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DECENTRING AND DISMANTLING: A CRITICAL AND RADICAL APPROACH TO DIVERSITY IN TERTIARY MUSIC EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article is a response, informed by my own recent experience of tertiary education in the UK, as well as my work as a composer, performer, researcher and activist, to the collection of articles published in *TEMPO* 292 addressing issues of diversity in music-making and tertiary music education in Australia. Though interventions have been successful in achieving better gender representation across musical contexts in Australian higher education institutions, I bring into question the long-term legitimacy of such empirical or revisionist approaches. Drawing on a range of feminist, poststructural, queer, and decolonial thought, I explore how conventional approaches to tertiary music education – both in terms of pedagogical methods, as well as assumed or prioritised content – enforce hegemonic and exclusionary value systems, hierarchies, ontologies and epistemologies. I also problematise some of the ways in which neoliberal and capitalist frameworks have become embedded within tertiary music education and advocate a process of destabilising and decentring assumed parameters, outlining how a critical, political and radical approach to music education might look.

The article 'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era',[1] published in the April 2020 issue of *TEMPO*, outlines work being done towards the promotion of women and women's work across music departments in Australian tertiary education. Initiatives such as imposing gender quotas onto university ensemble programmes, creating musicology and history classes focused on women in music, and making mandatory the inclusion of work by a female or non-binary composer on recital programmes are undoubtedly improving gender parity in the concert programming world and encouraging professional female composers, conductors and researchers. But although practices for mandating gender diversity are not necessarily novel or radical – in my experience they are widely accepted amongst those advocating

[1] Louise Devenish, Cecilia Sun, Cat Hope and Vanessa Tomlinson, 'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era', *TEMPO* 74, No. 292 (2020), pp. 30–37.

for better gender diversity in tertiary education and elsewhere – the reality is that very few institutions have actually committed to such targets and quotas.

During my time as a music undergraduate at the University of Cambridge there was no explicit work being done to address the almost complete absence of women and women's music in the curriculum and in concert programming. Historical and analytical courses were oriented towards a very conventional idea of the canon, exploring 'master works' of the great white men of history, and this was also largely representative of the composition teaching I experienced. Some attention was paid to biographies and timelines, but most was given to analytical score study with broad commentaries about aesthetic 'isms'. Sociological, anthropological, gendered and colonial contexts received only passing attention, obscuring the music's ideological premises. As Susan McClary says: 'no gender, no narratives, no politics: just chords, forms, and pitch class sets'.[2] There were occasional works by female composers included as examples, but these were often uncomfortably framed as afterthoughts intended to pacify the political minority of the student body, rather than representing the lecturer's genuine interest in the work in question.

If students chose to do a recital as part of their undergraduate degree there was no encouragement to diversify repertoire choice. My Finals recital presented a programme of contemporary music written by women and, by contrast with other performances offering canonic works (which were supported by relevant masterclasses, coaching and academics' perspectives), I did not feel that my recital was taken seriously. The archival, intellectual and emotional labour that went into creating this alternative kind of recital did not feel valued; even on a practical level, my performance (which used electronics) was not given appropriate technical support. There was clearly a fundamental assumption that nobody should deviate from the formula of presenting 'technically demanding' classical works with piano accompaniment.

My undergraduate experience is described with uncanny accuracy by Sally Macarthur in 'How the Composer is Composed', from her book *Towards a Twenty-First Century Feminist Politics of Music*. She outlines how analysis of the work of 'gifted composers' usually forms the focus of study, the linear account of the history of Western classical music only diverging only in the 1970s, where the 'progressive' narrative of new complexity (et al.) is contrasted with the disjointed world of minimalism, digital technologies, mixed media, popular musics. This score-oriented teaching leaves no room to explore how postmodernism 'addresses marginality, diversity and difference'.[3] Composition students are implicitly compelled to develop their 'craft' around the analysis of 'master works'. In developing an ostensibly creative practice students learn that 'expressing themselves entails perfecting their craft in the dominant aesthetic'.[4]

By comparison with my undergraduate experience the evidence of progress made towards gender representation in Australian institutions is encouraging. It shows that positive discrimination approaches can facilitate measurable change. However, my experience of a

[2] Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 2.
[3] Sally Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 48.
[4] Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music*, p. 46.

revisionist, and often tokenistic, approach to the work of female composers has made me question not the content, but the framework in which I was being taught. Including occasional works by women in an otherwise conventional Western canonical context continues to celebrate the narrative – dictated by a patriarchal and colonial perspective – of the 'genius' composer painstakingly constructing their master works.[5] So what are the real aims of the initiatives explained in 'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era'? Gender parity in concert hall programming? A revised 'canon' featuring more women? More female faculty members and professional composers? Should these outcomes be the ultimate, 'best case' aim of feminist work in tertiary education?

