

Towards a Differently Politicised Shostakovich:
an Analytical, Hermeneutical and Feminist Exploration
of the Opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*

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Abstract

This thesis provides a feminist interpretation of Shostakovich's opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932) that draws on musical analysis – particularly of tonality – and explores cultural contexts – particularly the history of Soviet women – in order to do so. If Shostakovich scholarship has been dominated by overtly politicised readings hitherto, this study contributes to the broadening of research methods and areas through which we might examine these compositions – yet for its own, differently political ends. Similarly, it adds to that limited body of literature – in the field of Shostakovich specifically, yet also in musicology in general – that profitably combines both analytical and hermeneutical approaches.

Lady Macbeth is often held to be a 'feminist' opera: an assessment that is highly problematic. A conventional feminist musical analysis of the work reveals its fundamental tonal-dramatic narrative to tell a familiar story of the heroine Katerina's struggle and subjugation; moreover, her final defeat is endorsed by aspects of the musical setting in a manner that is regressive. A richer contextual reading demonstrates that more is at stake here: Shostakovich's opera is shown to embody a shift from experiment to thermidor that took place in the 1920s and 1930s in various cultural and social spheres, and its strategies of endorsement also work to celebrate a move to traditionalism with far-reaching historical implications. Yet several analytical and hermeneutical readings of short extracts from the piece uncover moments in which its monolithic and pessimistic message is complicated: a project in line with other recent feminist and critical musicological developments.

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Preface

The motivation for this thesis on Shostakovich did not begin with the composer himself. This might seem surprising in the case of this individual: a figure who, as shall become apparent, has inspired fierce debate and keen, even obsessive interest amongst his community of scholars – and often in curious isolation from the world of musicology as a whole. Rather, the driving force for the study was the development of its approach – an integrated method comprising the critical, the analytical and the hermeneutical as explained presently – which came together gradually as the product of a number of different concerns, and might best be described from a personal perspective.

During my undergraduate years, I acquired three main interests: the first, a fascination with how music might communicate extra-musical meaning, a question easier to pursue in the study of texted pieces, in which words can anchor conclusions in the comparatively concrete; the second, an attraction to musical analysis of all types, for its attempt to investigate what I felt to be a vital component of the artwork that should not be ignored; and the third, a curiousness relating to women in opera, who seemed to be provided with both the best music and the worst destinies simultaneously. Throughout my master's research on opera, these apparently miscellaneous interests crystallised into a working method as I first encountered those musicologists whose concerns touched upon my own: writers such as Lawrence Kramer, whose examinations of texted pieces combined the hermeneutical and the analytical in their discussion of extra-musical meaning; or Susan McClary, whose feminist essays on operatic works and their heroines analysed the musical score and explored its wider significations in a different way – and more on both presently. My work on isolated twentieth-century examples of the genre – Strauss' *Salome* and Berg's *Wozzeck* amongst them – examined the central female protagonists in their cultural contexts, utilising various forms of musical analysis to uncover deeper meanings in the interface between libretto and score. It was in order to pursue this kind of combinative approach – arguably,

under-developed in the discipline of musicology as a whole – that I first embarked upon this thesis.

Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* initially suggested itself as an intriguing work to investigate due to its eponymous protagonist: Katerina Izmailova, adulteress and murderess on an epic scale, perhaps even the most notorious of operatic villainesses – at least on the surface of it. Thus the opera was chosen for its heroine, rather than its composer: and yet, as the project developed, Shostakovich and the literature that surrounded him became increasingly central to the research. For issues particular to Shostakovich studies served both to illuminate and refine aspects of the approach, and to imbue it with an extra relevance to this narrower field. Overwhelmingly, as shall be explained later in more detail, examinations of these compositions have focussed on the surface or extroversive elements of the score in their construction of meanings that are overtly yet narrowly political. Yet this thesis rather analyses the deeper or introversive aspects of the musical text in its exploration of extra-musical significations that might be described as differently political: an original project in the context of Shostakovich scholarship. It is hoped therefore that this study forms a productive contribution to the body of literature on the composer – and yet, that Shostakovich was not the original driving force behind its conception might also be considered a strength. For the work thus retains its significance in wider musicological spheres, potentially of interest to feminist critics, musical analysts and everything in between, as the outline of its objectives and summary of its chapters below should serve to demonstrate.

The overall purpose of this thesis is twofold. Primarily, it aims to contribute to the scope of Shostakovich scholarship and indeed of musicology as a whole by reading the opera *Lady Macbeth* via a wide variety of approaches and contexts: feminist criticism both conventional and postmodern; the analysis of functional tonality using both voice-leading techniques and more general methods; backgrounds musical, such as that of Shostakovich's lesser-known dramatic compositions of the 1920s and 1930s, for example; and backgrounds historical, such as that of Soviet women of the period, for instance. To integrate such diverse interpretational tools in one study is to build on that work – perhaps under-

developed in the discipline of musicology in general, as suggested above, and certainly under-developed in the field of Shostakovich in particular – that combines musically analytical and hermeneutical approaches in order to explore the extra-musical meanings of a piece, with worthwhile results. The in a sense secondary product of such a project is the resultant reading of the opera – and more on this below.

In the context of Shostakovich scholarship, the need for such varied methodologies becomes more pressing. For this literature has been overwhelmed by politicised accounts, presented in dogmatic fashion as absolute truths. Chapter 1 necessarily surveys this body of work, examining both changing trends in studies of this composer, and situating these within the wider context of developments in musicology as a whole: the former a project in line with other recent prefaces to texts on Shostakovich; the latter more original to this thesis. The initial chapter sets the tone of what will follow: in distinction to what has gone before it, the subsequent analytical-cum-hermeneutical interpretation is offered simply as one way of understanding the opera, in true postmodernist fashion.

The mountain of politicised writing on *Lady Macbeth* in particular forms the focus of Chapter 2: this first chapter on the opera provides a necessary summary of such disparate accounts, together with essential information on the piece and its history. In the spirit of recent scholarship on Shostakovich, the discussion attempts a rapprochement between texts that are wildly conflicting, demonstrating that in fact all accept one key ideological position that lies at the heart of the opera: namely, that there exists a musico-dramatic dichotomy between the oppressed (the heroine, Katerina) and the oppressors (those whom surround her), and this works to absolve Katerina of her crimes, conceptualised as legitimate struggle. This fundamental principle will form a lynchpin of the subsequent feminist reading of *Lady Macbeth*. Thus the thesis both builds on yet moves beyond past literatures, appropriating what is arguably a Marxist premise for its own, differently political purpose.

Chapter 3 reveals why a feminist approach is so appropriate for the study of the opera. Its fundamental division between oppressors and oppressed is foregrounded along gendered lines, female resistance and masculine oppression

thus at the very heart of work; dramatic and real life prototypes pre- and post-revolutionary – although previously understood in a narrowly political sense – serve to emphasise the overarching nature of this theme. Although *Lady Macbeth* is commonly labelled a ‘feminist’ opera, this chapter identifies a number of problems with this assessment, highlighting the need for a more rigorous critical examination.

The primary methodological tools employed in such a task – musical analysis, and feminist musical analysis – are further justified and elucidated in Chapter 4. The former, focussed mainly on tonality and utilising conventional methods and terminology, is generally underused in literatures on the composer and his opera – although the relatively conventional language of *Lady Macbeth* renders it appropriate. For readings of Shostakovich’s music have tended to focus on its surface or ‘extroversive’ musical features in relation to underlying message; this discussion rather examines how the ‘introversive’ elements of the score might communicate extra-musical meaning – and the resultant suppositions form the basis for much of the analysis that follows. Similarly, the feminist criticism made use of in subsequent chapters is explored then set out here: ‘traditional’ feminist analysis of the score – which maps tonal narratives onto dramatic plots of female transgression and defeat – is again remarkably appropriate for a study of this piece, despite potential new critical reservations regarding such a project; meanwhile, an engagement with the latter suggests some intriguing analytical avenues down which later chapters of the thesis will progress, exploring complications or disparities that disrupt the overall message of the opera in more postmodern a vein.

These initial chapters to some extent act as preparatory work for the concentrated analysis of the score that follows, begun in Chapter 5. The chapter examines the basic dramatic-cum-tonal structure of *Lady Macbeth* as a whole, uniquely so amongst studies of this piece; it borrows those theoretical assumptions outlined above to understand how the symbiotic narratives of libretto and key tell a story of female struggle and masculine oppression, both on the small and large scale, and in various ways. In making the opera about the victimhood of the heroine, the work might be regarded as ideologically unenlightened – provided Katerina’s defeat is positively endorsed. Chapter 6 pursues the question of

endorsement – not enough scrutinised in feminist scholarship – in more depth, investigating whether sample instances of tonal-dramatic oppression are censured or approved by elements of the libretto, musical setting and tonal process, and employing detailed voice-leading analysis of short extracts in order to do so. Overwhelmingly, Katerina’s subjugation would appear to be celebrated in *Lady Macbeth*, and Chapter 7 explores the various means by which this is achieved in the last act of the work. For while the heroine’s final overthrow is normalised by that stylistically beautified and aurally necessary tonic resolution familiar to feminist criticism of opera, it is *also* endorsed by other factors, both tonal and historical, that are less so – and in this and other ways, Shostakovich’s finale is disappointingly regressive.

If the analysis of *Lady Macbeth* thus far has been primarily text-based, Chapter 8 marks the beginning of a broader examination of the piece that draws on historical contexts both musical and social. The opera was written at a turning point in both the development of Shostakovich and of Soviet Russia: the 1920s can be summarised as a decade of pluralistic experimentation, the 1930s one of monolithic thermidor, and this general cultural shift is epitomised by the composer’s lesser-known dramatic scores of the period. This chapter originally categorises stylistic characteristics of contemporaneous music via these early works of Shostakovich, locating similar examples in *Lady Macbeth* – and in examining the opera through this filter, the thesis is in line with other recent literature on the composer beginning to discuss his less familiar repertoire. Crucially, the survey reveals a higher concentration of ‘1920s’ musics in the initial acts and of ‘1930s’ musics in the final scene: *Lady Macbeth* thus works through and embodies the experiment-thermidor paradigm of the age – and the significance of this in relation to the feminist reading outlined above will be explored presently. First, the remainder of Chapter 8 traces the same narrative shift in the social history of Soviet women in this period, demonstrating how the chronological course of the libretto again mirrors and summarises the move from the progressive to the regressive in a different historical arena.

The various interpretative conclusions of the thesis thus far are necessarily amalgamated at the beginning of Chapter 9: those musico-dramatic features

considered to endorse the heroine's final overthrow in the feminist reading of Chapters 5–7 are now understood to celebrate the contemporaneous cultural and social shifts to traditionalism that the opera embodies, as shown in Chapter 8 – and the ideological implications of this are far-reaching. The remainder of the chapter extends this richer feminist, analytical and hermeneutical interpretation of the opera, though aiming at conclusions that are less monolithic: a number of short extracts are examined in depth and in closer relation to the social history of Soviet women of the time; these individual moments from the work are shown to complicate and disrupt its overriding message as constructed hitherto. This more contemporary critical project is continued into Chapter 10, which explores the intriguing aspect of Katerina's diegetic singing in *Lady Macbeth*: a phenomenon that not only has implications for the metaphysics of the genre itself, but is also tied up with the heroine's resistance, agency and dramatic understanding in a manner that might empower her – and thus undermine the generally conservative position of the opera as a whole.

The ten chapters outlined above naturally group into three parts. 'Part I: The Composer, The Opera and The Approach', comprises Chapters 1–4, which provide the core literature summaries on Shostakovich and *Lady Macbeth*, essential information on the work, a justification and explanation of the thesis' methodologies and a basic statement of its critical position. 'Part II: On Text', consists of Chapters 5–7, which present their feminist musical analysis of the dramatic and particularly tonal aspects of the opera; 'Part III: On Contexts', contains Chapters 8–10, which draw on historical backgrounds both musical and social to inform their richer readings of the work. To separate and label the content of the thesis in this way, while providing clarity for the reader, is of course over-simplistic: one of the unusual features of the study is its deliberate presentation of literatures, contexts, and analysis alongside one another throughout, from beginning to end, the better to integrate its component parts. Thus some engagement with extracts from the score occurs early in Chapters 3 and 4, for example, just as summaries of historical scholarship appear late in Chapter 8, and of contextual backgrounds even in the final chapters: ultimately this is fitting in a study that remains as much about the merits of its critical approach than the actual points of its interpretation.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the following text in its entirety is my own individual work.

For Vera and Reg

Part I

The Composer, The Opera
and The Approach

Chapter 1

On Hearing Shostakovich:

Issues of Content and Meaning in Recent Scholarship

There are few twentieth-century composers whose output has been subject to as much contextual scrutiny as that of Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich. Due to his precarious position as the most prominent musician in the Soviet regime, both the style and content of Shostakovich's works were directly affected by political demands in a manner that is now common, even popular, knowledge. The well-documented constraints under which Shostakovich composed are inexorably bound up with his output to such an extent that they are impossible to discount in any generalised account of the composer's music. Even the most self-consciously de-politicised commentaries do not attempt to discuss Shostakovich's musical style in isolation from its overtly Soviet context. Laurel Fay's biography of Shostakovich, while setting out to function primarily as a factual resource that excludes (political) opinion and argument to as great a degree as possible, nevertheless devotes passages to the basic impact of the doctrine of Socialist Realism on certain of Shostakovich's works, for example.¹ Similarly, David Fanning's New Grove article on the composer, although strongly upholding the various personal, artistic, musical and crucially *non*-political influences on Shostakovich, still acknowledges both the direct and indirect effect of various official requirements on his musical language.²

Such tempered modern texts, in which political considerations form just one strand of many, attempt to offer a balanced account of *how* exactly Soviet doctrine contributed to the formation of Shostakovich's unique style: ever a fraught issue in scholarship relating to this composer. For if Soviet and early Western writings stressed that Shostakovich himself was genuinely committed to the civic goal of

¹ For example, Fay examines the particularly coercive circumstances surrounding the composition of the Fifth Symphony; while she rights certain myths regarding the degree to which Shostakovich submitted to pressures from above, she does acknowledge that this work was considerably more traditional as a result of Party directives. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 87–105. For Fay's concept of this biography, see her introduction to this text.

² Fanning, 'Shostakovich, Dmitry', in *The New Grove* (2001), 23. See, for example, Fanning's comments on the Fifth, Tenth and Twelfth Symphonies.

forging an accessible musical language ‘for the People’,³ later bodies of literature rather understood this ideal as an unwelcome imposition. Thus the familiar notion of the public-versus-private Shostakovich gained increased currency in the Western media from the 1960s onwards: put simply, this concept involves a sharp division between those traditional compositions that were necessarily shaped by state demands, and those less traditional works guided by artistic conscience alone.⁴

Exactly how much Soviet requirements were imposed, how much *self*-imposed, was, is, and must ever remain something of a moot point – and similar unresolvable yet still-contested questions abound in the literature surrounding this composer. It would be easy to begin any examination of Shostakovich by engaging with such disagreements and controversies, in part the legacy of opposing Cold War factions that eagerly appropriated the composer for their own politicised ends. Yet now that the notorious musicological ‘Shostakovich Wars’ of the 1990s have – for the most part – subsided, perhaps a more constructive way to at least start such a study is to attempt to define a contemporary mainstream academic position concerning the relationship of this music with its political context. For if Shostakovich criticism has, over the course of the twentieth century, been mired in conflict, it now seems possible to find some shared ground as we continue into the twenty first: a prospect that other forewords to other recent texts on this composer also acknowledge.⁵

Current scholarship on Shostakovich is characterised by its acceptance of less clear-cut, more nuanced positions than hitherto. For example, the public/private construct as explained above receives a more sophisticated treatment in

³ Soviet and émigré accounts both orthodox and moderate, together with early mainstream Western texts, depict Shostakovich himself as accepting of his role as a civic artist to a greater or lesser degree: for an example of each (of very many) see Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich*; Seroff, *Dmitri Shostakovich*; Schwarz, ‘Shostakovich, Dmitry’, in *The New Grove* (1980), 17; and Roseberry, *Shostakovich*.

⁴ See Fanning, ‘Shostakovich, Dmitry’, in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 294; 297.

⁵ The introduction to the most recent collection of essays on Shostakovich places the controversies that have dogged the composer firmly in the past, instead summarising different current critical perceptions and areas of enquiry that are starting to characterise this literature: Fairclough, Introduction to *Shostakovich Studies 2*; see also Fairclough and Fanning, Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*. Other pieces provide both summaries of the changing trends and prominent debates in Western Shostakovich scholarship and public perception over the course of the twentieth century and also look to the future: see Fairclough, ‘Facts, Fantasies and Fictions’; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 343–53; and Mishra, Preface to *A Shostakovich Companion*.

comparatively recent musicological texts, these opposing tendencies discussed in terms of their combinative effect on the formation of Shostakovich's style as a whole. Most works do not fit neatly in either box: rather, elements of the traditional and the popular meet and fuse with what is experimental and elite in a way that peculiarly marks the musical language of this composer. Thus Pauline Fairclough, in her in-depth study of the Fourth Symphony, describes the unusual synthesis of popular genres and innovative formal re-engagement, in her view a genuine attempt to create a new Socialist Realist Symphonism that was both sophisticated yet understandable to a wider audience.⁶ Similarly, Leon Botstein, in a more general article, discusses the 'mix of accessibility and complexity' in the musical language of Shostakovich, interpreting this as arising from a similar cause.⁷

This amalgamation has a specialness about it that is partly what we celebrate in Shostakovich, and this leads to an uncomfortable paradox: political interference, at times of the most appalling kind, has positively contributed toward shaping this composer's output as one of value. Recognition of this fact has been a long time coming: in Shostakovich's own lifetime, members of the Western artistic elite generally ascribed to the view that state interference – tending to promote accessibility – was inevitably detrimental to an artist's work, an aesthetic that contrasted absolutely with that of the Soviet musical establishment.⁸ Thus shortly after the death of the composer, the *New York Times* critic Harold Schonberg flatly stated that: 'Shostakovich was a great talent ruined by the system under which he was working'.⁹ Similar comments were widespread in the West,¹⁰ part of an

⁶ Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*. For a clear and concise statement of this argument, see the introduction to this text. In claiming that the composition of the Fourth Symphony was motivated by such considerations, Fairclough goes against the established mythology surrounding this work: see also Fairclough, 'The 'Perestroyka' of Soviet Symphonism'.

⁷ Botstein, 'Listening to Shostakovich', 374.

⁸ In the first comprehensive history of Soviet music to be written in English, Boris Schwarz both explained and upheld the ideal of music 'for the People' to his non-Soviet audience, even criticising the diametrically opposed Western musical aesthetic on occasion: Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life*, 267; 343–4; 450. The notion that the Soviet Union *and* the West were *both* governed by ideology in their vastly different assessment of the arts was slow to emerge in Western texts, though in an early study of Soviet music, Gerald Abraham makes some perceptive comments on this point: Abraham, *Eight Soviet Composers*, 90–92. Much recent writing on Russian music follows Abraham's early hints in acknowledging the Soviet/ Western divide in artistic aesthetics, and arguing for an evaluation of Soviet music on its *own* terms. For examples, see Taruskin, *On Russian Music*; and Frolova-Walker, 'Stalin and the Art of Boredom'.

⁹ Schonberg, 'Words and Music Under Stalin', 46.

ingrained way of thinking about music that stretched back to the nineteenth century and reached its zenith in the modernist aesthetic of post-war America. Music – or, more specifically, *great* music – was independent of the era in which it was written: adhering only to its own laws, its claim to greatness lay in its being *outside* of time, as composers and theorists from Schoenberg to Schenker and Boulez to Babbitt would attest.¹¹ Judged on these criteria, music that adhered to the external demands of the State or the People fared badly; as a consequence of this, Shostakovich long remained excluded from serious consideration outside of the Soviet Union.¹²

Trends in musicology since the 1980s have engendered at least a partial overhaul of this outlook, and today the prevailing dogma of artistic autonomy has relaxed to such an extent that it is even possible to interpret government requirements for accessibility in a positive light.¹³ That much of Shostakovich's significant music could only have come out of Soviet – or Stalinist – Russia is generally acknowledged.¹⁴ If it is a direct product of its environment in terms of its

¹⁰ Several such quotations – particularly those of the influential American music critic, Olin Downes – appear in Christopher Gibbs' survey of critical responses to the Seventh Symphony: Gibbs, "'The Phenomenon of the Seventh'"; similar reactions from British commentators are quoted throughout Fairclough's historical review of Shostakovich's portrayal in our national media: Fairclough, 'The 'Old Shostakovich''. Two essays discuss from a more personal angle the modernist aesthetic that condemned, derided or pitied Shostakovich for his lack of musical freedom from the State: see Brown, 'Shostakovich: A Brief Encounter and a Present Perspective'; and Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered'.

¹¹ Joseph Kerman famously characterised the position of these writers and severely criticised their belief in music's essential autonomy throughout Kerman, *Contemplating Musicology*. A critique of the orthodoxy of musical independence underpins much contemporary musicology, and similar summaries occur in numerous texts. For examples, see numerous chapters in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*; or (for a particularly virulent attack) McClary, 'Terminal Prestige'. Nicholas Cook provides a clear, comprehensive summary of these issues throughout Cook, *Music*.

¹² For discussion of this, see Brown, 'Shostakovich: A Brief Encounter and a Present Perspective'; and Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered'. For a fascinating examination of the changing perceptions of Shostakovich in the British media throughout the twentieth century that explores our fluctuating national reactions to this composer, see Fairclough, 'The 'Old Shostakovich''.

¹³ For example, Botstein considers the attempt to create a Soviet music that did not alienate the public as far from ignoble, and (unusually) holds the foreground accessibility and optimism of many of Shostakovich's works to be responsible for their continued popularity: Botstein, 'Listening to Shostakovich', 367–374.

¹⁴ Fanning concludes his *New Grove* article on the composer by stating that stylistic 'complexities could only have taken the shape they did under the unique coercions of Stalin's Russia': Fanning, 'Shostakovich, Dmitry', in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 301; elsewhere, Richard Taruskin expresses a similar sentiment: Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered', 360. Levon Hakobian argues, from a self-consciously Russian standpoint, that the conditions under which Shostakovich and others were writing contributed to a certain mentality that had a favourable effect on their music: Hakobian, 'A Perspective on Soviet Musical Culture'.

regulated Soviet concessions to public taste, perhaps its status as a cultural artefact goes deeper than this. That Shostakovich's music in some way resonates with or even chronicles its times is a long-held popular belief that has undergone extreme and violently contradictory revisions throughout the years of Stalin, glasnost, the Cold War and beyond. Now, in a new century, a kind of modified version of this argument has become cautiously established in mainstream musicological texts.

This view allows that there is something about this music that *sounds* as if it is of or even about its cultural and political context. A bewildering array of styles combine with an increased use of musical topoi to create a language that Richard Taruskin describes as 'richly coded',¹⁵ Ludmila Kovnatskaya as 'semantically saturated'.¹⁶ It is this peculiarity of Shostakovich's material that suggests the necessity of contextual interpretation: Gerard McBurney considers that this music 'seems to require that we read things into it' whilst Taruskin acknowledges that several of these works 'sound as though they were written to be paraphrased'.¹⁷ Shostakovich's excessive use of stylistic or personal references – often in a manner that is unpredictable or confusing – has a particular effect: music that so deliberately plays with signs will both suggest numerous meanings and, crucially, allow various sub-texts to be applied. Thus this sound-world has about it a property that is sometimes described as 'doubleness'; the term 'multivalence', freeing up the interpretative possibilities still further, has recently become popular in writings on Shostakovich.¹⁸

That this music could accommodate the inscription of contradictory emotions or narratives was essential. Certain of Shostakovich's pieces would fulfil both State demands and serve public need simultaneously: pro-Stalinist programmes and quite different sub-texts could be read alongside one another, and each successfully. This perhaps deliberately cultivated ambiguity – Taruskin coins the phrase 'interpretative opportunism'¹⁹ – is analysed at length in a relatively

¹⁵ Taruskin, 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth', 29.

¹⁶ Kovnatskaya, 'Dialogues About Shostakovich', 245.

¹⁷ Taruskin, 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth', 29.

¹⁸ 'Doubleness' is used throughout Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered'; 'multivalence' appears in Kovnatskaya, 'Dialogues About Shostakovich', 240; Bartlett, *Shostakovich in Context*, xv; and Taruskin, 'Shostakovich and Us', 21–2.

¹⁹ Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered', 369.

recent article by Botstein.²⁰ Interestingly, it is less the subject of Russian scholarly literature: here the multivalent function of Shostakovich's music at times seems almost too self-evident to require discussion.²¹

Personal accounts from Soviet audiences are plentiful however, and give an invaluable indication of how this music was heard by its contemporaries. Numerous sources in Elizabeth Wilson's documentary biography, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, reveal that performances of these works in the worst excesses of the Stalinist regime formed a kind of necessary mass catharsis,²² or what Fanning labels 'an emotional safety-valve for tragic experiences';²³ for Taruskin, it is the social function of music in a society where speech was inhibited that rendered Shostakovich's necessarily multivalent compositions so crucially important.²⁴ These works were received as protests by some, and tributes by others; neither hearing is absolute or uncontainable. In his essay 'Shostakovich and Us', Taruskin privileges the auditor as the final arbitrator of meaning, an argument in line with musicological trends that position the listener at the centre of any discussion of musical interpretation.²⁵ For Taruskin, there are as many subtexts to this music as there are historical or even personal contexts: in short, there are as many meanings as there are listeners. This reasoning could be adapted to any composer, and of course *has* been applied to music in general.²⁶ However, perhaps Shostakovich deserves a special place in the context of such poststructuralist theory: both the particular property of this output (its persistent and strange use of musical

²⁰ Botstein, 'Listening to Shostakovich'.

²¹ Taruskin quotes an ex-Soviet musicologist on the issue of meaning in Shostakovich's works: 'Never mind, we *knew* what it meant'. Taruskin, 'Shostakovich and Us', 5.

²² For example, see various personal reminiscences of the extraordinary premiere of the Fifth Symphony: Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, 126–31.

²³ Fanning, 'Introduction. Talking About Eggs', 3.

²⁴ Taruskin, 'Hearing Cycles', 348; 352–3.

²⁵ Taruskin, 'Shostakovich and Us'; see also Taruskin, 'Hearing Cycles', 347–56. Francis Maes argues similarly after Taruskin, on this and other points: see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 350–53.

²⁶ Such arguments have their basis in poststructuralist theory, drawing on Jacques Derrida's insistence on the difference between intention and contextual interpretation, or Roland Barthes distinction between work (an object that is the province of the author) and text (a 'space' around the work, in which discourses circulate and meanings are created). For clear overviews of poststructuralist thought, see Culler, *Literary Theory* and Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an Introduction*. Alastair Williams summarises these ideas in relation to music: Williams, *Constructing Musicology*, 27–47. These ways of thinking underlie much recent musicology: for examples see Korsyn, 'Beyond Privileged Contexts'; Everist, 'Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses and Musical Value' and other articles in Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*.

signifiers) and its exceptional conditions of listening (under Stalin, obviously; also amidst the tensions of the Cold War, for example) have made it more prone to interpretations that are intensely felt and politically fraught.

Problems have always arisen when any single meaning is applied absolutely to this music, whether these readings take the form of the home-grown pro-Soviet programmes appended to the symphonies in Shostakovich's lifetime or the anti-Soviet interpretations that were an inevitable product of glasnost.²⁷ In 1979, the publication of *Testimony* gave a considerable boost to the revisionist notion of Shostakovich-as-dissident. *Testimony* – alleging to be the memoirs of Shostakovich as dictated to the Russian émigré musicologist Solomon Volkov – revealed Shostakovich as an embittered and fiercely anti-communist composer who filled his music with hidden and subversive messages.²⁸ Always a controversial text, the authenticity of *Testimony* was intensely disputed in the West throughout the 1980s and 1990s in what was dubbed 'The Shostakovich Wars', one of musicology's most acrimonious debates to date.²⁹ By the early part of this century, largely due to the painstaking scholarship of Fay, the memoir was proven beyond all reasonable doubt to be a fake.³⁰ However, its contents had already become firmly established in popular mythology: a bestseller in 1979, it has now been published in over 30 languages, and a deluxe 25th anniversary edition was brought out in 2004. It has

²⁷ There are, of course, numerous examples of each. Taruskin summarises both orthodox Soviet readings of the Fifth Symphony and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, Russian texts of 1989 on this work: Taruskin, 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth', 31–8; 54–5.

²⁸ Volkov, *Testimony*.

²⁹ Perhaps the most extreme examples of the rancorous feeling that this debate generated in certain quarters can be observed in the writings of Norman Lebrecht. In one article, Lebrecht even likens Fay, *Testimony's* fiercest detractor, to a Holocaust denier: Lebrecht, 'Shostakovich – Dissident Notes', *La Scena Musicale: The Lebrecht Weekly* (19 Jan 2000), accessed on-line (on 30 Jan 2008); see also Lebrecht, 'The Fight for Shostakovich', *La Scena Musicale: The Lebrecht Weekly* (24 March 2004), accessed on-line (on 30 Jan 2008).

³⁰ In her first significant challenge of Volkov's text, Fay demonstrated that several passages of the memoir were taken from Shostakovich's other writings, yet unacknowledged; crucially, *these* extracts, containing relatively uncontroversial material, were the ones signed by Shostakovich as proof of authenticity: Fay, 'Shostakovich versus Volkov'. Dmitri Feofanov and Allan Ho published a lengthy and polemical defence of *Testimony* in response to this: Feofanov and Ho, *Shostakovich Reconsidered*; Fay subsequently expanded significantly on her earlier findings: Fay, 'Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered'. Fay's articles form the focus of Malcolm Hamrick Brown's *A Shostakovich Casebook*, which also includes other writings that contribute towards the debunking of *Testimony*. Paul Mitchinson's article in this volume gives a clear presentation of this debate: Mitchinson, 'The Shostakovich Variations'; see also Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 7–12; 33–6 for a more sympathetic summary of what Mishra considers an on-going controversy. Interestingly, the dispute has remained largely confined to the West; *Testimony* has not, to date, been published in Russian.

inspired a popular film, its extracts form the voice-over in a documentary on the composer, it is quoted extensively in a renowned foreign-language biography, and a surprising number of scholarly studies still cite passages from its text.³¹ A curious situation has thus arisen: the centrality of *Testimony* to most portraits of this composer remains unshaken and its myths, firmly embedded in popular culture, may prove difficult to overturn. Meanwhile, the complete and successful academic debunking of this source is currently little known.³²

Testimony formed the basis of numerous revisionist interpretations of Shostakovich's music, the most notorious being Ian MacDonald's 1990 biography, *The New Shostakovich*. In his preface to this work, MacDonald grudgingly recognised that: '*Testimony* itself is not what it seems'.³³ However, whilst tacitly admitting that the book was a fraud, he argued that its *essence* was based in reality: *Testimony* had revealed a 'new' Shostakovich, the polar opposite of the communist 'loyal son' portrayed in Soviet writings and broadly accepted in the West; this revised Shostakovich matched the biographical portraits that appeared in other Russian accounts and reminiscences.³⁴ If Volkov had misrepresented the precise nature of these memoirs, they nevertheless aspired to a kind of higher truth.³⁵ Its veracity thus dispensed with at the outset by an extraordinary sleight of hand,

³¹ The film is Palmer, dir., *Testimony* (1987), DVD reissue (2006) and the documentary is Weinstein, dir., *Shostakovich Against Stalin* (1997), DVD reissue (2005). The biography is Meyer, *Dymitr Szostakowicz*, first published in Polish and subsequently translated into several languages, though not English; Maes notes its indiscriminate inclusion of problematic passages from *Testimony* in Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 348. A recent and significant academic study that nevertheless quotes freely from *Testimony* to support its arguments is Shienberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, eg. 162, 290, 332.

³² There are isolated examples of this discussion entering the public domain, however: newspaper articles on Fay's findings include Rothstein, 'Sly dissident or Soviet tool?', *The New York Times* (17 Oct 1998), accessed on-line (on 22 Nov 2010); and Ross, 'Unauthorized', *The New Yorker* (6 Sep 2004), accessed on-line (on 22 Nov 2010).

³³ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 7.

³⁴ MacDonald claims that the autobiography of the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya – a friend and colleague of Shostakovich's – is broadly in line with Volkov in its depiction of the composer's anti-communist views: see Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story*. Both the personal reminiscences included in Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* and Shostakovich's own letters in Glikman, *Story of a Friendship* also reveal a man who was tormented by and hostile to the Stalinist regime; however, all of these portraits are more subtle and nuanced than Volkov's Shostakovich.

³⁵ This line of reasoning has become common, allowing authors to admit the veracity of Fay's findings and yet continue to use *Testimony* as a legitimate resource. A recent book by Brian Morton adopts this strategy: Morton acknowledges that the memoirs are largely a forgery, but declares that we can still trust 'the sentiments, if not the actual text'. Morton, *Shostakovich*, 129.

MacDonald proceeded to quote extensively from *Testimony*, treating it as a legitimate indicator of Shostakovich's compositional thinking.

The 'Shostakovich of *Testimony*' – a theoretically constructed personality referred to throughout *The New Shostakovich* – would appear somewhat narrow in his creative purpose. MacDonald's analyses claim that each of Shostakovich's works present an unambiguous programme, anti-communist or anti-Stalinist (the two are not differentiated) and aided by the use of musical quotations and references. The following comments on the Fifth Symphony are typical of his writing as a whole:

We are at a political rally, the leader making his entrance through the audience like a boxer flanked by a phalanx of thugs.... Suddenly, the vaulting theme from the movement's beginning is there amidst the mob, desperately trying to find a way out throughout the grinning brass. At the peak of a wildly struggling crescendo, its basic two note component [signifying Sta-lin] abruptly, and with a vertiginous ambiguity, turns into a flourish of colossal might on drums and brass...³⁶

MacDonald's text has been attacked so virulently, so extensively and so often that further detailed engagement with it is unnecessary.³⁷ It has been justifiably criticised for its unsubstantiated and crude analyses, its repetitive conclusions and its reductive over-simplifications of Shostakovich's music. Arguably, the academic establishment has a more fundamental problem with *The New Shostakovich*: MacDonald's free programmatic description is quite simply not musicology as we know it. It does demonstrate a remarkable affinity with musicology as it used to be, however; compare the passage above with a typical extract from an arbitrarily chosen monograph on Brahms, written over sixty years before MacDonald's text:

³⁶ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 129.

³⁷ Several reviews of *The New Shostakovich* condemn MacDonald's book on a number of counts: its weak and simplistic musical analysis, eg. Fanning, review of *The New Shostakovich*; its reliance on flawed evidence, eg. Brown, review of *The New Shostakovich*; its factual inaccuracies and its overtly biased agenda, eg. Graffy, review of *The New Shostakovich*. Christopher Norris questions the project as a whole, arguing that hearing this music as a subversive code is not the only way to understand Shostakovich: Norris, 'Shostakovich and Cold War Cultural Politics'. MacDonald's most vocal critic is Taruskin, who argues principally that MacDonald's unscholarly readings trivialise Shostakovich's music in a manner redolent of the worst kinds of Stalinist criticism: see Taruskin, review of *The New Shostakovich*; Taruskin, 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truths', 52–4; and others. Maes argues after Taruskin: see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 347–53.

The gnarled, ominously opening finale in Brahms's tragic key of F minor, which at first seems to conjure up the powers of the bottomless pit and then to throttle the darkly muttering initial themes in a sudden wild grip, rears itself up to a great height, eager for combat. A haughty and triumphant theme, obstinately accentuating the weak beat, resounds in an orchestra in which trombones and trumpets are silent, like a barbaric battle-song.... And now a tumult is unchained which gradually disentangles itself...³⁸

As music became institutionalised as an academic discipline, such poetic commentaries fell out of fashion, to be replaced with increasingly measured and scientific methods of analysis. MacDonald himself, writing as a journalist rather than an academic, implied that his lack of recognition was due to his status as an outsider;³⁹ perhaps there is some truth in the argument that his work was not taken seriously simply because this way of talking about music was not in current vogue. Interestingly, trends in new musicology place a higher value on imaginative narrative accounts of musical works: thus Carolyn Abbate, in her exploration of voice in opera, warns against a formalist 'high-handed dismissal' of nineteenth-century dramatic explanations of music, arguing that many modern analyses – while eschewing extra-musical imagery – nevertheless continue to discuss the musical work in terms suggestive of underlying drama or plot.⁴⁰ Other writers consciously attempt to bridge the gap between their own narrative readings of instrumental works and earlier programmatic accounts.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Scott Burnham, in an examination of poetic and analytical criticisms of Beethoven's symphonies, celebrates both methodologies as essentially synonymous attempts to connect with the musical work.⁴² Burnham is positive regarding the most fanciful of narrative readings, respecting them as:

³⁸ Specht, *Johannes Brahms*, 280.

³⁹ MacDonald's belief that his work was dismissed because he was not an academic forms the unmistakable sub-text of MacDonald, 'Interview with DSCH' (1998), on-line (accessed 1 Feb 2008).

⁴⁰ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 19–29; 22.

⁴¹ Examples include Jander, 'Beethoven's 'Orpheus in Hades' and Jander, 'The Kreutzer Sonata as Dialogue'. An overview of these and similar texts is given in Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 24–5; 257.

⁴² Burnham, 'How Music Matters'.

poetic attempts at consolidating one's experience with the music at a given time, recording the interaction between the world of the piece and the world of the listener. Verbal interpretations thus act as a way of embodying the musical experience of an active listener, a way of making the music into a truth for the listener.⁴³

Only a kind of listener-centric philosophy might thus redeem MacDonald's imaginative depictions of Shostakovich's music; ironically, it is Taruskin – MacDonald's fiercest detractor – who most strongly adopts this all-inclusive critical position in discussing this musical output.⁴⁴

The explicit anti-communist content of the programmes in *The New Shostakovich* will only resonate with a specific audience. And yet, for this group of listeners, these narratives do constitute a kind of truth: this is undoubtedly how MacDonald heard these works – and not just MacDonald. Whilst *The New Shostakovich* is the most prominent collection of revisionist readings of Shostakovich's pieces, similar accounts abound in the literature on this composer. Prominent texts by Dmitri Feofanov, Allan Ho and Solomon Volkov – all authors who would become very much associated with MacDonald⁴⁵ – consider this music to be aurally subversive, in part through its use of a dense network of (self) referential codes.⁴⁶ These writings are neither scholarly nor musically analytical: however, many academic works posit the same kinds of conclusions. Karen Kopp, in her substantial examination of form in the symphonies, sets out to use detailed structural analysis to support *Testimony's* seditious programmes.⁴⁷ Similarly, Esti Sheinberg's celebrated study of irony in the music of Shostakovich on occasion draws on *Testimony* to provide anti-Stalinist solutions to examples of audible

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁴⁴ See Taruskin, 'Shostakovich and Us'.

⁴⁵ MacDonald and Volkov both contributed to Ho's and Feofanov's text *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, which defends *The New Shostakovich* throughout; Hakobian argues that MacDonald was an 'equally involved coauthor' of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*: Hakobian, 'The Latest "New Shostakovich"', 230–31. MacDonald both defends *Shostakovich Reconsidered* and discusses his communications and collaborations with Volkov, Ho and Feofanov in 'Interview with DSCH' (1998), on-line (accessed 1 Feb 2008).

⁴⁶ See Feofanov and Ho, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* and Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*.

⁴⁷ Kopp, *Form und Gehalt*. For a critical discussion of Kopp's reliance on *Testimony*, see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 344; 349–50.

musical satire.⁴⁸ While the focus of Sheinberg's text is not political, other academic sources have a singular and overt revisionist purpose.⁴⁹ A sub-set of this literature explores Jewish elements in Shostakovich's works, interpreting his use of ethnic modes and topoi as an expression of solidarity with a persecuted race that was necessarily political in the context of Stalin's anti-Semitic policies. The essays of the analyst Timothy Jackson are notable in this field, appearing as centrepieces both in the first symposium dedicated solely to Shostakovich and the Jewish idiom, Ernst Kuhn's and Gunter Wolter's *Dmitri Shostakowitsch und das Jüdische Musikalische Erbe*, and in the pro-*Testimony* text, *Shostakovich Reconsidered*; Jackson's prominence in both camps highlights the inter-relationship between 'Jewish' and 'Dissident' portraits of the composer.⁵⁰

Much of this body of work is marginalised by the academic community for its overt political bias and disturbing reliance on *Testimony*, and these texts are either ignored or attacked in mainstream musicological studies.⁵¹ However, such

⁴⁸ For example, Sheinberg quotes *Testimony's* critique of the Composers Union's adoption of a contemporary march by Alexander Davidenko to support her argument that Shostakovich's shrill wrong-note parody of the piece in his incidental music to Nikolay Akimov's *Hamlet* (1932) was daringly political: see Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, 103–5.

⁴⁹ Articles that focus on 'code breaking' the network of quotations, references, ciphers and topoi in Shostakovich's works for revisionist ends are common in the academic literature on the composer. In one typical example of many, a survey of the preludes sets out to uncover instances of musical parody and their meaning: Leikin, 'Decoding the Twenty-Four Preludes'.

⁵⁰ The 'Jewish-dissident' literature is both extensive and varied in quality. Articles on Shostakovich's use of Jewish references and their wider contextual significance appear in Kuhn, Wolter and Wehrmeyer, *Dmitri Shostakowitsch und das Jüdische Musikalische Erbe*. Timothy Jackson's contributions to this body of work are unusually analytical, examining the use of Jewish modes on a surface and structural level in the music of Shostakovich and citing this as evidence that the composer deeply identified with the Jews as fellow victims of persecution: for example, Jackson, 'A Contribution to the Musical Poetics of Dmitri Shostakovich' and Jackson, 'Dmitry Shostakovich: The Composer as Jew'. Esti Sheinberg's work in this area offers a more original perspective: Sheinberg argues that Shostakovich was attracted to the simultaneous presence of euphoric and dysphoric elements in Jewish modes and styles, and drew on the genre in order to express the overriding theme of existential irony: for example, Sheinberg, 'Shostakovich's Jewish Music'; and Sheinberg, 'Jewish Existential Irony'.

⁵¹ Hakobian notes that both *Shostakovich Reconsidered* and *The New Shostakovich* are 'almost never cited in serious analytical studies': Hakobian, 'The Latest "New Shostakovich"', 232. Reviews of the former by established Shostakovich scholars criticise the text for its extremism, factual errors and un-academic methodology and tone: see Fanning, review of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*; and Sheinberg, review of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*. Fanning's review of the collection *Dmitri Shostakowitsch und das Jüdische Musikalische Erbe* dismisses several of the weaker articles as 'uncritical recyclings of unexamined clichés, inaccurate musical observations, and reckless jumping to unprovable conclusions': Fanning, review of *Dmitri Shostakowitsch und das Jüdische Musikalische Erbe*, 138. Fairclough attacks Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin* for similar reasons, focussing on Volkov's shaky grasp of musical analysis, careless inaccuracies and presentation of hypothesis as fact throughout: Fairclough, 'Facts, Fantasies and Fictions', 458–60.

ways of reading Shostakovich's music have an obvious popular appeal, and form the basis of numerous internet sites, journalistic writings and non-scholarly forums.⁵² Shostakovich the non-conformist is overwhelmingly the Shostakovich of current mythology; it would seem that MacDonald's text continues to exert its influence. Brian Morton's *Shostakovich: His Life and Music* – the latest study of the composer geared towards a general readership – is basically a modified re-write of *The New Shostakovich*, drawing heavily on *Testimony* to support dissident interpretations (and not revealing that the memoirs are in fact a forgery until the Afterword).⁵³

As a public, we are still clinging to a particular perception of this output, and this must reveal something about Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century; that this way of hearing is rather overtly socially constructed does not make it any the less real, however. A recent personal anecdote highlighted for me the extent to which MacDonald's experience of listening to Shostakovich is genuinely experienced by many today; for the group of people in question, *The New Shostakovich* was a valid text as it closely expressed how they *felt* this music.⁵⁴ As Soviet citizens needed to hear Shostakovich in a specific way, so too did MacDonald and Western Cold War listeners; and so also (evidently!) do British audiences now.⁵⁵ The need is not comparatively as great, nor is it as straightforward to analyse;

⁵² See the entry on the composer in the internet encyclopaedia Conservapedia, 'Dmitri Shostakovich', on-line (5 May 2009) for a mainstream, pro-*Testimony* view. The *Shostakovichiana* website, accessed 1 Feb 2008, is devoted to the dissident portrait of the composer. Certain strands on internet discussion forums reveal the overwhelming popularity of texts such as *Testimony* and *The New Shostakovich*: for example, see Yahoo! Groups, 'Shostakovich World', on-line, accessed 5 May 2009.

⁵³ For an example of the significant overlap between Morton's work and MacDonald's, see both writers' accounts of the Fifth Symphony. Both suggest Mahler's Fourth Symphony as a model for the opening; both focus on the use of two-note figures in the first movement, linking these to *Lady Macbeth*; both believe (to varying degrees) that this movement represents Stalin; both describe the slow movement as a finale to Tukhachevsky and the Russian people as a whole; both quote the same line from *Testimony* regarding the false apotheosis of the finale. See Morton, *Shostakovich, His Life and Music*, 56–7 and MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 127–32.

⁵⁴ A group of students assessed the merits of an extract from *The New Shostakovich* on a given set of criteria (did the author construct a convincing argument, separate fact from opinion, reference properly, etc.). Despite the obvious shortcomings of the text, a surprising number of the group were reluctant to pass a negative judgement on the piece as a whole: it too closely corresponded to how they *heard* Shostakovich. Similarly, Fanning's review of the work, while generally unfavourable, nevertheless hints at an underlying sympathy: 'This is a genuine and original contribution to the appreciation of Shostakovich's music, and it is expressed with passionate conviction': Fanning, review of *The New Shostakovich*, 315.

⁵⁵ For a more cynical account of the Western commercial music market's 'need' for a revisionist Shostakovich, see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 345–8.

perhaps this explains why Taruskin, in a similar discussion, prefers to replace the very concept of our ‘need’ as listeners’ with that of our ‘selfish, private interests’ – although he still regards these as perfectly legitimate.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the recent trend in Shostakovich scholarship that celebrates the auditor’s ultimate role in the construction of meaning must extend this privilege to revisionist hearings also, acknowledging the absolute truth of such interpretations for MacDonald-the-listener.

By embracing such critical theory, the programmatic accounts of *The New Shostakovich*, corresponding to an experiential reality, might potentially be put forward for re-evaluation – were they presented by MacDonald in this light.⁵⁷ For MacDonald, though, these analyses do not simply form one possible interpretation; they are not socially constructed (at least, not by the recipient), and their essential truth is not limited to one particular audience. Referring to the pictorial account of the Fifth Symphony given above, he explains: ‘There can be absolutely no doubt that introspection plays no part in this, that it is objective description – Shostakovichian, as opposed to Socialist, realism’.⁵⁸ If his hermeneutic readings appear to break with musicological tradition, their essential premise is deeply conservative: MacDonald places all of the responsibility for the construction of meaning with the composer himself. In the face of such authority, we as listeners become passive receivers of message, rather than potential creators of it. Consequently, no concept of doubleness, still less multivalence, exists for MacDonald: meaning is both singular and absolute. This is not one way of hearing, but the only way: for, as MacDonald’s future collaborators would assert, ‘the meaning of Shostakovich’s music is crystal clear for those with ‘ears to listen’’.⁵⁹

The point at stake here is not a possible re-evaluation of *The New Shostakovich*: it has long been acknowledged that this work is essentially flawed.

⁵⁶ Taruskin, ‘Hearing Cycles’, 356.

⁵⁷ Interestingly, since the writing of this chapter, Taruskin offers criticism such as MacDonald’s the same theoretical possibility of redemption, though crucially with the same caveat: ‘any reading that rewards us by enhancing our enjoyment, our imaginative engagement, or our emotional satisfaction, or that gratifies our moral needs or our sense of justice, is sufficiently justified.... Criticism (i.e., public interpretation) that serves these private selfish interests is fully justified on a similar basis, as long as no further claim is made’. Taruskin, ‘Hearing Cycles’, 356.

⁵⁸ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 129.

⁵⁹ Feofanov and Ho, *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, 14.

However, this critical diversion has highlighted a number of issues that are pertinent to any contemporary musicological study of this composer. Although MacDonald's example is an extreme one, it is part of a body of literature that draws on Shostakovich's own political and social context to inform the construction of (extra-musical) meaning in a discussion of this music: a basic aim that is shared by this thesis. And yet, if we admit the notion of interpretative multivalence – if we allow that any listener is the primary creator of a message that is largely shaped by their own social context rather than the composers' – then perhaps this analytical project is fundamentally futile. (Put simply: Shostakovich's Shostakovich is not my Shostakovich, and my Shostakovich is not your Shostakovich – yet each is valid. Yet if each is valid, then why put forward one interpretation?). This is a musicological dead-end reminiscent of Gary Tomlinson's well-known response to Lawrence Kramer on the subject of the 'New Musicology';⁶⁰ today, we have moved beyond such entrenched critical pessimism. There is no longer a need to defend the legitimacy of analysing meaning in a musical work. However, in the case of Shostakovich, it needs especial consideration: the reception of this music is so determined by political and social contexts that any reading must be rooted in ideology; moreover, it might be wildly at variance with other interpretations that are equally compelling and keenly felt.

It is possible to avoid becoming entangled in such problematic discussions of hermeneutics altogether. Rather than concentrating on the end effect of Shostakovich's music – whether that be the dissemination of political message or the projection of multivalence – a study might instead prioritise the methods by which such meaning is cultivated: essentially, an analytical shift of focus from the *what* to the *how*. In a celebrated and relatively recent work, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich*, Sheinberg examines at length the

⁶⁰ This critical exchange was carried out in the following articles: Kramer, 'The Musicology of the Future'; Tomlinson, 'Musical Pasts and Postmodern Musicologies'; Kramer, 'Music Criticism at the Postmodern Turn'; and Tomlinson, 'Tomlinson Responds'. In short, Kramer argued that contemporary musicology should recognise that both music and criticism was not independent of the world around it, but socially constructed; consequently, the musicologist should not impute absolutes to the musical work, nor imply access to an authoritative interpretation that is not socially mediated. In response, Tomlinson essentially accused Kramer of not acting on his own principles. By engaging in any kind of analysis of the music itself, Kramer was assuming both autonomy and authority; music could no more be separated from its historical context than musicology could be from ideological position.

ways in which irony and its related concepts are created in a musical text: for example, through the over-emphasis of surface musical features, or the transgression of biologically-engendered norms.⁶¹ She spends less time on attempting to define the precise object of practises such as satire (and when she does venture to fix *what* is satirised rather than *how* this is carried out, her conclusions often become less original).⁶² A key component of Sheinberg's thesis is her belief in *irony as terminus*: the use of ironic strategies to signify nothing other than irony itself. In proposing this argument, Sheinberg draws on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Russian Formalists, the young Shostakovich's contemporaries in 1920s Leningrad; McBurney, in his essay, 'Whose Shostakovich?', also explores the philosophies of these figures – and with a similar purpose.⁶³ For as Sheinberg, McBurney considers that Shostakovich's usage of plural styles and multiple topoi can be an end in itself: a kind of empty incantation of musical signifiers that, sounding as nonsensical 'babble', is expressive of nothing more than contradiction *per se*.

For these authors – although they don't put it quite like this – process has essentially become meaning. It is a short step from this tacit admission to a call for more formalist analysis; McBurney, while stressing that he is not primarily a scholar, sees an urgent need for such work to be done:

It seems fairly clear that, as yet, few questions have been asked about the language, the inner structure and coherence of this music, about what it is and how it works and why it is the way it is. There has been plenty of commentary, of course, about the signs and symbols he uses, and some of

⁶¹ Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*. Writers on Shostakovich have already labelled Sheinberg's work as a crucial resource: Taruskin admits to applying its theories to his own thinking on Shostakovich: Taruskin, 'When Serious Music Mattered', 371; similarly, Caryl Emerson uses Sheinberg's systems and categorisations in her own work: Emerson, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition', 189–96. Reviews of Sheinberg's work are also positive: see Ritzarev, review of *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque* and McMillin, review of *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*.

⁶² For example, her discussion of Shostakovich's parodistic use of a Davidenko melody in his incidental music to *Hamlet* takes a familiarly dissident turn: Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, 103–5.

⁶³ McBurney, 'Whose Shostakovich?'

that is interesting. But it still tells us less about how the music works and more about how we are supposed to read things into it.⁶⁴

It is true that the popular politicised controversies relating to Shostakovich have so dominated the literature that the 'music itself' has received scant attention even on the most rudimentary of levels – although there are some exceptions to this. For example, two recent compendiums, *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich* and *A Shostakovich Companion*, do each include a number of basic musically descriptive accounts of this output as part of a 'normalised' life-and-works overview of the composer that is long overdue.⁶⁵ More sophisticated analytical essays are also included in such volumes,⁶⁶ while isolated, highly-technical articles on Shostakovich do appear in theoretical journals⁶⁷ – and yet these examples, tending to focus on single works, are still few and far between. However, there is an extensive body of literature in the Russian language that attempts to explain comprehensively this output in purely musical terms:⁶⁸ overwhelmingly, this scholarship has focussed on the melodic and specifically *modal* qualities of Shostakovich's style, drawing on a theory of modality that is specifically Russian.⁶⁹ A

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁶⁵ Thus the former contains a basic musically descriptive survey of all of Shostakovich's major works genre by genre; it also includes the much-needed contribution Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language': Fairclough and Fanning, *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*. Similarly, Michael Mishra's companion incorporates straightforward musical commentary in his chronological historical account of the compositions: Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*.

⁶⁶ See examples in Fanning, *Shostakovich Studies*; Kuhn and Wehrmeyer, *Shostakowitschs Streichquartette*; Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*; and Fairclough, *Shostakovich Studies 2*.

⁶⁷ For example, William Hussey explores the marriage of triadic and linear chromatic writing in three examples from Shostakovich, using a combination of analytical approaches including Neo-Riemannian theory: Hussey, 'Triadic Post-Tonality and Linear Chromaticism'. Peter Child also explores the interrelationship between tonal and non-tonal musics in one symphony via set-theoretical and voice-leading techniques: Child, 'Voice-Leading Patterns and Interval Collections'. Meanwhile, David Castro scrutinises the relationship between thematic material, pitch collections and referential pitch in one movement from Shostakovich in great detail: Castro, 'Harmonic, Melodic and Referential Pitch Analysis'.

⁶⁸ The bibliography to Fay and Schwarz, 'Dmitry Shostakovich', provides a comprehensive list of Soviet analytical texts prior to this date. Recent Russian collections on Shostakovich include several purely analytical contributions: see examples in Leje, *Dmitrij Šostakovič: Problemy stilâ*.

⁶⁹ Ellon D. Carpenter summarises the Russian literature on mode in Shostakovich, relating it to Russian modal theory in general: Carpenter, 'Russian Theorists on Modality in Shostakovich's Music'; see also Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 309–14 for a more concise summary. Both Carpenter and Fanning regard modal theory to be a crucially important resource in understanding Shostakovich that is relatively untapped in the West, and still undeveloped in Russia: Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 34–6. For more general explanations of modal thinking in Russian analysis, see McQuere, *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music*.

modal approach to the compositions of Shostakovich might appear an attractive proposition: this music is inconveniently situated on the cusp of tonality, a significant impediment to scholars that might also help to explain the relative lack of analytical literature in this area.⁷⁰ Yet a musicological thesis focussed on extra-musical meaning is bound to point out the uncomfortably formalist nature of the Russian modal literature: for these writers, the categorisation of the various modes and the examination of their manipulations forms the entirety of the analytical project; procedure is all, and any link to the resultant emotional effect of such musical processes tends to be left unmade.

Such a literature of large-scale and strictly formalist studies on Shostakovich simply does not exist outside of Russia; in order to gain an understanding of why this might be the case, together with an appreciation of the kind of work that *has* been attempted, it is first beneficial to consider the earliest significant analytical examinations of the composer to have come out of the West. In a summary of this limited output published relatively recently, in 2000, Fanning lists just three substantial analytical texts specifically on Shostakovich written in the English language.⁷¹ The first, Fay's doctoral thesis on Shostakovich's late quartets, adopts an unusually formalist position, examining at length the composer's use of twelve-tone rows, atonality and intervallic manipulation.⁷² Yet the other two published British theses – Richard Longman's *Expression and Structure: Processes of Integration in the Large-scale Instrumental Music of Dmitri Shostakovich* and Eric Roseberry's *Ideology, Style, Content and Thematic Process in the Symphonies, Cello Concertos and String Quartets of Shostakovich* – both differ in their approach to that of Fay, as even their titles would imply.⁷³ For while both Longman and Roseberry carry out much detailed analysis, chiefly of thematic processes, their fundamental concern is with the expressive outcome of such procedures and the corresponding effect upon the listener – and if this is the underlying aim of the

⁷⁰ In his survey of Shostakovich's harmony and analytical responses to it, David Haas explores this and other such problems encountered in analysing the composer's musical language: see Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 304–8.

⁷¹ Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 32–3. A similar survey of Western analytical literature on Shostakovich can be found in Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 314–22.

⁷² Fay, 'The Last Quartets of Dmitrii Shostakovich'.

⁷³ Longman, *Expression and Structure*; Roseberry, *Ideology, Style, Content and Thematic Process*.

Russian modal analyses and of Fay's thesis, it is certainly buried deep. Thus these authors avoid excessively technical explanations, even drawing on the semantic lexicons of Deryck Cooke and Shostakovich's contemporary Boris Asafiev to explain the emotional meaning of stock musical phrases. In his examination of the Fifth Symphony, Roseberry explicitly rejects a formalist methodology, concluding that: 'to analyse such a passage in purely technical terms is out of the question'.⁷⁴ Instead, he adopts an unusual approach:

Metaphorical language best illuminates such a passage – the metaphor of a mountain journey, perhaps. We set out from a base of A minor (bar 18) and gain height via C minor (bar 23). We press on to reach the cold Neapolitan Peak of B flat major (the composer's characteristic flattened second degree already present in the original theme...) but we fall back (bar 26). A more hopeful route (bars 27–28) leads to a glorious glimpse of the summit (bar 29) but we lose our viewpoint again in the mists of B minor and C major (bars 30–31) – and find ourselves back again at the starting point.⁷⁵

Both Roseberry's insistence that this account is allegorical and his reference to tonal centres distinguishes this sharply from the narrative formulations of MacDonald's *New Shostakovich*, written just months after Roseberry's thesis. However, such descriptive writing is perhaps not quite what we might expect in a work that – alongside Longman's dissertation – was heralded by Fanning as a seminal analytical text.⁷⁶

Fanning's own contemporaneous monograph on Shostakovich, *The Breath of the Symphonist: Shostakovich's Tenth*, is more theoretically sophisticated than the primarily thematic studies of Longman and Roseberry, engaging in in-depth discussions of the interface between modality and tonality and the large-scale operation of tonal areas, for example.⁷⁷ However, it also stresses throughout the expressive outcome of the musical processes, addressing the book to the reader 'who will readily connect the musical examples with the sound of the score, with the emotional effect... who will be interested in, but not rest content with,

⁷⁴ Roseberry, *Ideology, Style, Content and Thematic Process*, 68.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Fanning, review of *Expression and Structure and Ideology, Style, Content and Thematic Process*.

⁷⁷ Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist*.

demonstrations of musical relationships'.⁷⁸ Thus dense analytical information never stands alone in Fanning's text, but is used to explain the corresponding aural impression: flattened modal inflections that impinge upon harmony and tonal centre give the 'sensation' of darkness, for example.⁷⁹ At times he resorts to programmatic description: the economy of material at the opening of the first movement suggests: 'an inchoate, almost dreamlike searching, the sense of being on the threshold of a spiritual journey which will confront past suffering and... propose a bright future'.⁸⁰ If this analogy is reminiscent of Roseberry's, above, Fanning's narratives are at times overtly political. Sympathetic to the dissident portrait of the composer, his lengthy analysis of the structure, tonality and thematic processes of the finale concludes with a reading that is explicitly politicised:

Theme B is even more benign now over a *fortissimo* pizzicato quasi-plagal-cadence accompaniment. The side drum and DSCH join in the celebrations (around fig. 202), the swirling woodwind lines from the second movement (fig. 75) are added, A goes over the top (fig. 204), Neapolitan harmony, DSCH motifs and theme B (around fig. 205) all merrily swing the hero along to the uncomplicated conclusion, capped by the scale/ glissando of the end of the second movement. He loved Big Brother.⁸¹

Fanning draws on purely musical elements to arrive at this interpretation, whereas MacDonald leans on a system of quotations and references that is essentially extra-musical. However, the tone and purpose of passages such as this place the two texts – one scholarly, one journalistic – closer than we might expect. It would seem that initial attempts to analyse this music avoided the excessive or exclusive use of formalist techniques, and it is notable in this respect that *The Breath of the Symphonist* devotes considerable space to the discussion of surface as well as structural features. Fanning acknowledges that his work strays from a purely analytical remit, suggesting that Shostakovich's music is too traditional for a study based purely on its inner workings to be of real interest.⁸² If this is unconvincing,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 73.

perhaps Roseberry comes closer to the heart of the matter, arguing in his introduction that this music: ‘proved strangely resistant to an analytical approach which sought to separate form from content’.⁸³ Those properties that so distinguished the works of Shostakovich – the excessive and unexpected use of musical topoi, the emotionally-laden contexts of composition and performance – would seem to interfere with their existence as autonomous musical structures, either on an actual or a perceived level.

Thus post-structuralist concerns regarding both the fundamentally worldly nature of the work and its inter-dependence on the listener naturally found an early foothold in Shostakovich scholarship, even in texts that were primarily analytical. At several points in *The Breath of the Symphonist*, Fanning acknowledges the existence of multiple interpretations predicated on the cultural experiences of the listener. Although he considers it necessary that his analytical findings *correspond* with his extra-musical readings, he offers his dissident portrait simply as one possibility, believing that: ‘everyone is free to build different sorts of bridges to different conclusions’.⁸⁴ Even in more analytical passages, the listener is never far from the forefront of this text: the sense of music as a process that is experienced both in time and in order underpins Fanning’s discussion of large-scale structural and tonal relationships. This is not score-based, but *sound*-based analysis; as such, it breaks with certain extreme formalist methodologies of the past.

In the case of Shostakovich, this concern would seem to persist: even a thoroughly analytical recent thesis – completed since Fanning’s summary in 2000 of such work to date – is more listener-centric than might be expected. Michael Rofe’s ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll: Dimensions of Energy in the Symphonies’ examines the creation of energy in this output within and between the multiple nested parameters of harmony, timbre, rhythm and form, using Boleslav Yavorsky’s theory of modal rhythm and the analysis of symmetrical and Golden Section proportions to do so.⁸⁵ As a comprehensive study of ‘how the music works’, this text is unparalleled; crucially for this discussion, its relevance lies in its commitment

⁸³ Roseberry, *Ideology, Style, Content and Thematic Process*, viii.

⁸⁴ Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist*, 60.

⁸⁵ Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’. This thesis is developed in the forthcoming book: Rofe, *Dimensions of Energy in Shostakovich’s Symphonies*.

from the outset to explaining the ‘inherent sense of energy’ that we *as listeners* experience on hearing these compositions. Rofe acknowledges both the validity of different aural perspectives as well as the subjectivity of the analytical project;⁸⁶ perhaps more constructively, his examination of proportional relationships considers from the outset ‘what can realistically be experienced by the listener’,⁸⁷ while his conclusion engages with recent literature relating to psychological perception⁸⁸ – arguably analytical musicology’s most positive response to certain poststructuralist dilemmas.⁸⁹

It would seem that, in relation to this composer in particular, analysts have adjusted their position along critical musicological lines – and this observation holds true with regard to other aspects of their work, to such an extent that Fanning, writing as early as 1998, could declare that: ‘the battle for integrating cultural context into Shostakovich commentary has long since been won’.⁹⁰ If Shostakovich analysis has broadened its scope, extending its investigation into areas that are traditionally the province of the musicologist, the corresponding shift has not occurred to the same degree: the majority of musicological texts on this composer pay little attention to the music itself. There is an extensive, predominantly Russian literature on Shostakovich that broadly falls into three categories: biography (the personal reminiscences of fellow musicians or family members, for example); reception history (surveys of how this music was received in former Soviet bloc countries, for instance); and archival research (previously unpublished letters, examinations of lesser-known manuscripts, accounts of particular performances, and so on).⁹¹ These texts, while undoubtedly important, neither aim nor claim to treat the actual musical work as an object of study – and of course this is legitimate. Yet there are plenty of critical writings on Shostakovich that *do* examine specific pieces from his oeuvre, and do so with a view to forming judgements on expressive

⁸⁶ See, for example, Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 36; 338.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 338–48.

⁸⁹ Robert Gjerdingen provides a helpful bibliography of journals and books devoted to the research of music perception and cognition: Gjerdingen, ‘An Experimental Music Theory?’

⁹⁰ Fanning, ‘A Response to Papers by Allan Ho and Dmitri Feofanov’, 279.

