

VARIATIONS ON A THEME: RECLAIMING FEMININE AGENCY WITH
TORI AMOS'S *NIGHT OF HUNTERS*

by

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ABSTRACT

For several decades music scholars have criticized the Western classical music canon for its failure to represent authentic female voices. This thesis demonstrates how Tori Amos's album *Night of Hunters* is an important work in reclaiming feminine agency in the canon. As a twenty-first century song cycle, *Night of Hunters* is a twofold variation on a theme. Literally, the album is based on existing pieces written by canonical composers. Figuratively, the album serves as a variation on the long-standing theme of masculine dominance in the canon. Amos establishes feminine agency in this album in very strategic ways: by drawing from subversive models, through the construction of matriarchal lineages and overt invocations of feminine spirituality and mythology, and with the practice of musical borrowing. Drawing on interdisciplinary feminist scholarship, this thesis considers *Night of Hunters* as a significant work in the ongoing negotiation of feminine agency in the Western classical musical canon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF EXAMPLES.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Review of the Literature.....	5
PART ONE: AMOS AND HER MODELS.....	11
Chapter I: Amos the Feminist.....	11
Chapter II: Song Cycles and “Maidenly” Characters: The Schubert-Amos Connection.....	27
PART TWO: FEMINIST STRATEGIES IN <i>NIGHT OF HUNTERS</i>	39
Chapter III: Matriarchal Lineages, Magic, and Mythology.....	39
Chapter IV: Musical Borrowing.....	51
CONCLUSION.....	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	73

LIST OF TABLES

1. Amos's use of pre-existing music, song-by-song.....	52
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LIST OF FIGURES

1. George Cruikshank, “ . . . The Poor Girl Homeless, Friendless, Deserted, Destitute, and Gin-Mad Commits Self-Murder” 59
2. Gros’s *Sapho au cap Laucade*..... 60

LIST OF EXAMPLES

1. Alkan's "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore," mm. 5-9..... 62
2. Opening Piano Part for Amos's "Shattering Sea"..... 64

INTRODUCTION

“I’m obsessed with women’s stories . . . how they’ve been able to negotiate what their place is at the roundtable.”

–Tori Amos¹

When scholars and performers of Western classical music speak of the classical musical canon, we speak of a museum of sorts. Housed in this museum are the musical works that have been chosen for their greatness, their innovation, and their ability to represent the genius of their composers. They are the pieces we hold in the highest esteem and against which all other compositions are measured. Canons have the power to instill cultural identities and provide a sense of unity and order. More specifically, academic canons determine uniformly what we study; repertorial canons dictate what is performed, what audiences experience time and time again, and what is engrained in our individual and collective psyches. For many, however, canons fail to reflect the reality of a society’s systems of oppression and dominance.² How we experience history is determined by the powerful. The canon, which is a “narrative for the past” and “template for the future,”³ is told by those privileged in class (economically dominant, educated), race (white), sexuality (heterosexual), and gender (male). It is hardly surprising, then, that the narrative of the musical canon almost entirely excludes authentic feminine voices. On the rare occasions that women *do* make appearances in canonical repertoire, they often do

1. “Press,” Tori Amos Official Website, <http://toriamos.com/go/press/> (accessed December 2,

2. Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1.

3. *Ibid.*

so in connection with more famous and highly regarded brothers and husbands. This absence means a loss of feminine agency and the representation of women is left to the pens of male composers. As has been demonstrated by numerous musicologists working within feminist frameworks, these representations are often unflattering at best and violently disturbing at worst. Musicologist Marcia Citron claims that the notion of a musical masterpiece is defined as “a work worthy of being repeatedly performed, published, and written about, eventually acquiring a permanency comparable to a painting in a museum.”⁴ As masterpieces in a museum, canonic works gain a sense of untouchable, established permanence.

Every once in a while, however, the canon is challenged. In October 2011, singer-songwriter and self-proclaimed feminist Tori Amos released a new album entitled *Night of Hunters* (hereafter *NoH*). *NoH*, a twenty-first century song cycle based on classical themes, challenges how women are too often depicted within the classical music tradition, a tradition that has been dominated by men for hundreds of years. This thesis will examine how Amos, who has a deft understanding of both the canon and the perils of women under patriarchal traditions, engages with—and ultimately deconstructs—damaging gendered traditions perpetuated by the canon. *NoH* will therefore be explored as a twofold variation on a theme. Literally, the album is based upon existing pieces written by canonical composers, including works by J.S. Bach, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Schubert, Felix Mendelssohn, and Robert Schumann. Figuratively, and more importantly, the use of feminist perspective and voice allows Amos to explore a variation on the long-standing theme of masculine dominance in the hegemony of the musical canon.

4. Ibid., 32-3.

Part One—which consists of chapters I and II—situates Amos as feminist performer and discusses figures that serve as her inspiration. In Chapter I, I introduce Amos’s career and the feminist agenda she has employed in some of her past work. I illustrate this agenda with the help of mainstream media critiques and interviews with Amos herself, as well as with scholarly feminist work focusing on Amos’s early career. More specifically, using the feminist categories outlined by Judith Lorber in *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, I situate Amos’s work within the particular theories of psychoanalytic and cultural feminisms. A case study of two of Amos’s more recent (and perhaps most overtly feminist) albums, *Strange Little Girls* and *American Doll Posse*, will help to illustrate Amos’s engagement with these particular feminist politics. An analysis of Amos’s cover of rapper Eminem’s “97 Bonnie & Clyde” will more specifically address how the singer identifies and critiques some underlying gendered texts within cultural products, as well as how she uses French psychoanalytic feminist Hélène Cixous’s concept of *écriture féminine* to create a new, woman-centered narrative. Even though Amos may not be familiar with these particular theories, she nonetheless operates within their principles.

Of all the composers that Amos re-works on *NoH*, she cites Franz Schubert as a particular source of inspiration. In Chapter II, I take a closer look at the relationship between Amos and Schubert and posit why the canonic composer is an appropriate source of inspiration for what Amos is seeking to achieve with her reworked song cycle. Not only is Schubert’s alternative composition style significant, considering the canon formation that would begin to materialize shortly after his lifetime, but also more contemporary debates surrounding his sexuality make the composer a continued source

of anxiety for those seeking to sustain the canon's heteronormative status quo. In modeling her work after Schubert, Amos draws upon an alternative space that Schubert creates—both with the music composed during his lifetime and with the ongoing debates surrounding him today.

Part Two consists of two chapters that each offer a strategy by which Amos challenges gender traditions with *NoH*. Chapter III addresses Amos's emphasis on matriarchal lineages and her involvement with mythology and magic. Both of these elements further ground Amos in the tradition of psychoanalytic and cultural feminisms, and both are used by Amos as strategies to oppose the oppressive qualities of Western patriarchal structures. Amos achieves this, in part, through the re-appropriation of symbols and language traditionally used to marginalize women.

Because the album is a literal variation on pre-existing themes, chapter IV is devoted to the rhetoric of musical borrowing as outlined by J. Peter Burkholder.⁵ With Burkholder's work on the subject providing a foundational understanding, this chapter examines how Amos resists and reconfigures Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence, which has been adapted for music scholarship in various ways. A closer look at *NoH*'s opener "Shattering Sea" (which borrows from a piece by Charles-Valentin Alkan) demonstrates how Amos departs from Bloom's aggressive model and instead approaches borrowing from past composers with both profound respect and feminist critique.

5. J. Peter Burkholder, "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowings as a Field," *Notes – Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 50, no. 3 (March 1994): 851-70; and "Borrowing," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52918>.

The conclusion begins by briefly acknowledging some potential shortcomings of Amos's feminist challenge as expressed in this specific album. This includes critiques of cultural and psychoanalytic feminisms generally, and recognition of Amos's own privileges more specifically. However, the primary focus of the conclusion is a demonstration of how the elements described in each chapter—Amos's feminist history; her musical and political models; the invocation of matriarchy, magic, and mythology; and the practice of musical borrowing—work to create a powerfully subversive narrative that renegotiates the representation of women in canonic traditions.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With *NoH*, Amos is at once within and outside of tradition. While firmly rooted in song cycle and classical music practices, Amos—as a feminist—poses challenges to the problematic gendered nature of such traditions. Examining these issues requires deep engagement with a variety of scholarship, including work on Amos and her previous feminist efforts, literature on the canon and song cycle traditions, and fundamental texts in feminist theory and feminist musicology.

Many musicologists working from a feminist perspective have critiqued the position of women in classical music. Perhaps the most foundational of these texts is Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*, a book in which McClary demonstrates how gendered codes are embedded in music, and how these codes are often used to disenfranchise women. McClary not only details how these codes appear in music theory, musical narratives, and the music itself, but also creates methodologies to identify and discuss discursive strategies of female musicians. McClary gives readers the tools to look

beyond traditionally valued ways of creating and experiencing music, and in turn acknowledges and values women in music who dare to do something different. McClary illustrates her arguments with cross-genre examples from both the popular and classical realms, making her methodologies all the more fitting for a discursive, genre-transcending artist like Amos.

Marcia Citron's *Gender and the Musical Canon* addresses the marginalization of women in classical repertoire and explores rituals of canon formation. Citron was the first to recognize the canon as not "intellectually pure" but representational of human interest, citing it as a tremendous force that "perpetuates ideologies of some dominant group" and establishes "norms for the future."⁶ Anything that does not measure up to these ideological standards—like the work of women—is simply thrown out or ignored. In foregrounding the canon's cultural power, Citron gives weight to the stories of women who disrupt it. Both McClary and Citron identify the problematic nature of women's position in classical music, in turn expressing a need for new voices that challenge damaging classical music narratives.

Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, is a grouping of essays that work collectively to explore the "ideological and social practices that inform the disciplining of music,"⁷ as well as the ways such practices are tied to canon formation. An essay by Don Michael Randel ("The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox") and an epilogue by Bohlman, specifically, posit how and why the canon has been exclusionary and imperialistic in nature, as well as what

6. Ibid., 9.

7. Katherine Bergeron, "Prologue: Disciplining Music," in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

measures might be taken to create a musical space that is less problematic in origin and function. Randel points to feminist musicology broadly and psychoanalytic feminism specifically as means to achieving this goal, making his essay a great foundation for the feminist work of Amos, who uses the tools of psychoanalytic feminism to wrestle with the canon.

Because Amos's works exist within a larger feminist tradition, and because feminism can manifest in a multitude of ways, I draw from the categorizations of feminisms outlined by Judith Lorber in the fifth edition of *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*. Each chapter of Lorber's book is dedicated to a specific category of feminism. In addition to providing outlines of basic social and political tenets and approaches to dismantling oppression, each chapter provides key readings from feminist texts to illustrate these approaches. The chapter on psychoanalytic and cultural feminisms is central to understanding the specifics of the type of feminist work that Amos does, as well as the possible snares of working within such frameworks.

One of the texts featured in Lorber's section on psychoanalytic feminism is Hélène Cixous's "The Laugh of Medusa," a poetically crafted essay in which Cixous urges women to find and use their distinctly feminine voice. Cixous argues that women can achieve this by reclaiming their own bodies—bodies that have been "confiscated" and portrayed in negative ways. The notion of reclaiming a confiscated female form is particularly significant to Amos, who in the past has used music to reclaim her own body. This is perhaps most explicitly demonstrated in her 1991 single "Me and a Gun," a song in which Amos wrestles with the physical and psychological damage caused by her own rape. In many ways, Amos is also reclaiming the female body in *NoH*, one that has been

confiscated and wrongly portrayed by dominant groups and canon-makers. Additionally, Cixous is sure not to emphasize lack (by which many women are traditionally defined), but instead a wholeness that can only come from love. As I demonstrate in chapter III, the resistance of binaries and the emphasis on wholeness is a primary strategy by which Amos is able to achieve her feminist goals in *NoH*.

Situating *NoH* within the tradition of song cycles will help to illuminate how Amos has challenged some gendered notions of the genre. In *The Song Cycle*, Laura Tunbridge provides a quite recent overview of the genre, including a brief chapter discussing issues of gender. A more focused account, however, can be found in Ruth Solie's "'Whose Life? The Gendered Self in Schumann's *Frauenliebe* Songs,'" in which Solie narrows scholarly parameters to a particular composer and song cycle. While Solie focuses on Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*—a cycle that she claims makes modern audiences uncomfortable because of its emphasis, by a male poet, on the domestic role of women—her writing demonstrates how the song cycle genre more generally has the power to establish and confirm familial relationships. In this light, *NoH* can be experienced as a renegotiation of women's role within gendered relationships. Both Tunbridge and Solie add to the knowledge of the construction of gender in traditional cycles, which in turn sheds light on how Amos uses gender in new ways in *NoH*.

Amos cites Franz Schubert and his song cycle *Winterreise* as particularly important muses for the composition of *NoH*, and Susan Youens provides an in-depth look at both in *Retracing a Winter's Journey: Schubert's Winterreise*. Youens is largely concerned with Schubert's music, Wilhelm Müller's poetry, their genesis, and the cultural context in which *Winterreise* was created. Scholars like Lawrence Kramer and

Phillip Brett, in comparison, have taken an increased interest in exploring Schubert's gender and sexuality. Kramer's *Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* explores the composer—and some of music he created—as sexually subversive. Phillip Brett, in “Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire,” begins by discussing the debates surrounding Schubert since Maynard Solomon's paper on the homosexual implications of the composer's biography—including the anxious attempt to reclaim him as “purely heterosexual” and therefore restore his “full status within the German musical canon.”⁸ Scholarship and debates regarding Schubert's gender and sexuality—and especially how it relates to his position in the canon—are both fascinating and important, considering the role he plays in Amos's feminist work. Schubert inhabits a dichotomous place: he is a cherished member of the canon, to which he also poses a threat. For Amos to align herself with Schubert, a potentially subversive character beloved in the repertoire, is a move supportive of her renegotiation of canonic space and its traditionally exclusive nature.

