

CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND
POST-TONAL MUSIC

Given the vast, marvelous repertoire of feminist approaches to literary analysis introduced over the past two decades, a music theorist interested in bringing feminist thought to a project of analyzing music by women might do well to look first to literary theory. One potentially useful study is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s landmark work *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which asserts that nineteenth-century writing by women constitutes a literary tradition separate and distinct from the writing of men and argues more specifically that writings of women, including Austen, Shelley, and Dickinson, share common themes of alienation and enclosure.¹ Some feminist theorists have claimed that a distinctive female tradition exists also in modernist literature; Jan Montefiore, for example, asserts that in autobiographical writings of the 1930s, male modernists tended to portray their experiences as universal in contrast to female modernists who tended to represent their experiences as marginal.²

But because of the singular nature of the modernist, post-tonal musical idiom, an analytical project intended to explore whether a distinctive female tradition indeed exists in music immediately runs aground. Unlike tonal compositions, which draw their structural principles from a more or less unified compositional language, post-tonal works are constructed according to highly individualized schemes whose meaning and coherence derive from their internal structure rather than from their relation to a body of works. Milton Babbitt has characterized these contrasting qualities of post-tonal and tonal music as “contextual” and “communal,” respectively, a distinction that will be useful in establishing the approach, boundaries, and intentions of this study.³

Babbitt defines “contextual” compositions as largely self-enclosed works that

¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979; 2nd edn, 1984).
² Jan Montefiore, “Case-histories versus the ‘Undeliberate Dream’: Men and Women Writing the Self in the 1930s,” in *Difference in View: Women and Modernism*, ed. Gabriele Griffin (London: Taylor & Frances, 1994), 56–74. Other explorations of the relationship between women and literary modernism are Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1: *The War of the Words* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds., *The Female Imagination and the Modernist Aesthetic* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1986).
³ Milton Babbitt, *Words about Music*, ed. Stephen Dembski and Joseph N. Straus (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 9, 167–68.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02843-1 - Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon

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establish their premises and materials within themselves – he gives as examples compositions by Schoenberg, Webern, and himself – and argues that these pieces can be understood on their own terms without reference to other works. In contrast, the coherence of music that he calls “communal,” like common-practice tonal compositions, depends on its relation to external principles which are shared with other works.

If we accept Babbitt’s premise that post-tonal compositions are by nature contextual and self-enclosed, then the task of drawing them into broader analytic categories like “music by women” for the purpose of comparative study proves to be extremely difficult, if not impossible; it follows that the enterprise of integrating gender into a set of close readings of post-tonal compositions might not best be served by a comparative method with the intent to generalize about the distinctiveness or “difference” of modernist music by women but by an alternative strategy.

Thus, I shall not seek to argue that specific compositions share some sort of commonality because they were written by women who were working within a specific idiom and historical moment. Instead, I propose to relate the music and identities of three twentieth-century American women: Ruth Crawford (1901–53), Marion Bauer (1887–1955), and Miriam Gideon (1906–96).⁴ I offer analyses of their music that are informed by the conditions of gender and politics within which they exist. By the term “gender” I mean, following historian Joan Scott’s definition, the social organization of sexual difference; under this definition, gender is regarded as distinct from biological sex.⁵ By “politics” I am referring to the network of relations between people in a society. This book explores the impact of gender on the structure of the compositions discussed, and addresses the impact of the composers’ political views on their music. As a work rooted in musical analysis, this study contributes to a growing body of scholarly literature that brings feminist insights to bear upon music theory.⁶

⁴ Ruth Crawford is also known by her married name, Ruth Crawford Seeger. Because she composed the three works analyzed in this study under the name Ruth Crawford, I shall refer to her as such.

In her article “Why Can’t We Listen to Marion Bauer’s Music?,” *Providence Journal-Bulletin* (Rhode Island), 23 August 1994, Susan Pickett asserts that Marion Bauer lied about the year of her birth and maintains that Bauer was born on 15 August 1882 rather than on 15 August 1887. Pickett supports this assertion in an unpublished typescript (“Marion Bauer Lecture”) by referring to a local newspaper’s announcement in 1882: “On August 15, born to the wife of J. Bauer, a daughter.” Since this evidence does not clearly state that “a daughter *Marion*” was born on this day, the possibility remains that another daughter – not Marion – was born on 15 August 1882. The question of Bauer’s birth year is not answered by consulting the birth records of her hometown. The Walla Walla, WA, health department does not have a birth certificate for Marion Bauer on file – before 1907, it was not required to register births or deaths there. The year of Bauer’s birth thus remains unverified, and requires further research. I thank Professor Pickett for providing me with a copy of her typescript.

⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 2.

⁶ Examples of feminist music-theoretical writing include Lori Burns, “Analytic Methodologies for Rock Music: Harmonic and Voice-Leading Strategies in Tori Amos’s ‘Crucify,’” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Walter Everett (New York: Garland, 2000), 213–46; Marcia J. Citron, “Music as a Gendered Discourse,” Chap. 4 of *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120–64; Marion A. Guck, “A Woman’s (Theoretical) Work,” *Perspectives of New Music* 32/1 (1994),

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The seven compositions that I analyze are Crawford's String Quartet, movements three and four, composed in 1931; her song "Chinaman, Laundryman" from *Tivo Ricercari* for voice and piano, composed in 1932; two of Bauer's *Four Piano Pieces*, "Chromaticon" and Toccata, premiered and published in 1930;⁷ and Gideon's "Night is my Sister" from *Sonnets from Fatal Interview* for voice and string trio, composed in 1952; and "Esther" from *Three Biblical Masks* for violin and piano, composed in 1960.⁸ Each analytical chapter first offers information about the composer relevant to the piece, and then presents an analysis informed by the biographical material. This approach thus employs another sense of the term "contextual" – in addition to Babbitt's meaning of "self-referential," these analyses are also contextual because they relate the techniques and strategies used in each piece to its social contexts. What I aim to demonstrate is that formalist readings acknowledging the impact of a composer's gender and political views on the work itself impart valuable ways of hearing and apprehending these compositions.

The following biographical survey provides a portrait of these three composers. Ruth Crawford was born in 1901 in East Liverpool, Ohio. Her father was a Methodist minister, and her mother a pianist who gave Crawford piano lessons.⁹ She continued studying piano with Djane Lavoie Herz and composition with Adolf Weidig at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Crawford spent the summer of 1929 at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where she met Marion Bauer, who was also in residence there. That fall Crawford moved to New York and began studying composition with Charles Seeger. In August of 1930 she went to Europe to continue her musical education in Berlin, supported by a Guggenheim fellowship – the first in composition awarded to a woman. Crawford was active in New York's modern music community during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and earned some measure of recognition from her colleagues for her musical accomplishments.

After Crawford married Seeger in 1932, their son Michael was the first of four children they would have together. Raising four children, giving piano lessons, teaching music at her daughter Barbara's school, and acting as a music consultant to several schools took up enormous amounts of her time, and for the next two decades she stopped composing modernist works, devoting her creative energies

28–43; Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "On Rebecca Clarke's Sonata for Viola and Piano: Feminine Spaces and Metaphors of Reading," in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music* (Zurich: Carciofoli Press, 1999), 71–114; Judy Lochhead, "Joan Tower's 'Wings' and 'Breakfast Rhythms I and II': Some Thoughts on Form and Repetition," *Perspectives of New Music* 30/1 (1992), 132–57; and Joseph N. Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger* (JNS-MRCS).

⁷ A date of composition has not yet been firmly established for Bauer's *Four Piano Pieces*. In a Works Progress Administration Composers' Forum-Laboratory of 22 January 1936 in which Bauer was the featured composer, the program gives the date 1930 for her *Four Piano Pieces*, and I am provisionally using this as the date of its composition (program in Harrison Potter file, Library Archives, Mount Holyoke College).

⁸ Gideon originally composed *Three Biblical Masks* for organ in 1958 as a commission from Herman Berlinski.

⁹ The first extended study of Crawford's life and music was Matilda Gaume's *Ruth Crawford Seeger* (MG-RCS). Judith Tick's biography, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (JT-RCS), is a rich resource about Crawford.

instead to transcribing and arranging numerous American folk tunes, many of which were published.¹⁰ Crawford returned to modernist composition in the 1950s, just before she died of cancer in Chevy Chase, Maryland, at the age of 52. Her compositions have enjoyed a renaissance during the past decade: scores, recordings, and information about her life and work are fortunately being made available, and her String Quartet 1931 is now rightfully regarded as one of the finest modernist works of the genre.