⁹¹ Several such examples can be found in Storoženko, *D.D. Šostakovič i ego epoha*. Esipova and Rahmanova, *Sostakovic – Urtext*, is devoted entirely to archival research, and includes the publication of reminiscences, letters, photographs, etc.

meaning and effect; even so, a surprising number of these studies contain little or no analysis of the musical text. Caryl Emerson's essays on Shostakovich's vocal compositions eschew biographical or archival details, and avoid any discussion of production, performance or reception: the focus is firmly on the works themselves. Her articles are rich in cultural and historical references, and her discussion of dramatic and literary content has been justly praised.⁹² However, musical exegesis is skin-deep or non-existent, and perhaps this is problematic in any holistic assessment of a multi-faceted art-form.⁹³ Certainly, the lack of engagement with the score itself forms a notable absence on reading: music has become, as Abbate implies, the proverbial 'elephant in the room'.⁹⁴

It is for such reasons that Fanning, in his turn-of-the-century survey of recent work quoted above, laments the dearth of serious musical commentary within Shostakovich scholarship as a whole, and appeals for such work to be undertaken: a call that, with the publication of texts such as Rofe's, is at least beginning to be fulfilled.⁹⁵ Fanning's argument has a compelling simplicity about it. Although he realises and even celebrates the relevance of contextual methodologies in this area, he makes a plea for the analytical study of Shostakovich's works to be carried out *as well*, for: 'do they not communicate, in significant part at least, by means of complexities of formal and harmonic language, the analysis of which is at the same time an analysis of that communication?'⁹⁶ As Fanning himself suggests, such analytical examinations need not be carried out in isolation from other critical

⁹² Emerson, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition' focuses on Shostakovich's operas and song cycles, examining these in reference to the literary futurists of the 1920s, Gogol and his followers and the paintings of Boris Kustodiev. A similar, richly contextual approach can be observed in Emerson, 'Shostakovich, Tsvetaeva, Pushkin, Musorgsky' and Emerson, 'Back to the future'. Emerson's work has received positive reviews: see Fairclough, 'Facts, Fantasies and Fictions', 457–8; McKeon, review of *Shostakovich in Context*, 36; Henderson, 'Review – Decoding Dmitri', 114.

⁹³ Arnold Whittall regards Emerson's musical observations as weak compared to her thoroughly researched textual interpretations: reviewing her comments on *Lady Macbeth*, he muses that Emerson cannot have *seen* the opera to arrive at such conclusions: Whittall, "'Forceful Muting' or 'Phatic Dithering'?", 70–71.

⁹⁴ See Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 109; 127.

⁹⁵ Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony'. Other significant, largely analytical studies of Shostakovich to have been published since this date are Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo* and Fanning's own monograph, Fanning, *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8.*; these will be discussed further below.

⁹⁶ Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 32.

activity.⁹⁷ If it was once necessary (post-Kerman) to adopt an emphatic position – to choose between contemporary musicology on the one hand, and formalist analysis on the other – this is no longer the case.⁹⁸ There is now a growing body of literature that attempts to marry these approaches: the work of Kramer, for example, comprises detailed examinations of both cultural context and musical text;⁹⁹ similarly, the writings of Abbate, though drawing heavily on postmodern theory, still interact closely with the score.¹⁰⁰ For the most part, these authors engage in what might better be termed ‘close reading’ than analysis as such. There are some exceptions to this, however: in his article ‘Haydn’s Chaos, Schenker’s Order; or, Hermeneutics and Musical Analysis: Can They Mix?’, Kramer self-consciously fuses historicist practices with more strictly formalist techniques, linking departures from Schenker’s fundamental line with Enlightenment philosophies on Chaos, for example.¹⁰¹

There are examples of texts on Shostakovich that also endeavour to bridge this methodological gap. As explored above, Fanning’s early monograph, *The Breath of the Symphonist*, uses detailed musical exegesis to support an explicitly political interpretation; more recent books by both Fanning and Fairclough also combine contextual, critical and analytical approaches in their examination of Shostakovich –

⁹⁷ Fanning believes that ‘the trend in recent musicology to look at the overlap of hermeneutics and analysis is a healthy one’, and mentions his own extra-musical interpretation of structural aspects of the Tenth Symphony in connection with this approach: Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 38.

⁹⁸ In the introduction to *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist argue that, although the years immediately post-Kerman were characterised by a lack of rapprochement between different theoretical approaches, they are writing at a time when ‘controversy is giving way to compromise’. If Kerman essentially advocated the abolition of musical analysis, now: ‘Musicology is absorbing analysis. Or maybe.... it is analysis that is absorbing musicology’. Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, x; xii.

⁹⁹ In his article on Chopin’s A minor prelude, Kramer carries out an in-depth analysis of the score, relating features of the music to contemporaneous literary practices: for example, oppositions and structural breakdowns between melody and harmony are linked to the structural trope of dialectical reversal evident in the work of the Romantic poets and expressive of particular heightened emotional states: see Kramer, ‘Romantic Meaning in Chopin’s Prelude in A minor’. Kramer’s work as a whole reads music as a practice that is embedded in cultural context; he routinely analyses literature or fine art and draws on other disciplines such as psychoanalysis in tandem with his close readings of the score. See, for example: Kramer, ‘Decadence and Desire’; ‘Culture and Musical Hermeneutics’; and ‘*Fin-de-siecle* Fantasies’.

¹⁰⁰ Abbate’s collections of essays on disparate (mainly operatic) works exhibit a richly contextual approach that is rooted in postmodern thought; however, she does not neglect to discuss the musical aspect of her chosen operatic ‘moments’: see Abbate, *Unsung Voices* and Abbate, *In Search of Opera*.

¹⁰¹ Kramer, ‘Haydn’s Chaos, Schenker’s Order’.

although they avoid such overtly politicised conclusions. In his study, *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8*. – perhaps the single work of the composer that has been most subject to political paraphrase owing to its excessive use of musical quotation¹⁰² – Fanning engages in a detailed examination of both the inner workings of the score, and the contextually-laden citations on its surface.¹⁰³ Ultimately, Fanning’s methodological concern with the ‘purely musical’ and the ‘extra-musical’ becomes tied up with his argument: he interprets the quartet as a journey from the autobiographical to the communal to the transcendent, the unfinished fugue of the first movement descending into references that are first specific to Shostakovich yet become more general throughout the piece; and the formally ‘perfect’ final movement specifically completing the initial incomplete fugue – while more generally ‘correcting’ the numerous false starts, compressions, disintegrations and other formal and thematic imperfections that characterise the work as a whole – in a short piece of technically textbook, crucially quotation-free, ‘pure music’.¹⁰⁴ In *A Soviet Credo: Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony*, Fairclough similarly integrates analytical and new critical methods: like Fanning, Fairclough is interested in the disjunctions, frustrations, collapses and other sequential peculiarities that characterise the dramaturgy of this work; she locates then interprets these using those theories on the relationship between form and content explored by Bakhtin, the Russian Formalists and others,¹⁰⁵ ultimately understanding the symphony (after Adorno) as a “‘narrative that narrates nothing’”.¹⁰⁶

Paradoxically, the communication of nothingness is still the communication of something: what all of these texts have in common is a concern with the broader meanings of these compositions, and an interest in how these are constructed through the interrelated workings of both ‘purely musical’ and ‘extra-musical’ elements – and this might be better understood through the isolation of three

¹⁰² MacDonald provides a populist revisionist reading, arguing that quotations from the Siberian act of *Lady Macbeth* and of the revolutionary song ‘Tormented by Greivous Bondage’ combine with appearances of the DSCH cipher to confirm that this is an autobiographical work about Shostakovich’s lack of freedom from the political authorities. MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 221–4.

¹⁰³ Fanning, *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 130–44.

¹⁰⁵ Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

specific examples. In his discussion of the second movement of the Tenth Symphony, Fanning suggests that shifts in interval content that nevertheless remain bound to one referential mode achieve the effect of ‘motion within motionlessness’; this is related to Shostakovich’s allusion to the opening of *Boris Godunov*, in which the people are bound in their allegiance to the Tsar; and the whole implies a ‘sensation of fruitless struggle’ that has obvious political implications.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Fanning engages with both the tonal and referential aspects of the much-paraphrased opening of the Eighth Quartet’s fourth movement: dismissing the crude popular hearings of the repeated anapest ‘outbursts’ as the sound of falling bombs or the knocks of the NKVD upon the door, he rather scrutinises the harmonic ambiguity of these chords and the disquieting aural difficulty that they present, going on to relate this to the network of sounding allusions to other works that are explicitly connected with death, imprisonment and the metaphysical questioning of such realities to interpret the whole as both a musical and non-musical ‘challenge’.¹⁰⁸

Fanning notes that thematic quotations in this movement communicate meaning not simply through their previous historical associations, but rather through their musical handling: thus a motivic reference to a lyrical, positive theme from the composer’s classical-styled Cello Concerto now signifies ‘pure malevolence’ due to its contrasting non-lyrical, dissonant and ‘brutalised’ recurrence.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Fairclough explores how the musical treatment of surface references to the scherzo of Mahler’s Second Symphony in the second movement of Shostakovich’s Fourth creates an emotional effect: whereas Mahler’s climaxes have a positive dramaturgical role, Shostakovich’s are rather the abortive outgrowth of excessive motivic repetition; whereas Mahler’s thematic material is dramatically defined, Shostakovich’s is rather characterised by its passive non-ness (non-lyrical, non-dance-like, muted in dynamic, and so on); and the overall outcome of this sounding contrast is that the later work becomes expressive of estrangement and negation.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ This is concisely summarised in a later article: Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 36–8.

¹⁰⁸ Fanning, *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8*, 103–10.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁰ Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 141–69.

In an essay on the Piano Trio in E minor, Patrick McCreless explicitly argues that such integrated methodologies are particularly appropriate in the case of Shostakovich:

The music itself clearly demands a marriage of analytical and interpretative approaches, a reckoning with both its immanent and extrinsic meaning.... What a more detailed and nuanced reading of the E minor Piano Trio requires is not just the *analysis* of immanent musical meanings, nor just the critical *interpretation* of extrinsic meanings, but rather a balanced approach that combines the insights of both.¹¹¹

McCreless chooses to discuss a piece that is immersed in biographical and historical contexts, laden with extra-musical allusions and topoi, and subject to explicitly politicised programmes. The work was written in response to the death of Shostakovich's closest friend, Ivan Sollertinsky, to whom the piece is dedicated; its date of composition closely followed the first reports of the Nazi concentration camps in the Soviet press; the finale incorporates a number of Jewish-styled dance themes: and so revisionist texts append a macabre narrative of Nazi torture to this music, holding this to be explicitly political in the anti-Semitic context of Stalinist Russia.¹¹² Yet McCreless breaks with this standard populist way of interpreting the trio, rather analysing structural and surface features of the music – through a combination of voice-leading and other techniques – to support a co-existing programme created via extra-musical references and concerned with death in a more general sense. Thus a thematic 'obsession' with arriving on the tonic – often unexpectedly quickly and via repeated notes and scalar descent – is associated with enforced recognition (of death); the failure of the upper line of the passacaglia to ever resolve to the key note is equated with a lack of acceptance (of death); and the large-scale move to the flattened supertonic near the close of the finale is linked to the extroversive use of characteristic Jewish modes, suggesting a conflation of private and public experiences (of death). In this way, McCreless in fact provides one solution to the slippery subject of musical meaning: what is 'purely musical' and

¹¹¹ McCreless, 'The Cycle of Structure and the Cycle of Meaning', 118–9.

¹¹² For examples, see MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 173–4; and Jackson, 'Dmitry Shostakovich: The Composer as Jew', 625–6. McCreless provides a summary of the work's context and similar critical discussions: McCreless, 'The Cycle of Structure and the Cycle of Meaning', 113.

thus necessarily elusive is wedded to an extra-musical programme that is essentially more tangible.

Broadly speaking, this approach to the music of Shostakovich comes close to that of this thesis. The ensuing study of the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* will combine analytical and hermeneutical methodologies to consider how the inner workings of this music relate to a literary text that is both explicit and inexorably embedded in historical contexts. The existence of a libretto alters the nature of this project. Words express meaning more unequivocally than any non-texted programme, however many extra-musical tags are provided, and their presence helps to anchor any discussion in the (comparatively) concrete.

Hermeneutic examinations of instrumental music will inevitably be more subjective, and McCreless' analysis of the Trio in E minor is, in places, extraordinarily so. Below, he cites the 'evidence' on which his reading of the passacaglia and finale is based:

The thoughtful passacaglia theme, which begins in B flat minor, seems continually to progress towards modal resolution in the global tonic of E minor, but is never able to do so within the passacaglia itself, just as it takes repeated re-examining of a loss to accept it.... when the passacaglia theme resolves into E for the second time (now in the major mode, at the end [of the finale]), the strings, significantly, take on the primary *surface feature* (that is, harmonics) of the opening cello line while playing the melodic *content* of the descending chromatic line of the passacaglia, thereby suggesting that the loss is somehow absorbed and accepted, both cognitively and emotionally, after reflection.¹¹³

This may tally with how some of us hear these passages; it might even *shape* our experiences of listening to or playing this music, and I have some personal examples of this regarding this particular piece.¹¹⁴ Yet it will also have its detractors, those who simply do *not* hear the trio in this way. Against even this fundamental objection, McCreless' 'evidence' does not stand up. This does not mean that this

¹¹³ McCreless, 'The Cycle of Structure and the Cycle of Meaning', 131.

¹¹⁴ In preparing this piece for performance, I discussed the extra-musical interpretations of MacDonald, Jackson and McCreless with the other members of my trio; though unwittingly, this turned into a kind of informal psychological experiment. Once it had been suggested that the finale was concerned with the holocaust, it was almost impossible *not* to hear it in this way; as the cellist revealingly put it: 'I just *knew* it was about something like that'.

musicological work is invalid; in general, similarly integrated approaches yield interesting results and are celebrated by many as a way forward.¹¹⁵ McCreless' essay in particular was favourably received on its publication, even heralded as a 'model for future analyses of Shostakovich's works'¹¹⁶ – and a subsequent essay by the same author that adopts the same methods, to equally intriguing ends, is discussed at length in Chapter 9.¹¹⁷ However, these kinds of hermeneutic studies do require a basic disclaimer: they do not – cannot – constitute an absolute truth. This straightforward caveat is now crucial if Shostakovich scholarship is to move beyond its too-familiar conflicts. In the spirit of this, this thesis offers its reading of *Lady Macbeth* simply as an interpretative possibility, true to the system that it sets up but nevertheless just one way – not the only way – of hearing Shostakovich.

¹¹⁵ See Cook and Everist, Preface to *Rethinking Music*, xi–xii.

¹¹⁶ McKeon, review of *Shostakovich Studies*, 40. Other reviews of McCreless' article are similarly positive as to its integrated approach: Joubert, review of *Shostakovich in Context*, 304; Warrack, 'The Man of Enigmas'.

¹¹⁷ McCreless, 'Shostakovich's Politics of D minor and its Neighbours'.

Chapter 2

Lady Macbeth, or, an Ideological Cacophony: Politicised Literatures, Contexts and Mythologies

If writing on Shostakovich has been dominated by politicised readings that are both intensely controversial and fiercely contested, the body of literature on the composer's 1932 opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* seems particularly prone to such interpretations. The work has become one of a handful of seminal compositions – others include the Fifth Symphony or the Eighth String Quartet, for example – around which debate has traditionally been concentrated; it was in response to a relatively recent and particularly divisive article on the political implications of the opera that the scholar Boris Gasparov lamented 'the cacophony that makes it so difficult nowadays to listen to Shostakovich's music without ideological trash of one kind or another ringing in one's ears'.¹ Despite the near-pleas of Gasparov and others,² this thesis does not aim to analyse the piece in complete isolation from its political context: this would be perverse in a texted work that is at least outwardly predicated on Marxist concepts, as detailed below. Yet the way in which this study first negotiates, then moves beyond, this too-familiar material is crucial if it is both to avoid becoming mired in circular arguments, and further to broaden the scope of contextual enquiry through which we examine the works of Shostakovich.

- (i) *From Leskov to Shostakovich:
the operatic rehabilitation of Katerina Izmailova*

The literary prototype for Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (hereafter: *Lady Macbeth*) was the short story 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk'

¹ Gasparov was discussing Taruskin, 'Entr'acte: The Lessons of Lady M.', more on which below: Gasparov, 'Historicism and the Dialogue', 220.

² Vadim Shakov similarly requests that discussions of this piece not be politicised: summarised in Emerson, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition', 205–7. Erik Fischer likewise laments the misinterpretations of the opera that arise from the 'contamination' of political ideologies, arguing that the work should rather be judged on artistic criteria alone: Fischer, 'Engagement und Ironische Distanz', 157.

(hereafter: 'Lady Macbeth'), penned in 1864 by the Russian writer Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov (1831–1895) and first published in 1865 in Dostoevsky's periodical *Epoch*.³ Leskov's novella, in part inspired by real-life events,⁴ tells the story of Katerina Lvovna Izmailova, a murderess whose crimes are so horrible that the local gentry re-name her after Shakespeare's notorious villainess.⁵ Leskov's 'Lady Macbeth' can be summarised as follows. In the introduction to the story, we are provided with the relevant background information: Katerina, a poor girl, has married the rich merchant Zinovy Borisovich Izmailov; the couple live at the mill with Zinovy's father Boris Timofeyich. Katerina is oppressed and bored, and when her husband is away on business she is seduced by the workman Sergey. So begins an adulterous relationship that develops into an obsessive and all-consuming devotion on Katerina's part; when Boris, on discovering the affair, whips then imprisons Sergey, Katerina responds by murdering her father-in-law (she poisons his dish of mushrooms). Although she is haunted by the ghost of Boris whilst in bed with her lover, she goes on to murder her husband (she strikes him with a candlestick) and her young nephew Fyodor (she smothers him with a pillow) in order to protect her relationship, and ensure Sergey's rights to the merchant home. However, these crimes are found out, and both Katerina and Sergey are convicted. On route to Siberia, Sergey rejects his former lover and begins relations with his fellow-prisoner Sonyetka; in response, Katerina throws herself and Sonyetka into the river Volga, and the bloody tale concludes with this final act of suicide-cum-murder.

The libretto of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* – co-authored by the composer himself and the Leningrad playwright Alexander Preis– follows Leskov's story in terms of its fundamental narrative, with one substantial change: the character of Fyodor, and hence Katerina's third murder, are omitted from the action. With the exception of this major cut, the summary of the novella given above can function

³ For details on the composition and publication of 'Lady Macbeth', see McLean, *Nikolai Leskov*, 144; 146–7; 150–1 and Lantz, *Nikolay Leskov*, 25; 47.

⁴ On his travels to Orel Province, Leskov attended the public trial of a young woman who had brutally murdered her father-in-law in order to gain her inheritance: see Brèque, 'Une Lady Macbeth', 7.

⁵ Other realist literary fantasies loosely based on Shakespeare's texts were written in Russia in this period, Turgenev's 'Hamlet of Shchigrov District' (1848) and 'King Lear of the Steppes' (1870) amongst them: see Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 68.

equally well as a basic synopsis of Shostakovich's and Preis' (hereafter 'Shostakovich's')⁶ libretto. Yet although the plots of both Leskov's and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* follow the same rough course, the works are fundamentally dissimilar in essence – and at the heart of this difference lies the central character, Katerina Izmailova. Leskov's *Lady Macbeth* is a villainess of the highest order: acting from motives of obsession, sexual desire and greed, she commits adultery and multiple homicides without experiencing any stirrings of guilt, and goes to her death utterly unrepentant. In 1888, 24 years after its initial creation, Leskov would recall how the monstrous quality of his anti-heroine and her behaviour drove him to near-delirium on writing: 'sometimes I was so terrified I could hardly bear it.... from that time on, I avoided descriptions of such terrors'.⁷ Yet the young Shostakovich's relationship with his heroine could not be more radically different: to the composer, Katerina was 'complex, earnest, tragic... affectionate, sensuous';⁸ she was 'a clever woman, talented and interesting' – and crucially, she was not at all to blame for her crimes.⁹ The central (and self-proclaimed) purpose of Shostakovich in *Lady Macbeth* was thus to absolve Katerina of all guilt,¹⁰ and every change made to Leskov's original text can be seen to stem from this overriding aim.

To chart the differences between these two works is to cover familiar (if essential) ground. An article by Jennifer Melick provides concurrent synopses of the Leskov and the Shostakovich that illustrate where the narratives diverge from one another in some detail;¹¹ essays by Richard Taruskin, Caryl Emerson, James Morgan and Luisa Micheletti each give comparisons of the novella and the opera that also explore issues of genre, historical or literary contexts and narrative style;¹² large-

⁶ Little is known of the extent or nature of Alexander Preis' involvement with *Lady Macbeth*, and thus hereafter, for the sake of simplicity, the libretto will be referred to as 'Shostakovich's'. The limited information that we do have on this collaboration is provided in Fanning, "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk", 16.

⁷ Quoted in Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 60.

⁸ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 42.

⁹ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 250–51.

¹⁰ This becomes apparent from Shostakovich's numerous published comments on the work; in one such essay, he flatly declares that: 'my problem was to acquit Katerina': Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 249.

¹¹ Melick, 'No Holding Back'.

¹² Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008); Emerson, 'Back to the Future'; Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist'; Micheletti, 'Dalla Lady Macbeth'.

scale studies by Eckart Kröplin and Alla Bogdanova present side-by-side analyses of the source text and libretto that highlight alterations in concept;¹³ an interpretation by Marina Cerkasina examines the developments made to the short story within a discussion that focuses on artistic techniques and genre-types;¹⁴ and certain shorter accounts – such as those by Francis Maes and Marina Frolova-Walker, which appear in a history of Russian music and a dictionary of opera respectively – supply concise summaries of the differences between the two versions that nevertheless penetrate to the very essence of the Shostakovich’s alterations.¹⁵ Moreover, these writings form but a small part of the whole: in the many academic and popular sources that explore this work to some degree, whether in depth or in passing, there are contained numerous such surveys. Essentially – although these texts do not quite put it like this – Shostakovich’s alterations to Leskov’s story attempt to exonerate Katerina of blame via a two-pronged attack: firstly by ‘raising’ the heroine; and secondly by ‘lowering’ those who surround her.

The first category of changes, focussed on ‘raising’ Katerina, can again be broken down into two sub-groups. Firstly, there are those *character*-based alterations that serve both to improve the heroine in terms of understanding and personality, and also to magnify her torment. Thus Katerina is provided with both quasi-feminist speeches and passionate and overtly-feminine outpourings of romantic yearning; such a character must suffer to a greater degree in her loveless and lonely imprisonment, and her various laments deepen her sadness to tragic proportions. This Katerina, noble and wretched, must be driven to commit her crimes. Secondly, there are those *plot*-based modifications that further work to mitigate the heroine’s wrongdoing. Although Leskov’s Katerina co-ordinates her murders in a calculated fashion – over half an hour elapses between Zinovy’s return and the argument that will lead to his death, and in that time she visits the concealed Sergey twice to urge him to readiness – Shostakovich’s telescoping of the action always ensures that his heroine acts in the immediate throes of passion or self-defence. If Katerina is always the criminal ring-leader in the novella, she is on

¹³ Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 195–9; Bogdanova, “*Katerina Izmailova*”, 21–5.

¹⁴ Cerkasina, ‘Gogol and Leskov in Shostakovich’s interpretation’, 237–44.

¹⁵ Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 265–8; Frolova-Walker, ‘Russian Opera’, 187–8.

one occasion the accomplice in the opera: while it is she that delivers Zinovy the fatal blow with the candlestick in the Leskov, this is reversed in the Shostakovich, in which Sergey wields the lethal weapon. This straightforward strategy of inversion is applied elsewhere in the adaptation: the original Sergey exhibits increasing signs of horror regarding his heinous acts; eventually he breaks down and confesses, though his partner-in-crime remains utterly indifferent and unrepentant. Yet in Shostakovich's version, it is not Sergey, but the re-vamped Katerina who sees guilty ghosts, lingers tormentedly by murdered corpses, turns herself into the law, and finally gives full voice to her blackened conscience.

The second category of changes, focussed on 'lowering' those who surround the heroine, can be further divided into three sub-sets. Firstly, the treatment of Katerina by her fellow chief protagonists has considerably worsened: Boris threatens his daughter-in-law, Sergey near-rapes his future lover, and Zinovy beats his wife. Secondly, the behaviour of the more minor characters that surround Katerina has deteriorated sharply: the workmen sexually assault the maid, Aksinya, and the officiating priest drunkenly lusts after the bride Katerina on her wedding day. Finally, Shostakovich has peopled his work with additional types, the baseness and stupidity of whom have been exaggerated to the point of caricature: the priest fails to understand the dying Boris' accusations, and waffles instead about Gogol and cold soups; the drunken peasant discovers the (highly suspicious) murder of Zinovy not by design, but because he breaks into the cellar in search of more wine. With almost no exceptions, Katerina's co-protagonists are violent, predatory, petty and corrupt.

The polarised characterisation of Katerina and her fellow men is fundamental to the musical setting of *Lady Macbeth*. One of the most remarkable features of this opera is its extraordinary profusion of styles: Russian folk and urban song, music hall, Romantic opera, circus genres, Baroque instrumental forms, operetta, Musorgskyan choruses, *Les Six*-ian parody and a plethora of other musics sit alongside what might be described as a more 'genuine' Shostakovichian language. This seemingly indiscriminate plurality was attacked by numerous early critics of the work: thus *The New York Times* journalist Olin Downes, reviewing the American première of *Lady Macbeth* in 1935, identified light opera, jazz,

passacaglia, fugue, Viennese waltz, Verdi, Wagner, Musorgsky, Borodin, Stravinsky and Prokofiev processing in a jumbled fashion, and concluded with disgust that stylistically, 'any old thing goes';¹⁶ likewise, the composer Elliott Carter, on attending a German performance of the opera in 1960, was horrified to hear how 'Berg, Hindemith, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky and Offenbach... confront each other without transition'.¹⁷

For the German musicologist Erik Fischer, Western commentators, unfamiliar with Eastern developments of the 1920s and 1930s, tend to misunderstand and thus wrongly condemn this aspect of Shostakovich's technique.¹⁸ Certainly it is the case that these disparate musics are actually applied with great care by the composer for various dramatic purposes: most notably, Shostakovich consciously used his multiple styles to define further the contrast between his heroine and those that surround her, and the dual nature of this compositional project is reflected in his terming the work 'a tragic-satiric opera'.¹⁹ Thus Katerina is provided with material that is lyrical, sincere and traditionally or operatically beautiful (evoking Russian folk or urban songs and Romantic operatic aria, for example); so she is absolved, for 'all of her music has as its purpose the justification of her crimes'.²⁰ Meanwhile, the loathsome and worthless are characterised by styles that are trivial and parodistic (music hall, popular dance or

¹⁶ Downes, 'New Soviet Opera', *The New York Times*, (6 February 1935), accessed on-line (26 June 2008).

¹⁷ Carter, 'Lady Macbeth', 368; see also Porter, 'Lady Macbeth', 860 for like criticisms of the opera's 'stylistic confusion'. Fairclough's reception history of responses to Shostakovich in the British press shows that such comments were common in reviews of the national premiere: Fairclough, 'The 'Old Shostakovich'', 266–7; meanwhile, Benjamin Britten's diary entries following this event reveal that these views were also held by English contemporary composers – though strongly countered by Britten himself: Britten and Mitchell, 'Britten on 'Oedipus Rex' and Lady Macbeth''. In one of the earliest Western musicological accounts of the opera, Gerald Abraham questions certain of the musical choices in this 'hotchpotch of styles': Abraham, *Eight Soviet Composers*, 19–22; remarkably similarly, a recent summary of the piece in a life-and-works volume on Shostakovich implicitly criticises its disparate languages, that 'sit incandescently, if not always comfortably, cheek by jowl': Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 75–6.

¹⁸ Fischer argues that there are precedents for Shostakovich's stylistic eclecticism in other Eastern European operatic experiments less-known to the West; in these works and in *Lady Macbeth*, musical pluralism serves aesthetic or dramatic ends in a way not sufficiently appreciated in Western criticism. Fischer, 'Die Oper Ledi Makbet'.

¹⁹ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 31.

²⁰ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 252.

circus genres, for instance): as Shostakovich carefully explained, this device laid bare the inner workings of the protagonists, stripping them, ‘so to speak, naked’.²¹

Once more, this fundamental principal of *Lady Macbeth’s* design has been discussed in numerous studies. In his lengthy examination of the opera, the East German scholar Eckart Kröplin argues that a basic dramaturgical dialectic is absolutely integral to the work, governing both stylistic material and thematic/melodic groupings or ‘intonation fields’;²² likewise, in her similarly large-scale analyses of the piece, the Soviet musicologist Alla Bogdanova explores the oppositional genre-types and ‘intonational spheres’ that work to depict the central contradiction between Katerina and her fellow characters.²³ Shorter expositions of this polarised technique can be found in essays or synopses of *Lady Macbeth* by Richard Taruskin, Caryl Emerson, Francis Maes, Geoffrey Norris, Marina Frolova-Walker and N.V. Lukyanova; all provide something of a lexicon of Shostakovich’s opposing genres.²⁴ Most standard summaries of the work follow the composer in acknowledging stylistic dichotomy as a central dramaturgical principle of the opera. However, David Fanning and K. Sakva point out that the system does break down on occasion,²⁵ whilst Vincenzo Buttino, Paul Edwards and others explore ways in which

²¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

²² Kröplin explores two opposing themes and their interlinked ‘intonation fields’—standing for violence/ the inhuman world and Katerina/ the human respectively – and charts their operation across the opera as a whole. The concept of ‘intonation’, after Boris Asafiev, informs much Eastern scholarship: it refers to loose melodic shapes and ideas that carry semantic meanings through their association with speech or culture. Thus Katerina’s ‘intonation field’ involves phrases from the Russian folk and art traditions that aid her positive portrayal. Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 220–21; 235–8; 478–90.

²³ Bogdanova, “‘Katerina Izmailova’”, 28–31.

²⁴ Taruskin lists Russian folk song, vocal lyricism and orchestral Romanticism amongst those musics that characterise Katerina, and operetta, music hall, popular dance, wrong-note satire, bordello, mechanical ostinati and military band and circus music amongst those that portray the other protagonists: Taruskin, ‘The Opera and the Dictator’, *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008). See also Emerson, ‘Back to the Future’, 69–73; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 268; Norris, ‘The Operas’, 117–18; Frolova-Walker, ‘Russian Opera’, 187–8; and Lukyanova, *Shostakovich*, 74–8 for similar summaries.

²⁵ These authors point out that Katerina’s part does not always remain immune from the popular and parodistic styles that characterise her fellow protagonists. For Fanning, this suggests that, in writing Katerina’s part, Shostakovich was motivated as much by youthful iconoclasm or Bakhtinian theories of the chaotic carnivalesque as he was by a restrictive dramaturgical plan: Fanning, “‘Lady Macbeth’”, 19–20. However, Sakva considers Katerina’s ‘slides’ into the music of her environment intentional on the part of the composer, revealing that even the heroine is fundamentally ‘of’ her world: Sakva, ‘Novaya vstrecha s *Katerinoy Izmaylovoy*’, 430.

it is complicated;²⁶ meanwhile, Kadia Grönke and Caryl Emerson challenge its success,²⁷ whilst Erik Fischer is unusual in even disputing its existence.²⁸

Interestingly, stylistic characterisation has something of a precedent in Leskov, as the Russian musicologist Marina Cerkasina observes: the nineteenth-century writer uses a vast array of different linguistic devices, drawing on ‘high’ biblical rhetoric, a range of old Slavonic dialects, the idioms and idiosyncrasies of popular speech and the possibilities of word distortion in order to characterise his various protagonists.²⁹ This feature of Leskov’s text loses something in the translation;³⁰ consequently, Western analyses of the opera and its prototype tend to concentrate rather on the fundamental disparity between the two *Lady Macbeths* in terms of their genre, style and tone – and the standard argument runs thus. Leskov’s novella is a straightforward horror story, told by a third-person narrator in simple language and with irony and detachment; at no point are we encouraged by authorial interference to feel any empathy for the characters. Shostakovich’s opera, on the other hand, is a realist drama, necessarily enacted in the first-person with the resultant effects of directness and immediacy, and

²⁶ For example, Buttino observes that Katerina’s music becomes contaminated by the parodistic when she is in the company of others: Buttino, ‘Realismo Erotico e Sarcasmo’, 25; similarly, Bogdanova notes occasional crossovers between the two intonation spheres of the opera when characters converse, for example when Sergey borrows Katerina’s material in order to seduce her: Bogdanova, “‘Katerina Izmailova’”, 29. Both Edwards and Kröplin explore how shared thematic material complicates the musico-dramatic opposition on which the opera is based: for Edwards, the use of common leitmotifs by indiscriminate characters calls into question a straightforward division: Edwards, “‘Lost Children’”, 168–70; meanwhile, Kröplin argues that charted motivic links between two opposing themes/ intonation fields – standing for violence/ the inhuman world and Katerina/ the human respectively – reveal an ideological message surrounding the use of morally dubious ends for rightful means: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 235–6; 478–90.

²⁷ For Grönke, the ever-changing progression of musics in the opera is such that no one style can be taken seriously enough to absolve Katerina: Grönke, ‘Lady Macbeth und ihre Schwestern’, 6–7. Meanwhile, for Emerson, Katerina is so (musically) isolated from her (musically) debased environment that the whole becomes meaningless: Emerson, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition’, 206–7; Morgan also agrees with this assessment: Morgan, ‘Shostakovich the Dramatist’, 339.

²⁸ Fischer challenges the conventional view that Katerina and her fellow men are musically polarised, instead arguing that the music of *each* protagonist is an alienating mixture of stylistic opposites such as high and low to the extent that no one is characterised as an individual personality: Fischer, ‘Engagement und Ironische Distanz’, 135–9.

²⁹ Cerkasina, ‘Social'no-psihologičeskaja tragedija’, 64. This aspect of Leskov’s writing and its affinity with Shostakovich’s compositional practice tends to go unnoticed in Western analyses of the opera.

³⁰ Leskov himself considered that this aspect of his writing rendered the successful translation of his work into other languages an impossibility, and in an introduction to one of the first publications of Leskov in an English version, the Russian Vsevolod Troitsky also concluded that this literary method was, ‘alas, untranslatable into a foreign language’: Introduction to Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer*, 13.

progressing for the main in deadly seriousness. Throughout, its composer intervenes with emotional and ethical signposts that are unambiguous: notable examples of these are the five orchestral interludes between certain scenes (I/1 and I/2, I/2 and I/3, II/4 and II/5, III/6 and III/7 and III/7 and III/8), explained by Shostakovich as developmental commentaries on the action,³¹ understood by others to function in this way,³² and much discussed in general writings on *Lady Macbeth* (although this thesis, more concerned with the texted sections of the work, bucks this trend for the most part). This overall understanding of the stylistic differences between the story and the opera is put forward in the most depth in essays by Taruskin, Emerson and Micheletti that are essentially convincing.³³ Again, this difference in style stems from a fundamental change of purpose: Leskov attempts to demonise Katerina, and his plain, dispassionate style is suited to this aim; meanwhile, Shostakovich works to absolve his heroine, and his emotive strategies are employed toward this end. While Leskov's macabre tale is designed to entertain, Shostakovich's opera is perhaps intended to educate – and this idea is explored further below.

(ii) *'A Ray of Light in a Dark Kingdom': Marxist readings of Lady Macbeth*

Just as Shostakovich rehabilitated the person of Katerina Izmailova, it was also necessary for him to rehabilitate Leskov's text in general, and along Soviet lines. The author was not altogether the most promising of fellow travellers: Leskov had distanced himself from the various revolutionary movements and radical philosophies that were so prevalent in 1860s Russia,³⁴ and Andrew Wachtel details some of the features of the writer's output that rendered him somewhat suspect

³¹ For the composer's conception of the function of his orchestral interludes, see Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 252.

³² For example, Emerson is typical in regarding the orchestral material of the opera, and one interlude in particular, as an authorial commentary on the drama that works to justify Katerina: see Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 69–70; 78.

³³ Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008); Emerson, 'Back to the Future'; Micheletti, 'Dalla Lady Macbeth'.

³⁴ For discussion of Leskov's ideologically and personally fraught relationships with both left- and right-wing factions in 1860s Russia, see McClean, *Nikolai Leskov*, 59–93 and Lantz, *Nikolay Leskov*, 17–27.

from a Soviet point of view.³⁵ However, nor was Leskov entirely unredeemable. Although he did not subscribe to the liberal theories of the '60s, his simply-narrated tales strongly criticise certain elements of the nineteenth-century establishment, and demonstrate a basic humanistic commitment to the common man.³⁶ This was enough for the author Maxim Gorky – in the early 1930s, something of a literary spokesman for the Stalinist regime – to acclaim him as ‘the writer most deeply rooted in the people’.³⁷ Certainly the story of ‘Lady Macbeth’ itself underwent something of a revival in the first decade following the revolution: a film adaptation of the novella was released in 1927, new editions were reprinted in 1928 and 1930 (the latter containing illustrations by Shostakovich’s family friend, Boris Kustodiev), and several theatrical productions and literary copycats appeared in the early 1930s – and Shostakovich himself enthusiastically received at least some of these transpositions.³⁸

All of these factors rendered the nineteenth-century work potentially suitable material for socialist reinterpretation, and the Slavic literary historian Andrew Wachtel considers Shostakovich’s opera exactly that: a Soviet rehabilitation of a Russian classic of the kind that was typical of the Stalinist era.³⁹ Shostakovich

³⁵ Wachtel points out that certain of Leskov’s stories attacked those on the political left, while his output as a whole was uncomfortably religious: Wachtel, ‘The Adventures of a Leskov Story’, 118.

³⁶ Leskov’s are stories of ordinary folk, and his simple, anti-literary method of narration is tied up with his basic commitment to the people. Several tales fiercely criticise the hypocrisy and inhumanity of nineteenth-century society: examples include ‘Lefty’ or ‘The Sentry’ from Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer*; and ‘The Flaming Patriot’ or ‘The Clothes Mender’ from Leskov, *The Musk-Ox*. Kenneth Lantz provides biographical information on Leskov’s childhood and travels spent amongst a wide range of the ‘lower’ social classes, and details the young writer’s journalistic criticisms of the establishment and particularly the Orthodox church; he goes on to develop these themes in his chronological summary of Leskov’s fiction: Lantz, *Nikolay Leskov*, 12–13; 15–16; 29–34. McLean also combines biographical and textual commentary in examining these concerns in Leskov: for example, his analysis of the writer’s stories of the 1880s and 1890s reveals a strong (though un-idealised) sympathy for the peasants and a powerful critique of the Russian gentry, military, clergy and bureaucracy: see McClean, *Nikolai Leskov*, 436–70.

³⁷ This and other of Gorky’s commendations of Leskov are referenced in McLean, *Nikolai Leskov*, 672n2.

³⁸ Shostakovich reportedly found the film version of ‘Lady Macbeth’ ‘vivid and engrossing’; he is known to have bought a copy of the Kustodiev edition of the story, and attended a production of Leskov’s ‘Flea’ around this time. See Fanning, ‘“Lady Macbeth”’, 16; Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 185; Emerson, ‘Back to the Future’, 64.

³⁹ Wachtel’s essay presents Shostakovich’s opera as a genuine Soviet project of this type, that nevertheless failed due to the eroticism that had accrued to Leskov’s story through its other reinterpretations of the 1920s: Wachtel, ‘The Adventures of a Leskov Story’. His chapter appears in a study of the large-scale rehabilitation of past Russian culture that began in the early 1930s, a Stalinist

certainly presented his adaptation of 'Lady Macbeth' in this light. In his published statements on the work, he explained that Leskov's novella did have latent Soviet potential; however:

Leskov, as a representative of pre-revolutionary literature, could not give the right treatment to the events that develop in his story. Therefore my role as a Soviet composer consists in approaching the story critically and in treating the subject from the Soviet point of view.⁴⁰

Early Soviet reviews of the opera follow the composer in arguing that the social meaning that lay dormant in Leskov was fully unpacked in Shostakovich,⁴¹ and later Marxist, Soviet or left-leaning studies of the work – for example, those by Eckart Kröplin, Lev Lebedinsky, Marina Cerkasina and Alla Bogdanova – also accept this analysis.⁴² Of course, there are numerous other readings of *Lady Macbeth* that regard the rewriting of Leskov as a distortion, rather than a realisation; likewise there are those who consider that Shostakovich's published statements on the impeccable Soviet ideology of his opera were born of political expediency, or act as a smokescreen to mask his true intent – and these arguments will be summarised elsewhere in this chapter. However, on the musico-dramatic surface of the work at least, there *is* a consistent and fully-developed Marxist narrative that is elucidated in the composer's accompanying proclamations on the opera. *Lady Macbeth's* Marxist credentials are threefold: firstly, the opera critiques pre-revolutionary society; secondly, it exposes oppression and excuses the oppressed; and thirdly, it reinterprets violent acts as legitimate protest – and these interlinked arguments are explored in more depth below.

The operatic absolution of Katerina Izmailova in part involved the musico-dramatic 'lowering' of those around her, as discussed above. Therefore Katerina

U-turn – in part for politicised ends – that sharply broke with the 1920s practice: Brandenberger and Platt, *Epic Revisionism*.

⁴⁰ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 249.

⁴¹ For example, the critic Adrian Piotrovsky, writing in 1934, certainly understood the opera as a socially correct explanation of the events of the Leskov story: quoted in Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 65.

⁴² Thus Kröplin cites such quotations by Shostakovich unquestioningly, arguing that the composer worked out certain contradictions in Leskov by furnishing Katerina with social rather than psychological motivations along correct modern ideological lines: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 184–99. Lebedinsky, 'Preface', 13; Cerkasina, 'Social'no-psihologičeskaja tragedija', 64–5; and Bogdanova, "*Katerina Izmailova*", 21–5 each understand Shostakovich's reworking similarly.

finds herself in a community peopled by base types: oppressive merchants (already present in Leskov) are joined by violent workers, ignorant priests, drunken peasants and corrupt policemen in Shostakovich's depiction of the Mtsensk district. In a Soviet opera of this date, such a portrayal of nineteenth-century society is obviously loaded with political implications— and Shostakovich left nothing ambiguous in this regard. In the various published (and much quoted) writings that accompanied the work's release, the composer described Katerina's world as 'one of the darkest periods in pre-revolutionary Russian history'.⁴³ Moreover, her fellow men were 'the products of the dark and hopeless merchant life of that time':⁴⁴ thus the despotic Boris Timofeyevich was 'a typical stolid merchant of feudal Russia'⁴⁵ whilst his weak and bullying son Zinovy Borisovich was 'a petty moron, the product of the merchant class';⁴⁶ the insincere Sergey, though ostensibly a worker, was in essence a would-be 'merchant exploiter',⁴⁷ and even the labourers were 'vulgar grovellers, feudal merchants in embryo, who only think of how to become like Boris Izmailov'.⁴⁸ *Lady Macbeth's* prosaic genres and debased parodies were put to the service of 'exposure through music',⁴⁹ and for the following purpose: 'I wanted to unmask reality and to arouse a feeling of hatred for the tyrannical and humiliating atmosphere in a Russian merchant's household'.⁵⁰

For Shostakovich, Katerina remained untainted, 'a remarkable, talented and intelligent woman who perished in the nightmarish conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia'.⁵¹ The musico-dramatic 'raising' of the heroine to a position far above her unenlightened counterparts in part helped to absolve her – and yet it is not only the simple mechanism of contrast that works to pardon Katerina. Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* is the victim of abuses that were in the main absent in Leskov's text: for example, the operatic Katerina is both verbally and physically threatened and mistreated by Boris, sexually assaulted by Sergey, beaten by Zinovy and subject to

⁴³ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 31.

⁴⁴ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 252.

⁴⁵ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 42.

⁴⁶ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 254.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴⁸ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

the predatory sexual advances of the priest. Thus for Shostakovich, his heroine, though a murderess, was deserving of our compassion: 'despite the fact that Katerina murders both her husband and her father-in-law, I still sympathise with her'.⁵² This Katerina is the subject of brutal oppression: as such, she cannot be held to blame for her crimes.

Of course, these kinds of philosophies, though inherent in a Marxist ideology, are not exclusive to it: Shostakovich's critique of the Tsarist establishment and sympathy for its downtrodden criminal element also taps into a rich and varied vein of nineteenth-century thought. In particular, the oppressed-thus-blameless criminal is a recognisable type in pre-revolutionary Russian literature from Dostoevsky to Tolstoy – and Katerina Izmailova herself is explicitly modelled on one such archetype. The facts of this specific parallel again relate to Shostakovich's attempt to absolve his heroine; to understand this, it is necessary to return temporarily to the Leskov original – and even beyond. For Nikolai Leskov's 'Lady Macbeth' (1864) in a sense had a source-text of its own: the novella is in fact a parody of Alexander Ostrovsky's near contemporaneous play *The Storm* (1859).⁵³ The short-story follows its dramatic prototype closely (and if the following synopsis seems even more familiar, it might be due to the fact that Janáček's opera *Kát'a Kabanová* is also based on Ostrovsky's play). *The Storm* tells of a young bourgeois wife, Katerina Kabanova, who is entrapped in a joyless marriage to her weak husband (Tichon), subjugated by her ferocious mother-in-law (the Kabanikha), and oppressed by her strict merchant surroundings. Although this Katerina is a paragon of piety and goodness, she falls passionately in love with another, and is tempted to have an affair when her husband leaves town on business; however, she is eventually so overcome with guilt at her own actions that she commits suicide by jumping into the river Volga.

Ostrovsky's serious realist drama is a searing critique of the repressive and petty-minded merchant way of life; unbearably stifled in this environment, the

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Leskov himself discussed his story in these terms: see Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 330; and Cerkasina, 'Gogol and Leskov in Shostakovich's Interpretation', 239. Such parodies of sentimental realist dramas and their virtuous heroines were not uncommon in Russia at this time: see Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 75.

angelic Katerina Kabanova is excused of her crimes. And although Leskov's 'Lady Macbeth' in effect challenges the moral position of the earlier play – *his* Katerina is very much at fault – Shostakovich returns us to *The Storm* in concept: the operatic Katerina is raised, and those around her lowered, on an Ostrovskian plan; subject to increased abuse, Shostakovich's heroine becomes as blameless as Ostrovsky's. Once more, to plot the course from Ostrovsky, to Leskov, to Shostakovich, and back to Ostrovsky again is to chart familiar territory: for example, texts on the opera by Taruskin, Kröplin, Morgan, Emerson, Cerkasina, Maes and Frolova-Walker all note the correspondences between these art works, and understand the essence of these alterations similarly.⁵⁴ Shostakovich's strategic use of Ostrovsky was quite deliberate, as his additional references to *The Storm* in *Lady Macbeth's* libretto attest. One example is often remarked upon in studies of the opera: in Act I, Boris brutally forces Katerina down on her knees to pledge an oath of fidelity to her husband, and this incident – which has no precedent in Leskov – is clearly modelled on a similar episode in Act 2 of the play.⁵⁵ Moreover, there are several small-scale references to Ostrovsky's drama in Shostakovich's composition that are less remarked upon, though such allusions – quite possibly familiar to an educated Russian public – are significant.⁵⁶

Shostakovich's strategy thus far is simple: by deliberately evoking *The Storm* in a manner that would have been recognisable to his opera audience, Katerina Izmailova is in part absolved by her conflation with the heroic, oppressed and blameless Katerina Kabanova. Yet the rehabilitative power of the Ostrovsky link

⁵⁴ Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008); Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 192–3; Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 330; Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 75; Cerkasina, 'Gogol and Leskov in Shostakovich's Interpretation', 239; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 267; Frolova-Walker, 'Russian Opera', 187.

⁵⁵ Just prior to the departures of Tichon and Zinovy, both the Kabinikha and Boris order their slightly unwilling sons to instruct their wives on how to behave in their absence; Katerina Kabanova, falling on her knees, then begs her husband to make her swear an oath of fidelity – though Katerina Izmailova is compelled to do so. Compare Act II/ scenes 3 and 4 of Ostrovsky's play with Act I/ scene 1; figure 47/ bar 1–figure 57/ bar 13 of Shostakovich's opera. Emerson is amongst those who notes this parallel, commenting also on the similarities between Katerina Kabanova's mother-in-law and Katerina Izmailova's father-in-law as the character type of 'the strong-willed, sexually possessive parental tyrant who is a voyeur in the married life of a passive son': Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 63.

⁵⁶ Both Ostrovsky's and Shostakovich's Katerina reminisce of the freedom of their childhood (see I/7 and I/1 respectively); both yearn for a baby to alleviate their predicament (II/8 and I/1); alone, both dream of birds as a metaphor for their situation (II/8 and I/3) and both are beaten by their husbands (V/1 and II/5).

goes still further. In an essay of 1860, the radical young literary critic Nikolai Dobrolyubov wrote an analysis of *The Storm*, the essence of which is contained in its title, ‘A Ray of Light in a Dark Kingdom’ – and in reference to this well-known critique, the young Shostakovich would justify his heroine thus: ‘speaking in the language of Dobrolyubov, one might say that she is ‘the ray of light in a dark kingdom’...’.⁵⁷ The full significance of the often-cited allusion to Dobrolyubov is unpacked by Kröplin and Taruskin (and, after Taruskin, Maes).⁵⁸ For Dobrolyubov, the suicide of Katerina Kabanova was a *protest* against her repressive merchant community that was fully justified.⁵⁹ By amalgamating the two Katerinas and pulling Dobrolyubov along in their wake, Shostakovich implicitly suggests that the murders of Katerina Izmailova *also* become legitimate acts of rebellion against her oppressors. In only one of his published statements on *Lady Macbeth* does the composer explicitly refer to Katerina’s crimes as ‘protest’ against her world;⁶⁰ however, this ideological premise forms the unmistakable subtext of all of his numerous writings on the opera. The reworked Katerina Izmailova has thus become a kind of proto-revolutionary: though born into an earlier epoch, she suffers under tyranny, rebels against injustice, and ultimately lays down her life for the cause – and such nineteenth-century types were recognised and celebrated in contemporary Marxist-Leninist culture.⁶¹

In summary: on the surface of this opera there exists a basic Marxist narrative (albeit one that overlaps, as did Marxism, with other strands of nineteenth-century thought) that consists of three main components. Firstly, *Lady Macbeth* is set in a pre-revolutionary society that is petty, violent and corrupt; secondly, its elevated heroine is brutally oppressed by the representatives of this

⁵⁷ Shostakovich, ‘About My Opera’, 252.

⁵⁸ Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 192–3; Taruskin, ‘The Opera and the Dictator’, *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008). Maes’ summary follows Taruskin’s: Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 267.

⁵⁹ This content of Dobrolyubov’s essay is closely summarised in Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 192–3.

⁶⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶¹ An interesting example can be seen in Lenin’s personal project to turn Moscow itself into quasi-museum of revolutionary history: from 1918, sixty-five sculptors were engaged to create a vast number of statues with accompanying texts of broadly socialist figures – amongst them prominent Russian rebels, assassins and martyrs of various nineteenth-century political movements – in part for the purpose of providing the Bolshevik Revolution with historical justification. See Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 88–92.

community and thus absolved of all blame for her crimes; and thirdly, this heroine's acts are protest against a tyrannical regime. Early Soviet texts certainly received the work in this way: thus a 1933 review by Shostakovich's friend Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovsky described the piece as 'an unvarnished view of the bestial face of tsarist Russia';⁶² a 1934 essay by the composer's close friend Ivan Sollertinsky considered that the brutal treatment of Katerina by her merchant oppressors meant that 'the victims become executioners and the murderer becomes a victim';⁶³ and a 1934 article by Shostakovich's one-time friend Boris Asafiev argued that the opera's laudable message was to 'justify *resistance*'⁶⁴ – and other contemporaneous writings subscribed to one or other or all of these views.⁶⁵ Much later Soviet, Russian and Western musicology also understands *Lady Macbeth* as a critique of pre-revolutionary society that sides with the oppressed and even legitimises opposition: for example, texts by Lev Lebedinsky, N.V. Lukyanova, Jakov Platek, H.H. Stuckenschmidt, Norman Kay, Francis Maes, Laurel Fay and Richard Taruskin summarise the ideological meaning of the work at least in part along these lines.⁶⁶ Some of these texts wholeheartedly concur with the opera's social message (eg. Lebedinsky, Lukyanova), while others merely report it (eg. Maes, Fay): yet all agree that it is present.

Certain of these scholars also suggest that *Lady Macbeth* adheres to Marxist thinking in different ways: for instance, Kay believes that it is not just Katerina, but also the opera's *unsympathetic* characters that are depicted as pawns of circumstance imprisoned by their environment,⁶⁷ while Stuckenschmidt considers that Katerina is portrayed in solidarity with the working class⁶⁸ – and other examples exist in the literature.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, three lengthy studies – two

⁶² In Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 116.

⁶³ Sollertinsky, '*Lady Macbeth*', 308.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 74.

⁶⁵ For example, see contemporaneous assessments by Piotrovsky and Ostretsov, quoted in Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 66.

⁶⁶ Lebedinsky, 'Preface', 13–14; Lukyanova, *Shostakovich*, 74; Platek, 'Opera, Kotoraja Delaet Epohu', 33–4; Stuckenschmidt, 'Dimitri Schostakowitsch, "Lady Macbeth"', 60; Kay, *Shostakovich*, 24–6; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 266–8; Fay, 'Lady Macbeth', 1076; Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008).

⁶⁷ Kay, *Shostakovich*, 24.

⁶⁸ Stuckenschmidt, 'Dimitri Schostakowitsch, "Lady Macbeth"', 60.

⁶⁹ For example, Maes holds that the depiction of events in Shostakovich's opera is in keeping with the Marxist ideal of progress, in particular the notion that all human misery springs from the social

interrelated texts by the Soviet musicologist Bogdanova, and one by the East German academic Kröplin – provide fully worked-out Soviet or Marxist interpretations of *Lady Macbeth*, reading the opera as a story of oppression and legitimate rebellion, and exploring in depth how this is realised in the musico-dramatic content of the work.⁷⁰ In particular, Kröplin develops his argument along Marxist lines with some sophistication: thus Katerina’s taking of a working-class lover is a social protest directed at breaking class boundaries; her criminal resistance, though it cannot work at this stage in time, encapsulates the beginnings of man’s progress toward socialist consciousness and can thus be justified historically; her individual tragedy becomes symbolic of that of the oppressed masses in Act IV, in which the heroine is positively identified with the convicts; and so on – and his analysis of the thematic and intonational elements of the musical score works to support his interpretation. For all of these scholars, the notion that Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* espouses a broadly Marxist ideology to a greater or lesser degree appears to be self-evident. Yet there are many who violently contest this premise, and some of these alternative readings shall be examined below.

(iii) *Different Dark Kingdoms:
revisionist and other readings of Lady Macbeth*

To accept the Marxist narrative that exists on the surface of *Lady Macbeth* and is fully elucidated in the composer’s published statements on the piece is in a sense to receive the opera ‘at face value’ – and, as outlined above, many do understand it in this way. Yet in the context of Shostakovich scholarship at large, it is unsurprising that there are also those who do *not* accept the orthodox politicised reading of this work. In *Testimony*, springboard for many an Aesopian interpretation of Shostakovich’s compositions, Solomon Volkov’s Shostakovich implicitly suggests that the miserable environment in which Katerina languished might not be as

order: Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 266. Meanwhile, Lebedinsky and Stuckenschmidt argue that in the final act, Katerina’s tragedy ceases to be narrowly individual, instead merging with the collective suffering of the oppressed masses: Lebedinsky, ‘Preface’, 13; Stuckenschmidt, ‘Dimitri Schostakowitsch, “Lady Macbeth”’, 60.

⁷⁰ Bogdanova, “*Katerina Izmajlova*”; Bogdanova, *Opery i balety Šostakoviča*; Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*.

nineteenth-century as it appeared: 'the opera is about...how love could have been if the world weren't full of vile things...the laws, and properties, and financial worries, and the police state'.⁷¹ Just a few years after the publication of Volkov's memoirs, one American critic took up the hint, flatly asserting that: 'Shostakovich's target was not the Tsarist society but conditions which still prevailed'.⁷² Such a remark typifies a populist revisionist understanding of *Lady Macbeth*, as various performances of the work in the West would seem to testify: the British première of the 1932 opera by English National Opera in 1987 shifted its setting to the Stalinist era, an interpretative decision similarly followed in a relatively recent production by Baltimore Opera Company, in which Shostakovich himself – as a victim of police harassment – even made a stage appearance.⁷³ For reviewers of the latter production and indeed revisionists at large, Shostakovich's self-confessed satire of pre-revolutionary times was in fact a smokescreen masking his true intent: a vicious indictment of contemporary Soviet life⁷⁴ – and several non-revisionist musicologists, Michael Mishra amongst them, also subscribe (albeit more cautiously) to this notion.⁷⁵ In a relatively recent book, Volkov expanded further on this argument, making full reference to Shostakovich's published statements on the opera:

All his [Shostakovich's] later confused explanations... with references to Alexander Ostrovsky's drama *The Storm*, as interpreted by the critic Dobrolubov ('a ray of light in a dark kingdom'), are merely rationalizations in

⁷¹ Volkov, *Testimony*, 81.

⁷² Quoted in Keill and Wolf, 'Opera as a Forum', 23.

⁷³ The English National Opera production was staged at the London Coliseum in May 1987, directed by David Pountney, conducted by Mark Elder, and with Josephine Barstow in the title role; the Baltimore Opera production was staged at the Lyric Opera House, Baltimore in February–March 2003, directed by Uwe Eric Laufenberg, conducted by Christian Badea, and with Karen Hoffstodt in the title role.

⁷⁴ One review of Baltimore Opera's *Lady Macbeth* in the Washington Post reveals the extent to which the anti-Stalinist interpretation is accepted as a self-evident truth in popular accounts, carelessly stating that the performance: 'blew away the formerly necessary pretence that it [*Lady Macbeth*] was an indictment of capitalism, rather than Stalinism': McLellan, 'Shostakovich's 'Lady''.

⁷⁵ Mishra allows that, although the opera was 'touted' as a satire of Tsarist society, one scene in particular 'may well have had relevance in the context of the emerging Stalinist police state': Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 73; Sheinberg goes further in declaring that such scenes were 'an obvious satire on authority... one that few Soviet citizens in 1934 would likely have interpreted as an unambiguous reference to Tsarist times': Sheinberg, 'Jewish Existential Irony', 352. Other authors imply that Shostakovich's assertions that the work was a critique of the pre-revolutionary age might have been an expedient cover: see Edwards, "'Lost Children'", 178; Wells, "'The New Woman'", 164–5.

hindsight for an intuitive and impulsive creative act. Here Shostakovich was covering his tracks.⁷⁶

Those who regard *Lady Macbeth* as a grim portrait of the Stalinist regime tend to focus on the opera's departure from the Leskov original in III/7: in this scene, a ridiculous yet all-powerful police sergeant leads his men in a hymn to bribery, imprisons a harmless teacher without trial, and announces his intention to 'get even' with Katerina for snubbing the authorities, for 'a pretext can always be found'. Texts by Jean-Michel Brèque, Ian MacDonald, Michael Mishra, James Morgan, Brian Morton, Harlow Robinson and Solomon Volkov all cite the police chief and his men as a key element in Shostakovich's critique of totalitarianism.⁷⁷ For Ian MacDonald, Norman Lebrecht and Mstislav Rostropovich, the Tsarist penal colony of *Lady Macbeth's* Act IV becomes the Stalinist Gulag;⁷⁸ meanwhile, Galina Vishnevskaya (quoting Shostakovich in conversation) and James Morgan reinterpret the Shabby Peasant, who reports to the police on discovering Zinovy's corpse, as a Stalinist informer.⁷⁹

In extended commentaries on the work, MacDonald and Volkov develop their revisionist readings of the opera more fully. For both authors, Shostakovich personally identified with Katerina herself: both composer and heroine were talented and outstanding individuals who suffered in a brutal and backward environment.⁸⁰ Moreover, both celebrate Katerina's propensity to love, upholding it against certain theories on the abolition of love that had a short-lived and limited

⁷⁶ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 114. MacDonald also claims that Shostakovich's invocation of Dobrolyubov meant little, arguing along convoluted lines that the composer's other literary tastes renders the possibility of his genuinely endorsing this writer moot: see MacDonald, 'His Misty Youth', 533–41.

⁷⁷ Brèque, 'Une Lady Macbeth', 12; MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 92; Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 73; Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 339; Morton, *Shostakovich*, 44; Robinson, 'The Case of the Three Russians', 71; Volkov, *Testimony*, 81.

⁷⁸ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 92; Lebrecht, 'The Fight for Shostakovich'; Rostropovich interviewed in Volkov, 'Tradition Returns', 365–6.

⁷⁹ According to Vishnevskaya, Shostakovich said of the Shabby Peasant: 'the bastard ran to the police, overjoyed that he could inform on her.... That's a hymn to all informers!': Vishnevskaya, *Galina*, 355. Morgan accepts this interpretation of the character: Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 338–9.

⁸⁰ MacDonald declares that the notion that Shostakovich 'actively identified' with Katerina is 'obvious': MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 88–9. See also MacDonald, 'His Misty Youth', 533 and Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 114.

appeal in 1920s Russia (and will briefly be summarised in Part III of this thesis).⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, MacDonald takes this further: Katerina's depth of feeling was a deliberate protest against the trivialisation of authentic emotion in Soviet society, and one intended to offer a kind of theoretical alternative to the dangerous devotion required of the Stalinist cult of personality. In this and other ways, *Lady Macbeth* was concerned with the individual rather than the collective, and thus the opera provided 'the first categorical proof of his [Shostakovich's] antagonism to Communism – an antagonism which, even if only in artistic terms, could justly be called counter-revolutionary'.⁸²

For Taruskin, the opera also had a contemporary relevance in Stalinist Russia – although one that is drawn up along very different lines. Taruskin argues that the merchant characters of *Lady Macbeth* are debased, their murders trivialised, through their lowbrow and parodistic musical styles, to the extent that they become sub-human; in contrast, Katerina Izmailova is expressly humanised through her sympathetic musical treatment. The whole is justified on a 'vulgar-Marxist' basis: 'Katerina's victims were class enemies, creatures at a lower stage of historical development than she, and she had every right, according to the objective laws of historical materialism, to eliminate them'.⁸³ Crucially, it was exactly this kind of ideology that was used to rationalise Stalin's mass-extirmination of Ukrainian peasants in the early 1930s. Thus in essence, Boris and Zinovy are less nineteenth-century merchants than twentieth-century kulaks – and their murders therefore take on a chilling significance.⁸⁴

Although Taruskin's reading is highly controversial in musicological circles,⁸⁵ there are those in other disciplines who do understand the work in this way. The

⁸¹ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 90; Volkov, *Testimony*, 81–2.

⁸² MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 90; see also similar arguments in MacDonald, 'His Misty Youth', 533.

⁸³ Taruskin, 'Entr'acte: The Lessons of Lady M.', 505.

⁸⁴ Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008); see also the slightly modified rewrite of this article for some relevant additions: Taruskin, 'Entr'acte: The Lessons of Lady M.', 508–110.

⁸⁵ Gasparov criticises Taruskin's essay for its 'political fervor': Gasparov, 'Review: Over the Barriers', 534; elsewhere, he even likens Taruskin's methodology to that of his revisionist 'opponents': Gasparov, 'Historicism and the Dialogue', 219–20. Similarly, Shakov objects to Taruskin's analysis as he does to anti-Stalinist readings, arguing that the opera should be examined as an artwork in its own right, and not compared to Leskov as a basis for politicised interpretations: summarised in Emerson, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition', 205–6. Meanwhile, Noble finds the

Marxist philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek also considers that these characters would have been recognised by early Soviet audiences as surrogate-kulaks, and accepts that the work acted as a justification of the Stalinist anti-kulak campaign; the electronic-music composer Paul De Marinis analyses the opera similarly.⁸⁶ For these writers, *Lady Macbeth* constitutes something of a vindication of Stalinist ideology – and the distance that we have now travelled from the revisionist readings of Volkov, MacDonald and others is immense. Precisely why this work should have given rise to interpretations that are wildly disparate, even dichotomously opposed, is initially difficult to comprehend. Yet at least in part, it is tied up with the opera’s chequered and well-known reception history; this shall now be summarised.

(iv) *Interlude: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Opera*

Certain of the facts detailed below regarding the creation, revision and reception of Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* are by now very familiar; others are surely less so. As this opera is so embroiled in politicised debate, it has spawned numerous studies that cannot be relied upon for factual evidence. However, the painstaking archival work of the scholar Laurel Fay has resulted in several highly detailed and de-mythologised accounts of the compositions of Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth* amongst them. It is primarily from Fay’s acclaimed biography, *Shostakovich: A Life*, that much of the following summary is gleaned, although other

notion that Shostakovich’s opera analogously justifies the extermination of the kulaks ‘almost ludicrous’: Noble, Review of *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 290. Taruskin does have his musicological supporters however, and recent summaries of the opera in historical texts repeat his reading: Bartlett, ‘Shostakovich as Opera Composer’, 190; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 268; Hakopian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, 112.