Outside of articles and interviews in mainstream media magazines and newspapers, scholarship on Amos herself is minimal. Several writers, however, have commented upon the feminist nature of Amos's music. Much of this work focuses on Amos's earliest output from the beginning of the 1990s, a time when her musical imagery and expression was often “unexpected and shocking.”⁹ In a chapter from *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity & Popular Music*, Lori Burns and Méliisse Lafrance discuss

8. Phillip Brett, “Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire,” *19th-Century Music* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 150.

9. Ronald D. Lankford, *Women Singer-Songwriters in Rock: A Populist Rebellion in the 1990s* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 124.

how Amos interrogates normative gender and religious discourses in her 1992 song “Crucify.” A chapter from Ronald D. Lankford’s *Women Singer-Songwriters in Rock: A Populist Rebellion in the 1990s* similarly explores Amos’s subversive work in “Crucify,” as well as several other pieces from her debut solo album *Little Earthquakes*. As of now, little scholarship exists on Amos’s most recent musical output and *NoH*. This thesis will be unique in its engagement with Amos’s venture into classical music, and how she—as a feminist artist—deals with the gender issues that plague the classical world.

Katrina Eileraas’s article “Witches, Bitches & Fluids: Girl Bands Performing Ugliness as Resistance” examines not just a specific Amos song or album, but instead a feminist strategy of resistance. Eileraas includes Amos in the company of other female rockers and describes her musical and thematic confrontations of “ugliness,” including references to witches, bloodletting, and rape. Such analysis is valuable considering Amos’s use of similar strategies in *NoH*. Chapter III will expand upon such strategies. In collaboration with pop music critic Ann Powers, Amos herself penned a book entitled *Tori Amos: Piece by Piece*. In this work, Amos and Powers give accounts of Amos’s personal and public lives, her inspiration and music, and her close ties to mythology and folklore. Mythology and folklore appear frequently throughout *NoH*, and their heavy use is another way Amos successfully articulates feminist sensibilities through her music.

While scholars have focused on Amos’s feminism as seen in her early work, no scholarship exists dealing specifically with *NoH* and how Amos challenges male-dominated classical music traditions. This thesis will fill this gap in the literature and will serve as a continuation of the scholarly discussion of Amos and her feminist work.

PART ONE: AMOS AND HER MODELS

CHAPTER I: AMOS THE FEMINIST

“In women’s speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we’ve been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us—that element is the song; first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman.”

-Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”¹

Mainstream media and music scholars have consistently positioned Tori Amos as a feminist since the release of her successful debut album *Little Earthquakes*. For instance, an image of Amos, straddling the piano bench in her signature way—with her left foot on the pedal and her body open and angled towards her audience—graces the cover of scholars Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance’s *Disruptive Divas*, a work on feminism and identity in popular music. Like Burns and Lafrance, many music scholars have focused on Amos’s output in the 1990s, a decade in which angry women in rock seemed to rule the airwaves, a decade marking the rise of third-wave feminism and the issues of gender and sexuality to which “the public persona of Tori Amos was tied, whether by coincidence or intent.”² Although Amos’s work today may no longer be described as “unexpected and shocking,”³ her ties to feminism did not end with the nineties. Mainstream media continues to report on the singer’s feminist sensibilities: the

1. Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” in *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 419.

2. Sady Doyle, “Birth of the Uncool,” *Bitchmagazine.com*, 2011, <http://bitchmagazine.org/article/birth-of-the-uncool> (accessed March 11, 2013).

3. Lankford, *Women Singer-Songwriters in Rock*, 124.

headline for a 2011 interview with Amos touted her as “feminist-as-ever,” and a blog contributor for music website *NME* cited the jailing of punk-protest group Pussy Riot and comments from conservative politician Todd Akin regarding “legitimate” rape as reasons “why we need Tori Amos’ outspoken feminism more than ever.”⁴

Considering Amos’s career, her status as a feminist seems to have been rightfully bestowed. The singer-songwriter has a history of boldly confronting women’s issues both with and outside of her music. In her 1991 song “Me and A Gun,” for example, she wrestles with the account of her own rape. RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), a charity Amos co-founded in 1994, has become the largest anti-sexual violence organization in the United States.⁵ Still, in a society where feminists are often constructed as militant bra-burners, Amos has occasionally shied away from being boxed in by the label.⁶ In 1999 she stated that feminism and its associations needed a change because “it’s turning people off.”⁷ Nevertheless, while she has peppered interviews with

4. Lucy Jones, “Why We Need Tori Amos’ Outspoken Feminism More Than Ever,” *Nme.com*, August 22, 2012, http://www.nme.com/blog/index.php?blog=1&title=happy_birthday_tori_amos_we_need_your_ou&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1 (accessed March 11, 2013).

5. RAINN: Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, “About Us,” <http://www.rainn.org/about-rainn> (accessed March 11, 2013).

6. The myth of bra-burning began with “No More Miss America!” a 1968 manifesto protesting the annual pageant and calling participants to toss “woman-garbage” (including bras, eyelash curlers, issues of *Cosmopolitan*, etc.) into a “huge Freedom Trash Can.” The editors of *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*—which includes the manifesto—assert that no actual bra-burning took place at the protest, and that the act was instead an invention of the media. The burning of bras, nonetheless, may still exist in the public psyche as a symbol of “angry” feminists. Popular website AskMen.com, for example, recently provided a step-by-step guide on how to “deal with angry feminists.” See “No More Miss America!” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010), 90-1; and Sarah Stefanson, “How To: Deal With Angry Feminists,” *Askmen.com*, http://www.askmen.com/dating/heidi_400/426_how-to-deal-with-angry-feminists.html (accessed March 11, 2013).

7. Morgan Baden, “Reflections on Tori Amos and the Feminist Movement,” *Popmatters.com*, October 4, 2012, <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/feature/163865-reflections-on-tori-amos-and-the-feminist-movement/> (accessed March 19, 2013).

reservations regarding feminism, it seems that by the release of her albums *Strange Little Girls* (2001) and *American Doll Posse* (2007), Amos was more open to embracing feminism. “This [world] has been created by the patriarchal authority,” she said during the promotion of *American Doll Posse*, “and I’m coming after them.”⁸

Positioning Amos within the body of feminist politics is essential, considering the feminist tactics that the performer employs in *NoH*. Amos’s past relationship with feminism may be complicated, but so is the nature of feminism itself. Labeling Amos a “feminist” without considering the word’s multitude of meanings can be problematic, but situating Amos within a distinct type of feminism leads to a better understanding of the feminist work that Amos does within her re-worked song cycle.

Like Amos as an individual and performer, feminism is not readily classifiable, but instead something that is complex and ever-changing. To talk about feminism as if it were one, easily identifiable and describable doctrine would not only be overly broad and simplistic, it would also be next to impossible. Instead, it would be more correct to refer to “feminisms,” which takes into account the multitude of ways in which feminists approach a variety of issues that affects groups and individuals that are equally diverse. While the arguable end goal for all feminists is to expose and dismantle systems of oppression, scholar Judith Lorber aids in the understanding of the complexities and nuances of feminisms by dividing them into three distinct categories: gender reform, gender resistance, and gender rebellion feminisms.⁹ Lorber places certain kinds of

8. Christian Taylor, “Meet Tori’s Posse,” *Samesame.com/au*, March 28, 2007, <http://www.samesame.com.au/features/565/Meet-Toris-Posse.htm> (accessed March 11, 2013).

9. Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

feminisms under each category based on their shared ideologies and politics—while also honoring the unique, distinct qualities of each kind of feminism. With the help of Lorber’s classifications, Amos’s work can be interpreted as falling under the specific category of gender resistance feminist thought. Although grossly simplified, a brief description of Lorber’s categories will be useful in situating Amos in a distinct feminist framework—and therefore provide clearer understandings of her political goals and feminist strategies.

The primary goal for gender reform feminisms is gender equality, or the assurance that men and women, while biologically different, are treated the same under the law. Major concerns may include the gendered division of labor and the “exploitation of women’s labor and emotions in the service of marriage and motherhood.”¹⁰ Whereas gender reform feminisms accept the social categories of “man” and “woman,” gender rebellion feminisms question the “stability and necessity of the whole gendered social order.”¹¹ Gender rebellion feminisms tend to reject binary categorizations (man/woman), and distrust normative notions of “woman” and “man” as genuine markers of identity. Here one might find the groundbreaking and influential theories of gender performativity as outlined by Judith Butler.¹² Moments in Amos’s career could be interpreted as expressions of either gender reform or rebellion feminisms—for instance, consider her album *American Doll Posse*, in which Amos performs as a number of female personae, as

10. Ibid., 23.

11. Ibid., 203.

12. For more on Butler’s theory of performativity, see *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010), 419-30.

an articulation of Butler's theory—but I see Amos, her feminist goals, and the work she specifically does in *NoH* as falling most clearly under a third category described by Lorber: gender resistance feminisms.

According to Lorber, the types of feminisms that fall under the “gender resistant” category seek to expose patriarchy (defined broadly as men's subordination of women) and the “sense of superiority” that is “deeply embedded in the consciousness and subconsciousness of most men,” as well as within the privileges they hold in Western society.¹³ More specifically, Amos's feminism draws from the doctrines of radical feminism and psychoanalytic and cultural feminism, both of which fall under the gender resistance category. For instance, one of radical feminism's major political points is the valorization of women, including their bodies, sexuality, and maternal qualities. Amos's emphasis on matriarchal lineages in *NoH*, for example, is reflective of radical feminist politics, and will be explored in greater depth in chapter IV of this thesis.

Although not without points of contention, Amos's work—especially when considering *NoH* and issues of the canon, is perhaps most representational of the politics of cultural and psychoanalytic feminisms. These types of feminisms focus on the deconstruction and analysis of how gender is represented in cultural texts. Lorber defines such texts as products of culture embedded with societal beliefs regarding gender at any given time. The collective canon, as well as the individual pieces that combine to create it, can be viewed as kinds of cultural texts carrying gender codes, or what is said about gender, what is left unsaid, and what is possibly hinted at (Lorber identifies this a subtext). The discourses of a cultural text may or may not be readily apparent to

13. Lorber, *Gender Inequality*, 124.

recipients, and in fact audiences may even interpret and reshape such texts as they are consumed. These products of society are precisely what cultural and psychoanalytic feminisms seek to deconstruct.

Deconstructing such texts involves first and foremost a recognition of the existence of embedded gender codes as products and constructions of societies, rather than the acceptance of such codes as innate societal characteristics. Cultural feminists also seek to “unpack” or “tease out” such codes and examine how they function within society. This type of critical analysis has been a trend in scholarship, and was first used in the deconstruction of elements of literature, film, and later, music. For example, Lorber cites Laura Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze as an example of a cultural/psychoanalytic approach to unpacking gender discourses within visual products. Essentially, the male gaze is the construction of women as passive objects to be viewed and desired sexually by male audiences. In the voyeuristic setting of a dark theater, men can project their sexual fantasies onto the female form, avoiding actual contact and therefore avoiding the risk of castration.¹⁴ Mulvey focuses on film, but the concept is certainly applicable to other forms of visual media, including advertisements, stage productions, and music videos.

Lori Burns has adapted Mulvey’s concept in her discussion of Amos’s music video for “Crucify,” citing the ways in which Amos manipulates the gaze in order to evoke anxiety in her audience. Burns discusses strategies like the presentation of the

14. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

female body in full rather than a “series of fetishized parts,”¹⁵ as well as Amos’s own empowered gaze, which she confidently directs to the camera, and subsequently, to her voyeuristic viewers. While Burns comes to the conclusion that the video for “Crucify” is an “ongoing kind of resistance within a problem of institutionalized proportions,”¹⁶ her analysis points to Amos’s involvement in the cultural and psychoanalytical work of deconstructing the gendered discourses within media.

Susan McClary and Marcia Citron have continued the tradition of such cultural feminist work by exposing the gendered discourses of Western classical music and the canon, as well as the messages they carry regarding the role of women in such traditions.¹⁷ While Amos is neither a literary scholar nor a musicologist, she has nonetheless recognized the troublesome position of women in the world of Western classical music. In a promotional interview for *NoH*, Amos expressed her hope for the future of women as creators: “I’d like to think that female composers will be embraced more internationally. . . . I mean, it really is time—not just in the pop world, but in all these other worlds . . . from musical theater to classical composition . . . women, you

15. Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance, *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity & Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 75.

16. *Ibid.*, 79.