Such interventions, though important for implementing rapid change in participation and visibility, will not solve the fundamental ideological problems which prevent radically new and diverse work being done, by radically diverse bodies. Although Devenish, Sun, Hope and Tomlinson imply that they too are interested in moving away from 'the traditional Great Man/Great Work model'[6] of teaching music history, this is not explored in their article. In addition, initiatives such as commissioning technical studies by female composers or making students 'sign a tick box which says they have included a piece by a composer identifying as a woman or as non-binary'[7] feel uncomfortably superficial.

These interventions also expose the shortcomings of quotas as a solution to a lack of diversity. The proportion of women in the population is universal and quantifiable and so a 50 per cent quota for women can be justified using the liberal logic of 'fairness' and 'equality'. However, it is clear that no quantifiable quota can be meaningfully placed on other demographic groups. Gender has been so widely addressed using quotas *because* it is measurable and justifiable, but quotas do not work for other kinds of demographic diversity. Even gender quotas become uncomfortably convoluted with regards to those of fluid or non-binary gender identities. Organisations tie themselves in knots in their use of inclusive terminology (a difficulty acknowledged in the article 'Towards the Summers Night: A Mentoring Project for Australian Composers Identifying as Women').[8] Some organisations confuse their feminist messaging by seeming to advocate a rigid and exclusionary understanding of gender; on the other hand, non-binary or gender fluid students and music creators can feel excluded by the very fact of being categorised with 'women' for quotas' sakes. A more holistic and deep-rooted approach to improving diversity is ultimately needed. As bell hooks elucidates in her seminal work *Teaching to Transgress*, 'it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom'.[9]

Without critically examining and dismantling the biases within our current practices of teaching and learning, education cannot become

[5] Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 82.
[6] Devenish, Sun, Hope, and Tomlinson, 'Teaching Tertiary Music', p. 35.
[7] Devenish, Sun, Hope, and Tomlinson, 'Teaching Tertiary Music', p. 33.
[8] Cat Hope, Nat Grant, Gabriella Smart, and Tristen Parr, 'Towards the Summers Night: A Mentoring Project for Australian Composers Identifying as Women', *TEMPO* 74, No. 292 (2020), pp. 49–55.
[9] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 29.

the 'practice of freedom'. Positive discrimination, which arises as a response, a counter-action, to the present reality of women's exclusion from tertiary educational contexts, can only go so far. At best, it can reach a net-zero, in which women and men are statistically equally represented across musical life. But what would this achieve, if nothing has been done to dismantle the patriarchal power structures and value judgements which advantage male composers in the first place, and within which women must currently present their work? Ultimately, a much more profound look at *how* teaching is done, why it is done, as well as what is taught, is essential for the radical changes which all feminists would surely hope to achieve.

Fundamental to the dismantling of pedagogical frameworks and the destabilising of assumed content is a new focus directed towards broader learning and 'non-musical' frameworks. I grew into this perspective during the most valuable course in my undergraduate degree, 'Decolonising the Ear', led by Peter McMurray. The course's frameworks were postcolonial and sound studies epistemologies; alongside and within these frameworks, I was introduced to radical and experimental musical practices by a diverse range of music creators from across the globe. The class was never score-oriented; instead, teaching was focused on philosophical and critical thinking.

During my first two years of study, I had been unhappy. Most of the undergraduate programme was mandatory and followed the conventional score-oriented, 'genius composer' perspective of history and analysis. I did not find it engaging or challenging and by my third year I felt exhausted. I had not been given the radical tools to critique and dismantle my own education. The perspective I gained from 'Decolonising the Ear' in my third and final year made it very clear what had been missing from my tertiary education. Students should become equipped to think critically about their musical lives, able to contextualise their studies with decolonial, feminist, queer and crip theory, anthropological and sociological thought, and knowledge of political histories. If such material constituted the core of studies, any complementary musicological, analytical or historical courses would become more diverse by default. In a faculty oriented by radical thinking, a course without any female composers would simply be odd, as would any course of study that did not acknowledge colonialism and slavery as fundamental to understanding contemporary cultural production. The 'default' of white, male, European composers as central would be dismantled.