⁸⁶ Žižek, engaging with Taruskin’s article, agrees that *Lady Macbeth* is ‘about’ the extermination of the kulaks; moreover, he goes further than this, arguing that the reason that the opera was prohibited (more on this below) is because the ‘open depiction’ and ‘open support’ of this genocide ‘had to be publicly disavowed’: Žižek, ‘A Plea for Leninist Intolerance’, 560–3. In a small aside in a description of pieces based on a speech by Stalin, the composer Paul De Marinis essentially hits upon the same argument, suggesting that Stalin objected to the work as ‘the victims of the lovers’ crimes are small landowners and the blood on Ekaterina’s hands smells a lot like that on Stalin’s after the mass exterminations in the Ukraine in 1932’: De Marinis, ‘The lecture of Comrade Stalin’, 69.

studies – in particular Fay’s entry on the piece in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* and Fanning’s article on Shostakovich in *The New Grove* – are also invaluable.⁸⁷

Shostakovich and his co-librettist, Alexander Preis – a former collaborator on the composer’s first opera, *The Nose* (1929) – began work on the libretto of *Lady Macbeth* in the autumn of 1930, when Shostakovich was just 24 years old. Its more or less chronological composition took place between October 1930 and December 1932, intermittently broken for Shostakovich to complete various film, theatre and ballet commissions, and occurring alongside his courtship of and marriage to his first wife Nina Varzar: the opera is dedicated to her.⁸⁸ Shostakovich was so sure of the opera’s future success that he negotiated multiple productions while it was only half-finished: in the event two very different interpretations of the work opened almost simultaneously in 1934, at the Leningrad Maliy Theatre in a production by Nikolai Smolich on 22nd January, and at the Moscow Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre in a production by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko just two days later.⁸⁹ The composer’s confidence in his work turned out to be justified: *Lady Macbeth* scored an instant success with the opera-going public. At the première, Shostakovich was called onto the stage between acts and even scenes, subsequent nights sold out, and the relentless demand for curtain calls continued long into the initial run.⁹⁰ From 1934–6, the Leningrad and Moscow productions combined ran to almost 200 performances and received several broadcasts, and within this two-year period the work also appeared in locations such as London, New York, Buenos Aires, Stockholm and Zürich, amongst others. Few twentieth-century operas can have had

⁸⁷ Fay, *Shostakovich*, 67–9, 74–8, 83–5, 87–92, 194, 197, 237–9 and throughout; Fay, ‘Lady Macbeth’, in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 15 Nov 2010); Fanning, ‘Shostakovich, Dmitry’, in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 286–7, 297–9. See also Norris, ‘The Operas’, 115, 120–23; and Fanning, ‘“Lady Macbeth”’, 16, 20–21 for reliable factual details on the composition, reception history and revisions of the opera. Wilson, *Shostakovich* provides numerous personal reminiscences of the opera’s extraordinary history that are of interest, while Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’ and Brown, ‘The Three Faces of Lady Macbeth’ deal in detail with Shostakovich’s various versions of the score.

⁸⁸ Fay, *Shostakovich*, 68–9 and Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 164n12 provide detailed accounts of the chronology of composition.

⁸⁹ For details of both productions and a concise assessment of their differences see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 75–7. For an interesting Marxist analysis of their change of focus see Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 209–16.

⁹⁰ See Fay, *Shostakovich*, 76–7.

such a meteoric rise to fame; moreover, both Soviet and Western critical responses were overwhelmingly more positive than not.⁹¹

There are obvious reasons for *Lady Macbeth's* popular appeal. For one, the work represents something of a conservative retreat in Shostakovich's compositional development. The first decade of Soviet Russia saw two main and somewhat oppositional strands of artistic experiment: Western-style modernism (fostered by organisations such as the Association for Contemporary Music, or ASM) and proletarian iconoclasm (cultivated by groups such as *Proletkult*, for example). Both of these progressive tendencies can be observed in Shostakovich's youthful output – and this shall be examined in more depth in the third part of this thesis. Yet *Lady Macbeth* marks a shift to the comparatively traditional: the piece is tonal, containing very few passages that cannot be said to be in a key; most of the melodic writing is tonally conceived; much use is made of triadic and functional harmony; the borrowings from familiar genres and styles of all kinds, some popular, is widespread; there are examples of conventional operatic set-pieces such as arias and choruses; the vocal writing tends towards what is lyrical rather than exploring extended techniques; the whole makes reference to Russian operatic classics of the nineteenth-century; and so on. In fact, in its move towards what was accessible, classical and national, *Lady Macbeth* pre-empted certain tendencies that would later become required under the official doctrine of Socialist Realism – and given the subsequent fate of the opera, this is particularly ironic.

The next part of this narrative constitutes something of an iconic event in the history of twentieth-century music. On 26th January 1936, Stalin himself attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth*, yet left the theatre after the third act; two days later, an unsigned editorial appeared in the official mouthpiece *Pravda*, clearly representing the views of the dictator and denouncing the opera on numerous counts.⁹² The much-quoted article, entitled 'Muddle Instead of Music', begins its criticism of the work thus:

⁹¹ See Fay, *Shostakovich*, 76–7 for details and examples; also Norris, 'The Operas', 120–21 for some extended quotes.

⁹² It is generally accepted that the *Pravda* article was written at the instigation of Stalin and essentially represented his own views; nevertheless, its precise authorship is still contested, numerous candidates having been put forward. See Fay, *Shostakovich*, 304n67.

From the first minute of the opera, the listener is flabbergasted by an intentionally dissonant, confused stream of noise. Fragments of melody... disappear again amidst crashes, scrapings and squeals. It is difficult to follow this “music” and impossible to commit it to memory.⁹³

A lengthy elaboration of the dissonance, complexity and inaccessibility of Shostakovich’s score follows in a similar vein; this perverse formalism is condemned as simultaneously ‘leftist’ and ‘petty-bourgeois’. The article goes on to attack the scenes of coarse and vulgar naturalism, and deride the false ideological conception of the opera.⁹⁴ The ramifications of this short and shoddy piece of journalism on both the career of Shostakovich in particular, and the course of Soviet music in general, were immense. *Lady Macbeth* was soon after pulled from the stage; a veritable campaign against the opera and its composer was unleashed in the press; and the work was denounced at branch meetings of the Composer’s Union in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere.⁹⁵ The personal effect on the young composer was considerable, and it would be some time before he was successfully rehabilitated.⁹⁶ Although he had intended *Lady Macbeth* as the first of a tetralogy of operas that would constitute a kind of Soviet Ring Cycle, the crisis of 1936 effectively put an end to this project, and he never completed another opera proper.⁹⁷ Yet the significance of the whole affair went far beyond Shostakovich: the *Pravda* article acted as a warning to Soviet musicians, and indeed Soviet artists in general, that from now on their allegiance to the state was more conscientiously

⁹³ ‘Muddle Instead of Music’, *Pravda*, 136–7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137–8.

⁹⁵ See Fay, *Shostakovich*, 89–92. For personal accounts of such media attacks and public denunciations, see Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 108–14.

⁹⁶ According to a number of sources, Shostakovich contemplated suicide at this time: see Fanning, ‘Shostakovich, Dmitry’, in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 287. For personal accounts of the composer’s response to the furor, see Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 108–14. The *Pravda* affair certainly resulted in a sharp decline in performances of Shostakovich’s works and thus his income: see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 94. The mainstream view is that his next major work, the Fourth Symphony, was withdrawn by Shostakovich just prior to performance owing to fears as to possible repercussions; not until the extraordinary success of the Fifth Symphony was the composer accepted back into the fold: see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 95–7; 99–102.

⁹⁷ Shostakovich made several statements concerning his proposed Soviet *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: for examples, see Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 31; 46. Throughout the remainder of his life, operatic projects were mooted, begun and dropped in various stages of development: see Bartlett, ‘Shostakovich as Opera Composer’, 191–7 for a full survey.

required, and their creative freedoms more restrictively curtailed – and against the backdrop of the Great Terror, such warnings were necessarily heeded.

As for *Lady Macbeth* itself: for the next twenty-nine years or so, the opera disappeared entirely from the Soviet stage. After the death of Stalin in 1953 and during the period of the Thaw that followed, Shostakovich and others made efforts to resurrect it: thus in 1956, a commission from the Ministry of Culture met to assess a revised version of the opera with a view to its performance; however, in the event, the stigma attached to this proscribed work was such that it was again officially condemned.⁹⁸ Yet the drive to see *Lady Macbeth* return to the stage gathered momentum as the political climate became more relaxed: from 1957 onwards, the Kirov theatre in Leningrad repeatedly scheduled (then delayed) performances of the piece, and similar attempts to produce the opera (not all of them abortive) were made in the West at this time.⁹⁹ Eventually, the revised work *Katerina Izmailova* – decked out with a new opus number and changed in several of its details, though not in its essential content – was finally completed, and first performed at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre in Moscow on 8th January 1963. Productions in Riga, London, Zagreb, Vienna and Budapest were amongst those that followed in the wake of this momentous re-launch, described in the title of a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko as a ‘Second Birth’.¹⁰⁰ A film version of *Katerina Izmailova*, directed by Mikhaíl Shapiro and with Galina Vishnevskaya in the title role, was produced by Lenfilm with Shostakovich’s involvement in 1966; again, this required some modifications and additions to the score.¹⁰¹ It is only through the 2006 Decca DVD release of this last incarnation of the opera that *Katerina Izmailova* is known at all to Western viewers: since the late 1970s, it is rather the first version

⁹⁸ For factual details of this attempt to resurrect the work, see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 197; 237. For a personal account of the play-through to the Ministry of Culture, see Isaac Glikman’s in Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 288–92 and Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 260–62n30.

⁹⁹ Fay details the Kirov Opera’s frequently altered proposals to stage the revised *Lady Macbeth* in the late 1950s; plans by La Scala to mount first the new, and later the old, versions of the work in these years; and the production of the original opera by the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf in 1959: see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 237–9.

¹⁰⁰ See Fay, *Shostakovich*, 238–9 for general facts, and Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 349–50 for details concerning Shostakovich’s involvement in these various productions. Yevtushenko quotes his poem and gives the circumstances of its composition in Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 366.

¹⁰¹ Shostakovich oversaw editing the score for the film production, making cuts in length, re-writing the interludes and excising III/7 – the scene with the policeman – in its entirety: see Riley, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, 99–100.

of the piece, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932), that has been recorded, performed and discussed in the West. In contrast, Russian opera houses almost invariably perform *Katerina Izmailova* (1963), and Russian musicologists near-exclusively examine this later work. This curious situation is once again entangled with political ideology, and it is to this subject that this chapter will now return.

(v) *On Monsters and Myths: the influence of Pravda on critical reception*

In the extensive literature on *Lady Macbeth*, both scholarly and otherwise, much attention has been focussed on the opera's reception history – and given the twists and turns of this extraordinary narrative, this is not surprising. Of course this particular story is of interest, and deserving of study. However, certain of its dramatic events – above all, the unfavourable response of Stalin to the piece, and the devastating article in *Pravda* that followed – have heavily influenced critical and ideological reactions to *Lady Macbeth* in ways that are not acknowledged. Put simply, Stalin's judgement of the opera has contaminated that of others, resulting in literatures that are skewed and mythologies that are endemic. The most straightforward example of this phenomenon can be observed in those Soviet musicological texts of the late 1930s that immediately followed in the wake of *Pravda*. Although it is fairly obvious that the anonymous author of 'Muddle Instead of Music' was primarily incensed by the dissonant musical language and explicit sexual content of the work, Soviet critics rushed to provide a corrective post-rationalisation for the opera's condemnation that was based on more lofty ideological grounds. What had previously been justified through orthodox Marxist arguments must now be shown to be false in principle, and two quotations from the writings of Asafiev clearly demonstrate this U-turn. In 1934, following the première of *Lady Macbeth*, Asafiev had declared: 'only Soviet musical dramaturgy could get rid of this admiration for... non-resistance, and, what is more, could justify *resistance*'.¹⁰² Yet in 1936, following *Pravda*, the writer unashamedly asserted that: 'overcoming the nightmare of violence by means of a naturalistic display of violence

¹⁰² Quoted in Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 74.

is a method foreign to Soviet artistic criticism.¹⁰³ This kind of pseudo-Marxist re-think is typical of Soviet commentaries post-*Pravda*, and accounts by Ivan Martynov, D. Rabinovich and others argue that the ideological conception of *Lady Macbeth* is fundamentally flawed along similar lines.¹⁰⁴

That these critical judgements have been distorted by Stalin's view of *Lady Macbeth* is palpably apparent; of course no one trusts Soviet texts of this period today, and in the Cold War West, such commentaries were always discounted as hopelessly biased. And yet, to paraphrase Nicholas Cook, ideology was not just what the other guy had: arguably, the simple fact that Stalin disliked this work has affected our assessment of it in the West just as much as in Soviet Russia, though differently – and this will be explored below.¹⁰⁵

A cursory glance at the *Pravda* article, a basic understanding of its historical context, and an uncomplicated analysis of the general character of *Lady Macbeth* present us with several likely reasons for why the opera did not find favour with Stalin. Some of these reasons are personal: its compositional style was too complicated for one of simple musical tastes; its sexual content was too overt for one who was famously prudish regarding the arts; its composer was too much of a national and international celebrity for one so megalomaniacal; and so on. Some are political: Shostakovich's opera was enjoying widespread and unchecked popularity at a time when the dictator and the Soviet state wished to reign in such creative freedoms, and it is quite possible that, had *Lady Macbeth* not been singled out to make an example of, another artwork would have served the same purpose. Others are more general: the individualistic subject matter and pessimistic tone of the work was hardly keeping with the broad communal topics and optimistic character that was increasingly required of Socialist Realism, for example. These kinds of explanations for the opera's censure have been put forward in more

¹⁰³ Quoted in Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 328.

¹⁰⁴ Martynov argues that, even under the oppressive conditions of the Tsarist regime, there were yet honourable women: Katerina's crimes cannot therefore be considered as protest, nor her punishment as social, and the root problem of the opera is this 'incorrect handling of the central theme': Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, 44. Rabinovich similarly considers that the moral foundations of the opera do not stand up: there is no clash here between good and evil; rather, Katerina simply destroys and is destroyed by 'her own kind': Rabinovich, *Dmitry Shostakovich*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Cook formulates his memorable phrase thus: 'during the Thatcher/ Reagan years, it was received wisdom that ideology was what the other guy had': Cook, *Music*, 102.

moderate, non-politicised texts by Elizabeth Wells, David Fanning, Laurel Fay and Norman Kay, amongst others.¹⁰⁶

However, populist and revisionist writings peddle more dramatic reasons for Stalin's dislike: for instance, Harlow Robinson states with some certainty that the dictator's problem with *Lady Macbeth* was that it embodied defiance of authority, in particular of the police;¹⁰⁷ meanwhile Brian Morton (after Ian MacDonald and Maxim Shostakovich before him) makes the basically unsubstantiated claim that Stalin, on attending the work,

apparently reached the paranoid (but not necessarily inaccurate) conclusion that the character of the police chief in the third act was a skit on himself.

These scenes were not in the original story, which gives the possibility some added credence.¹⁰⁸

To imaginatively second-guess Stalin's rationale in this way is comparatively harmless in itself, if ultimately unprovable. However, comments such as Morton's above betray that revisionist readings of *Lady Macbeth* might be the product of a kind of post-hoc rationalisation: put simply, these texts seem to assume that, because Stalin disliked the opera, it must therefore be anti-Stalinist in meaning – and this logical fallacy underlies many a popular account of the work. For Western and particularly Cold War commentators, *Lady Macbeth* was on the 'right' side, and Taruskin even argues that this is why we celebrate it unconditionally: 'Everyone knows it as the opera Stalin personally repressed. That, according to Volkov and [others], is reason enough to love it'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ For example, Wells posits that Stalin objected primarily to the blatant sexuality of the work: Wells, "The New Woman", 164. Meanwhile, Fanning and Fay both consider that the *Pravda* affair was a planned exercise, Fanning for the purpose of reducing Shostakovich's stature, and Fay with the aim of restricting artists' creative freedoms: Fanning, 'Shostakovich, Dmitry', in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 287; Fay, 'Lady Macbeth', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 15 Nov 2010). Alternatively, Kay suggests that the opera was disliked for its negativity and general 'feminine' passivity, which contrasted sharply with the aesthetic of positive strength that the age required: Kay, *Shostakovich*, 25–7.

¹⁰⁷ Robinson, 'The Case of the Three Russians', 71.

¹⁰⁸ Morton, *Shostakovich*, 44. MacDonald too declares, with a similar lack of supporting evidence, that 'it seems he [Stalin] thought the Police Chief was supposed to be a parody of him': MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 92. This popular rumour is also reported by the composer's own son in Shostakovich, 'Six Lectures', 406.

¹⁰⁹ Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008).

For precisely this reason, the original *Lady Macbeth* (1932), as distinct from the revised *Katerina Izmailova* (1963), has a particular cachet in the West: it was this *first* version of the opera that was prohibited by the Soviet state, and therefore a mythology has sprung up regarding its essential legitimacy. The received wisdom runs thus: *Lady Macbeth* is the better composition and the preferred work of Shostakovich; *Katerina Izmailova* is the compromised version, significantly altered for reasons of political expediency, and all the weaker for it. There is a history to this particular myth-formation. In the late 1970s – a time in which the conditions were ripe for politically revised interpretations of Shostakovich and his compositions – the conductor Mstislav Rostropovich embarked upon a project to record the *original original Lady Macbeth*: i.e. the opera as it appeared in its 1932 manuscript score, as opposed to the first published score by Muzgiz, Moscow of 1935, in which a handful of small changes were made.¹¹⁰ Rostropovich’s motivation allegedly came straight from Shostakovich, as the booklet notes to the 2002 re-release of the recording explain: ‘One of the last things Shostakovich had said to Rostropovich was, “If you perform *Lady Macbeth*, please do the first version”’.¹¹¹ The release of Rostropovich’s “real” *Lady Macbeth*¹¹² coincided with the first publication of the 1932 score by Sikorski in Hamburg; the introductory notes to this edition also claim to present ‘Dmitri Shostakovich’s masterpiece, originally strident with expressiveness and provocation... as the author had it in view’.¹¹³ If the Sikorski introduction held the 1932 original superior to the ‘moderated’ version of 1935, it reserved its especial contempt for the bowdlerised *Katerina Izmailova* of 1963, in which: ‘grave alterations... have polished much of the ruggedness of action and structure of the piece and taken away much of its effect’.¹¹⁴

Rostropovich’s recording and Sikorski’s score were products of 1979, the year that also saw the publication of *Testimony* – and as with Volkov’s memoirs, the unsubstantiated claims of these contemporaneous projects have taken firm root in Western popular thought. The following summary, taken from a relatively recent

¹¹⁰ For full details of the myths and facts concerning the differences between these scores, see Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 164–70.

¹¹¹ Osborne, ‘Rostropovich conducts *Lady Macbeth*’, 14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ ‘Notes on the History of the Opera’, 5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

edition of a renowned opera dictionary, is typical both in its unquestioned acceptance of the superiority of *Lady Macbeth*, and its presentation of the poor relation *Katerina Izmailova* as a heavily-reworked concession to political necessity:

Shostakovich produced a major revision under the title *Katerina Izmailova*. This revised version is a compromise.... Since the composer's death, the original (1932) version has returned to favour, both on record and on the stage, and today there seems little reason to prefer the expurgated score.¹¹⁵

Yet the painstaking archival work of the scholar Laurel Fay has in fact shown many of these assumptions to be false. In a 1995 article, Fay engages in a highly detailed study of autograph manuscripts, published and performance scores, printed libretti and other source texts that significantly builds on the previous limited research in this area.¹¹⁶ Through this side-by-side comparison, she demonstrates that the amendments made by Shostakovich in his 1963 version of the opera are neither as extensive nor as politically motivated as is usually supposed in the West: the majority of the changes to the musical score actually involve adjustments to the tessitura and orchestration that were presumably not completed with the censor in mind. And although Shostakovich's revision of the libretto was both more comprehensive and more sensitive to external considerations – in essence, the explicit sexual content that proved so problematic in 1932 was purged from the 1963 version of the text – Fay puts forward considerable evidence that the rationale behind this was not simply political. Rather, the older composer seemed uncomfortable with his youthful exuberance: in private conversation with his friend Isaac Glikman, who carried out the amendments to the libretto, Shostakovich confessed that, 'when you just look with

¹¹⁵ Walsh, 'Dmitry Shostakovich', 851. Other opera dictionaries and surveys, in similarly recent editions, also echo these sentiments: for instance, Grout's history declares that the composer's revisions in *Katerina Izmailova* were so extensive that, 'in essence, [he] created a new opera' – although one that is increasingly falling out of favour as companies perform the superior and powerful *Lady Macbeth*: Grout and Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 666–7; meanwhile, a popular illustrated guide labels the later work a "'politically correct" new version' – although citing no evidence to support this assessment: Jansen, *Opera*, 152.

¹¹⁶ Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*'. See also Brown, 'The Three Faces of *Lady Macbeth*' and Fay, 'The Two *Katerinas*' for earlier research on this subject.

your eyes at the text in the [1932] piano score and don't listen to it with your ears, much appears in bad taste'.¹¹⁷

Moreover, Fay does not accept the widely touted view that *Katerina Izmailova* is inferior to *Lady Macbeth*, nor the Rostropovich-inspired myth that the composer preferred his earlier work. In fact, she convincingly argues that the more significant musical changes made to the score – for example, the replacement of the orchestral interludes between I/1 and I/2, and III/7 and III/8, with newly-composed material – are actually improvements on the original.¹¹⁸ Again, Shostakovich's correspondence suggest that he favoured the later opera; on discovering that *La Scala* intended to stage *Lady Macbeth* in the 1960s, he pleaded with a go-between to ensure that this performance did not take place: 'I have been able to make many corrections and improvements in the new version and I beg you to tell them to produce my opera in the new version by *all means*, or to leave it alone'.¹¹⁹ Although it is possible that such remarks were prompted by reasons of political expediency, the Russian musical establishment (and Maxim Shostakovich amongst them) certainly accept the composer at face-value on this point: as Fay points out, the 1963 opera is accepted as the definitive version of the work in Russia, almost without exception.¹²⁰

As for the *original original Lady Macbeth*: again, Fay challenges the notion that the changes made to Shostakovich's 1932 manuscript in the 1935 published score are as numerous, as politically motivated, as artistically damaging and as distasteful to the composer as popular mythology would have it. In fact, Fay reveals that the 1932 version recorded by Rostropovich and published by Sikorski does not have quite the sacrosanct status as was claimed: rather than being the first

¹¹⁷ Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 58. Glikman too considers that Shostakovich made changes to the libretto due to personal conviction rather than political pressure, citing several conversations in which the composer expressed his concern over unsuitable or distressed audience reactions to the opera's sexual content; he also includes a letter from Shostakovich of 1955 detailing certain of the alterations required, all of which are focussed on softening moments of sex or violence: Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 56–9.

¹¹⁸ Earlier, non-Western accounts make similar arguments: for example, Alla Bogdanova states that the changes made by Shostakovich to the reworked *Katerina Izmailova* render the whole a more musically consistent and logical composition: Bogdanova, "*Katerina Izmailova*", 19–20.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*', 185.

¹²⁰ Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*', 161; see also Maxim Shostakovich's comments on this point in Shostakovich, 'Six Lectures', 407.

'authentic' copy of the work, Fay uncovers even earlier manuscripts which contain certain small differences.¹²¹ It seems that, in the early years of its existence, Shostakovich's opera was rather a flexible and constantly evolving artwork, slight alterations being made by the composer in collaboration with directors, conductors and performers as a natural and indeed positive part of the rehearsal process. It is reasonable to suppose that the 1935 Muzgiz edition, produced under the supervision of Shostakovich, incorporated some of the best of these changes; the 1935 score might thus be regarded as a 'polished' version of what is in essence the original work, and it is on this basis only that it is used as the primary source text in this thesis.

Further to this point, it should be stated here that this study focuses on *Lady Macbeth* instead of the later *Katerina Izmailova* not through any preconceived judgement concerning its authenticity or superiority, but rather because the relationship between the opera and the cultural and social history of the 1920s and 1930s is an integral part of the analysis. Where relevant, the disparities between the scores will be detailed and their possible significances considered. However, for the most part, the differing versions of the opera are close enough in content to warrant their conceptual bracketing together as one work of art, and many of the conclusions of this thesis are thus relevant to both *Lady Macbeth* and *Katerina Izmailova*. That this can be said to be the case only serves to highlight how purely politicised is the hype surrounding the earlier opera in the West. Once again, it would seem that the reaction of Stalin has coloured the reaction of all of us: although Fay has debunked the popular mythology surrounding Shostakovich's revisions just as completely as she exposed Volkov's *Testimony*, there is a widespread unwillingness to discard our perception of the original *Lady Macbeth* as a work of greatness and even a work of dissidence. The extent to which this and similar prejudices prevail accounts for the understandable frustration felt by musicologists studying Shostakovich in general and this opera in particular – and it is in this context that writers such as Gasparov, in the quotation that began this

¹²¹ Fay gives details of two other conductor's scores of 1932 preserved in the Glinka Museum, as well as blocking 'scores', libretti and other documents used in staging the opera's first performances: see Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*, 161–77.

chapter, make the seemingly old-fashioned appeal to rid Shostakovich scholarship of the 'ideological trash of one kind or another' that surrounds this music.

(vi) *The Oppressor, the Oppressed and the Vindicated: an ideology shared*

The political 'cacophony' that surrounds *Lady Macbeth* is made up of accounts that are wildly disparate; in turn Marxist, Soviet, Western, revisionist or anti-revisionist, the conflicting positions of these various readings have been shaped by the chequered history of this opera in particular, and indeed of the twentieth century at large. That many of the studies of this work were written against the backdrop of the Cold War is palpably apparent: much of the literature is drawn up along oppositional lines, and therefore plagued by a number of direct contradictions. Most notably, Soviet or Marxist texts accept *Lady Macbeth* as a critique of pre-revolutionary times, whereas Western or revisionist texts treat the work as a commentary on the Stalinist regime. For Fanning, the apparently irreconcilable nature of this discrepancy can be transcended if we allow that an artwork must always be multivalent, for 'no drama with satirical intent can insist on delimiting the object of its satire... an important part of effective and non-ephemeral satire is that its target lies in the ideology of the beholder'.¹²² Precisely *who* or *what* is being satirised is as flexible as it is ultimately unprovable, and this leads Fanning to conclude that: 'the only invalid interpretation... is one which seeks to narrow down the many-sidedness of this drama to one overriding "message"'.¹²³ This argument is both persuasive and liberating, and, as proposed in the initial chapter of this thesis, this study does offer up its analysis of *Lady Macbeth* simply as one interpretative possibility of many.

Yet there is a further reason why this particular opera lends itself so readily to readings that are dichotomously opposed, and this lies within the work itself. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the musico-dramatic content of *Lady Macbeth* is founded on its own basic opposition: Katerina is sympathetic; those who surround her are unsympathetic. This fundamental antagonism is bound up with

¹²² Fanning, "Lady Macbeth", 18.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

the moral position of the opera: Katerina is oppressed, her fellow protagonists are her oppressors – and thus she is exonerated of or even validated in her behaviour. It is *because* there is an essential dichotomy at the core of *Lady Macbeth* that directly contradictory interpretations proliferate: binaries map onto binaries, and thus the struggle between good and evil might take place in Tsarist just as well as Stalinist Russia, in any un-nuanced historical analysis. On the surface of it, the various readings of this opera are entirely incompatible. Yet in essence, they are in accord: all recognise and build on the principle of opposition between persecutor and persecuted that is at the heart of the work, and governs its overall message of absolution and justification. There are those who query or condemn the ethics of the drama's standpoint: in an exploration of the underlying morality of *Lady Macbeth* and two other operas, Grönke suggests that a heroine's victimhood cannot and must not excuse her murderous acts,¹²⁴ while in that fiercely polemical article discussed hitherto, Taruskin argues that Shostakovich's project to acquit Katerina involved a pernicious ethical inversion with sinister overtones – and other writers more cautiously subscribe to this view.¹²⁵ Yet in essence, no-one disputes the nature or presence of the work's fundamental ideological premise: Katerina is oppressed by her oppressors, and thus she is vindicated.

Perhaps this *is* the 'one overriding "message"', the existence of which Fanning denies – and as a position, it is not ideologically neutral. To divide the world into two categories of oppressors and oppressed, to treat a murderer as a victim, or even to justify homicide as protest is not exclusive to Marxism, but it is inherent in it. Certainly such principles could be described as left-leaning (!), and thus there is a particular irony when Volkov has his honorary Western, free-world Shostakovich declare that 'a turn of events is possible in which murder is not a crime'.¹²⁶ For even as revisionist analyses map their own communist/ anti-communist binary on to the dichotomy oppressor/ oppressed that underpins the opera, they necessarily accept a principle that is intrinsically socialist. In *Lady Macbeth*, who or what the people of

¹²⁴ See Grönke, 'Lady Macbeth und ihre Schwestern', 7–8; 10–11.

¹²⁵ Several scholars accept Taruskin's basic premise: that an opera that justifies a murderess and presents her as a victim is at best what Morgan describes as 'ethically dubious': see Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 329, 339; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 268; Bartlett, 'Shostakovich as Opera Composer', 190; and Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, 112.

¹²⁶ Volkov, *Testimony*, 80.

Mtsensk represent is as flexible as the basic opposition *between* its characters is fixed. Yet this is only the case because, despite the colossal regime changes that took place in Russia in the twentieth century, the division between the persecutors and the persecuted remained. To argue this way is to argue along broadly Marxist lines, for although many Western texts on Shostakovich tend to conflate Marxism with communism with Stalinism, a Marxist analysis of the 1930s would certainly uncover similar structures of domination as hitherto.

This thesis does borrow a Marxist understanding of the fundamental conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, and the notion of Katerina's actions as struggle. Yet it differs from other non-Marxist readings of the opera in that it does so self-consciously, for its own particular purpose. This examination of *Lady Macbeth* assigns a different binary opposition to the familiar dramaturgical dichotomy on which the work is founded – that of masculine/ feminine – and reads Katerina's resistance along feminist lines. In the following chapter, the reasons why a feminist analysis of this opera is both appropriate and long-overdue will be explored. In its appropriation of Marxist principles for feminist ends, this thesis builds on previous research. Yet it simultaneously moves beyond the overtly politicised debate in which discussion of this opera has traditionally been mired, towards an exploration of what might be described as *differently* political.

Chapter 3

A Differently Politicised Shostakovich:

Lady Macbeth as a Site of Feminist Enquiry

Katerina Izmailova is sharply distinguished from her operatic protagonists: she is oppressed, her fellow men are her oppressors, and thus she is absolved or even justified in her actions against them. This essential dramaturgical dichotomy and its intertwined ideology lies at the heart of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*, and Chapter 2 demonstrated how critical responses that were wildly disparate, even directly contradictory, were nevertheless united in their acceptance of this as the governing principle of the work. Previously this understanding has informed readings that are explicitly politicised; thus Katerina has been the victim of eras both pre- and post-revolutionary, her persecutors variously perceived as Tsarist merchants, Stalinist toadies or even contemporary kulaks. Yet this thesis conceives of the fundamental premise of the opera differently: the binary oppressor/ oppressed is understood along gendered lines, and the heroine's actions thus conceptualised as feminist struggle.

To present a feminist interpretation of *Lady Macbeth* is appropriate for reasons inherent in the work itself: throughout, Katerina is verbally and physically abused in ways that explicitly relate to her gender. Of course, this has been acknowledged in the musicological literature on the opera. However, many critical texts tend to refer to the subject in brief and in passing, whilst in overtly politicised readings, Katerina's oppression as a woman is treated as epiphenomenal to her oppression as a citizen. A study of *Lady Macbeth* that places feminist issues centre-stage is thus long overdue. Moreover, an analysis that systematically applies some of the tools of feminist criticism might help to dispel certain anomalies that are widespread in the discussion of this work: most notably, *Lady Macbeth* is commonly labelled a 'feminist' opera, though this assessment is highly problematic and demands further scrutiny.

1. The Story Re-told:
Masculine Oppression and Feminine Resistance in *Lady Macbeth*

The beginning of *Lady Macbeth* is characterised by its striking immediacy. The opera has no overture; the curtain opens on the central character, Katerina Izmailova, who concisely presents us with her back-story after just twelve bars of orchestral introduction. Katerina's exposition contains no musical or dramatic preamble. Straight away, the heroine relates both her unhappiness and its cause: hers is the mental stagnation and physical imprisonment that necessarily befalls the wife of a merchant. In her opening monologue and folksong, Katerina describes her lonely days spent drinking tea and taking naps – there is 'nothing else to do', but 'Lord, how boring it is!' – and looks back fondly on her unmarried life, for 'at least there was some freedom'. Thus we have already arrived at one of the central themes of the work: the predicament of Katerina as a woman – and moreover, a woman who is exceedingly isolated in an overwhelmingly male environment. For aside from the maid Aksinya, who makes just two brief appearances in the first act, Katerina is the sole female inhabitant of the Izmailov mill. Indeed, Katerina is the only major female protagonist in the opera, and one of only four female solo roles of a cast of 23. From mid-way through scene 2 to the beginning of scene 8 we do not hear any other female voice, solo or otherwise; meanwhile, the all-male chorus is utilised six times (in various dramatic guises) and the mixed chorus thrice, yet the all-female chorus only once. Katerina's isolation in this regard might foreground the issue of gender relations in the opera – if this were really necessary. In fact, from the outset, examples of male oppression and female resistance are prevalent in the libretto and even in the music itself.

In the following summary of such instances, literary quotations from the libretto are taken from Joan Pemberton Smith's translation of the 1932 version of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, unless stated otherwise; meanwhile quotations from the musical text are taken from the primary source of this thesis: the Muzgiz vocal score of the opera of 1935.¹ On the very few occasions in which

¹ The rationale behind the use of the 1935 Muzgiz edition of the score as the primary source text is given in Chapter 2. Throughout this thesis, musical examples taken from the vocal, rather than the

the 1932 text differs from that of 1935, this is further elucidated in the discussion. In fact, such glances at the 1932 version of *Lady Macbeth* – and even, on occasion, at the re-worked opera *Katerina Izmailova* (1963) – are generally of interest.

(i) *Oppression...*

As the only female member of the Izmailov household, Katerina is subject to the absolute authority of her father-in-law Boris and husband Zinovy. In particular, Boris issues Katerina with numerous demands: she must carry out various household chores (eg. Act I/ scene 1; figure 30/ bars 1–5), deal with his immediate wants (e.g. II/5; 249/5–250/8), and even get dressed or go to bed on his say-so (e.g. I/3; 134/1–136/10).² In effect part-slave, even Katerina's innermost feelings are not her own; having forced her to swear an oath of fidelity in preparation for Zinovy's leave of absence, Boris requires that in addition Katerina cry actual tears of farewell (I/1; 61/1–10). Boris routinely attacks his daughter-in-law: thus he blames her childless state on her lack of ardour, for 'it all depends on the woman/ what sort of wife a man gets' (I/1; 22/2–24/3); he also accuses her of harbouring intentions of adultery long before the event, for 'young wives are all the same' (I/1; 27/1–4; 50/5–52/1). Elsewhere, Katerina is treated to various verbal insults, by Boris and others: she is a 'trollop' and a 'hussy' in *Lady Macbeth* (II/4; 268/3–4, III/7; 407/7–9, IV/9; 484/5), although some of these lines are cut in *Katerina Izmailova*;³

orchestral, score do suffice – although details of instrumentation are often provided in the accompanying text. Joan Pemberton Smith's translation of the 1932 libretto is held to be the best English-language version, and printed in the liner notes to both the Mstislav Rostropovich (1979) and Myung Whung Chung (1993) recordings of the opera, hence its usage here. For the most part, the 1932 and 1935 libretti do not differ from one another, and thus Pemberton Smith's text in effect acts as a translation of the 1935 opera that is better than that of L. Soudakova's, provided in the Muzgiz publication itself. Throughout this thesis as a whole, when the sources do diverge, this is normally discussed.

² From this point onwards, textual and musical references to the score will be given in the following format: Act/ scene; figure/ bar no.–(figure)/ bar no.

³ In the Act II quote from *Lady Macbeth*, the Russian word is 'потащуха', translated by both Pemberton Smith and Soudakova as 'trollop'; however, at the corresponding point in *Katerina Izmailova* (II/5; 259/3–4), the insult is removed, the previous line instead repeated. In the Act III quote from *Lady Macbeth*, the Russian word is 'подлая', translated by Pemberton Smith as 'hussy' and Soudakova as 'wretch'; surprisingly, this term remains at the equivalent point in *Katerina Izmailova* (III/7; 384/8–9), translated by Downes as 'bitch'. In the Act IV quote from *Lady Macbeth*, the Russian word is 'сволочь', translated by Pemberton Smith and Soudakova as 'hussy', though elsewhere as 'swine': Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 56; Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*', 180. Shostakovich specifically requested to Glikman that this word be changed in the revised opera: see

meanwhile, in the 1932 version of the opera she is even a ‘slut’ – although this has already been excised from the 1935 score.⁴ Even the prison guard feels able to comment on Katerina’s morality: ‘Oh women! Women! / What a lecherous lot!’ (IV/9; 477/1–3).

In fact, it is rather the male characters of this opera who are degenerate in this regard. With Zinovy away on business, Boris prowls beneath Katerina’s bedroom window after hours, indulging in unsavoury imaginings: ‘Now if I were younger... what I’d do! She’d have it hot from me; hot, yes by God, so hot...’ (II/4; 210/9–213/2). Eventually the master of the house resolves to go to his daughter-in-law, for, ‘it’s dull for a woman without a man’ (II/4; 216/6–217/4) – although the implications of his proposed visit are considerably softened in *Katerina Izmailova*.⁵ Boris is not the only older male to desire Katerina; even the officiating priest lusts after the young bride on her wedding day (III/8; 448/5–11). Yet this less than salubrious behaviour pales into insignificance besides the shocking acts of sexual brutality perpetrated by the younger men in the opening scenes of the work: for example, in Act 1/ scene 2, a group of labourers, led by Katerina’s future-lover Sergey, carry out a violent assault on the maid Aksinya (I/2; 70/1–89/8). Although the precise nature of what occurs is unclear from a libretto that is almost entirely devoid of stage-directions, the attack is clearly physical: Aksinya cries out continually, repeatedly demands ‘hands off!’, exclaims that she is hurt and ‘covered in bruises’, and reveals that her skirt is ‘torn to pieces’; meanwhile, the men incite one another to ‘hold on to’, ‘feel’ or ‘squeeze’ her, whilst alternately mocking and lusting after her body in equal measure.

Of course, this incident was considerably bowdlerised in the re-worked *Katerina Izmailova*; in fact, Shostakovich singled out the opening of scene 2 as his

Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 56; thus in *Katerina Izmailova* ‘убийца’ is given, translated by Downes as ‘murderess’.

⁴ In the 1932 Sikorski score (II/4; 256/3), the Russian word is ‘Шлюха’, translated by Pemberton Smith as ‘slut’; however, at the same point in the 1935 Muzgiz score, the insult is removed, the previous line instead repeated.

⁵ Thus at the corresponding points in *Katerina Izmailova*, Boris feels sorry for Katerina rather than engaging in lewd dreams: ‘I feel really sorry for her. This life must be terribly hard on her! Poor Katerina!’ (II/4; 206/6–207/4). Ultimately he decides to visit his daughter-in-law for more innocent reasons: ‘she’s beautiful! I could just sit gazing at her day and night’ (II/4; 208/1–7).

‘main’ priority for amendment in a letter to Isaak Glikman.⁶ Yet in a private conversation with his friend and co-collaborator, it seems that the composer himself hit upon a major stumbling block in the complete and successful transformation of passages such as this, namely that: ‘the words grew integrally with the music... they can’t be separated’.⁷ If it is the case that the essence of the Aksinya episode is inescapably bound up with its musical setting, then this is alarming – for in its original 1932 version, the assault on the maid is even more brutal than in the slightly modified score of 1935. In its first incarnation, it is Aksinya’s ‘breast’ that is pinched and covered in bruises; meanwhile, the Shabby Peasant cries:

Come on, let’s feel her,
let’s feel her, squeeze harder! Again!
What boobs, oh what boobs,
ah lovely, lovely, lovely boobs!
Oh how smooth they are!
Harder! Harder! Harder! Harder!
Ha, ha, ha...⁸

This expurgated material suggests that what is termed the ‘teasing’ of Aksinya in the film version of *Katerina Izmailova*⁹ was originally conceived as a serious sexual assault, even a rape – and there is considerable evidence to support

⁶ In Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 56. In Glikman’s reworking for *Katerina Izmailova*, several allusions to the men feeling Aksinya are altered: for example, while in *Lady Macbeth* the Shabby Peasant cries ‘потпорай’, translated by Pemberton Smith as ‘feel her there’ (I/2; 70/6–7), in *Katerina Izmailova* this is changed to ‘Ай да Аксинья!’, translated by Downes as ‘Good old Aksinya!’ (I/2; 68/6–7). Similarly, more risqué references to Aksinya’s body are substituted: for example, her leg (‘ножка’) in *Lady Macbeth* (I/2; 73/4) becomes her arm (‘ручка’) in *Katerina Izmailova* (I/2; 71/4), translated by Downes as ‘shoulders’. See Wells, “‘The New Woman’”, 168 and Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 179–80 for similar details on these alterations.

⁷ Quoted in Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 58. Laurel Fay takes issue with Shostakovich’s comment in relation to the opening of the second scene in particular, pointing out that the passage from 79/1–89/1 was borrowed almost without alteration from a previously-composed instrumental number in his music hall revue *Declared Dead* (1931): Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 179, n64. However, if Shostakovich’s remark is taken less literally, it still stands: the relevant episode in *Declared Dead* accompanies the riotous bacchanalia of two Russian Orthodox saints that is viciously satirical in its intent; perhaps it is this *dramatic*, rather than verbal, essence of the scenario that grew integrally with the music, and thus made it so suitable for its transposition into an operatic scene that is similarly sexual and aggressive.

⁸ In the 1932 Sikorski score, the Russian word is ‘грудь’, translated by Pemberton Smith as ‘breast’; in the 1935 Muzgiz score, the syntax is altered so that the term can be removed (I/2; 76/7–8). In the 1932 Sikorski score, certain lines in the Shabby Peasant’s text are ‘вымя, ну и вымя! Ай вымя’, translated by Pemberton Smith as ‘boobs, oh what boobs, oh lovely... boobs’; in the 1935 Muzgiz score, ‘вот так ручка, ну и ручка, ай ручка, Ай ножка!’ is given instead, translated by Soudakova as ‘What nice fat arms..., ’tis her arm! ’tis her leg! ’tis her arm!’ (I/2; 72/5–73/5).

⁹ See the menu page on Shostakovich, *Katerina Izmailova*, dir. Mikhail Shapiro (1966), DVD reissue (2006).

this in the music itself. The incident in its entirety takes place to a parodistic $\frac{2}{4}$ galop which proceeds at manic speed ($\text{♩} = 112$) and a predominantly loud dynamic; the whole is characterised by its chaotic multi-voice texture, the highest vocal part particularly strained in tessitura; and the material consists of the relentless repetition of single pitches, tiny melodic motifs and short rhythmic units, together with frantic quaver or semi-quaver runs of rising and falling scales, semi- or fully chromatic in content. If certain aspects of this setting are onomatopoeically suggestive of violence – for example, the reiterated pedal points ‘hammered out’ in equal quavers, or the vocal parts ‘jousting’ for position a semitone apart in off-/ on-beat alternation – there is also a more concrete reason to connect this music with physical brutality. The distorted galop material actually constitutes a recognisable recurring style in this opera, labelled ‘genre-type 1’ for the remainder of this thesis; the genre-type recurs five times in the work as a whole, each time reserved for instances of extreme violence or aggression. Thus genre-type 1 accompanies both Sergey’s assault on Katerina (I/3; 174/1–189/12) and Boris’ sadistic whipping of Sergey (II/4; 232/1–244/9), more on which below; it also returns for Sergey’s and Katerina’s bloody killing of Zinovy (II/5; 340/1–349/12) and the female convicts’ wild taunting of Katerina (IV/9; 516/1–524/1). On each occasion, the material exhibits those general characteristics described above; the passages are also linked by a number of specific motivic recurrences – a falling semitonal motif, a descending dotted rhythm in the brass, a number of figures formed from basic $\frac{2}{4}$ building blocks, and so on – that connect them unambiguously. The harassment of Aksinya is thus explicitly aligned with scenes of flogging and murder – and this might provide more definite proof of the real nature of this assault.

In an article that shall be returned to elsewhere in this thesis, the musicologist Elizabeth Wells also explores the conflation of sex and violence in the opera as a whole, giving this scene as an example. Yet Wells goes further, suggesting that the final bars of the Aksinya galop actually constitute a kind of graphic musical depiction of the act of rape. The relevant passage is given in Example 3.1, alongside several lines of text that precede this passage and are listed by Wells in support of her argument. Wells cites Sergey’s rising vocal line as her

musical evidence; her subsequent analysis of other passages also implies that Sergey's ascendancy over Aksinya in terms of tessitura is indicative of his physical conquest.¹⁰ It is the case that most Soviet commentaries on the work accepted Aksinya's assault as rape – and this certainly lends credence to Wells' position.¹¹ Similarly, the fact that so many recent productions of the opera now interpret the scene in this way might further corroborate Wells' reading – for if the essence of the episode *is* musically transcribed into the closing bars, then it might be freely realised in a period of more relaxed censorship.¹²

Example 3.1

The musical score for Example 3.1 consists of two systems. The first system features Sergey's vocal line (treble clef) with a melodic phrase starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then a descending line. Below it is the piano accompaniment (grand staff) with a bass line of eighth notes and chords in the right hand. The second system features Aksinya's vocal line (treble clef) with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Below it is Sergey's vocal line (treble clef) with a melodic phrase starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then a descending line. Below that is the piano accompaniment (grand staff) with a bass line of eighth notes and chords in the right hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *ff*.

¹⁰ See Wells, "The New Woman", 171; 174–5.

¹¹ For one Soviet example, see Rena Moisenko's 1949 discussion of 'the rape of the serving girl, Aksinia': Moisenko, *Realist Music*, 203–4. Stanley Dale Krebs, in a book greatly influenced by his time in Soviet Russia, also refers to the 'rape' of the 'peasant woman': Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 194. Wells confirms that Soviet commentators read the scene in this way: Wells, "The New Woman", 168.

¹² For example, see the shocking depiction of this scene in Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, videorecording of Nederlandse Opera production (2006).

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| (Sergey (to labourers): | Look out! Stop! Hold on to her!... |
| Aksinya (to labourers): | Get him off me! |
| Sergey (to Aksinya): | Well now! Stand still!..) |
| Sergey: | A! Oh! Oh! Oh! |
| Aksinya: | Let go, let go, let go, let go! ¹³ |

I/2; 87/5–16.

The violent treatment of Aksinya is notable for one other reason: it is the only sexual assault that does not claim the central character for its victim. Elsewhere, it is Katerina who is subject to such abuse: thus Boris roughly forces his daughter-in-law down on the ground to swear her oath of fidelity to her husband (I/1; 54/1–57/13); meanwhile, Sergey continues his wrestling match with his future lover despite her pleas for him to ‘let go, let go, let go’ (‘пусти...’) as ‘it hurts’ – significantly, phrases borrowed verbatim from Aksinya’s text (I/2; 100/6–107/5). There are more large-scale borrowings from the Aksinya episode; Zinovy beats Katerina with a belt during one of the extended genre-type 1 passages, as outlined above (II/5; 341/1–351/2). Yet the most important parallel to the Aksinya affair follows soon after it. In the subsequent scene, Sergey steals into Katerina’s bedroom, and the two consummate their adulterous relationship to a graphically programmatic orchestral passage that has become the most notorious single feature of this work (I/3; 183/1–189/12). Although the exact nature of what took place involving Aksinya in I/2 remains ambiguous, there is no such ambiguity in I/3. The boisterous instrumental episode – famously dubbed ‘pornophony’ in 1935 by a reviewer for the *New York Sun* –¹⁴ is clearly a depiction of the sexual act: this is evident both from Katerina’s and Sergey’s dialogue fore and aft (I/3; 174/1–197/11), and a number of decidedly unsubtle imitative musical devices – most notably the swelling upwards glissandi in the solo trombone – that have been meticulously detailed by Wells.¹⁵ In the original 1932 version, the closing bars even

¹³ In this and all of the musical examples given throughout, the Pemberton Smith translation of the 1932 libretto is appended to the Muzgiz edition of the 1935 score; when the sources diverge, Soudakova’s text as it appears in the 1935 Muzgiz edition is given. The use of Pemberton Smith’s translation does at times present a clumsy underlay in the manuscript examples; however, its superior content still renders it preferable for the purpose of analysis, rather than performance.

¹⁴ Quoted in Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 137.

¹⁵ Wells lists, amongst other musical topoi, a persistent pulsing ostinato that she labels the ‘lust motive’; the ‘musical erection’ in the solo trombone; Sergey’s rising chromatic vocal line; Sergey’s final ascendancy in pitch over Katerina; the downwards trombone glissandi; and the ‘representation of the male phallus’ through the specific instrumentation of the trombone, an instrument associated with jazz and thus decadent Western sexuality: Wells, “‘The New Woman’”, 170–75.

contained trombone slides in the opposite direction – designed to portray, as Wells puts it, Sergey’s ‘detumescence’;¹⁶ these had already been excised from the score by the time of its publication in 1935, while in *Katerina Izmailova* the instrumental interlude is cut in its entirety.¹⁷

Few commentators on the opera have disputed that Sergey and Katerina have sexual intercourse at this point – and yet, as shall be explored elsewhere in this chapter, critics are wildly at variance regarding the extent to which they perceive this act as consensual. On the evidence of text and score, this is initially surprising. In the dialogue that precedes the orchestral passage, Sergey embraces Katerina although she repeatedly demands he ‘let go’ (‘пусти’). In the exchange that ensues, she is overpowered completely:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Sergey: | Anyway, I’m stronger than you. |
| Katerina: | Sergey, you mustn’t. What are you doing? I’m afraid. |
| Sergey: | My dearest! |
| Katerina: | What are you doing? You mustn’t, let go, let go, I don’t wa... |

If Sergey’s terms of endearment confuse the issue, a glance at the 1932 score does reveal that what follows this dialogue was certainly not originally conceived as an act of love. In this version of the work, Sergey cruelly mocks both Katerina and her impotent husband in the aftermath of the event: ‘Ho, ho. Seems I have never seen married women give themselves to me so quickly. Ho, ho. Zinoviye heh Borisovich...’¹⁸ Moreover, the planned staging of the first production of *Lady Macbeth* at Leningrad’s Maliy Theatre – documented to allow ‘full possibility to

¹⁶ Wells, “The New Woman”, 172.

¹⁷ In the 1932 Sikorski score, a 123 bar instrumental interlude depicts the sexual act (I/3; 183/1–191/11); in the 1935 Muzgiz score, the final 21 bars – containing the notorious trombone descents – are cut, rehearsal figures 190 and 191 simply absent from this edition (I/3; 193/1–189/12). Fay presents evidence that even the first Leningrad production of the opera in 1934 ‘subdued’ the trombone material, while the first Moscow staging in the same year may well have used the shortened version of the episode: Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 171–2 ; all of this suggests the Muzgiz edition to be the final transcription of a path already taken. In *Katerina Izmailova*, the interlude is omitted in its entirety, replaced with a 16-bar passage of ominous material at a moderate tempo that accompanies Boris prowling underneath the window (I/3; 185/1–186/10).

¹⁸ Fay examines various versions and modifications of this recitative in the three extant scores from 1932; it would seem that Sergey’s text was problematic from the outset, and was cut not only from the 1935 Muzgiz score, but even from the initial productions: Fay, ‘From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*’, 165–7.

revive and restore the given spectacle' – suggests Katerina to be a somewhat reluctant participant during the instrumental interlude:

183–94 [mute struggle] Sergey draws Katerina behind the curtain, she escapes from his grasp and runs to the door but Sergey does not let her go – renewed struggle – Katerina runs into a dead end at the window. Sergey drags her away from the window. She escapes and runs to the toilet but does not reach it, falling to her knees at the chair. Sergey lifts Katerina from her knees, grasps her tightly and carries her again behind the curtain.¹⁹

Yet once again, perhaps the most conclusive evidence that this consummation is both violent and non-consensual exists in the musical text itself. Both the orchestral passage and the dialogue that precedes it are examples of genre-type 1, as encountered above. On this occasion, the distorted galop is made particularly menacing: the whole takes place at the more frenetic tempo $\text{♩} = 138$; the material is highly chromatic and dissonant, at times atonal; there is considerable textural and dynamic build up; the vocal parts are consistently strained; and so on. In itself, this setting is not suggestive of a peaceable union; furthermore, its membership in the genre-type 1 group associates it with a number of other violent events, as previously outlined. The extract shares several additional motivic similarities with one other genre-type 1 episode: the scene 2 assault on Aksinya. Most notably, the closing bars of Katerina's and Sergey's dialogue contain the same rising chromatic vocal line, reiterated B pedal and single pitch syncopation on 'let go' ('пусти'); this can be observed from a comparison of Examples 3.1 and 3.2. Again, Wells' article charts further musical correspondences between the two episodes²⁰ – and it is this striking correlation between the two extracts that, above all, marks Katerina's and Sergey's physical union as an act of violent assault.

One other instance of masculine aggression is worth mentioning here: namely, Boris' brutal flogging of Sergey on the discovery of the workman's affair with Katerina (II/4; 232/1–244/10). To include this incident in a summary of gender-based oppression is counter-intuitive – Boris' victim is a man, after all, not a woman! – and yet, a certain peculiarity in the musical setting of this episode renders the extract relevant to this discussion. As hitherto, the graphically violent

¹⁹ These staging directions appear in the 'blocking score' for the Leningrad production; however, a softened version of events – in which more of the presumed action takes place behind the curtain – is also given as an alternative. Exactly which was performed when is unknown: see Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth to Katerina*', 174–6.

²⁰ Wells, "'The New Woman'", 175.

Example 3.2

182

Kat. Не на-до, пу-сти, пу-сти, я не хо...
Let me go, let go, let go, I don't wa...

182

Kat. *fff*
 Ah! —————
 Ah!

Serg. Ах, ————— Ка - тя, ра - дость ты мо - я! —————
Oh, ————— Kat - ya, tu ra - dost' ty mo - ya! dear - est love! —————

p cresc.

I/3; 181/6–182/9.

attack on Sergey – during which Boris screams abuse as he repeatedly draws blood – takes place to a frenetic genre-type 1 passage replete with familiar motifs. Yet the most interesting feature of this section is the fact that Sergey is completely silent throughout, though Boris makes frequent demands for him to speak: ‘Why don’t you cry out, blast you... Why are you standing there like a statue, not saying anything?... Just yell, then I’ll stop!’ The effect of Sergey’s not-speaking is that the main body of this extract becomes a duet between Boris and *Katerina*, who

demands Sergey be let go to reiterated *fortissimo* pitches high in her register. It is therefore a male and a female voice that sound out in a simultaneous and strained opposition above the chaotic orchestral accompaniment; Sergey is forever silent, and thus the *audible* conflict in this extract is made the struggle between Boris and his daughter-in-law.

Shostakovich has swapped victims on us – and in the closing bars, this curious substitution is further magnified. When Katerina attempts to put a stop to the flogging, she is physically restrained by the male servants on Boris' command; 'let him go' ('отпустите') thus becomes simply 'let go' ('пустите'), as Katerina works to free herself. Therefore in the final phrase, Katerina shouts at the servants, while Boris shouts at Sergey – and yet, the passage is so written that the voices interact only with each other. Katerina cries 'let go' to the same syncopated single-pitch motif with which she attempted to fend off Sergey's advances, as did Aksinya before her; meanwhile, Boris' single-note exclamations recall Sergey's ejaculations at the climax of the Aksinya episode (compare Examples 3.1 and 3.3). As the voices cease, the rising chromatic scale that has signified sexual conquest hitherto passes into the orchestra: a resource that has of course been utilised elsewhere for the wordless expression of such activity. The effect of the whole is not an actual, but a *sounding*, sexual assault –²¹ and significantly by the man who vowed, at the beginning of the scene, to visit his daughter-in-law alone in her room and recreate his former amorous successes.

Certain of the motivic similarities outlined above have again been noted by Wells, although the conclusions that she draws from them are very different (she says nothing concerning the role of Katerina in the flogging scene, for example). For Wells, what is at issue is the way in which sex and violence are amalgamated in the opera, and thus the thematic links between Sergey's beating and Aksinya's/ Katerina's assaults lead her to conclude that Boris gains 'a perverse sexual satisfaction' from whipping Sergey.²² This thesis accepts the conflation of sex and

²¹ An interesting parallel can be made here with queer musicological theories on *en travesti* parts: several writers explore how the use of trouser roles in opera creates moments in which the visual and sounding illusion of homosexual eroticism displaces the nominal heterosexual plot: see essays in Blacker and Smith, *En Travesti*.

²² Wells, "The New Woman", 166.

Example 3.3

Kat. Пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те,
Let go,— let go,— let go,— let go,— let go,— let go,—

Boris ста - ну. Ну! Ну! Ну! Ну! Ну!
stop!— Now! Now! Now! Now! Now!

244

Kat. пу-сти-те! пу-сти-те!
let go!— let go!—

Boris Ну! Ну!
Now! Now!

244

cresc. *fff* *G.P.*

II/4; 243/5–244/10.

violence in scenes such as this as a given, and goes on to consider the implications of the different kind of synthesis uncovered above: that of the two characters Boris and Sergey into one 'character' of male predator. To a certain extent, the personages of Aksinya and Katerina are also conflated in this manner: both are the female target of assaults that are realised remarkably similarly and in close succession. Appearing briefly and only in scenes 1 and 2, Aksinya herself is barely developed as a protagonist in her own right; rather, she is subsumed into the

'character' of female victim.²³ The notion that Aksinya and Katerina are in essence one entity receives incidental support in the way in which they relate to one another on stage: although Aksinya addresses Katerina directly in I/1 Katerina does not answer, and remains strangely and conspicuously mute in Aksinya's presence for the rest of the scene; meanwhile, following their brief dialogue on Katerina's entrance in I/2, Aksinya becomes an utterly silent observer of the proceeding action, before absenting herself from the opera altogether. The oppression of (each) woman by the men that surround her is the focus of this libretto – and, to this end, the characters of the opera are divided up along binary lines.

(ii) ... and Resistance

The eponymous heroine of *Lady Macbeth* is by no means a passive victim of the treatment meted out to her. In the initial scenes of the work, Katerina openly contests the misogynistic behaviour of Boris and others on a number of occasions. Thus when Boris attacks his daughter-in-law for her childless state, she does not remain silent; the Katerina of 1935 reminds him 'I myself am sad', while the Katerina of 1932 more daringly counters: 'it's not my fault... Zinovy is incapable of getting a child into my womb' (I/1; 18/3–21/7). It is Katerina who halts the assault on Aksinya, and in her subsequent dialogue with Sergey, she robustly challenges his chauvinistic outlook. In the quasi-aria that follows, she berates the men for their arrogance, going on to passionately defend the worth of Russia's womenfolk:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Katerina: | Let the woman go; so you enjoy mocking a woman? |
| Sergey: | Who else can we make fun of? |
| Katerina: | So a woman's only there for you to make fun of, is she? |
| Sergey: | What other reason is there?... |
| Katerina: | You men certainly think a lot of yourselves; do you think you're the only ones who are strong and brave, the only ones with any wisdom? |

²³ A passing comment in an early text by Krebs indicates that he also understands the female characters to be representative of 'woman' in this way. Krebs' insertions into a Soviet description of Sergey's conquests of first Aksinya, then Katerina, read as follows: "'the triumph of Sergei, not only in "mockery of the peasant woman [read: 'womankind' – SDK]" but in effecting her [woman's] submission to him'": Krebs, *Soviet Composers*, 194.

Haven't you heard about the times
when women kept the whole family
from starving?
And how in wartime
women gave the enemy a beating?
There have been times when women
sacrificed their lives
for their husbands or sweethearts,
but this means nothing to you.
Well, I'll give you a good thrashing
to show you
what a woman's good for.

I/2; 90/1–99/12.

It is the case that Katerina's assertive and articulate spoken opposition occurs mainly in the initial scenes; as the work progresses, the heroine becomes less feminist and more feminine, at least on the surface – and Wells does note Katerina's gradual reversion to a more traditional operatic stereotype.²⁴ However, this might be conceived differently thus: as the plot develops, Katerina's resistance goes underground, her *words* of defiance in effect becoming *deeds* of protest. As outlined in Chapter 2, the notion of violence as legitimate struggle is one of the key Marxist principles that underpin the opera, notwithstanding any moral objections that we might feel regarding such an ideology. Katerina murders those who enslave, abuse, insult, prey upon, beat and even (symbolically) rape her – and thus her actions, however unethical or misguided, can be regarded as an extension of her spoken opposition to her masculine oppressors.

However, it is not simply Katerina's violent crimes that are conceived as 'feminist' resistance, but also her sexual transgressions. Although the concept of adultery-as-protest might seem strange initially, an examination of the libretto reveals that it is established as such from the outset. The fear that Katerina will jeopardise the patriarchal House of Izmailov by being unfaithful is what motivates Boris in his persecution of Katerina. In their opening dialogue, Boris is unusually provided with a section of music that is not parodistic, but genuinely expressive: his


²⁴ Wells interprets the assertive yet sexually passionate Katerina of Act I as a representative of the New Soviet Woman as envisaged by the Bolshevik feminist Alexandra Kollontai; however, she argues that, in the later acts, Katerina is subject to a slavish and desperate devotion and thus 'fails as the New Woman, slipping into the ways of a pre-Revolutionary past': Wells, "The New Woman", 178–89 (182). James Morgan also perceives a similar shift, although he places it later than Wells, at the close of Act II: see Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 336–40. Both Wells' and Morgan's articles will be discussed further below.

vocal line is both melodic and lyrical; the accompaniment is characterised by repetitive and lilting waltz-like patterns at moderate tempo; much use is made of descending mediant shifts and falling chains of minor thirds; and so on. The subject that inspires Boris with such uncharacteristically solemn and sensitive material is none other than the institution that is the Izmailov family: ‘We’ve no heir to leave our fortune to./ Nor our renowned reputation as a merchant’ (I/1; 24/9–26/11). Katerina, in her capacity as wife and child-bearer, is uniquely positioned to destroy both the family name and the family line if she so chose – and it is the possibility of this that goads Boris to a furious climax in the subsequent passage. At a quickened tempo and to ever-increasing dynamics, Boris rages against Katerina’s envisaged adultery high in his register, to hammered-out repeated pitches, pedal points and piquant dissonances:

Boris: You’d like to hook some youngster
and make off with him and jeer at your husband.
No, don’t try that on, the fence is high,
the dogs are loose, the workers trusty
and I’m always on the alert.

I/1; 27/1–29/7.

Here, the threat of Katerina’s infidelity drives Boris to thoughts of violence: in the bars immediately following his outburst, the primarily rhythmic motif that is associated with force throughout the opera is first heard in the orchestra, as shown in Example 3.4.²⁵ Elsewhere, the prospect of his daughter-in-law’s unfaithfulness provokes Boris to actual violence; as outlined above, Katerina is roughly forced to the ground to swear her oath of loyalty to her husband on his departure in scene 1. Zinovy’s response to the concrete proof of Katerina’s infidelity is more severe: first

²⁵ All recurrences of the motif fulfil almost all of the following musical criteria: the use of four notes; the rhythmic profile  or equivalent; an element of pitch repetition, especially in the last two notes; a narrow register, with the maximum range being a perfect fourth; a non-legato or accented articulation; a *forte* or *fortissimo* dynamic; and the use of the trumpet, brass section or orchestral tutti. David Fanning charts occurrences of this and other leitmotifs, loosely describing their musical characteristics and exploring their semantic significance, in an article that challenges Shostakovich’s declaration that there are no such motifs in *Lady Macbeth*: Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 145–59; elsewhere, he includes the theme as one of seven leitmotif, providing a comprehensive list of the appearances of each: Fanning, “*Lady Macbeth*”, 21–2. On the basis of the violent contexts in which it appears, Fanning accepts the ‘widely recognised’ label of the ‘Force’ motif in the earlier article: Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 145; later, he terms it ‘*Power and its abuse*’: Fanning, “*Lady Macbeth*”, 22. Other commentators explore the use of the force motif, understanding its connotations similarly: for example, Eckart Kröplin carries out a lengthy examination of its dramaturgical operation across the opera as a whole: see Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 220–1; 235; 472–90.

he vows to give her ‘sheer hell,/ absolute, sheer hell’ (II/5; 343/7–344/6); second he strikes her repeatedly with Sergey’s belt to another genre-type 1 episode. What so aggravates Zinovy is Katerina’s blow to the very institution of marriage, tied up as it is with the patriarchal establishment in general: ‘I am your husband before God and the Tsar/ I am responsible for the family’s honour’ (II/5; 344/6–345/1). Katerina’s extra-marital relationship with Sergey thus constitutes an act of resistance – and one that is directed not simply at her tyrannical husband, but in effect against the oppressive male order as a whole.