The compositional style that Crawford forged in Chicago bears the influence of Skryabin in its harmonic language, a quality about which Seeger was highly critical. Early pieces include her *Nine Preludes for Piano*, the first five composed in 1924–25 and the last four in 1927–28; the Violin Sonata of 1925–26; and her *Five Sandburg Songs*, composed at the MacDowell Colony in the summer of 1929. After beginning to study composition with Seeger in 1929, Crawford became much more concerned with contrapuntal procedures in her music, as is evident in some works composed during this period, including her second, third, and fourth *Diaphonic Suites* of 1930, her String Quartet 1931, and her 1930–32 song cycle *Rat Riddles*, with texts by Carl Sandburg.¹¹

Born in 1887 as the youngest child of French Jewish immigrants, Marion Bauer first studied piano with her sister Emilie in her hometown of Walla Walla, Washington, and later with Henry Holden Huss and Eugene Heffley in New York.¹² In 1906 she

¹⁰ Collections of Crawford's transcriptions and arrangements include *Our Singing Country*, ed. John A. and Alan A. Lomax (New York: Macmillan, 1941) and *American Folk Songs for Children* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950; repr., Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1993). A complete list of Crawford's published transcriptions and arrangements appears in JT-RCS, 364–71.

¹¹ In JNS-MRCS, Joseph N. Straus discusses the relationship between Crawford's music and Charles Seeger's theories of dissonant counterpoint and new music composition, as outlined in Seeger's article "On Dissonant Counterpoint," *Modern Music* 7/4 (1930), 25–31 and in his treatise "Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music," in Charles Seeger, *Studies in Musicology II, 1929–1979*, ed. Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 39–273. Judith Tick explores the impact of Seeger's theories on Crawford's String Quartet in her essay "Dissonant Counterpoint Revisited: The First Movement of Ruth Crawford's String Quartet 1931," in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock*, ed. Richard Crawford, R. Allen Lott, and Carol J. Oja (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 405–22, as does Taylor A. Greer in his essay "The Dynamics of Dissonance in Seeger's Treatise and Crawford's Quartet," in *Understanding Charles Seeger, Pioneer in American Musicology*, ed. Bell Yung and Helen Rees (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 13–28.

¹² The most thorough biographical study of Bauer currently available is Nancy Louise Stewart's "The Solo Piano Music of Marion Bauer" (NLS-SPM). Information on Bauer also appears in Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 123–27 (rev. edn, Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, forthcoming); David Ewen, *American Composers Today: A Biographical and Critical Guide* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1949), 20–22; Madeline Goss, *Modern Music-Makers: Contemporary American Composers* (New York: Dutton, 1952; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 129–40; Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, in press); and Claire R. Reis, *Composers in America: Biographical Sketches of Contemporary Composers With a Record of Their Works* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; rev. and enl., 1947), 19–20. Three interviews with the following people yielded additional information about Bauer: Martin Bernstein, who was Bauer's colleague at New York University for twenty-five years (interview with the author, 22 March 1994); Maurice Peress, who studied with Bauer at New York University (interview with the author, 11 April 1994); and Irene Heskes, who also studied with Bauer at New York University (interview with the author, 8 July 1997).

traveled to Paris for the first time; there she studied with Nadia Boulanger, exchanging English lessons for instruction in harmony and analysis, and studied piano as well, with Raoul Pugno. Bauer studied counterpoint and form in Berlin with Paul Ertel in 1910–11, and composition in New York City during World War I with Walter Henry Rothwell.