17. A chapter concerning the depiction and fate of canonic opera heroines (“Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen”) from McClary’s *Feminine Endings* was especially informed by French psychoanalytical feminist Catherine Clément, who was one of the first to give a feminist critique of music by examining the cultural text of canonic opera plots. In her book *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, one of Clément’s major determinations—that an overwhelming majority of female opera characters experience either literal or metaphorical deaths on stage—may seem like an observation readily available to anyone having witnessed a performance of the opera. However, as Susan McClary points out in a foreword to Clément’s book, the tendency to prioritize the music itself—or the elements of a piece that are “pure,” that rise above social signification and the drama of operatic narrative—can make it easy for agendas to “slip past unnoticed” in the wake of music’s “seductive undertow.” See *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); and Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

know, they have a voice.”¹⁸ Although approaching these texts from a different angle—that of a composer rather than a scholar—Amos is part of a larger, cultural and psychoanalytical feminist tradition of recognizing and deconstructing the misogynistic gender discourses embedded within the canon.¹⁹

For French psychoanalytic feminists, however, the simple recognition of the gendered codes within cultural texts is not enough. These feminist thinkers—including H  l  ne Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva—posit that culture revolves around the phallus, meaning that cultural texts are constructed upon a foundational fixation on the power and dominance of men. To counteract such masculine discourses, feminists like Cixous call for women to create their own, feminine-articulated products of culture. Cixous created the concept of *  criture f  minine*, or “women’s writing,” which calls upon women to invent a new language capable of breaking through the “repressive, censoring codes of phallogentric culture.”²⁰ Infused with feminine sensibilities, *  criture f  minine* is meant to express the experiences of women; their bodies; their sexuality, joy, and pleasures. The outcome of such writing, Cixous claims, will be women’s “return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the

18. “Tori Amos on Night of Hunters – Part 2,” [n.d.], video clip, accessed March 11, 2013, YouTube, *Youtube.com*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jsHQCHt4Wk.

19. Amos is certainly not the first and only woman to challenge such discourses. A discussion of Janika Vandervelde’s woman-centered work is discussed in “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman’s Voice in Janika Vandervelde’s *Genesis II*,” a chapter from Susan McClary’s, *Feminine Endings*.

20. Diana Holmes, *French Women’s Writing 1848-1994* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), 216.

nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions.”²¹ In other words, *écriture féminine* is one strategy for women to reclaim the agency that has been taken from them: they must be creators; they must write themselves.

Many moments throughout Amos’s career can be seen as existing within the sensibilities of *écriture féminine*. In 2007 Amos released *American Doll Posse*, an album in which she embodies a number of feminine personae inspired by Greek mythology. In the course of the album, Amos critiques the role of women within society, as well as the personality archetypes to which they adhere. Amos sees the album, as well as the expression it allows its female characters, as an avenue to freedom from masculine oppression. When explaining her motivation for creating *American Doll Posse*, Amos explains that she became “drawn to the patriarchy and what it’s created over the last few thousand years, and how it’s affecting all of us right now in its extreme form.”²² In order to remove the invisible “muzzle” that silences women, Amos asserts that women must insert themselves into the cultural conversation: “Confrontation isn’t getting [women] anywhere, it’s only taking us further to our demise. And so it seems that there has to be a round table of thinkers and perspectives, and I don’t believe that somebody’s going to open the door for us into the round table . . . but we can choose to walk through the door ourselves.”²³ In other words, Amos believes—much like Cixous—that women are responsible for claiming and representing themselves and their own feminine sensibilities.

21. Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 418.

22. Christa Titus, “Music: 6 Questions with Tori Amos,” *Billboard*, May 19, 2007, 69.

23. *Ibid.*

Before *American Doll Posse* came to fruition, Amos sought to achieve a similar goal with her 2001 effort *Strange Little Girls*. The album consists of 12 songs originally written by men—most about or relating to women—which Amos has reworked from a female point of view. Each song revolves around a female character: sometimes a woman referenced directly in the original song; sometimes a woman created by Amos and more loosely tied to the song’s narrative. In *Piece by Piece*, Amos explains that she spent months getting to know these women and their individual stories.²⁴ Working with makeup artist Kevin Aucoin, stylist Karen Binns, and photographer Thomas Schenk, Amos embodied each female character in a series of photographic portraits. Novelist Neil Gaiman created artistic narrative vignettes to accompany each portrait in Amos’s *Strange Little Girls* tour book. Amos states that she, along with the team responsible for creating these characters, had realized that a “generalized image of the antiwoman, antigay heterosexual man had hijacked Western male heterosexuality and brought it to the mediocrity of the moment,” and that, at its core, “this perverted male image was filled with malice and getting high off swallowing its own violent ejaculation.”²⁵

With this bold statement, Amos makes several important assertions. First, she identifies that the damaging patriarchal structures dominating Western culture are not truly representative of masculinity, but instead are “perverted” and malicious mutations of masculinity. As a result, Amos implies that a mode of masculinity exists that is neither homophobic, sexist, nor damaging at the expense of others. Furthermore, Amos sees her

24. Tori Amos and Ann Powers, *Tori Amos: Piece by Piece* (Westminster, MD: Broadway Books, 2005), 286-7,

25. *Ibid.*, 286.

characters in *Strange Little Girls* as a step towards identifying and correcting the misguided, mediocre, and often violent expressions of masculinity that exist in the present. The ferocity of Amos's performance in *Strange Little Girls* can perhaps be explained by her encounters with such expressions. Amos's reference to "violent ejaculation," considering her own experience with rape, demonstrates how the singer has been personally affected by this mutated masculinity.

The women of *Strange Little Girls* are diverse and complex. An aging and nurturing showgirl sings Depeche Mode's "Enjoy the Silence" while a New York business woman performs Lou Reed's "New Age." The voice behind The Beatles' "Happiness is a Warm Gun" is the call girl who Amos discovered had visited Mark David Chapman before he assassinated John Lennon, and the woman singing Tom Waits's "Time" is a gentle and compassionate Death incarnate.²⁶ Many of the women's performances can be seen as a Cixousian expression of the female body as a source of empowerment. For instance, Amos's decision to cover thrash metal band Slayer's "Raining Blood," was informed by "what was going on in Afghanistan—the way women were being oppressed, the destruction of religious statues."²⁷ Amos is referring to the Taliban regime's then-control of the country, the subsequent treatment of and restrictions placed upon women, and the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, 1,500-year-old

26. Ibid., 288.

27. Will Hermes, "Don't Mess With Mother Nature," *Spin*, October 2001, posted under "press," Tori Amos Official Website, *Toriamos.com*, <http://www.toriamos.com/go/galleries/view/388/1/265/press/index.html> (accessed March 12, 2013).

relics considered to be “gods of the infidels” by Taliban officials.²⁸ When Amos heard the Slayer song, she states, “I just imagined a huge, juicy vagina coming out of the sky, raining blood over all those racist, misogynist fuckers.”²⁹ The song’s final line, “now I shall reign in blood,” takes on an entirely new meaning when seen through the lens of women’s menstruation.

Perhaps the most controversial cover on *Strange Little Girls*, however, is Amos’s take on rapper Eminem’s “97 Bonnie & Clyde.” In the song, Eminem raps to his young daughter, explaining the murder of her mother and the dumping of her body in a lake—at his hands—using sickeningly sweet baby talk. Having become a new mother around the time of the song’s release, Amos was powerfully drawn to the dead woman. “When I first heard the song,” Amos explains, “a hand reached out of that trunk and pulled at me and said, ‘you need to see how I heard it’.”³⁰ With only minute changes to Eminem’s lyrics, Amos’s haunting, breathless delivery brings to life the ghost of a woman who must witness her child becoming an accomplice to her own murder. At times there is a heartbreaking sadness behind Amos’s voice, a sonic depiction of the portrait of Amos created as an accompaniment to the song. In it, Amos—dressed as a pleasant, mom-next-

28. Barry Bearak, “Afghan Says Destruction Of Buddhas Is Complete,” *New York Times*, March 12, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/12/world/afghan-says-destruction-of-buddhas-is-complete.html> (accessed March 12, 2013).

29. Hermes, “Don’t Mess With Mother Nature.” In light of U.S. military involvement in the Middle East and in Afghanistan, Amos’s statement can be problematic. Feminist scholar Uma Narayan warns that when considering the West’s colonial history, Western feminism can easily become a racist export meant to reinforce the colonizer’s construction of superiority. Narayan continues by warning Western feminists that if they “fail to see the context of their theories and assume that their perspective has universal validity for all feminists, they tend to participate in the dominance that Western culture has exercised over nonwestern cultures.” See Uma Narayan, “The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist,” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010), 332-40.

30. Irin Carmon, “Tori’s Got A Gun,” *The Village Voice*, October 9, 2001, 71.

door type—holds a birthday cake for her daughter. She smiles slightly, but the smile doesn't quite reach her eyes, which instead resonate with a deep sense of sadness. Neil Gaiman's accompanying story echoes this sadness, telling of a woman victimized by domestic abuse, and voicing the anxiety over leaving her daughter with the man who inflicted it: "Now that she is dead, she tries to remember only the love. She imagines every blow a kiss, the make-up that inexpertly covers the bruises, the cigarette burn on her thigh – all these things, she decides, were gestures of love. She wonders what her daughter will do."³¹ Perhaps if this woman can convince herself that the injuries inflicted upon her were coming from a place of love, she can rest in peace, hoping for a better fate for her daughter, who is likely to suffer the same abuse.

The woman in the trunk, however, is emotionally complex. While she is certainly consumed with heartbreak and sadness, she is also a fiercely protective and scorned mother. When Amos, as the mother, tells her daughter at the opening of the tune that "nobody in this world is ever gonna keep you from me," it is whispered as a sinister threat, turning the original meaning of the lyrics back around on the violent and morally corrupt father. The threat posed by this woman's ghost is reflected in the musical arrangement of the song, and Amos has replaced Eminem's hip-hop beat with a string part that could have been pulled from the soundtrack of a horror film. The original sing-song chorus—a somewhat parody of the Will Smith father-son ode "Just the Two of Us," which in turn samples the Grover Washington, Jr. and Bill Withers tune of the same name—is swapped for Amos's striking upper register. A startling contrast between the

31. "Everything Tori | '97 Bonnie and Clyde," Tori Amos Official Website, <http://toriamos.com/go/galleries/view/172/1/29/albums/index.html> (accessed March 12, 2013).

breathy, spoken performance in the verses, the singer's declaration of "just the two of us" lies somewhere between a mournful wail and the confident assertion that, in the end, nothing will separate this mother and daughter. While Eminem's original version finds this woman dead and powerless in a trunk, Amos breathes life back into the woman, creating a force to be reckoned with. Amos doesn't let the story end there. She also gives a voice and a story to the couple's daughter—the daughter who witnesses her mother's murder at her father's hand. Elsewhere on the album, all grown up, she sings the cover of The Stranglers' "Strange Little Girl."³²

Without changing the fundamental text, Amos has powerfully infused the male-articulated songs on *Strange Little Girls* with a kind of *écriture féminine*, a representation of female perspective, experience, and a reclaiming of the confiscated (and even murdered) female body. But Amos has also recognized these songs as powerful cultural texts with tremendous influence. The shocking content of "Bonnie & Clyde" seems to have been accepted by audiences and critics without major protest. *Rolling Stone* called the song a "clever takeoff" on Smith's "Just the Two of Us,"³³ and *Entertainment Weekly* referred to it as the album's "funniest slice of black humor."³⁴ As of late 2012, *The Marshall Mathers' LP*—on which "Bonnie & Clyde" is a track—sold over ten-and-a-half million units, making it part of an elite group of 21 albums that have surpassed the ten million U.S. sales mark since the implementation of SoundScan in 1991. The gendered

32. Amos and Powers, *Piece by Piece*, 286.

33. Toure, "Eminem, The Marshall Mathers LP," Album Reviews, *Rolling Stone*, July 6, 2000, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/albumreviews/the-marshall-mathers-lp-20000706> (accessed March 12, 2013).

34. David Brown, "The Slim Shady LP (1999)," *Entertainment Weekly*, March 12, 1999, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,274722,00.html> (accessed March 12, 2013).

discourse of “Bonnie & Clyde,” in other words, is one that we seem to be willing to accept. Although Eminem’s original version has real world implications—considering the song’s references to the rapper’s daughter by name and his very public turmoil with ex-wife Kim Mathers—Amos sees the content of the song as a reflection of larger issues. The singer has stated that “‘97 Bonnie & Clyde” is not about Eminem, asserting instead that “music is always a reflection of what’s going on in the heart and minds of the culture. If you’re singing songs that are about cutting women up, usually these guys are tapping into an unconscious male rage that is real. . . . They’re a gauge; they’re showing you what’s really happening in the psyche of a lot of people.”³⁵ With Freudian-like references to the unconscious and the psyche, Amos has aligned herself with the politics of feminists like Cixous and McClary by positioning *Strange Little Girls* as a tool for the deconstruction of gendered cultural discourses. She has certainly re-signified the meaning of “Bonnie & Clyde” using a feminine perspective and thereby has reclaimed power in the name of victimized women. In reference to the cover, writer David Fricke pronounced, “Eminem may get the royalties, but he no longer owns the song.”³⁶ Furthermore, Eminem no longer owns the narrative, which has transformed from a man’s fantasy into a woman’s story.

Although *Strange Little Girls* and *Night of Hunters* are stylistically different, the work Amos does in “‘97 Bonnie & Clyde” is not far removed from what she achieves with her more recent song cycle. Musicologist Elizabeth L. Keathley has suggested that,

35. Teri vanHorn and Steffie Nelson, “Tori Amos Says Eminem’s Fictional Dead Wife Spoke To Her,” MTV News, September 28, 2001, *Mtv.com*, <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1449422/amos-reinterprets-eminem-beatles.jhtml> (accessed March 12, 2013).