From this perspective the lack of any explicit acknowledgement in 'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era' of the specific, potent context of the Australian (post)colonial condition seems remiss. The only article in the issue to acknowledge that the land on which its projects took place is colonised was Hope, Grant, Smart and Parr's, 'Towards the Summers Night'. Cat Hope's blog 'What can [should?] a music school in a modern Australian university look like?' is also underwhelming, suggesting only that students should have 'some knowledge of the Indigenous music traditions and how these inform our musical landscape'.[10] Introducing students to Indigenous musics without contextualising these musics within the reality of colonialism is baffling – especially in a country where racism is still prevalent.[11]

[10] Cat Hope, *What can [should?] a music school in a modern Australian university look like?* (2019) www.musictrust.com.au.

[11] See, for example, Jack Latimore, 'Australia is Deplorably Racist, as People of Colour are Reminded When They Speak Up', *The Guardian*, 9 August 2018.

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bell hooks mentions that lecturers who attempt to respect cultural diversity are often forced to confront the limitations of their own knowledge and risk losing their hierarchical authority as the source of knowledge in the classroom.[12] Very few university lecturers have been educated with the radical approach that I am advocating. Dr McMurray sets an example: a teacher who is open and honest about his own knowledge, eager to learn from his students, and experimental and joyful in his approach.

Deleuze and Guttari's 'rhizome' concept, explored by Dan Goodley as a model for pedagogical relationships, represents this alternative mode of teaching and learning:

> The rhizome is presented as a model of communication and of proliferation. . . . Rhizomes are oppositional to trees which symbolise hierarchies, linearity and extreme stratification. The rhizome is not singularly rooted but multiply interlinked and ever growing.[13]

There is also a parallel between rhizomatic thinking and the ideas that Reardon-Smith, Denson and Tomlinson present in their article 'Feministing Free Improvisation'. They describe a feminist version of freedom – found in free improvisation – which acknowledges relationality, facilitating radical freedom within the context of supportive bonds with others.[14] The rhizome not only models the potential for experimentally open feminist performance, but also exemplifies a utopian vision of tertiary education: interlinked, mutually learning bodies spreading their thinking in many different directions.

The 'rhizome' is also related to poststructuralist ideas of 'authorship' that can enable a shift away from thinking of music as the product of a self-directed and all-knowing composer towards thinking of the composer as a 'multiplicity'.[15] Various manifestations of collective creativity would become the new 'normal' practice and although composing in the present hegemonic aesthetic would still be possible in this new educational world, it would become decentred and disoriented, contextualised by radical and critical thinking about the histories of power which have led to the development of such practices and aesthetics.

'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era' can provide us with other perspectives for thinking about radical reform. The article repeatedly uses the terminology and idea of the 'canon'. Yet revising an existing 'canon' to include a few works by 'exceptional' female composers will not dismantle the problematic hierarchies which presently exist in the teaching and doing of music. A radically new approach to history, musicology and composition could instead prioritise alternative and marginal perspectives (for example, queering, embodiment, openness, resistance, intensity, capitalism, authorship) to provide the frameworks and focal points for conversation. Such an approach would, by default, ensure more diversity and is perhaps a version of Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith's 'uncanoning'[16] – an elision of the words uncanny and canon, implying that a deconstruction of our present canon can only proceed from marginality.

[12] hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, p. 30.
[13] Dan Goodley, 'Towards Socially Just Pedagogies: Deleuzoguattarian Critical Disability Studies', *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 11/3 (2007), p. 328.
[14] Hannah Reardon-Smith, Louise Denson, and Vanessa Tomlinson, 'Feministing Free Improvisation', *TEMPO* 74, No. 292 (2020), pp. 10–20.
[15] Reardon-Smith, Denson, and Tomlinson, 'Feministing Free Improvisation', p. 18.
[16] Shoshana Rosenberg and Hannah Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion: A Toolkit for Transformative Sound Use', *TEMPO* 74, No. 292 (2020), p. 72.

Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith also mention a parallel process of 'radical forgetting' – 'so that we can remember anew those who have been obscured and omitted by a patrilineal western art canon'.[17] Tertiary music students invariably arrive with the 'baggage' of a hegemonic perspective on thinking about music, which has been absorbed in the course of their formal educations pre-university. Ever since I began composing around the age of 15, I have had the unsettling feeling that my conventional music education – in which I had unquestioningly participated – had foreclosed potentialities for my own compositional work. The mandatory history modules I studied at Cambridge continued this process and I was disappointed to learn that similar content is also mandatory for undergraduate composers at the Guildhall School (where I am now doing a Masters in Composition). 'Radically forgetting' patriarchal and hegemonic value judgements is surely essential to create a space in which a multiplicity of creativities can grow. This is not to rule out studying Bach or Schenker – but uncritically including them as 'core' content creates an environment that reinforces hegemonic ideas about what is important and denies students their full creative and intellectual potential.

The contexts in which musical performances occur also need to be examined. The concert hall or recital room is an assumed parameter for the doing and studying of musical performance in the article 'Teaching Tertiary Music in the #MeToo Era'. Yet these spaces are frequently acknowledged to be highly disciplining, hierarchical, colonialist and exclusionary.[18] The contextual implications of 'performance' within the concert hall – that there will be a rendition of music perfected by many hours of practice, presented on a stage, for an (attentive, probably paying) audience, possibly led by a conductor, framed by formal rituals of entrance, bowing, applause – upholds conventional, patriarchal narratives of the 'master work' and the isolated genius of the composer. It does not create space for the exploration of marginal, destabilising practices such as improvisation, meditation, silence, utterance, spatialisation. These practices can take place within the concert hall at present, but they remain peripheral and defined in opposition to its core function of housing highly disciplined performances of the Western canon. It is ironic that the vast majority of tertiary education's composition work is oriented towards the concert hall, given that the concert hall can only support the careers of a limited number of composers.[19] To make space for a diverse multitude of creativities to flourish, we need to radically rethink what and where can constitute 'performance'. We do a disservice to those students wanting to develop a creative practice by implementing a model in which very few of them can actualise their work.

Whenever concert-oriented music making is brought into question, the tension between the arts and capitalism comes to the fore. The concert hall system is a significant way in which performers and composers earn their incomes and, without paying audiences, those whose

[17] Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion, p. 72.

[18] See Anna Bull, *The Musical Body: How Gender and Class are Reproduced Among Young People Playing Classical Music in England* (Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2015); Alex Ross, *Applause: A Rest Is Noise Special Report* (2005), therestisnoise.com; Mina Yang, 'East Meets West in the Concert Hall: Asians and Classical Music in the Century of Imperialism, Post-Colonialism, and Multiculturalism', *Asian Music* 38/1 (2007), 1–30; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

[19] Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music*, p. 43.

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careers revolve around performances of music are adrift. This embedding of music-making within the concert format, entwining it with capitalism, is untenable in a utopian vision of radically diverse musical life; this is even more apparent during the current period of mid- to long-term concert hall closure. Tertiary education could provide a point of intervention, facilitating a retreat from the neoliberal imperative to make money. Students could be given the support, space and resources (material and intellectual) to experiment, fail and be open to new possibilities, allowing a multitude of different performance-oriented practices to grow. This disorientation of performance opens up possibilities for exploring playfulness, amateurism and embodiment; away from an observing audience perhaps more free and experimental practices would become common. Being an 'amateur' performer is not acceptable within an academy guided by formal assessment;[20] it would be liberating and nurturing to consider de-centring physical skill resulting from disciplined practice in tertiary education, and instead giving power to the radical potentialities of intuition and failure in performance. Perhaps with such an approach music students might leave university with a more open perspective on what constitutes, and can be valued in, musical performance.

Teaching towards examinations is problematic across tertiary music education, not just for performance. Most tertiary education assessment involves a combination of 'closed book' examinations, formally defined written coursework, portfolios of compositions, and recitals. Though my decolonial studies were oriented towards an examination, there was continual reassurance that creative approaches, special interests and genuine investment in the ideas would be valued above extensive reading or rote learning. Exploration of how the module might be alternatively and ideally assessed was encouraged; there was a consensus that less formal, less restricted assessment, featuring writing, discussion, and perhaps creative responses, would be more appropriate. Although Cambridge University was unwilling to consider alternative assessment models, we were allowed to think about what our utopian vision of a degree might be.[21]

Neoliberal learning models, oriented towards the goals of passing examinations and creating work-ready graduates, will continue to undermine the valuing of difference within tertiary education, making space only for those who are willing and able to conform to conventional ideas of 'academic excellence'.[22] Those marginal students who might never be capable of – or interested in – conventional academic success have no place.[23] We might instead advocate for an education which is flexible and creative in its assessment of students, and which focuses on small-scale, low-risk activities which allow for

[20] Andy Merrifield, *The Amateur: The Pleasures of Doing What You Love* (London: Verso Books, 2017). See also Rob Hayler, 'Stolen Moments', *The Wire*, January 2020, p. 47, on the importance of amateurism.