Example 3.4

The musical score for Example 3.4 consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Boris in a bass clef, starting with a rest followed by a *fff* dynamic marking. The lyrics are "и я все вре-мя на" (and I'm al-ways on). The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs, with a *cresc.* marking. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "на че-ку." (the alert.) and includes the marking "FORCE LEITMOTIF" above the piano part. The piano accompaniment features a *fff* dynamic marking and another "FORCE LEITMOTIF" marking. The third system shows the vocal line with a whole note chord and the piano accompaniment with a *fff* dynamic marking.

I/1; 28/6–29/7.

Katerina’s murderous and adulterous crimes, however indefensible, endow her with a power that was formerly denied to her. As the heroine transforms from victim to victimiser, she gains an assertiveness and authority that she did not previously possess – and this becomes apparent in her conversational dealings with her fellow-protagonists, examples of which are given below. Thus post-adultery and post-poisoning, Katerina refuses Boris’ relentless demands for the first time:

Boris: Bring some... water.
 Katerina: I won't.
 Boris: What? What did you say?
 How dare you...
 Katerina: I do dare!
 Boris: You dare...
 Katerina: I dare!

II/4; 255/3–256/3.

Significantly, following her murder of Boris, Katerina takes control of her relations with Sergey, appearing the dominant partner for the first time in their liaison. In fact, in their dialogue below, traditional gender roles are curiously reversed:

Sergey: Oh Katya, what I'd give to become
 your husband in God's eyes!...
 Katerina: Don't upset yourself Sergey,
 I'll make you my husband
 and we'll live together properly.
 Sergey: How will you manage that?
 Katerina: That's not your worry,
 It's your business to kiss me hard,
 like this.

II/5; 309/314/2.

It would seem that Katerina's feminist consciousness develops alongside her criminal portfolio, however uncomfortable this might appear. Having murdered her father-in-law and taken a lover, Katerina is able to confront her husband with a new self-assurance:

Katerina: Kindly explain
 what "affairs" you're talking about.
 You know absolutely nothing about it,
 I'm the one who knows it all.
 I won't allow me or anyone else
 to talk to me about my "affairs".
 It's not for you to judge me.
 Hands off, you disgusting, pathetic creature;
 I can't even call you a husband...

II/5; 341/5–343/10.

Just minutes after Katerina utters these words, Zinovy the wife-beater lies dead. This monologue thus epitomises how the heroine's spoken resistance, violent actions and sexual transgressions are amalgamated in *Lady Macbeth* as feminist protest – and the way in which this is expressed in the musical text of the opera shall resurface in later chapters of this thesis.

(iii) *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District: a synopsis re-synopsised*

Chapter 2 provided a standard synopsis of *Lady Macbeth*, typical of those summaries of the plot given in opera guides, programme notes, CD and DVD liner booklets, and even more substantial and academic studies of the work. The following précis places an alternative slant on the opera – although arguably one that would be more familiar if our priorities in general were somewhat different.

Katerina Izmailova, married to the merchant Zinovy Izmailov, leads a monotonous yet precarious existence amongst the all-male inhabitants of the Izmailov mill. The imprisoned and enslaved bourgeois wife is both verbally and physically abused by her father-in-law Boris, despite her protestations. She is further threatened by the violent and sexually predatory behaviour of the labourers, who rape the maid Aksinya under the leadership of the new workmen Sergey, before Katerina herself brings their assault to a close. When Katerina's husband is away on business, this same Sergey gains access to and rapes Katerina – and so begins an adulterous relationship that strikes at the very fabric of the Izmailov establishment. Later a lustful Boris, loitering outside Katerina's bedroom with intent to enter, discovers Sergey and sadistically whips him as Katerina is roughly restrained by the labourers; in protest, Katerina poisons the master of the house. Similarly, when Zinovy threatens Katerina's relationship and brutally beats his wife, her resultant struggle turns into a murderous act of resistance against her matrimonial lord and master. Ultimately, Katerina's crimes are discovered; she is arrested by the policemen and sent to Siberia, societal order thus restored. On route to exile and faced with Sergey's betrayal, she brings her rebellious life to a close with her suicide.

2. Katerina and Her Sisters:
Lady Macbeth in her Cultural and Historical Contexts

In its exploration of gender-based oppression, *Lady Macbeth* both explicitly draws on, or implicitly resonates with, a number of models. Some are pre-revolutionary, others post-revolutionary; some are literary, others historical; some

are familiar, others less so – and below, the significances of a number of such paradigms are explored.

(i) *Pre-Revolutionary prototypes...*

In essence after Leskov's novella, the surface-text of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* depicts the position of women in pre-revolutionary society, focussing in particular on the miserable existence of the merchant wife. In doing so, it taps into a rich vein of nineteenth-century literature that exposed and sympathised with the unbearable boredom, oppression and double-standards that befell the female partner of the bourgeois marriage. It was common in the novels that dealt with such subject matter for the woman, trapped in an empty relationship, to enter into an affair for which she could not reasonably be blamed – the eponymous characters of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877) and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) provide two particularly well-known examples, one Russian and one Western, though of course there are a great many others – and Shostakovich's Katerina becomes one of this canon of guilty-yet-guiltless heroines. A handful of musicologists have read *Lady Macbeth* through the filter of such literature: thus Eckart Kröplin charts the similarities between the opera and numerous nineteenth-century texts that focus on the bourgeois woman's predicament;²⁶ Jean-Michel Brèque attempts a similar project on a smaller scale, his models exclusively Western;²⁷ and Caryl Emerson and James Morgan also discuss in brief the work's relationship with what Emerson regards as the particularly national tradition surrounding '*zhenskaia dolia*', or 'woman's lot'.²⁸ Ostrovsky's play *The Storm* (1859) – discussed at length in Chapter 2 – is once again an important source-text for *Lady Macbeth* in relation to such concerns: the predicament of Katerina Kabanova is that of the repressed bourgeois

²⁶ In particular, Kröplin examines the similarities between *Lady Macbeth* and two other Leskov stories, as well as Ostrovsky's *The Storm* and Dobrolyubov's essay as discussed in Chapter 2, in relation to women's lot; he also provides an extensive list of Russian and European fictional and non-fictional texts of the late nineteenth century that deal with this issue: see Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 190–5.

²⁷ In particular, Brèque compares Katerina to a number of French heroines, the title character of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and the creations of Mérimée amongst them: see Brèque, 'Une Lady Macbeth', 7–10.

²⁸ See Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 74–5 and Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 327–40.

wife, suffering in a loveless marriage to her merchant husband and subjugated by those who surround her – and, as summarised elsewhere, many musicological texts do note Shostakovich’s debt to Ostrovsky’s play.

Often, such critical literature tends to overlook the significance of Leskov’s story in its deeper concerns, seeming to view the novella as little more than a plot template for the opera. And yet, Leskov’s work does have a special contribution to make regarding the theme of *zhenskaia dolia*: unlike many nineteenth-century explorations of this subject, it tackles the subject of domestic violence head-on, presenting an unadorned exposé of Katerina’s treatment at the hands of her fellow men. Thus Leskov’s Boris, on discovering Katerina’s infidelity, tells her: ‘when your husband comes we’ll take you, you faithful wife, to the stables and flay you with our own hands’²⁹ – and the threatened wife-beating is realised by Zinovy in Shostakovich’s version of the story. Similarly, Leskov’s Sergey treats his ex-lover to a particularly unpleasant night-time visit in the convict’s cell en-route to Siberia: the sleeping Katerina is covered with a coat, firmly restrained and given fifty lashes by a mysterious convict whose voice ‘nobody would have had difficulty in recognising as Sergey’s’.³⁰ Once again, although this horrible incident is omitted from Shostakovich’s libretto, its motifs of violence and subjugation do re-emerge in Sergey’s assault on Katerina in Act I/ scene 3.

In fact, Shostakovich’s opera draws closely on another short story by Nikolai Leskov that is almost contemporaneous with the writer’s ‘Lady Macbeth’ – and this goes almost entirely unnoticed in the musicological literature on the work. Leskov’s tale ‘Kotin and Platonida’ (1867) contains a number of remarkable similarities with Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* that are highly relevant to the themes of *zhenskaia dolia* in general and the bourgeois wife in particular. Although Eckart Kröplin has noted the most obvious narrative parallels between ‘Kotin and Platonida’ and the opera,³¹ whilst Richard Taruskin also makes a fleeting reference to the story,³² neither the extent of the correspondences nor their full significance have been

²⁹ Leskov, ‘Lady Macbeth’, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

³¹ See Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 190–91.

³² See Taruskin, ‘The Opera and the Dictator’, *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008).

realised or unpacked. Like Katerina, Platonida Andreevna is the sole female member of the merchant family of Deev; she is entrapped in a loveless marriage to the peevish Marko Markelych, son of the bullying Markel Semenyich, both of whom threaten, reproach and dominate her; and she is unbearably stifled and isolated in the 'gaol of a house' that is the merchant abode.³³ Platonida and the young man Avenir indulge in the same robustly flirtatious dialogues and outdoor wrestling as do Katerina and Sergey – and likewise, Avenir is thrashed by Platonida's father-in-law for the liberties that he takes with the family possession, Platonida.³⁴ Yet Markel himself is not above lusting after his son's wife: following the death of Marko (analogous to the absence of Zinovy), Markel pursues Platonida just as Boris pursues Katerina – and so a series of events is set in motion that corresponds closely with certain key incidents in the operatic version of *Lady Macbeth*.

Alone in her bedroom at night after Marko's funeral, Platonida yearns for life as she watches the pigeons 'billing and cooing' from her window-sill, before deciding that all is hopeless: "It would be better if I aged the sooner... it would be better if they had sent me to a convent...".³⁵ This vignette is fully developed in Shostakovich's (not Leskov's) *Lady Macbeth*: at the opening of Act I/scene 3, Katerina – also by herself in her room at bedtime following Zinovy's departure – sings an extended and Romantic aria in which she longs for love (I/3; 140/1–151/6). As Platonida, Katerina is inspired by the doves that nest outside of her window; and as Platonida, she ultimately concludes that all is beyond hope: 'no love, no love, will be my fate here'.³⁶ At this point in both 'Kotin and Platonida' and the operatic *Lady Macbeth*, the young suitor enters; both couples lament their immeasurable

³³ Leskov, 'Kotin and Platonida', 90.

³⁴ See chapter 9 of Leskov, 'Kotin and Platonida': here Avenir intrudes on Platonida and refuses to leave despite her coquettish protestations in a manner similar to that of Sergey and Katerina in the opening of their I/3 dialogue; Avenir also recalls his and Platonida's outdoor wrestling, which has its equivalent in Sergey's and Katerina's wrestling match in I/2; and Platonida refers to Avenir's 'hidings on my account' from her husband and father-in-law, which has its parallel in Sergey's flogging by Boris for his involvement with Katerina in II/4.

³⁵ Leskov, 'Kotin and Platonida', 106.

³⁶ It should be noted that Katerina's aria text about doves that concludes with these lines is a 1935 Muzgiz replacement: in the earlier 1932 version(s) of the score, the heroine sings more explicit words to the same music, listing various animal pairings and lamenting her own lack of a mate in strictly biological terms. See the 1932 Sikorski score for this version of the aria, or the preface to this edition for a comparison of the 1932 and 1935 texts; see Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*', 164–5; 167 and Brown, 'The Three Faces of *Lady Macbeth*', 247–50 for discussion and analysis.

boredom, and Avenir-Sergey goes on to make tentative advances before Platonida-Katerina orders him to leave.³⁷ Although Avenir complies, Sergey of course refuses, and the struggle that follows culminates in the violent sexual assault on Katerina discussed above.

Yet notwithstanding Avenir's departure, Platonida, as Katerina, is also at risk from a night-time predator – and the events that unfold at this stage in the story seem remarkably candid for 1867. Platonida is undressing when she hears a noise; on investigation, she discovers a man outside her window scratching at the glass whilst 'breathing heavily and shaking all over'. The man who is 'clawing at the window like a greedy cat at a covered jug of milk' turns out to be no other than Platonida's father-in-law, Markel Semenych – and in the passage that ensues, the night-time visit as envisaged by Shostakovich's (not Leskov's) Boris Timofeyich is semi-realised:

Platonida became frightened, and darted aside... the window opened with a crash, and the father-in-law's two arms seized the body of the daughter.

"Father! Father! Lord, what's this?" cried Platonida Andreeva, struggling desperately; but for answer her father-in-law, with a fierce movement, wrenched her arms apart and pressed his hot lips on her bare breast.

"Lecher! Get away!" Platonida gasped in disgust, as she felt on her bosom her father-in-law's dry, shaking beard.

Realising now, at last, the true object of his visit, she plunged both her hands frantically into the old man's white hair and held his head away from her breast. The same instant she felt his strong sinewy hands tear her linen nightdress, and Platonida, almost naked, found herself in the arms of the love-demented patriarch.³⁸

Although Leskov's Platonida is subject to more heinous abuse from her father-in-law than is Shostakovich's Katerina, her retaliation is less severe; acting in self-defence and in the immediate throes of terror, Platonida attacks and wounds Markel before fleeing from the Deev house forever. In evoking the literary model of the short story so closely, Shostakovich's opera provides another example of what might be termed the 'Ostrovsky effect': Katerina Izmailova is in part conflated with a more angelic woman (Platonida goes on to become a nun) whose crime is without

³⁷ In 'Kotin and Platonida', the heroine laments "'it's so deadly dull here – it fairly gets you'"; in *Lady Macbeth*, it is rather Sergey that first complains 'I'm dying of boredom', though Katerina later too confesses 'I'm bored too'. Avenir's coy innuendo about 'sleeping in a new place' is matched by Sergey's comment that 'even a child... comes as a result of something'; Platonida's response to 'get along with you' has its equivalent in Katerina's 'go away now': Leskov, 'Kotin and Platonida', 106–7; Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth*, I/3; 157/1–173/6.

³⁸ Leskov, 'Kotin and Platonida', 113.

blame – and thus our Lady Macbeth is brought more in line with the traditional nineteenth-century procession of guilty-yet-guiltless heroines.

Yet a different conflation of multiple characters is also effected by Shostakovich's borrowings from 'Kotin and Platonida' – and arguably, one that is more significant. As indicated above, the model for Boris' projected bedtime call on Katerina is Markel's *actual* night time visit to Platonida; Boris and Markel thus become fused in the type of the predatory father-in-law – and this process of amalgamation extends still further. To recap necessarily yet concisely, the events that take place towards the end of Leskov's story are ordered thus: Platonida muses in solitude whilst watching the birds from her bedroom window; Avenir enters and the couple discuss their boredom; Avenir makes suggestive comments and Platonida asks him to leave; Platinoda's father-in-law enters her bedroom and sexually assaults her. Substitute 'Katerina' for 'Platonida' and 'Sergey' for 'Avenir' and the narrative runs the same – up to the last point. For here it is Sergey, not father-in-law Boris, who carries out the brutal attack on Katerina: consequently, Sergey's assault merges with that of Boris-Markel. As observed previously in this chapter, the separate male protagonists are thus conflated in the meta-character of male predator, and the issue of male violence is correspondingly foregrounded.

The nineteenth-century fictional depictions of the bourgeois wife and *zhenskaia dolia* on which *Lady Macbeth* draws were of course themselves drawn from real-life precedents. The predicament of such women was analysed by a number of contemporaneous thinkers and literati, and Kröplin refers to certain of their texts in his contextual backdrop to Katerina's life-story.³⁹ Surprisingly for a Marxist thesis, the Marxist literature on this subject is conspicuous by its absence in Kröplin's study (less surprisingly, it does not feature anywhere else in the body of work on this opera either). Yet *Lady Macbeth* is at least outwardly a Marxist opera which takes as a central subject the oppression of women – and as such, surely the Marxist position on this issue is of relevance. In fact, though Marx himself had less to say on the matter, other founding Marxist figures – most notably, Friedrich

³⁹ Kröplin mentions, amongst others, Vissarion Belinsky, Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Chernyshevsky as nineteenth-century Russian writers who tackled the Woman Question: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 193–4. For further discussion of such texts and the issues that surround them, see particularly chapters 1 and 2 in Stites, *The Woman's Liberation Movement*.

Engels and August Bebel – provide a thorough critique of bourgeois marriage and the subjugation that it necessarily entailed.⁴⁰ Of course, Engels’ and Bebel’s understanding of this subject is intertwined with their analysis of capitalism and its evils: thus female oppression stemmed initially from the nature of bourgeois marriage as a business transaction or ‘money relation’ into which the woman was sold.⁴¹ The condition of the wife as a commodity created her domestic and sexual servitude,⁴² for ‘a sold married woman must submit to the embraces of her husband, even though she have a hundred reasons to hate and despise him’.⁴³ The fundamentally unequal basis of this relationship also gave rise to a sexual double standard described by Engels as ‘monogamy for the woman only, but not for the man’: thus the dissolute bourgeois male was essentially free to commit adultery and visit prostitutes, though his wife must observe a strict code of chastity.⁴⁴ Yet Bebel certainly believed the emotional and sexual needs of men and women to be identical – and thus in the future, long-term monogamous relationships would be based on the unforced coming together of two equal individuals, the female partner financially independent and therefore fully liberated through her participation in public industry.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Engels augmented his thinking on women and the family after Marx’s death in Engels, *The Origin of the Family* (1884); the text provides an anthropological review of the changing role of women in society from prehistoric times to the present day, and attempts to account theoretically for a perceived decline in their status. Bebel further developed the Marxist position on women in Bebel, *Women and Socialism* (1879), which combines classical Marxist thought with a liberal late nineteenth-century exploration of the Woman Question; Engels effectively endorsed this book, and the historian Alfred Meyer persuasively argues that Marx and Engels accepted the work as one that was ‘entirely compatible with their own views’: Meyer, ‘Marxism and the Women’s Movement’, 96–100 (96). It is from these two seminal texts that the following summary is primarily taken, though passing comments on the subject in Engels and Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845); Engels, ‘The Draft of a Communist Confession’ (1847); Engels, ‘Principles of Communism’ (1847); and Engels and Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) are also of use. Other detailed summaries of the Marxist position on women are given in Meyer, ‘Marxism and the Women’s Movement’, 86–102 and Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 29–43.

⁴¹ Engels and Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 5.

⁴² Thus Engels and Marx flatly state that ‘wives... are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family... is the first property’: Engels and Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 44.

⁴³ Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, 97.

⁴⁴ Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, 126. Bebel also protested that: ‘nothing illustrates more drastically, and also revoltingly, the dependence of woman upon man than this radically different conception regarding the gratification of the identical natural impulse, and the radically different measure by which it is judged’: Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, 146.

⁴⁵ See Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, 145 and Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, 343–4 for comments on the form that future relationships should take. The need to emancipate women from financial dependence and servitude is acknowledged, for example, in Engels and Marx, *The Communist*

The Marxist critique of bourgeois marriage and *zhenskaia doliia* is obviously applicable to *Lady Macbeth*. To pick one example of many, Engels' and Bebel's analysis of the sexual double standard resonates strongly with Boris' attitudes on life: in I/1, he insists on Katerina's absolute fidelity; in II/4, he fondly reminisces over his numerous extra-marital adventures. Of course, such notions surrounding the oppression of women within the bourgeois marriage were not exclusive to Marxism, but rather formed part of a rich strand of nineteenth-century thinking. Yet Katerina's opening monologue – an addition to Leskov's novella by Shostakovich – appears particularly Marxist in its nature: desperately bored and miserable, Katerina understands that productive labour is the key to salvation:

Katerina: Oh, I don't feel like sleep anymore, but I'll try.
 (tries to sleep).
 No, I can't sleep.
 Of course, I slept all night, then got up
 and drank tea with my husband,
 then went back to bed.
 After all, there's nothing else to do.
 O Lord! how boring it is!
 It was better when I was single,
 although we were poor,
 at least there was some freedom.
 But now, this depression's enough to make you hang yourself.
 I am a merchant's wife,
 married to the eminent merchant
 Zinovy Borisovich Ismailov.
 The ant drags along its straw,
 the cow gives her milk,
 the farm labourers pour out the flour,
 but I alone
 have nothing to do,
 I alone am depressed.
 To me alone, life is unkind.
 To me, the merchant's wife.

I/1; 1–14/8.

(ii) ...and Post-Revolutionary precedents

If texts such as the above focus on forms of female oppression that are particularly nineteenth-century in hue, other scenes from *Lady Macbeth* – most

Manifesto, 22; Engels, 'Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith', 354; and Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, 182; that this must be achieved through women's equal involvement in the public sphere is agreed: for examples, see Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, 137 and Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, 187.

notably, the rapes of Aksinya and Katerina – resonate more closely with the post-revolutionary era. For the anarchic 1920s was a decade beset by extreme violence and sexual brutality; these trends, ever the by-products of the upheavals of revolution, were further exacerbated by a series of radical new laws that somewhat ironically aimed to emancipate women – and these shall briefly be summarised in Part III of this thesis. Sexual excess, promiscuity and hooliganism were widespread throughout the 1920s, and this general state of affairs – poetically described by one contemporary commentator as an ‘inexpressible bacchanalia’⁴⁶ – was the subject of much public debate in the Soviet press.⁴⁷ In particular, the problems were rife in cities such as Shostakovich’s Leningrad and in communist youth movements such as the Komsomol, which fostered an uncomfortably masculine culture in which those fashionable ideologies of free love discussed in Part III of this thesis – enthusiastically discussed by the young Shostakovich in a private letter⁴⁸ – were variously abused.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The quote is that of S. Ravich, a local government commissar, from 1920: quoted in Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 200.

⁴⁷ Wendy Goldman’s seminal text on Soviet policy and day-to-day life surrounding women in this period perhaps best analyses those sharp increases in male promiscuity, female abandonment, marriage and divorce, casual unions, prostitution and abortion throughout the 1920s: see particularly chapters 3 and 5–8 in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*. Contemporary documents – for example, transcriptions of speeches or letters to newspapers – reveal trends of sexual anarchy and sexual violence that gave rise to general concern: see examples in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 77–83; 95–120. Studies of the public discourse surrounding sexuality in this decade show that the brutal sexual revolution was a hot topic in the press: see particularly chapter 7 in Naimen, *Sex in Public*, and throughout Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*.

⁴⁸ In a letter to his mother of 1923 concerning his then partner Tania Glivenko, Shostakovich philosophised at length on the subject, arguing in favour of open marriage or easily obtainable divorce and concluding: ‘of course the best thing imaginable would be a total abolition of marriage, of all fetters and duties in the face of love. But that is utopian, of course.... But at any rate that love should be free’: in Sadykhova, ‘Shostakovich: Letters to his Mother’, 4–5. In a letter to Glikman of 1960, he recalls such issues – as represented in a 1927 novel – as subjects ‘that we used to vex our brains with in those days’: in Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 86. Surveys on sexual mores carried out amongst student groups in the 1920s and contemporary public debates in the press reveal such ideas to have been widely explored: for examples, see Fitzpatrick, ‘Sex and Revolution’, 71–6 and Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, 87–9.

⁴⁹ In an essay that explores Komsomol culture, Anne Gorsuch provides documentary evidence of male abandonment and sexual hooliganism in such quarters that was often justified as part of the new morality: Gorsuch, “‘A Woman is Not a Man’”, 147–9. In his work that examines the public discourse surrounding youth and sexuality in the 1920s, Gregory Carleton similarly quotes contemporary individuals on the issue of young male promiscuity and its ideological rationalisation: see Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, 29–36 and ‘Writing-Reading the Sexual Revolution’, 240–41.

Such subjects were imaginatively treated in a number of highly topical and semi-educational Russian novels of the 1920s,⁵⁰ certain of which controversial texts formed the subject of reminiscences in Shostakovich's private letters to Isaak Glikman, as well as in Solomon Volkov's composer's memoir.⁵¹ The novels depicted a youth culture in which licentiousness was celebrated, and abstention mocked or denounced – and perhaps predictably, these opposing behaviours were often drawn up along gendered lines. There is documentary evidence that these authors exaggerated the degree to which these practises or attitudes were the norm – although they were upheld in certain quarters.⁵² Perhaps more importantly for a cultural study such as this, such ideas and perceptions were very much in the public consciousness – and it is against this literary-cum-historical backdrop that Shostakovich's Sergey roughly seduces the unwilling Katerina. Katerina's seduction has a near-contemporaneous artistic precedent in Panteleimon Romanov's short story *Without Cherry Blossom* (1926). Like our operatic heroine, the unnamed female protagonist of Romanov's novella experiences an unbearable loneliness as she watches other couples in the park at night; eventually, her desire for romantic companionship prompts her to call on a male comrade. Yet like Sergey, the unnamed male lead of Romanov's story is dissolute, manipulative and brutal; alone in his room, the same drama of struggle and conquest is played out, with an unceremonious postscript to match Sergey's callous gloating in the 1932 version of the opera.

⁵⁰ Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia* and Naiman, *Sex in Public* provide the most extensive surveys of 1920s literature in reference to themes of sexuality, both exploring party and public reactions to such works.

⁵¹ Shostakovich wrote to Glikman in 1960 of enthusiastically re-reading Sergey Semynov's 1927 novel *Natalya Tarpova*, the story of a young female factory worker caught in a love triangle and debating issues of free love and sexuality: see Glikman, *Story of a Friendship*, 85–6. Meanwhile, Volkov has his Shostakovich comment on Sergei Malashkin's 1926 novel *Moon From the Right*, notorious for its depiction of the sexual exploits of Komsomol members: see Volkov, *Testimony*, 82.

⁵² The issue of how much sexual bacchanalia was a perceived or actual reality is something of a moot point. Sheila Fitzpatrick's statistical analysis of a number of student surveys completed in the 1920s indicates that promiscuity was celebrated more in the ideal than the actuality: see Fitzpatrick, 'Sex and Revolution'; however, Carleton cites numerous contemporary letters, magazine exposés and private documents that argued or implied that the artistic portrayal of general debauchery amongst the student population was an accurate one: see Carleton, 'Writing-Reading the Sexual Revolution', 245; 248 and *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, 47; 123–4; 179–81. Carleton, self-consciously writing from a Foucauldian perspective, argues that the statistical facts – in any case, ultimately unprovable – matter less than the cultural discourses and perceptions surrounding them: see Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, 51.

'I've fixed it so that nobody is likely to disturb us.... I'm not going to let you out anywhere now', said he, hurriedly.
'I don't like being here'.
'Ah, beginning all that over again', said he crossly. 'What's the matter? Where do you want to go to?'
His speech was choking and rapid, and his hands trembled when he thought to restrain me from going.
My hands also trembled, and my heart beat so violently that it was dark before my eyes....
He seemed to have only one thing at heart, to succeed before any of his comrades burst in upon him. He showed impatience and irritation at the slightest show of resistance on my part...

*

When we got up he first of all turned on the light.
'Oh, I don't want any light', I cried in misery and alarm.
He looked at me in astonishment and, shrugging his shoulders, turned the light out again.
Then he went back to the bed and began to tidy it....
'There', said he, 'your hairpins. I crawled and crawled all about the floor. Why must you be absolutely without light? You'd better be off now or somebody will be along. I'll see you out the back way. The front door will be shut now.'
We did not say a word to one another...⁵³

In other ways, the sexual revolution of the 1920s backfired on women. The relaxation of laws surrounding marriage, part of an attempt to facilitate the free and loving relationships that nineteenth-century Marxists such as Bebel had envisaged, led to extreme and unprecedented rises in unregistered partnerships, bigamy and divorce – and the perhaps inevitable end result of this was the mass abandonment of women, often pregnant or with children.⁵⁴ The progressive attempt to enforce the payment of alimony similarly miscarried; maintenance was rarely paid, yet the prospect of its demand often triggered severe acts of violence, sexual and otherwise, against the mother or her offspring.⁵⁵ In fact, the high instances of violence and rape against women in general were again a topic of popular concern in the 1920s; once more, the public discourse centred on the Nation's young.⁵⁶ Thus in N. Borisov's short story 'Vera' – a tale of Soviet youth

⁵³ Romanov, *Without Cherry Blossom*, 26–9.

⁵⁴ Goldman provides statistics on the rising numbers of all types of sexual relationships – legally registered and otherwise – throughout the 1920s, and details the consequent problems with female abandonment and non-payment of alimony, as well as the mass desertion of children: see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, particularly 103–9; 133–43; 171–6; 296–310.

⁵⁵ A number of particularly brutal examples are detailed in contemporary letters to the press: see Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 99–111.

⁵⁶ Eric Naiman details what was a veritable press campaign against sexual violence and rape perpetrated by youths in the mid-1920s, in his view part of an attempt by the state to gain control over private life through talking about sex: see particularly chapter 7 in Naiman, *Sex in Public*. Carleton, charting numerous press, party and public debates on this and similar issues in the 1920s, rather views such discussions as genuine open discourses of multiple conflicting voices: see throughout Carleton, 'Writing-reading the Sexual Revolution' and *The Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*.

published in 1926 in the Komsomol's own newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* – the eponymous heroine is subject to an assault that is even less ambiguously portrayed than that of Katerina:

– she suddenly cried in horror.... Nikolai, go away!!!
– Vera, listen to me... – he babbled, as if drunk.
– Go away! Go away!
But as a hungry wolf does not spare a sheep once he has caught it, so Nikolai, mad with sexual passion, did not heed poor Vera's entreaties. He overpowered her.⁵⁷

However, the similarly candid depiction of the rape of the young communist Polia in Fyodor Gladkov's celebrated Socialist Realist novel *Cement* (1925) is pre-empted by a dialogue that strikingly anticipates the corresponding scene in *Lady Macbeth*: the relevant passages are presented alongside one another below.

She could not sleep....
Someone knocked at the door gently – she did not know who.
“Who is there?”
Badin's voice; and by its sound it seemed that he was smiling.
“Polia, little Polia, are you asleep? Dress and come out for a moment – we have some work to do”.
“I can't, Badin. Wait til tomorrow”.
“Impossible, Polia. Get up and come out”.
... The latch clicked and the door opened.⁵⁸

(Katerina undresses completely and lies down on the bed. A knock is heard at the door.)

Katerina: Who's there? Who's that knocking?
Sergey: Please don't be afraid. It's me.
Katerina: Who?
Sergey: Sergey.
Katerina: Sergey? What is it?
What do you want here at night?
Sergey: Just a small matter, open the door!
Katerina: What small matter?
Sergey: Open the door, then I'll tell you.
(Katerina opens the door. Enter Sergey).

I/3; 157/1–159/4.

Meanwhile, a passage from Romanov's *Without Cherry Blossom* brings a different scene from *Lady Macbeth* to mind. In his attempted exposé of daily life in an urban university, Romanov describes a casual assault by a group of male students on two of their female colleagues:

Two girls were ahead of us. A whole group of students were mauling them, and when they tore themselves away the students burst into fits of laughter, stared after the girls and called out things after them.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Quoted in Naiman, *Sex in Public*, 117.

⁵⁸ Gladkov, *Cement*, 249.

⁵⁹ Romanov, *Without Cherry Blossom*, 19.

It is but a short step from this molestation to that of Aksinya – though for Shostakovich, via a different operatic vignette. For in the composer’s 1929 opera *The Nose*, another incidental female character is subject to a brutal sexual assault by a group of men: this time, the victim is a bagel-seller on St. Petersburg’s Nevsky Prospect, approached by ten policemen who, according to the stage directions, ‘jump out of hiding, surround the market-woman, feel her, and lead her offstage’ (III/7; 343/4).⁶⁰ Significantly, the policemen carry out their attack (III/7; 338/1–349/1) to a brisk duple-time passage characterised by the persistent repetition of single pitches and small rhythmic units, together with some frenetic semiquaver activity: in short, this is an earlier example of the genre-type 1 distorted galop material that is ever-associated with scenes of dramatic violence in *Lady Macbeth*, albeit one that is more atonal and texturally chaotic in its general language. Moreover, the climax of the policemen’s assault on the bagel-seller strikingly anticipates that of labourers’ on Aksinya in several of its specific features. Example 3.5a demonstrates how the market-woman struggles against the wall of sound created by the male soloists to repeated single pitches or two-note motifs high in her register – and thus Aksinya attempts to fend off the workmen’s advances at the opening of *Lady Macbeth*’s second scene (Example 3.5b). Meanwhile, the rising chromatic scales and solo trombone glissandi that depict violent sexual conquest in Shostakovich’s second opera are also present throughout the bagel-seller’s assault, signifying similarly.

The assaults on Aksinya and her immediate operatic prototype, the market-woman, are each post-revolutionary additions to pre-revolutionary texts: in Leskov’s ‘Lady Macbeth’, the workmen simply tease the cook Aksinya, whilst in Gogol’s *The Nose* – the short-story on which Shostakovich’s opera is based – the bagel-seller does not even make an appearance. Both episodes utilise languages and idioms that are particularly redolent of the 1920s: thus the rollicking and parodistic galop that accompanies Aksinya’s attack is typical of Shostakovich’s film and theatre scores of this period; in fact, as Laurel Fay points out, much of this

⁶⁰ The precise wording of this stage direction is taken from the recent English-language translation of the libretto provided in the booklet notes to Shostakovich, *The Nose*, Mariinsky, Gergiev, CD (2009); subsequent quotes from this opera are taken from the same source.

Example 3.5a

♩ = 160

Market Woman

5. 8. Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой!
Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!
A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!

2. 7. 9.

Policemen

3. 6.

A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!
A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!

1. 4. 10.

♩ = 160

sw

Market Woman

Ой! Ой! Ой!
Ow! Ow! Ow!

Policemen

A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!
A! A! A! A! A! A! A! A!

(8)

(Market-woman: Bagels, bagels!
 3rd Policeman: What a fantastic little woman. A real tasty morsel!
 Market-woman: Bagels, bagels, bagels, bagels, bagels, bagels!
 4th Policeman: Come over here, you!
Afraid, the market-woman approaches the policemen.
 Market-woman: Buy some! Buy some! Buy some, God's my witness! They're good!
 3rd Policeman: So, what's that?
 Market-woman: Bagels! God's my witness!
 3rd Policeman: And what's that?
 Market-Woman: Bagels! Go...
 3rd and 4th Policeman: And what's th-a-a-a-at?
 Market-Woman: Ow, ow, ow!
 3rd and 4th Policeman: Ha-ha-ha-ha!..
 4th Policeman: You'll excuse my curiosity!
The policemen jump out of hiding, surround the market-woman, feel her, and lead her off stage.
 Market-Woman: Ow! Ow! Ow!..
 1st Policeman: That's what we get from her! A! A! A! A!..
 2nd Policeman: Fantastic little woman. Ha-ha-ha-ha!.. A! A! A! A!..
 3rd Policeman: It won't help, it won't help! Ha-ha-ha-ha!
 A! A! A! A!..)...
 Market-Woman: Ow! Ow! Ow!
 [All Policemen]: A! A! A! A!..

The Nose. III/7; 346/5–347/2.

Example 3.5b

70
***ff* Allegro** ♩ = 112

Aksinya
 Ай! _____ Ай! _____ Ай! _____ Ай! _____
 Oh! _____ Oh! _____ Oh! _____ Oh! _____

Shabby Peasant
 Пря - мо со - ло - вуш -
Just like a night - tin -

Porter
 Сви -
 А

Steward

Tenor
 Ну й го - ло - сок, Ну й
What a pret - ty voice, What a

Bass

70
***f* Allegro** ♩ = 112

Aksinya
Ай! Ай! Ай,
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Shabby Peasant
ка. А ну, по - тро - гай, А ну - по - тро - гай,
gale! Come on, feel her here, Come on, feel her there,

Porter
нья со-ло-вьем за-ли - ва е - тся.
sow is sin-ging like a night-in-gale.

Steward
О - го! жи - ру
А - ha! She's plump,

T.
го-ло-сок, Ну й го-ло-сок!
pret ty voice, What a pret ty voice!

B.

71

Aksinya: Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!
 Shabby Peasant: Just like a nightingale!
Come on, feel her here, come on, feel her there,
 Porter: A sow is singing like a nightingale.
 Labourers: What a pretty voice, what a pretty voice...
 Steward: Aha! She's plump...

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/1; 70/1–71/1.

material is actually recycled from a 'bacchanalia' scene in the composer's spectacular music-hall revue, *Declared Dead* (1931).⁶¹ Meanwhile, the bagel-seller's assault from *The Nose* combines this circusry and grotesquerie with a dose of contemporaneous Western-style modernism. That these passages are so representative of 1920s musical developments serves to emphasise the terrible topicality of the events that they depict: these rapes sound uncomfortably of their time. And if the 1920s was a period plagued by violence and sexual brutality in

⁶¹ Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*', 179, n64.

general, perhaps these operatic insertions evoke one such incident in particular. For in 1926, a large group of Leningrad factory workers abducted and repeatedly raped a young female student identified as Liubov B., a crime that became one of the most infamous news stories of the decade. The ‘Chubarov Alley case’ received extraordinary and extended coverage in the Soviet press; excessively detailed reports, first of the event and later of the trial, triggered numerous petitions and a general public outcry.⁶² Although the link has not previously been made, it seems possible, even likely, that the young Leningrad composer recalled this notorious incident when constructing its fictional counterparts just a few years later; in any case, Chubarov Alley may well have resonated in the minds of many of his audience. Certainly it would not be the only example of this dreadful crime influencing the artistic output of the time: in the poem ‘The Hooligan’, written just a few days after the story hit the headlines, Shostakovich’s one-time collaborator Vladimir Mayakovsky gave his creative reaction to the affair.⁶³ In *Aksinya*, in the bagel-seller, and in Romanov’s unnamed students, there are traces of a *real* woman: Liubov B., the casualty of Chubarov Alley, and the iconic victim of a brutal age.

(iii) *The ‘Collected Features’ of Woman’s Predicament: towards a universal approach*

As summarised above, there are several musicological texts that note the particularly nineteenth-century quality of Katerina’s oppression, relating it to earlier literary depictions of the bourgeois wife and *zhenskaia dolia* – albeit it usually in brief, and in passing. However, this thesis has located only two authors who associate the specifically sexual abuse that occurs in *Lady Macbeth* with the prevailing culture of brutality that existed in the 1920s – and, given certain of the remarkable parallels outlined above, this seems extraordinary. Only one short study, Wells’ article ‘‘The New Woman’: Lady Macbeth and sexual politics in the Stalinist era’, makes any serious academic attempt to analyse this specific aspect of

⁶² See Naiman, ‘The Case of Chubarov Alley’ for a full account.

⁶³ Mayakovsky’s poem is given in Naiman, ‘The Case of Chubarov Alley’, 286. Shostakovich wrote the incidental music to Meyerhold’s adaption of Mayakovsky’s play *The Bedbug* in 1929; for details, see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 51.

the work in its social context: in one section of her paper, Wells précis the basic facts surrounding Russia's early sexual revolution, in relation to the relevant scenes from the opera – although crucially, she does not refer to any of the specific literary or real-life precedents explored above.⁶⁴

Furthermore, no other analysis of *Lady Macbeth* gives equal weight to both Katerina's pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary prototypes: the heroine's oppression as a woman is read as *either* nineteenth-century *or* Soviet, and, as encountered hitherto, this distinction is often drawn up along politicised lines. Of course, early Soviet commentaries on the work followed Shostakovich's lead in declaring that the heroine's predicament was thoroughly pre-revolutionary in nature: thus Ivan Sollertinsky, borrowing standard Marxist phraseology, declared that the agents of Katerina's persecution were 'the home-building structure of the family' – and other contemporary accounts understood the opera similarly.⁶⁵ Yet even later accounts that whole-heartedly subscribe to the notion that Katerina's subjugation is nineteenth-century through-and-through are often Marxist in their slant: for writers such as Eckart Kröplin and Alla Bogdanova, for example, the heroine's oppression as a woman is intertwined with other social injustices that are endemic of the pre-revolutionary era.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the political spectrum, Ian MacDonald – the only writer, other than Wells, to note the particularly *post*-revolutionary tone of certain sexual assaults in the opera – intimates that these 1920s-styled episodes are part of a deliberate attempt by Shostakovich to satirise and condemn the Stalinist age.⁶⁷

Yet these apparently contradictory readings of *Lady Macbeth* may not be mutually exclusive. Throughout the work as a whole, Katerina is subject to abuses

⁶⁴ Wells, "'The New Woman'", 176–8.

⁶⁵ Sollertinsky, '*Lady Macbeth*', 308; see similar quotes in Lebedinsky, 'Preface', 13–14. Both follow the composer in interpreting the opera in this way: in one statement, Shostakovich flatly stated that the work based on Leskov portrayed 'the position of a Russian woman in the pre-revolutionary times': Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 249.

⁶⁶ Thus Kröplin's thoroughly Marxist thesis begins with an exploration of the position of women – essentially an oppressed class – in an unjust pre-revolutionary social order: see Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 184–99. Like Kröplin, Bogdanova understands the exploitation of women to be inherent in the class system, referring to the opposition between the merchants and a woman with no rights: Bogdanova, *Opery i balety Šostakoviča*, 146.

⁶⁷ MacDonald notes a 'strain of gang-minded male cruelty' in 1920s life that is portrayed in scenes from *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth*, concluding that the Aksinya scene in particular is 'a functional satire' on contemporary gender relations: MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 91.

both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary in hue; these various episodes can co-exist peaceably within the same opera because, in the broadest sense, the oppression of women was ingrained in both Tsarist and Soviet society. Thus our analyses of *Lady Macbeth* need not be so narrowly political, but might aim at a greater universality – and to some extent, this was the intention of the composer himself. For Shostakovich’s long-term ambition – before the *Pravda* affair rendered such a plan impossible – was in fact to write a tetralogy of operas on female subjects: this ‘Soviet *Ring of the Nibelungs*’ would include heroines as diverse as Sofia Perovskaya, a prominent member of the revolutionary People’s Will movement of the 1870s–90s who was executed for her involvement in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, and Zhenya Romanko, a record-breaking concrete mixer on the Dnieprostroi Dam-building project of the 1920s–30s. This magnum opus would, according to Shostakovich, embrace ‘collected features of women’ from the past, the present and even the future.⁶⁸ Intriguingly, the young Leskov conceived his novella similarly: the story was intended as the first of twelve ‘sketches’ of characters drawn from various social classes, yet crucially ‘female only’.⁶⁹ For the authors of *Lady Macbeth*, it was Katerina’s predicament and status as a woman that was of foremost importance – and thus this thesis follows their lead in placing these issues centre-stage.

3. Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth*: a ‘Feminist’ Opera?

Thus far, this chapter has demonstrated that the oppression of women is indeed at the heart of this opera. Perhaps it is the foregrounding of this theme that prompts so many commentators on *Lady Macbeth* to label the work as ‘feminist’: thus Brian Morton refers to Shostakovich’s ‘instinctive feminism’ in his treatment of Katerina;⁷⁰ Richard Osborne alludes to the ‘strongly feminist profile’ of the piece;⁷¹ and Diane Follet even terms the opera a ‘powerful and sympathetic musical

⁶⁸ In Grigoriev and Platek, *Shostakovich*, 46.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Morgan, ‘Shostakovich the Dramatist’, 328–9.

⁷⁰ Morton, *Shostakovich*, 46.

⁷¹ Osborne, ‘Rostropovich conducts *Lady Macbeth*’, 12.

advocate for women⁷² – and other authors subscribe to these views, to a greater or lesser extent.⁷³ Such evaluations tend to be made casually and in passing; precisely why *Lady Macbeth* is popularly hailed as a ‘feminist’ opera remains elusive, and in fact, on closer scrutiny, two specific musico-dramatic aspects of the work render the assessment highly problematic.

(i) *Abuse Trivialised, Love Idealised: some problematic elements*

Abuse trivialised...

On attending a performance of the ‘original’ *Lady Macbeth* at Düsseldorf in 1960, the composer-cum-critic Elliott Carter was perturbed by the work’s apparent lack of any kind of moral compass.⁷⁴ In particular, Carter was troubled by the ‘unaccountable’ disjunction between serious, even tragic events and the flippant musical styles that accompanied them⁷⁵ – and others, most notably Taruskin – pursue this argument in their analyses of *Lady Macbeth*.⁷⁶ Yet although numerous commentators express concern regarding the frivolous musical treatment of the opera’s murders, none experience a corresponding discomfort on listening to its scenes of rape. This is initially surprising, for, as outlined above, the attacks on Aksinya and Katerina take place to similar strains of the ‘lively dance’ that so distressed Carter on its association with the strangling of Zinovy:⁷⁷ specifically, the roisterous and music-hall inspired parodistic galop material of genre-type 1. Not

⁷² Follet, ‘Mélisande Meets Lulu’, 5.

⁷³ For example, MacDonald describes *Lady Macbeth* as an ‘overtly feminist opera’: MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 88; Solomon Volkov refers to it as a ‘feminist apotheosis’: quoted in Morgan, ‘Shostakovich the Dramatist’, 328; and others make links between the opera’s message and the female liberation movement: see Brown, ‘The Three Faces of *Lady Macbeth*’, 246 and Stuckenschmidt, ‘Dimitri Schostakowitsch, “Lady Macbeth”’, 60.

⁷⁴ Carter, ‘Lady Macbeth’.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 369. Other Western commentators identified this as a problem, one negative 1936 review appearing under the heading ‘Merry Flogging Scene’: see Fairclough, ‘The ‘Old Shostakovich’’, 268–9.

⁷⁶ For a summary of both Taruskin’s controversial reading and various responses to it, see Chapter 2, above. Fanning perceives a similar problem in the simultaneous trivialisation and barbarisation of episodes such as the Aksinya attack, regarding the whole as desensitising; he views this musical flippancy-cum-cruelty as a feature of Shostakovich’s music as a whole, hearing the scherzos in particular as a casually brutal treatment of serious ‘issues at stake’: Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist*, 40–1.

⁷⁷ Carter, ‘Lady Macbeth’, 369.

only murder, but also rape, is musically trivialised in Shostakovich's opera – and this is somewhat disturbing.

Perhaps the unexpected stylistic realisation of the sexual assaults in *Lady Macbeth* renders these episodes dramatically ambiguous: Carter is but one of very many commentators who omit to mention these events whatsoever in their appraisals of the work. Given the relative scarcity of sex scenes in general and rape scenes in particular on the operatic stage, this apparent oversight is initially surprising.⁷⁸ Although the failure of early Western texts to include such incidents in their plot synopses might be put down to sensibility, surely this explanation cannot account for why many more recent summaries of the opera also make no reference to sexual abuse. Alternatively, Aksinya's rape is considerably softened in précis: thus Michael Mishra, in a chapter published in 2008, alludes to 'the taunting of the Ismailovs' cook, Aksinya'.⁷⁹ Similarly, the violent and non-consensual nature of Katerina's and Sergey's union is frequently misleadingly described: a recent edition of *The New Kobbé's Opera Book* still relates how the pair 'embrace' and 'make passionate love';⁸⁰ *The New Penguin Opera Guide* of 2001 also refers to the act as 'love-making';⁸¹ and Fay's entry on the work in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* somewhat coyly relates how Katerina 'succumbs to [Sergey's] seduction'.⁸² Others respond differently, though perhaps similarly improperly, to the boisterous sex scene. Thus for Mishra, the notorious trombone glissandi are 'pure comedy, a moment of "nudge-nudge" humor in which... we are forced to laugh at the twenty-five-year-old composer's unblushing smuttiness' – and this kind of audience reaction certainly seems to be a common one.⁸³

There may be historical reasons for our variously inappropriate reactions to the rape scenes in *Lady Macbeth*. Perhaps the *Pravda* affair has once again skewed

⁷⁸ See Carroll, 'Eros on the Operatic Stage' for a survey of operatic sex scenes. Possibly the most notorious imitative instrumental sex interludes pre-*Lady Macbeth* occur in Strauss' *Feuersnot* (1901) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1910), while perhaps the most conspicuous rape scene – musically tamer than Shostakovich's own – appears in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946).

⁷⁹ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 75.

⁸⁰ Harewood, 'Katerina Ismailova', 723.

⁸¹ Walsh, 'Dmitry Shostakovich', 851.

⁸² Fay, 'Lady Macbeth', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 15 Nov 2010).

⁸³ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 75 – and it was certainly with laughter that one audience greeted the modified version of this scene in Gergiev's Mariinsky production of *Katerina Ismailova* at the London Coliseum in July 2006.

the work's subsequent reception history: there is a sense that, if Stalin was shocked by the sex in the opera, then we mustn't be – and this is the obvious sub-text of the notes to the Sikorski score of the 'original' *Lady Macbeth*, tied up as it is with an anti-Soviet ideology.⁸⁴ More generally, writers today may wish to distance themselves from the prudishness of early responses, both Soviet and Western: the highly typical and near-hysterical assessments of critics such as Harry R. Beard – who declared, in a review of 1960, that this 'obscene', 'exuberant' and 'repulsive' piece should never be seen again in its current form – certainly seem products of the past.⁸⁵ But the main reasons for our casual and apparently insensitive reactions to the instances of violent assault in this opera surely lie within the work itself. We critically trivialise the rape scenes because Shostakovich musically trivialises them; similarly, we laugh at the depiction of sexual activity simply because it is written that way. This in itself must disqualify *Lady Macbeth* from being a feminist opera; it also demonstrates the necessity of a radical reassessment of our critical and even personal responses to these particular episodes. In a text book published in 1949, the Stalinist musicologist Rena Moisenko summarised the dramatic content of the work with considerably more honesty than many Western commentators today: 'based on... a novel by Leskov, the subject-matter deals with three murders and two rapes'.⁸⁶ Moisenko's description of the assault on Aksinya reads as follows:

... this is perhaps the most revolting scene in the entire opera: the shrieks of pain of the raped girl intermingle with coarse and cynical comments from the crowd of onlookers, ejaculations and even swearing, every word of which is carefully translated into music.⁸⁷

Moisenko's text is not in general one to admire: written at the height of zhdanovshchina, it condemns much of Shostakovich's earlier work along familiar lines, closely following the *Pravda* article in its vehement censure of *Lady Macbeth*.

⁸⁴ The preface to the edition refers to the censorship of the work and the necessity of a 1963 rewrite; it presents this solely as a consequence of the opera's explicit content, which it (therefore!) strongly praises: see 'Notes on the History of the Opera', 5.

⁸⁵ Beard, 'Reports from Abroad', 102. Similar comments in both Soviet and Western accounts of the opera abound: for example, one text condemns its 'coarse... naturalism' and 'monstrous images': Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, 38–9, while another considers that the 'physiological' in the score is inclined to 'repulse': Rabinovich, *Dmitry Shostakovich*, 35.

⁸⁶ Moisenko, *Realist Music*, 202.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 203–4.

Yet in her response to the rape of Aksinya, perhaps Moisenko got it right: we should acknowledge the sexual abuse that takes place in this opera; we should react to it; and we should even be shocked by it.

...and Love idealised

Just as problematic as Katerina's assault is her own reaction to it. For in the bars immediately following the event, the heroine also submits emotionally to Sergey, declaring 'I have no husband but you alone' (I/3; 194/8–12). So begins Katerina's all-consuming devotion to her rapist, an overwhelming passion that will govern her subsequent behaviour and ultimately result in her suicide. Katerina's relationship with her beloved Sergey is hardly an enlightened one: during her argument with Zinovy, she pleads with her lover to 'come out and protect me' (II/5; 346/8–10); and when she gives herself up to the policemen, she begs only for his absolution: 'Oh, Sergey, forgive me, forgive me, Seryozha!' (III/8; 460/3–6). In Act IV, her slavish attachment reaches new heights: although Sergey has cruelly abandoned her, she welcomes him back, explaining 'you're all I have, you know,/ my love.../ Seryozha, I can't exist a minute without you' (IV/9; 503/1–3, 508/6–8).

To depict such a relationship is not necessarily to endorse it – and yet unfortunately Shostakovich's musical setting *does* glorify Katerina's passion for Sergey. Thus at the opening of Act II/ scene 5, the heroine entreats her lover kiss her in long lyrical phrases, accompanied by a Romantic-styled passage of lilting and repetitive string melodies, lush extended harmonies, Neapolitan and mediant progressions and filmic climaxes (II/5; 296/1–301/1); meanwhile, the close of this bed-time dialogue is further romanticised by an extended Mahlerian adagio for strings and harp in F# major (II/5; 314/3–315/10). Similar examples abound; in Act IV, Katerina's fawning confession that 'even the pain in my legs has gone/ and the tiredness and the anguish.../ Everything's forgotten,/ once I'm with you,/ Seryozha, Seryozha!' is set to a lilting, lyrical theme that would return at one of the expressive high-points of the Eighth String Quartet (IV/9; 479/1–8).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The theme is given at the same pitch and in almost equivalent rhythm in the fourth movement or *Largo* of the Eighth String Quartet at 62/1; it appears high in the cello register, marked *piano* and *dolce*, and accompanied by sustained *pianissimo* chords in the upper strings. This movement in

As if the work itself left any doubt as to the nature of Katerina's passion, Shostakovich provided further elucidation in his published statements on the piece: 'Katerina, in her love for Sergei, sacrifices herself completely. Besides Sergei, nothing exists for her.... [finally] she drowns herself because life without Sergei's love has lost its interest'.⁸⁹ Perhaps the opera's glorification of such a philosophy should give us pause – and yet, a great many commentaries on *Lady Macbeth* follow Shostakovich's lead in presenting Katerina's all-consuming devotion to Sergey as an overwhelmingly positive feature of the work. For Daniil Zhitomirsky, the theme of a 'poetic' and true love has its roots in Leskov, and should even have been developed further by the composer.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, both the novelist Galina Serebryakova and the singer Galina Vishnevskaya propose a highly-romanticised account of the personal reasons behind *Lady Macbeth*: for these writers, Shostakovich's celebration of the laudable ideology that 'for the sake of love, one could do anything' was tied up with the young composer's courtship of his first wife, to whom the opera was dedicated.⁹¹ This biographical interpretation perhaps has its roots in *Testimony*, in which Volkov's Shostakovich declares that Katerina 'is a genius in her passion, for the sake of which she is prepared to do anything'.⁹² First Volkov and later MacDonald develop these personal sentiments along politicised lines, and this has been summarised in Chapter 2; other writers also use this quote from *Testimony* as a springboard for their own analyses.⁹³

particular contains a number of musical quotations, rendering the piece particularly prone to emotive extra-musical interpretation: this is discussed further in Chapter 4.

⁸⁹ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 251.

⁹⁰ Zhitomirsky, 'Shostakovich', 445–6. Although often overlooked in musicological accounts of the novella, it is the case that Leskov's Katerina – though an abject villainess – nevertheless demonstrates a single-minded devotion to her lover: throughout, her crimes are committed, as she puts it, 'for him'; she is prepared, 'for Sergei's sake... to go through fire and water, into prison or on the cross'; and despite the prevailing promiscuity of the convict train, she remains sexually faithful: Leskov, 'Lady Macbeth', (67, 41). Shostakovich, in the quote above, describes how 'nothing exists' for Katerina except Sergei; this concept and its expression owes much to Leskov, who described how: 'light and darkness, good and evil, joy and boredom *did not exist for her* [italics mine]: she did not understand anything, or love anybody, not even herself': Leskov, 'Lady Macbeth', 69–70.

⁹¹ Thus Vishnevskaya romantically imagines that Shostakovich realised in Katerina what he rightly desired in Nina: someone who would 'love him without hesitation, to be ready to do anything for his sake': Vishnevskaya, *Galina*, 350–1. For similar comments by Serebryakova, see Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 96–7.

⁹² Volkov, *Testimony*, 81.

⁹³ For example, a recent article cites this quotation in arguing that *Lady Macbeth* promotes a Nietzschean philosophy on love: see Sheinberg, 'Jewish Existential Irony', 351–5.

These interpretations of *Lady Macbeth* all idealise the concept of true love, although for different reasons, and the tendency of popular accounts to do so is in fact so prevalent that David Fanning terms this the ‘third reading’ of the work.⁹⁴ Taruskin is alone in noting, albeit in passing, that Katerina’s status as a ‘love slave’ contradicts certain of the claims that are made for this opera⁹⁵ – and yet, this argument does deserve more unpacking. For Shostakovich’s idealisation of Katerina’s attachment to her rapist presents a considerable stumbling block, as far as the notion that this is a ‘feminist opera’ is concerned. That this problem has never been seriously addressed highlights the need for a more rigorous feminist assessment of the fundamental musico-dramatic principles of *Lady Macbeth*; this project is begun below, and further developed throughout this thesis.

(ii) *Oppression Emphasised; Oppression Endorsed*

The emphasis placed on Katerina’s oppression as woman in the operatic version of *Lady Macbeth* might be seen as a regressive move – and this argument can be made most powerfully by returning once more to the literary prototype for the work. As detailed hitherto, Leskov’s novella was intended as a parody of that tradition of female martyrdom that was so prevalent in nineteenth-century literature, epitomised by Ostrovsky’s sentimental portrait of an impossibly virtuous heroine who is afflicted by a great love and persecuted by those around her. In contrast to Katerina Kabanova, Leskov’s Katerina Izmailova is plainly depicted at the outset as an ordinary peasant girl, whose adoration of Sergey is ignited by lust pure and simple; as the story progresses, she develops into a monstrous villainess who torments her fellow men, yet experiences no stirrings of guilt regarding her heinous crimes. However, as discussed above, Shostakovich returns his heroine to the traditional mould: the operatic Katerina is both dramatically and musically ennobled whilst her love for Sergey is magnified; crucially she is absolved of her actions, tormented by her guilt, and fundamentally presented as a victim. Neither the

⁹⁴ Fanning, “‘Lady Macbeth’”, 19.

⁹⁵ Taruskin, ‘The Opera and the Dictator’, *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008).

romanticisation of Katerina as a character, nor the idealisation of her love for Sergey, are progressive moves by Shostakovich. Yet above all, it is the concentration on Katerina's victimhood that might be perceived as something of a step backwards, from a feminist point of view. For while Leskov's villainess is abject and unrepentant, there is nevertheless a power in this; what the operatic heroine gains in virtue, she loses in strength. Although Leskov's *Lady Macbeth* tells the story of Katerina's oppression *of* others, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* tells the story of Katerina's oppression *by* others – and this concept will be returned to in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Of course, to depict patriarchal oppression in an art work is not necessarily unenlightened; on the contrary, the inclusion of scenes of sexual abuse in *Lady Macbeth* could be seen as remarkably progressive. What becomes crucial here is the separation of the *what* from the *how*: for a rape scene might be condemned, or merely represented, or even legitimised by its musico-dramatic treatment. A miscellaneous excerpt from a musicological text on Shostakovich might serve to elucidate this point further. In her study of the construction of the grotesque in the music of this composer, Esti Sheinberg touches on the rape of Aksinya, thus becoming one of only three pieces of writing identified by this thesis that even remotely engage with this assault.⁹⁶ Sheinberg's focus is on how this and other extracts from Shostakovich's output constitute examples of the grotesque, defined as 'a hybrid that combines the ludicrous with the horrifying':⁹⁷ the attack on Aksinya, played out to frenetic and distorted dance material that Sheinberg regards as typical of the genre, obviously fits the bill. Sheinberg argues that our reaction to the grotesque is typified by an enjoyment that is often inappropriate – and in the case of Aksinya, this is particularly disturbing. She suggests that the underlying rhythmic pulse of this episode is sensually and physically pleasing, and that the folk-like melody sung by the male labourers as the assault draws to a climax is aurally 'comfortable' and participatory in its nature: the end result is that we enjoy and

⁹⁶ Others are Wells, "The New Woman", 168–9 (discussed above), and Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 35–6. However, Fanning's analysis of the Aksinya episode – used to demonstrate a point concerning middleground tonal continuities in Shostakovich's music – is a purely musical one.

⁹⁷ Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, 207.

even in a sense take part in this assault, empathising with the rapists rather than the raped, whose screams are repellent.⁹⁸

Sheinberg essentially makes the case that this abuse is made palatable, even pleasurable, by its musical setting – and her argument, though a brief and diversionary aside from her main thesis, is nevertheless persuasive. In fact, the treatment of rape in several Russian novels of the 1900s–1920s supports Sheinberg’s conclusions, though she herself does not draw on this particular literary context. For although it might seem surprising to us in the West, a number of texts from this era openly deal with rape as subject matter. Even more surprisingly, sexual assaults of this nature were treated ambiguously in these works, to say the least: in a survey of this literature, the historian Eric Naiman presents several instances in which rape is even portrayed as a positive phenomenon.⁹⁹ Certainly one of the characters in Mikhail Artsybashev’s 1917 novel *A Woman Standing in the Middle* would have understood Sheinberg’s analysis of the onlooker’s position – and it is against the backdrop of these kinds of examples that the assault on Aksinya was composed.

The helplessness of a woman who is raped does not evoke pity or indignation in us... It only arouses us. When we read in the newspaper about the rape of a defenceless girl by a crowd of hooligans, we become indignant only because we are hypocrites; actually, we thirst for details and are painfully envious that we were not in that crowd.¹⁰⁰

Sheinberg’s incidental conclusions are relevant to this thesis: this study likewise analyses moments from *Lady Macbeth* in which the subjugation of women seems to be dramatically and musically legitimised, although it also explores those passages in which such oppression appears to be dramaturgically condemned. One other recent essay, published during the writing of this thesis, also raises a number of points that are highly pertinent to the feminist content of this study. Morgan’s chapter on *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth* in Michael Mishra’s 2008 *A Shostakovich Companion* focuses on the character of Katerina in its short discussion of Shostakovich’s second opera, tracing her shared characteristics with traditional Russian heroines, the New Soviet Woman, and even the female protagonists of

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215; 244–5.

⁹⁹ For example, Naiman explores examples from the novels of Boris Pil’niak and Feodor Gladkov in which sexual violence is conceived as a strong and necessary purging force, with rape utilised as a metaphor for revolution or war communism: see Naiman, *Sex in Public*, 59–63; 177–8.

¹⁰⁰ Naiman, *Sex in Public*, 51.

American pulp fiction and film noir. Morgan's piece is both broad and exploratory, in passing throwing out more questions than it answers; nevertheless, some of his insights are new contributions to the discussion of this work, and happen to correspond with certain of the areas of enquiry that are pursued in more depth in this thesis. Most notably, Morgan also locates instances of masculine oppression and feminine resistance in *Lady Macbeth*; he also moots the possibility that the heroine of this opera enacts a quasi-feminist revolt against male tyranny – although his analysis is entirely confined to the libretto, rather than the musical score. Moreover, Morgan explores the tension between the portrayal of Katerina as a traditional operatic victim on the one hand, and a dominant femme fatale on the other – although ultimately, he considers that the work places an overriding emphasis on the powerful version of Katerina, a conclusion that this thesis would decidedly contest.¹⁰¹

That this study disagrees with Morgan's chapter in certain of its finer points is really incidental. What is more significant is that this thesis differs from the partially feminist analyses of Sheinberg and Morgan in its placement of such issues centre-stage, to be subjected to systematic analysis using established critical tools – and it is to these methodologies that the discussion will now turn.

¹⁰¹ Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 327–40.

Chapter 4

Analytical and Hermeneutical Approaches:

Musical Analysis and Feminist Criticism in the Study of the Opera

In its adoption of a feminist approach to Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth*, this thesis is in line with other recent work on the composer that moves beyond traditionally politicised lines of enquiry in order to examine this output in more diverse contexts, and through more varied methodologies. For example, one current strand of Shostakovich scholarship – most prominent in the writings of Gerard McBurney – engages in archival research to uncover and reassess the composer's little-known and generally dismissed theatre, ballet and film scores, particularly of the 1920s; these works, written pre the worst excesses of Stalinism, reveal a youthful and iconoclastic Shostakovich, very different to the uniformly tragic figure of popular mythology.¹ Meanwhile, a different body of musicological texts – of which relatively recent books by Esti Sheinberg and Pauline Fairclough form two notable examples – examines the relationship between Shostakovich's output and the theories of his contemporary Mikhail Bakhtin, using the literary theorist's notions of polyphony, unfinalizability and the carnivalesque to gain insight into certain distinctive peculiarities of the composer's musical style.²

¹ Several articles written since the 1990s actively celebrate the young Shostakovich's often exuberant compositions of the first decade of Soviet Russia, providing factual details of the creation and reception of individual works, and engaging with these early scores for the first time or afresh: for examples, see McBurney, 'Declared Dead'; McBurney, 'Fried Chicken in the Bird-Cherry Trees'; Digonskaya, 'Interrupted Masterpiece'; Titus, 'Socialist Realism, Modernism and Dmitriy Shostakovich's *Odná*'; and Yakubov, 'The Golden Age'. Chapters in the recent life-and-works volume, Fairclough and Fanning, *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich* provide much-needed surveys of the previously neglected theatre, opera, ballet and film works, most composed in the 1920s; in his introduction to his examination of the compositions for theatre, McBurney argues convincingly for the merits of such research: McBurney, 'Shostakovich and the Theatre', 147–52.