During the 1930s, Bauer continued her career as a composer, writer, and university professor while living with her sister Flora in New York. In 1926 she became the first woman faculty member to join New York University's music department, where she taught generations of students during her twenty-five-year career, among them composers Milton Babbitt, J. Vincent Higginson, and Julia Frances Smith.¹³ In 1933 she published *Twentieth Century Music*, an introductory guide which was then particularly valuable for its reproductions of extracts from hard-to-find music by composers of atonal music, including Schoenberg and Webern.¹⁴ She was a correspondent for the Chicago-based periodical *The Musical Leader*, and her orchestral work *Sun Splendor*, noteworthy as the second piece by a woman to be performed by the New York Philharmonic, was premiered by the Philharmonic in 1947 under the direction of Leopold Stokowski.¹⁵

Bauer's music is more conservative than Crawford's. Many of her compositions from the 1910s and 1920s rely upon a pitch center; she turned to serialism relatively late, in the 1940s, in her piano works *Patterns*, op. 41 (1946), and *Moods*, op. 46 (1950/54). Although her writings and lectures of the early 1930s embraced modernism and atonality, her own music remained less experimental than the music she advocated by Schoenberg, Webern, Cowell, and others.¹⁶ This seeming inconsistency may be partly explained by the reluctance of her publisher, Arthur P. Schmidt, to support her early leanings toward modernist composition.¹⁷ Two piano works illustrating Bauer's tonal style are *Three Impressions* (1918) and *From the New Hampshire Woods* (1922).

Bauer's study at the Paris Conservatory from 1923 to 1926 with André Gédalge, who taught Ravel, Milhaud, and Honegger, marked a turning point in her compositional style from a tonal to a post-tonal idiom.¹⁸ Her interest in innovative

¹³ Ammer, *Unsung*, 267.

¹⁴ Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How It Developed, How to Listen to It* (MB-TCM). Babbitt states that reading Bauer's book was for him "one of the great turning points," convincing him to transfer from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to New York University, from which he graduated in 1935. Babbitt is quoted in William Duckworth, *Talking Music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995), 61–62. Babbitt provides an introduction to the 1978 reissue of Bauer's *Twentieth Century Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Ammer, *Unsung*, 98. ¹⁶ Bauer's *Twentieth Century Music* is an example of her pro-modernist writing.

¹⁷ Letters to Bauer's publisher Arthur P. Schmidt dated 29 September 1916 and 6 October 1916 attest to Schmidt's preference for a more conservative musical style than Bauer wished to maintain; cited in NLS-SPM, 17. In addition, Bauer describes her unfortunate experience of having her violin sonata marked down from first to second place in the 1928 Society for the Publication of American Music competition expressly for its "modern tendencies" (letter by Bauer dated 18 June 1927 to Henry R. Austin of the Arthur P. Schmidt Publishing Company; cited in NLS-SPM, 39–40).

¹⁸ Two works that Bauer composed in Paris in 1924, *Quietude* and *Turbulence*, demonstrate her departure from tonality.

compositional procedures is apparent also in one of her tonal works, her 1922 Prelude in D minor for piano, op. 15/3, in which a melodic line is presented by the right hand in a continuous rhythm of short note values and is doubled at the octave by the left hand.¹⁹ Bauer continued composing in a post-tonal style from the 1930s through the mid-1950s; these works include her *Dance Sonata*, op. 24 (1932); *Two Aquarelles*, op. 39 (1944/50); and *Anagrams*, op. 48 (1950).

Miriam Gideon was born in Greeley, Colorado, in 1906.²⁰ Her father, Abram, taught philosophy and modern languages at Colorado State Teachers College, and her mother, Henrietta, taught at a local elementary school. Both were of German-Jewish extraction and spoke German at home. In 1916, the Gideon family moved to Yonkers, New York. Gideon studied piano with Hans Barth in New York City and took music courses at Yonkers High School, but because her parents did not own a piano or phonograph, her contact with music at home was limited. To provide their daughter with a proper musical education, Gideon's parents sent her to Boston at the age of fifteen to study music with her uncle Henry, who was an organist and conductor, as well as the music director of Temple Israel. In Boston, Gideon immersed herself in the study of piano, organ, and music theory, and she continued to live with her uncle while attending Boston University. There she majored in French and minored in math while taking music courses and studying piano with Felix Fox. After graduating at the age of nineteen, she returned to New York and took courses in music at New York University with Martin Bernstein, Marion Bauer, Charles Haubiel, and Jacques Pillois, planning to earn a certificate to teach in the public schools. Bernstein encouraged Gideon to compose, and after a year at New York University, she aspired to teach at the university level.

