubtedly the major ‘historical’ figure in any gay and lesbian study of music, so far.

Every big change in the gay and lesbian study of music had him smack at the center of it – giving that first paper on Britten and the ‘open secret’ of being gay at a musicology conference back in 1976 – you may recall him discussing his sheer nervousness at getting up in front of that crowd, to come out as its Designated Faggot; and then in 1989 being so organized and inspiring as to actually manage to officially establish a Gay and Lesbian Study Group of the American Musicological Society. Philip, with Susan McClary, participated the following year in the famous first session of papers on lesbian and gay topics, which of course received a standing ovation. He spent the 1990s working on the development and establishment of the GLSG, in a way that showed more sheer dignity and strength than the AMS probably ever expected to see from such a group – its even-gendered structure, which taught me something that simply wouldn’t have occurred to me, as a hopelessly ghettoized gay man: that there needs to be an equal partnership of the sexes from the outset, and an aggressive

reaching out to anyone who has been, or who feels, excluded by the patterns of culture and history.

Then of course in 1994, the publication of *Queering the Pitch*, with its fabulously proud subtitle “the new gay and lesbian musicology;” followed by intermittent sparring with the likes of Rosen and Taruskin in the pages of major newspapers and magazines, with other strong figures like Ruth Solie on his side – of course, through all of this Philip managed to temper a clear vision and deeply informed opinion with a gracious, slightly old-Oxbridge diplomacy. As Americans, we could perhaps not quite manage to imitate him, but some of us did improve our communication skills – even I, irritating as I remain to this day, learned a lot about dealing with people from Philip’s example and advice while I was editing the first three years of the group’s *Newsletter*, which he had envisioned. In 2001, the big event in queer musicology was Philip’s 2001 article for the *New New Grove* on ‘Gay and Lesbian Music’, written of course with Liz Wood. As you may know, the editors were uncomfortable with the article and cut it down a great deal. In a later interview, that ungrateful wretch Stanley Sadie singled it out from 6,000 other entries as having given him “a great deal of trouble.”

Philip published a spirited defense of the article in the *BBC Music Magazine* early in 2002, which the editors plastered with rather garish pictures and headlines, including a cameo of the Village People – but of course the article itself was powerfully reasoned, lucid and utterly honest; this was his last major act, as he fell suddenly ill in early summer and died of cancer in October of that year. It would be pointless to avoid the fact that his illness and death was a deeply painful and dreadfully frustrating process, especially coming as it did at a time when he and his partner George had bought a beautiful new house so that Philip could begin his dream job as professor and dean at UCLA. As the summer progressed, Philip and George, and through George a number of people who wanted to know what was going on, were told that Philip might have to miss some teaching,

that he might have to have surgery, that there might be serious consequences, then that he might possibly die; and then – that he might possibly live, and finally that there was nothing they could do. Although I'm sure the doctors did all they could, it was a terrible way for such a thing to happen to someone so gentle and so sensitive – and I'm grateful he had a little bit of time to recover somewhat and say good-bye to a few people toward the end.

It's interesting how far we've come since he started everything out in 1976. I find myself having to explain, as my wildly enthusiastic first year students read papers by Philip, by Suzanne Cusick, and by others, that when those papers complain that no one has taken certain topics seriously, they already out of date. In just a decade, since the establishment of the GLSG, everyone in the entire AMS speaks so differently than they did, and with so much more awareness. Many contributed to that change of course, but Philip is really why it all happened. It's worth remembering that Philip established a remarkably strong and broad-based model of discourse in queer music studies: he was interested in, and responsible about the usage of, technical jargon, history, cultural theory, and subjectivity – imagine how different our writing, even our current awareness, would be if we had started out with a narrower approach that only used one or two of those methods. We've all struggled a bit in trying to maintain some balance between all those worlds, but his example showed us that it could be done, and it must be done in order to make any sense of the complex world we inhabit.

The day of his death, I sent a message to the AMS list saying that the best possible response to Philip's death was to emulate his powerful mentorship, his visionary support of a wide variety of people and projects, in fact his frankly angelic embracing of all the best possible qualities one could want in a friend and colleague. I still think that's true: it won't be easy, of course – it means we need to learn to do a lot of things simultaneously and well, and also that we need control the natural vices of the academic: egotism, oversensitivity, and the habit

of trying to reduce the world, and our students, to a simple equation whose answer is something we've already published. But we've had such a great example to work from: we just need to work to keep as many details as we can in memory – to think of Philip as though, if we went over to the telephone, we could call him up right now, share a silly story about something funny done or said by a mutual friend, tell him what we're working on at the moment, and ask him what he thinks we should do next.

[In speaking of this, I'm adding to a long list of responses to many different facets of Philip's life and work. Anyone who wants to know more about him should spend some time at the UCLA Musicology Department's memorial website dedicated to him:

<<http://www.musicology.ucla.edu/philip>>]

Righteous anger directed at authoritarian repression... leads to a strong, if mostly symbolic, identification with other minorities or any group that is perceived as oppressed. One of the more unusual actions taken by various GALA choruses is the addition of someone onstage at a concert signing for the deaf. This practice has become widespread, although it may seem rather off; one's initial puzzled reaction might be to ask why a deaf person would want to come to a concert in the first place, and how interesting can musical lyrics or texts be? This signing is not merely, however, a practical action, but also a symbol of inclusion; although the institution is dedicated to the production of music, which is based on sound, it encourages participation by those who cannot perceive sound. More importantly, signing is seen as a gesture of solidarity with intensely emotional implications.

Attinello: *QtP*, 320

Call for proposals

Ashgate Publishing has expressed interest to publish a new text on *Queering and Popular Music*.

This volume, planned to include the papers given by the Panel at the 2003 IASPM Conference, is now inviting contributions from researchers with an interest in queering. We are especially interested in proposals concerned with queer research on race, class, and gender in popular music that are interdisciplinary in approach.

Please email proposals to:
s.whiteley@salford.ac.uk

Proposals should include:
author's name
institutional affiliation
post and email addresses
abstract of 500 words or less.

Deadline for submissions:
July 1, 2004.

Authors will be notified of the editorial panel's decisions by September 1, 2004.

Prof. Sheila Whiteley
Chair of Popular Music,
The University of Salford
Greater Manchester, UK
Publications Officer, IASPM

Please use the form provided as an insert to this issue for your membership and subscription to the Newsletter of the Gay Lesbian Study Group of the American Musicological Society.

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