[21] Interestingly, the current coronavirus pandemic has forced the University to offer alternative and diverse forms of assessment – which students feel, in usual circumstances, would have taken years of examination reform campaigning to be even considered. For example, the 'Recital' option in the Music faculty can be assessed through writing, pre-recorded performance, livestreamed performance, or a combination of the above, depending on the student's preference. Though students have been subjected to the whims of their Faculties with regards to their modes of remote examination, the current situation does provide hope for the future of more flexible and radical assessment options.

[22] Lesley Johnson, Alison Lee and Bill Green, 'The PhD and the Autonomous Self: Gender, Rationality and Postgraduate Pedagogy', *Studies in Higher Education* 25/2 (2000), p. 139.

[23] Goodley, *Towards Socially Just Pedagogies*, p. 327.

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experimentation and failure.[24] This kind of education – oriented towards 'the uncertain burrows of postmodernity, lines of flight and constant becomings'[25] – would inherently make space for diverse, as well as non-normative, learners.

Not only do neoliberal frameworks for university education orient learners towards fixed, measurable goals, they also isolate students. A central tenet of neoliberalism is that individuals are separate, empowered and responsible agents within society, encouraging the belief that 'hard work pays' and obscuring identity markers which might motivate individuals towards collective action.[26] This creates an educational environment which is utterly in opposition to the idea of the 'rhizome'. Students are instead isolated, and even encouraged to compete for grades. Radical collective action towards cultural diversity is undermined. For these reasons, I found Professor Hope's comment that 'given Australian students pay more for their "public education" than anyone else in the OECD they are right to expect to be prepared for work'[27] especially unsettling. If the head of a major music school is focused on neoliberal work outcomes for their students, it is hard to imagine the radical change that I propose. The implication that paying higher fees entitles students to demand 'more' from their education is also profoundly concerning.

By the end of my second year of undergraduate study, the conservative, hegemonic perspective of the Cambridge music faculty had left me exhausted, deflated and confused. My peers and I were consistently made to feel that experimental, non-conforming work was marginal, and I did not yet have the critical tools with which to challenge the education with which I was presented. Though I was extremely lucky to be supported by a few individual mentor figures, as well as likeminded peers, many other students certainly suffered from feeling misunderstood or unvalued by teaching staff. This structure of power within the university reinforces structural hierarchies of privilege. At tertiary education institutions, those from non-conventional backgrounds already feel marginalised and othered, by contrast with their straight, white, cis-male, privately educated peers.[28] Moreover, these conventional students' identity and experience is reflected in the patriarchal and colonial values which are implicit in the content and pedagogical methodology of the course. In coming to tertiary education from an under-represented or non-conventional demographic group, substantial emotional labour is required to simply get by in an environment which was not created to support you. As Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith say in 'Of Body, Of Emotion: A Toolkit for Transformative Sound Use':

[24] Anastasia Liasidou, 'Inclusive Education and Critical Pedagogy at the Intersections of Disability, Race, Gender and Class', *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 10/1 (2012), p. 170. Also see Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) for extensive discussion of the powerful re-orienting potential of failure.

[25] Goodley, *Towards socially just pedagogies*, p. 327.

[26] Rosalind Gill, 'Unspeakable Inequalities: Post Feminism, Entrepreneurial Subjectivity, and the Repudiation of Sexism Among Cultural Workers', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 21/4 (2014), p. 517. See also Christina Scharff, *Gender, Subjectivity and Cultural Work: The Classical Music Profession* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[27] Hope, *What can [should?] a music school in a modern Australian university look like?*

[28] Lesley Johnson, Alison Lee, and Bill Green, 'The PhD and the Autonomous Self: Gender, Rationality and Postgraduate Pedagogy', *Studies in Higher Education* 25/2 (2000), p. 139.