From 1931 to 1934 Gideon studied harmony, counterpoint, and composition with Lazare Saminsky, a Russian émigré composer and conductor who had been a student of Rimsky-Korsakov. At Saminsky's suggestion, Gideon began to study composition with Roger Sessions, joining a number of other young musicians including Milton Babbitt, Edward Cone, David Diamond, and Vivian Fine. During the eight years that she studied with Sessions, her compositional style changed

¹⁹ As Stewart notes, the rhythm and doubling of the melody in Bauer's third Prelude is strikingly similar to Ruth Crawford's 1930 *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* (NLS-SPM, 136).

²⁰ Biographical information on Miriam Gideon appears in Jane Weiner LePage, "Miriam Gideon," in *Women Composers, Conductors, and Musicians of the Twentieth Century: Selected Biographies*, vol. 2 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press 1983), 118–41; Barbara A. Petersen, "The Vocal Chamber Music of Miriam Gideon," in *The Musical Woman*, vol. 2, ed. Judith Laing Zaimont, Catherine Overhauser, and Jane Gottlieb (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 223–55; Deena Rosenberg and Bernard Rosenberg, "Miriam Gideon," in *The Music Makers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 62–69; and in numerous biographical statements and descriptions of professional activities written by Gideon that are housed in the archives of Broadcast Music, Inc. (MGf-BMI). Interviews I conducted with the following people yielded additional information about Gideon: Irene Heskes, 8 July 1997; Barbara A. Petersen, 8 July 1997; Şahan Arzruni, 8 July 1997; Leo Kraft, 10 July 1999; George Perle, 8 September 1997; Milton Babbitt, 4 October 1997; Alexander Ewen, 17 December 1999; and Lucille Field Goodman, 21 December 1999.

Cambridge University Press

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markedly, abandoning its tonal foundations and moving to the free atonal style that she would maintain for the rest of her career.²¹

Gideon entered Columbia University's graduate musicology program in 1942, earning an M.A. in 1946 with a thesis focusing on Mozart's string quintets.²² She began teaching at Brooklyn College, City University of New York (CUNY) in 1944 and at City College, CUNY in 1947. In 1949 she married Frederic Ewen, a member of Brooklyn College's English department.²³ During the 1950s, many leftist faculty in the City University of New York system were fired or their contracts not renewed because of McCarthyism. In 1952, at the age of 53, Ewen took early retirement from a tenured position in preference to going before a committee to discuss his and others' political views. Gideon noted in a 1991 interview that in 1954, because of her views and her relationship to Ewen, "at Brooklyn College, I was told my services were no longer required";²⁴ she resigned from City College the following year, so as not to be asked to identify other leftist faculty. At the invitation of Hugo Weisgall, Gideon began to teach in 1955 at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, which awarded her a Doctor of Sacred Music degree in composition in 1970. She also taught at the Manhattan School of Music from 1967 until 1991. In 1971, Gideon was rehired at City College, where she was appointed as a full professor, and from which she retired in 1976. In 1983 Brooklyn College awarded her a Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.²⁵

Gideon was particularly interested in vocal music and set texts by Francis Thompson, Christian Morgenstern, Anne Bradstreet, Norman Rosten, and others for voice and chamber ensemble or piano. She also composed choral works, synagogue services, a cantata, and an opera, *Fortunato* which is based on the Spanish play by Serafin and Joaquín Quintero. Her instrumental compositions are primarily for chamber ensembles, and include a string quartet and a number of piano works. Gideon received awards and commissions from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, among others. In 1975 she was inducted into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the second female composer to receive this honor (the first was Louise Talma, who was inducted in 1974).

My analytical approach varies according to the work under discussion. I relate Crawford's compositions to information about her life specifically during the time she composed each work. The chapters analyzing her music describe, in turn,

²¹ Gideon contributed "Hommage à Roger" for solo piano to a festschrift in honor of her former teacher. In *Perspectives of New Music* 16/1 (Spring–Summer 1978), 118–19.

²² Miriam Gideon, "The Secular Chamber Music of Mozart with Particular Reference to the Quintets" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1946).

²³ Ewen's books include *Bertolt Brecht: His Life, Art, his Times* (New York: Citadel Press, 1967; repr., New York: Carol, 1992); and *Heroic Imagination: The Creative Genius of Europe from Waterloo (1815) to the Revolution of 1848* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1984).