36. David Fricke, “Tori Amos’ Male Call,” *Rolling Stone*, September 27, 2001, 68.

while the misogynistic violence in Eminem's music is something of a hallmark for the gansta rap genre, the content of "Bonnie & Clyde" has just as many ties to "whiter" classical musical traditions, including canonic opera and the female corpses that litter it. While the sexism of society as a whole serves as the underpinnings of the violence that occurs in both gangsta rap and opera, Keathley sees the narrative of "Bonnie and Clyde"—the nuclear family that falls apart, the protagonist who must punish his immoral and unfaithful partner—as indicative of the "transgression-and-punishment paradigm that informs so much nineteenth-century opera and literature."³⁷ In some ways, Amos's take on "Bonnie & Clyde" can be seen as a prelude to *NoH*, a work in which she confronts the misogyny of the canon head on.

37. Elizabeth Keathley, "A Context for Eminem's 'Murder Ballads'," *Echo* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2002), http://www.echo.ucla.edu/volume4-issue2/keathley/keathley_1.html (accessed March 12, 2013).

CHAPTER II: SONG CYCLES AND “MAIDENLY” CHARACTERS: THE SCHUBERT-AMOS CONNECTION

Amos borrows from many familiar composers on *NoH*, but she cites Franz Schubert as a particularly important figure of inspiration for the album, stating that she has, as an artist, “always identified with him.”¹ His song cycle *Winterreise* served as a broad inspiration for the album, and Amos describes her completion of “Star Whisperer,” a variation on a Schubert piano sonata, as a “breakthrough moment.”

I’ve always had a soft place in my heart for Schubert, but once I got “Star Whisperer,” that was really the first one that came that was complete. . . . Once I knew what that was, then I started throwing away all kinds of things that I was working on, because they just weren’t good enough. I realized, “Okay, this is the benchmark, this Schubert variation. Everything has to live up to that.”²

The composer, however, has served as more than a musical model for Amos and *NoH*. Schubert’s legacy—including issues surrounding his sexuality, compositional style, and canonic status—also make him a model for social and political subversion. By aligning herself creatively with Schubert, Amos is better able to access a space created for alternative musicality and therefore better able to contest gendered traditions in the canon.

When scholar Maynard Solomon suggested in his article “Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini” that the composer participated in sexual promiscuity of

1. Marc Spitz, “Q&A: Tori Amos on Going Goethe on Her New Album, *Night of Hunters*,” *Vanityfair.com*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2011/09/tori-amos-on-going-goethe-in-her-new-album--i-night-of-hunters--> (accessed February 11, 2013)

2. Mike Ragona, “A Conversation with Tori Amos,” *Huffingtonpost.com*, October 19, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-ragona/stevie-nicks-moonlight-a_b_1014756.html (accessed December 1, 2011).

an “unorthodox character”³ and that the sexuality of the circle of young men surrounding Schubert was likely a “homosexual one,”⁴ a fiercely polemic debate erupted in the world of musicology—a world that had only recently begun to consider the implications of gender and sexuality in music scholarship at the time of Solomon’s publication in 1989. By 1993, *19th-Century Music*—the publication in which Solomon’s article first appeared—ran a special issue devoted to Schubert and the implications of homosexuality surrounding him. Contributor Rita Steblin positioned herself on the opposite side of the argument, grounding her response in the refutation of evidence Solomon used to suggest that Schubert may have been beyond the realm of normative sexuality. Kofi Agawu took things further by claiming that debates over Schubert’s sexuality were irrelevant, because the sexual orientation of a composer has little bearing over the “immanent or neutral” level of analysis of that composer’s work.⁵ After all, in Agawu’s discussion of “musical autonomy and transcendence,”⁶ there really is not a “uniquely gay way of writing rondo, variation, or sonata forms.”⁷

Why were scholars so concerned with speculations regarding Schubert’s sexuality, when the homosexuality of other canonic composers—Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, for instance—seemed to be of less concern? In the same Schubert-centered issue of *19th-*

3. Maynard Solomon, “Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini,” *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1989), 194.

4. *Ibid.*, 202.

5. Kofi Agawu, “Schubert’s Sexuality: A Prescription for Analysis?” *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 80.

6. *Ibid.*, 81.

7. *Ibid.*, 80.

Century Music, Susan McClary points out that Tchaikovsky's homosexuality was "established beyond question" in the scholarly world.⁸ Perhaps the shroud of historical mystery surrounding Schubert meant that his sexuality was still up for grabs in the musicology community, a community that historically "drew a veil of secrecy around the homoerotic aspects of a (male) composer's life."⁹ Perhaps it is because composers like Tchaikovsky, Aaron Copland, and Benjamin Britten are more comfortably labeled by scholars as masters of the ballet and the opera—genres too tied up in narratives and the human body to be considered of the "autonomous and transcendent" quality. In twentieth- and twenty-first century canonic rhetoric, on the other hand, Schubert can be seen as a direct descendant of the J.S. Bach-Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart-Ludwig van Beethoven Austrian-German musical bloodline, composers of the untouchable body of work that lies at the heart of the canon.

Central to the debate over Schubert's sexuality, it seems, is the canon and the power structure it represents. Philip Brett (who, as a gay scholar, was open about what he had at stake with such a debate) saw the defensive response to Solomon's article as a manifestation of the "anxiety, if not the desperation," to project Schubert as heterosexual and therefore reconfirm his rightful place within the German canon.¹⁰ The canon, after all, is a major articulation of the power structures of Western culture, and at the foundation of such a structure is the privilege awarded to the white *heterosexual* male. Speculations

8. Susan McClary, "Music and Sexuality: On the Steblin/Solomon Debate," *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 83.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Brett, "Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire," 150.

about the homosexuality of a major canonic player like Schubert, therefore, pose a tangible threat to the status quo. One foundational crack and the entire structure might crumble. This threat is why, in the words of Brett, “some members of the straight ‘classical’ music world are so interested in projecting ‘Schubert’ in their (and the canon’s) own image, disallowing him (and it) even what might be considered the open human possibility of sexual activity of various kinds.”¹¹

A beautifully subversive tension, however, exists within the legacy of Schubert, for while he is, in many ways, an important figure in Beethoven-dominated canon, he is also its antithesis. In fact, the composer’s more contemporaneous critics often constructed Schubert and his music as the anti-Beethoven. Robert Schumann, a few short years after Schubert’s death, articulated this Beethoven-Schubert dichotomy: “Schubert is a maidenly character compared to that one [Beethoven]; by far more loquacious, softer, [and] broader. . . . To be sure, he brings in his powerful passages, and offers massive sonorities; but he still always behaves like a woman to a man, who commands were she pleads and persuades.”¹² Lawrence Kramer notes that by the time of Schubert’s death, the canon was already being “crystalized around Beethoven’s symphonies.”¹³ Beethoven,

11. Ibid.

12. Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), 117. Sir George Grove, in essays originally printed in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, agreed with Schumann and elaborated: “Another equally true saying of Schumann is that, compared with Beethoven, Schubert is as a woman to a man. For it must be confessed that one’s attitude towards him is almost always that of sympathy, attraction, and love, rarely that of embarrassment or fear. Here and there only . . . does he compel his hearers with an irresistible power; and yet how different is this compulsion from the strong, fierce, merciless coercion, with which Beethoven forces you along, and bows and bends you to his will . . .” See Sir George Grove, *Beethoven Schubert Mendelssohn* (London: MacMillan & Co, 1951), 237.

13. Lawrence Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 95.

with his aggressive and virile representation of masculinity, stands above and casts his shadow over the classical canon. Especially in the years immediately following his death, it was impossible for any contemporary composer to keep up with the “juggernaut” that was Beethoven’s reputation.¹⁴ Although nineteenth-century critiques like those of Schumann’s tend to get swept up in the heightened gender-dichotomies of the time, they demonstrate that, even in the time directly following Schubert’s life, the composer was set apart from masculinized Beethovenian standards. They also make clear that issues surrounding Schubert’s gender and sexual identity originated long before Solomon’s article.

To see the feminization of Schubert’s music as anything other than pejorative is difficult, considering the gendered language embedded in music discourses throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Marcia Citron provides numerous translations of scholarly descriptions of sonata form from this era in which the first theme is constructed as masculine/dominant, and the second theme is relegated as feminine/submissive. Excerpts from A.B. Marx’s *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* (1845) and Hugo Riemann’s *Katechismus der Musik (Allgemeine Musiklehre)* (1888) rely on this construction,¹⁵ but perhaps the most disturbing example comes from Vincent D’Indy’s 1909 *Cours de composition musicale*:

Force and energy, concision and clarity: such are almost variably the essential *masculine* characteristics belonging to the *first idea*: it imposes itself in *brusque rhythms*, affirming very nobly its tonal ownership, one and definitive. The *second idea*, in contrast, entirely gentle and of *melodic* grace, is affective almost always by means of its verbosity and modulatory vagueness of the eminently alluring *feminine*: supple and elegant, it spreads out progressively the curve of its ornamented

14. Ibid.

15. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 132-5.

melody. . . . It is as if, after the active battle of the development, the being of gentleness and weakness has to submit, whether by violence or by persuasion, to the conquest of the being of force and power.¹⁶

D'Indy's passage, which Citron asserts is based on opposition, "irrefutable authority," and gender violence,¹⁷ serves as just one example of how contemporaneous ideologies of women as passive and inferior were often woven into musical rhetoric.

Situated within this era of language, comments by Schumann and Sir George Grove—in which Schubert and his compositions are equated with the feminine—seem to be an articulation of the composer's inherent inferiority. Considering Schubert's place in the canon, however, this comparison may also work for some good. What Schubert does is create a space in the musical repertoire for alternative dialogues. As Kramer argues, comparisons between Schubert and Beethoven were provoked because Schubert's music was widely appealing despite—or perhaps because of—its supposed faults. Kramer continues: "By winning the affection of listeners without apparently offering them either disciplined structure or profound meaning, this music posed a genuine alternative to the supremacy that, for so many reasons, had to be reserved for Beethoven."¹⁸ McClary argues a similar point, saying that while the debate over Schubert's sexuality may never be definitively settled, the composer was creating "constructions of masculine subjectivity" that were decidedly different from the standards surrounding him. Perhaps even more striking is that this alternative subjectivity seems to be a deliberate choice rather than any innate compositional tendencies or limitations: "Schubert's music differs

16. *Ibid.*, 136.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, 96.

not because he was incapable of producing heroic narratives along the lines Beethoven had charted, but rather because he evidently wanted to explore other possibilities—even though this required that he rework virtually every parameter of his inherited musical language.”¹⁹ This is precisely the subversiveness that has made Schubert a source of anxiety for Schumann, Steblin, and other critics and scholars for well over a century now. This is also precisely the subversiveness that may have drawn Amos to Schubert during the creation of *NoH*. Schubert’s legacy, in light of what Amos sought to achieve with her song cycle, functions as a canonic space-maker, carving out room for alternative musical dialogues and modes of expression. The idea of creating alternative space in the canon is one of particular importance to Amos, for if she achieves one thing with *NoH*, it is infusing this space with an alternative dialogue of her own.

The themes that begin Amos’s album—brokenness, the ending of a relationship—are also reflected in the themes of Schubert’s *Winterreise*.²⁰ Schubert set poetry by Wilhelm Müller and published this famous song cycle in the twilight of his life. The narrative concerns a man travelling through a barren winter landscape, reminiscing and lamenting about lost love.²¹ After wandering through twenty-three dreary poetic settings, the main character finally meets a lone organ grinder (“Der Leiermann”), whose “continuous drone . . . of music seems to encapsulate the endless journey of the wanderer—the cycle that can only end in death.”²² Suffering from what has been

19. McClary, “Music and Sexuality: On the Steblin/Solomon Debate,” 87.

20. Oussama Zahr, “The Amos Variations,” *Opera News* 76, no. 4 (October 2011): 16.

21. Laura Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23.

22. *Ibid.*, 34.

speculated to be syphilis, Schubert found himself near death and in a frame of mind no less despairing than the subject in *Winterreise*. “Imagine a man,” he wrote in a letter to a friend, “whose health will never be right again, and who in sheer despair over this ever makes things worse and worse, instead of better; imagine a man, I say, whose most brilliant hopes have perished, to whom the felicity of love and friendship have nothing to offer but pain at best. . . .”²³ Like the man in *Winterreise* wandering towards death and never reclaiming his love, like the woman at the start of *NoH*, battered from the shattering of her romance, Schubert was quite possibly literally dying from a disease contracted from one of his own relationships. Possible anxieties regarding his own sexuality may have increased Schubert’s feelings of isolation, and it is not hard to imagine that he felt an affinity for *Winterreise*’s protagonist: a despairing, self-declared social outcast.²⁴ Perhaps Amos has tapped into these same sentiments; she is most certainly aware of the subordinate, outcast position of many women in our society.

Although *Winterreise* served as a sonic model for *NoH*, and while the two cycles share the thematic elements of brokenness and journeying, Amos ultimately tells a very different story. Unlike the perpetually downtrodden leading character in *Winterreise*, the heroine of Amos’s cycle ends her journey on a note of peace and hope. This marked difference is particularly significant, especially when considering that the *NoH* opening

23. Susan Youens, *Retracing a Winter’s Journey: Schubert’s Winterreise* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 25.