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> Othered people are left to figure it out themselves. This requires a level of heavy-duty exploration, introspection and intentional building of bricolage social networks, actions that are not required of those who easily fit socially sanctioned models of existence.[29]

'Othered' folks who then seek to look beyond the present, conservative educational model therefore bear the double burden of not only not fitting in, but also of having their work undervalued and misunderstood. Placing 'othered' ideas at the centre of tertiary education – colonised, subaltern, feminist, queer, working class, disabled perspectives – would disintegrate this othering of those students who do not 'fit' the traditional white, socioeconomically privileged, male, cis version of the learner.

Close relationships with mentor figures, within the context of a radically refigured pedagogical framework, can help rectify this feeling of otherness for students from non-traditional backgrounds. Mentors whose approach is non-hierarchical and genuinely, mutually caring are extremely important for making students feel valued and giving them the space and support to ask questions and develop. At Cambridge I did not have a creative mentor with whom I could share my critical thoughts about my composition work. Going to the Guildhall School and experiencing affirming relationships with mentors has helped to expand my practice in the past six months. Though I value what I have been taught, it is the regular and trusted space in which to interact and share with a like-minded mentor, who invests time in understanding my practice and perspective, that is invaluable. Carefully and thoughtfully matching students with caring, creative mentors should be a priority of a culturally diverse tertiary education.

Students may relish the opportunity to be mentored by someone who shares their background or their minority status – this can have myriad benefits, often centring around a sense of shared challenges within their lives and creative work. This is certainly how I have felt: there were no female composition teachers available at Cambridge, and being mentored by women was an important factor in my choosing to go to the Guildhall School. It has created space in which to have candid conversations about important emotional and personal aspects of my creative practice – conversations which I have rarely felt comfortable having with male tutors. The positive potential of matching female students to female mentors was explored by Hope, Grant, Smart and Parr in their article explaining 'The Summers Night Project', a mentorship scheme for young female composers, but this scheme was offered to composers selected from a national call, raising issues about gatekeeping and access.

It goes without saying that the lack of female role models within composition faculties, as well as canons, poses a material threat to the uptake of composition amongst young women. But within the current patriarchal framework for defining and valuing 'composition', women – and other marginalised folks – will never have space in which to genuinely develop a creative practice. Derrida's notion of the phallogocentricism of Western society helps confirm the reality that compositional practice in the present day is patriarchally defined.[30] However, the simple idea of a 'female' or 'feminist' musical aesthetic that arises in response to the hegemonic aesthetic is inherently limited

[29] Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 66.
[30] Talisha Goh, 'From the Other Side: Feminist Aesthetics in Australian Musicology', *TEMPO* 74, No. 292 (2020), pp. 21–29.

by its definition in opposition; in order for aesthetics in composition education and practice to become radically open, free and experimental (in the genuine, not genre-signifying, sense of that word), we cannot simply respond antagonistically to established hegemonic values.

Macarthur highlights the circularity of this present situation, stating that 'the student composer will tacitly accept or deliberately transgress the normative system, reinforcing its dominance'.[31] Before I was introduced to a more holistically critical and radical approach to epistemologies and the world around me, I was the student Macarthur describes – deliberately working against the hegemonic values presented by my education, but aware that I was not dismantling the status quo. A new model for exploring creativity in tertiary education would centre experimental approaches, such as intuition, spontaneity, open scoring, improvisation, giving students opportunities to experiment and fail, and to work intimately with and as performers of their own and others' musics. These principles would be informed by feminist and queer scholarship that centres the body and subjectivity, as well as decolonial thinking which moves away from the colonial and discipling powers of tonality (and its counter, atonality) and the conventionally notated score. Within such a model I might have felt encouraged to explore my graphic scores, my improvisation practice, my interest in developing close relationships with performers, as composition. Instead these practices remained marginal and under-explored and I felt compelled to submit conventional work for my Finals portfolio: three fully notated works with demonstrable structure, harmonic planning and extended techniques. I was given a first-class mark.

The notion of 'sound use', coined and explored by Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith in 'Of Body, Of Emotion', is helpful. In Sara Ahmed's recent book *What's the Use?* she focuses on the university environment, and how spaces become restricted by their intended 'use' is and who their 'users' are, as well as exploring a queer 'use' which disorients objects from their originally intended purpose. Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith suggest the term 'sound use' as a replacement for terms such as 'music-making', 'composition', or 'artistic expression',[32] raising interesting questions about the weight of terminology in the academy. It would, I think, be productive to re-name certain areas of teaching, utilising contemporary concepts such as queer 'use' as well as a more neutral and open lexicon, instead of intellectualised and historically saturated terms such as 'composition' and 'analysis'.