²⁴ Linda Ardito, "Miriam Gideon: A Memorial Tribute," *Perspectives of New Music* 34/2 (Summer 1996), 208.

²⁵ In 1988, the annual Frederic Ewen Colloquium in Civil Liberties was established at Brooklyn College.

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incidents of professional bias against women and her reactions to them, her self-image, and her leftist political beliefs, in order to suggest that these aspects of her experience, as recorded in her letters, diary entries, and other writings, shape her compositions. Because biographical information currently available on Bauer is scant, my readings of her compositions are not grounded in specific lived experiences to the extent of my analyses of Crawford's music. Rather, they speculate about possible relationships between the narratives in two of Bauer's piano works and her identity as constructed in her writings about music and in reflections by her contemporaries. Similarly, I link Gideon's music to her identity as it was shaped by her experiences and beliefs, some of which are just now coming to light in papers and interviews. Her setting of Millay's sonnet "Night is my Sister" and her musical interpretation of the story in the Book of Esther suggest a feminist sensibility sympathetic to the female characters. In the music of all three composers, their identity is expressed in the fabric of their music.

Though my approach to each composition differs, a unifying thread throughout the book is attention to various aspects of contour, working from the foundations of contour theory established by Robert Morris, Elizabeth West Marvin and Paul Laprade, and Michael Friedmann.²⁶ Morris defines contour space as "a pitch-space consisting of elements arranged from low to high disregarding the exact intervals between the elements."²⁷

I apply Morris's conception of musical contour to a variety of musical spaces. Chapter 2 presents an analysis of the third movement of Crawford's String Quartet 1931. By using an original analytical tool that measures the "degree of twist" of the four instrumental voices as compared to their normative arrangement with the first violin as the highest voice, second violin as the second highest voice and so forth, I suggest that this work speaks in a "double-voiced discourse" (a phrase coined by literary theorist Elaine Showalter) by presenting both a dominant narrative and a "muted" narrative that is recoverable only when applying the twist tool to its dimension of voice leading.²⁸ Chapter 3 offers a narrative hearing of the fourth movement of Crawford's quartet. As in Chapter 2, I argue that Crawford's personal experience of bias against women composers informs the structure of a movement from her string quartet, and suggest that a female persona is given voice in the first violin, its music actively opposing the other three instruments which represent male authority. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of a composition with text, Crawford's song "Chinaman, Laundryman." Introducing the notion of "contour deviance," an

²⁶ Robert D. Morris, *Composition with Pitch-Classes: A Theory of Compositional Design* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Morris, "New Directions in the Theory and Analysis of Musical Contour," *Music Theory Spectrum* 15/2 (1993), 205–28; Michael L. Friedmann, "A Methodology for the Discussion of Contour: Its Application to Schoenberg's Music," *Journal of Music Theory* 29/2 (1985), 223–48; Elizabeth West Marvin and Paul Laprade, "Relating Musical Contours: Extensions of a Theory for Contour," *Journal of Music Theory* 31/2 (1987), 225–67; and Friedmann, "My Contour, Their Contour," *Journal of Music Theory* 31/2 (1987), 268–71.

²⁷ Morris, *Composition with Pitch-Classes*, 341.

²⁸ Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 263.

analytical measure analogous to the “twist tool” which I employed in Chapter 2, I assert that measuring the contour deviance of the piano’s music underscores a particular reading of the text, one that can be linked to Crawford’s political sympathies with the ethnic immigrant worker.

In Chapter 5, I argue that Bauer’s beliefs about the organization of society are suggested in her prose writings about music; her piano piece “Chromaticon” can be heard as musically representing such views. Through an analysis of the piece that maps out a narrative of conflict between specific melodic contours, I propose that Bauer’s belief in the necessity of challenging the status quo is reflected in the structure of the piece. Chapter 6 examines Bauer’s Toccata through an aspect of its performance – the relationship of the pianist’s hands – and traces a narrative in terms of one hand’s dominance over the other. Its particular approach to contour space is one that has not yet been examined in the contour literature: I discuss the relationship of the pianist’s hands in performing the predominant four-note simultaneities of the piece, whose precise pitches remain secondary in my analysis to the physical arrangement of the performer’s hands. I argue that within this performative dimension, a narrative based on a playful reversal of hand dominance is present in the work; my analysis also contemplates whether this reading of the piece might be understood to resonate with Suzanne Cusick’s recent speculations about the relationships between musical experience and sexuality.²⁹