24. Ibid. Certainly audiences and performers have tapped into this sensibility—in the winter of 2004, American tenor David Pisaro traveled on foot across Northern England to give a total of thirteen performances of *Winterreise* in settings ranging from churches to farmhouses. He explained that his goal with the performances—an interesting hybrid of music and method acting—was to “make this music relevant to people—people who have been dumped, people who have been dejected, made redundant.” See Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 32.

narrative of a woman finding herself in the dying embers of a relationship is evocative of the larger relationship between men and women in the classical tradition—one that is repeatedly marked by women’s oppression, exclusion, and misrepresentation. With inspiration from Schubert’s grim song cycle and the devastation of “Shattering Sea” as a starting point, the protagonist’s subsequent journey of self-reclamation in *NoH* is of upmost importance. Here is where Amos strategically offers her alternative to the narrative, her variation on the long-standing theme of masculine dominance in the hegemony of the musical canon. How she specifically does so will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapters, but the fact that the *NoH* cycle ends on a positive note is in of itself a hopeful change.

NoH is modeled on traditional song cycles, and like a typical plot-driven cycle, Amos’s work is a collection of songs grouped by a cohesive narrative. Of course, Amos has put her distinct spin on song-cycle practice. Her album is a deliberate reversal of tradition: while composers often crafted their cycles around pre-existing poetry, Amos has lent her own poetry to pre-existing musical classics. Amos has also added her own compositional talents to each of the pieces. With the help of long-time collaborator and arranger John Philip Shenale, Amos re-orchestrated each piece for piano and a small chamber ensemble. Amos has not only reworked some of the compositional tropes of the song cycle, she has also revised some of the genre’s common gendered themes.

At the height of their popularity in the nineteenth-century, song cycles and Lieder were closely tied to music-making in the domestic sphere. The piano-and-voice composition of Lieder made them suitable for use in the home, and the ideal nineteenth-century woman was expected to be able to perform gender-appropriate genres (small

scale works like Lieder) on gender-appropriate instruments (piano). Additionally, song-cycle composers often expressed this idealized womanhood in their work. Schumann's *Frauenliebe und-leben*, for instance, depicts a woman and the uncontrollable joy she feels over fulfilling her life's traditionally feminine roles: first love; marriage; and childbirth.²⁵ The cycle is problematic for many women, and musicologist Ruth Solie has claimed that *Frauenliebe und-leben* makes modern audiences uncomfortable because of its emphasis, by its male poet, on the domestic role of women.²⁶ Overall, the gendered nature of many song-cycle themes and the performance of Lieder in the home "became a means by which family relationships could be established and confirmed, be they between mother and child, prospective lovers, or husband and wife."²⁷ The final piece in the *Frauenliebe* collection depicts the woman's anguish over her husband's death. Without him, she cannot bear to go on living: "The forsaken woman just sits and stares; the world is empty," she sings, "I have loved and lived; I am not alive any more."²⁸ When Amos's *NoH* character loses her male companion, on the other hand, she sets out on a journey of self-discovery. In light of this narrative turn, for Amos to compose a contemporary song cycle is truly fitting. What better way to renegotiate the position of women than with a genre that traditionally subordinated them? Like *Frauenliebe*, *NoH* traces a woman's life story, but instead of what Solie deems an "impersonation of a woman by the voices of

25. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 50.

26. Ruth A. Solie, "Whose Life? The Gendered Self in Schumann's *Frauenliebe* Songs," in *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220.

27. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 50.

28. Robert Schumann, *Robert Schumann: Selected Songs for Solo Voice and Piano*, ed. Clara Schumann, from the Complete Works Edition, with a new prose translation of the texts by Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), 146-7; 244-5.

male culture,”²⁹ the latter offers the story of a woman’s journey from the voice and perspective of a female. Although the performance and consumption of Lieder in the home has all but disappeared in today’s modern age, Amos’s popularity is bringing the negotiation of gendered relationships through the song cycle back to wide audiences. *NoH* made *Billboard* history by simultaneously peaking in the top ten on the Alternative and Rock charts and at number one on the Classical charts.³⁰

Amos isn’t the first to rethink the song cycle in an attempt to reclaim the female voice. Aaron Copland’s *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1950) and Ned Rorem’s *Women’s Voices* (1975-6), as well as his setting of poems from Sylvia Plath’s *Ariel* (1971)³¹, serve as examples of cycles that strive to articulate a distinctly feminine voice and perspective. That Copland and Rorem undertook such a task is worth noting—both perhaps experienced their own personal oppression as homosexuals in a less-than-gay-friendly era. Several modern female composers have also approached the song cycle from a woman’s perspective: Judith Weir’s *woman.life.song* (2000) and Diamanda Galás’s *Defixiones, Will and Testament* (2004) are two examples. Elements of the song cycle have even made appearances in popular music; the thematic cohesion of a concept album, to an extent, embodies the spirit of the classical genre. The Decemberists’ *The Hazards of Love* (2009), is a recent example of a concept album with a complex narrative dealing

29. Solie, “Whose Life? The Gendered Self in Schumann’s *Frauenliebe* Songs,” 220.

30. “Chart News,” Tori Amos Official Website News, posted October 4, 2011, <http://toriamos.com/news.html> (accessed March 28, 2013).

31. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 56.

with a variety of themes, including love, relationships, and gender.³² What sets Amos's *NoH* apart, though, is her use of the classical canon. By aligning herself with a canonic but potentially subversive composer like Schubert, and by drawing from and then reworking traditional classical genres and thematic content, Amos is at once able to position herself within and renegotiate the classical music tradition.

32. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 56-7, 185.

PART TWO: FEMINIST STRATEGIES IN *NIGHT OF HUNTERS*

CHAPTER III: MATRIARCHAL LINEAGES, MAGIC, AND MYTHOLOGY

Amos employs a variety of feminist strategies in *NoH* in order to reclaim feminine agency and power in the milieu of the classical canon, but perhaps the tactic most relevant in this project is Amos's emphasis on matriarchal structures and the power of feminine-oriented mythology and magic. While the focus on matriarchy serves a broader purpose in underlining the power of feminine lineages and the connectedness of women generally, Amos's use of magic and mythology calls upon and deconstructs specific male-articulated negative tropes common in Western patriarchal culture. Together, these strategies demonstrate how Amos uses cultural feminism frameworks to achieve her feminist goals. First, however, a summary of the album's narrative will provide proper context for Amos's feminist work.¹

Set in Ireland on the river Bandon, *NoH* opens in crisis with "Shattering Sea." The tension of this musical landscape depicts the violent shattering of a relationship between the cycle's heroine, tori—with an intentional lower-case "t"—and her male partner, who is never referred to by name, but only as "him."² The violence that has occurred between the couple is heightened by the knowledge that both tori and her lover possess elemental powers: he carries the force of water and she the power of fire. Abandoned by her lover

1. For a complete list of songs on *NoH*, refer to Table 1 on page 53.

2. Because they are not necessarily the same, my use of "tori" will be in reference to the lead character of *Night of Hunters*, while the use of "Amos" will be in reference to the composer and performer of the cycle. Amos's use of a lower-case "t" might suggest that the song cycle heroine is meant to represent the everywoman. tori's success, then, is representational of the success of all women.

and alone in an old Georgian home, tori pieces together what has just taken place as the sun slowly sets.

In “SnowBlind,” listeners are introduced to the character Anabelle. A shape-shifting creature that first appears in the form of a fox, Annabelle explains to tori that the clearest sight can sometimes come during the darkest hours. She claims that a clue to the couple’s relationship can be found 3,000 years previously in ancient Ireland. With the ability to see into the past, Anabelle takes tori on a mental journey through time to witness a mythic conflict that is depicted in the song “Battle of Trees.”

Through this vision, it is revealed that tori and her lover were, in past lives, poets united against a common enemy and brandishing the ancient Irish tree alphabet (also known as Ogham) as a weapon. Amos emphasizes in her liner notes that an understanding of the true power of poets in ancient Ireland has been lost in modernity, and that a poet’s wrath, “if skillfully turned on a ruler of an opposing army, could shame them to such an extent that a psychological advantage could be achieved for the poet’s army.”³ Despite this power, however, the relentless Thunder God-worshipping invaders eventually defeated the poets and their goddess-centered culture—a culture that would then be further suppressed by the spread of Christianity.

The album’s next song, “Fearlessness,” takes listeners back to more recent history, when doubt and blame crept into the couple’s relationship and began to drive them apart. Anabelle, this time appearing in the form of a goose, offers tori, in “Cactus Practice,” a mind-altering elixir, allowing her to reach a new level of understanding and recognize her

3. Tori Amos, “Night of Hunters: Introduction track by track,” *Night of Hunters* (Deluxe Version), MP3, 2011.

role in the shattering of her relationship. The transcendent effects of this elixir are felt throughout the next song, “Star Whisperer.”

Nearly ten-minutes long, “Star Whisperer” serves as the sonic centerpiece and narrative turning point in the cycle. For the first time, tori speaks directly to her lover, referring to him as “you.” Album liner notes reveal that tori’s lover also gains a voice and a perspective that is represented through various ensemble instruments. Amos’s lyrics suggest “Star Whisperer” as a revelatory moment in which tori is able to understand how the relationship brought out the worst in each of them: “I saw a ‘you’ I didn’t want to see,” she sings, “I saw a ‘me’ I didn’t want to see.”

Having gained this new insight, tori gazes at the stars that join to create Job’s Coffin and remembers when she abandoned her power of fire to be with her lover. Anabelle encourages tori to reclaim herself and her power, as a “grid of disempowerment” and a force that wants “Earth to be controlled” looms in the present. “Nautical Twilight” allows tori to expand upon these ideas, and she realizes that by denying herself, she has played a pivotal role in upsetting the delicate balance of her relationship.

In “Your Ghost,” and “Edge of the Moon,” tori once again addresses her lover directly. After meeting his ghost, she realizes that she wasn’t the only one damaged in the devastation of “Shattering Sea,” and that he was also greatly wounded by her. tori then asserts that their power—which has up to this point yielded such destruction—can also be used for healing. “Edge of the Moon” allows for the reminiscing of deep feelings between the two—and the recognition that many of these feelings still exist.

With the help of Anabelle’s powers and elixir, tori comes to a deeper understanding of her emotions—a far cry from the shocked and confused woman that

first appears in “Shattering Sea.” With “The Chase,” Anabelle announces her departure and leaves tori with The Fire Muse. Before the shape-shifter leaves, she imparts final bits of wisdom upon tori, encouraging her to embody both the hunter and the hunted. Only then, Anabelle claims, will tori be able to out-smart, out-maneuver, and “out-create the forces who have chosen to use their power for destructive purposes.”⁴

In “Night of Hunters,” The Fire Muse warns tori of the intentions of the dark forces referenced in “The Chase.” The Fire Muse says that while some are greedy for power, others seek to corrupt the dreams of children. tori’s initial instinct is to seek revenge, but The Fire Muse counsels her to follow a path that allows her to “find Love instead of their blood by your thorn.” With the help of the ancient Seven Sisters (after which the only instrumental piece in *NoH* is named), “a frequency is put in place to watch over the children’s dreams and guard them against the dark forces that would invade these children.” tori is then able to continue her personal journey from a place of gratitude and love.

With the rising of the sun that set at the opening of the album—the entire journey of the cycle has occurred during one night—*NoH* ends with “Carry.” A gentle ballad, the song shows tori at peace with herself and her circumstances. Although she is not reunited with her lover, she sings that she will carry him—and others who have come and gone from her life—like a tattoo on her heart forever.

Only four characters appear throughout *NoH*: tori; her lover; Anabelle; and The Fire Muse. While tori’s male partner is at times given a voice through orchestral

4. Ibid.

instruments—a detail that may be missed entirely by the casual listener—only the cycle’s female characters are depicted with sung voices and text. While Amos lends her voice to tori, Amos’s then-eleven-year-old daughter Natashya Hawley and her niece Kelsey Dobyms voice Anabelle and The Fire muse, respectively. For Amos, the inclusion of her daughter and niece was a natural step: “I think if I were having a very dark night after a shocking experience,” she explains, “I would go to both of them and talk to them, so naturally I wanted them involved in the project.”⁵ Amos’s character in *NoH* does just that. She turns to Anabelle and the Fire Muse for much-needed guidance after the devastation that has occurred in “Shattering Sea.”

Amos’s inclusion of female family members in the album—as well as the wisdom, knowledge, and mutual support that occur between the characters they voice—emphasizes the power of matriarchal structures. The invocation of a matriarchy is purposeful in its opposition to the patriarchal tradition—a tradition identified by gender resistance feminisms as the root cause of male dominance and female subordination.⁶ To counter this subordination, gender resistance feminisms seek to valorize women’s “nurturance, emotional supportiveness, and mothering capacities.”⁷ Anabelle and The Fire Muse serve, in many ways, as mother figures to tori in *NoH* by providing emotional support and guidance during a time of need.

5. Tori Amos, “Documentary,” *Night of Hunters* (Deluxe Version), MPEG-4 video file, directed by Barry Barnes, 2011.

6. Lorber, *Gender Inequality*, 12.

7. *Ibid.*, 13.

The notion of patriarchy is something that has informed Amos's work for much of her life and career. When speaking of her work, Amos says that her songs are "not about make-ups and breakups" or "who is sleeping with whom." Instead, "they're about the breaking down of the patriarchy within relationships and the idea of women claiming their own power."⁸ In *Piece by Piece*, she emphasizes her commitment to this mission with calculated language: "My whole goal has been to *penetrate* the patriarchy from the day I was five."⁹ With this statement, Amos not only recognizes patriarchy, its oppressive nature, and its symbolic association with the phallus, she also declares her desire to dismantle it.