² In her study of irony and related states in the music of Shostakovich, Sheinberg traces the biographical links between Bakhtin's artistic circle and Shostakovich's then draws on various of the theorist's concepts throughout to explain the composer's style: for example, the various layers and multiple styles of one piano prelude is understood through Bakhtin's notions of multi-voicedness; the unresolved and exaggerated musical features of other of Shostakovich's works are discussed via ideas of unfinalizability and the grotesque; and the recurring topoi of the 'heavy dance' is linked to theories of the carnivalesque: see Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, 168–85; 197–204; 282–309 and throughout. Likewise, Pauline Fairclough explores Bakhtinian thinking on plot and story in order to inform her interpretation of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony as a work that self-consciously plays with narrative, and whose meaning derives from its form rather than its content:

Such developments are in evidence in a handful of articles on *Lady Macbeth*. Thus Paul Edwards reads the opera through a Bakhtinian lens, seeing the concept of polyphony – relating to the multiple and contradictory ‘voices’, besides the author’s own, that exist in the artwork – reflected both in the multiplicity of ‘high’ and ‘low’ genres, and the tension between the characters and the orchestra-as-narrator.³ Similarly, Caryl Emerson interprets the complicating relationship between text and score as a Bakhtinian ‘double-voiced’ discourse, while her general discussion of the ways in which Leskov’s story and Shostakovich’s libretto interact implicitly draws on Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘dialogic’ work: one that is in constant dialogue with other artworks and authors.⁴ Emerson’s articles on *Lady Macbeth* also analyse the opera in different contexts, mainly literary: for example, she examines this and other works against the backdrop of the Russian Futurist and Gogol schools of the early to mid-1920s.⁵ Meanwhile, articles by Elizabeth Wells and James Morgan – referred to in the previous chapter and elsewhere in this thesis – view Katerina from multiple perspectives, holding her up against the novels of the Old Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai on the one hand, and early American cinema on the other.⁶

These contributions to the musicological literature on Shostakovich in general and *Lady Macbeth* in particular demonstrate a broadening of research areas that must be beneficial to the study of this composer – and it is in the spirit of expanding the critical filters through which this output might be examined that this thesis is offered. This chapter attempts both to justify and elucidate its two central methodologies: musical analysis, and feminist musical analysis; consequently, it naturally falls into two main parts.

see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 63–6; 71–3. Recent academic collections on Shostakovich contain essays on Bakhtin and Shostakovich, revealing the degree to which this research area is currently fashionable: see Hibberd, ‘Shostakovich and ‘Polyphonic’ Creativity’; Bullock, ‘The Poet’s Echo, the Composer’s Voice’; and Morgan, ‘Shostakovich the Dramatist’.

³ See Edwards, “‘Lost Children’”, 171–85.

⁴ See Emerson, ‘Back to the Future’, particularly 69–70 and 59–60.

⁵ In particular, Emerson compares *Lady Macbeth* to the short story ‘Rus’ by Shostakovich’s contemporary and one-time collaborator, Yevgeny Zamiatin: see Emerson, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition’, 197–203.

⁶ Wells, “‘The New Woman’” and Morgan, ‘Shostakovich the Dramatist’: for summaries of content, see Chapters 3 and 8.

1. Musical Analysis: Extroversive v. Introversive Methods of Signification

Subsequent chapters of this thesis will examine the functional operation of tonality in *Lady Macbeth* on both large and small-scale levels, using conventional Western methods and terminology: thus in Chapters 6 and 9 (part 2 (iii)), Schenkerian analysis is adopted, though elsewhere a generalised approach, more loosely adapting voice-leading techniques, is the norm. To apply such methods to Shostakovich's music in general may be problematic: this output as a whole is not straightforwardly tonal, and therefore tools such as voice-leading analysis – in any case, not widely used in Russia⁷ – might seem less suitable than those home-grown modal theories discussed in Chapter 1. In his recent summary of Western responses to Shostakovich's harmonic language, David Haas therefore criticises those studies of the composer that discuss his works according to common tonal practice, a concern that others also voice.⁸ Yet there are texts that productively adapt such analysis in their study of Shostakovich: for example, David Fanning has carried out several sophisticated neo-Schenkerian examinations of these compositions and persuasively argues for more to be done in this area;⁹ meanwhile, several scholars successfully combine tonal with modal or pitch-set analysis – and all of this work has justly been praised.¹⁰

In the case of *Lady Macbeth*, certain of these concerns are in any case somewhat moot. For, as Haas points out, the opera is significantly more tonal and

⁷ Thus as late as 1972, Boris Schwarz confidently asserted that: 'the name of the theorist Heinrich Schenker is virtually unknown to Soviet musicians': Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life*, 382.

⁸ See Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 319. Haas takes particular issue with applying Schenker to Shostakovich, encountering a number of problems in his sample analysis of one piece: for example, non-diatonic pitches are much in evidence; the two-part texture provides too little harmonic information; the bass line does not delineate common-practise chord progressions; and so on: Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 306–8.

David Castro also queries the application of Schenker to Shostakovich, in part because 'a true *Urlinie* is nearly impossible to find': Castro, 'Harmonic, Melodic, and Referential Pitch Analysis', 158.

⁹ Fanning considers that Shostakovich's music is enough rooted in the tonal tradition to authorise the use of 'the most powerful theoretical tool for explaining such works'; he goes on to demonstrate the illuminating results of applying such techniques, musing upon why analysts have been slow to rise to the challenge, and urging them to 'get a move on': Fanning, 'Shostakovich and Structural Hearing', 77–9; 98–9.

¹⁰ For example, Michael Rofe combines traditional techniques with Yavorskian theories to arrive at a method of 'tritone-led voice leading' that yields productive results: see Rofe, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Doll', 8–9 for an explanation of this practice, used throughout. Haas praises similar combinative approaches: see Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 321–2.

harmonically traditional than the majority of Shostakovich's works, a fact that renders it more suited to the application of conventional analytical techniques.¹¹ In fact, there are very few passages that cannot be said to be 'in' a key, although these are often modally inflected; moreover, these tonalities remain active across longer durations, while key signatures are occasionally used for shorter sections, and triadic harmony and functional progressions are much in evidence on a local level. Despite this, there are very few texts on the piece that grapple with tonality whatsoever, on a large or small scale; even lengthy studies such as Alla Bogdanova's or Eckart Kröplin's confine their references to key to just a handful of paragraphs¹² – and in Kröplin's case these are marred by a number of analytical misdiagnoses, as Fanning also notes.¹³ Subsequent chapters of this thesis consider the underlying key structures of *Lady Macbeth* in general terms: a project that – given the fundamentally tonal nature of this work – is long overdue; Chapters 6 and 9 also include voice-leading analyses of shorter passages – including one extract that has traditionally been analysed from a modal perspective¹⁴ – employing Schenkerian procedures that have been used previously by one author in his explorations of the opera. In two short essays, Fanning incorporates two Salzer-esque analyses of medium-length excerpts, an approach hitherto unique in the literature on the work – and more on these below. Nevertheless, the voice-leading analyses included in Chapters 6 and 9 differ from Fanning's in that they are detailed examinations of much shorter passages, and for the most part utilise more orthodox Schenkerian methods¹⁵ – although elsewhere in this thesis, voice-leading methodology and notation is adopted considerably more loosely.

¹¹ See Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 304–5.

¹² Bogdanova begins to discuss how recurring tonalities and tonal 'arcs' relate to dramaturgy; disappointingly, this summary is limited to less than a page of text: Bogdanova, *Opery i balety Šostakoviča*, 162–3. Meanwhile, apart from isolated references, Kröplin reserves his incomplete charting of occasional tonalities for an inserted table: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 222–9.

¹³ Kröplin declares the opening of I/2 – clearly in f minor – to be in G \flat major, and the passacaglia that forms the interlude between II/4 and II/5 – less clearly in c \sharp minor – to be in d minor: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 222; 224. Fanning also notes these diagnostic errors: Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 34–6.

¹⁴ The piece is Katerina's aria in I/3; Haas refers to Russian modal analyses of this extract in Haas, 'The Rough Guide to Shostakovich's Harmonic Language', 305.

¹⁵ One analytical essay on Shostakovich similarly applies relatively strict Schenkerian procedures to a likewise short and clearly tonal piece, the Prelude in C \sharp Minor for piano: see Plotnikov, 'On Dialectical Structure Creating Process'.

Yet the fundamental purpose of the tonal analysis carried out in this thesis is not to contribute to our ‘purely musical’ understanding of Shostakovich, or even of *Lady Macbeth*. Rather, what is of issue is how the functioning of tonality in the work communicates extra-musical meaning, and relates to the opera’s dramaturgy. In combining the analysis of ‘introversive’ musical elements with a discussion of dramatic significance, this study is unusual in scholarship on the composer, much of which focuses rather on the ‘extroversive’ features of the score: below, these terms and their significance are further explored.

(i) *Extroversive examples*

That prevailing tendency, discussed in Chapter 1, for studies of Shostakovich’s music to concentrate on its surface is in part facilitated by the particular qualities of the composer’s language: the abrupt disjunction of ‘high’ and ‘low’ styles, the excessive use of topoi and parody, and the frequent inclusion of musical references render these works especially suited to such an approach. Yet to focus specifically on what can be termed the ‘extroversive’ – defined as items on the musical surface such as quotations, ciphers and leitmotif that are explicitly associated with extra-musical concepts¹⁶ – is *also* advantageous in the formation of those politicised interpretations of Shostakovich’s works with which this thesis is now familiar. In particular, revisionist texts will argue that explicitly anti-Stalinist messages are constructed in Shostakovich’s compositions through a dense network of referential codes. Thus the standard reading of the Eighth String Quartet (1960), strongly promoted by writers such as Ian MacDonald and Lev Lebedinsky and now the mainstay of popular accounts of the piece, runs as follows.¹⁷

The omnipresence of the D-S-C-H monogram throughout indicates that the subject of the work is the composer himself; the parade of quotations from the First, Eighth and Tenth Symphonies, Second Piano Trio, First Cello Concerto and

¹⁶ Fanning explains the terms ‘extroversive’ and ‘introversive’ (and their less favoured equivalents) in relation to Shostakovich scholarship: see Fanning, ‘Talking About Eggs’, 7; for another interesting description, see Taruskin, ‘Hearing Cycles’, 341.

¹⁷ See MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 221–4 and Lebedinsky, ‘Code, Quotation and Collage’, 475–7 for overlapping versions of the populist revisionist reading below, itself extrapolated from a short paragraph in Volkov’s memoir: see Volkov, *Testimony*, 118.

others constitutes a retrospective gaze over the course of his career; the borrowings from Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony and Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* together with the presence of a funeral march intimates that death is close; and the use of melodies connected to particular texts – namely, the nineteenth-century revolutionary song that begins 'Tormented by grievous bondage' and the motif sung by Katerina in Act IV of *Lady Macbeth* just prior to her rejection by Sergey – reveal Shostakovich as wretched and betrayed. This programme is used to substantiate a certain version of biographical events: that Shostakovich, forced to join the Communist Party in 1960, felt so miserable and wronged that he experienced an emotional breakdown and even contemplated suicide.¹⁸ The official inscription 'To the victims of fascism and war', apparently inspired by a visit to Dresden where the composer wrote the piece, is therefore a smokescreen: the *real* objects of the work's dedication were those victims of a *different* totalitarian state, Shostakovich himself first and foremost amongst them.

Like the Eighth String Quartet, *Lady Macbeth* is a highly politicised composition due to its reception history, and as such it might be prone to similar 'code-breaking' analyses of its surface elements. Yet the tendency to approach the work via its extroversive features is also arrived at from a different direction. For in general, discussion of opera overwhelmingly centres on what might be described as the musical exterior; historically disqualified from the kind of musical analysis developed for more highbrow and absolute genres such as the symphony, both academic and popular accounts of individual operatic works almost invariably focus on leitmotif, associative tonalities and stylistic-types in their exploration of dramaturgical significance.

Thus the (remarkably few) musicological studies of *Lady Macbeth* that engage with the musical score to any degree do so primarily through an examination of the relationship between thematic content and topoi, and the drama as a whole. As summarised in Chapter 2, texts by Bogdanova and Kröplin

¹⁸ Lev Lebedinsky and Isaak Glikman offer conflicting accounts of the pressures put upon Shostakovich to join the Communist Party and his eventual capitulation; both describe the composer's intense suffering following this decision, though the mention of suicide comes from Lebedinsky: see Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 336–41. Fay collates sparse information and accounts on this 'puzzling' and under-documented episode in the composer's biography: see Fay, *Shostakovich*, 216–19.

trace the use of leitmotif, genre and melodic intonation across the opera in its entirety, demonstrating how the usage and development of such material underpins and interacts with the dramatic narrative.¹⁹ These studies are particularly Soviet in certain of their methodologies: for example – and again, as discussed in Chapter 2 – both authors devote considerable attention to the examination of ‘intonation fields’, collections of loosely-connected and ever-developing melodic motifs or phrases that characterise the protagonists in part through their historical connotations. That the basis of such a concept lies in the Marxist musicological work of Shostakovich’s contemporary, Boris Asafiev, might serve to remind us that Soviet musicology, as much as musicology on opera, also focuses on the extra-musical relevance of musical material – although of course for very different reasons.²⁰ Meanwhile, Fanning’s surveys of *Lady Macbeth’s* ‘quasi-leitmotifs’,²¹ although more analytically sophisticated, bring to mind a specifically Western precedent: those inventories of leitmotifs and their dramatic associations that have proliferated in European studies of opera post-Wagner.

Crucially, such analyses of *Lady Macbeth* are overwhelmingly predicated on the extroversive as defined above: items on the musical surface (e.g. leitmotifs or genre-types) communicate meaning through their association with extra-musical concepts. For example, Kröplin minutely traces the numerous occurrences of certain dramatic themes, arguing that the continued use of this meaning-laden material begins to tell us what the characters cannot: for instance, the ongoing symphonic interplay between the ‘violence motif’ and a figure initially associated with Katerina’s struggle indicates that it is a conflict between brutality and resistance that underpins this text, while the shared rhythmic content of the two themes tells us from the outset that Katerina’s protest will itself take a violent

¹⁹ A more recent article carries out a similar project, though focussing on a more specific section of *Lady Macbeth* and drawing on a more rigid analytical framework: Rosso, ‘La Monodia di Katerina’ applies semiotic theory after Nattiez to Katerina’s monologue, demonstrating how literary and musical motifs are generated and interrelated.

²⁰ Kröplin himself goes back to Asafiev – more on whom below – quoting his thinking that melodic intonations associated with particular concepts arose as the products of a particular age, and were able on hearing to communicate meaning: both criteria that obviously render intonation theory particularly appealing, from a Marxist or Soviet point of view: see Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 234–5.

²¹ Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 145–56; Fanning, “‘*Lady Macbeth*’”, 21–2.

turn.²² In Fanning's reading, *Lady Macbeth's* 'quasi-leitmotif' likewise denote under manipulation: the two orchestral interludes that are based on Katerina's defiance figure thus become 'symphonic developments' of the heroine's self-assertion then self-destruction – and Bogdanova interprets these ent'ractions somewhat similarly.²³ Meanwhile, Bogdanova also considers the effect of hearing motifs in combination with different genre-types, each of which carry their own associations: the appearance of Katerina's and Sergey's theme at the centre of a manic can-can, for example, warns us of the hidden evils of the lovers' union.²⁴

This kind of interpretative approach to *Lady Macbeth* is not limited to the study of thematic material. Almost invariably, those musicological texts on this opera that refer to its key centres treat them as 'leit-tonalities', operating in a purely extroversive capacity – and the possibility that this is limiting, even misleading, will be explored below.

(ii) *The Extroversive explained*

The ability of a leitmotif to communicate meaning is theoretically constructed as follows. A phrase first becomes associated with a character or idea through the basic fact of its contiguity; thereafter, the re-appearance of this phrase will symbolise to some extent the original (if modified) dramatic element. What is crucial here is that what semioticians would term the signifier (the musical theme) and the signified (the extra-musical concept) have a relationship that is essentially arbitrary: nothing in the musical content itself denotes a specific meaning.²⁵ Although in the case of a leitmotif, the sign has acquired its connotation within the self-contained structure of the work itself, other extroversive musical elements –

²² See Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 478–87 for an extensive exploration of these themes and their dramaturgical significance; also 220–1 and 235–6. Kröplin's appendix (472–90) examines the dramaturgical thematic construction of the opera as a whole. Gabriella Rosso understands certain shared musical material of Boris and Katerina to signify similarly: see Rosso, 'La Monodia di Katerina', 95–6.

²³ Fanning, 'Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*', 152–3. Bogdanova understands the interlude as a 'polyphonic development' ('полифоническое развитие') of the (musical) characters and dialogue of Katerina and Sergey: Bogdanova, "*Katerina Izmajlova*", 49–50; 55.

²⁴ Bogdanova, "*Katerina Izmajlova*", 49–50.

²⁵ These particular concepts have their origin in the work of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure: for a concise overview, see Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, 34.

genre-types, for example – have accrued their subtext from their extensive use in a wider cultural context. And yet, essentially they operate in the same manner, the relationship between music and message predicated on a connection that can essentially be arbitrary, to a greater or lesser degree.

If this way of constructing – or indeed, discussing – extra-musical meaning begins to seem a little superficial, this becomes most apparent in a consideration of associative tonalities. It is commonly understood that particular keys become affiliated with certain characters or concepts, again simply by virtue of their (initial) co-occurrence; subsequently, these centres come to be emblematic, operating in essence as quasi-leitmotifs or ‘leit-tonalities’. Thus Fairclough refers to the ‘symbolic’ use of keys in *Lady Macbeth*,²⁶ while Fanning also lists tonality – alongside motif and instrumental tone colour – as a ‘musical element with semantic force’: g minor is ‘Boris’ key’, while F# major/ minor stands for love²⁷ – and Bogdanova ascribes similar labels to these centres.²⁸ Meanwhile, Elizabeth Wells, in a reading of the notorious first-act sex scene that draws heavily on the significance of individual pitches, associates C# with Sergey’s sexual excitement and B \flat with his conquest.²⁹ Such commentary is prevalent in musicological writing on opera, and is perhaps of limited interest: while it points out what is (self-evident) on the pages of the score, arguably key is simply not experienced as an isolated aural symbol in this manner. Assumptions about the way in which we *do* perceive tonality, especially across large stretches of time, have been challenged in recent decades: a point to which this discussion will return³⁰. However, it is relatively uncontroversial to

²⁶ Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 241. Fairclough considers that the symbolic use of tonality is one of several factors that links the opera and her primary subject of study, the Fourth Symphony; she argues that the plotting of tonality in the instrumental work is more dramaturgical than strictly functional, different key areas becoming associated with themes and topoi and thus operating in a manner that she describes as ‘intonationally functional’: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, xxix-xxx and 240–1 for a general discussion of these principles, and 137–8 or 190–4 for their demonstration in the work itself.

²⁷ Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 156. Throughout this thesis, upper-case letters are used for major keys and lower-case for minor; upper-case letters are also used to indicate single pitches or areas that fluctuate between major and minor. Where possible, the terms ‘major’ and ‘minor’ are omitted, in order to avoid excessive repetition.

²⁸ Bogdanova also terms f# the ‘tonality of love’ (‘тональность любви’), and notes that Boris’ primary theme and episode are linked by the key of g: Bogdanova, *Opery i balety Šostakoviča*, 162–3.

²⁹ Wells, “‘The New Woman’”, 170–6.

³⁰ Most famously, Nicholas Cook performed an informal listening experiment on a group of music students which seemed to demonstrate that large-scale tonal closure had little perceptual effect on

assume that, to some extent, we hear key centres in relation to other key centres – and it is this contextual relationship that straightforward accounts of tonal symbolism tend to ignore.

If the focus on extroversive signifiers in the literature on Shostakovich might be limited, it can also be problematic – and this can best be demonstrated through the examination of two examples from musicological texts on *Lady Macbeth* that do adopt such an approach. In his paper on *Lady Macbeth*, the German scholar Hartmut Möller considers what the first two bars of the opera, given as Example 4.1a, might communicate to us. Möller acknowledges that, on their first purely orchestral appearance, this is difficult to ascertain; however, when the phrase returns alongside Katerina's complaint that she cannot sleep ('no, I cannot'), he argues that the motif is 'semanticised', thus signifying Katerina's inability to 'fit into' her tedious existence as a bourgeois wife. Following this verbal statement by Katerina, another theme, Example 4.1b, is heard in the orchestra; again, this motif is only 'given semantic meaning' on its repetition in conjunction with the phrase 'anything else' and the musings of the heroine on the time prior to her marriage, and thus it comes to denote her 'other', happier phase of existence. Möller concludes that the thematic interplay of this passage communicates the contrast between Katerina's current, monotonous life and the vision of a better alternative. Yet, he himself admits that there is a significant problem with the way in which he has constructed this interpretation of the musical material: namely, that 'these possible meanings can only work backwards, against the flow of the 'real present' of the music'.³¹

Möller's *dramatic* explanation of this scene is perfectly convincing – and yet, it can be reached at via a reading of the score that is less convoluted, corresponding more closely to how we might actually experience this music, i.e. both forwards (!)

listening: see Cook, 'The Perception of Large-Scale Tonal Closure'. Robert Gjerdingen engages critically with Cook's work, and also provides a summary of more rigorous scientific testing carried out on musical perception, primarily in the discipline of psychology: see Gjerdingen, 'An Experimental Music Theory?'

³¹ ('Doch diese möglichen Bedeutungen sind nur von rückwärts zu erschließen, gegen den zeitlichen Ablauf der 'realen Gegenwart' dieser Musik'). Möller, 'Dmitri Schostakowitschs *Lady Macbeth* Heute', 124–6; 126.

Example 4.1a

Moderato andante ♩ = 80
p legato

I/1; 1–3.

Example 4.1b

Katerina

3 (tries to sleep)

3

I/1; 3/1–3.

and in the ‘real present’. For several aspects of the setting – the frequent re-arrivals at the modally-inflected tonic a minor, the periodic re-statements of the Example 4.1a motif throughout, the proliferation of circular shapes and the persistent recurrence of the key-note in the melodic lines (see Example 4.1a), the use of pedal points and heterophony that ultimately result in unisons (see Example 4.1c) – communicate *in themselves* the qualities of repetition and boundedness, and in the general dramatic context of Katerina’s lament, this becomes a comment on the nature of her predicament. Similarly, an abrupt tonal shift from the prevailing tonic a minor to the third-related f of Example 4.1b, occurring twice in the underlying tonal narrative (I/1; 1/1–3/2, 7/1–8/1), sounds *in itself* as an expression of Möller’s ‘else’ – and, played out broadly in tandem with Katerina’s forays into sleep or reminiscence, this sudden mediant move becomes aurally suggestive of envisaged escape or ‘otherness’ without the need for precise textual support.

Example 4.1c

1/1; 2/2-4.

Möller's focus on the extroversive features of Katerina's monologue is problematic by his own admission. On the other hand, the above analysis of what can be termed the 'introversive' aspects of the musical score – elements such as tonality that do *not* explicitly signify meaning through their previous association with an extra-musical concept – is arguably more successful, both providing us with dramatic insights, while yet taking into account how we might *hear* this music. A further example from the musicological literature on *Lady Macbeth* serves to demonstrate how an extroversive reading might even be contradicted by introversive factors. Elizabeth Wells' interpretation of Sergey's assaults on Aksinya and Katerina attaches much importance to the relative *height* achieved in the characters' vocal lines at the culmination of these episodes. Thus in Examples 4.2a and 4.2b, Sergey's rising chromatic scale, followed by his climax on a note a semitone higher than his victims, signifies their being 'overcome' and his 'conquest'.³² Pitch therefore operates extroversively rather than functionally, tapping into our linguistic concepts of rising, growing and ascendancy – and yet, in an interconnected episode elsewhere in the opera, this method of constructing meaning begins to break down.

At the parallel conclusion of Boris' flogging of Sergey – a scene which metamorphoses into an attack on Katerina, as argued in Chapter 3 – it is the victim who is 'on top' in terms of tessitura: Katerina exclaims to a reiterated F, a semitone

³² Wells, "The New Woman", 167–74.

above Boris' E, as Example 4.2c reveals. Yet in fact, Boris is in the stronger position here, both musically as well as dramatically: *his* repeated pitch, E, functions as the tonal centre of the passage; subsequently, the bass line of the familiar ascending chromatic scale halts on the enharmonic dominant of e, which is established tentatively (245/1–4) then unambiguously in the bars that follow (246/7–248/5). This introversive indicator of Boris' domination far outweighs Wells' extroversive signs in a consideration of the *sound* of this passage – and the possibility that analyses of the introversive can be used productively in such discussions of dramatic meaning will now be explored.

(iii) *The Introversive explored*

All of the musicological readings of Shostakovich's compositions summarised in the discussion above – whether politicised or non-politicised, revisionist or Marxist, Soviet, Russian or Western – share this in common: each examine the extroversive features of the musical score as part of their discussion of extra-musical message or dramaturgical significance. For to analyse *introversive* musical elements, such as functional tonality, in connection with such concerns is often deemed inappropriate: traditionally, the study of the 'purely musical' has been strictly walled off from any consideration of extra-musical meaning.

Such preconceptions run right through those articles on *Lady Macbeth* by David Fanning, referred to above as unique in the literature for their in-depth analysis of tonality in certain passages of the work. Fanning's article on the opera begins with a neo-Schenkerian analysis of the opening of the second act; a summary of the second and third scenes using similar procedures forms the centrepiece of a more general essay on Shostakovich.³³ On the basis of his findings, Fanning makes conclusions about the composer's output as a whole, arguing that there are elements of coherence and continuity that underpin much of this music and contribute to its greatness. As might be inferred from the use of language, Fanning

³³ Fanning, 'Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*', 137–44; Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 35–6.

Example 4.2a

Sergey

A, Ай! Ай!
Oh! Oh!

ff ff

Aksinya

Пу-сти, Пу-сти, Пу-сти, Пу-сти,
Let go, let go, let go, let go!

Sergey

Ай! Ай! Ай! Ай! Ай! Ай!
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

ff ff

1/2; 87/5-16.

Example 4.2b

Kat.

Ах! Ах!
Ah! Ah!

Sergey

Ах, Ка - тя, ра - дость ты мо - я!
Oh, Kat - ya, tu dear - est love!

fff **183**

p cresc. **183** *fff*

1/3; 182/4-183/1.

Example 4.2c

Kat. 

Пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те, пу-сти-те,
Let go, — let go, — let go, — let go, — let go, — let go, —

ста - ну. Ну! Ну! Ну! Ну! Ну!
stop! — Now! Now! Now! Now! Now!

244

Kat. 

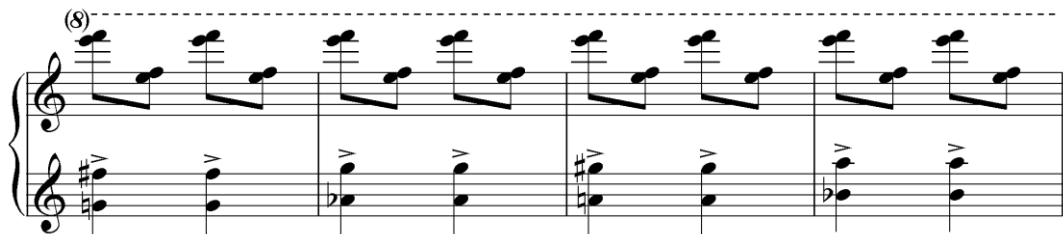
пу-сти-те! пу-сти-те!
let go! — let go! —

Ну! Ну!
Now! Now!

244

8va

cresc.



G.P. **245** Moderato ♩ = 121
(stops flogging) *mf*

Boris

У - стал
I'm tired out

245 Moderato ♩ = 121

11/4; 243/5–245/4.

is primarily concerned here with ‘pure’ music and what he terms its ‘universal, and untranslatable, message’.³⁴ He makes a clear separation between the introversive aspects of the operatic score (such as the underlying structure) and the extroversive (such as the use of leitmotif), and while he ultimately concludes that the two can coexist peaceably – both in Shostakovich’s compositions and in our investigations of them – he nevertheless perceives a disjunction. The ‘symphonic’ element of *Lady Macbeth* is concerned with basic experiential states:

movement, a sense of ‘travelling’,... processes such as growth and decay, or conflict and resolution, strongly contrasted and yet integrated in one overarching, purely musical experience. This... might seem difficult to reconcile with the presence in such number of such powerful extramusical signs as leitmotifs, and indeed with the whole concept of opera.³⁵

However, perhaps the signifying properties of introversive and extroversive elements are not as dissimilar as Fanning’s work – and indeed musicology in general – would seem to imply. For the introversive, deemed ‘untranslatable’ in one of Fanning’s articles, is in fact ‘translated’ above: for is not to talk about musical events in terms of movement and travel, growth and decay, conflict and resolution and contrast and integration, to assign to them what is extra-musical? A tonal return in *Lady Macbeth* may import stability, while a leitmotif might denote Katerina’s self-assertion – the former has a general connotation, and one that exists outside of this

³⁴ Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 34.

³⁵ Fanning, ‘Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*’, 158.

particular opera; the latter signifies only what is specific, and remains within the narrow confines of the work itself – yet crucially, both still carry a semantic meaning.

For Fanning, the distinction may well be more fundamental than this. Whereas the leitmotif has a man-made (thus, in broad terms, cultural) connection with the object that it signifies, it has traditionally been assumed that a musical event such as a tonal return was naturally and *essentially* expressive of a basic state – resolution, for example. Yet one contemporary of Shostakovich’s believed otherwise: as early as 1942, the composer and theorist Boris Asafiev suggested that even such primary musical building-blocks as melodic intervals and tonal relationships were part of a ‘vocabulary of intonations’, the sense of which were worked out by a given society and commonly understood by that cultural group. The most fundamental of musical meanings, because socially conditioned, was subject to change: thus in the feudal age, the tonic degree was heard to mean rest; post-French Revolution, on the other hand, the key note came to express affirmation and conviction.³⁶

It is beyond the remit of this thesis to weigh-in on postmodern disputes concerning essentialism and social constructedness; even if such debate could be resolved, it would only be of limited relevance to the subsequent discussion. For the listener may equate tonal return with stability because it is natural to do so, or because he or she has been taught to do so – the end effect is still the same. What *is* crucial to this thesis is the notion that introversive music does (somehow!) carry semantic meaning, even if this can only be defined in the most general of terms. And this is why this study, unlike Fanning’s, considers that ‘pure’ music can actually exist quite happily alongside the extroversive paraphernalia of opera.

In fact, the dramatic and verbal aspects particular to this and other texted genres might even work to deproblematise the thorny issue of assigning meaning to tonal events that – as referenced briefly above – are by no means certainly

³⁶ Summarised in Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, 278–9. Raymond Monelle provides a clear and comprehensive overview of Asafiev’s theories on intonation that places him within the context of semiotics as a whole: Monelle *Linguistics and Semiotics*, 274–9; other summaries of Asafiev on ‘intonatsia’ are given in Brown, ‘The Soviet Russian Concepts of ‘Intonzia’ and Haas, *Leningrad’s Modernists*, 60–62.

perceived by listeners. Thus far, this discussion has implicitly assumed that stages of a tonal narrative such as conflict and resolution are both heard and emotionally understood by an audience; it has adopted this contentious supposition knowingly, aware that any attempt to fix what is actually heard by a 'general' listener is – as Eric Clarke persuasively argues – ultimately impossible.³⁷ In a study of perceptual listening that stresses the uniqueness of each auditor's experience, Clarke chooses not to engage with the issue as a problem: certain individuals in specific circumstances *could* perceive and interpret structural elements that are undoubtedly present in Western artworks of a particular type, and this is enough to include these features – though crucially not exclusively – in his exploration of 'what there is to be heard... [of] anything that people can and do hear' in one such piece.³⁸ This thesis adheres to Clarke's freeing position, considering the emotional effect of tonal events in *Lady Macbeth* – even those that take place across long stretches of time – because they are unambiguously *there*; because they *might* be heard; and because, from a personal perspective, I believe myself to experience the music in this way – and, due to the lack of any real empirical evidence on the subject, even such a subjective response is perfectly valid.

Additionally, it is important to note that it is not necessary for tonal elements to be perceived and interpreted in isolation: other aspects of the music, developing in tandem with the tonal narrative, will serve to emphasise the presence and effect of its various stages. For example, a large-scale tonic resolution imparting rest could be marked by a number of surface features denoting similarly: for instance, a descending stepwise melody; static non-chromatic harmony; a repetitive on-the-beat rhythmic figure; and so on.³⁹ Crucially, in the case of opera, these supporting elements are multiplied due to the dramatic component: thus expanding

³⁷ Clarke explains that empirical research on what people *actually* hear, especially carried out on extended and diverse groups of listeners, is minimal; he explores the overwhelming problems that would be encountered by such projects on a large-scale: the differences in subjects' ability to express their experiences in language; the distorting effect of unusual conditions of listening; the impossibility of selecting pieces arbitrarily; and so on. See Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 192–4.

³⁸ This position runs throughout Clarke's chapters on what he terms 'autonomous' listening and Western classical works, situated within his wider ecological study of the perception of musical meaning: see chapters 5 and 6 in Clarke, *Ways of Listening*.

³⁹ Rofe makes a similar point, arguing that listeners' (subconscious) perception of Golden Section and symmetrical proportions is also dependent on corresponding events in other musical parameters: see Rofe, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Doll', 341.

on the previous example, a peaceful death, the entrance into sleep or the resolution of a problem are all stage scenarios that could underline the occurrence and impact of such a tonic return – and thus render the question of its autonomous aural perceptibility somewhat moot.

The interrelationship of tonal and dramatic narrative in the expression of extra-musical meaning is central to this thesis, and the precise way in which this is configured can be explained in part by returning to the musicological literature on Shostakovich. For a more recent article by Fanning – this time, *not on Lady Macbeth* – comes closer to this thesis' understanding of functional tonality and its extra-musical signification, particularly as explored in practice in the following chapter. Fanning considers the Neapolitan relationship between the keys of the first and second subjects of the Fifth Symphony's opening movement: 'E \flat minor is so near to, and yet so far from, D minor. So near diastematically – in terms of up or down... but so far functionally, in terms of the circle of fifths'. He goes on to detail how this 'so near, so far' tonal occurrence is heard alongside a near-quotation from *Carmen*, originally associated with the text 'L'amour, l'amour'; this leads him to conclude that: 'what is symbolized here... is an image of beauty that cannot be owned'.⁴⁰ That a verbal text is involved in the construction of meaning here is highly significant: as explored in part above, if the assignation of even the most generalised labels such as 'growth' or 'decay' might seem tenuous when applied to tonal events in isolation, the presence of a corresponding dramatic strand strengthens the case for such vocabulary. Furthermore, Fanning's analysis here ascribes a certain equality to both musical and textual parameters in relation to their communication of meaning, more unusual in writing on opera yet important to this thesis. For the concept that music expresses words is a familiar one in texts on the genre: tonal conflict communicating textual conflict, for example. Yet more interesting – and less discussed – is the idea that this could also work vice versa: that a conflict being played out on stage might be explicating and articulating a conflict in the underlying structure of the music itself. It is this apparently topsy-turvy postulation that both Lawrence Kramer and Richard Taruskin present in their analyses of Wagner's aptly

⁴⁰ Fanning, 'Shostakovich and Structural Hearing', 84.

named musikdrama, *Tristan und Isolde*; Taruskin's formulation of this position is given below.

We may now be inclined to view musical events as metaphors for emotional ones, but for Wagner it was just the opposite: not only the action of his operas but the emotions portrayed or conveyed therein were the metaphors in his view, the music the palpable reality. Tristan's desire for Isolde and hers for him symbolized and gave a phenomenal context for the desire of the dominant for the tonic, not the other way around.⁴¹

While Taruskin calls for a complete overhaul of the conventional wisdom – text now expresses music, rather than music expressing text – arguably the dramatic and (introversive) musical components of opera have a more interdependent relationship, each continually embodying the other in a permanent symbiosis. This thesis will explore how, in *Lady Macbeth*, themes such as conflict and subdual, inevitability and resolution are present both in the libretto and tonal aspect of the score; these textual and musical concerns might reinforce, enrich or even complicate one another, ultimately drawing out the essential meanings of the opera in their combination.

In summary: in analysing the functional operation of tonality in *Lady Macbeth* this thesis is rare amongst studies of this opera; in attempting to marry the musical analysis of introversive features, in particular tonality, with a discussion of extra-musical meaning it is unique. In the following chapters, this project is carried out on the (musically) large-scale (Chapter 5), the small-scale (Chapters 6 and 9), and on surface and background levels (Chapter 7); it engages with tonal events (Chapters 5 and 7) and tonal process (Chapters 6 and 9); and it explores the

⁴¹ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 328. Taruskin uses Wagner's own definition of his music dramas – 'deeds of music which have been made visible' – in order to support this argument. Interestingly, Kramer's very different harmonic analysis of the opera arrives at the same theoretical conclusion. Having analysed the way in which two ambiguous versions of the *Tristan* chord, together with a chromatic figure he labels the 'Desire motive', are progressively reinterpreted in different harmonic contexts that are musically unified at the point of Isolde's dramatic transfiguration, he concludes that: 'the Transfiguration, where all such processes culminate, is less something Isolde does than something she embodies. In musical terms, the essential action occurs in the orchestra. Isolde's role is to reperform that action as a speech act': Kramer, 'Musical Form and Fin-de-Siècle Sexuality', 147–65; 160.

varied manner in which dramatic and musical meanings interact, in ways both obviously supportive (eg., Chapter 5) or more contradictory (Chapter 9).

2. Feminist Musical Analysis: or, One Hermeneutical Reading of Tonality

In essence, the above argues for that marriage of analysis and hermeneutics as envisaged in Chapter 1 of this thesis. In one area of musicology at least, this union has been attempted: a certain thread of feminist criticism does engage in a hermeneutical reading of tonality, mapping the operation of functional key centres onto narratives of female transgression and defeat – and below such methodology and its application to this thesis is further explored.

(i) *The Gendered Workings of Functional Tonality: ‘traditional’ feminist analysis*

In that particular strand of feminist musical analysis most prominent in the work of the American musicologist Susan McClary, the functioning of key within the tonal system is considered to be implicitly gendered. Such theories are well-known, and can thus be summarised briefly here: put crudely, the tonic is masculine; those key areas that threaten the hegemony of the tonic are non-masculine (or feminine); and the final restoration of the former involves the conquest of the Other.⁴² The notion that these tonal areas and their operation are expressive of masculinity, femininity, threat and defeat is not based on any essentialist premise. Rather, such significations are culturally constructed, meaningful insofar as they are socially retained and aurally (albeit subconsciously) understood. McClary thus offers several historical supports for her hypothesis: for example, past discourses surrounding procedures such as sonata form, which demonstrate that first and second subjects,

⁴² For a concise explanation of McClary’s theories on gender and sexuality in musical (and specifically tonal) narrative, see the introduction to McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 12–17. Feminist examinations of sonata form pieces that draw on this basic construct – even if in order to show how particular works are more ambiguous with regard to the established mould – include McClary’s readings of the first movements of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony and Brahms’ Third Symphony: see McClary, ‘Sexual Politics in Classical Music’, 69–79 and McClary, ‘Narrative Agendas in “Absolute” Music’, 330–42 respectively; and Marcia Citron’s of the first movement of Cécile Chaminade’s Piano Sonata: see Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 144–59.

their respective key areas and overall restatement in the tonic have long been conceived in terms of gender and victory; or for instance, the theories of narratologists such as Theresa de Lauretis, who argue that traditional Western narrative follows an underlying structure in which the masculine must encounter then purge the feminine in order to achieve satisfactory closure.⁴³

However, the main foundation for McClary's reading of tonality lies in the genre of opera – and perhaps this alone renders this kind of criticism particularly apposite for a study of texted works of this type. In effect, McClary's work forms a musical complement to Catherine Clément's seminal literary analysis, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1979), perhaps the single text that marks the beginning of feminist criticism in the discipline of musicology. Clément's book traced a dramatic paradigm of female transgression and necessary defeat in numerous, particularly nineteenth-century, operatic libretti, noting how the final and often violent conquest of the subversive heroine is typically beautified by its musical setting in a manner that renders it desirable. Meanwhile, early articles by McClary – essays in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (1991) prominent amongst them – uncovered a corresponding pattern in the musico-dramatic narratives of several, again mainly nineteenth-century, operas: the dangerous female is constructed as tonally unstable or tonally 'other'; and her obligatory overthrow is expressed by a tonal resolution that is aurally required.⁴⁴

It is these kinds of observations that this thesis brings to bear on *Lady Macbeth*. It does so with an awareness of the fact that certain of these hypotheses are contentious, whilst this body of work as a whole is relatively small and currently unfashionable – and some of the more complex and home-grown feminist objections to certain projects such as McClary's above are explored in more depth presently. Yet primarily, it is McClary's readings of instrumental music, and especially of sonata form, that are controversial in mainstream musicological

⁴³ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 13–16.

⁴⁴ For example, McClary's readings of *Carmen* and *Salome* in this volume both trace how the heroine's harmonic and tonal difference is resolved on her violent death via triadic or tonic resolution: see McClary, 'Sexual Politics in Classical Music', 61–3 and McClary, 'Excess and Frame', 99–101.

circles;⁴⁵ similar readings of opera – able to lean on the extra-musical ‘prop’ of the text for support – are surely less so.

This thesis works to its own particular rationalisation of the dramaturgical operation of tonality in relation to gender, set out as follows. Male and female protagonists, feminine danger and masculine conquest – existing unambiguously in the textual arena – are expressed through the generalised extra-musical associations of tonal events: the binary contrast of the tonic and the non-tonic, the threat and instability of tonal difference and dissonance, the reassertion and stability of the tonic return – and it is partly through this explicit association with the libretto that tonality itself *becomes* gendered. Simultaneously, the whole might be examined the other way round in the topsy-turvy formulation encountered in Taruskin’s analysis of *Tristan und Isolde*, above: the broad experiential states of a tonal narrative – binarism, instability, stability – might rather be seen as *realised* in the surface formulations of character and plot. Such a phenomenal realisation lends specificity to the general implications of musical elements: thus if a male/ female duality is one possible connotation of tonal polarity (another might be Occidental/ Oriental, for example), the content of the libretto will fix this denotation more precisely. Gendered meanings might thus be regarded as a latent possibility of the tonal system – one that the constant repetition of Clemént’s operatic paradigm has both brought to the fore, and set into a particular patriarchal mold of difference, danger and defeat.

As suggested above, that work of McClary’s that maps large-scale tonal structures and their gendered significances is a relatively limited body of literature. However, much of the subsequent feminist criticism of the 1990s – although it concentrated on the small-scale rather than the large-scale, or on style and genre rather than form – in effect supported McClary’s tonal paradigms. In McClary’s analyses, what is chromatic or tonally Other is constructed as feminine; this

⁴⁵ One essay devoted to the subject of whether gendered readings of sonata form are exaggerated offers many of the standard arguments against McClary: that such analyses are crude and reductive; that tonal polarities or ‘Otherness’ might symbolise other meanings not connected with gender or sexuality; that less conventional sonata form pieces – even those in the minor mode with the second subject in the major, for example – complicate the issue; and so on: see Hepokoski: ‘Masculine-Feminine’.

presents a challenge to what is diatonic and tonally normative, constructed as masculine. The binary division of musical components along gendered lines is something that other feminist scholars have observed in texted compositions and the discourses that surround them; such work is extensive, and has dealt with a wealth of material from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. Although the precise nature of what is heard as feminine and what is heard as masculine has changed in small details over the years, in the fundamentals it has remained remarkably consistent. (To acknowledge this fact is not to claim that there is any essentialist basis for this continuity, but rather to suggest that how gender has been (musically) conceived within this time frame has in many respects changed less than we might think). The broad characteristics of 'feminine' and 'masculine' music as evidenced in several articles on different outputs and historical periods can thus be summarised as follows.

Over time, 'feminine' music has been constructed in various vocal and melodic styles that are virtuosic, embellished, melismatic, improvisatory, unpredictable or excessive; it has often been asymmetrical or free in its phrase structure; it has inclined towards modality and mixed modality, flat or minor keys, alternative tonics or atonality; and it has tended to utilise chromaticism, dissonance, destabilising harmonic devices (such as false relations or suspensions) or adventurous chord progressions. 'Masculine' music, in contrast, has been generally predisposed towards a more unadorned melody, regular phrase units and forms, major keys and diatonicism, and straightforward harmonies.⁴⁶ Although to

⁴⁶ This list of 'feminine' and 'masculine' musical characteristics has been compiled from numerous essays that deal with a wealth of repertoires and times; the following references are arbitrarily picked on a one-per-period basis. Thus one article on Hildegard of Bingen explores the disjunct lines, melodic expansiveness, structural freedoms and unusual tonal goals that characterise the female, particularly in relation to the Virgin Mary: see Holsinger, 'The Flesh of the Voice', 102–7, 111–15, 122–3; one on English music of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discusses the discourse surrounding 'feminine' and 'masculine' types, the former involving what was embellished and chromatic, and the latter what was simple and diatonic: see Austern, "'Alluring the Auditorie'", 351–4; one focusses on Mozart's operas, demonstrating that minor keys – seen by contemporary theorists as weaker and more unnatural than their major counterparts – were predominantly reserved for women: see Wheelock, '*Schwarze Gredel*'; one analyses Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, arguing in part that the soprano's extreme use of melisma, flourish and coloratura characterise her irrational femininity: see Smart, 'The Silencing of Lucia', 119, 128–30; another examines Strauss' *Elektra*, analysing the chromatic, whole-tone, tritonal and bitonal ambiguities belonging to the dangerous female characters in contrast to the triadic motifs of the hero: see Kramer, '*Fin-de-siècle* Fantasies', 152–6; and so on. For an overview of feminist critics on the

conflate the evidence in such a manner is to run the risk of over-simplifying it, this inventory indicates that those components that are gendered feminine are those that are anomalous or aberrant to masculine norms. This supports McClary's basic position, as stated above.

Furthermore, although the majority of the literature that charts musical elements along this binary does not deal with underlying tonal events, much of it is concerned with surface tonality. In an essay on *Lucia di Lammermoor*, McClary demonstrates how the heroine's tonal flights into madness in E_b are framed by the male chorus' repeated attempt to control her in their tonic c;⁴⁷ in an article on Monteverdi, Susanne Cusick describes the famously dissonant entry in the madrigal 'Cruda Amarilli', in which the enticing yet unobtainable soprano sounds her A against the lower-voiced ensemble's G major harmony.⁴⁸ The former explores the (relatively) large-scale, the latter the (very) small-scale – and yet the essential argument concerning feminine tonal resistance remains the same.

In many late nineteenth and early twentieth century operas, what is tonally 'Other' in both a structural and a stylistic sense in fact coalesces around the person of the heroine. In Strauss' *Salome* (1905), the predominant key of the title character is C#/c#, and the relationship between this feminine tonal area and the masculine C/c of Jokanaan and Herod governs the underlying passage of the work. Yet Salome does not simply rebel in her overall tonal allegiance; she also opposes the Germanic and diatonic style of her male adversary through her colourful Orientalisms and destabilising chromaticisms. A similar coming together of underlying and surface tonal otherness in a prominent female character can be observed in Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) and Strauss' *Elektra* (1908), amongst others. Understandably, all of these operas are popular with feminist and critical musicologists,⁴⁹ and their varying treatments of sexually enticing yet dangerous

construction of the masculine and feminine in music, see also Cox Lorraine, 'Recovering Jouissance', 3–7.

⁴⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 93–8.

⁴⁸ Cusick, 'Gendering Modern Music', 10–12.

⁴⁹ For example, McClary co-authored the Cambridge opera handbook, McClary and Robinson, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*; the postmodern scholar Abbate devotes a chapter to *Parsifal* in Abbate, *In Search of Opera*; and the 'New musicologist' Kramer has published articles on both of Strauss' operas: Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics' and 'Fin-de-siècle Fantasies'.

women can reveal much about Western patriarchal fears of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Shostakovich's *Katerina*, the creation of a very different era, is poles apart from these exotic femmes fatales. As such, *Lady Macbeth* has remained untouched by feminist critics thus far – and yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, many of the concepts outlined above have a striking relevance to the analysis of this opera. This is why this study draws on the more established feminist theories and methods above, despite the possibility of any current feminist or new-critical opposition to such approaches – and it is to these potential objections that this chapter now turns.

(ii) *Against Analysis, Authority and Absolutes:
'new' feminist and critical objections*

To reiterate necessarily yet concisely: in its analysis of *Lady Macbeth*, this thesis draws in part on that particular strand of feminist criticism, prominent in the writings of McClary, that traces the gendered workings of tonality in connection with large-scale patriarchal narratives of female transgression and defeat. And yet, such work might already appear a little out of step with more recent developments, both postmodern or post-structuralist, feminist or 'post-feminist' in kind. For example, any analysis of the musical text itself that is based (albeit loosely) on procedures such as voice-leading might appear uncomfortably formalist, associated with positivistic truth claims that sit uneasily with the more contemporary privileging of numerous varied – yet equally valid – interpretations. Much critical musicology has questioned the legitimacy of such conventional analytical approaches, claiming that they do not necessarily correspond to how we hear this music: the notion that what happens *below* the musical exterior is somehow more significant than what occurs on the surface – an assumption implicit in much formalist writing – is particularly contested.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For example, Rose Rosengard Subotnik critiques theories of structural listening, doubting that we hear music as according to Schenker and querying the assumption that surface elements are less valid than structural ones: Subotnik, 'Towards a Deconstruction of Structural Listening'; see also Fink, 'Going Flat' for a critique of the depth-surface hierarchy in relation to Schenkerian analysis.

Similarly, feminist and other 'new' criticisms have challenged the prominence that is almost automatically granted to the score in traditional musicological texts, arguing for a greater emphasis to be placed on other components of the musical experience, such as performance or reception.⁵¹ In feminist quarters, critique of the discipline has followed a specifically gendered course. The tendency to analyse music in ways that aim to be objective or to approximate scientific methodology is deemed masculine in itself, necessarily at odds with a more subjective and experiential, 'feminine' approach; thus Schenkerian graphs, along with set-theoretical procedures and similar techniques, are seen as standing in a long line of masculine attempts to control music – an art form that has repeatedly been constructed in historical discourse as dangerously feminine.⁵²

Given the importance of such thinking to feminist criticism, it is easy to understand why examinations of the musical text do not occupy a central position in this literature. Yet it is not simply a general distrust of 'masculine' modes of analysis that might make the mapping of overall tonal structures onto underlying dramatic paradigms appear a little out of date. Both McClary's writing on sonata-form pieces and Clemént's survey of operatic libretti are predicated on the notion of a fundamental and holistic narrative that, to a significant extent, governs the

⁵¹ Such new directions in musicology are influenced by those postmodern and post-structuralist theories that query the absolute authority of author and text, rather allowing that meaning is in part constructed by the culturally-situated interpreter: for a general discussion of such issues, see Chapter 1. In her collection of postmodern readings of opera, Carolyn Abbate thus explores individual pieces as works that will be *performed*, as distinct from transcendent compositions: see the introduction to Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, and essays throughout. Much feminist writing contests the notion that the score should be the primary object of study on these new critical grounds, Suzanne Cusick even referring to "The Music Itself" as the 'Ultimate Feminist Issue': Cusick, 'Gender, Musicology and Feminism', 491–3. In part, this is due to the fact that musicology's privileging of composition above other spheres of endeavour serves to ignore those areas of music-making in which women have historically been prominent, such as domestic performance or teaching, for instance; thus certain feminist studies survey women's contribution to music in a wider sense, exploring these kinds of activities: for an example, see Pendle, *Women and Music*.

⁵² Thus much feminist criticism queries objective and quasi-scientific analytical methods, arguing rather for critical commentary to be more subjective and experiential: for examples, see Detels, 'Soft Boundaries and Relatedness', or Guck, 'A Woman's (Theoretical) Work'. For arguments on the 'masculine' nature of traditional and technical forms of analysis, born of attempts to manage and structure the art form, see Maus, 'Masculine Discourse' and Shepherd, 'Music and Male Hegemony'. Other work demonstrates how music itself has been gendered 'feminine' in public discourse in various time periods: for example, see Austern, "Alluring the Auditorie to Effeminacie", and examines similar 'masculine' efforts to control the discipline at different points in its history: for example, see Cusick, 'Gendering Modern Music'.

behaviour of each individual work – and this seems uncomfortably close to the structuralist assumptions of theorists such as Schenker. More recent critical musicology tends rather to embrace a post-structuralist belief in the plurality and instability of meaning within any one text, an acceptance of complexity that goes hand in hand with the rejection that the binary oppositions so beloved of structuralism (male/female, for example) are always fixed in their signification.⁵³ Current thinking in the field of gender studies similarly contests the presumption of the male/ female binary,⁵⁴ whilst contemporary feminist criticism tends not to concern itself so exclusively or so negatively with the oppressive patriarchal practices of the past – both factors that date important analytical projects such as those of McClary and Clément. Although these texts are acknowledged as fundamental contributions to the literature, both have been criticised along such lines: McClary for her reliance on a fundamental gender division, for example,⁵⁵ or Clément for her adherence to a monolithic and overwhelmingly pessimistic overview.⁵⁶

On the whole, most recent feminist or gender-based writing on opera moves beyond these earlier studies to explore how the multi-faceted elements of the genre in effect disrupt one another, often in ways that challenge the dominant ideology of the work and even empower the Other. Thus this literature might celebrate the displacement of authority onto the female performer by virtue of the

⁵³ Thus in her introduction to a relatively recent collection of feminist and new critical readings of opera, Mary Ann Smart suggests that the theories of the post-structuralist Roland Barthes might productively be used to help musicology move beyond a reliance on binary divisions that are intellectually problematic: see Smart, *Siren Songs*, 7–10. For an earlier essay that applies such post-structuralist and specifically Barthesian philosophies ahead of its time, thus exploding straightforward gender divisions in Strauss' opera *Salome*, see Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women'.

⁵⁴ For example, studies within the sciences have challenged the concept of a basic dimorphism, examining the biological complexities of sexual classification and intersex bodies; meanwhile, queer theory has worked to destabilise sexual binaries, in part through exploring the experiences of transgendered individuals: see Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 30–1; 204–6.

⁵⁵ Thus Elizabeth Sayrs takes McClary to task for reproducing 'normal/ deviant' binaries such as straight/ gay or male/ female, divisions that much gay and feminist scholarship has attempted to deconstruct: see Sayrs, 'Deconstructing McClary', accessed on-line (28 April 2012).

⁵⁶ Most famously, Paul Robinson argues that Clément's overridingly negative assessment of the genre ignores the site of women's empowerment in opera: the singing voice: see Robinson, 'It's Not Over Until the Soprano Dies', *The New York Times* (1 January 1989), accessed on-line (on 30 April 2012). Others also point out similar aspects of or resistances within works that destabilise Clément's downbeat single message: see Locke, 'What Are These Women?', 60–74 or Abbate's tellingly titled essay, 'Opera, or the Envoicing of Women', particularly 228–9.

virtuosity or sheer beauty of her vocal music, or the destabilising of heterosexual plots through the existence of subversive homosexual subtexts, or the challenge to the established gender binary in opera's numerous and ambiguous travesti roles, and so on – and there are numerous examples of such approaches in seminal collections of the 1990s and 2000s.⁵⁷ Such writing is typically postmodern in its emphasis on multiple, decentered meanings and its privileging of the performer and listener in the construction of these messages. Its challenge to the authorial control of the composer (and librettist) necessarily involves a shift away from scrutiny of the operatic text itself, and any examples of musical analysis that do exist in this literature tend to focus on isolated passages of the score rather than examine the overall structure. This betokens a distrust of unified and totalising conclusions that clearly distinguishes this work from what has gone before it.

Given these more recent developments in the literature, this thesis might seem split in its dual adherence to broadly feminist, critical and postmodern thinking on the one hand, and musical analysis of the source itself, in its entirety, on the other. Unlike much other recent musicological work on opera, this examination of *Lady Macbeth* is very much focussed on the text as a primary site of meaning, albeit one that is rooted in its social context; and although it aspires to keep the listener at the forefront of its musical exegesis – aiming essentially at that *sound*-based, rather than *score*-based, analysis, as discussed in Chapter 1 – at no point does it really scrutinise the performances, productions or reception of the piece in forming its interpretation, except in passing. Furthermore, certain of the analytical approaches of this study approximate formalistic methods that sit uneasily with the 'New Musicology': in particular, the notion of viewing this opera as a unified tonal structure might appear problematic. Certain of these possible objections to this research project are potentially significant, and as such, they must be addressed.

⁵⁷ Three such collections are Blackmer and Smith, *En Travesti*; Dellamora and Fischlin, *The Work of Opera*, and Smart, *Siren Songs*. An example in first explores how castrati, travesti and disguise roles destabilise structures of authority and sexuality in opera: see Reynolds, 'Ruggiero's Deceptions'; an example in the second how sounding 'Sapponics' or 'homovocal jouissance' in one piece works to 'save' what would later become a chauvinistic plot type: see Smith, "'O Patria Mia'". Examples in *Siren Songs* demonstrate how the composition's ostensible message can be subverted by devolving power to the listener: see Feldman, 'The Absent Mother'; the performer or director: see Allanbrook, Hunter and Wheelock, 'Staging Mozart's Women'; the musical text: see Parker, 'Elisabeth's Last Act'; or the physical body: see Smart, 'Ulterior Motives'.

(iii) *The Case for the Defence*

The argument for a feminist text-based analysis of *Lady Macbeth* might be made on many levels. Chapter 1 of this thesis argued for the inclusion of musical analysis on the basis of a simple premise: that these procedures at least endeavour to engage with the score, a component of the musical work which undeniably exists. If the compositional text has been too much the centre of attention in the past, that is not a reason to ignore it today; such a misguided attempt to compensate for previous ills results in music becoming, in that memorable borrowed phrase of Carolyn Abbate's, 'the elephant in the room'. Instead of abandoning traditional forms of analysis wholesale, it is surely more productive for critical musicology to appropriate what is positive in such procedures for its own hermeneutical ends. For arguably the problem with formalist methodology does not lie primarily in its processes, but rather in its presentation as an end in itself, together with its corresponding claims to universal truth and objectivity. If the alleged neutrality of musical analysis is in fact historically and culturally constructed, as many feminists would contend, that does not necessarily discredit it as an interpretational tool; it simply means that we must employ it with this in mind. From a personal point of view, as explored above, I use musical analysis because it helps me to explain how I hear this music – and if this is because I have been trained in a particular way, that does not make it any the less legitimate. A postmodern acceptance of the validity of numerous hearings must extend this privilege to analytical readings also, providing that they drop their pretensions to the absolute; and as long as we first acknowledge that all of us are writing from a position that is culturally situated, then perhaps the problem of what to use and how to use it largely disappears.

There are further arguments to be made for the inclusion of text-based analysis in an operatic study of this type. The delayed acceptance and integration of critical theories in the discipline of musicology (relative to similar developments in the study of literature or art, for example) has led to what might be described as a 'telescoping' of certain important stages. A genuine feminist criticism of music

began to materialise in the late 1980s, roughly twenty years after its emergence in the field of literature, and – as Susan McClary was keen to point out – at a time when scholars in other areas were proclaiming the advent of ‘postfeminism’.⁵⁸ In the early 1990s, as writers like McClary were beginning to uncover the gendered components and oppressive patriarchal structures of canonic musical works, feminists *outside* of musicology were starting to reject and deconstruct such clear-cut notions (in a sense, certain McClary-esque projects were ‘second wave’ feminist, coming into being against a wider current of ‘third wave’ thinking). Arguably, the fact that musicology was so ‘out of step’ in this regard had some important consequences for feminist criticism of opera in particular. Work that read the operatic text as a site of gender construction and power relations had a comparatively short shelf life: it was not long after Clément’s book was translated into English in 1988 that a wealth of responses challenged her thesis by exploring the discontinuities and resistances in the genre. Similarly, analysis of the score (and in particular, of the *whole* score) was quickly passed over, in favour of a new critical emphasis on other aspects of the musical work such as performance and reception. Thus the first stage of a feminist, text-based exegesis of the operatic repertoire was discarded relatively quickly, in an explosion of scholarship that pulled musicology alongside parallel developments in other disciplines and indeed the world at large – and if this was necessary and desirable, perhaps it also left some things undone.

Or indeed, some things undeveloped. For arguably, McClary-esque projects, single-mindedly dedicated to the goal of uncovering patriarchal musico-dramatic narratives, have not enough scrutinised and differentiated between the occasions when such plot-lines are simply represented (or even condemned) by their musical treatment in the score, and the occasions when they are expressly legitimised. Of course, McClary – in a conceptual sense, after Clément – proposes that the final overthrow of the heroine is made aurally desirable and thus celebrated by the conclusive resolution to the tonic. It is the notion that this is over-simplistic that has led more recent feminist commentators to examine how an opera’s tonal endorsement of feminine defeat on the large-scale might be destabilised by

⁵⁸ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline’, 412.

individual moments from the work, or by other dimensions of the composition, such as its performance. Yet McClary's overriding paradigm might also be undermined by the strictly text-based particulars of the score itself, even those tonal and large-scale – and a critical engagement with her own interpretation of Strauss' *Salome* (1905) can provide an example. In her analysis, McClary traces a familiar feminist trajectory: Salome enacts her sexual and chromatic transgressions in C# /c#; she is violently put to death in c; and it is in this key that social and tonal order is restored. However, McClary does acknowledge that the *specific* nature of this opera's conclusion puts a significant strain on the well-worn formula of tonic closure: after luxuriating in erotic and chromatic excess for the majority of the work, the abrupt final cadence in c is ultimately unsatisfactory. For McClary, Strauss' choice to end this way is a deliberate, disingenuous and hypocritical act.⁵⁹ Yet there is an alternative and equally plausible explanation that does not assume the opera's endorsement of Salome's defeat: that the brevity of the final passage in c is strikingly and ambiguously undermined by the length of the C# section which precedes it might rather suggest that *Salome* is a piece that is deeply and self-consciously uncertain as to the desirability or otherwise of feminine and tonal emancipation.

The fundamental question of whether the score itself sanctions patriarchal oppression, or rather censures it, or simply represents it, is one that naturally arises out of research such as McClary's; however, as criticism has rushed to embrace other areas of enquiry, this issue has remained largely unscrutinised.⁶⁰ And if it is the case that the subjugation of women is endorsed in the overwhelming majority of operatic scores, as work such as McClary's would seem to suggest, then whether and exactly how this is musically achieved beyond the simple fact of desirable tonic resolution also demands further investigation.

It might be argued that more operas need to be examined in light of their patriarchal workings before we react against this; certainly, more hermeneutical analyses of musical compositions are at least possible before it becomes necessary

⁵⁹ See McClary, 'Excess and Frame', 99–101.

⁶⁰ Peter Rabinowitz is a rare example of a critic who formulates a similar version of this argument, lamenting that many discussions of music and ideology gloss over 'the distinction between representation and endorsement': Rabinowitz, 'Singing for Myself', 133.

to move into other, performance-related spheres. As a genre, opera can be conceived chronologically: the libretto the original component, the musical setting the *first interpretation*, the performance the second, and the reception the third.⁶¹ This formulation highlights that audible disparities and resistances do not *have* to be located beyond the score, but might rather exist in the gap between the libretto and the composition, or even within the musical text itself – and again, this is an area of enquiry that begs analysis.

In summary, there is still much score-based work to be done in the study of opera, in areas with which this thesis will engage: in the tracing of gender relationships and oppressive narratives in the underlying tonal and dramatic structures of individual pieces (Chapters 5 and 7); in the serious consideration of whether and how a work endorses, censures or merely represents its subject matter (Chapters 6, 7 and 8); and in the exploration of resistances and discontinuities that exist within the texts themselves (Chapters 9 and 10). To justify the need for continued textual analysis is not to privilege the composition above other elements of the musical experience, but simply to state that the score itself is still a site of special historic interest: it is on this understanding that the following and subsequent chapters approach *Lady Macbeth*.

⁶¹ In an essay on Schubert lieder, Kramer conceptualises song similarly: composition engages with text to form the ‘first phase’ of interpretation, performance with composition to form the ‘second phase’, and so on, each successive stage involving a ‘complex negotiation’ resulting in new meanings: see Kramer, ‘Interpretative Dramaturgy’, 12–13.

Part II

On Text

Chapter 5

Tritonal Resistance and Tonic Oppression:

Mapping Dramatic and Tonal narratives

The following discussion examines the basic dramatic and tonal structure of *Lady Macbeth* in its entirety, a project unaccountably left undone in studies of this opera hitherto. In doing so, it draws on those analytical and feminist methodologies and assumptions set out in the previous chapter, exploring how the dramatic and tonal narratives operate in tandem with each other – in ways both general and specific – to tell a familiar story of feminine struggle and defeat that is fundamentally regressive. It is the relationship between extra-musical meaning and introversive tonality and its hermeneutic significance that is the essential subject of this chapter, and thus in no sense does the following examination aim or claim to expose anything of especial interest from a ‘purely musical’ point of view. The kinds of tonal patterns encountered in the opera, as uncovered by the most basic analysis, are to be found elsewhere in Shostakovich’s output, and will be explored in passing. In these instrumental examples, such tonal arguments express generalised emotional meanings; in the opera *Lady Macbeth*, their broad experiential significations are fixed more precisely by the libretto – and it is the way in which the tonal narrative of *Lady Macbeth* is dramaturgically realised that is rather of primary concern in the following discussion.