Chapter 7 examines Gideon’s song “Night is my Sister” for voice and string trio. The text of “Night is my Sister,” a sonnet by Edna St. Vincent Millay, offers a tale of a drowned woman “weedily washed ashore,” one for whom there is “Small chance . . . in a storm so black / A man will leave his friendly fire and snug / For a drowned woman’s sake”; it thus provides an opportunity to consider Gideon’s music in relation to an overtly gendered narrative. Gideon’s setting presents an intensely sympathetic portrait of the unfortunate female protagonist while it criticizes the male character’s refusal to help her. Chapter 8 explores Gideon’s “Esther” from *Three Biblical Masks* for violin and piano, which portrays the Biblical figure in the Purim story after which the piece is named in relation to the two other primary characters, Mordecai and Haman. My analysis traces the transformation of the title character from passive and dutiful to assertive and authoritative, a shift enacted by Gideon’s treatment of pitch and rhythm.

This project of presenting analyses that are inflected by historical and social context does not argue that these strategies exist *uniquely* in compositions by women. There is, obviously, no biological imperative for women to compose one way and men another, and it is certainly possible that structures similar to those I describe here are present in music by male composers. If one indeed discovered similar strategies in compositions by men, their existence would not alter my argument about the relationship between gender and structure in these pieces by

²⁹ Suzanne G. Cusick, “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight,” in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Gary C. Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67–83.

Cambridge University Press

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Crawford, Bauer, and Gideon. I would not identify their presence as being related to gender and female identity in the ways that I claim here.

Four additional points will further clarify the goals and limits of this study. First, the compositions analyzed are not meant to be representative of the *œuvre* of Crawford, Bauer, or Gideon, or of post-tonal music by American women composers of the twentieth century more generally. Rather, I argue that these pieces may be related to their composers' subjectivities in specific ways; other compositions by Crawford, Bauer, or Gideon may not exemplify the specific relationships I claim here.

Second, I believe the task of identifying common structural elements or strategies in such a diverse group of compositions by three women is futile and, accordingly, this study does not have such a goal; rather, it presents close readings of individual works by three women. Exploring the question of whether music that belongs to a particular category (e.g., "twentieth-century music by American women") is somehow structurally distinctive would necessitate detailed readings of a number of compositions, and of music by both male and female composers.

Third, my argument is not based on compositional intention, i.e., that Crawford, Bauer, and Gideon consciously constructed these musical narratives and strategies in order to express their personal situation or views. There is no documentary evidence that they intended to present the particular narratives I offer, though it remains a possibility. Rather, this study demonstrates that making connections between biography and musical structure enables a listener to experience new and compelling ways of understanding music. Indeed, composers do not always provide the most convincing interpretations of their music, nor are they necessarily cognizant of the analytical implications of their music: Crawford once remarked that sounds in the third movement of her String Quartet 1931 were inspired by foghorns she heard at New Year's, while Bauer dismissed the last two chords of her Toccata as "arbitrary chords at the point of movement and repose."³⁰ My analyses of both of these pieces offer different readings than their composers articulated.

Fourth, I aim to present feminist accounts of post-tonal music that are pro-modernist. I thus respond to Catherine Parsons Smith's influential article which considers the historical phenomenon of musical modernism through the lens of gender.³¹ She argues that because American male composers such as Ives described musical modernism by using language fraught with masculine imagery, modernism itself is marked as male: "It appears that modernism in music, as in literature, may indeed be understood as a reaction to the first wave of feminism. One must painfully conclude that while this reaction was productive for many males, it was profoundly destructive for female composers."³² She suggests that this rhetoric of masculinity may even have ultimately driven women from fully pursuing their

³⁰ Quoted in JT-RCS, 156–57, and Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music* (MB-TCM), 119.

³¹ Catherine Parsons Smith, "'A Distinguishing Virility': Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 90–106. ³² *Ibid.*, 99.