

Music, Gender, and Sexuality, post-1800

Spring 2020

Student Discussion Forum on Music in the Era of #MeToo

Discussion Forum, Week 15: due on or before Wednesday, May 13, 11:59pm

Topic: Music in the Era of #MeToo

Hi all!

Before Wednesday, 11:59 pm, please complete your assigned readings/listening (see Tuesday class folder). Then, please post a response to the readings on this discussion forum.

I would like everyone in class to mention one issue, concept, idea from the article that you found surprising, intriguing, or provocative.

Reminder: Overall, your "post" should consist of at least one paragraph (3 full sentences, but you may write more). Adding a question is a great idea as well!

Student Response: Rasmussen's societal association, "vision with masculine rationality and hearing the feminine with hysteria" just articulates why people don't believe female survivors. Any accounts of female survivors are delegitimized unless there's a large number of survivors who come forward.

As I read the Cheng and Johnson, though, I could help but think: those that are so absorbed by music, that love it so much that they refuse to acknowledge the contextual history of predators who create it, are having an emotional reaction. which veils their perception of reality. I found it hypocritical that they're accusing survivors of being too emotional/exaggerated (when trauma scientifically impairs memory). I also think that, when predators initiate acts of sexual assault, they are acting on their emotions as well. In that context, sex is more of an act of power, not love, but still -- I find it ironic who is aloud to be emotional in a powerful and harmful way. The dichotomy Rasmussen points out is full of irony.

Student Response: The first two pages of the Johnson reading are so powerful. Remembering trauma after the fact and having to process it years and years after the fact is such a struggle and is so detrimental to a person. In this case, the music triggered these memories, but ended up being therapeutic. This can be the case for many people and can take many different shapes.

Rasmussen discusses acoso callejero (street harassment) and how it is a form of gender violence. The fear that it can strike in women is actually insane. The genuine fear that if you say anything back, this man could kill you. So you just have to keep walking and listen. As Rasmussen says, this is how men can "exert power over another . . . in a physical and/or symbolic form." This prevents women from having "equal access to public spaces" .

Student Response: The first two pages of the Johnson are absolutely chilling. With the way that it is written, it almost feels like poetry. I think it is so interesting with the sense of sound being related back to a traumatic experience. This kind of makes me think of the five senses, and how if you smell something or eat a certain food it can bring you back to an old memory. This is so evident with sounds and music, and reliving any traumatic experience by having it being triggered by something as "little" as a sound is so damaging for a person, especially when this is a reoccurring experience. This goes into the Rasmussen, with how women can react to acoso callejero: " (1) anticipation of acoso callejero, (2) perception of acoso callejero, and (3) trauma response(s) to acoso callejero." Imagine having those feelings everyday and constantly being on edge of it happening again. This causes women to not have "equal access to public spaces" because of the fear of going out and having this happen to them. It is heartbreaking that women are afraid to speak out.

What is the approach for women to overcome superhumanizing situations in a professional setting? What do these sound triggered memories say about how we can interpret music?

Student Response: From the discussion posts I have read so far, I have found interesting and great points from my colleagues. So, I will focus more on *Loving Music Till It Hurts* and its subject on the #MeToo movement.

We love music, we wouldn't be here if we didn't. However, there are people who loooooove music so passionately that they can't face reality and scale music over morality.

What annoyed me was reading music connoisseur and NYU emeritus professor of economics Melvyn Krauss say, "now Americans are being deprived of Dutoit's considerable talents because of the country's sexual politics." Like seriously? The idea of the conductor having power and being a "genius" because of their leadership and talents is what gets them away with exerting their power sexually on musicians.

Student Response: All three of these readings were very raw and real, the Johnson especially. One thing I took away was the intense connection of memory to senses other than sight, such as sound and how years in the future a sound can conjure the negative and positive memories in life. Music is composed to touch our emotions and memories. In this era, it can be used as a cry for help, a coping mechanism, a public statement, etc. No matter your background or culture, humans can connect through music in a way that language cannot.

Student Response: In the essay "The Touch of the Violin, the Coldness of the Bell Synaesthesia, Mimesis, and the Unlocking of Traumatic Memory in Bunita Marcus's "The Rugmaker" and Andra McCartney's "Learning to Walk"" many questions arose. In a way, did writing these pieces not only unlock their trauma but, help heal it? With my own traumatic experiences (non-sexual ones), writing music was a therapy of sorts, is this the same for sexual assault survivors? I wonder if these pieces were also triggering for other survivors?

Student Response: I have always been a huge opponent of the concept "separate the art from the artist" and it seems Cheng would agree. To think that someone's life, their mental and physical well-being, isn't worth as much as a talent or contribution? Garbage. Bullshit, really. There are so many men (and women) who have been accused or even admitted to some form of sexual misconduct or violence against women, and yet are still allowed to perform. Many were dismayed when David Bowie was accused of misconduct with underage fans, R. Kelly's mess of a life is slowly being unravelled and more is being discovered every day, John Lennon admitted to hitting women, and queer indie punk band PWR BTTM dissolved after lead singer Ben Hopkins was accused. Bowie revolutionized pop, Lennon changed rock, R. Kelly is revered as one of the best R&B artists of the 90s and 2000s, and PWR BTTM was a champion of queer rights and trans issues. Where do we separate the good from the ugly?

Maeve McDermott wrote an article for USA Today title "The art vs. the artist: Reckoning with my favorite musicians' #MeToo allegations" and I think she really narrows it down: it's a case of just having some decent empathy for other people. McDermott says "I believe accusers' stories about these harmful (almost exclusively) men in music. And if I believe that Ryan Adams' accusers are telling the truth, and I still make the conscious decision to stream his music or buy a concert ticket, I see that as a selfish act, signifying that I value these women's stories less than I do a pleasurable listening experience or a night out for myself." We cannot value a perceived gain over the safety of other humans.

Student Response: The Rasmussen reading stuck out to me because (unfortunately) the topic was very familiar to me. I grew up and live in a very densely populated area. Starting in middle school, it became not so uncommon to get catcalled and harassed walking home from school. It breaks my heart that so many women have to learn how to navigate at all, but especially when they are still children. One thing I have noticed is that so many men don't aurally pick up on these sounds. I have seen situations where girls were harassed and male teachers didn't even hear, test every girl in the class did.