1. Feminine Protest and Masculine Defeat:
the Story of V, #I, and I; their Extra-musical Realisation in Act I of the Opera

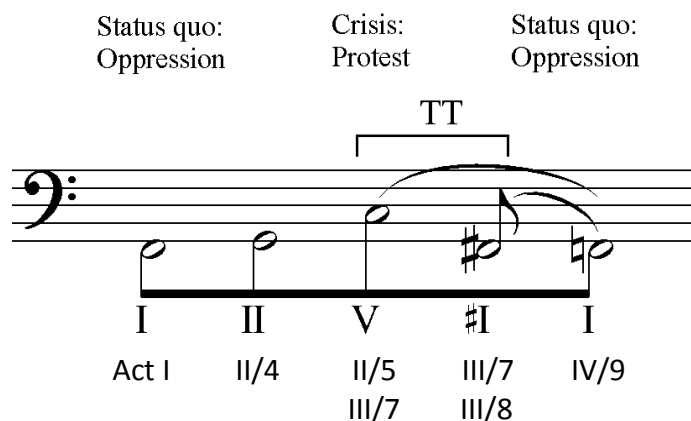
The opera *Lady Macbeth* can be understood as a Marxist/ feminist narrative of oppression and resistance, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The various periods of the heroine Katerina’s subjugation and protest are in fact clearly demarcated by the act-divisions of the work. Thus in Act I, the downtrodden bourgeois wife is verbally abused by her father-in-law, physically forced to swear the oath of fidelity to her husband, and sexually assaulted by her future lover. However, in Acts II and III,

Katerina-the-victim becomes Katerina-the-victimiser, openly indulging in an adulterous relationship and murdering her one-time persecutors in order to sustain her position. Yet in Act IV, Katerina is once again returned to the ranks of the browbeaten: one of a convict train en-route to Siberia, she is betrayed by her lover and tormented by her fellows, events that ultimately result in her suicide.

The Oppression–Resistance–Oppression trajectory maps onto the fundamental tonal plan of *Lady Macbeth* as a whole, as demonstrated in Figure 5.1 and explained below. It should be clearly stated that both this figure, all of the other tonal diagrams throughout this chapter and similar illustrations in Chapters 7 and 9 are only very loosely based on Schenkerian methodology and its notation: the plans do show the presence and prolongation of important key centres of the opera based on their tonal prominence and functional relationship with other keys in a conventional manner; however, tonalities particularly emphasised by features on the musical surface, or, crucially, by corresponding events in the dramatic narrative, are also included as significant centres in the overall scheme – a decision theoretically justified in the previous chapter. On this basis, Figure 5.1 outlines the main functional key centres of the opera, revealing a I–II–V–♯I (♭II)–I structure in f minor (c minor operating as a minor dominant). Each of the central pivots of the tonal narrative is emphasised by the scene or act-divisions of the work: thus Act I (scenes 1–3) is rooted in f minor; II/4 begins and ends in g minor; II/5 moves quickly to c minor and also concludes in this key; III/7 starts in c minor and finishes in f♯ minor; III/8 again cadences in f♯ minor; and Act IV (scene 9) opens and closes in f minor. Only III/6 – the shortest and most musically trivial scene of the work – does not coincide with one of the key points of the opera’s tonal plan.

The tonal argument is primarily concerned with the tension between the minor dominant c and the sharpened tonic f♯, and the eventual resolution of this tritone by the descending movement of f♯ to the tonic f. The large-scale structures of several of Shostakovich’s symphonic works are similarly governed by tritones and their resolution: most notably, the Thirteenth Symphony in b, minor opens in that tonic (mvt. 1), moves to e minor at its apex (mvt. 3) and closes in b, major (mvt. 5). Other works relate more specifically to the tritonal narrative of *Lady Macbeth* as

Figure 5.1: Fundamental Tonal Structure of *Lady Macbeth*



shown above: for example, the Second Symphony in b minor is built on an emergent V–I plan that is interrupted by the first entrance of the choir in the Neapolitan area of C major;¹ meanwhile, the first movement of the Seventh Symphony in C major is founded on the same C/F# tritone opposition that governs the opera, although here functioning in a I/#IV relationship.²

In these instrumental examples, the large-scale introduction and resolution of the tritone constitutes a conflict ‘worked through’, a dramaturgical narrative common to the symphony post-Beethoven. In certain of Shostakovich’s symphonic works this familiar (tonal) story is associated with a more concrete extra-musical reality: thus the C/F# (I/#IV) argument and its partial resolution in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony is simultaneously expressed by and expressive of war and its aftermath, appearing as it does alongside a host of extroversive musical signifiers – military dotted rhythms, percussion tattoos, shrieking ‘shell-like’ woodwind, vocal-style woodwind recitatives, and so on – that denote the battlefield or personal lament. In *Lady Macbeth*, the underlying structure I–II–V–#I (bII)–I is likewise both realised by, and a realisation of, the dramatic journey of Katerina from

¹ Interestingly, Peter Deane Roberts identifies surface and structural root or bass-line progressions involving a tritone and adjacent semitone – often in a dominant/ Neapolitan/ tonic configuration, as in the Second Symphony and (enharmonically) *Lady Macbeth* – as common in Russian piano music of the 1910s and 1920s, citing numerous examples from the compositions of Shostakovich’s older contemporary, Nikolai Roslavets.

² Michael Rofe examines the all-important operation of the tritone in Shostakovich’s symphonies on both surface and structural levels. For an elucidation of his theory, based loosely on Yavorsky, of ‘tritone-led voice leading’ – the way in which unstable tritones are prolonged and then resolved in a number of different ways – see Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 4–13; for sample analyses of tritones functioning in the background, middleground and foreground, see 72–4; 193–200; and throughout.

her states of oppression to resistance and back again, as detailed above – and that the heroine’s subjugation occurs in the tonic status quo, whilst her protest initiates a crisis for this order in the tonal areas of the dissonant tritone, both normalises and endorses the former along McClary-esque lines.

The process by which functional tonality comes to be expressed by/ expressive of extra-musical realities both general and specific in this manner can be observed in several small-scale examples from Act I of *Lady Macbeth*. For the tonal argument that governs this opera in its entirety – the resolution of the tritone V/#I by the descent of #I to I – is in evidence in numerous shorter passages from the opening of the work. That the small-scale and the large-scale should be interrelated in this manner is of course a typically symphonic way of working: in his examination of the first movement of the Thirteenth Symphony, Michael Rofe explores how the B₆/E tritone governs tonal events on foreground, middleground and background levels.³ Table 5.1 charts those tonal or harmonic progressions in Act I that involve the resolution to the tonic of V, #I, its enharmonic ,II, or their resultant tritone, similarly revealing a high concentration of such events in the opening scenes of the opera.

Usually, although not exclusively, these sequences occur in connection with the relevant keys c, f#, G, and f; however, it is strictly through their functional capacity that these tonalities are able to suggest extra-musical meaning. For functional key centres carry with them a number of potential, generalised significations that have accrued over time, for the educated Western listener at least; several of these dramaturgical possibilities are listed alongside the relevant tonal areas in Figure 5.2a. In Act I, the operation of these functional tonalities is given a more precise textual realisation: throughout, certain of the keys are associated with particular dramatic concepts in keeping with their broad extra-musical connotations, yet relating specifically to themes of feminine resistance and masculine oppression – and this two-part construction of meaning is summarised diagrammatically in Figure 5.2b.

³ See Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 73–4; 199–200.

Table 5.1

Tonal Relationships and their Dramaturgical Significance: Act I

Act I, scenes 1 and 2

| Act/ scene | Fig./ bar no. | Tonality | Relevant dramatic/ textual summary | Dramaturgy |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|---|--|
| I/1 | 15/1 | g (#) | Katerina and Boris argue; Boris threatens Katerina | Tension: contained resistance |
| | 48/1 | c# (V) | Boris moots Katerina's possible infidelity; he urges Zinovy to persuade Katerina to swear an oath | Tension: possible escape; envisaged crisis |
| | 53/1 | G _b (I) | Zinovy agrees to make Katerina swear the oath | Temporary resolution: promise of oppression, <i>versus</i> : |
| | 53/1 | G _b (,II) | Boris moots Katerina's possible infidelity | Tension: possible escape; envisaged crisis |
| | 54/1 | f (I) | Boris forces Katerina to swear the oath | Resolution: oppression |
| | 58/1 | c (V) | Aksinya warns Katerina of Sergey's notorious reputation | Temporary alternative: possible outlet; expected to fail |
| | 61/2 | f (I) | Boris rebukes Katerina | Resolution: oppression |
| First <i>Entract</i> | 62/1 | f (G _b interplay) (I (,II)) | | Summary: oppression; contained resistance |
| I/2 | 70/1 | f (G _b interplay) (I (,II)) | The labourers, led by Sergey, physically assault Aksinya | Repeated tension and resolution: futile resistance; continued oppression |
| | →112/14 | c (V) | Boris threatens Katerina with Zinovy's return | Expectation: promised oppression |
| Second <i>Entract</i> | 113/1 | f (G _b /F# interplay) (I (,II)) | | Summary: oppression; contained resistance |

Table 5.1

Tonal Relationships and their Dramaturgical Significance: Act I

Act 1, scene 3

| Act/ scene | Fig./ bar no. | Tonality | Relevant dramatic/ textual summary | Dramaturgy |
|---------------------|---------------|---|--|---|
| I/3 | 128/1 | f (G _b interplay) (I (b,II)) <i>becoming</i> :(IV) | After an unsettling day, Katerina prepares for bed | Tension: memory of recent events: oppression; contained resistance |
| | 133/5 | C/c (I) | Boris orders Katerina to bed; Katerina submits peaceably | Resolution: acquiescence to oppression |
| | 140/1 | f# (#I) | Katerina yearns for love | Tension: envisaged sexual escape |
| | 151/4 | →f (I) <i>becoming</i> :(IV) | Katerina concludes that love is impossible | Resolution: self-defeat |
| | 152/1 | C/c (I) | (Implied) Katerina returns to preparing for bed | Return: capitulation to status quo |
| | 157/1 | C (F# interplay) | Sergey enters Kat's bedroom | Tension: possible escape; potential crisis |
| | 194/7 | c/C (F# interplay) (V (#I)) | Katerina accepts Sergey as her lover | Tension: possible escape; potential crisis |
| | 197/1 | C (V) | Sergey vows to stay with Katerina | Expectation: promise of future |
| Orchestral Postlude | 198/1 | f (G _b /F# interplay) (I (b,II/#I)) | | Resolution: implied oppression; potential escape |
| | | f (I) | | Resolution: implied oppression |

Figure 5.2a: Dramaturgical possibilities of functional tonalities

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| • Dominant (c) | → | alternative/ expectation/ unfinished... |
| • Sharpened tonic (f#) | → | disturbance/ resistance/ escape... |
| • Neapolitan (G _b) | → | disturbance/ resistance/ escape... also impending resolution... |
| • Tritone (c/f#) | → | tension/ conflict/ crisis... |
| • Tonic (f) | → | resolution/ homecoming... |

Figure 5.2b:

Dramaturgical possibilities of functional tonalities, as realised in *Lady Macbeth*

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| • f# (sharpened tonic) | → disturbance/ resistance/ escape.. | → feminine/ sexual escape |
| • G _b (Neapolitan) | → disturbance/ resistance/ escape... also impending resolution...→ | feminine resistance... will be resolved |
| • c/f# (V/#I tritone) | → tension/ conflict/ crisis...→ | protest-through-adultery potential crisis (will be resolved) |
| • f (tonic) | → resolution/ homecoming...→ | enforced resolution oppression |

As is evident from the figure, there is a certain overlap in Act I between the extra-musical connotations of f# (#I), G_b (bII), c (V) and their resultant tritone: all are involved with feminine escape and struggle, particularly as enacted through the sexual freedom of adultery; furthermore, all are concerned with the potential catastrophe that will result from such an action, a crisis which must ultimately be resolved. Thus the sharpened tonic, f#, suggestive in itself of disturbance or resistance, is specifically associated with Katerina's sexuality, a dangerous threat to the masculine order: for example, it is in this key that the heroine yearns for physical love in her extended aria (I/3; 140/1–151/3). Similarly, the flattened second G_b, likewise expressive of disruption yet also impending resolution, appears in connection with feminine resistance that will be defeated: Katerina's adultery is first envisaged by Boris in G_b, prior to his insistence that she swear an oath of fidelity (I/1; 53/1–57/8); and Aksinya struggles against her attackers to a repeated G_b, before she is eventually overcome (I/2; 70/1–72/5). Meanwhile, the tritone formed between G_b/ f# and c provides a musical expression of tension or crisis that is specifically tied Katerina's and Sergey's adulterous relationship, a potential catastrophe for the patriarchal house of Izmailov: it is to a stark juxtaposition of the

pitches C and F \sharp that Sergey enters Katerina's bedroom with obvious intent (I/3; 157/1–160/8), and F \sharp continues to sound against the c/C material in which Katerina eventually accepts Sergey as her lover (I/3; 195/1–4).

These functional key centres and their associative meanings therefore form a kind of amalgamative expression of feminine resistance in the opera that stands in binary opposition to the musico-dramatic operation of the tonic, f. If a sense of resolution is necessarily implicit in this tonal area, the tonic is allied more specifically in Act I with the particular concept of oppression: for example, it is in this key that Katerina is violently forced to swear her oath of obedience by her father-in-law, while the scene in which Katerina is attacked by Sergey also concludes in this key (I/3; 198/1–13) – and thus tonic resolution becomes tonic subjugation, disturbingly masculine and shockingly violent in kind. These and similar statements of the tonic typically resolve those feminine tonal protests as explored above, a procedure that is illustrated in microcosm by the first bars of Aksinya's assault. Example 5.1 provides the musical setting of the opening of the extract: in the orchestra, repeated root-position triads of f are hammered-out in equal quavers and at a *forte* dynamic; meanwhile, the male chorus restate descending scalic motifs, and assorted male soloists provide reinforcements of supertonic, dominant and tonic scale degrees. Against this overt statement of f, the soprano soloist reiterates a dissonant G \flat , that is repeatedly resolved through being drawn downwards to the key note. The result is one of the most memorable aural and visual passages of the opera: a powerful yet wordless exposition of hopeless resistance on the Neapolitan G \flat , and inevitable subdual in the tonic f.

Table 5.1 charts the dramaturgical significance of tonic resolutions of V/ \sharp I and similar more systematically, revealing that the extra-musical connotations of these functional tonalities as explored above remains fairly consistent throughout Act I. In the 'dramaturgy' column, those broad experiential states listed – akin to those provided in Figure 5.2a – apply equally to both the tonal and dramatic narratives, and appear in bold. Other text details the more specific textual realisation of these generalised musico-dramatic meanings, thus adhering to the same conceptual model as Figure 5.2b above.

Example 5.1

70 *ff* Allegro $\text{♩} = 112$ G^b F

Aksinya
 Ай! Ай! Ай! Ай!
 Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Shabby Peasant
 Пря - мо со - ло - вуш -
 Just like a night - tin -

Porter
 Сви -
 А

Steward

Tenor
 Ну й го - ло - сок, Ну й
 What a pret - ty voice, What a

Bass

70 Allegro $\text{♩} = 112$
f

f

Aksinya
Ай! Ай! Ай,
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Shabby Peasant
ка. А ну - по - тро - гай, А ну - по -
gale! Come on, feel her here, Come on, feel

Porter
нья со - ло - вьем за - ли - ва е - тся.
sow is sin - ging like a night - in - gale.

Steward
О - го!
А - ха!

T.
го - ло - сок, Ну й го - ло - сок!
pret - ty voice, What a pret - ty voice!

B.

Aksinya: Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!
(Oh, you shameless creature, hey, don't pinch...),

Shabby Peasant: Just like a nightingale!
Come on, let's feel her, (let's feel her,
squeeze harder! Again!...)

Porter: A sow is singing like a nightingale.

Labourers: What a pretty voice, what a pretty voice.

1/2; 70/1-8.

2. Different Versions of the Same Story, or, the Tritone in Flux:
An Examination of the Tonal-dramatic Narratives of Four Scenes

The extra-musical significances of the functional tonalities as observed in small-scale extracts from Act I are borne out in more extended examples across the work as a whole, although in a manner that is more fluid. Thus in four scenes from the opera, the large-scale handling of the familiar tritone, its constituent pitches and its resolution both alters in tandem with the dramatic narrative, yet remains involved with concepts of feminine resistance and masculine oppression: this is both summarised in Table 5.2, in the format as explained above, and explored further below.

(i) *II/5: The Tritone in Stasis*

The tonal structure of Act II, scene 5 spans the tritone C/F# (G_b) as shown in Figure 5.3. The diagram charts the main key centres of the scene (for the most part, these fluctuate between the major and minor modes, yet are labelled by letter name only for the sake of simplicity); each are marked by significant stylistic or formal shifts on the musical surface, such as tempo changes, sectional endings or beginnings, genre insertions, etc. The figure reveals the tonal narrative of II/5 as a symmetrical journey from c to f#/ G_b and back again to c that is marked by arrivals at the tonic a; this bisects the tritone equally into two minor thirds.

Figure 5.3: Tonal Structure of II/5

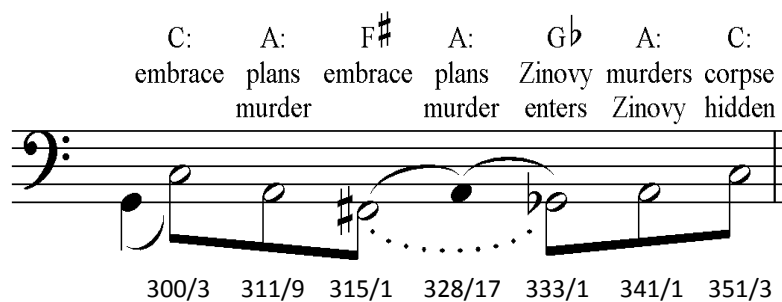


Table 5.2

Tonal Relationships and their Dramaturgical Significance: Acts II–IV

Act II/ scene 5; Act III/ scene 6

| Act/ scene | Fig./ bar no. | Tonality | Relevant dramatic/ textual summary | Key dramatic theme | Dramaturgy |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---|--|--|
| II/5 | 300/3 | C/c | Katerina expresses her love for Sergey; they kiss passionately | Adulterous love | Stasis: Potential crisis held in equilibrium: sin remains undiscovered |
| | 303/1 | a | Sergey fears the return of Zinovy; Katerina declares she will make Sergey a merchant and her husband | Adulterous love; (Anticipated) murder | |
| | 313/7 | F#/f# | Katerina and Sergey kiss passionately | Adulterous love | |
| | 329/1 | A/a | Katerina and Sergey fall asleep; Zinovy returns; Sergey hides and Katerina swears revenge | Adulterous love; (Anticipated) murder | |
| | 333/1 | G _b | Zinovy returns | | |
| | 341/1 | a | Kat and Zinovy argue; Zinovy beats Katerina; Sergey and Katerina strangle Zinovy | Murder | |
| | 351/3 | c/C | Katerina and Sergey carry Zinovy's corpse to the cellar; they stand in a final embrace | (Murder) Adulterous love | |
| III/7 | 392/1 | c | The Sergeant and policemen declare their intention to get even with Katerina and long for a pretext to go to the Izmailov's | | Expectation: Agents of order prepared |
| | 418/1 | f# (C, F interplay) | On discovering of the body in the cellar, the policemen hurry to apprehend Katerina | | Crisis: Situation demanding future resolution |
| Fifth <i>Entract</i> | 423/1 | f# (v. C) f# (v. F) | (Implied) The policemen travel ever closer to the Izmailov's | | Impending crisis: Situation increasingly demanding urgent resolution |

Table 5.2

Tonal Relationships and their Dramaturgical Significance: Acts II–IV

Act III/ scene 8; Act IV/ scene 9

| Act/scene | Fig./bar no. | Tonality | Relevant dramatic/ textual summary | Key dramatic theme | Dramaturgy |
|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| III/8 | →434/1 (end of last scene) | (as above): f# (v. C) f# (v. F) | (as above): (Implied) The policemen travel ever closer to the Izmailov's | Pursuit | (as above): Impending crisis: Situation increasingly demanding urgent resolution |
| | 434/1 | b | Katerina and Sergey celebrate their marriage | (Attempted) flight (denial of situation) | Departure: temporary escape from impending crisis |
| | 443/6 | e | Katerina and Sergey celebrate their marriage; Katerina realises that their crimes are discovered; Katerina suggests running away | (Attempted) flight | Departure: temporary escape from impending crisis |
| | 453/1 | a | Katerina and Sergey make preparations to escape | (Attempted) flight | Departure: temporary escape from impending crisis |
| | 456/1 | e | The policemen approach | Pursuit | Return: inevitable move back towards crisis-point |
| | 458/1 | b | The sergeant addresses Katerina; Katerina confesses; Sergey struggles | Pursuit; confrontation | Return: inevitable move back towards crisis-point |
| | 463/1 | f# | Katerina and Sergey are led away | Capture | Return: arrival at crisis-point |
| IV/9 | 464/1 | f | Katerina is one of a convict train heading for Siberia; the convicts lament their miserable existence | Defeat by policemen | Resolution: oppression |
| | 482/1 | d | Sergey rejects Katerina; Katerina sorrows; Sergey betrays Kat; Katerina experiences guilt | Defeat by Sergey | |
| | 540/1 | b | The convicts prepare to move on | Beginning of end | |
| | 548/9 | a _b | Post-the suicide of Katerina and the murder of Sonyetka, the Old Convict laments | Defeat by opera? | |
| | 549/1 | f | The convicts march on and lament | | |

In Act I, the tritone, in itself a musical expression of tension or crisis, was specifically connected with Katerina's protest-through-adultery against the male tonic order; in Act II, scene 5, such associations both remain and are extended. For Figure 5.3 demonstrates that arrivals at the tritone-linked tonal centres of *c*, *a*, *f*[♯] and *G*_b coincide with dramatic events relating to two overall themes: Katerina's adultery; and Katerina's murders – and, as argued in Chapter 3, it is these interlinked deeds of sexual transgression and violent crime that constitute the heroine's Marxist/ feminist resistance against her patriarchal oppressors. Thus Katerina and Sergey kiss passionately in a filmic climax in *C/c* (300/3); Katerina first contemplates killing her husband to lyrical phrases in *a* (311/9); the couple embrace once more in a Mahlerian-styled adagio in *F*[♯]/*f*[♯] (313/7); they fall asleep in one another's arms to an expressive cadence on *A* for solo strings (328/17); Katerina wakes to plot the murder of Zinovy against a persistent *A* bass pedal (330/1); the victim enters to brass fanfares in *G*_b (333/1); Katerina attacks and kills in a wild and dissonant galop in *a* (341/1; 346/4; 350/9); and she carries away her husband during the muted orchestral march in *c/C* that concludes the act (351/3). Significantly, dramatic events that do not pertain to adultery or murder take place outside of the fundamental tonal plan: for example, the ghost of Boris appears to Katerina mid-way through the scene in a highly chromatic and dissonant passage with no clear tonal centre (320/1–324/1).

The tritone that underpins II/5 is still expressive of tonal-dramatic protest and imminent crisis; its long-term dissonance requires tonic resolution just as the crimes of Katerina demand retribution. However, it is temporarily stabilised in this scene through two aspects of its large-scale handling: firstly, its symmetrical division into two equal intervals of a minor third around the axis *A*; and secondly, by the palindromic ordering of the underlying tonal narrative. Elsewhere in Shostakovich's output, similar structures can be observed: for example, the underlying plans of the Third Symphony (part 1) and the Seventh (mvt. 1) each involve tritone-related key centres partitioned by those at the minor third, while the overall key schemes of both the Fourth Symphony and the Sixth each constitute a movement-by-

movement palindrome.⁴ In his analysis of such symphonic examples, Rofe uncovers parallel symmetries in other musical parameters: thus in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, symmetry is present both in the middleground key scheme – which involves a minor third division of a tritone as explained above – as well as in the proportional durations between various formal and thematic events; meanwhile, the tonal and durational symmetries of the Thirteenth Symphony correspond more closely with one another, the axis of the work’s entirely symmetrical key scheme coinciding with its mid-way point.⁵

In Rofe’s study, symmetry is equated with stasis, and the way in which tonal and other parameters work to produce the effect of ‘stasis’ (and its opposite, ‘dynamism’) is explored.⁶ In a dramatic work such as *Lady Macbeth*, the expression of such broad extra-musical conditions takes place in dramatic, as well as musical, dimensions – and this is certainly the case in II/5 as elsewhere. For if the tritone made-symmetrical is expressive of the unstable made (just) stable, this is exactly the dramatic essence of the scene. Katerina’s protest must eventually be resolved; however, for now she enjoys a momentary ascendancy, undiscovered, uninhibited, and temporarily safe. It is this state of precarious balance that exists in both the tonal and textual aspect of II/5.

(ii) *III/7: The Tritone Explicit*

In the discussion thus far, the C/F# tritone has been considered as a single entity: in Act I, a musico-dramatic amalgamation expressive of feminine protest; and in Act II, scene 5, a static tonal object whose component parts are linked by various symmetrical procedures. The treatment of the interval in the latter scene,

⁴ For a discussion of tritone relationships and their symmetrical division by the minor third in the key structures of the first movements of the Third and Seventh Symphonies, see Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 125–8; for details of the overall structures of the Fourth and Sixth Symphonies, see 72–3.

⁵ See Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 88–93 for a discussion of the Ninth Symphony, and 72–4 for a discussion of the Thirteenth.

⁶ For an equation of symmetry with stasis particularly in relation to durational proportions, see Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 18–20; 23–6. In the introduction to his thesis, Rofe discusses stasis and dynamism in different musical parameters, arguing that the inter-relationship between such states and dimensions is what creates the flow of energy in Shostakovich’s music: theories that are demonstrated in subsequent analysis.

as distinct from elsewhere in the opera, serves to underline the curious ambiguity of the tritone: on the one hand it is aurally dissonant, demanding of its own resolution and thus unstable; on the other hand it bisects the octave exactly, can itself be divided equally, and is both transpositionally and inversionally invariant, all qualities relating to the stable.⁷ Although there are examples of tritones being used as static objects in octatonic, extended chromatic or whole-tone contexts,⁸ within a tonal system the interval ultimately pertains to instability – and in Act III, scene 7, this is writ large. For throughout the scene, the opposing poles of the tritone appear in marked contrast to one another, both on structural and surface levels. As summarised in Figure 5.4, the most part of III/ 7 remains firmly grounded in c minor, the unprepared shift to f# occurring only in the final section of the scene; in the closing bars, the tritone is presented ever more blatantly on the musical surface, a process that continues into the following orchestral interlude.

Figure 5.4: Tonal Structure of III/7

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-------|----------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Song (392/1): | Verse | Chorus A | Chorus B- (x3) | | |
| Dialogue: | 407/1 | 410/2- | 415/1 | 417/1 | 418/1 |

⁷ Rofe, after Richard Taruskin, explains how the paradox of the tritone – its symmetry thus apparent passivity, yet its aural activeness – arises from the symmetrical interval functioning in an asymmetrical tonal system: see Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 13 and Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 322; 329–30.

⁸ Taruskin explores the use of tritones as harmonic and melodic points of rest in octatonic passages in Rimsky-Korsakov, as stable ‘tonics’ in Wagner, and as ‘suspended’ prolongations of the dominant function inducing ‘time-forgetful stasis’ in Scriabin: see Taruskin, ‘Chernomor to Kashchei’, 110–15; 118–21 and ‘Scriabin and the Superhuman’, 330–1, 334–5, 343 respectively. Peter Deane Roberts points out that Yavorsky’s theories on the instability of the tritone only apply to tonal music; he goes on to identify several examples of stable, symmetrical tritone structures on the small- and large-scale in non-tonal piano works by Roslavets, Scriabin and others: see Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music*, 61–71.

The broad extra-musical possibilities of the dominant are here realised in text and in music quite differently than hitherto. The distinct and extended presentation of V at such an advanced point in the overall operatic narrative must set up the expectation of resolution: thus this functional c minor is the first step in a regulated procedure that will lead to the reestablishment of the tonic regime – and it is this association of the dominant with restorative order that is borne out by the musico-dramatic realities of III/7. The scene introduces new characters to the opera: the Sergeant and policemen, whose sole purpose is to bring Katerina to justice and thus reinstate normality in the tonic f. In their opening song (392/1–406/8), the men sing of their civic role in maintaining the historic status quo:

The police were formed, so we are told,/ when the Pharaohs ruled in days of old,/ how then
in our enlightened civilisation/ can men exist without a police station?

III/7; 392/1–393/4.

This song itself is amongst the most formally regimented of the work: its text is arranged in rhyming couplets; its phrases are largely constructed from two- and four-bar units; its clearly-defined verse and double chorus structure is repeated three times with only small modifications; and so on. Moreover, the I–IV–V–I middleground progression of the self-contained piece – emphasised by the sectional divisions of the verse and choruses – goes on to govern the tonal structure of the apparently free dialogue that follows the song, as annotated on Figure 5.4.

It is into this dramatic and musical presentation of order that the character of the Shabby Peasant intrudes with the news of Zinovy's murder (416/1), a dramatic event that would seem to precipitate the sudden tonal swing to the sharpened tonic f# (418/1). In the subsequent passages, the tritone is made conspicuous: thus in the policeman's exit chorus (418/1–422/8), the harmonies of f# minor and C major are directly alternated as shown in Example 5.2a; and in the following orchestral interlude, the relevant pitches sound against one another in a violent presentation of the leitmotif associated with force in the opera, as shown in Example 5.2b.

Hitherto, the tritone has been structural; now it erupts explicitly on the musical surface. This kind of phenomena can be observed elsewhere in Shostakovich's output: thus in the first movement of the Sixth Symphony, a formal

Example 5.2a

Tenor
 жи - во, жи - во! Там пред -
quick - er, quick - er, we might

Bass
f # *C*
 Ob. Silof.

T.
 ви - ди - тся на - жи - ва,
get free food and li - quor,

B.
f # *C* *f #*

III/7; 421/3–8.

Example 5.2b

C *FORCE LEITMOTIF* *FORCE LEITMOTIF*

F #

Fifth Entract; 423/2–9.

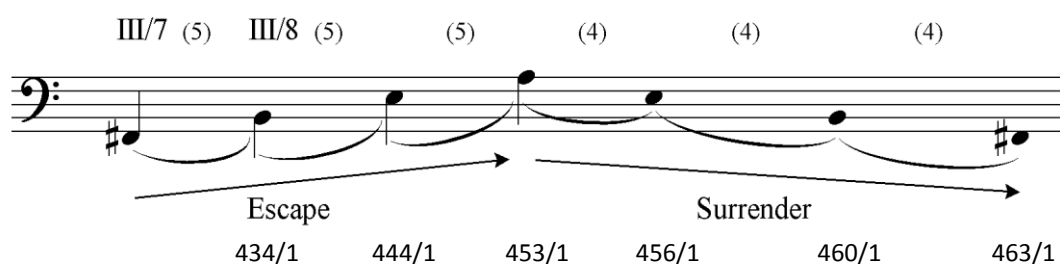
opposition between E and B, established at the outset is later heard as an overt and sustained harmonic dissonance supporting an extended flute cadenza. In his analysis of this movement, Rofe describes the tritone-as-cadenza – which coincides

with points of proportional significance – as the emotional ‘heart’ of the piece.⁹ In the texted work *Lady Macbeth*, the tritone explicit is given a more precise extra-musical realisation. For Katerina’s crimes have been discovered and her downfall is imminent: thus the tritone, previously an underlying symbol of potential catastrophe, becomes a blatant expression of an actual crisis that demands its own resolution.

(iii) *Escape from f#: Perfect and Plagal journeys in III/8*

The musico-dramatic resolution pending at the close of III/7 is in fact delayed in III/8. For the narrative of this scene travels away from the sharpened tonic f# and back again via a series of perfect and plagal moves as shown in Figure 5.5, a tonal course of action that operates in tandem with Katerina’s initial endeavours to avoid her arrest, and her subsequent surrender to her captors.

Figure 5.5: Tonal Structure of III/8



Katerina’s positive and resolute efforts to escape her dramatic and tonal destiny are marked by a series of decisive V–I modulations away from the crisis point of f#: thus the celebration of her wedding to Sergey – in essence, an attempt to put her criminal and adulterous past behind her – opens in b (434/1); she declares her intention to run away following her realisation that she has been discovered within the tonal orbit of e (444/1–452/6); and she firmly instructs her lover on the arrangements for their getaway in a (453/1–455/9). Katerina would thus appear to control the V–I progressions that characterise the opening 178 bars of III/7; at the point of her a minor dialogue with Sergey, she has travelled a

⁹ See Rofe, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Doll’, 209–223 (214).

substantial distance from $f\sharp$ around the circle of fifths and seems poised to escape. The moment of hope is short-lived, however. The policeman's entrance in e initiates a series of defeatist and resigned acts of surrender on the part of the heroine; these coincide exactly with a sequence of passive IV–I shifts, back 'the way we came' to the $f\sharp$ crisis point. Thus following the policemen's arrival in e (456/1), Katerina gives herself up without struggle in b (460/1), and allows herself to be meekly led away in $f\sharp$ (463/1), begging forgiveness from Sergey all the while. Katerina seems to lose control of the IV–I progressions that fall back rapidly towards $f\sharp$ in the last 77 bars of the scene; this is a capitulation that is both fatalistic in its character, and swift in its execution.

Katerina's last-ditch attempt to break away from both the consequences of her crimes and the disruptive tonality of the sharpened tonic is ultimately a failure. The circular structure of III/8 has taken us away from both a freshly-discovered murder in need of retribution, and a large-scale tonal dissonance in need of resolve, only to return us to these dramatic and musical subjects at the conclusion of the scene. That the main musico-dramatic argument of the opera is once again resumed at the end of III/8 is emphasised by its reuse of musical material from the close of III/7. In the earlier scene, the policemen clamoured for the urgent arrest of Katerina in a typically Shostakovichian passage in $f\sharp$, characterised by repeated pitches and 'hammered out' equal note values (III/7; 418/1–422/8); in the later scene, the same men make the same demands, using portions of identical text to a variation of the original musical material (III/8; 463/1–8). This time, the requirements of societal and tonal order must be adhered to: at the opening of the following act, both Katerina and the disruptive tonal area associated with her criminal protest are finally and variously defeated.

(iv) *Absolute Defeat: tonic resolution in IV/9*

The beginning of Act IV marks the end of Katerina's murderous and adulterous rebellion against the patriarchal establishment: the final scene opens with the heroine a convict bound for Siberia, a potent symbol that her adulterous and murderous resistance has been decisively overcome. Thus the $C/F\sharp$ tritone that

has so dominated the opera – both expressive of and expressed by Katerina’s protest and its concomitant crisis – does not return in IV/9: rather, the sharpened tonic $f\sharp$ that remained unresolved at the close of III/8 is resolved to the tonic f at the opening of IV/9, which thereafter remains enclosed in the tonal orbit of the tonic as shown in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: Tonal Structure of IV/9

Figure 5.6 shows the tonal structure of IV/9. The notation is in bass clef and consists of two phrases. The first phrase has four notes: f , d , a , f . The second phrase has four notes: b , a , b , f . Above the notes are Roman numerals: $(d:I, II, V, I)$ and $(a:II, V, I)$. Below the notes are figured bass notations: $464/1$, $482/1$, $540/1$, $548/9$, $549/1$.

Both the dramatic and tonal defeats of Katerina are strongly marked as follows. The convicts with whom the heroine marches are the only other characters in the work to sing music that is traditional, nationalistic, conventionally beautiful and genuinely expressed: therefore she is overtly identified with their number. The opening chorus of IV/9 (464/1–475/5) reveals these weary and pitiful prisoners – lamenting their miserable existence in heartfelt terms – to stand in a long line of precedents from the nineteenth-century Russian literary tradition, the criminals of Dostoevsky’s *The House of the Dead* or Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* providing notable examples; such types are fundamentally browbeaten and utterly subjugated. Furthermore, in certain of its stylistic characteristics – the interface between modality and tonality, the predominance of minor triads, and the use of various harmonic devices such as parallel motion chord progressions, unprepared shifts, oscillation and pedal points – the chorus powerfully evokes the music of Musorgsky, a stylistic borrowing of considerable dramatic significance. For in the operas of this composer, the oppressed masses make a regular appearance, and although the crowds that beg for bread in *Boris Godunov* or lament their war-torn state in *Khovanshchina* are not criminals, they are equally wretched and downtrodden. By

modelling his convicts on such Dostoevskian and Musorgskian prototypes, Shostakovich bestows on them the weight of a whole history of subjugation – and so Katerina, explicitly positioned alongside them, takes on their misery, which is epic; and their oppression, which is age-old.

If the dramatic portrayal of Katerina's defeat is powerfully highlighted by the introduction of the convicts, the tonal expression of her overthrow is similarly emphasised, the tonic f being clearly stated and reinforced in a number of ways. IV/9 is the only act in the opera to begin and end in the same key, and one of only three scenes to do so; moreover, as shown in Figure 5.6, the main tonalities explored in the scene are bound up in a closed cycle of minor thirds that travels from tonic–tonic. The return of the initial key centre at the end of the scene is emphasised by an extended and fundamentally exact repeat –again, almost unique in this opera – of a section of the opening chorus (compare 472/1–475/2 with 549/1– 552/2); this chorus itself is unusual for its extended and uncomplicated presentation of a single, clear tonality.

That $f\sharp$ has been resolved to f is unambiguous – and yet, a telling thematic reference that occurs just prior to the death of Katerina would seem to further bring home the point. The I/3 aria in $f\sharp$ in which the heroine first yearns for a loving sexual relationship opens with the vocal motif annotated in Example 5.3a; this returns as the flute lead-in to the II/5 Mahlerian orchestral passage in $F\sharp$ to which Katerina and Sergey passionately embrace, as shown in Example 5.3b. Yet the third and final occurrence of this emotionally-loaded theme takes place in a very different dramatic and tonal context in Act IV: imprisoned, betrayed by her lover and mocked by her fellow convicts, Katerina first contemplates suicide to the solo cello version of the motif in F/f provided in Example 5.3c. Previously connected with her sexual rebellion in the sharpened tonic, the phrase is thus dragged down to express her tonic defeat in a manner that is familiar.

Essentially, this small-scale reference provides a summary of the large-scale musico-dramatic argument of *Lady Macbeth* – and another thematic recurrence in the final scene of the opera works to a similar end. The convict's opening chorus in IV/9 closes with a three-pitch motif that outlines the resolution of the tritone $C/G\flat$,

Example 5.3a

140
Adagio ♩ = 80

Kat.

MOTIF

pp

Я во - кош - ко
Once I saw from

140

I/3; 140/1-3.

Example 5.3b

Fl. *p*

MOTIF

II/5; 314/4-5.

Example 5.3c

Old Convict

га - тья бу - дут,
they'll give us hell,

слы - шишь?
do you hear?

MOTIF

pp

MOTIF

IV/9; 543/4-5.

to F (475/1–2); this figure returns in the final bars of the scene as shown in Example 5.4, to conclude the work in its entirety. The motif encapsulates the V–#I–I progression of the opera and its attendant extra-musical meanings with one interesting amendment: at this late stage, the sharpened tonic f# is reconceptualised as the Neapolitan G_b, a functional tonality that carries within it the expectation of its own imminent resolution. In its enharmonic reworking of the opera’s tonal narrative, the final phrase would seem to retell the story of female resistance and masculine oppression, though in the past tense: F# rewritten as G_b, it becomes clear that Katerina’s attempts to escape her (tonal) destiny were ever doomed from the outset.

Example 5.4

552 (The stage is now empty).

T. div. *pp*

B. div. *pp*

MOTIF

MOTIF

552 *pp* 6 7

CURTAIN FALLS.

END.

IV/9; 552/1–6.

3. Conclusion: Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*, or, a Tale of Defeat

The above discussion charts the dramaturgical operation of tonality in *Lady Macbeth* on small and large-scale levels, revealing that its main functional key centres remain variously yet ever associated with concepts of feminine protest and defeat. Ostensibly this opera, after Leskov, tells a story of a formidable female villainess and her notorious crimes. However, while the powerful deeds of Katerina drive the action on the surface, the fundamental dramatic-cum-tonal argument of the work is concerned with the subjugation of the heroine, rather than her dominance. In its essential subject matter, the operatic *Lady Macbeth* is regressive: its seismic shift of focus places the work firmly alongside its Romantic precedents, in which such dramatic and tonal narratives of feminine struggle and overthrow are disturbingly commonplace. In such operas, the heroine's transgressions are tonally dissonant, while her downfall is tonally consonant, thus aurally desirable – and Shostakovich's work proves no exception to this rule. Katerina's tritonal resistance becomes increasingly unstable as the piece progresses, materialising on the musical surface in discordant formulations that demand their own resolution, and render the final tonic arrival a relief. It would seem that *Lady Macbeth* does not simply tell

of the heroine's defeat, but also sanctions her overthrow – and the question of endorsement will be considered in more detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 6

Oppression Censured, Oppression Endorsed:

the Dramaturgical Use of Tonal Procedures in Three Extracts

The previous chapter proposed that the fundamental musico-dramatic subject of *Lady Macbeth* is the defeat of the heroine Katerina at the hands of her male counterparts. The notion that the (tonal) narrative of this piece is concerned with themes of feminine resistance and masculine dominance is in line with feminist interpretations of earlier operas. Such readings of such works argue that the heroine's final overthrow is sanctioned by a concluding tonic resolution that is aurally required, and Chapter 5 demonstrated that Shostakovich's opera also follows this familiar paradigm. Yet prior to the long-required shift from f# to f that marks the point of Katerina's absolute defeat in Act IV, smaller scale modulations from the sharpened tonic and related key areas to the emergent tonic do not necessarily celebrate the dramatic instances of female oppression that they accompany. For the sum of these passages is more than merely the simple fact of their tonic resolution: exactly *how* this resolution is textually, stylistically and technically achieved also has a bearing on the endorsement or otherwise of dramatic events – and this shall be explored in the analyses below.

1. Oppression Censured:
the Foregrounding of (Musical) Violence in Katerina's I/1 Oath
 - (i) *From a to f:*
the dramatic, stylistic and functional establishment of the tonic in I/1

Although *Lady Macbeth* is firmly rooted in f minor, the opera as a whole following the trajectory I–II–V–#I (♭II)–I in f as analysed in the previous chapter, the first scene does not in fact *begin* in this key. Rather, the opera opens in a minor, the overall tonic of the work reached conclusively only in the final minutes of the scene (57/8). The contrast between the presentation of a and f, both in terms of their dramatic context and musical handling, supports the notion that f is established as the key of masculine order – and of a particularly unpleasant kind.

The tonal centre of a minor accompanies Katerina alone on stage, lamenting her personal predicament in the private space of her bedroom. Her monologue indulges in a stylistic intimacy and freedom: individual woodwind colours predominate; the solo lines are unpredictable in their meandering melodic course; there is no clear-cut phrase structure; the tempo varies whilst the pulse is often understated; and so on. As is so often the case in the works of Shostakovich, this language occupies a grey area between modality and tonality, and an (Aeolian) a minor receives no explicit functional reinforcement.¹ Furthermore, the status of a as the (modal) tonic is frequently undermined: the passage fluctuates between a (Aeolian) and e (Phrygian) as alternative centres. At times, *which* is predominant is ambiguous: the passages from 7/4–8 and 9/4–11/4 could be heard either in a or e, and this ambivalent relationship between tonic and dominant can be observed elsewhere in Shostakovich's output.²

If Katerina's presentation of the tonic a minor is characterised by a stylistic freedom and tonal/modal flexibility, the initial statement of the tonic f is fundamentally different in nature. The episode in which f is first introduced, then established, occurs at 53/1–57/9: the relevant passage begins with an extended G, harmony, during which Boris and Zinovy imagine Katerina's escape-through-adultery; this is followed by an abrupt move to f, in which Boris orders Katerina to swear an oath of fidelity. The extra-musical significance of the shift from Neapolitan to tonic has been fully examined in Chapter 5; what is of interest here is *how* the move to the masculine tonic is presented and achieved in the subsequent bars. This

¹ For discussions of the interface between modality and tonality in Shostakovich's music, see Rofe, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Doll', 169–85 and Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist*, 16–20 and throughout. For Rofe, modality is primarily a surface phenomenon, the melodic and harmonic hierarchies of diatonicism – and in particular, the stable resolution of unstable tritones – governing this music on a fundamental level. For Fanning, tonality and modality function in a more integrated and similar way than conventional analysis might allow: rather than the former being equated with dynamism and the latter stasis, tonal progressions between related key centres might unfold in a static manner, as between 'dual aspects of one entity' (20), while the gradual alteration of scale degrees within modal areas can create a dynamic sense of progression.

² For an example that also fluctuates between a modal a minor and e minor in particular, see the first theme of the second subject group in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony (figures 31–32): while the reiterated E in the bass line suggests this pitch as the tonic, certain aspects of the melodic voice-leading – the initial move from E–A, the final attempt to descend to A, and so on – rather imply this note as the centre. Tonal diagnoses of this material thus vary: for example, Pauline Fairclough labels the passage in a minor, while Karen Kopp considers it in e minor: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 89–92.

extract relates a dramatic incident of some violence: Boris first orders Katerina to pledge her loyalty to Zinovy, then forces her down on the ground to take leave of her husband. The full text is given below, the words immediately preceding the musical excerpt bracketed:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| (Boris: | Watch out someone doesn't/ seduce her). |
| Zinovy: | Yes. |
| Boris: | Katerina,/ swear on the sacred icon,/ that you'll be faithful to your husband. |
| Katerina: | I swear. |
| Boris: | That's all./ Goodbye Zinovy./ Say goodbye to your wife. |
| Zinovy: | Goodbye, Katerina darling! Goodbye! |
| Boris: | Not like that!/ On your knees! On your knees! Come on!/ He's off on a long journey – spare an extra tear.../ On your way then! |

This brutal scenario is stylistically realised through 'hammered out' repeated pitches and melodic descents, strident unison textures, accented delivery and *forte–fortissimo* dynamics, brass-heavy orchestration and noisy percussion, and strained moments of high vocal writing usually half-shouted in performance.³ These surface characteristics are shared by other violent resolutions of the Neapolitan to the tonic elsewhere in Act I: at the opening of scene 2 (70/1–), the labourers molest Aksinya – and G, resolves to f – to the same reiterated pedal points, patterns of descent and vocal extremities; at the close of scene 3 (198/1–), the predator Sergey (implicitly) takes hold of Katerina – as f# and G, resolve to f – to similarly powerful unison doublings and fortissimo orchestral tuttis.

None of these extracts exhibit the kind of modal ambiguity that is found in Katerina's opening monologue, and indeed at numerous other points throughout the work. These passages, though utilising extended chromaticism and dissonance, are functional in a tonal sense, and statements of key are clear. Aksinya's assault, though highly dissonant, begins with twenty-five reiterated f minor triads; Sergey's final embrace of Katerina, though chromatically complex, is punctuated by decisive perfect cadences in f (1/2; 198/3–4; 8–9; 13); and Katerina's oath is similarly unequivocal in its insistence on f, as shall be examined in more detail below. These presentations of the tonic f, in sharp contrast to Katerina's exploration of the tonic a, are characterised by their dramatic brutality, stylistic stridency and tonal rigidity –

³ Examples of this can be heard in both the Mstislav Rostropovich (1979) and Myung Whung Chung (1993) recordings of the opera.

and the inflexible tonal procedures at work as Boris forces Katerina to pledge her fidelity will now be explored in more depth.

(ii) *The Tonic Explicit: a voice-leading analysis of Katerina's I/1 oath*

Figure 6.1 provides a voice-leading analysis of Katerina's oath (I/1; 53/3–57/8): this comprises of two graphs – background and middleground – including various levels of detail as appropriate.⁴ The analysis shows that the extract is essentially a prolongation of $\hat{1}/I$ in *f*. $\hat{1}$ is reached in Boris' vocal solo at the outset, in the register *f* (54/1); the continued presence of this pitch in the subsequent bars underpins the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ *Uralnie*-like descent in the higher register *a_b"-g"-f"* (54/1–55/1).⁵ This mini-descent is quick to arrive at $\hat{1}$; furthermore, $\hat{2}$ is unsupported in an orthodox sense, the pitch *g"* sounding against a strong voicing of the tonic pitch at registers *f* and *f'* (54/4). Throughout the extract, $\hat{1}$ and *I* are prolonged through various complete and incomplete neighbour-note elaborations: the voice-leading graphs chart movements from *G_b-f*, (*f*)–*e*–*f* and *c_#/d_b-c*, the latter an unfolding to an inner voice that is supported by the harmonic progression *vii₀₇-I*. These elaborations of $\hat{1}$ recur several times during the episode, the neighbour-note progression (*f*)–*e*–*f* emerging in both the melodic and bass lines. This movement in the bass creates a series of *vii₀₇-I* harmonies that in effect operate as perfect cadences: the arrival at *I* is thus a recurring feature of the passage.

The tonic pitch *f* is (re)established in multiple registers throughout this extract: $\hat{1}$ reappears at the registers *f*, *f'* and *f"*, while the statement of *I* in the bass occurs at the pitch *F*. In the final bar, the higher octave doublings of the orchestral accompaniment are stripped away, and the melodic line drops to *f* – the pitch at which Boris' vocal solo first introduced the $\hat{1}$ that would form the basis of the section. The re-emergence of $\hat{1}$ in its original (and in Schenkerian terms, obligatory) register is reinforced by the sole and concluding *V-I* cadence of the extract. Overall,

⁴ The notation utilised in this and subsequent graphs, as well as in the accompanying discussions, is standard Schenkerian notation, as most clearly set out in the initial chapters of Pankhurst, *Schenker Guide*.

⁵ This notation of precise pitches is taken from Helmholtz: the *C* two octaves below middle *C* = *C*; one octave below = *c*, middle *C* = *c'*, one octave above = *c''*, and so on.

Figure 6.1: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina's Oath (I/1; 53/3–57/8)

207

BACKGROUND

53/3 57/1

F minor: \flat II I VII I V I

Figure 6.1: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina's Oath (I/1; 53/3–57/8)

Gb: Ic
 F minor: \flat II $I^{\flat 6}$ I \flat VI $^{\sharp 4}$ $I^{\flat 6}$ VII $^{\circ 7}$ I VII $I^{\flat 6}$ V 7 VII $^{\circ 7}$ I VII $^{\circ 7}$ $I^{\flat 6}$ VII $^{\circ 7}$ V 7 I

Katerina's oath forms a strong presentation of f minor in which the tonic is constantly reiterated and reinforced: $\hat{1}$ is heard at the outset, immediately re-established through a mini-*Uralinie* descent, and prolonged throughout various neighbour-note elaborations supported by a series of perfect-type cadences (vii^o7–I); it is reached and re-reached in different registers, underlined by the final return to the original register and supported by the decisive closing cadence V–I. The unremitting focus on the tonic leaves little room for tonal uncertainty. Only at the outset (54/4–6) might D_b constitute an alternative centre, and on the varied repeat of this material (55/7–56/1) the D_b is removed. The passage provides a statement of the tonic that is powerful and persistent: all opposition to this key is eradicated, and f is both relentlessly repeated and vigorously reinforced.

In summary: this extract depicts the subjugation of Katerina by her male counterparts; this act of aggression takes place in the tonic f, the key associated with masculine oppression throughout the work. The brutality of the scenario is emphasised through various means, both dramatic and musical: physical cruelty is strongly implicit in the text; this is musically realised through a style that is forceful, and procedures of tonal reinforcement that are unremitting. The foregrounding of violence in Shostakovich's setting effectively condemns the subjugation of Katerina: at this point in the opera, patriarchal oppression is thus censured.

2. Oppression Endorsed:

Peaceable Submission/ Necessary Defeat in Two 1/3 extracts

Elsewhere in Act I, the resolution of feminine/ tonal resistance to masculine/ tonal order is achieved in less violent a manner. As detailed above, Act I, scenes 1 and 2 contain forceful resolutions of the Neapolitan G_b to the tonic f that coincide with brutal acts of female oppression; by the opening of 1/3, f is not simply established as the tonic, but also confirmed in its extra-musical signification. Yet at two points in scene 3, the move from $\flat II / \sharp I - I$ is managed somewhat differently. In (a) the initial dialogue between Katerina and Boris, and (b) the subsequent aria of Katerina, the familiar resolution is softened and even made desirable through its

dramatic realisation, stylistic accompaniment and tonal handling – and both the nature and implication of this altered treatment are examined below.

(a) Katerina's and Boris' I/3 Dialogue

(i) *Oppression Made Palatable: text and setting*

The third scene of *Lady Macbeth* opens much as the first: Katerina, alone on stage, laments her overwhelming boredom and bemoans both the mental and physical imprisonment of her bourgeois existence. Midway through her reverie, Boris enters and demands she go to bed – and although Katerina faintly protests, her objection is soon overruled:

Katerina: Time for bed. The day is over,/ time for bed, time for bed./ I've no one to talk to,/ oh, how boring it is, how boring,/ just walls and doors with locks on them. (*Enter Boris*).
Boris: Katerina!
Katerina: Yes?
Boris: Time for bed.
Katerina: It's still quite early.
Boris: Nonsense!/ What have you got to do? Your husband's not here,/ no need to waste the candle.
Katerina: All right, I'll go to bed. (*Exit Boris, Katerina undresses*).

I/3; 128/1–137/7.

Boris' effortless victory might seem trivial – and yet this dialogue is symptomatic of a nineteenth-century power-relation in which the weaker partner was denied even the most basic of decision-making freedoms. Katerina's attempt to direct her own movements is half-hearted, and her easy submission disguises the sinister extent of Boris' absolute control. Furthermore, the disturbing nature of Katerina's defeat is softened by its musical setting. A gently rocking ostinato pattern is established in the orchestra at the outset and remains throughout the extract: this consists of a lazily syncopated rhythmic pattern that first outlines an oscillating semitone (see Example 6.1a), and later vacillates between a major and a minor triad in its subsequent developments (see Examples 6.1b and 6.1c). The text is expressed in long lyrical lines while the accompaniment utilises subdued orchestral timbres – muted divisi strings with touches of French horn and celesta – that for the most part play at a *piano* level. The hypnotic repetition, lyricism and restrained dynamic of

this bed-time conversation is reminiscent of a lullaby – and the evocation of this particular genre would seem to disallow any possibility of wrongdoing.

Example 6.1a

128
Allegro ♩ = 132



1/3; 128/1–2.

Example 6.1b



1/3; 133/9–12.

Example 6.1c

137 (*Exit Boris*)



1/3; 137/1–7.

Although the exchange between Katerina and Boris exhibits both female resistance and male repression, this is made palatable – and even obscured – through the understated quality of their dialogue and the soothing nature of its musical style. In a similar manner, disturbance and resolution is worked out in the

tonal argument of the extract – and yet, as examined below, this process occurs in such a way that its dissonance and drama becomes scarcely perceptible.

(ii) *Struggle Made Ineffectual: tonal procedures*

The night-time conversation of Katerina and Boris begins in an f minor that is undermined by a strong bass presentation of the Neapolitan G_b, (128/1–129/3); the latter is of course the functional pitch that signifies female resistance in this opera. The extract subsequently shifts to e_b, (130/4–132/11), and finally arrives at a C major that is coloured by frequent vacillations to c minor (133/5–137/7). It is in this concluding key area that Katerina at last acquiesces to Boris, and as C/c functions throughout Act I as the (modal) dominant of f, this small submission in C/c is but one step towards her large-scale conquest in the overall key of the opera. Thus Katerina's defeat might be said to take place 'in the sphere' of the tonic f – and yet although this tonal-dramatic outcome may by now seem commonplace, the peaceable way in which this particular resolution is achieved is less familiar.

Figure 6.2 provides a voice-leading analysis of the 1/3 dialogue that consists of a background and a middleground graph; specifics highlighted in the discussion below are annotated in red on the latter diagram. Although 1/3 begins in f, the opening bars provide a statement of dissonance: G_b, sounds in the bass at the register G_b; it is also reached in Katerina's vocal line in the register g₂". These pitches constitute the lowest and highest extremities of range in the first two phrases of the scene, and the ♭II degree is thus underlined. The Neapolitan dissonance is further emphasised by its musico-dramatic history: this beginning is reminiscent of the start of the previous scene, in which Aksinya's struggle against the violent f minor of the labourers repeatedly touches on the same g₂" as Katerina. As is indicated in the voice-leading analysis, the opening of 1/3 sees the resistant G_b resolve to f by incomplete and complete neighbour-note resolutions in multiple registers, and it is in this manner that the disruptive pitch submitted to the tonic in the expression of Aksinya's assault. Yet in the subsequent phrases of 1/3, G_b is treated differently: as the setting modulates to e_b minor (via a dual V–I progression round the circle of fifths, as annotated in the analysis), the dissonant Neapolitan at g₂" becomes

consonant (131/1). Its role as a semantic carrier of female resistance is thus negated: G_b now literally sounds in harmony with the surrounding context, and it is further normalised through subsequent and fully-diatonic mini $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ *Urlinie*-like descents at g_b'-f'-e_b' and g_b"-f"-e_b". As the pitch loses its tonal function as the Neapolitan, it is also stripped of its dramatic function in signifying struggle: thus the standard weapon of feminine-tonal resistance in the opera is here made ineffectual, and in so gentle a manner as might almost go unnoticed.

The dialogue between Katerina and Boris that begins 1/3 opens with a strong presentation of G_b in the bass, and closes with a firm statement of C. The bass line thus spans a tritone, from G_b, the functional pitch associated with female resistance, to C, the functional stepping-stone to masculine tonic order – and in the tonal-dramatic narrative of the opera as a whole, this tritone is expressive of the crisis that results from Katerina's defiance, demanding of its own resolution. Yet in this short extract, the gradual shift from G_b to C is handled in such a way that the unstable interval of the tritone is partially stabilised. As delineated above, the dissonant bass G_b reappears in an upper voice, then is diatonically resolved to E_b via the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ *Urlinie*-like descent at g_b'-f'-e_b' in the tonal context of e_b. The prominent E_b in the bass (130/4–133/3) is subsequently resolved through the same $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ pattern of descent: E_b-D-C in c minor (133/3–4). The tritone is thus symmetrically partitioned by the minor third, a procedure utilised by Shostakovich on both local and large-scale levels elsewhere in his output, and – as discussed in Chapter 5 – shown by the scholar Michael Rofe to often correspond with durational proportions that are symmetrical (thus pertaining to stasis) or otherwise controlled. It is this kind of careful management of the tritone that is observable in Katerina's and Boris' dialogue: here, the bass move from G_b to C is not simply bisected by the symmetrical minor third, but further divided sequentially along the degrees of the octatonic scale. The unstable potential of the interval is consequently diffused by its balanced and ordered treatment across the passage in its entirety.

Throughout this extract, the journey from G_b to C in the bass occurs alongside a tonal shift from f–c. While C/c operates as the (modal) dominant of f on the larger scale of the scene as a whole, on the small-scale level of this extract the

Figure 6.2: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina's and Boris' I/3 Dialogue (I/3; 128/1–137/7)

MIDDLEGROUND:

128/1 129/1 130/4 131/1 132/1

f: I B \flat /b \flat : V I e \flat : V I

132/11 133/5 134/4 135/1 135/7

($\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$) ($\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$) ($\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$) ($\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$) ($\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$)

($\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$) ($\hat{3}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{5}$) ($\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$) ($\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$)

C/c: I V I \flat III II V I

functional relationship of these keys is upturned, and f acts as the subdominant of the (temporary) tonic C/c. This reconfiguration is significant. Elsewhere in this thesis, it was proposed that, while V–I shifts have a decisive modulatory energy about them, IV–I progressions are more passive: an examination of the tonal-dramatic narrative of *Lady Macbeth* in Chapter 5 found that in Act III, structural perfect cadences coincided with Katerina’s positive actions, whilst structural plagal cadences accompanied her moments of least resistance. In the opening of I/3 also, Katerina surrenders to Boris over a giant plagal cadence: her submission is thus peaceably achieved. Both the construction of the whole along tritone, minor third and octatonic divisions, together with the emphasis on the plagal (rather than the perfect), have particular precedents in the Russian tradition – and Chapter 7 will explore the notion that this use of structural ‘Russianisms’ might further legitimise Katerina’s fate.

In summary: this extract enacts a similar tonal-dramatic tale of feminine resistance and defeat as can be seen elsewhere in *Lady Macbeth*. However, this scenario is softened in a variety of ways: the textual content of Katerina’s and Boris’ exchange is understated; its restful stylistic accompaniment draws on the genre of lullaby; the disruptive qualities of the Neapolitan and tritone are negated through various means; and the whole takes place over a giant plagal cadence suited to gentle resolution. Although a disturbing narrative underpins this dialogue, it is alleviated and obscured by its presentation – and in this way, patriarchal oppression becomes acceptable.

(iii) *Postscript: an unambiguous conclusion*

Although this musico-dramatic resolution is peaceably accomplished, there is no mistaking the certainty of the final outcome. As Boris exits, Katerina begins to undress for bed, her verbal promise thus translated into firm action. C/c, the tonal area in which she ultimately succumbs, is strongly reinforced through an excess of reiterated tonic triads and triadic/ scalic patterns on the musical surface. The voice-leading analysis from 132/11 to the close of the passage further reveals how C (c) is

repeatedly confirmed. The tonic is first reached by the $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ *Urlinie*-type descent in the melodic line at g"-f"-e"-d"-c" (132/11–133/5); from 133/5 to the end of the extract the pitches of the tonic triad in the upper voices are then prolonged by various ‘nested’ neighbour-note elaborations (neighbour-notes within neighbour-notes). Meanwhile, in the bass, the tonic-triad pitches are also prolonged in turn: first E (133/5–134/9) then G (135/1–9) are elaborated by a series of mini-*Urlinie* patterns and arpeggiations. In the last bars, all melodic activity in the upper voices ceases, and a lower voice and bass line provide both the melodic and harmonic element (135/7–): C is finally confirmed by the $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent at the register G–F–E–D–C, in which the final scale steps are supported by a conclusive perfect cadence. In fact, C is reinforced through some of the same procedures that participated in the powerful establishment of the tonic f during Katerina’s Oath. In both the chosen extracts from I/1 and I/3, Katerina’s tonal-dramatic defeat is made absolute. Yet in Katerina’s Oath this is aurally disturbing, while in Katerina’s and Boris’ Dialogue it is aurally reassuring – and it is only this pleasing confirmation of masculine tonic victory that is regressive, from a feminist point of view.

(b) Katerina’s I/3 Aria

(i) *Yearning, Unfulfilled: text, genre, melody*

Following the exit of Boris in I/3, Katerina gives voice to her desire for a loving physical relationship in an extended operatic aria (140/1–151/6). In the privacy of her bedroom, the heroine breaks away from the confines of her loveless bourgeois marriage through her imagined romantic fantasies in the key of f#; however, this envisaged escape soon comes to an end, and the music shifts to f during the instrumental passage that closes her song (151/1–). In the subsequent orchestral section, Katerina falls silent to a variation of the powerfully established C/c material that accompanied her submission to Boris just prior to the aria (152/1–156/7), and following this reminiscence, Sergey gains admittance to Katerina in a lengthy dialogue that is similarly poised above the bass pedal C (157/1–160/8). Sergey’s entrance in the overall dominant will be fatal: it is in the main body of I/3 that he violently seduces Katerina, to the same frenetic galop tempo, forceful

rhythmic figures, elemental melodic motifs and noisy orchestration that accompanied his attack on Aksinya in the previous scene. A further repeat of the C/c 'submission' reminiscence completes Sergey's assault of Katerina, this time signifying a different kind of surrender (195/1–197/1). In the concluding bars of the act, this dominant material at last leads to a tonic resolution that is absolute: the orchestral music that brought the violent action of I/2 to a strident tonic close is repeated, providing a similar stamp of key-note finality to the brutal episode of Katerina's conquest (198/1–13).

These shifts from f#–f and c–f bear a tonal-dramatic narrative that is by now familiar. Again, it is the way in which these tonic resolutions are achieved that is of interest – and the modulation from f#–f in the instrumental passage that closes Katerina's aria is particularly notable in this regard. Katerina's song appears in two versions: the somewhat risqué 1932 original is given below, alongside the bowdlerised 1935 replacement.

Katerina (1932): The foal runs after the filly,
the tom-cat seeks the female,
the dove hastens to his mate,
but no one hurries to me.
The wind caresses the birch-tree,
and the sun warms it with his heat,
for everyone there's a smile from somewhere
but no one will come to me.
No one will put his hand round my waist
no one will press his lips to mine.
No one will stroke my white breast,
no one will tire me out with his passionate embraces.
The days go by in a joyless procession,
my life will flash past without a smile,
No one, no one will ever come to me,
no one will come to me.

Katerina (1935): Once I saw from my window a little nest.
A little nest under the roof;
A happy dove was hast'ning there,
Was hast'ning there with her darling mate.
Now often do I look at them
And with envy bitterly weep and cry;
Oh, happy dove, she has a mate,
I have no freedom, I have no darling, none,
I am not able to fly,
Ah! I have no freedom,
I've no darling, no sweet beloved darling have I.
Day follows day sad and mournful,
My life will pass without a single smile.
No love, no love will be my fate here,
No love will be my fate here.