Amos was also just five-years-old when she was accepted as a pianist into the Peabody Conservatory. There, she was first introduced to classical music and composers. When asked why she chose not to pursue a career as a concert pianist, Amos explains that, while she admired those who devoted their lives to interpreting the music of great composers, she wanted to know who the "think tanks" were—or, in other words, those with the power to choose the music that was worthy of study and performance. She also became acutely aware of the lack of women in the repertoire she studied. In an interview given during the promotion of *NoH*, Amos revealed: "Growing up at the Peabody when people would say 'the three Bs' you know – whoever they are, Bach, Beethoven,

8. Burns and Lafrance, *Disruptive Divas*, 63.

9. Amos and Powers, *Piece by Piece*, 95. Emphasis added.

Brahms . . . It wasn't Amy Beach, okay, it just wasn't."¹⁰ In another interview, Amos stated:

There weren't a lot of women in classical music that were getting taught. . . . It seemed that they didn't get a great shake; great opportunities. Someone said to me at the conservatory, "you know, if you want to really pursue being a composer, not just a pop songwriter"—as if it were the dirtiest, most awful thing you could ever consider doing—"you need to know that it's one in a billion chance." And I thought, "well that's not very fair, is it?"¹¹

In light of Amos's quotes, it's possible that one of the first manifestations of patriarchal dominance that Amos experienced was in the world of Western classical music. The matriarchy Amos constructs in *NoH*, therefore, works to give women structures of power within this same realm. Ann Powers also recognizes how Amos has specifically contested the musical patriarchy with *NoH*: "Leave it to Amos to find a way to challenge the classical tradition of masculine mentorship by working in a little matrilineal magic."¹²

Perhaps more important than the patriarchal relationship between characters, however, is what the characters *do*, or, in other words, how these characters function as women within the cycle. Throughout *NoH* runs a clear sense of magic and mythology—elements that play a central role in defining the identities of the characters and how their narratives unfold. While thematically relevant in a number of the cycle's moments, magic

10. Melissa Lesnie, "Tori Amos: classical music huntress," *Limelightmagazine.com.au*, September 14, 2011, <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/271983,tori-amos-classical-music-huntress.aspx> (accessed February 25, 2013).

11. "Tori Amos on Night of Hunters – Part 1," [n.d.], video clip, accessed January 21, 2013, YouTube, *Youtube.com*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDIsqhz_8ow.

12. Ann Powers, "First Listen: Tori Amos, 'Night Of Hunters,'" NPR Music, <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/11/140261371/first-listen-tori-amos-night-of-hunters> (accessed March 28, 2013).

and mythology are perhaps best represented in the song “Battle of Trees” and with the character Anabelle.

Amos articulates her connection to mythology and goddess-worshipping cultures in *NoH* with “Battle of Trees.” Inspired by the ancient druidic Beth-Luis-Nion tree-alphabet, “Battle of Trees” is the only piece on the album in which the central couple is not in turmoil, but united.¹³ That the couple is allied amidst a culture worshipping the White Goddess is not unintentional on Amos’s part. It is only after the invasion and triumph of the culture of the Thunder God (which has ties to, according to Amos, Christianity) that the lovers’ relationship begins to deteriorate. The suppression of the White Goddess by the Thunder God has clear gendered implications¹⁴ and allows “Battle of Trees” to be interpreted as an allegory for the battle women in the world of Western classical music, a realm in which they have been silenced and suppressed by masculine-centric traditions. This allegory is further supported by Amos’s emphasis on the power of poetry. In the same manner that poetry is wielded as a weapon in “Battle of Trees,” male-composed classical music that provides damaging representations of women has been employed as source of feminine shame for hundreds of years. Fortunately, the power of what cultural

13. Robert Graves provides a thorough discussion of this alphabet in *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, amended and enlarged edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 168-95. It is also possible that Amos was inspired by Graves’s interpretation of a medieval Welsh poem entitled “The Battle of the Trees,” also in *White Goddess*, 15-34.

14. This narrative also has clear religious implications, and many feminists identify Christianity as an institution that perpetuates the oppression of women. Amos herself has taken great issue with traditional Christian doctrines, but the nuance and details of these issues go beyond the scope of this particular project. For a feminist critique of Christianity, see Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Leslie Feinberg also critiques Christianity from a transgender perspective in “Transgender Liberation, A Movement Whose Time Has Come,” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010), 133-43. For a specific discussion of Amos and Christianity, see Lankford, *Women Singer-Songwriters in Rock*, 143-5.

feminists call cultural “texts”—or products of culture that are embedded with societal ideas regarding gender—can be used not only for shame and destruction, but for healing. Music, therefore, is a well-suited avenue for the renegotiation of women’s agency within canonic traditions.

The mythology embedded in *NoH* is undoubtedly a reflection of Amos’s deep connection with feminine spirituality and folklore, a connection that began early in her childhood. During the summers she spent with her Cherokee grandfather in North Carolina, Amos heard the Native story of Corn Mother. In the story, Corn Mother’s body literally becomes the source of maize, an essential staple for her people. In essence, her body is a reminder of balance and a source of life. For Amos, the idea of a life source has particular meaning for her creative process, and she views her songs not as entities that originate from her, but instead from a powerful force that she is able to access. This notion, as she is well aware, goes against traditional Romantic-era notions of “genius,” a label bestowed upon many composers in the canon: “The romantic myth of the artist says that you are the Source,” she explains. “I have no illusion about that. I think this goes back to my grandfather. That was his great gift to me—Native Americans don’t believe they are the Source. They have *access* to the Source.”¹⁵ By drawing from Corn Mother as a matriarchal source of power, life, and creativity, Amos is able to contest the patriarchal notion of the dominant male “genius” within canonic traditions. Therefore, female-oriented mythology not only serves as a source of creative power for the central couple in *NoH*, but also for Amos in the larger scope of her life and career as a musician.

15. Amos and Powers, *Tori Amos: Piece by Piece*, 2, 18-19.

This connection to mythology is also indicative of doctrines of some radical gender resistance feminists, who reject traditional religious affiliations and instead practice goddess worship—deriving their “symbols and rituals from the earth and fertility goddesses of pre-Judeo-Christian and pre-Islamic religions,” as well as Native American cultural figures like the Corn Mother.¹⁶ The heavy use of goddess-centered mythology and religious practices is one way that Amos’s feminist strategies in *NoH* can be situated within a gender resistance feminist framework.

Closely intertwined with mythology are the elements of magic that appear throughout *NoH*—elements that are articulated primarily with the character Anabelle. Anabelle’s shape-shifting nature, her ability to see into the past, and her possession of a mind-altering potion are explicitly indicative of the magic of witchcraft. The witch (along with other feminine mythological figures, like the siren) has also been constructed by patriarchal society in a way to shame women. They are the villains—perhaps alluring at first, but in the end always destructive and deviously evil—that fill our cultural fairy tales. Lawrence Kramer points out that female creatures of mythology are especially marked by excessive sexuality, danger, and the threat they pose to the “imaginary order of masculinist culture.”¹⁷ In psychoanalytic feminist terms, the degradation of mythological or magic female figures may be interpreted as a result of a fear of the castrating woman. Stare into the gaze of the gorgon, be allured by the call of the siren, or become bewitched by a spell, and man will lose his phallus—his symbol of masculine power and dominance.

16. Lorber, *Gender Inequality*, 140.

17. Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, 75.

Fortunately, these female figures are not permanently tied to such hideous representations. Hélène Cixous, for example, reclaimed and re-signified the gorgon in her piece “The Laugh of the Medusa.” With poetic finesse, Cixous transformed the stone-y, castrating gaze of Medusa into an “icon of women’s sexual strength.”¹⁸ Cixous writes: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing.”¹⁹ If this new Medusa is to be representational of female sexual empowerment, her laugh is perhaps embodying the *jouissance* associated with being a woman and the knowledge that, ultimately, such joy cannot be repressed.

Following in Cixous’s footsteps, Amos has been among the first female performers to appropriate these reviled feminine figures in her performance, and Karina Eileraas sees performances of “ugly” as a source of feminine agency:

To provocatively invoke the ugly or despised figures of the witch, bitch, and whore, is an act of genealogy (foraging through the history of women’s representation), re-signification, and potential self-empowerment. Girl bands’ appropriation of negative female iconography stages an explosive assault on, and an ironic reversal of, images foundational to misogynist symbolism.²⁰

Amos certainly hasn’t been afraid to perform ugly in the past. She ironically references burning witches in her 1994 song “God” and cathartic bloodletting in “Precious Things” (a song in which she also alludes to her own status as an “ugly girl”). When re-appropriated and re-signified, the witch is not a source of shame, but a source of power.

18. Lorber, *Gender Inequality*, 175.

19. Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 422.

20. Karina Eileraas, “Witches, Bitches & Fluids: Girl Bands Performing Ugliness as Resistance,” *TDR* 41, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 124.

Amos's character Anabelle—with all her capabilities of magic—is therefore not a reviled creature, but a wise and powerful tool of feminine resistance. As a shape-shifter, she embodies a fluidic nature that “neither marriage nor any other social institution can dam or channel.”²¹ With this power, Anabelle defies normative categorizations dictated by society, as well as their potentially damaging associations. Anabelle appears in both fox and goose form, and her ancient wisdom is articulated with the voice of a child.²² With the power to embody such dualities, Anabelle escapes strict codes of age, gender, and even species. This advantage is clearly demonstrated in “The Chase,” as Anabelle's shape-shifting is employed to both successfully evade predators and capture prey. She tells tori that to defeat her oppressors—the “dark forces” that seek to control the world—she must be flexible and able to become both the hunter and the hunted. One of Amos's greatest assaults on patriarchal culture has been her re-appropriation of elements of magic and mythology that are regularly used to belittle women. In the struggle to regain feminine agency in the midst of male-dominated traditions, Amos has waged war on the oppressors using the oppressor's own weapons—and subsequently embodied elements of both the hunted and the hunter.

21. Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, 77.

22. The evocation of children and childhood are central issues in the narrative of *NoH*. The childlike characteristics of Anabelle, as demonstrated above, are central to her source of power, and a significant point in the album's plot comes when tori and the seven sisters save the children and their dreams from being invaded by dark forces. Both of these issues not only further ground Amos in the psychoanalytic feminist tradition, but they also comment upon Amos's use of this type of feminism to combat gender imbalances. Rosemary Tong has noted that psychoanalytic feminists claim that “gender identity and hence gender inequity is rooted in a series of infantile and early childhood experiences.” tori's efforts to save children from “dark forces”—which can be interpreted as oppressive patriarchy—are perhaps efforts to amend gendered power imbalances for future generations. See Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 129.

CHAPTER IV: MUSICAL BORROWING

When musicologist and Deutsche Grammophon executive producer Alexander Buhr reached out to Amos with the idea of creating a twenty-first-century song cycle based on classical themes, Amos saw the opportunity to borrow from previous composers as a means to make powerful statements about gender:

For Deutsche Grammophon to approach me as a woman and say, “with our blessing, go mess with the masters, make it great,” was an opportunity to say we’re going to tell a story about a woman, and her psychological process, and we’re going to use the ingredients to form a marriage between male and female as well. I’m taking some of their DNA and making a new being.¹

Each piece on *NoH* is tied together by its use of pre-existing music (see table 1), and Amos’s compositional process for *NoH* exists within a larger tradition of musical borrowing. Harold Bloom expressed this relationship of creative borrowing in his theory of the anxiety of influence, which posits that artists must depart from, and ultimately “destroy,” influences from the past in order to produce work that is truly original and valuable. Music scholars have sometimes adapted this model to situate composers (especially those borrowing from canonic forebears) within Bloom’s aggressive, competitive, and masculinized framework.² The quote above, however, demonstrates how Amos departs from Bloom’s theory by using a rhetoric of mutual partnership and

1. Lesnie, “Tori Amos: Classical Music Huntress.”

2. See Lloyd Whitesell, “Men with a Past: Music and the ‘Anxiety of Influence,’” *19th-Century Music* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1994), who cites Brahms, the early modernists, and even Beethoven as composers explored with Bloom’s model.

feminine, creative fertility. As a result, Amos is able to approach musical borrowing in a way that at once honors and challenges her compositional predecessors.

Table 1. Amos's use of pre-existing music, song-by-song.

<i>Night of Hunters</i> Track:	Variation On:
1. Shattering Sea	"Song of the Madwoman on the Sea-Shore" Prelude op. 31, no. 8 Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888)
2. Snowblind	Añoranza (from 6 Pieces on Spanish Folksongs) Enrique Granados (1867-1916)
3. Battle of Trees	Gnossienne no.1 Erik Satie (1866-1925)
4. Fearlessness	Orientale (from 12 Spanish Dances) Enrique Granados
5. Cactus Practice	Nocturne op. 9 no. 1 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
6. Star Whisperer	Andantino (from Piano Sonata in A major D 959) Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
7. Job's Coffin	Inspired by "Nautical Twilight"
8. Nautical Twilight	Venetian Boat Song (from Songs without Words op. 30) Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
9. Your Ghost	Theme and Variation in E flat major WoO 24 "Ghost Variations" Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
10. Edge of the Moon	Siciliano (from Flute Sonata BWV 1031) Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
11. The Chase	The Old Castle (from Pictures at an Exhibition) Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)
12. Night of Hunters	Sonata in F minor K. 466 Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) And: Salve Regina (Gregorian Chant)
13. Seven Sisters	Prelude in c minor Johann Sebastian Bach
14. Carry	The Girl with the Flaxen Hair (from Preludes I) Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

While a thorough discussion of the complexities, history, and traditions of musical borrowing is far beyond the scope of this project, J. Peter Burkholder—who has written extensively on the topic—has delineated a series of fundamental questions when

approaching this particular field of study. Two of the foremost questions posed deal with how the borrowed music is used in the new work, and what “musical or extramusical functions” the borrowed music serves.³ Burkholder asserts that extramusical associations stemming from borrowed material can serve a variety of functions, including a critique of the music that is being borrowed.⁴ Especially within the narrow realm of popular music borrowing from classical traditions, the motivations for borrowing can range from “recycling good melodies for a new audience to humor, irony, or commentary, often exploiting the distance between the ‘high’ culture of art music and the broad-based popular culture.”⁵ Amos certainly marries the seemingly disparate worlds of classical and pop/rock music, but her greatest accomplishment may be how she carefully negotiates the critique of some of the music from which she borrows.