My own research has led me to explore the ableism, the rejection of the 'mess' of bodies,[33] covertly present in the hegemonic valuation of 'hard work' in composition, such as the prizing of painstaking and time-consuming composing processes, or the prestige conferred on immaculately presented scores. Rarely is it considered that such value judgements may be ideologically and literally exclusionary to disabled folks. I have become interested in the interfaces between such value judgements, crip and queer theories of the body and agency, as well as technologies which can facilitate new modes of participation and creativity for diverse peoples. This is especially pressing work when much of the radical discourse around 'sound use' (for example, Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith's exploration of the

[31] Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music*, p. 44.
[32] Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 66.
[33] Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 66.

body and emotion) does not explicitly negotiate the place of non-normative bodies. If, as Julie Dawn Smith argues, 'our experience of, and participation with, sound is inseparable from our experience of, and participation with, our body and the bodies of others',[34] it is important to consider how disabled and ill folks might participate in (or be excluded from) different versions of sound use, and what possibilities there are for radical, bodily inclusive sound use. Such work is necessary in the path to radically opening up possibilities for diversity within tertiary education, which will, in reality, be a slow and painstaking process. The more thinking and research is done, the quicker the diversity we are all striving for will be truly achieved, on both ideological and demographic levels.

Sally Macarthur (via Elizabeth Grosz who herself draws on Deleuze and Guattari) opens *Towards a Twenty-First Century Feminist Politics of Music* by calling for a different 'dangerous and disconcerting'[35] kind of revolution, opening up possibilities for unpredictable new ways of being and doing which are not simply oppositional to the hegemonic values of the past and present. Black radical thinkers have articulated the need for a complete reassessment of how the university works,[36] and queer theorists have articulated a similar wish for new beginnings: Jack Halberstam states that 'resistance lurks in the performance of forgetfulness itself'.[37] However, I think this idea is pronounced most clearly and eloquently by Audre Lorde: 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.'[38]

Lorde breaks down an unavoidable truth: as long as we operate within the epistemological bounds of patriarchal, colonial musical and cultural hegemonies, we will never achieve true change. It is this dismantling using new tools that I have advocated throughout this article, looking across tertiary musical education at the canon, the concert hall, performing, creating, and suggesting a decentralisation of scores and interior musical analysis in favour of equipping students with broad, outward facing tools to think radically and critically about culture, sound and power. Fresh attention also needs to be paid to students' primary and secondary educations. If students arrive at university already inducted into hegemonic orientations towards what and who is valuable, it is difficult to challenge these ingrained (yet often passive) perspectives. This could be changed by a more playful, broad and critical approach within primary and secondary music education.

I am aware that what I propose may seem unfeasible, given the constraints on university departments for hiring new staff, creating new courses and buying new books, and the ideological shackles of the notion that university prepare students for the 'world of work'. But ultimately, I think I have presented an utopian perspective on what we might dream of for our tertiary education systems – radically

[34] Julie Dawn Smith, quoted in Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 64.
[35] Macarthur, *Towards a Twenty-First Century Feminist Politics of Music*, pp. 1–2, quoting Elizabeth Grosz, 'Deleuze's Bergson: Duration, the Virtual, and a Politics of the Future'.
[36] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, 'The University and the Undercommons', in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (Port Watson, NY: Minor Compositions, 2013), pp. 26–43.
[37] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, p. 69, quoted in Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 72.
[38] Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', from *Sister Outsider: Essays and speeches* (Berkeley: Crossings Press, 1984), pp. 110–14.

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freeing, self-reflective, challenging and fulfilling for all involved, giving students real tools to encourage better cultural diversity across their worlds. In this sense, I hope that any educators reading this might perhaps consider 'tak[ing] the risk of going beyond declarations of what is not, to the affirmation of what might be'.[39]

[39] Nancy J. Hirschmann and Christine Di Stefano, 'Introduction: Revision, Reconstruction, and the Challenge of the New', in *Revisioning the Political: Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory*, ed. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Christine Di Stefano (New York: Routledge, 2018), quoted in Rosenberg and Reardon-Smith, 'Of Body, Of Emotion', p. 69.

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