Despite their differences, the texts express the same essential emotional content: Katerina yearns for love, and yet remains unfulfilled. Her private stirrings of impossible desire would be familiar to many a nineteenth-century operatic heroine; both Tatyana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (1878) and Liza in the same composer's *The Queen of Spades* (1890) indulge in similar outpourings of amorous longing whilst alone in their bedrooms and preparing for sleep – and other examples abound. The musical style of Katerina's aria does bring such traditional precedents to mind: her song is conventional in its firm tonal grounding and combination of basic verse and ternary structures; it is Romantic in its use of extended chromatic harmony and pedal points, vocal lyricism and virtuosity, string, horn and harp-based orchestration, and liberal sprinkling of expressive markings and tempi changes. If the overall genre-type of Katerina's Romantic-styled operatic aria is suggestive of yearning unfulfilled, this emotional state is also conveyed by the musical specifics of her song. Katerina's vocal part is characterised by its upward melodic strivings: the intervals of a major sixth and perfect octave mark the beginning of the first and third 'verses', as shown in Examples 6.2a and 6.2b; and the major ninth of Example 6.2c constitutes one of the expressive high-points of the piece.

Example 6.2a

140

Adagio ♩ = 80

Kat. *pp*

Я во - кош - ко —
Once I saw from.

140

140/1–3.

Example 6.2b

146
♩ = 80
Kat. *pp*
Про - хо - дят
Day fol - lows
146
pp

146/1–2.

Example 6.2c

149
Kat. *p cresc.* *pp subito* 150
Сов-сем, сов-сем не бу - дет люб - ви,
No love, no love will be my fate here
149 150
pp *p espr.*

149/1–150/1.

In fact, the first part of this aria exhibits an overall trajectory of ascent that is in keeping with the ever-increasing desire of the text(s). From the second ‘verse’ onwards (142/1–), Katerina’s vocal line gradually climbs to a higher tessitura, culminating in her climactic B, at 145/1; this general shift upwards is supported by a proliferation of rising motifs in the bass, and accompanied by a sustained crescendo and accelerando. Yet if both the small and large-scale patterns of ascent in this extract are suggestive of reaching or growth, their progress seems continually hampered by the presence of *descents* on the musical surface. Katerina’s melody

contains numerous falling tone and semitone motifs that sound and resolve against the orchestral harmonies (eg. 141/3; 149/5) – and these quasi-appoggiaturas in the vocal line in themselves constitute a musical *topoi* evocative of longing, sighing or weeping.⁶ Yet these descending figures signify still further. During the final phase of Katerina's ascent, her vocal line appears 'weighed-down' with such motions: Example 6.3 illustrates how this passage in fact grows out of the falling dyads F#–E, G#–F#, G#–G, A–G# and A–G, embellished in the vocal line by drooping arpeggios. Such phrases are curiously characterised by their simultaneous patterns of ascent and descent – and this unusual quality would seem to encapsulate Katerina's state of yearning, unfulfilled.

(ii) \hat{S} , *Unresolved: a Schenkerian perspective*

The particular combination of ascents and neighbour-note elaborations in the melody line of Example 6.3 is clearly shown in the foreground graph of three such voice-leading diagrams of the aria – background, middleground and foreground – provided in Figure 6.3. Overall, the analysis reveals that the main body of Katerina's f# aria (140/1–150/7) is a prolongation of \hat{S} in the register C#" , elaborated for the most part by patterns of ascent. \hat{S} is established at the outset; at the beginning of the second 'verse' (142/1–) it is 're-reached' by the third progression $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{S}$; and in the extended passage that follows (142/6–144/10) it is the starting point for the ascending arpeggiation C#"–F#"–A". Each pitch of this background elaboration is supported by a different temporary key centre on the musical surface: thus C# is \hat{S} in the tonal context of f#; F# becomes \hat{S} following the transitory modulation to b (142/9–143/8); and A becomes \hat{S} over a passing excursion to d (144/1–10). Each is approached by a quasi-initial ascent, $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{(\#4)}$ – \hat{S} or similar.

From a Schenkerian perspective, the main body of the f# aria is characterised by its lack of resolve. On a background level, the original \hat{S} stays unresolved throughout, active in the register c#" until the final bar of Katerina's

⁶ For a survey of the musical topic of the descending semitone or *pianto* that traces its usage and signification from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, see Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 66–73.

Example 6.3

F# —————> E, F# —————> E, **144** G# —————>

Kat. *mf* *cresc.* *f* *accelerando*

нет у ме - ня, ах нет го - луб - ка; ах, нет,
I have no free - dom, I have no dar - ling, none

144

F# , G# —————> G, A —————> G#
cresc.

Kat.

нет у ме - ня _____ сво - бо - ды, Ах! Я не мо -
I am not ab _____ le to _____ fly, Ah! I have no

145 *Più mosso*

Kat. *ff*

гу ле - тать, _____ и нет _____ у ме
free - dom _____ now, _____ I've _____ no _____ dar-ling

145

143/5–145/2.

vocal part, in which it is transferred down the octave to c#⁷ (150/7). Meanwhile, on the musical surface, those temporary $\hat{5}$ s in the melody line – supported by transitory modulations to b and d – also remain unresolved. Throughout the duration of Katerina’s material in f#, the voice-leading diagrams reveal a conspicuous lack of those *Uralinie*-like descents that are a necessary precondition of

tonal resolution in traditional Schenkerian analysis; in fact, the graphs show only linear *ascents* in the sung $f\sharp$ portion of her aria. However, the orchestral postlude to the song (151/1–6) in f provides a solution to both the non-resolution of $\hat{5}$, and the absence of those linear descents so essential to a Schenkerian concept of resolution. First $C\sharp$ ‘becomes’ C : the latter is melodically substituted for the former over the harmonies of $C\sharp$ and $f\sharp$, as shown in Example 6.4. This replacement $\hat{5}$ is then resolved to $\hat{1}$ in the new tonic, f , via the first *Urlinie*-like descent of the piece: $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-(\hat{2})-\hat{1}$ at the register $C-B\flat-A-(G)-F$. Although in a surrogate tonic, the $f\sharp$ aria thus finally achieves a Schenkerian closure of sorts.

Figure 6.3: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina’s I/3 Aria (I/3; 140/1–151/6)

BACKGROUND

$f\sharp$: I b II V I f : V I

Figure 6.3: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina's I/3 Aria (I/3; 140/1–151/6)

MIDDLEGROUND:

140/1 142/1 143/1 145/1

f#: I b: V I d: VII I Bb: I

(III) IV III I g: III I

Vb bII -

146/1 150/1 151/1

V I (#) ft: V I

(last sung note) (orchestral postlude)

^5 ^4 ^3 ^2 ^1

Figure 6.3: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina's I/3 Aria (I/3; 140/1–151/6)

FOREGROUND

140/1

142/1

143/1

f#: I bII V I IV III b:V I II I II I

145/1

d: VII I VII I Bb: bII I g: I #IV I #IV/ I

146/1

I f#: bII V I bII V bII I V I

149/1

150/1 (last sung note)

151/1 (orchestral postlude)

IV I bII/V I f: V I V IV I I

Example 6.4

151

150/8–151/2.

(iii) *The 'Wrong' Conclusion?*
The construction of formal, cultural and tonal desire

The peculiar conclusion of Katerina's song might invite a hermeneutical interpretation. In the text of her aria, Katerina wishes for a fulfilling and loving physical relationship. What she *gets*, however, is a kind of distortion of this dream: the commencement of her adulterous affair with Sergey just minutes after her reverie could not be more brutal and insincere (and this travesty of expectations resonates in several ways with the social history of the time, as discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis). Likewise, what the f# aria 'wants' in general terms is tonic closure – or, in Schenkerian specifics, the resolution of $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ through an *Urlinie* descent in f#. What the aria 'gets' is a distorted version of this conclusion: resolution via descent in a different tonic, f. That this tonal about-turn takes place *after* Katerina has stopped singing is significant: Katerina might dream of escape in the overall sharpened tonic of the opera, but, once she has finished, the orchestra must bring her back to reality in the fundamental tonic – and this concurs with standard postmodern and feminist theories of where exactly authorial control is located in the operatic work.⁷

⁷ The intuitive concept that the composer's voice resides in the orchestra, the performer's in the vocal line, underpins much of that feminist musicological writing on opera discussed in Chapter 4, in which the female singer's voice or material sounds against plot-based or musical structures. Such broadly post-structuralist theories also inform Carolyn Abbate's imaginative explorations of those operatic moments in which the orchestra – functioning as the (male) 'observer-commenter', in leitmotivic works in particular – ceases to carry out its conventional role, performing voices temporarily assuming control: for examples, see Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 124–7 and 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', 247–52.

Both the (tonal) lead-up to Katerina's aria, and the (tonal) events that follow, are dramatically and musically constructed in such a way that we desire what appears to be the 'wrong' conclusion – at least on the surface of things. As members of an audience, we should not want Katerina and Sergey to become lovers: we already know him to be a philanderer and rapist at this point in the work. However, our knowledge of operatic narrative convention tells us that this *must* happen. The plot follows a standard path in which events are compressed to a degree that makes the likely outcome almost ridiculously obvious: thus in the first scene, Boris suggests that Katerina may commit adultery; her husband, Zinovy, must suddenly leave the mill on urgent business; Sergey, the new labourer with a history of seducing the master's wives, is hired the very same day; Boris is prevented from discovering his dubious past by the sudden arrival of the coachman; and all of this takes place in less than two hundred bars of music. Arguably, the seeming-inevitability of Katerina's and Sergey's coming together results in our desiring it: we wish – as Clemént or McClary might have it – the established plot to run its course. Likewise, when Katerina taps into the Romantic tradition by singing an expressive aria in which she yearns for love, our familiarity with operatic custom demands that she be satisfied – and thus we *want* the predator Sergey to knock on Katerina's bedroom door at the end of her song.

Perhaps the unresolved musical properties of Katerina's $f\sharp$ aria act similarly, the conventional resolution of \hat{S} to \hat{I} so well-established that we desire this descent even in the substituted key of f . However, although f seems the 'wrong' tonic on the musical surface, it is of course the overall tonic of both act and opera; furthermore, Figure 6.4 – which combines the background graphs of Katerina's and Boris dialogue (from Figure 6.2) and Katerina's aria (from Figure 6.3) – reveals the extended extract to be enclosed in this key.

Perhaps the resolution of $f\sharp$ to f was always expected, and thus, of course, required. The abrupt shift to the tonal centre of f , with its violent musico-dramatic history, is eased by its stylistic accompaniment: the modulation is primarily effected by an expressive and muted cello solo in lilting triplet figures (150/8–151/6). It is in the dominant of f that Sergey will enter Katerina's bedroom with disastrous

Figure 6.4: Voice-leading Analysis of Katerina’s and Boris’ I/3 Dialogue (I/3; 128/1–137/7), and Katerina’s I/3 Aria (I/3; 140/1–151/6)

228

BACKGROUND

128/1 130/4 133/3 138/9 140/1 145/1 151/1

f: I eb:V I C/c: I II V I f#:V I bII V I ft:V I
 c: IV c: I

consequences, and the tonic f that will follow his assault on the heroine. Yet in her aria, she yearned for something similar; and the powerful setting in motion of narrative, tonal and even Schenkerian structures that must be fulfilled results in our perception of the 'wrong' (tonal) outcome of Katerina's longing as the 'right' resolution of her song.

3. Towards Act IV: Some Final Thoughts

The musico-dramatic defeats of Katerina— via variations of a tonal argument that is by now familiar — are at times condemned, and at times approved, by aspects of text, musical style, and technical tonal procedure. Perhaps significantly, of the examples given above, it is the extract from scene 1 that explicitly works to censure the subjugation of Katerina; as the opera progresses and the tonic f becomes ever more established in its functional capacity, its element of aural desirability might inevitably serve to endorse the dramatic events that it accompanies, at least to some extent. Certainly by the close of the work, the move to the tonic seems urgently required — and yet, it is not simply the long-overdue arrival at f minor that sanctions the final overthrow of the heroine in IV/9. The following chapter will explore how Katerina's Act IV downfall is endorsed by features other than the mere fact of tonic resolution; in doing so, it moves beyond the standard feminist paradigm.

Chapter 7

Act IV, or, a Most Traditional Ending:

Tonal Endorsement, National Precedent and Operatic Prototypes in Shostakovich's Finale

The concept that the *final* overthrow of the heroine is made musically satisfying through both tonal and stylistic means is a familiar one in feminist criticism of opera, and the following chapter deals solely with the last act of *Lady Macbeth*. As detailed in Chapter 5, Act IV sees Katerina dramatically and tonally vanquished in a manner that is absolute: the plot charts her punishment, betrayal and violent death; this narrative is enclosed within the tonal orbit of f, and begins and ends with powerful statements of this key. However, this tonic subdual comes as a welcome aural relief: the tritone that underpins the opera has become increasingly prominent as dissonance throughout Act III, and demands its own resolution. Moreover, the eradication of Katerina's musico-dramatic resistance is made stylistically pleasing. The unambiguous resolution in f takes place to a Musorgskian choral section that is traditionally and operatically beautiful: it was this chorus and similar material in Act IV that proved one of the saving graces of the work for many early Soviet and Western critics, and the final act is still praised for its conventional beauty in popular accounts today.¹ Yet the last scene of *Lady Macbeth* also endorses Katerina's defeat in ways that are less familiar to standard feminist accounts, moving beyond the simple fact of beautified tonic resolution – and it is this that forms the primary subject of this chapter.

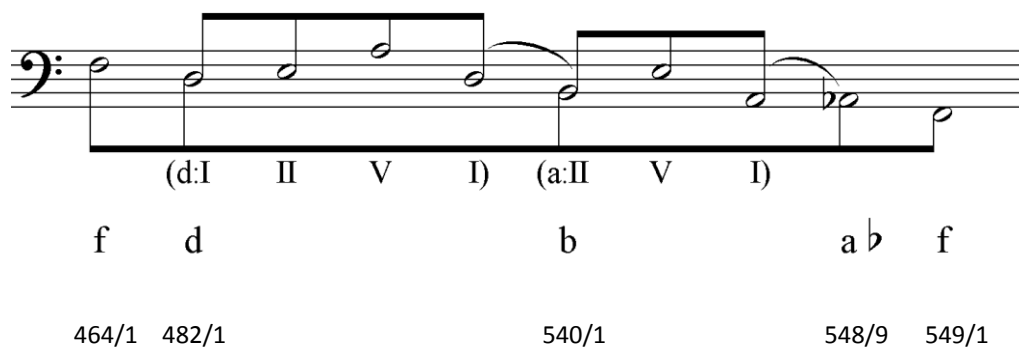
¹ Two early examples, one Soviet, one Western, of overwhelmingly negative commentaries on the opera that nevertheless praise its final scene are Downes, 'New Soviet Opera', *The New York Times*, (6 February 1935), accessed on-line (26 June 2008); and Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, 36–47. The latter typically acclaims the last act's debt to Musorgsky and the Russian art and folk traditions and its serious emotional tone, features still admired in contemporary commentaries: for example, a recent entry in a dictionary of opera commends the 'affecting, folk-inspired lament in Musorgskian vein': Fay, 'Lady Macbeth', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 15 Nov 2010).

1. The Underlying Structure of IV/9:
Tonal Endorsement both Natural and National

(i) *Tonal Completeness:
mediant sequences, pivot-notes and octatonicism*

The internal tonal plan of Act IV, first provided in Chapter 5, is shown again in Figure 7.1. The illustration reveals that IV/9 is underpinned by tonal centres a minor third apart, following the trajectory f–d–b–a_b–f. The second step of this plan, d, is elaborated by an extended I–II–V–I over a period of 520 bars that are thus essentially self-contained in d; e (II) and a (V) can thus be viewed as ‘adjuncts’ to d (I). However, the third step, b, is rather a starting point for a II–V–I cadence in a; a (II) is thus a tonal centre ‘in its own right’.

Figure 7.1: Fundamental Tonal Structure of IV/9



As explained in Chapter 5, the diagram above does not pretend to be a ‘true’ Schenkerian background analysis: the figure does demonstrate the presence, prolongation and functional relationships of tonal centres based on conventional analytical considerations; however, it also places more weight than is usual on keys particularly emphasised by stylistic or formal changes on the musical surface and crucial dramatic events, as previously justified. Thus, while an orthodox musical analysis would present f minor and d minor – proportionally and functionally the most significant tonalities of the act – as of more structural importance than b and a_b, this examination considers the latter key centres of similar consequence based on the following kinds of criteria. Thus although the modulation to b (540/1–) lasts for only thirteen bars, its arrival is strongly emphasised by the closure of the

dialogue between the main characters (none of them will speak again in the opera), the voices of the full chorus of convicts (which have not been heard since the opening of the act), and the instruction of the Sentry, who informs us that the prisoners must move on; this call for change is underlined by an altered tempo and time signature, and the introduction of entirely new material involving an ominous tonic pedal in the timpani. Similarly, although the excursion to a_b (548/9–) is brief, it occurs as the Old Convict utters his final words of lament on the misery of our existence (in fact, the last solo expression of any kind in the work), and heralds the unprecedented cyclic return of the opening chorus of IV/9.

All of the tonalities comprising the underlying minor third chain are marked by similar dramatic and surface musical events, the latter most notably stylistic. Although the opera as a whole is characterised by its wildly disparate styles, Act IV sees the greatest incongruence in this regard: banal parodies of operetta dialogues stand side-by-side with expressive Musorgskian-styled choruses, or extended woodwind recitatives of the kind that would become distinctive of Shostakovich's individual style. However, the crucial tonalities f , d , b , a , a_b , and f are all marked by retreats to genre-types or musical languages that are serious and genuine, rather than parodistic. Table 7.1 details the statements and re-statements of these mediant-related tonalities, indicating how their structural significance is emphasised by dramatic and musical changes or markers.

As is evident from both Figure and Table 7.1, the sequence of minor thirds 'completes' the diminished seventh from the tonic, the final arrival at I marked by the opening chorus' cyclic return. Elsewhere in the opera, tonal sequences have been incomplete or 'hijacked' by their symmetrical patterning. Thus the large-scale progression by minor thirds in II/5 begins $c-a-f\#$, yet never manages to fulfil the diminished seventh e_b-c ; instead, it retreats to a , attempts G_b once more, then ascends back 'the way it came', from $a-c$. Similarly in III/8, the initial succession of V-I shifts, $f\#-b-e-a$, is simply reversed: a series of plagal cadences, $a-e-b-f\#$, returns the scene to its starting-point. These and similar progressions are in a sense frustrated; only in the final act is a chain sequence 'worked through' in full, and arguably there is an aural satisfaction in its completion. The particular qualities of

Table 7.1:
The Main Tonalities of IV/9, and their Dramatic and Musical Reinforcement

| Bar no | Key | Dramatic changes/ markers | Musical surface changes/ markers |
|--------|----------------|---|---|
| 464/1 | f | Opening of scene; location change to Siberia; introduction of convicts; Katerina shackled | Chorus. Clear tonal statement; traditional and expressive Musorgskian language. <i>Adagio</i> (♩=76). |
| 482/1 | d | Sergey first rejects Katerina | Free dialogue. Ambiguous tonal statement; unmelodic, chromatic language. <i>Allegretto</i> (♩= 120). |
| 501/1 | | Sergey returns to Katerina, feigning love; Sergey cruelly tricks Katerina | Free dialogue. Clear tonal statement; unmelodic, chromatic language. <i>Allegro molto</i> (♩= 176). |
| 526/1 | | Katerina first realises her guilt | Arioso. Clear tonal statement; expressive Musorgskian language. <i>Adagio</i> (♩= 63). |
| 540/1 | b | All dialogue ends; the convicts prepare to move on | Solo and chorus material. Clear tonal statement; Romantic dramatic language. <i>Andante</i> (♩= 76). |
| 547/1 | a | Katerina drowns | Clear tonal statement; traditional and expressive Musorgskian language. |
| 548/9 | a _b | The old convict laments | As above |
| 549/1 | f | The convicts lament | As above |

such a tonal plan must give rise to a sense of cohesion: in his analysis of similar third-related cyclic schemes in the Fourteenth Symphony, Michael Rofe comments that this kind of organisation balances both motion (inherent in the continuous evolution of each key centre) with stasis (inherent in the symmetrical partitioning of the octave).² This type of structure is thus simultaneously never-ending and yet complete – and this synthesis of apparent opposites has a certain unity about it.

The specific connection between tonal centres that are a third apart might also contribute to the overall impression of cohesion. In a series of all-major or all-minor triads transposed by all-major or all-minor thirds, each triad will share one pitch in common with the next in the series; *which* component pitch is shared will depend on the specifics of the sequence. In the descending progression of minor

² See Rofe, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Doll', 288.

triads by minor thirds, the root of the initial chord acts as a pivot note in becoming the third of the following chord – and so on, as demonstrated in Figure 7.2a. In the tonal structure f–d–b–a_b–f that underpins this act, each key is therefore ‘contained’ in the next in a manner that is unified. Furthermore, the pitch collection created by the triads f, d, b and a_b forms the S-T octatonic scale as outlined in Figure 7.2b;³ the tonal centres are thus theoretically connected through their shared membership of this group.

Figure 7.2a: Mediant Chains and Pivot-note Progressions in IV/9

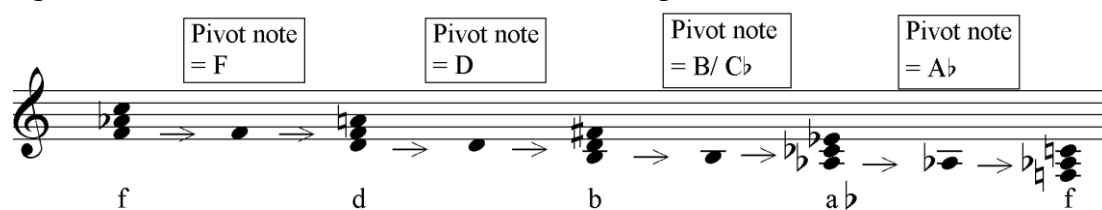
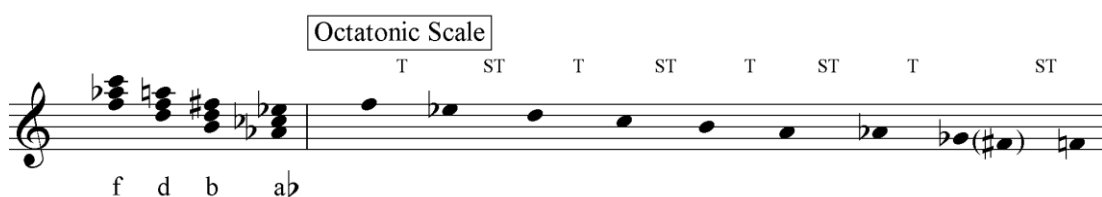


Figure 7.2b: Mediant Chains and the Octatonic Scale in IV/9



This octatonic scale in descent, F–E_b–D–C–B–A–A_b–G_b–F, is in fact integral to the organisation of Act IV. As shown in the more detailed summary of the tonal structure of IV/9 provided in Figure 7.3 – predicated on the same broad analytical considerations discussed above – the scale steps that ‘fill in the gaps’ between the minor third-related pitches (ie. E_b, c, a and G_b) also emerge as key centres or important harmonic features throughout. The diagram reveals that these ‘fill-in’ octatonic tonalities at times operate outside of, at times within, the middleground (I)–II–V–I structures in d and a. Yet each of the key centres/prominent pitches E_b/e_b,

³ In fact, the S–T octatonic scale contains all of the pitches of numerous harmonic formations – major, minor, diminished, dominant seventh, minor seventh, diminished seventh, half diminished seventh and French sixth – based on every node of its fundamental diminished seventh; furthermore, any cycle of major, minor or mixed triads by the minor third will generate the complete octatonic collection. For a discussion of how the triadic resources of the scale were exploited by Rimsky-Korsakov and others, see Taruskin, ‘Chernomor to Kashchei’, 100–103.

c, a and G_b, also function independently of these structures, in order to (re-) propel us forward to the 'next' tonality in the overarching minor third chain.

Figure 7.3: Detailed Tonal Structure of IV/9

Thus on a tonal level, E_b/e_b functions several times as an upper neighbour to reappearances of the tonic d, and numerous small-scale harmonic progressions from E_b/e_b to d are also present on the musical surface (for examples, see 484/1–2; 501/1–504/3; 535/4–536/2). The shifts from c–b and a–a_b, though fundamental steps in the overriding tonal plan, occur in the foreground (Examples 7.1a and 7.1b); meanwhile, the bass resolution of the pitch G_b to f takes place in the overall context of f, in a Neapolitan–tonic resolution that is by now familiar (Example 7.1c). The minor-third related key centres of Act IV are thus connected by an underlying octatonic plan that is both comprehensive and cohesive.

(ii) *Tonal Precedents: examples from the Russian tradition*

Complete sequences of minor thirds involving 'pivot-note' progressions⁴ and octatonic scale-steps are characterised by their qualities of integration, and in itself this might engender a sense of 'rightness' in the listener. Yet these tonal procedures also carry with them powerful historical associations: such processes have precedents in the Russian symphonic and operatic tradition, and these prototypes, both specific and general, work in different ways to legitimise Katerina's fate. Thus one particular and seminal Russian orchestral work explores the same complete mediant chain as does *Lady Macbeth's* Act IV: the opening movement of

⁴ Richard Taruskin uses the term 'common-tone' for such progressions, for example throughout Taruskin, 'Chernomor to Kashchei'.

Example 7.1a

540 Andante ♩ = 76

ff

Sergeant

Вста- вай! По ме- стам! Жи - во!
 On your feet Back to your places! Look lively!

(An officer wakens the convicts.
 The beating of the drum is heard.)

540 Andante ♩ = 76

pp ff dim.

8va tr

Sergeant

(The convicts get up.)

S. *div. ff*

A. *ff*

T. *div. ff* Эх, вста
 Oh, we've

B. *ff*

tr

ff fff 8va

Cassa

539/7-540/6.

Example 7.1b

(Exeunt convicts.)

Old Convict *p*

Сно - ва и сно - ва ша гать, мер - но зве - ня кан - да
We trudge a-long day after day, clan-ging our fet - ters be

ла - ми. Вер - сты у - ны - ло счи - тать,
hind us. Wea - ri - ly coun-ting the versts,

548/6-11.

Example 7.1c

552 *(The stage is now empty).*

Tenor *div. pp*

Bass *div. pp*

552 *pp* 6

552/1-2.

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony (1878) is founded on the minor-third related cycle that spans the octave, f–f, though here moving upwards through the familiar sequence of tonalities f–A_b/a_b–B–d–F/f. Tchaikovsky's written programme for this movement might throw further light on Shostakovich's choice of a third-based structure for the finale of his opera. In an oft-quoted document sent to his patron, Nadezhda von Meck, the earlier composer revealed that the subject of the piece was 'Fate', adumbrating how its musical narrative depicted a series of life experiences all overshadowed by the 'fateful force that.... is invincible, and you will never overcome it'⁵ – and Tchaikovsky's dramatic scenario is thematically realised by a sequence of episodes periodically interrupted by his Fate motif throughout, as is standardly recounted.⁶ Yet less discussed is the notion that the underlying tonal plan might also be expressed by or expressive of this generalised programme: for if, as proposed earlier in this chapter, a full mediant cycle is simultaneously suggestive of both the continuous – through the constant evolution of its third-related centres – and the concluded – through the complete and symmetrical partitioning of the octave – then the structure is inherently suited to Tchaikovsky's vision of life, both experienced in its development, yet ever-directed by Fate inescapable from the outset. The relevance of this to Katerina – an operatic heroine who in living transgresses and must be defeated – is further illuminated by the particulars of the Fourth Symphony: in fact, the Fate-obsessed and third-related opening movement was dramatically, tonally and thematically inspired by Bizet's *Carmen*,⁷ the finale of which so impressed Tchaikovsky in its enactment of the heroine's 'inescapable end'.⁸

In relation to *Lady Macbeth*, the example of the Fourth Symphony serves to suggest that, for Shostakovich as for Tchaikovsky, an underlying third-related cycle is innately expressive of a certain fateful inevitability. Yet the later composer's allusion to the *specific* tonal centres of the earlier composer's famous symphonic movement might also conjure up this latter work more particularly, its associative

⁵ Quoted in Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 147.

⁶ For a typical account of the thematic content of the symphony's first movement and its relationship to von Meck programme, see Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 143–7.

⁷ David Brown shows how the tonality and first main theme of Tchaikovsky's movement are derived from *Carmen*: see Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 144.

⁸ Quoted in Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 144.

baggage of the Fate narrative and Carmen's inescapable destiny imbuing Katerina's own end with a sense of naturalness. More generalised examples of mediant cycles, pivot-note progressions and octatonicism in the Russian symphonic and operatic repertoire also work to legitimise Shostakovich's finale, though differently: for *Lady Macbeth's* use of such tonal processes taps into a proud nationalistic tradition, these third-based procedures being self-consciously styled as 'Russian'. Underlying structures based on complete cycles of mediant progressions can be found in the works of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Serov, for example; and although this kind of tonal plan is also evident in the compositions of several Western composers – Schubert and Liszt, for instance – it is peculiarly involved with Russian attempts to create a nineteenth-century nationalist style.⁹ Third relationships were mined from the works of Glinka, so loudly proclaimed by the *kuchka* as the Father of Russian music.¹⁰ Such mediant key areas provided a useful alternative to the dominant, oftentimes avoided as inauthentic in compositions based on the folk genre.¹¹ Much traditional Russian folk song is characterised by its 'tonal mutability' or *peremennost'* – the tendency to shift freely between two alternative 'tonics' often a minor third apart (in a relative major/ relative minor relationship) – and this feature was also appropriated for the nationalist project.¹² Both local and large-scale mediant moves thus became an established trait of the national school: distinctly

⁹ For a discussion of both harmonic and tonal mediant relationships and cycles in the work of Russian composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov and Western composers such as Schubert and Liszt, see Taruskin, 'Chernomor to Kashchei', 79–91; see also Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 70 for a summary of third relations in a sample Rimsky-Korsakov symphony and Taruskin, *Opera and Drama*, 224 for the same in a Serov opera.

¹⁰ For example, Taruskin demonstrates how interlinked melodic, harmonic and tonal third relationships in Glinka's orchestral fantasia *Kamarinskaya* – long-held as one of the founding compositions of the Russian national tradition – were deliberately exploited by Balakirev in his two overtures on Russian themes, in turn developed by Rimsky-Korsakov in his own work of that name: see Taruskin, 'How the Acorn Took Root'.

¹¹ Taruskin and, after Taruskin, Francis Maes show how the *kuchka's* and particularly Balakirev's use of mediant or other harmonic progressions and tonal schemes arose from a belief that the sharpened seventh and the dominant were alien to Russian folk music: see Taruskin, 'How the Acorn Took Root', 133–41 and Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 65–6. Marina Frolova-Walker also explores how a nineteenth-century nationalist distrust of V–I progressions resulted in a theory of Russian historical 'plagalism' that was ultimately flawed: see Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 105–111; 184.

¹² For an explanation of *peremennost'* and a discussion of its application in the works of the *kuchka*: see Taruskin, 'How the Acorn Took Root', 133–40.

'Russian' not in any essentialist sense, but rather because they were initially defined as such, and subsequently exploited by many a homegrown composer.¹³

In a similar manner, both the 'pivot-note' progressions and octatonic underpinning involved in such mediant sequences are examples of characteristics 'become' Russian through their use by national figures. Once again, Father Glinka provided a prototype for local 'pivot note' shifts involving major and minor thirds; this technique was taken up and extended by Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov in particular.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the latter composer began to connect his cycles of minor-third related harmonies, through stepwise bass movement that gave rise to explicit octatonic scales on the musical surface – and this experimentation with octatonic collections would influence another generation of Russians under the tutelage of Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky most prominent amongst them.¹⁵

Interestingly, the first use of the device by Rimsky-Korsakov – in his 1867 tone poem *Sadko* – involves the same key areas that are present in Act IV of *Lady Macbeth*: the harmonic progression $e\sharp-d-b-g\sharp$ is 'filled in' by passing chords on the octatonic steps $f\sharp, d\sharp, c$ and a , to form an extended leitmotif that would recur throughout. The composer himself gave an account of this 'modulation by a minor third downward' in his autobiography, explaining its integration with 'the

¹³ The distinction is an important one: much recent work on music from Russia has argued that traditional Russian and Western accounts have tended to 'ghettoise' this output, defining it wholly by its nationality or 'Otherness', and assuming myths of 'true' or 'essential' Russianness that need deconstructing: see the introductions to and essays throughout Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*; Taruskin, *On Russian Music*; Maes, *A History of Russian Music*; and Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*. Frolova-Walker goes as far as to make the point that there is no such thing as Russian music, only music from Russia; however Taruskin persuasively argues in response to this that 'if a cliché, however disprovable, is accepted by artists and embodied in their art, then it has indeed become a stylistic determinant': Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, 383. Elsewhere Taruskin comments how features and styles 'invented' by Glinka and Balakirev, because (self) defined as Russian and subsequently imitated as so, thus 'become' national: see Taruskin, 'How the Acorn Took Root', 133.

¹⁴ In an early Western text on Russian music, Abraham identifies Glinka's unconventional harmonic progressions based on 'pivots' as one of the much-imitated thus defining features of Russian harmony: see Abraham, *On Russian Music*, 257–8, 267–8; a recent history understands the device similarly: see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 26; 84. The initial model in Glinka is Chernomor's march from Act IV of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, which contains the repeated chord progression $F-D_7-F-g\sharp$, each connected by one pivot note (IV/19; 13/1–2 and similar); its most famous later development is in Musorgsky's Coronation Scene from the prologue to *Boris Godunov*, in which the dominant seventh harmonies based on D and A_7 , containing two common pitches, are alternated (Prologue/ scene II; /1–4/10).

¹⁵ For an explanation of the evolution of this technique in Rimsky-Korsakov's music see Taruskin, 'Chernomor to Kashchei', 93–7; this essay also locates similar practises in earlier composers such as Schubert, the further development of octatonic patterning in later Rimsky-Korsakov, and the influence of this on Stravinsky's harmonic language.

descending scale of semitone, whole tone, semitone, whole tone – a scale that subsequently played an important part in many of my compositions'.¹⁶ What Richard Taruskin describes as 'Rimsky's and Russia's first octatonic scale' constitutes another of those 'become-Russian' symbols that is essentially worked out on a tonal level in Act IV of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*.¹⁷ The exact pitch-correspondence between Rimsky-Korsakov's original and Shostakovich's version might even suggest that the reference was deliberate, for the older composer's works and teachings had a continued influence on the syllabus of the Leningrad conservatoire in the 1920s.¹⁸

If the technical tonal processes in the examples outlined above in themselves create a sounding 'rightness' that helps to legitimise the dramatic events of IV/9, the fact of their being procedures with particular dramatic and nationalistic associations also works to a similar end. Other Russianisms in the final act too contribute to the positive endorsement of Katerina's defeat; these are explored below.

2. A Very-Russian Ending: National Endorsements both General and Specific

(i) *Back-to-Russia: national homecoming and pseudo-cyclism in Lady Macbeth's finale*

The above discussion has identified several musico-dramatic features with nationalistic connections on both the surface and structure of Act IV. The scene opens with that standard trope of nineteenth-century Russian literature, a convict train en route to Siberia; the first tragic chorus in a modal f minor evokes Russian operatic models, particularly Musorgskian; and even the underlying tonal organisation has particular precedents in the national tradition. That Shostakovich draws on such markers of Russianness at the conclusion of his opera is itself something of a standard practise in the Russian operatic tradition, as two seminal

¹⁶ Quoted in Taruskin, 'Chernomor to Kashchei', 93.

¹⁷ Taruskin, 'Chernomor to Kashchei', 96.

¹⁸ Shostakovich attended the conservatoire when it was under the directorship of Aleksandr Glazunov, pupil and friend of Rimsky-Korsakov; he studied harmony, composition and related classes with Rimsky-Korsakov's pupil and son-in-law Maximilian Steinberg; and he was subject to the rigorous technical training that was the legacy of the Rimsky-Korsakov tradition: see Fanning, 'Shostakovich, Dmitry', in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 280–1.

examples from the repertoire will serve to demonstrate. Both Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842), heralded by many as the first truly 'Russian' opera, and Borodin's *Prince Igor* (1887), one of the many works written in its wake,¹⁹ each exhibit a musico-dramatic 'homecoming' to the motherland at the close of the work. Thus following the exotic foreign locations, folk musics and chromatic and whole-tone experiments of *Ruslan's* central acts, the final scene opens in the princely court of Kievan Rus, depicted in Glinka's default language of Italianate classicism with hints of Russian flavour. Similarly, while the most part of *Prince Igor* takes place in the Steppe lands of Eastern Asia – characterised by the amalgamation of vocal melisma, Arabic modal inflections, undulating semitones, drones and cor anglais/ harp-based orchestration that constitutes Borodin's particular brand of Orientalism²⁰ – the epilogue is set in the Kievan Russian fortress of Putivl, musically portrayed in standard mid-nineteenth century operatic terms combined with borrowings from the Russian folk repertoire.

The musico-dramatic homecoming that exists in these examples and is evoked in *Lady Macbeth* is part of an underlying cyclic narrative in the case of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and *Prince Igor*; such cyclical structures are common in the Russian repertoire, and might even constitute a defining trait of the national tradition.²¹ In the magical quest-story of *Ruslan*, the shift to Kievan Rus at the close of the opera is in fact a return: the work began with the marriage celebrations of the warrior Ruslan and the princess Lyudmila at the court of the Grand Prince of Kiev; so too it ends; and the musical repetition of a choral version of the overture in the final scene – a piece that Glinka and his nineteenth-century followers regarded

¹⁹ Although Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) was initially celebrated as the first Russian opera, his second experiment in the genre was later championed by Vladimir Stasov – spokesman for the *kuchka* – and others as the desired model for the national tradition in a series of polemical debates: for details, see Taruskin, 'Glinka's Ambiguous Legacy'. Marina Frolova-Walker details how *Ruslan* was justified as essentially 'Russian' by nineteenth-century critics, in part on dubious musical grounds; she follows the accepted view in describing *Prince Igor* as 'undeniably another of *Ruslan's* offspring, perhaps the most faithful of all Glinka imitations': Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 104–13; 42.

²⁰ For a discussion of this trope in Balakirev, its sexual connotations and the Western myths that surround it, see Taruskin, 'Entoiling the Falconet', 152–85.

²¹ This is not generally argued in scholarly texts on this area, but might benefit from more investigation. However, the cyclical themes and symmetrical structures that characterise Rimsky-Korsakov's operatic output are acknowledged, considered the result of the composer's use of pagan, folk or fairy-tale models: see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 187–92; Abraham and Calvocoressi, *Masters of Russian Music*, 129.

as quintessentially Russian – reinforces this recurrence.²² Likewise, in the military quest-story of *Prince Igor*, the arrival at Putivl for the opera’s conclusion is in fact a re-arrival: in the prologue, the people cheered the title character on his way to fight the Polotsvians; in the epilogue, they praise him on his return; and they use the same Russian material – based on the folk song ‘About the Sparrow Hills’, with its characteristic use of melodic descending fourths and tonal *peremennost’* – to do so.²³ In both operas, the return to realities and musics explicitly national at the close of the work has become increasingly necessary, following the dangerously destabilising dramatic and stylistic exoticisms of the central acts. Such cyclic returns would seem to satisfy an opera audience’s fundamental need for restoration, be this atavistic or socially conditioned – and when allied with a homecoming that is explicitly Russian, a *Russian* opera audience might experience a sense of fulfilment still stronger.

Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* exhibits no such overt cyclism across the opera as a whole: besides Katerina’s oppressed status and the tonic of f minor, the first and last acts share no discernible dramatic, stylistic or thematic connections. Yet its very ‘Russian’ conclusion evokes a nationalistic homecoming model with powerful associations of cyclism: so much so, that the final scene is imbued with a real sense of return. Looking back, the chaotic events of the central acts – played out in parodistic music-hall and dance numbers that were symbolic in Soviet Russia of Western (thus foreign) capitalist decadence, as shown in Chapter 8 – appear analogous to the exotic musico-dramatic adventures of Glinka’s other-worlds, or Borodin’s East. Only in IV/9 does Katerina ‘return’ home, to the markedly national realities of Siberia and Musorgsky – and in this homecoming, both Soviet and

²² The music at /1–2/13, 11/1–12/13 of the overture returns in near-identical choral versions in the finale at 29/21 – 31/13 and 34/1 – 35/13; the last movement also develops this material throughout. In part, the opening movement of *Ruslan* was upheld as inherently Russian by Stasov and others due to its emphasis on plagal rather than perfect cadences, adhering to the theory of national ‘plagalism’ discussed above; Frolova-Walker demonstrates this reasoning to be flawed: see Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 105–11.

²³ In Rimsky-Korsakov’s and Alexander Glazounov’s completion of *Prince Igor* – unfinished on Borodin’s death – the material does not in fact return; however there is evidence that the composer originally intended this music for the finale, and one recent production of the opera thus repeats the choral version of the folk song that first appears in the prologue at A/17–D/28 as the epilogue: see Borodin, *Prince Igor*, videorecording of Kirov Opera production (1998), DVD reissue (2003). For a justification of this decision, together with a discussion of the multiple versions of the opera, see Barry and Malkiel, ‘Authenticity in *Prince Igor*’.

Western critics seem to have experienced something close to relief. Thus Katerina's protest is made aberrant, her defeat normalised and sanctioned, through a pseudo-cyclic national homecoming with established general precedents in the Russian tradition; below, a more specific allusion to one national opera in particular works to a similar end.

(ii) *Decisive Resolution:
a thematic reference to Musorgsky's Boris Godunov*

Musorgsky's revised version of *Boris Godunov* (1872) ends with the lament of the Simpleton, a condensed repeat of earlier material that constitutes one of the most memorable moments of the work as a whole.²⁴ The short piece concludes as it began, with the alternation of the semitone F–E as provided in Example 7.2a. It is this prominent semitone oscillation between the pitches F and E that re-emerges twice in the closing pages of *Lady Macbeth*; the second of these occasions is given as Example 7.2b. The parallel is heightened by the Musorgskian context in which it emerges: the preponderance of minor harmonies, modal inflections and parallel chord progressions in Shostakovich's setting are all hallmarks of the earlier composer's style, and observable in the extract from the Simpleton's lament. Shostakovich's choice of the exact pitches F–E, his placement of the oscillating motif at the end of the opera, and his use of a particularly Musorgskian idiom all suggest that the motivic reference may have been deliberate; whether or not this was the case, this accumulation of correspondences might well have conjured up the *Boris Godunov* example in the minds of many an educated listener.

That *Lady Macbeth* contains an extroversive allusion to *Boris Godunov* tells us very little in itself. Rather, it is the introversive context in which the theme is located that is of interest. The melodic similarity of Musorgsky's and Shostakovich's oscillating F–E semitone in fact emphasises the *dissimilar* way in which the motif functions, specifically on a tonal level – and it is in the difference between the two

²⁴ In the 1869 version of the opera, the Simpleton's song occurs earlier in the work, in the scene at St Basil's that opens Act IV; only in the 1872 re-working does it reappear at the close of the new 'Kromy scene' that finishes an altered Act IV, though this was again deleted and restored at later junctures. For details of the numerous and complex versions of the opera, see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 101–7; 110–115; 184–6.

Example 7.2a

He shudders, watching the glow.

Simpleton

The first system of music shows a vocal line for the character Simpleton, which is entirely silent (indicated by a horizontal line with a dash). The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time and consists of two staves. The right hand plays chords and moving lines, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The music concludes with a fermata over the final chord.

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

Simpleton

The second system of music shows the vocal line for Simpleton, which is silent. The piano accompaniment continues in 3/4 time. The right hand features a series of chords and a melodic line, while the left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a fermata.

Simpleton

The third system of music shows the vocal line for Simpleton, which is silent. The piano accompaniment concludes the piece. The right hand has a few chords and rests, while the left hand plays a final melodic phrase. The system ends with a double bar line and the text "END OF OPERA".

Boris Godunov. IV/iii; 75/2–11.

Example 7.2b

551

Soprano

Alto
e.
us.

Tenor

Bass

551

pp

pp

pp

pp

p *dim.* *pp*

(Exeunt the convicts. Their singing can be heard in the distance).

S.

A.

T.

B.

Lady Macbeth. IV/9; 550/6–551/4.

extracts that extra-musical meaning is situated. The *Boris Godunov* semitone is heard in the context of a (modal) a minor in which F acts as the Neapolitan to the dominant, E. As shown in Example 7.2a, both the alternating tonic harmonies and A bass that are present throughout drop away in the final bars, leaving the F–E motif unaccompanied: in a daring move, the opera thus ends on the dominant degree, referred to by Taruskin in this instance as ‘the very emblem of non resolution’.²⁵ Yet other aspects of this ending further contribute to the uncertainty of its closure. For the most part, the semitone F–E sounds against a tonic harmony or tonic bass: F is therefore dissonant and unstable, continually resolving to a consonant and stable E. However, the surface features of this music conspire to undermine this relative position of weakness and strength. It is the problematic pitch F, rather than the unproblematic E, that is emphasised throughout: F appears on the beat, while E occurs off the beat; on the final oscillation, the F is held for two beats, the E for just half a beat; and the last full harmony of the opera is (remarkably) a chord of F, rather than of a. F remains a disruptive element to the very end, and the implied tonic resolution of *Boris Godunov* is rendered extraordinarily ambiguous by its continued presence.

In the final moments of *Lady Macbeth*, the alternating pitches F and E operate in what is essentially an ‘opposite’ manner. The motif occurs in the tonal context of f: F is thus the tonic, whilst E is the leading-note; F is stable, whilst E is unstable; and it is E that continually resolves to F, rather than vice versa. This time, the functional relationship that exists between the two pitches is reinforced by their surface treatment. F sounds either against a fully voiced tonic triad (eg. 550/6) or as a tonic pedal (eg. 551/1–4); it is emphasised by its placement on the strong beats of the bar throughout, and its rhythmic extension in variation (compare the equal quaver oscillation of 550/6 with the elongation of the F pitch at 551/1). E, meanwhile, has no fully developed harmonic role; the leading-note is never separately harmonised, but is heard rather as a recurring disruption to the tonic chord – though one that is always contained within it, and easily overcome. Whereas the ending of *Boris Godunov* was tonally ambiguous, the conclusion of *Lady Macbeth* – provided in Example 7.3 – is unequivocal in this regard: just five

²⁵ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 80.

bars after the oscillating semitone dies away, chorus then orchestra join in an extended chord of *f* that gradually grows in volume, before a final down-beat reiteration of the tonic triad marked *ffff* brings the opera to its decisive close.

Example 7.3

The musical score for Example 7.3 consists of three staves. The top two staves are for Tenor and Bass, both in 8/8 time. The Tenor staff begins with a melodic line marked *morendo*, followed by a sustained chord. The Bass staff mirrors this with a similar melodic line and sustained chord. Above the Tenor staff, the text *CURTAIN FALLS.* is written. The bottom two staves are for the Piano, also in 8/8 time. The right hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the left hand plays a sustained chord. The piano part is marked *END.* and *ffff* at the end. There are also some markings below the piano staves, including a treble clef and a key signature change.

552/4–6.

The thematic reference to *Boris Godunov* at the conclusion of *Lady Macbeth* conjures up an earlier ending that is characterised by its irresolution – and this only serves to emphasise the assurance of Shostakovich’s closure. Musorgsky’s Simpleton in part commentates on the troubled and chaotic events that have passed, and in part foresees the turbulence that will follow: although the naive Russian people have joyfully accepted the Pretender as their ruler, both character and audience know that the future is uncertain – and this is expressed by the tonal ambiguity of Musorgky’s finale. In contrast, Katerina’s fate is absolute: her period of struggle has come to decisive and fatal stop, punctuated by a series of explicit tonic chords that mark her end as emotionally unambiguous, and decisively ‘right’.

3. Death Marginalised, Guilt Magnified: a Conservative Operatic Conclusion

In the final act of *Lady Macbeth*, the convict Katerina, shackled and bound for Siberia, undergoes a series of personal tribulations. She is insulted by the Sentry; rejected, duped and betrayed by her former lover; made witness to the passion of Sergey and Sonyetka; cruelly ridiculed by the female convicts; and mocked by her rival in love. Finally, in a simultaneous act of suicide and murder, she jumps into the river Volga and pulls her fellow-prisoner Sonyetka in after her. This violent denouement *ought* to be the climax of the scene; however, it is dramatically and musically marginalised in a number of ways – and it is the guilt-ridden confession of Katerina that *instead* becomes the dramaturgical culmination of the act. Both the manner and significance of this change of emphasis is examined below.

(i) *Death Marginalised: text, proportion, form and tonality*

In the libretto of the opera, the simultaneous suicide-murder of Katerina and her rival, Sonyetka, is remarkably understated. The fatal act is unprepared; its execution involves no dialogue; and none of the principal characters comment upon it, either before, during or after the event. In fact, Katerina's crime appears to make little impact on those around her: her fellow convicts exclaim once, the officer utters a two-line postscript, and the prisoners move on to the same lament as opened the act, their text virtually unchanged:

(Katerina slowly goes up to Sonyetka, who is standing on the bridge by a broken parapet. She pushes Sonyetka into the river and throws herself in after her.)

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Sonyetka: | Ah! |
| Convicts: | Good heavens! Whatever's happened? |
| Officer: | Don't move there! Watch it! I'll do you! |
| Sonyetka <i>(from a distance)</i> : | Ah! Ah! |
| Officer: | They've both drowned, we can't save them, the current's too strong! Attention! Back to your places! |

(The convicts line up and march off.)

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Old convict: | We trudge along day after day [...] |
| Convicts: | Ah, steppes you are so endless [...] |

544/1–552/6.

This short dialogue is not significantly extended in length by its musical setting; in fact, these events take up a small proportion of Act IV as a whole. Table

7.2 provides an average duration for certain relevant lengths of IV/9; this is based on timings taken from four different recordings. The table demonstrates that Katerina’s suicide-murder and its aftermath – measuring from the point at which the orchestra enters alongside Sonyetka’s first scream (540/1), and to the point at which a concrete musical theme begins following the last words of the officer (548/2) – lasts for just 50 seconds (on average): roughly 2.5% of the (average) duration of the act in its entirety. The crime takes place late in the day: from the opening of the Siberian scene to Sonyetka’s scream is around 90% of the whole, while the remaining action *following* the deaths makes up only 7.7% approx. of the total length. Katerina’s violent suicide is deferred, brief, and disposed of quickly.

Table 7.2: IV/9 Average Sectional Durations

| Recording (conductor) | Durations (m/s) | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| | Opening to b (540/1) | Opening to deaths (546/1) | b (540/1) to end | bm to deaths (540/1– 546/1) | deaths (546/1– 548/2) | post-deaths (548/2) to end | Whole act |
| Alexander Anissimov | 29'31" | 32'33" | 6'56" | 3'01" | 53" | 3'02" | 36'27" |
| Myung-Whun Chung | 26'59" | 29'45" | 5'48" | 2'46" | 45" | 2'17" | 32'47" |
| Mariss Jansons | 25'55" | 28'33" | 6'01" | 2'38" | 50" | 2'33" | 31'56" |
| Mstislav Rostropovich | 25'52" | 27'47" | 6'05" | 2'55" | 50" | 2'20" | 30'57" |
| Average durations: | 27'04" | 29'39" | 6'12" | 2'55" | 50" | 2'33" | 33'01" |

Moreover, the death of the main protagonist is peculiarly unmarked by formal events – although *other* points in the surrounding dialogue are strongly emphasised by sectional beginnings or thematic returns. Just prior to the drowning, the Old Convict addresses Katerina to an extended passage of new and distinctive musical material: his fragmented phrases are sung against a lyrical orchestral recitative in an unambiguous e minor, a tonic pedal sounding continually in the bass (542/1–544/7). After the suicide-murder, a variation of this episode returns: this time, the Old Convict’s music is rooted in a minor over a persistent bass pedal on A,

and combined with a cyclic (though condensed) recurrence of the opening solo/chorus of the act (compare 548/2 –552/2 with 465/1–466/5 and 472/1–475/2). The murderous suicide of Katerina– undistinguished by any such markers on the musical surface – is thus sandwiched *between* two ‘verses’ of similar material sung by the Old Convict, the second reinforced by a large-scale formal return. Similarly, the key area in which the moment of death takes place is somewhat ‘outside’ of the overarching tonal cycle of the act. As charted in Figure and Table 7.1, Katerina drowns in a minor: this key centre is reached by a structural II–V–I progression, and subsequently resolves to a₆, as part of the octatonic plan outlined above. However, it is still secondary to the main chain of minor thirds that underpins the scene. Thus dramatically, proportionally, formally and tonally, Katerina’s violent demise is curiously marginalised.

(ii) *Guilt Magnified: text, style, proportion and tonality*

In both scholarly and popular accounts of *Lady Macbeth*, it is the final arioso of Katerina – rather than her actual death – that is celebrated as the emotional highpoint of the act.²⁶ In her quasi-aria in d minor (527/5–533/2), Katerina speaks aloud of her guilt for the first time in the opera, envisaging her conscience as a black lake. The powerful impact of Katerina’s personal anagnorisis is heightened by its association with an earlier Lady Macbeth: Shakespeare’s villainess also confronts her crimes for the first and only time in the final act of *Macbeth* before committing suicide; just as Katerina, she visualises her guilty conscience as an external image, and her well-known metaphor dwells on the same specific quality of sin’s indelible stain.²⁷

Katerina: In the wood, right in a grove, there is a lake,
 almost round and very deep,
 and the water in it is black,

²⁶ For an early and recent example, one Soviet and one Western, see the descriptions of the song in Sollertinsky, *Lady Macbeth*, 310 and Fay, ‘Lady Macbeth’, in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 15 Nov 2010).

²⁷ Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth’s lines are of course: ‘Yet here’s a spot./.... Out, damned spot, out, I say!/.... What, will these hands ne’er be clean?/.... Here’s the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand’: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V/I; 30, 33, 41–2, 48–50.

black like my conscience.
And when the wind blows in the wood,
on the lake waves rise up,
huge waves, and then it's frightening:
in autumn there are always waves on the lake,
and the water's black and the waves huge,
huge, black waves.

The musical language of the black-lake arioso is strongly marked: a climactic orchestral tutti at *fff* ushers in a sparse modal recitative in flexible meter; isolated trills, glissandi and dotted figures occasionally emerge in the accompaniment, and the prominent use of harp, solo violin, celesta and bass clarinet intensifies the audible strangeness of the passage. References to other critical moments in the opera further serve to underline the importance of this confession: the particular use of minor thirds and falling root position triads in Katerina's vocal line recalls the melodic intonations of her $f\sharp$ aria in I/3; meanwhile, the neo-Baroque trills, melodic flourishes, dotted figures and pedal bass evoke the orchestral passacaglia that followed her initial murder in II/4.

The proportional durations of the act in its entirety also conspire to emphasise the d minor arioso. The first two tonal steps in the overarching minor third sequence, f and d, underpin a significant part of IV/9: Table 7.2 demonstrates that the opening of the scene up to the arrival of the next key in the cycle, b (540/1), constitutes approximately 82% of the total length; in contrast, the remainder of the series, b–a₂–f, takes up roughly 18% of the whole – and Katerina's death, enclosed within this final stage of the sequence, is thus precipitated. The black-lake monologue marks the last stage of the d minor section of the scene, and constitutes the final step in the secondary I–II–V–I cadence as outlined in Figure 7.1: it is therefore doubly reinforced, the 'product' of the coming-together of two semi-independent tonal structures. In conclusion, the d minor arioso is textually, stylistically, proportionally and tonally shaped to become the climax of the final act; beside it, the moment of Katerina's physical death barely registers in our perceptions.

(iii) *Transgression and Atonement: a very conventional opera heroine*

The notion that Katerina's physical death is marginalised, her guilt magnified, is intriguingly and differently realised by the altered endings of two major and relatively recent productions of the opera, filmed for general release on DVD. In the 2002 version by the Gran Teatre del Liceu, directed by Stan Winge, the heroine's death is more than understated: in fact Nadine Secunde as Katerina *does not die*, but remains alone on stage with the corpse of Sonyetka as the convicts slowly depart, handcuffed to her victim as a final and lasting visual image of her sin. In the 2006 De Nederlandse Opera production, directed by Martin Kušej, it is rather the title character's precise mode of death that is dispensed with: following her murder – now by strangulation – of Sonyetka, Eva-Maria Westbroek's heroine is now lynched by her fellow convicts, in punishment for her crime. That the directors of these productions both chose to develop their dramatic interpretations along such lines supports the idea that the diminishment of Katerina's particular demise, and the augmentation of her personal transgression, is inherent in the work itself – and the implications of this are significant. For the marginalisation of Katerina's final deed takes a power away from our heroine: in this opera, murder is protest, and even suicide might be viewed as an authoritative act of choice. Yet Shostakovich's Katerina is denied the strength of crime or agency: Act IV, firmly self-contained in the key of f, remains about her oppression at the hands of others – quite literally so, in Kušej's adjusted denouement.

In respect of her guilt, the heroine's soul-searching arioso puts a particular complexion on her final deeds of rebellion. The black-lake monologue has no precedent in the original novella on which the opera is based: Leskov's Katerina remains unrepentant to the last. In the final paragraphs of the story she attempts to feel remorse, but cannot:

Katerina Lvovna tried to remember a prayer and moved her lips to repeat it but her lips kept saying, "How we had good times together, how we sat out the long autumn nights together and sent people out of this world with violent death."²⁸

²⁸ Leskov, 'Lady Macbeth', 82.

This unashamed villainess is reconceptualised in Shostakovich's opera, and the text of the *d minor* arioso epitomises the composer's more sympathetic treatment of the central character. The operatic Katerina is tortured by her guilty conscience – and there is a virtue in this. Yet while Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* gains in merit, she loses in strength. Though Leskov's monster of a woman is awful, she is also awe-inspiring; few precedents exist in literature for such an unremittingly evil yet utterly remorseless female. In contrast, our Katerina becomes a very traditional operatic heroine through the performance of her black-lake arioso: in admitting her guilt, she joins a procession of sinful women who must first confess and then atone for their transgressions through their deaths. This established precedent works to emphasise Katerina's victimhood once more – and perhaps this partially explains a curious anomaly in the critical reactions to the denouement. A great many texts, both academic and otherwise, completely overlook the murder of Sonyetka in their accounts of this work: it is Katerina's self-punishment, rather than her vengeance, that would seem to make an impression here.²⁹ For in perpetrating her final crime, inconveniently inherited from Leskov, Katerina does not adhere to the conventional operatic prototype; and so, through musico-dramatic strategies of under- and over-emphasis, Shostakovich provides us with the kind of heroine that we might prefer.

4. A Most Traditional Conclusion: some Final and Further Thoughts

The musico-dramatic endorsement of Katerina's defeat across IV/9 in its entirety, together with the conventional treatment of the heroine's character and

²⁹ Such texts take their lead from Shostakovich, who conveniently ignores the murder of Sonyetka in his *précis* of the opera: 'despite the fact that Katerina murders both her husband and her father-in-law, I still sympathise with her': quoted in Grigoriyev and Platek, 31–2. Thus Jennifer Melick, in a popular article that places Katerina 'on trial', sums up the evidence by arguing that Katerina's victims – Boris and Zinovy – seemed 'deserving of their fates': Melick, 'No Holding Back', 34. Of course, a traditional Marxist reading of the opera, in justifying Katerina's crimes as acts of protest born of her oppression, must underplay the heroine's murder of a downtrodden fellow female convict: and so Eckart Kröplin brushes over Sonyetka's killing as committed in a surge of emotion: Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 202. Yet other non-politicised texts seem to simply forget Sonyetka's death: thus Levon Hakobian describes Katerina as the murderer of 'merely two rather not likeable males': Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, 108; while Francis Maes revealingly terms Zinovy's 'the last murder': Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 267.

actions in its final stages, render the last act a most traditional conclusion – and this has regressive implications, from a feminist point of view. Yet the shift to what is reactionary at the close of the opera has wider significances when viewed against the backdrop of historical spheres musical, cultural and social; it is to this broader context that this thesis shall now turn.

Part III
On Contexts

Chapter 8

Lady Macbeth, Experiment and Thermidor:

Musico-Dramatic Narrative as Historical Summary

Thus far, this thesis has examined *Lady Macbeth* within several contexts highly specific to the opera, focussing closely on the musical and literary text of the work itself in relative isolation. Yet Part III of this study broadens its scope, viewing *Lady Macbeth* against the wider backdrop of contemporaneous Soviet cultural and social developments, and as reflected in the output of Shostakovich himself.

This opera was composed at something of a turning point in the Soviet historical narrative. Broadly, the 1920s might be characterised as a decade of relative innovation, pluralism and freedom, while the 1930s – a period with which we in the West are more familiar – is something of its opposite in these respects, being fiercely anti-experimental, overwhelmingly traditional and tightly-controlled. This chapter traces this basic shift in two main areas – firstly, in Soviet musical life, particularly as demonstrated by the dramatic works of Shostakovich, and secondly, in the social history of Soviet women – and considers how this change is embodied by the musical and dramatic narratives of *Lady Macbeth* in its entirety.

1. Experiment and Thermidor: Soviet Cultural Life in the Post-Revolutionary Decades

If to chart any aspect of the social or cultural history of the Soviet Union in the first two decades of its existence is to reveal a narrative of pluralistic experimentation – roughly correlating with the 1920s – and of monolithic thermidor – roughly correlating with the 1930s¹ – then the area of music is no exception to

¹ Thus in his seminal text of 1989, the historian Richard Stites paints a rich portrait of the innovative currents in thought and behaviour that flowered following 1917, detailing numerous and varied projects and fantasies: the enactment of massed street theatre on a truly epic scale; the ‘God-building’ creation of new Bolshevik rituals and names; the attempts to construct newly appropriate forms of morality, dress and language; the growth of cults surrounding the machine, time and even Taylor and Ford; and the development of various kinds of communal living – to highlight but a few. However, the emergence of the Stalinist state towards the end of the 1920s put a stop to the free play of such revolutionary endeavours. See Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*.

this paradigm. The standard account of musical life in this period – heavily influenced by Boris Schwarz’s seminal text of the 1970s – identifies two main and radical oppositional strands on both the ‘right’ and ‘left’ of the musical spectrum during the 1920s: Western avant-garde modernism, fostered by the *Association of Contemporary Musicians* (ASM), and the Revolutionary musics developed by various groups, the *Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians* (RAPM) most prominent amongst them – and more on both below. Yet, according to the established narrative, both the modernist and the proletarian experiment came to an abrupt end on 23rd April 1932: on this date, a Party Resolution liquidated all of the artistic organisations in operation, replacing them with single and all-controlling Unions – the *Union of Soviet Composers* amongst them – that were increasingly subject to State demands for a ‘Socialist Realist’ art primarily characterised by its traditionalism. Thus in music as elsewhere, the diverse innovations of the 1920s gave way to conformity and conservatism in the decade that followed.²

Recent musicological studies challenge two key aspects of this standard account: firstly, the perception that 1932 clearly marked the end of free experimentation and the beginning of enforced traditionalism; and secondly, the notion that ASM and RAPM were straightforwardly ‘modernist’ and ‘anti-modernist’ organisations and thus essentially opposed. For example, there are those who argue that totalitarianism in the arts, resulting in an enforced stylistic conformism, came later and more gradually;³ or that in fact there are continuities to be found between the music and musical life of the 1920s and that of the 1930s.⁴ Meanwhile, there

² Schwarz’s *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* was the first comprehensive and relatively unbiased history of the music of the Soviet period to be published in the West, and the subsequent basis for many standard accounts; the narrative as summarised above is taken from Parts I–III. Numerous texts post-Schwarz follow this basic sequence of events: for one example, see Ferenc, ‘Music in the Socialist State’, 8–14.

³ For example, both Pauline Fairclough and Simo Mikkonen challenge the notion that 1932 marked the beginning of the long period of composers’ enforced compliance with a regressive Socialist Realist model promulgated from above, rather perceiving the early years of the Composers’ Union pre-*Pravda* as a time of relative liberalism and genuine debate: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, xvii–xx; 11–12; 16–24; 229–30 and ‘The “Perestroika” of Soviet Symphonism’; and Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s*, 11–12; 33; 46–7; 75–6; 86; 89; 118–9; 150; 153 and throughout.