The relationship with music and composers from the past—and especially the critique of such compositions—has, for many composers, not been without conflict. Music scholars have adapted Harold Bloom’s literary anxiety of influence to depict the unease of creating under the shadow and legacy of past composers. Bloom’s theory asserts that a creator must “misread” the work of his forebears, allowing him to depart completely from previous traditions and forge new creative idioms.⁶ Bloom describes this conflict as a “battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and

3. Burkholder, “The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowings as a Field,” 864.

4. *Ibid.*, 866.

5. Burkholder, “Borrowing.”

6. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 30. The use of male pronouns in this discussion is a deliberate reflection of Bloom’s model, which consistently constructs the artist as masculine.

Oedipus at the crossroads. . . .”⁷ In this mythic, Freudian configuration, the son must destroy his father to gain creative superiority. Artists who create work derivative of past traditions—who fail to conquer and surpass the influence of predecessors—are consequently labeled weak.

Musicologist Lloyd Whitesell has critiqued Bloom’s theories as particularly problematic in terms of gender. Because creative superiority is equated with aggressiveness and the willingness to subdue potential threats to identity, Whitesell has accused Bloom of merging “artistic self-definition with those of masculine self-definition”—that is to say, the common archetype of normative masculinity.⁸ Whitesell also points out that Bloom has excluded the woman from the original Freudian/Oedipal triad of child-father-mother. This exclusion carries numerous implications (including a suggestion that the sexual attraction the child feels for his mother must be transferred to the father, an inference of homosexuality about which Bloom is noticeably silent), but Bloom makes clear that the dominant tone of relationship of influence is one of strength and aggressive “male entitlement.”⁹ Because of the absent woman, Bloom’s familial metaphor leaves no room for attributes that are traditionally more associated with the feminine mother figure: nurturing; sheltering; and creative fertility, for example.

Adapted for music scholarship, Bloom’s theory has been used to explore the compositional anxieties of a number of composers, including Johannes Brahms and the

7. *Ibid.*, 11.

8. Whitesell, “Men with a Past: Music and the ‘Anxiety of Influence,’” 154. This equation is of particular interest when considered within the context of the nineteenth-century, the century marked by increased gender difference, the century in which the theme of the anxious composer, haunted by the ghosts of his musical forefathers was perhaps most prominent, the century when canon formation and the notion of the composer “genius” was emerging, and the century of music from which Amos most heavily draws.

9. *Ibid.*, 155.

avant-garde modernists.¹⁰ Whitesell, however, features several composers who clearly do not fit within Bloom's theoretic parameters. Benjamin Britten, for example, when asked about how he felt about the "great burden" of past musical traditions, answered that he was "supported" by it: "I couldn't be alone. I couldn't work alone. I can only work really because of the tradition that I am conscious of behind me. . . . I feel as close to [John] Dowland . . . as I do to my youngest contemporary. . . . I'm given strength by that tradition."¹¹ Rather than adhere to the traditional masculine attributes that are tied up in the anxiety of influence, Britten has acknowledged a more feminized rhetoric. By recognizing the support he receives from ancestral composers, Britten, like Bloom, is evoking a kind of family metaphor. Unlike Bloom, however, Britten's configuration is based on "nurture, something our culture tends to relegate, materially and symbolically, to the sphere of the 'maternal'."¹² Fertility is also a thematic point in models of influence beyond that of Bloom's. Maurice Ravel, for instance, referred to the influence of Erik Satie as "fertile soil, propitious to the growth of rare flowers."¹³ Amos expresses this musical fertility by referring to the songs on *NoH* as beings, created by the combined DNA of herself and past composers.¹⁴

10. Whitesell, "Men with a Past: Music and the 'Anxiety of Influence,'" 152.

11. "Mapreading: Benjamin Britten in Conversation with Donald Mitchell," in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 95-6.

12. Whitesell, "Men with a Past: Music and the 'Anxiety of Influence,'" 157.

13. Arbie Orenstein, ed., *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 45.

14. Lesnie, "Tori Amos: Classical Music Huntress."

Bloom's absent mother figure and the cultural idea of the feminine are reintroduced in the creative models of composers like Britten and Ravel. Although it is unlikely that Amos is familiar with the statements by these composers, I suggest that it is also from this perspective that Amos approaches the music from which she borrows. Like Bloom and Britten, Amos uses a familial metaphor to describe the relationship of influence, but changes the dynamics of the familial to one of partner instead of descendent. "I was having love affairs with these composers to the point where truly my husband would come and say, 'Okay, isn't it time for a nightcap and look at the stars with your husband?' And I would say, 'I am still with the dead guys,'"¹⁵ she stated during press for the album, "I fell in love with their work, I fell in love with the energy."¹⁶ With such statements, Amos has effectively positioned herself as the romantic partner—as opposed to the anxious opponent—of past composers.

Amos has articulated her profound respect for the composers from whom she borrows; in interviews she often refers to them as "masters." Still, she strives to strike a careful balance between reverence and bold critique: "When you start using things from the masters, you have to approach it with a delicate ruthlessness. Because if you're intimidated by it, you shouldn't be doing it,"¹⁷ the singer stated. "The idea was that I'd

15. "20 Years On, Tori Amos Redefines The Classics," Studio Sessions, *Npr.org*, December 20, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/21/144039089/new-tori-amos-cd-night-of-hunters-redefines-classics> (accessed February 25, 2013).

16. Gwynne Watkins, "A Feminist-As-Ever Tori Amos on Her Latest Album and 'Penetrating' Classical Male Composers," *Vulture.com*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.vulture.com/2011/12/feminist-as-ever-tori-amos-on-her-latest-album-and-penetrating-classical-male-composers.html> (accessed February 25, 2013).

17. Kerri Mason, "Tori Amos Talks New Album & 'Little Earthquakes' at 20," *Billboard.com*, September 17, 2011, <http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/467412/tori-amos-talks-new-album-little-earthquakes-at-20> (accessed February 25, 2013).

take male masters, not female, and then permeate and penetrate them as a woman. That was exciting to me. . . . If we were going to create a new being, they became the egg and I acted as the penetrator. But in the most loving way!”¹⁸ By creating the role of a female penetrator, Amos is effectively positioning herself as the figure of power in this creative relationship. Additionally, through the embodiment of the combination of male (penetrator/permeator) and female (fertile/loving/nurturing) attributes, Amos is able to depart from Bloom’s aggressive creator-as-destroyer rhetoric while still having the agency and power to engage and negotiate with gender issues within the tradition from which she borrows.

The opening song of *NoH*, “Shattering Sea,” provides a sound example of how Amos refashions both the musical and extramusical associations of pre-existing compositions to support a new, feminist narrative. The piece is based on Alkan’s “La Chanson de la Folle au Bord de la Mer,” (Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore). This title is particularly interesting considering the nineteenth-century preoccupation with madness—especially women’s madness—and the artistic and musical manifestations of such obsessions.

Author Barbara T. Gates points out that although women’s suicide rates were consistently lower than that of men, fictions about suicidal madwomen were prevalent throughout the nineteenth-century.¹⁹ Both madness and suicide were displaced onto

18. Watkins, “A Feminist-As-Ever Tori Amos on Her Latest Album and ‘Penetrating’ Classical Male Composers.”

19. Barbara T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 125.

women as female “maladies”²⁰ and supported the Victorian notion of women as the weaker sex, both physically and mentally. Suicidal women (many of whom were lovelorn victims of heartbreak, driven to madness by men) were therefore depicted frequently in nineteenth-century literature, poetry, and art.

Death by drowning was a theme popular in these depictions, and the “dissolution into a body of water”²¹ called upon the association between women and excess fluid, including uncontrollable crying, drowning in one’s own tears, and the fluid of childbearing and menstruation.²² A second common depiction was that of airborne women, having leapt to their deaths from great heights. This was most often combined with watery elements, as women hurled themselves from bridges and cliffs into murky rivers and stormy seas. Thomas Hood’s famous 1844 poem “The Bridge of Sighs” retold one woman’s jump to death,²³ and illustrations of plummeting women (see figure 1) often accompanied popular literature.

20. See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

21. Gates, *Victorian Suicide*, 135.

22. Perhaps the most famous drowned woman in literature is Shakespeare’s Ophelia, a character that continued to resonate in the Victorian imagination. Sir John Everett Millais’s famous painting *Ophelia* (1851-2), for example, brings together madness, literature, music, and art by depicting Shakespeare’s character floating in a stream, gazing heavenward and singing a song immediately prior to her drowning.

23. Walter Jerrold, ed., *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 649-50.



Figure 1. George Cruikshank, “. . . The Poor Girl, Homeless, Friendless, Deserted, Destitute, and Gin-Mad, Commits Self-Murder”²⁴

One legend even tells of Sappho, a Greek poet often credited today as a figure of feminine creativity and bisexuality, jumping to her death after her lover, Phaon, rejects her.²⁵ Portrayals of Sappho’s cliff-side leap cropped up in France in the late eighteenth-century, but the most influential was Antoine-Jean Gros’s 1801 painting *Sappho au cap Laucade* (see figure 2).²⁶ While Sappho is not yet airborne, Gros’s painting dramatically captures the moments before she steps off the craggy ledge.

The deaths and suicides of madwomen were not limited to literature and art, but extended also to the medium of music. French composer Charles-François Gounod, for example, staged an operatic retelling of Sappho’s heartbreak and suicide in 1851 with *Sappho*.²⁷ Susan McClary has argued that in many nineteenth-century operatic settings

24. George Cruikshank, “The Drunkard’s Children. Plate VIII,” in *The Bottle and The Drunkard’s Children: In Sixteen Plates Designed and Etched by George Cruikshank* (London: Cowans & Gray, 1906).

25. Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 107.

26. *Ibid.*, 176; 184.

27. Steven Huebner, “Gounod, Charles-François,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40694> (accessed March 20, 2013).



Figure 2. Gros's *Sappho au cap Laucade*

(she illustrates her point with Strauss's *Salome*), female pathology is depicted musically with “slippery chromatic deviations from normative diatonicism.”²⁸ Diatonicism is therefore representative of the rationality of onlookers, who are most often men. Thematically, then, Alkan's composition falls into line with nineteenth-century depictions of madness and suicide as seen in art, literature, and opera. Alkan biographer William Alexander Eddie notes that the composer's character pieces (which includes “Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore”) were “strongly influenced by opera and ballet from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.”²⁹ Additionally, Alkan uses musical techniques to evoke madness. By toeing the line between diatonicism and chromaticism, by disrupting normative chordal progressions, and by utilizing musical extremes, Alkan

28. McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 100.

29. William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 93.

masterfully draws upon the subversion of expected musical codes in order to depict musically his title character's madness.

Alkan's composition begins with a quietly rumbling bass, and a minor tonic 6/4 chord (Eb-Ab-Cb-Eb) in the key of Ab minor is sounded entirely below the bass staff in the left hand. With this opening sound, Alkan has already destabilized the tonic progression of the piece: second inversion tonic chords are harmonically unstable and are sometimes used cadentially in conjunction with a dominant chord, with the pair typically resolving to a root-position tonic chord. While Alkan does follow up his minor tonic 6/4 with a major dominant, he moves directly back to the second inversion tonic. In fact, manifestations of these two chords (with a few minor exceptions) are the only harmony Alkan uses throughout the entire piece. What listeners get, as a result, is a sort of never-ending cadence, without resolution. To add to this tonal instability, Alkan gives performers the instructions *pedale sempre* (pedal always). The heavy use of the sustain pedal, in combination with the extreme low register of the bass chords, results in a muddy, almost indecipherable tonal progression (see example 1).

Floating above the bass notes is an eerie, haunting melody. Written almost entirely among the ledger lines above the treble staff, the extremity of the melody's register creates an unnerving juxtaposition between the left and right-hand parts. If this melody is, as the title suggests, the song of the madwoman on the sea shore, then the resulting impression is perhaps one of this woman meandering dangerously close to the edge of a sea side cliff, with the repeating, watery bass chords representing a succession

Example 1. Alkan's "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore," mm. 5-9.³⁰

of waves crashing upon the craggy rocks below. Alkan sprinkles the melody with nonchord tones and an overall sense of chromaticism, rendering an aural representation of the woman's unstable mind, or perhaps a more literal depiction of a foot slipping along the cliff's crumbling edge. Either way—as McClary has demonstrated in her analysis of *Carmen* and *Salome*—slippery, female chromaticism must be contained, and death is often the means of such containment.³¹

After establishing and repeating the main melody, Alkan delivers the climax of piece by transitioning into a variation of the melody in the parallel major key of Ab. With the eeriness of the melody and overall instability of the piece still intact, this transition to the major feels uncomfortably out of place. An accelerating tempo and increasing dynamic build to create a musical state of mania, which, like a mental state of mania, seems to be building towards an inevitable, debilitating crash. It is conceivable, therefore, to imagine this excerpt as a depiction of the madwoman leaping from the cliff side and plummeting to her death—not unlike Cruikshank's homeless woman, Sappho, Puccini's

30. Alkan, C.H.V., "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore," *imslp.org*, http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/3/33/IMSLP11248Alkan_Song_of_the_Madwoman_on_the_Sea_shore.pdf (accessed March 16, 2013).

31. McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 61-2.

Tosca, or Wagner's Senta. When the original minor melody returns to end the piece, it is no longer whole, but instead appearing in broken fragments followed by ominous periods of silence. Perhaps the madwoman has survived her fall and still tries to sing, her shattered body sprawled on the jagged rocks. Or, perhaps Alkan's fragmented melody is the ghost of this woman's song, being carried and reiterated by the seaside winds.³²

If given this interpretation—an interpretation that is in line with many of the gendered narratives of madness and death in the nineteenth century—Alkan's piece raises many concerns. Not only is death (or, at least, an eternity of insanity) this woman's fate, it is nearly impossible to discern any context surrounding her madness. The nineteenth-century artistic tropes of heartbreak, lost love, and the consequent suicide of women are troublesome enough. The lack of context surrounding the woman in Alkan's piece seems to allude to the fact that her madness is almost innate—it is, at the very least, her only identifying characteristic in the piece.

These problematic narratives are what Amos refashions when she borrows from Alkan for her album opener, "Shattering Sea" (see example 2). The piece begins much like "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore," with Amos playing several rumbling bass figures in a rhythm akin to Alkan's. Instead of full chords, however, Amos only plays single notes and then octaves, rendering a tonal quality that is sonically clearer and perhaps less ambiguous than Alkan's. Additionally, while Alkan's piece is in the

32. Eddie notes that Alkan was quite introverted, struggling with bouts of melancholia and retreating from public performance for stretches of years at a time. The birth of an illegitimate son in 1839 may have added to the composer's mental turmoil, and he once expressed his envy of a friend's wife and legitimate child in an 1860 letter. "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea Shore" was composed in 1847 during one of Alkan's isolated periods, and perhaps is somewhat representative of the composer's own deteriorating mental state. See Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, 7-16.

compound meter of 6/8, “Shattering Sea” opens in a simpler 4/4. The entrance of the madwoman’s melody continues this sense of rhythmic stability. Amos’s version is less loquacious; she uses fewer pitches overall and simplifies the rhythm. The melody’s register is also different from the original: Amos’s version is roughly two octaves lower, quelling the original extreme register tensions that Alkan created. Harmonically the piece is also more grounded. The bass notes that Amos strikes are no longer the fifth of the tonic, but the root of the tonic, and the progression that follows in the opening measures of the piece is an alternating second-inversion subdominant (iv 6/4) and tonic. This iv 6/4 ultimately serves a pedal rather than a cadential function, creating a passage that is grounded in the tonic—as opposed to Alkan’s never-ending cadence. Setting the stage for the rest of the album, Amos has added an orchestral ensemble and lyrics to Alkan’s piano piece, in turn creating a musical and narrative context for the lead character’s “madness.”

Example 2. Opening Piano Part for Amos’s “Shattering Sea”³³

33. Tori Amos, “Night of Hunters,” arranged by John Philip Shenale, featured under “Night of Hunters –iTunes LP” digital booklet for *Night of Hunters* (Deluxe Version), Deutsche Grammophon, MP3, 2011.

The ominous pulsing bass and eerie melody taken from Alkan's original solo piano piece quickly give way to a musical chaos that is unique to Amos's arrangement. The tension of this musical landscape depicts the violent shattering of a relationship between the cycle's heroine and her male partner. While the emotional turmoil of a breakup is depicted musically through feverish rhythms and increasing tempo, Amos's opening lyrics allude heavily to the fact that physical violence has also taken place: "That is not my blood on the bedroom floor," she sings, "that is not the glass that I threw before." The words seem to be those of a woman in shock and denial over the violence surrounding her. Although it is not immediately clear *whose* blood is on the floor, it is the male character that is consistently set up as the figure of violence throughout the rest of the piece: Amos refers to his power and his tempest, which surges in an "angry flash." Later in the piece, Amos repeats the following line several times: "every line, every curve, every twist, every turn of every brutal word." Here, the language is telling. The use of "curve" (and its connotations to the female form) in conjunction with "twist," "turn," and "brutal" intermingles violence with a woman's body. Knowing that Alkan's original nineteenth-century piece was entitled "Song of the Madwoman on the Sea-Shore," and knowing the contemporary history of the spectacle of female madness and fate of madwomen in nineteenth-century creative works, Amos' narrative of male-on-female violence is all the more chilling.

With the strategic use of borrowed music and the addition of a textual narrative, Amos has negotiated the extramusical associations of female madness depicted by Alkan's piece. Without a contextual frame, this woman's identity is entirely encompassed by her unstable state of mind. Amos borrows elements of this madness from Alkan and

ultimately places a context around it. The underlying narrative of domestic violence provides a context and a *reason* for the woman's breakdown. Furthermore, this framework perhaps alludes to the fact that this mental state is situational and therefore likely temporary.

Whether the heroine's consequent encounter with a shape-shifting creature is a manifestation of this madness is left for listeners to determine. It is, however, most important to note that the woman in *NoH* is able to embark on a subsequent journey of self-discovery, therefore evading the fatal end of so many nineteenth-century madwomen. Although "Shattering Sea" is just one song on *NoH*, it serves as a fit representation of Amos's feminist strategy of musical borrowing. With a sense of delicate ruthlessness, Amos can be simultaneously supported and inspired by her compositional forebears, while at the same time engaging in a critique of the negative gender traditions they represent as members of the canon.

CONCLUSION

Amos's feminist critique of damaging masculine narratives—both throughout her career generally and within *NoH* more specifically—has no doubt contributed to the renegotiation of patriarchal traditions. At the same time, however, the complexities surrounding issues regarding gender, sexuality, and oppression make it so that Amos's work is also not without potential limitations and shortcomings. When approached from a different angle, the framework for Amos's work can be seen as exclusive and essentialist.

If Amos is to be grounded in psychoanalytic feminism, the problematic nature of the politics of sexual difference must be acknowledged. A concept like *écriture féminine* assumes that there is a distinct female experience and mode of expression, separate from that of men's. This mode of thinking is reliant on the binary categorization of male/female characteristics and attributes, and this “attribution of a fixed essence to women” (and men), as described by feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz, is essentialist in nature.¹ This universal women's essence is often linked to biological traits, but can also be expressed through psychological characteristics: the tendency towards nurturance, nonaggression, and supportiveness, for example.² Egalitarian feminists, who posit that the difference between men and women is not biologically but socially determined, argue that essentialism can be used as a tool to confirm gendered power imbalances and that the

1. Elizabeth Grosz, “Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism,” in *The Essential Difference*, ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 84.

2. *Ibid.*

“divisions and inequalities between the sexes were seen as the effects of a nature that should not be tampered with.”³

Harold Bloom’s model undoubtedly relies on such essentialist structures, as men are depicted as dominant aggressors and women (if present at all), are weaker, creative inferiors. Although Amos ultimately resists Bloom’s configuration, much of her work in *NoH* can be read along essentialist lines. Her approach to musical borrowing, for example, draws from essentialist feminine tropes of nurturance and supportiveness, as does her emphasis on the mutual supportiveness of matriarchal structures. The feminine qualities of love are consistently privileged throughout the album over the male qualities of aggressiveness. This notion is perhaps best articulated by the Fire Muse’s advice in the song “Night of Hunters:” “find Love instead of their blood by your thorn. . . .”⁴

Some have argued, of course, that sexual difference and gender essentialism need not be seen as entirely damaging, and Cixous points out that it is “through ignorance that most readers, critics, and writers of both sexes hesitate to admit or deny outright the possibility”⁵ of masculine and feminine modes of expression. If sexual difference is indeed accepted as a reality, however, it need not fall into the trap of hierarchizing binaries. Cixous rejects damaging binaries in which women function within “the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which

3. Ibid.

4. Tori Amos, “Night of Hunters,” *Night of Hunters* (Deluxe Version), Deutsche Grammophon, MP3, 2011.

5. Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 421.

annihilates its specific energy. . . .”⁶ Pure difference, according to Grosz, “refuses to privilege either term.”⁷

As an upper-class, heterosexual white woman, Amos is very much privileged in many ways and perhaps cannot fully represent all of the voices excluded from classical music canonic traditions. The problem with the canon is not limited to its exclusion of women; it also excludes or marginalizes people—and especially women—of color and members of the LGBTQI⁸ community. *NoH* may make a case for the voices of women, but it does not specifically engage with issues of race, class, or non-normative modes of gender or sexual orientation, which have become increasingly important in recent feminist movements.⁹ Accusations that feminism was tailored for privileged, educated, white, heterosexual women were common criticisms of the movement, and black and transgender feminists argued that race, class, and gender discrimination deserved just as much focus as issues of sexism.¹⁰ Seen in this light, the feminist goals in *NoH* can seem to be lagging behind the urgency of today’s feminist issues.

Even when considering the potential shortcomings of Amos’s work with *NoH*, the album is nonetheless an important addition to the renegotiation of the damaging traditions

6. Ibid., 424.

7. Grosz, “Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism,” 91.

8. LGBTQI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex.

9. See Judith Lorber’s discussion of Transnational Feminism, Multiracial/Multiethnic Feminism, and Postmodern Feminism and Queer Theory for more on these political orientations, in *Gender Inequality*.

10. See bell hooks, “Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression,” 51-7; and Leslie Feinberg’s “Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come,” 133-43, in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2010)

of patriarchal culture. The human tendency (and perhaps especially in patriarchal cultural structures) to acquire wealth and resources, dominate others, and impose one's values, evidenced in recent centuries by the colonization practiced by so many of the world's peoples, is replicated in the traditions of canon formation. Some posit that the imperialists of canon formation have been the representatives of high culture—including academies, concert halls, and musicological communities—and the colonized have been the music-cultures and musicians that created it. Musicologist Don Michael Randel, when speaking about the practices of musicology, argues:

I have claimed that musicology's canon has been determined largely by the methods with which musicology has studied its objects. Musicology has typically added repertoires to its domain by a process of colonization that imposes traditional methods on new territories. After years of regarding Italian opera as peripheral, if not frivolous, we discovered that it too had sources and even sketches to study and edit and that it too could be investigated in terms of large-scale formal coherence. We appropriated jazz not because of what was most interesting or characteristic about it, but because it too presented us with a body of source material and variants to classify.¹¹

Canon-makers, then, are those with the inclination and power to impose their own specific "criterion of excellence"¹² and modes of analysis onto the products of music-cultures, thereby determining the value of the material in question. As Randel points out with references to Italian opera and jazz, canon-worthiness is not a fixed concept, but can change over time at the discretion of those in power. Amos introduces many elements that have yet to live up to the canonic standards of greatness: she is a female composer and performer, and she comes primarily from a popular music tradition—one that has

11. Don Michael Randel, "The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox," in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 17.

12. *Ibid.*

historically threatened “musicology’s most ingrained habits.”¹³ *NoH* is also infused with feminist politics, which Randel claims has a “particularly important role to play in our discipline, for it confronts directly the issues of canon formation . . . and invites the collaboration of Marxist and psychoanalytic studies.”¹⁴

Perhaps canons provide musical communities with a certain level of discipline. Canons delineate a repertoire that provides uniformity and a shared cultural experience. But discipline can also be used to disguise the ugliness of canons, or what ethnomusicology Philip V. Bohlman identifies as the “racism, colonialism, and sexism that underlie many of the singular canons of the West.”¹⁵ Bohlman goes on to argue how a canon is

determined not so much by what it was as by what it was not. It was not the musics of women or people of color; it was not musics that belonged to other cultures and worldviews; it was not forms of expression that resisted authority or insisted that music could empower politics. . . . Disciplining music was an act of domesticating music, making it our own and commanding it to be docile.¹⁶

According to Bohlman, then, musical discipline—like that expressed through canons—can be wielded as an exclusionary and colonial-like weapon. The cultural influence of music makes this kind of disciplinarian power a dangerous thing.

Broadly, music is not some abstract *thing*. It is not without historical and cultural significance and power. Both Susan McClary and Marcia Citron have emphasized

13. *Ibid.*, 15.

14. *Ibid.*, 16.

15. Philip V. Bohlman, “Epilogue: Musics and Canons,” in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 198.

16. *Ibid.*

music's ability not only to reflect the values of a culture, but to influence and change them. Additionally, musicologist Christopher Small coined the term "musicking," which drew focus to music as an activity. According to Small, participating in music—whether through performing, listening, or sweeping up an auditorium post-concert—allows us to enact our ideal social relationships.¹⁷ With this in mind, is a relationship in which women are at best excluded and at worst misrepresented, demeaned, and abused truly ideal? Is a legacy of musical imperialism, sexism, racism, and classism the best we can strive for?

This is why it is important to continue to talk about gender in music, and especially in popular music, which is consumed, experienced, and embraced by vast numbers of people. This matters because women matter. A single album from a single artist may not have the power to disrupt centuries of tradition completely, but, if we are to have some sense of hope, some idea that oppressive traditions are not sacred and untouchable pieces enshrined in our cultural museum, it is important that we tell the individual stories of those who are not afraid to resist long-standing traditions and offer an alternative. Together, these stories will bring about much needed change. Tori Amos and *Night of Hunters* is one of those stories.

17. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 13.

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