⁴ For example, Shelia Fitzpatrick proposes a link between the anti-formalist campaigns of RAPM in the late 1920s and the more familiar crack-downs of 1936 and 1948, while Neil Edmunds perceives different connections between the proletarian movement and what followed, in terms of preferred musical styles and prominent musical figures: Fitzpatrick, ‘The Lady Macbeth Affair’ and Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement*, 299–301; 310, ‘The Ambiguous Origins of Socialist Realism’,

are those who query the conventional portrayal of the 'asmovites' as an avant-garde force persecuted by their regressive counterparts, the 'rapmovites':⁵ for example, these writers claim greater links between ASM and RAPM than have previously been supposed,⁶ and characterise the latter and related groups as a more positive part of the revolutionary experiment.⁷

Any current research that engages to some extent with this history must define its position in relation to contemporary scholarly developments, and this thesis does so as follows. In reference to the first point: although it is clear that the progress of Soviet musical developments from the 1920s through to the 1930s was more complex and continuous than had previously been assumed, it is still indisputably the case that a general shift from the innovative to the conservative took place during this time, and that this broadly two-phase process roughly correlated with the first two decades of post-revolutionary life – and it is this basic developmental change with which this chapter is concerned. Meanwhile, in reference to the second point, this study is in line with recent research that challenges the straightforward and highly polarised characterisation of ASM and RAPM: in identifying the '1920s musics' at work in the opera, the following

118–20 and 'Music and Politics', 87–9. Meanwhile, Boris Groys goes against the established view in arguing that certain aims and personalities of the 1920s avant-garde helped to shape the Socialist Realism of the 1930s, a theory taken up by others: see Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s*, 9; and, in reference to Shostakovich in particular, Titus, 'Socialist Realism, Modernism and Dmitriy Shostakovich's *Odná*', 101. Amy Nelson suggests more general continuities between the two decades regarding the complex negotiation between the state, musical institutions and individuals: see Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 12; 242–46.

⁵ The standard and sympathetic portrayal of the former as a progressive intelligentsia who were terrorised by the latter, a backward, ignorant and all-powerful body, is promoted by a number of Western studies, Sitsky's *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant-Garde*, Haas' *Leningrad's Modernists* and Roberts' *Modernism in Russian Piano Music* amongst them. Nelson debunks the notion of a persecuted avant-garde on a number of counts, for example demonstrating that ASM were better supported by the state in the 1920s, and RAPM less so, than has previously been supposed: see Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 43–9; 56–9; 91–3; 95; 210–40 and throughout.

⁶ Thus Edmunds demonstrates connections between both camps in terms of their individual members, various professional activities, political or aesthetic ideologies, and even compositional styles: see Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement*, 79–84 and examples throughout; and Edmunds, 'The Ambiguous Origins of Socialist Realism', 120–26; 129.

⁷ This is the unmistakable tone of work by Edmunds on this subject, which enthusiastically reveals the little-known innovations of the proletarian music movement, and at times explicitly praises their ideologically driven projects: see Edmunds, *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement*, (311) and "'Lenin is Always with Us'", (117–19). Richard Taruskin even claims that RAPM, in disregarding the musical establishment and attempting to construct new forms of art for the proletariat, were the true Soviet avant-garde: see Taruskin, 'Safe Harbours', 86–96.

summary includes both modernist and proletarian developments, regarding these often-interlinked styles as equally important parts of the Revolutionary experiment.

To chart the historical course from experiment to thermidor seems particularly appropriate in connection with Shostakovich. For of all the big-name Russian composers of the twentieth century, it is he whose biography most closely corresponds with that of early Soviet Russia in the most basic sense: born in 1906, he turned twenty in the 1920s and thirty in the 1930s; his formative years as a musician thus coincided with the Soviet Union's formation as a state, while his maturation as an artist corresponded with the establishment of certain societal norms that would be recognisable in the years to come; and thus that progression from youthful experimentation to more settled compromise – a pattern discernible in the creative evolution of many a composer – is in a sense writ large in its wider historical context. To explore this particular history in relation to *Lady Macbeth* is even more apposite: the opera has long been acknowledged in standard accounts as a pivotal piece within Shostakovich's oeuvre, acting on the one hand as a summation of the composer's youthful output, and on the other as a tentative beginning of a new phase of development.⁸ To understand this as a work of transition is therefore nothing new – although conceiving of its chronological narrative as symbolic of historical transition is original to this thesis.⁹

Likewise, to adopt an all-encompassing view in relation to the various musics of the 1920s is particularly appropriate in the case of Shostakovich. For the composer was unique amongst other significant Russian musicians of his day in his eager appropriation of the whole spectrum of 1920s developments: affiliated to ASM, he nevertheless had links with RAPM and was active in writing for the *Leningrad Working Youth Theatre*, or TRAM; his works of this era thus draw on both modernist and proletarian innovations, the Second Symphony in particular often

⁸ For (a typical) example, the *New Grove* article on Shostakovich describes the composer's theatrical pieces prior to *Lady Macbeth* as a 'preliminary study' for the opera, whilst also considering that the work demonstrated a new style that was in the spirit of the times: see Fanning, 'Shostakovich, Dmitry', in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 289–90.

⁹ Interestingly, one recent essay, published since the writing of this chapter, makes a similar claim for Shostakovich's contemporaneous film score *Alone* (1931). The article, by Joan Titus, proposes at the outset that *Alone* 'embodies and symbolises a transition from the aesthetics of the 1920s to those of the early 1930s'; it goes on to explore the use of what she terms 'modernist' and 'Socialist Realist' film musics in the score, which in part maps onto the chronological narrative of the piece appropriately: see Titus, 'Socialist Realism, modernism, and Dmitry Shostakovich's *Odná*, (100).

cited as an example in which the two strands meet.¹⁰ That this composition is chosen as representative comes as no surprise: scholars of Shostakovich tend to focus on abstract instrumental genres, and both the Fifth Symphony and – in one recent text – the Fourth, have been held up as differently illustrative of the tenets of Socialist Realism.¹¹ This chapter rather draws on the composer’s lesser-known dramatic, incidental, ballet and film scores of the early Soviet period in order to locate and further define certain 1920s and 1930s developments – and it chooses to focus on this repertoire for several reasons. Firstly, it is in these dramatic genres that the young Shostakovich primarily worked in the early years of both his career and the new Soviet state, and these numerous works thus trace the musical developments of each in illuminating detail. Secondly, the theatrical component of these compositions renders them more suitable in a study of opera; and finally, to examine this repertoire is in line with that other recent work that also investigates this previously neglected output, as referred to in Chapter 4. Yet prior to an exploration of these pieces, it is first necessary to define in more general terms the musical developments of the 1920s and the 1930s: these are briefly summarised below.

2. From Action to Reaction: Modernism, Proletarianism and Socialist Realism

In its musical characteristics, the experimentation of the 1920s took various diverse forms. The ‘asmovite’ composers were influenced by several Western ‘big names’ who either visited or had their works performed in a proudly

¹⁰ For a recent discussion of the young Shostakovich’s involvement with ASM – already well documented – and RAPM – less well-known – see Hakobian, ‘Shostakovich, Proletkul’t and RAPM’, 265–7. Another recent summary of this subject is typical in regarding the Second Symphony as a work that exhibited both modernist and proletarian features: extreme atonality; polyrhythmic ‘ultrapolyphony’, attributable to Shcherbachov and the young Leningrad school; a dramatic narrative mirroring that of the proletarian ‘mass spectacle’; a heroic tonal choral finale that borrowed of proletarian hallmarks such as rhythmic declamation; the use of a factory hooter, a nod to the industrialism explored by those at both ends of the musical spectrum; and so on: see Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 53–8.

¹¹ That the Fifth Symphony is the embodiment of certain aspects of an approved style is generally understood, as its oft-applied sub-title, ‘a Soviet artist’s practical creative reply to just criticism’, would indeed suggest. Fairclough goes against the established view by claiming that the Fourth Symphony encapsulated an ideal of Socialist Realism: see the introduction to Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, xvii–xix for the outline of this thesis, explored throughout her text.

internationalist Leningrad: Hindemith, members of the Second Viennese School and representatives of *Les Six* were amongst this number, and linearism, atonalism and irreverent parody amongst the stylistic explorations of the first post-revolutionary decade. Other academic pathways taken were more specifically national. Certain pre-revolutionary Russian groups and figures continued to exert their influence, Scriabin most prominent amongst them; for example, the gradual transcendence of functional tonality as exhibited in the works of this composer found its development in the total and serial-esque systems of tonal organisation established by ASM's founder, Nikolai Roslavets – though for Marxist rather than mystical ends.¹² There is also considerable evidence that both the prominent theories of Boris Asafiev, together with the pedagogy introduced into the Leningrad conservatoire under the professorship of Vladimir Shcherbachov (1923–31), contributed to the formation of a distinct Leningrad compositional school during these years; its characteristic features were its rejection of the schematic and periodic in favour of a continuous and ultra-polyphonic linearism, such as can be observed in the works of Shostakovich's contemporary Gavriil Popov, for example.¹³

Meanwhile, the hard-line 'rapmovites' championed creative developments of a very different kind: their preferred music of choice was the mass song, a distinct genre to an extent invented by the composer Alexander Davidenko that consisted of a two-part setting of an ideological text for soloist and chorus, typified by its plain folk-like melody and homophonic and unison textures. Yet RAPM's preoccupation with this and similarly simple types – a fixation that grew more fanatical during their period of partial-control – has obscured the more intriguing musical experiments that came out of the wider proletarian movement, throughout the 1920s as a whole. The mass musical work carried out amongst ordinary workers gave rise to new compositional genres that had a strong agitprop component, and

¹² For a technical analysis of Scriabin's influence on Roslavets, see Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music*, 23–6. Scriabin's tonal innovations were tied up with his fringe belief in theurgy, as Taruskin has powerfully argued: see Taruskin, 'Scriabin and the Superhuman'; meanwhile, Roslavets himself justified his experiments using Marxist, and specifically Trotskyian, theories: see Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 63–4.

¹³ This topic forms the study of Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists*. For an explanation of Asafiev's theories and Shcherbachov's pedagogy see chapters 3 and 4; for analysis of how these teachings contributed to the formation of distinct stylistic characteristics in the works of the young Leningrad composers, see chapters 5–9.

that could be performed in part by non-experts. Examples included: choral declamation, the rhythmic recitation of political texts by a unison choir, sometimes with the addition of vocal onomatopoeia or instrumental sound effects; the 'vocal placard', solo declamation of similarly ideological tracts in a manner that most closely approximated *Sprechstimme*; musical dramatisations or similar multimedia works, pieces that might incorporate songs, choruses, declamation, vocal sound effects, instrumental music, drama or pantomime; and the music composed for the 'living newspapers' (agitprop theatre productions based on current events) and the 'mass spectacle' (the Bolshevik equivalent of a medieval mystery play), both of which demanded genre-based satirical numbers for the musical depiction of certain stock characters.¹⁴

There were also those musical places where the modernist and proletarian factions met. Prominent avant-garde composers pioneered microtonalism, Georgiy Rimsky-Korsakov establishing the *Society for Quarter-Tone Music* in 1923; yet what is less known is that a division of *Proletkult* also explored these possibilities, devising microtonal scales based on folk music to enable the creation of truly new artistic forms by the proletariat.¹⁵ Similarly, innovation and ideology combined in the invention of several new electronic and mechanical instruments designed to be playable by the unskilled masses, the most famous of which, the theremin – an early electronic synthesiser operated with very little physical contact by the performer – was eagerly taken up by both Lenin's government and the asmovite composers alike.¹⁶ The related trends of constructivism and futurism were also evident in musics at both sides of the political spectrum: if we in the West are familiar with Alexander Mosolov's programmatic *Iron Foundry* (1926), an ASM

¹⁴ See Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, for surveys and manuscript excerpts of these novel compositional genres; in particular, his reviews of individual composers of the proletarian groups ORKiMD and Prokoll at 164–210 and 219–87 provide illuminating examples. Edmunds, "'Lenin is Always with Us'", 107–16; and Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*, 72–89 give a more concise overview.

¹⁵ See Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, 71; 77–8.

¹⁶ Leon Theremin, inventor of the instrument, discusses the immense interest shown in it by the Soviet government and indeed Lenin himself in the early 1920s: see Mattis, 'An Interview with Leon Theremin' (2002), on-line (accessed 16 June 2012); meanwhile, Shostakovich was amongst the first modern composer to use the theremin in his works, for example in the 1931 film score *Alone*. For details of other attempts made by groups such as *Proletkult* to create new electronic and mechanical instruments for the masses, see Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, 75–7.

export that quickly gained international fame, we are surely less aware that similar machine-like ostinati and imitative sound-effects were to be found in the works of even the most staunch proletarian composers.¹⁷ More extreme constructivist projects abandoned conventional instruments in favour of the machines themselves: thus 'noise orchestras' played on engines, turbines, hooters and other factory apparatus, whilst Arseny Avraamov's 'Symphony of Factory Whistles' (1922) involved sirens, whistles, foghorns, cannon and other military equipment, performed by amateurs outdoors and on a massive scale.¹⁸

Musicians were also inevitably affected by those radical experiments taking place in other artistic arenas. In the fields of literature, theatre and film, a number of iconoclastic avant-garde groups rose to prominence in the 1920s, the Russian Futurists, the Russian Formalists, the *Oberiu (The Union of Real Art)* and FEKS (*The Factory of the Eccentric Actor*) amongst them. These related groups shared certain of the same related aims and concepts: a desire to overhaul and debunk the high culture of the past; an advocacy of everyday and mundane speech or genres; an understanding of the stuff of art – poetic language, for example – as device or artifice; and a preoccupation with defamiliarisation or *ostranenie*, the impactful presentation of the familiar in an unfamiliar way. Such ideals resulted in works that were irreverent and absurd, typified by their use of the high and lowbrow, abrupt juxtapositions and incongruities, and techniques such as stylisation, exaggeration, parody and irony. In the careers of certain important artists, one or other of these features might be seen to be emphasised: thus the innovative theatre of the influential director Vsevolod Meyerhold was excessively stylised, his school of acting focussed on the portrayal of stock characters through gesture and movement; meanwhile, the groundbreaking films of Sergey Eisenstein explored the effect of violent disjunction through the use of cinematic montage. It is easy to conceive how all of these artistic concepts, characteristics and devices might have fed into the musics of the 1920s, and much recent scholarship on Shostakovich does explore the

¹⁷ Edmunds provides examples of various instrumental and vocal machine effects in the works of composers such as Alexander Kastalsky, Alexander Davidenko and Boris Shekter, members of proletarian music groups such as Agitotdel, ORKiMD and Prokoll: see Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, 169–70; 178–9; 229–32; 237–9; 243–5; 248–9.

¹⁸ For details, see Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 159.

effect of such trends on the compositional style of this particular composer.¹⁹

The reactionary musical developments of the 1930s, although less diverse, are nevertheless more difficult to define. For although under Stalinism it became increasingly necessary to write in a Socialist Realist style, precisely what this entailed was unclear: official if obscure proclamations that the new art should ‘depict reality in its revolutionary development’ or be ‘National in form, socialist in content’ were primarily directed at other art forms, and had little obvious application in the field of composition.²⁰ If initially this meant that the nature of Socialist Realist music was open to debate,²¹ a series of familiar denunciations from 1936 onwards resulted in its required characteristics becoming somewhat more fixed. Today musicologists variously and tentatively define Socialist Realist art music as: traditional, classical, nineteenth-century or specifically *kuchka-esque* in idiom, utilising a conventional tonal language; generally accessible and melodious; nationalistic or patriotic in certain of its features, for example the use of folk or military material; communicative of content, thus programmatic or text-based to some extent; and beautiful, optimistic, monumental or heroic in character, with forms such as opera and symphony preferred.²²

Certain of these general trends can be observed in two genres specific to the Soviet 1930s and beyond: the ‘song opera’ and the ‘national opera’. The title of the

¹⁹ For example, Caryl Emerson examines the influence of Russian Futurist concerns, such as a preoccupation with everyday speech, on works such as *The Nose*: see Emerson, ‘Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition’, 183–96; Esti Sheinberg explores the impact of Russian Formalist theories, for instance of defamiliarisation, on the composer’s parodistic music: see particularly chapter 8 in Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*; Levon Hakobian argues for a link between the brutal absurdity of *Oberiu* performance art and similar trends in *The Nose* and the Fourteenth Symphony: see Hakobian, ‘*The Nose* and the Fourteenth Symphony’; Hélène Bernatchez examines the connection between stylistic incongruity and characterisation in the films of FEKS and the theatre of Meyerhold, and the film score for *The New Babylon*: see Bernatchez, ‘Shostakovich and FEKS’; and Richard Burke analyses the musical adaptation of film techniques such as montage in the Fifteenth String Quartet: Burke, ‘The Moving Image’.

²⁰ The former quote first appeared as part of the definition of Socialist Realism published in *Pravda* in 1934; it was subsequently repeated by officials, for example in party congress speeches: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 14; 21. The latter quote is Stalin’s own, part of the title of a 1934 directive on the development of national cultures that became tied up with the formation of Socialist Realism: see Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 311–13.

²¹ For example, Fairclough charts Composer’s Union debates of 1935 on the formation of a Socialist Realist symphonism: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 16–24.

²² The collection of essays edited by Bek, Chew and Macek, *Socialist Realism in Music*, attempts to define the slippery subject of what Socialist Realist art really was; while acknowledging its greater complexities, contributions such as Fukač, ‘Socialist Realism in Music’, outline the above criteria.

former is fairly self-explanatory: ‘song opera’ consists for the most part of a series of self-contained vocal numbers, the idiom perhaps best typified by the first of its kind, Ivan Dzerzhinsky’s *The Quiet Don* (1935). Dzerzhinsky’s work has gone down in musicological history as a footnote to the *Lady Macbeth* affair: just nine days prior to the disastrous performance of Shostakovich’s opera in front of Stalin’s entourage, the dictator attended *The Quiet Don* at the same theatre, yet accorded its composer significant acclaim. Officially heralded as a model of Socialist Realism, the piece is patriotic and heroic in its subject matter, conservative in its general musical language and simple, tuneful and lyrical in style, drawing heavily on the characteristics of mass song and folk music. Meanwhile, the ‘national opera’ of the 1930s arose from a more concrete political agenda: as new republics joined the USSR, the task of overseeing and in part creating their indigenous cultures became a conscious foreign policy aim. Thus composers, sometimes in pairs or groups, were commissioned to write national operas for the outlying states: these were nominally based on native folk music, although in actuality they closely resembled the Orientalist projects of the *kuchka* – and the first large-scale Kirghiz opera *Ai-churek* (1939), by the Kirghiz and Russian collective Vlasov-Fere-Maldibayev, provides one such example.²³ Initially, these works were focussed on the non-Russian nation republics; however, as governmental ideology shifted, a chauvinistic and specifically Russian patriotism crept into such cultural projects.²⁴ Thus while one recent writer on Socialist Realist music argues that its single most important characteristic is its turn to the past, another recent text suggests that it is overwhelmingly defined by its nationalism.²⁵

²³ For a discussion of what she terms the ‘project of musical nation-building’ and analysis of works such as *Ai-churek*, see Frolova-Walker, ‘Musical Nationalism in Stalin’s Soviet Union’, 301–2; 311–338.

²⁴ Marina Frolova-Walker charts the move from anti- to pro- Russian nationalism in the 1920–1930s and beyond, both in official cultural policy and, correspondingly music: see Frolova-Walker, ‘Musical Nationalism in Stalin’s Soviet Union’. For a wider historical analysis of the shift from the Marxist-Leninist internationalism favoured in the 1920s to the Stalinist Russocentrism of the 1930s, see Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*.

²⁵ Mikkonen claims the former, while Frolova-Walker implies the latter: see Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s*, 283 and Frolova-Walker, ‘Musical Nationalism’, 313.

3. A survey of '1920s' and '1930s' Musics in the Dramatic Works and *Lady Macbeth*; an Analysis of their Distribution Across the Latter Work

Below, certain of the generalised musical developments of the 1920s and the 1930s as outlined above are demonstrated in practice in both the contemporaneous dramatic scores of Shostakovich and the opera *Lady Macbeth*; the distribution of Shostakovich's '1920s' and '1930s' styles across the latter work is then charted. This project is carried out systematically as follows. This chapter identifies twelve categories – in their particulars, entirely original to this thesis – of '1920s' musics and four of '1930s' musics; each is described using two cited examples from Shostakovich's lesser works and *Lady Macbeth*, and a single manuscript example from each where necessary. At times the link between Shostakovich's dramatic scores and the opera are particularly close: the survey uncovers a number of intriguing thematic connections in passing, several of which have not previously been remarked upon – and this demonstrates the extent to which the minor compositions acted as preparatory sketches for the more substantial work. The distribution of such material across the opera as a whole is then charted in Table 8.3, 'Stylistic distribution in *Lady Macbeth*', which is explained in more detail presently. Crucially, the following survey does not attempt to explore the effect of these styles; rather, their importance lies in their symbolism, each representative of one or other of the first two decades post-revolution.

3. (i) A Survey of '1920s' and '1930s' Musics in the Dramatic Works and *Lady Macbeth*

'1920s' Musics

- 1) *Multiplicity of genre-types*
- 2) *'Low' genres*

The use of multiple and often wildly contradictory styles, idioms and genres both lowbrow and highbrow was characteristic of much Soviet art of the 1920s, as detailed above. It can be observed in the works of the Futurists and related groups, who celebrated both everyday forms and the discontinuities that their use engendered; similarly, it is evident in those proletarian multimedia projects such as

the musical dramatisations, for example. Many of Shostakovich's early works exhibit such diversity, drawing on a range of popular and classical musics: the score for the music-hall revue *Declared Dead* (1931) – a lavish spectacle for numerous performers, incorporating a jazz band, circus artists and a dancing dog – contains light songs, dances such as polka, galop and waltz, operatic parody and non-satirical, even modernist orchestral vignettes; meanwhile, the soundtrack for the film *Alone* (1931) – again, scored for extensive forces, including symphony orchestra, chorus, brass band, organ, theremin and Tuvan throat singer – features imitation Altai folk music, revolutionary songs, orchestral preludes and near-atonal grotesquerie. If opera itself is a mass media spectacle of sorts, *Lady Macbeth* develops this aspect of the genre still further. Table 8.3, which appears at the end of this chapter, lists all of the genres and stylistic references encountered in this work, numbering the different types that occur in each scene: these range from folk-influenced ariosos or orchestral examples of passacaglia and fugue on the one hand, and 'lowbrow' chorus galops or operetta-styled dialogues on the other.

3) *Wrong-note/ parodistic material*

4) *Parodistic genre typage*

The use of 'wrong note' styles and musical parody was widespread in the 1920s, and arrived at from both Western and Soviet directions, as outlined above: thus while the influential French import *Les Six* explored these procedures in a spirit of flippant iconoclasm, in the films of FEKS, the plays of Meyerhold, and the agitprop theatre and mass spectacles of the proletarian movement such methods might also be employed for the purposes of political satire – and examples of this are provided below. If 'wrong note' composition is a familiar and fairly self-explanatory form of musical parody, other parodistic techniques are perhaps more difficult to define; however, in a recent text, the musicologist Esti Sheinberg makes the attempt, including the following features in her survey of satirical markers: collisions or abrupt shifts, for instance between incongruous styles; the distortion of norms or clichés through the removal, insertion or replacement of important elements, for example the substitution of one tonic with another; the exaggeration of one feature to the point of absurdity, such as the excessive repetition of a

melodic figure; the undue emphasis given to inessential surface elements including routine accompanimental patterns; the transgression of normal, even biological boundaries of pitch or tempi, perhaps through the extensive use of low or high-pitched instruments; and the presence of grotesque musical hybrids like the 'heavy' dance.²⁶

Shostakovich's early dramatic works are particularly rife with such techniques: in Examples 8.1a and 8.1b, an extract from the satirical polka in the ballet *The Golden Age* (1930) appears alongside a loosely similar section from the first scene of *Lady Macbeth*, both annotated with Sheinberg's criteria. If both passages are relatively modernist and complex in their overall musical language, other instances of musical parody occur in simpler stylistic contexts: the crude wrong-note march from the incidental music to Meyerhold's production of Vladimir Mayakovsky's play *The Bedbug* (1929) provides one such example, while the unambiguous Viennese Waltz of Boris' Act II monologue is another (II/4; 209/1–216/17). Elsewhere, the parodistical content of such set pieces is more underplayed: both the waltz from the score to the film *The Golden Mountains* (1931) and the Priest's polka in *Lady Macbeth* (II/4; 279/6–282/6) are almost 'straight' in their presentation – although not quite.

These examples of musical parody are largely genre-based, and thus there is a parallel to be made here with other Soviet performance art of the 1920s, in which the satirical use of recognisable musical idioms was common. Here, its primary purpose was political: thus in the 'living newspapers' of agitprop theatre groups such as the *Blue Blouse*, stock characters such as priests or 'NEPmen' were depicted through gypsy songs or operetta, while representatives of the Tsarist regime received more classical 'bourgeois' musics.²⁷ Such politicised genre 'typage' is strikingly in evidence in Shostakovich's early theatre works: the polka from *The Golden Age* cited above is part of a suite of decadent Western dances such as tango and can-can that is used to send-up the corrupt capitalist baddies of the foreign city of 'U-town', in which the ballet is set; similarly, the waltz from *The Golden*

²⁶ See examples throughout Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, particularly chapters 5, 9, and 10.

²⁷ See Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, 130.

Example 8.1a

55

Transgressive extremities of pitch

Contrabassoon

ff

Snare Drum

Transgressive extremities of pitch

Glockenspiel

solo

Wrong-note (G \flat replaces F)

f pizz.

Juxtaposition with tonal accompaniment

Violin 1

f pizz.

Violin 2

f pizz.

Viola

f

Violoncello

p

cresc.

mf cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

56

Highly dissonant cluster

Highly concordant material

Juxtaposition

Contra-bassoon

Abrupt interruption

Excessive dynamic

← Juxtaposition →

Horn in F

ff

Horn in F

ff

Trumpet in B \flat

I sola

p

Trumpet in B \flat

ff

Trombone

ff

Distorted norm: cluster cadence

Emphasis of surface cadential figure

Tuba

Tuba solo

p

Heavy dance: tuba melody

Replacement of norms: tuba melody

Timpani

p

Snare drum

p

Glockenspiel

56

Violin 1

ff

Violin 2

p

Viola

p pizz.

Violoncello

ff

Violoncello

p pizz.

Excessive repetition

Presto ♩ = 208

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Cor Anglais in F

Piccolo clarinet in E \flat

Clarinet in B \flat

Bass clarinet in B \flat

Bassoon

Contra-bassoon

Horn in F

Horn in F

Trumpet in B \flat

Trumpet in B \flat

Trombone

Tuba

Timpani

Snare drum

Glockenspiel

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Violoncello

Transgressive dance speed

'Wrong-note' distorted cliché: G \flat replaces F

Unison emphasis of surface cadential figure

Excessive dynamic

'Wrong-note' abrupt interruption

'Wrong' tonic cadence: e minor

'Wrong-note' harmony

Emphasis of surface bass figure

Removal of norm: removal of harmonic support

Suite from the Ballet *The Golden Age*. 3. Polka; 54/6–56/8.

Example 8.1b

15
Largo ♩ = 63

Katerina

Boris

(Enter Boris.)

15
Largo ♩ = 63

Replacement of norm:
bassoon melody

'Wrong'note':
A♭ replaces G

Transgressive
extremity of pitch

Heavy dance:
slow tempo, low winds

pp

Allegretto. ♩ = 120

Katerina

Boris

p

Гриб - ки се - го - дня бу - дут?
Will there be mush - rooms to - day?

Allegretto. ♩ = 120

f

sfp

Exaggeration of
surface figure

16

Katerina *p*
Бу - дут.
Yes therewill.

Boris *cresc.*
Бу дут? смот - ри я о - чень люб - лю гриб - ки да
There will? You know, I'm ver - y fond of mush - rooms, es

16

dim.
'Wrong-note' harmonisation:
bitonal melody and accompaniment

p
Distorted norm:
cadential figure V-II

17

Katerina
Exaggeration of superficial feature (text) Све - тит ли сол - нце,
Whe - ther the sun's shi - ning,

Boris
ска - ши - цей, ска - ши - цей
pe - cially with buck - wheat gruel

17

Removal of norm:
absence of harmony in standard
accompanimental pattern

Abrupt interruption

f

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/1; 15/1-17/1.

Mountains accompanies the industrial bosses whose attempts at strikebreaking form the subject of the film. Although the link is very rarely made, these ‘living newspaper’ devices permeate the score of *Lady Macbeth*, as Table 8.3 reveals.²⁸ Boris’ Viennese waltzes and Romantic operatic allusions mark him as an honorary Western member of the nineteenth-century Russian regime, a despicable hybrid class to which the polka-dancing Orthodox Priest also belongs; meanwhile, Sergey’s operetta-styled material aligns him with the despised NEPmen of agitprop theatre – and if this musical characterisation is initially confusing, Shostakovich’s description of Sergey as a ‘future kulak’ provides some clarification.²⁹

In the politicised dramatic works of the Soviet 1920s, genre-based satire often contributed to an underlying and fundamental dramaturgical dichotomy. Thus the Bolshevik mass spectacle was routinely predicated on an opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the former depicted by the use of idioms such as gypsy music, operetta and Western dances, and the latter portrayed through Revolutionary songs and military effects.³⁰ Once again, this principle feeds directly into Shostakovich’s early dramatic pieces. The ballet *The Bolt* (1931) enacts the struggle between a band of undesirables bent on industrial sabotage and a group of upright young communists who foil their plot; the saboteurs, lazy worker and drunken priest amongst them, are represented by parodistic Viennese waltzes, tangos and liturgical strains, whilst the workers dance to Soviet songs, marches and machine music. Likewise, the unfinished comic operetta *The Great Lightning* (1932) involves two main sets of differently characterised protagonists: a Soviet delegation to a Western trade fair, who sing of their homeland in a military and folk-influenced language; and their capitalist counterparts, whose vices are lampooned via the usual mix of wrong-note and satirical popular dances.

Intriguingly, this proletarian dramaturgical device of the 1920s might have its roots further back in Russia’s cultural history. In Glinka’s *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842), oft heralded as the founding work of the Russian operatic tradition, diatonic

²⁸ The connection is only made once and in passing to my knowledge, in the recollections of Shostakovich’s contemporary, the musicologist Daniel Zhitomirsky: see Levaa, ‘Svideteli Veka: D. Šostakovič’, 72.

²⁹ Shostakovich, ‘About My Opera’, 253.

³⁰ See Edmunds, *The Proletarian Music Movement*, 142–6.

music is assigned to human or 'good' protagonists, whilst chromatic, often whole-tone, material is allocated to supernatural or 'evil' characters – and this fundamental musico-dramatic dichotomisation formed the basis of many subsequent national operas, Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel* (1907) and Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (1919) amongst them. At times, the principle is applied along nationalistic lines: thus in both *Ruslan* and Borodin's *Prince Igor* (1887), the 'goodies' are characterised through the use of Russian folk music, and the 'baddies' through various foreign exoticisms. The bearing that this inherited technique – in evidence in Russian classical opera as in Soviet proletarian drama – has on *Lady Macbeth* is unambiguous: the work is founded on an underlying dramatic and musical dichotomy with politicised overtones, as discussed at length in Chapter 2.³¹ Furthermore, the dramaturgical opposition is nationalistic in essence: the sympathetic characters (Katerina, the convicts) are distinguished in part through their musical Russianisms, whereas the un-sympathetic characters (everyone else) receive mainly Western – and hence foreign – light music genres.

5) *Juxtaposition*

6) *'Wrong' mood*

If the Russian Formalists and related radical groups of the 1920s were in general intrigued by juxtapositions and incongruities, perhaps this tendency comes most to the fore in the development of montage and similar techniques by well-known figures such as Eisenstein, or lesser-known figures such as Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, founders of the avant-garde FEKS. These latter filmmakers have a particular connection with Shostakovich: prior to *Lady Macbeth*, the young composer wrote the music for the Kozintsev/ Trauberg films *The New Babylon* (1929) and *Alone* (1931), and thus the latest cinematic experiments in both the fast cutting montage and the simultaneous presentation of conflicting elements fed directly into his scores. In the first few minutes of *The New Babylon* – a retelling of the events that led to the formation of the Paris Commune – abrupt shifts between

³¹ Francis Maes is unusual in linking both what he terms 'the dualistic approach' and parodistic genre typecasting in the ballet *The Golden Age* with similar techniques in *Lady Macbeth*, although he does not make a connection with the Russian operatic tradition: see Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 264–5.

contrasting musical styles loosely match the sequence of changing images on screen: the montage veers between scenes of society women fighting over dress fabrics and parasols in *Le Grand Magasin* to the strains of one Parisian Music Hall number, the cigar-smoking proprietor looking-on to another, and the working masses toiling in factories and domestic settings to quasi-minimalist material comprising circular figures and layered ostinati.³² In the later film *Alone* – the story of a young female teacher, Yelena Kuzmina, who is posted to the Altai Republic to spread Soviet education to the natives – still more use is made of wildly conflicting musics. On her arrival in the Altai, Yelena envisages instructing the village children to an up-beat militaristic galop with oom-pah accompaniment; this is abruptly cut short twice, once by the intrusion of an authentic recording of a Shaman singing outside her window, and once by a theremin melody depicting the snowy landscape. These and several other juxtapositions that take place during less than three minutes of film are charted in Table 8.1 and Example 8.2.³³

The rapid montage of contrasting musics is in evidence throughout *Lady Macbeth*; Table 8.2 charts the example of the orchestral interlude between the seventh and eighth scenes, in which short fragments of divergent material process and overlap in much the same manner as in the extract from *Alone*. Meanwhile, Example 8.3 reveals that the violence with which such shifts are effected in the film is also demonstrable in the opera: the fourth scene closes with the priest intoning on a single pitch in free time, to the accompaniment of a sustained string chord marked *piano*; this is rudely interrupted by the entrance of the entire orchestra on a dissonant harmony at *fff*, signifying the *attacca* beginning of the monumental instrumental passacaglia that bridges the central scenes of the work.

³² This film is provided on the SHOSTAKOVI.CH website; the sequence above occurs at 1'54"–3'51".

³³ This film is provided on the SHOSTAKOVI.CH website; the sequence above occurs at 36'57"–39'36".

Table 8.1: Stylistic Juxtaposition in Extract from *Alone*

| Time | Action/ image | Music | Notes on juxtaposition |
|--------|---|---|---|
| 36'57" | Alone in her room, Yelena envisages teaching the village children | Militaristic galop; oom-pah accompaniment; brass instrumentation; up-beat character | Interrupted at * on Example 8.2 |
| 37'28" | The Shaman sings, beats drum and dances outside | Free chant; frantic drum beats; jangling bells <i>(authentic recording)</i> Additional overblown and chromatic flute gestures; frenzied character | Continues throughout introduction of new musics, below |
| 37'58" | Shots of villagers using farming machinery alternate with those of Shaman | Sounds of machinery <i>(authentic recording)</i> | Overlaid with Shaman's music, above |
| 38'41" | Yelena continues enacting her lesson | Material as at 36'57", now on barrel organ | Overlaid with Shaman's music and sounds of machinery, above All interrupted at ** on Example 8.2 |
| 38'59" | Shot of snowy landscape | Solo theremin melody; minor key and prominent use of semitone; melancholy character | Interrupted mid-melody |
| 39'04" | Text: наступила зима ('The Winter came') | Silence | |
| 39'07" | Shots of snowy landscape | Theremin melody, as above | Melody continues into silence |
| 39'17" | Yelena teaches the village children | Militaristic percussion rhythms; brass and woodwind fanfares; silences; energetic character | |

Example 8.2

8

Trumpet *ff*

Horn *f* I II a2

Trombone *ff*

Tuba *ff*

Snare Drum *f*

Cymbal *f*

9

Tpt.

Horn

Tbn.

Tba.

S. D.

Cym.

Tpt.

Horn

Tbn.

Tba.

S. D.

Cym.

Alone, third reel of film. No.3; 8/1-9/10.

Table 8.2: Stylistic Juxtaposition in Extract from *Lady Macbeth*

| Bar no. | Musics | Notes on juxtaposition |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Fifth Entract; 423/1 | Presto: bitonal repetition of force motif to tritone C/F#; trumpet and timpani instrumentation; <i>fff</i> and accented; brutal character | Straight switch to material below |
| 424/1 | Allegretto: fragmentary presentation of dotted figures, upward flourishes, cadences and silences; confused military character | Interrupted by material below |
| 425/7 | Presto: fragment of <i>presto</i> material above | Silence then switch to material below |
| 425/11 | Allegretto: development of <i>allegretto</i> material above. Also wrong-note martial trumpet melody and counterpoint | <i>Allegretto</i> material resumed. Straight switch to material below |
| 427/1 | Piccolo clarinet cadenza; fragments including fifth drone, trombone glissandi and snare drum rattle; bewildering character | Flourishes from above <i>allegretto</i> material continue Silence then switch to material below |
| 428/1 | Presto: fragment of <i>presto</i> material above | Straight switch to material below |
| 429/1 | Tonally confused and polyphonic development of last <i>allegretto</i> material, above; frenzied character | Trumpet melody, counterpoint, flourishes and cadenza material from above <i>allegretto</i> material continue Dimuendo into material below |
| 430/2 | (Presumed tempo change): ³⁴ Romantic-styled dance in G minor/ major; lyrical melody; extended Romantic harmony; string and French horn orchestration; graceful character | Silence then switch to material below |
| 432/1 | Chromatic string runs; hectic character | Lead-in to material below |
| 433/1 | ♩ = 120; fragment of <i>presto</i> material above | Silence the switch to material below |
| 433/5 | ♩ = 144; isolated fragments of first <i>allegretto</i> material | Abrupt ending |

³⁴ Several features on the musical surface – the complete contrast between the chaotic *allegretto* material and the Romantic-styled dance; the sudden pause on a static harmony at the close of the former, and the free rhapsodic material that diminuendos into the latter; and so on seem to demand a change of tempo here: certainly this is carried out in both the Mstislav Rostropovich (1979) and Myung Whung Chung (1993) recordings of the opera.

Example 8.3

283

Priest

Од - на - ко па - ни - хид - ку не ме - ша - ет от - слу -
But that doesn't stop us say - ing a re - qui - em for —

283

Priest

жить. Ны - не от - пу - ща - е - ши ра - ба тво - е - го, вла - ды - ко...
him. "Lord now le - test thou thy ser - vant de - part in peace..."

attaca

Entr'act between the 4th and 5th scenes.

284 *Largo* ♩ = 69

fff

8^{va} ↓

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. II/4; 283/4–Third Entr'act; 284/1–7.

7) *Debunking*

Arguably, the use of all of the techniques outlined above within a high art form such as opera work to undermine the genre itself to some extent – and it is this deliberate debunking of the highbrow that was so beloved of groups such as the Russian Futurists on the one hand, and *Les Six* on the other. Such iconoclastic disrespect for the past can also be observed in the ‘anti-operas’ of the early Soviet

period: works such as Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* (1919) or Shostakovich's first opera *The Nose* (1929) in which the conventions and clichés of the genre were both mocked and overturned, and the audience's emotional engagement with the drama disabled through devices of dehumanisation and estrangement.³⁵

Shostakovich's early dramatic works provide several instances of 'debunking' in all its various forms. A straightforward technique for ridiculing the artistic artefacts of the past is of course direct quotation, or direct quotation with a difference: for example, in the last act of *Declared Dead* – an irreligious music-hall sequence set in heaven involving the saints and apostles engaged in riotous behaviour – the Devil sings part of the 'Song of the Golden Calf' from Act II of Gounod's *Faust*, its overt melodrama undermined by comic wrong-note harmonies. Similarly, on Boris' death, Katerina borrows the tragic supplication of the downtrodden from the opening scene to Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (Prologue/1; 6/1–9) – only retelling it in parodistic vein high in her register, to the accompaniment of piercing piccolo clarinet in unison and bassoons duetting in staccato semitones (II/5; 275/1–277/5).

Other examples are more complex. In Act II, scene 5 of *The Nose*, the hero Kovalyev attempts to explain his predicament to the newspaper clerk in an expressive passage marked *bel canto*, accompanied by pulsing string triadic harmonies and a solo violin counter-melody as shown in Example 8.4. Yet these allusions to Romantic opera are destabilised by several factors: firstly, by the increasingly atonal language of the extract; secondly, by the surrounding and general style of the work, this being atonal, dissonant, highly complex and decidedly un-lyrical; and finally, by the quite ridiculous text, given below.

Similar instances are present in *Lady Macbeth*, most involving the debunking of certain formulaic phrases from Romantic opera or operetta. Thus in Act II, scene 5, a series of G₂ major brass fanfares herald the arrival of Zinovy, whose dialogue with Katerina consists almost entirely of dominant to tonic cadential figures sung *forte* and high in the register. However, these heroic motifs in the light operatic style are mocked by several factors: short wrong-note melodic fragments in the

³⁵ For a discussion of such trends in the context of twentieth-century opera as a whole and in relation to the theatre of Meyerhold, see Frolova-Walker, 'Russian Opera', 181–5.

Example 8.4

188 Largo ♩ = 66-80

Kovalev *p*

Я не мо - гу вам ска - зать, ка - ким об - ра - зомъ;

188 Largo ♩ = 66-80

pp

но глав - но - е то, что он разъ - ез - жа - ет по

Kovalev

го - ро - ду и на - зы - ва - ет се - бя стат - ским со -

Kovalev

вет - ни - ком. И по э - то - му

f

189

p espr.

189

Kovalev: I can't tell you in what way. The important thing is that he's [my nose is] riding round town and calling himself a State Councillor. That's why I beg you (to make an announcement asking his captor to bring him to me with all haste in the soonest possible time. Judge for yourself, really, how can I live without such a noticeable part of the body? It's not something like a little toe: I'm in boots and nobody can see if it's not there).

The Nose. Act II, scene 5; 188/1–191/4.

bass and treble that sound against the trumpet fanfares in bitonal presentation as in Example 8.5; the contrast between this material and the modernistic or genuinely Romantic passages that have formed the basis of the scene thus far; and perhaps even the excessive reiteration of Sergey's and Katerina's routine vocal cliché, to the following prosaic and repetitive text:

Example 8.5

Katerina

Кто там? Who's there?

f

Zinovy

Ка-те - ри - на! О-тво
Ka-ter - i - na! O-pen

f marc.

Katerina

Zinovy

ряй!
thedoor!

334

Katerina

Zinovy

He pas - бе - py,
I can't make it out...

334

8^{va} Fl. Ob.

V-ni

ff

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Zinoviy (<i>outside the door</i>): | Katerina! |
| Katerina: | Who's there? |
| Zinoviy: | Open the door! |
| Katerina: | I can't make it out...(/ Who's there? |
| Zinoviy: | It's me... |
| Katerina: | Who? |
| Zinoviy: | Me, can't you hear? |
| Katerina: | I can't make it out. |
| Zinoviy: | Look, it's me...) |

II/5; 333/1-334/1.

8) Musical brutality

If political revolution tends to breed a general culture of violence, the arts are not immune to this trend: a disturbing strain of brutality can be observed in the activity of various avant-garde groups of the Soviet 1920s, most notably the theatre of the *Oberiu*, which involved a peculiar brand of slapstick both excruciatingly violent yet semi-humorous. The link between such performance art and the work of Shostakovich has previously been made in connection with the opera *The Nose*, and it is easy to comprehend the link between its hybrid scenes of cruelty and comedy, such as the bagel-seller's assault detailed in Chapter 3, and the futurist theatrics of the *Oberiu* and others.³⁶ The unremitting and inexpressive brutality of these dramatic episodes in *The Nose* feeds directly into the musical setting: thus, as explored in Chapter 3, the market-woman's attack takes place to a distorted and manic galop characterised by the relentless repetition of single pitches or short motifs and frantic semiquaver passages – in short, a precursor of the genre-type 1 material ever associated with extreme aggression in *Lady Macbeth*, the distinguishing traits of which are even onomatopoeically suggestive of violence. If the assault of the bagel-seller pre-empts that of Aksinya, the passage from *Lady Macbeth* has a musical antecedent that is even more direct: as previously noted, the instrumental music for a significant part of the Aksinya episode is lifted wholesale from *Declared Dead*, in which it formed the accompaniment to the riotous bacchanalia of the Russian Orthodox saints John of Kronstadt and Paraskeva Piatnitsa – and this vicious piece of anti-religious satire was certainly in keeping with the spirit of the age.³⁷

If genre-type 1 material provides the obvious example of musical brutality in *Lady Macbeth*, this tendency is present elsewhere: in the 'hammered-out' repeated figures or dissonances, strained extremities of tessitura, brass and percussion-heavy orchestrations, extremes of dynamic and uniformly accented delivery of much of Boris' Act I music, for instance. Example 8.6 gives the cacophonous tutti climax to

³⁶ Hakobian explores the connection in '*The Nose* and the Fourteenth Symphony', 167–72.

³⁷ Stites details what he names the 'Godkilling' cultural projects that emerged post-revolution as a result of the Bolshevik's official policy on religion: these included explicit anti-religious poster art, riotous antireligious carnivals, and public acts of offensive blasphemy: see Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 105–9.

one such episode, which closes with two annotated appearances of the rhythmic motif associated with force in the opera. This recurring four-note figure, restricted in its range and always comprising an element of pitch repetition, is ever-loud and ever-accented: significantly this musical depiction of brutality also occurs in the ballet *The Bolt*, where it too accompanies moments of direct or violent conflict.³⁸

Example 8.6

The musical score for Example 8.6 consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Boris in bass clef and the piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The vocal line has a fermata and a *fff* dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment features a *f* dynamic marking and a rhythmic motif. The second system shows the vocal line with Russian and English lyrics: "я все вре - мя на че - I tu - self am al - ways". The piano accompaniment has a *cresc.* marking. The third system shows the vocal line with a fermata and the piano accompaniment with two instances of the "FORCE LEITMOTIF" marked with *fff*.

I/1; 28/3–29/7.

³⁸ This is well illustrated by a recent production of the ballet, in which the motif accompanies both of two physical punches in the scenario: see Shostakovich, *The Bolt*, DVD recording of Bolshoi Opera production (2007); the first of these incidents occurs at Act I/ scene II; 3. 'Scene with Mariya, Dimka and Jan', 3'19" approx.

9) *Mechanistic figures*

The trend for machine music that flowered briefly in both the West and Russia in the 1920s – demonstrated by well-known concert works such as Honegger’s popular Russian import, *Pacific 231* (1923) and Mosolov’s Russian export, *The Iron Foundry* (1926), yet also in evidence in the community compositions of the Soviet Union’s proletarian composers – is not a style that we associate with Shostakovich in general. However, his dramatic commissions of the 1920s do contain one brief foray into this area: the ballet *The Bolt*, set in a contemporary Soviet factory, was heavily influenced by constructivism. Sets and costumes utilised abstract and highly patterned geometric designs, whilst both staging and choreography involved the imitation of machinery by the dancers, at times on a large scale: thus in the production dances of the ballet, the cast were carefully arranged in rows to simulate the mechanism of both a tractor and a loom when viewed on mass.³⁹ Shostakovich’s score for this project also mimicked the sounds of industry: the work contains numerous examples of machine music, and Example 8.7a provides one such instance. This extract from the overture to the ballet is characterised by several typical features: the layering of rhythmic and primarily unmelodic ostinati; the excessive use of repeated pitches; the preoccupation with different divisions of the beat, here both quavers and triplet quavers; the construction of phrases from regular building blocks, here 2 bars + 2 bars; the employment of imitative instrumental sound effects, here high-pitched jabs on flute and piccolo; and a gradual dynamic build up to cacophony.

Of course *Lady Macbeth* contains no such industrial simulation (!); however, certain aspects of this style are observable to a lesser degree in several moments from the work. Thus Example 8.7b exhibits the same use of primarily rhythmic ostinati comprising various equal divisions of the beat, though these are repeated less often and more flexibly, and the same dissonant crescendo; meanwhile, the oscillating rise and fall of the contrary-motion brass motifs annotated on the manuscript at * might almost be suggestive of machinery. The extract is Boris’, and other passages of his material also contain such mechanical figures: compare Example 8.7b with I/1; 22/1–24/3.

³⁹ For details, see Ilichova, ‘Shostakovich’s Ballets’, 207.

Example 8.7a

18

Picc. *p cresc.* *f*

Fl. *p cresc.* *f*

Ob. *p cresc.* *f*

C. A. in F *p cresc.* *f*

Picc. Cl. in E \flat *ff* *a 2*

Cl. in B \flat *ff* *a 2*

Bsn. *f*

Cbsn. *f*

Hn. in F

Hn. in F

Tbn. *p cresc.*

Glock. *p cresc.* *f*

18

Vln. I *p cresc.* *f*

Vln. II *p cresc.* *f*

Vla. *p cresc.* *f*

Vo. *f*

Vo. *f*

Suite from the ballet *The Bolt*. 1. 'Overture'; 18/1-4.

Example 8.7b

accel.

Boris

Хо - зя - ин у - ез - жа - ет,
Your mas - ter has to goa - way

accelerando

p cresc.

Boris

а вы ни гру - сти, ни то - ски, не
and you don't show a - ну sign of

38

Boris

чув - ству - е - - ре!
grief or re - - gret!

38

V-ni

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/1; 37/3–38/2.

10) *Melody as process*

If the distinct and Asafiev-influenced compositional school that emerged from the Leningrad conservatoire in the 1920s is most commonly discussed in reference to symphonic and instrumental pieces rather than dramatic works,

certain elements of its style are nevertheless in evidence in Shostakovich's lighter creations of this period.⁴⁰ The Leningrad modernists' rejection of what was schematic, sectional, periodic and regular in favour of what was free, continuous, developmental and organic gave rise to a particular kind of melody: conceived as a process unfolding in time and generating its own direction and motion, tensions and releases, it often took the form of broad and slow 'respiratory' instrumental monologues.⁴¹ Even *Declared Dead* (1931), composed for the popular Leningrad music hall, contains an example: the melodic extract shown in Example 8.8a, part of an interlude depicting a pastoral scene, demonstrates a free meandering continuity that transgresses obvious phrase boundaries and seems to propel itself gently forward – at times into unexpected tonal areas – through patterns of tension and resolution created by its relationship with the second polyphonic line.

In all of these aspects this passage is akin to several others from *Lady Macbeth* – and in the extract given as Example 8.8b, the resemblances extend still further. Both hover mainly around the Aeolian mode on A, though wander into distant key areas such as E_b; and both contain a number of similar melodic or rhythmic motifs: falling fourths and fifths, circular shapes, descending scales harmonised in thirds or sixths, quaver and semiquaver dactyl patterns, and so on. Interestingly, several of the examples of the Leningrad 'melody as process' style located in *Lady Macbeth* exhibit these particular features, Katerina's opening monologue conspicuous amongst them; the correspondences with both the *Declared Dead* passage and fragments from Shostakovich's incidental music to Nikolay Akimov's controversial production of *Hamlet* (1932) – each works closely contemporaneous with *Lady Macbeth* – reveal these as compositions very much hewn from the same creative material.⁴²

⁴⁰ Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists*, as referenced above, analyses the works of young Leningrad conservatoire composers under the influence of Asafiev's teachings and Shcherbachov's pedagogy, arguing for the existence of a compositional school characterised by its continuous and ultra-polyphonic linearism; primarily, his study concentrates on large-scale instrumental works, such as Shostakovich's First Symphony (1925), Shcherbachov's Second Symphony (1925), and Popov's Septet (1927).

⁴¹ For an analysis of such melodic writing, as influenced by Pyotr Ryazanov's conservatoire course on melody, see Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists*, 91–4.

⁴² See in particular those fragments from *Hamlet* entitled 'Пастуший рожок' ['Shepherd's horn'], 'Любовная сцена короля и королевы' ['Love scene of the King and Queen'] and 'Колыбельная' ['Lullaby'] in volume 28 of the 1978–1986 Muzika edition of the collected works. All exhibit a number

Example 8.8a

Declared Dead, 'The Field'. Bars 12–19.

Example 8.8b

♩ = 69

(Katerina gives Sergey her hand. Sergey squeezes it.)

Sergey

A ну, поз - воль - те ру - ку,
Well then, ma - dam, a - llow me

♩ = 69

101

Sergey

ес - ли з - то вер - но.
to take your hand ifihat isso.

101

of the criteria listed above; interestingly, although none are rooted in the Aeolian mode on A, they all make use of similar 'white-note' collections.

Katerina

боль - но, пу - сти,
You're hurting, let go,

Katerina

коль - до...—
it's myring...

Sergey

Об-ру - чаль - но - е ко - ле-чко да-вит.
Your wed - ding ring's dig-ging in - to you.

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. 1/2; 100/6–101/10.

11) *Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance*

12) *Textural complexity*

The extreme musical modernism arrived at by certain individuals whose works were performed in the Soviet Union in the 1920s – Berg, whose opera *Wozzeck* (1922) was given in Leningrad soon after its world premiere, providing an obvious Western example, and Roslavets, whose works were frequently programmed in ASM concerts, providing a less obvious Soviet one – is not a style immediately identifiable with Shostakovich; however, a handful of his youthful compositions, *The Nose* prominent amongst them, do contain a degree of atonalism, dissonance and textural complexity that would not again be revisited by the composer. Whilst Shostakovich's second opera is in general significantly more traditional than, for example, his first, there are moments that might be described as conventionally modernistic – and in both the incidental works and *Lady Macbeth*,

this often takes a particular form. The music that accompanied the chaotic ‘fire’ scene in *The Bedbug*, an extract from which is given in Example 8.9a, exhibits the characteristic traits of Shostakovich’s early ‘cacophonous’ style: in general it is fast-paced, approaching atonality, chromatic and dissonant, and densely polyphonic in a way that is not adequately represented in piano reduction; in specifics it makes extensive use of chromatic quaver triplet patterns, cluster dissonances, sudden silences and stab chords, short orchestral dialogues between the ‘high’ and ‘low’ instruments, and abrupt drops in dynamic followed by sustained crescendi. This kind of material marks several moments of extreme violence in *Lady Macbeth*: below, an extract from Sergey’s instrumental assault on Katerina appears as Example 8.9b, alongside the *Bedbug* example for the purpose of comparison.

The ‘cacophonous’ style is found elsewhere in Shostakovich’s dramatic works of the 1920s. In the ‘Internationale’ of the incidental music to Adrian Piotrovsky’s play *Rule, Britannia!* (1931) – a work written for the workers’ youth theatre, TRAM, and dealing with class warfare abroad – a similar passage concludes with an ascending chromatic scale on E, *fff* chord of E, and soaring trumpet melody, all gestures that render it strikingly similar to the conclusion of Zinovy’s murder in *Lady Macbeth* (compare bars 43–9 of the ‘Internationale’ with II/5, 349/5–12). In fact, this single piece from the play constitutes something of a montage of motifs from the opera: its pseudo-march on *piano* clarinet (bars 26–36) reappears as the closing material of *Lady Macbeth*’s scene 5; furthermore, the turbulent content of bars 10–13 of the ‘Internationale’ – based on a rising bass line on B, prominent semitone intervals and threatening dynamic swells – is heard as Boris reveals to Katerina that he knows of her adultery (II/4; 2301–1/12), whilst the alto flute’s broadly ascending chain of rising and falling thirds and seconds in bars 16–8 of the incidental music appears in the same instrument as Boris and Zinovy discuss the oath of fidelity (I/1; 50/1–2) – and there are other parallels besides.

Example 8.9a

The musical score consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef with triplets and a bass line with triplets. The second system begins with a dynamic marking of *mf cresc.* and features a treble staff with triplets and a bass staff with chords and triplets. The third system continues with a treble staff of triplets and a bass staff of chords and triplets. The fourth system starts with a dynamic marking of *p cresc.* and includes a treble staff with triplets and a bass staff with chords and triplets. The fifth system concludes with a treble staff of triplets and a bass staff of chords and triplets.

The Bedbug. 'Fire', bars 23–43.

Example 8.9b

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment, divided into three systems. The first system consists of five measures. The second system begins with a measure marked with a box containing the number '188', followed by four more measures. The third system also consists of five measures. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one flat, and a 3/4 time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes in the right hand, and chords and eighth notes in the left hand.

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/3; 187/9–188/6.

'1930s' Musics

1) *Folk music/ nationalism*

Those folkloric and nationalistic elements that would come to be so integral to an official Socialist Realist style, as best demonstrated by the growing trend for 'national opera' in the 1930s, begin to be more in evidence in Shostakovich's dramatic works of this period, here manifesting themselves in various ways. On occasion, Shostakovich would make use of authentic and popular folk material, in his film scores in particular: thus his soundtrack for Kozintsev's and Trauberg's *The Youth of Maxim* (1934) – the first part of an epic revolutionary trilogy following the life of the hero Maxim, a factory worker – is to some extent a compilation of pre-existing folk songs; sung and played by the characters within the story itself and thus in film terms diegetic, this was preferred above non-diegetic music for its realistic qualities. *The Youth of Maxim* also includes a full choral version of the Russian revolutionary march 'You Fell as Victim', notably performed at Lenin's funeral; a similar nationalistic icon and Lenin's favourite song, 'Tormented by

Grievous Bondage’, also appears in Shostakovich’s score to the film *Girlfriends* (1935) – the patriotic story of three female nurses who work together in the First World War – together with the rousing then-national anthem of the Soviet Union, ‘The Internationale’.

Elsewhere, Shostakovich composes his own imitation folk music. Thus the chauvinistic duet ‘In a Country of Hostile Lilliputians We Stand’ from the unfinished opera *The Great Lightning* exhibits several traits associated with Russian folk, as demonstrated by the extract given as Example 8.10a: the duet is in a modally-influenced f minor, with much melodic emphasis given to the flattened seventh; a plagal cadence is a prominent feature of the opening phrase; the vocal material is simultaneously suggestive of the relative major, almost indicating that a kind of *peremennost* is at work; the male voices duet in close harmony, often moving in parallel thirds; the end of the second phrase involves a characteristic vocal ‘whoop’; and so on. In *Lady Macbeth*, Katerina’s music in particular draws on such Russianisms,⁴³ pieces such as her rural-styled arioso, ‘The ant drags along its straw’, containing similar allusions to Russian folk as a kind of meta-genre: again, the piece is in a modally-influenced minor key with the melodic line highlighting the flattened seventh; the vocal part includes several falling fourths and fifths; the whole is harmonised with predominantly minor triads, often moving in parallel motion; use is made of a tonic pedal, or drone; and so on – and these features are conspicuous in the extract in Example 8.10b.

Meanwhile, in the ballet *The Limpid Stream* (1935) – a cheerful tale of life on a Soviet collective farm – it is folk dance that is the subject of faithful pastiche: the ‘Russian Lubok’ from the ballet suite imitates a generic popular Russian dance in sectional form, consisting of short regular phrases of a lively diatonic melody supported by dominant–tonic pedals and some gentle rhythmic syncopation. This character dance is but one of several sequences of such pieces from the ballet proper, and these mini-spectacles – in which Kuban Cossacks dance alongside

⁴³ Numerous commentators acknowledge that Katerina’s material employs such national markers from the Russian folk and art music traditions. Alla Bogdanova explores the issue in some depth, listing Russian folk-song intonations, the national nineteenth-century genre of the domestic/urban romance (*bitovoy romans*), and the operas of Tchaikovsky and Musorgsky as amongst those influences that inform her part: for examples, see Bogdanova, *Opery i balety Šostakoviča*, 161–3 and “Katerina Izmailova”, 31; 33.

Example 8.10a

Igor

Встра не враж-деб-ных ли - ли -
Ina country of hos - tile Lill - i -

Semyen

Встра - не враж-деб-ных ли - ли -
Ina country of hos - tile Lill - i -

Igor

пу - тов сто - им, бой - цы ве - ли - ких дней, как
pu - tians we stand, great men of the old days, our

Semyen

пу - тов сто - им, бой - цы ве - ли - ких дней, как
pu - tians we stand, great men of the old days, our

Igor

сос - ны, ла - пы пе - ре - пу - тав, се - мей - ных
legs of oak are bound up, fa - mi - ly

Semyen

сос - ны, ла - пы пе - ре - пу - тав, се - мей - ных
legs of oak are bound up, fa - mi - ly

The Great Lightning. Duet: 'In a Country of Hostile Lilliputians...', bars 2–8.

Example 8.10b

Katerina

p
 My - ra - вей та - ска - ет со-ло - мин-ку, ко - ро - ва да-
 The ant drags a - long its straw the cow

Katerina

ет мо - ло - ко, бат - ра - ки круп -
 gives her milk, the farm la - bourners

Katerina

чат - ку ссы - па - ют, толь - ко мне од - ной
 pour out the flour, but I a - lone

13

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/1; 12/2–13/2.

Caucasians – are reminiscent of similar staple suites from the Russian classical repertoire, ‘Chernomor’s March’ and the ‘Oriental Dances’ from Act IV of Glinka’s *Ruslan and Lyudmila* forming one instance, and the ‘Grand Divertissement’ from Act II of Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* another. It is rather to the example of Musorgsky, ever-revered by Russian musical nationalists from the *kuchka* to the rapmovites, that Shostakovich turns in Act IV of *Lady Macbeth*. The sudden appearance of the downtrodden masses as personified by the chorus of convicts is a typically

Musorgskian feature, as is the sage and suffering character of the Old Convict. Appropriately, the music that accompanies these protagonists is saturated with Musorgsky-isms: modally-inflected 'flatter than minor' keys; overwhelmingly minor-triad harmonisations; parallel chord, pivot note and mediant progressions and pedal points; unconventional harmonic spacings such as 'close' thirds and 'wide' octaves, for example; oscillating tones and semitones; and speech-like melodies.

2) *Traditionalism*

A turn towards Russian folk music and the national classics was also of course a turn to the past – and the general shift to musical traditionalism that took place in the 1930s pervades all areas of Shostakovich's compositional style. Its conspicuous examples are in the 'straight' borrowings of older forms in the dramatic scores: thus the incidental music to *Hamlet* (1932) boasts a thoroughly Chopin-esque funeral march, its long, lyrical and chromatically expressive melodic lines supported by extended Romantic harmonies; meanwhile, the music to *The Human Comedy* (1934) – a conservative play by Pavel Sukhotin after a nineteenth-century source, the writings of Honoré de Balzac – includes a typical sectional sarabande complete with stock rhythms, excessive ornamentation and cadential suspensions. The chorus that both opens Act IV of *Lady Macbeth* and is briefly reprised at its conclusion also appears a conventional number from an earlier opera: the self-contained piece is firmly rooted in f minor, and consists of alternating sections of solo (A) and choral response (B), each constructed of 2+2 bar phrases, framed by an instrumental introduction and closing statement in the following format: Intro–A–B–A1–B1–Coda. Its overall language is nineteenth-century rather than twentieth, and tinged with Musorgskian features as outlined above.

3) *Non-satirical light musics*

The regressive musical shift of the 1930s in part involved a growing tendency towards what was accessible and melodic, as demonstrated by the fashion for 'song operas' at this time; in the dramatic works of Shostakovich, such listener-friendly tendencies can be observed in the inclusion of light-music numbers that were

decidedly *un*-satirical in their treatment. The title piece ‘The Song of the Counterplan’ from the film *The Counterplan* (1932) – an upbeat story of workers in a Soviet turbine factory – is a thoroughly conventional mass song with a ‘sing-able’ melody and rousing march-like accompaniment; its accessibility rendered it immediately popular in both the Soviet Union, where it soon became in essence an honorary folk song, and abroad, where it was used as the official march of the United Nations in the 1940s, the finale of the MGM film-musical *Thousands Cheer* (1943), and the standard wedding march in Swiss registry offices.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the main theme heard throughout *The Human Comedy* is an imitation of a contemporary French chanson in a popular sentimental style, its long-note lyrical melody most often supported by a lilting broken-chord pattern on pizzicato strings – and not a ‘wrong-note’ harmony to be found.

While the satirical use of popular and light musics in *Lady Macbeth* is widespread, as is evident from the discussion above, there are also those places where the use of ‘low’ genres is *non*-satirical in its presentation. Although the operetta-like dialogues between Sergey and Sonyetka in Act IV are for the most part undermined by parodistic devices, arguably there are moments when their style of communication becomes genuine: thus in their extended discourse from 492/1–499/6, the fragmentary shifts, unexpected tonal turns, crude instrumental interruptions and too-high-pitched clarinet gradually drop away to reveal the passage of ‘pure’ light-operatic recitative given in Example 8.11, its melodramatic tremolos and final perfect cadence unadulterated by any wrong-note or similar features. Significantly, Sonyetka’s next and final appearance in the opera is likewise free from any debunking tendencies: her last speech to Katerina sounds as a genuine fragment of operetta, its conventional lyrical melody accompanied by pizzicato strings and decorated with woodwind counter-figures (IV/9; 534/1–539/7).

⁴⁴ For a survey of the various re-usages of this piece, see Riley, ‘From the Factory to the Flat’.

Example 8.11

Sergey

ня?
do?

f *cresc.* 8^{va}

499

(Sonyetka shows Sergey her torn stockings. Sergey seizes her legs, but Sonyetka puts a stop to his advances with a slap on the cheek.)

Sonyetka

ff

Ви - дишь?
Can yousee?

Чул - ки пор - ва - лись,
My stock - ings are torn

Sergey

499

ff

Sonyetka
хо - лод-но мне, до стань чул - ки! У куп - чи - хи.
and...I'm cold. Get me some others! From your rich merchant's wife.

Sergey
ff
Ногде же? Вер но!

IV/9; 498/9–499/6.

4) Socialist Realist moods

The preferred music of the 1930s might evoke a number of moods beautiful, optimistic, monumental or heroic in character – and increasing examples of this can be located in Shostakovich’s dramatic works of the early 1930s. In the incidental music to Alexander Afinogenov’s politicised drama about the Spanish civil war, *Salute to Spain* (1936) – significantly, one of the first compositions that Shostakovich completed following the *Pravda* affair – is one number that fulfils the first of these criteria. The romantic ‘Song to Rosita’, a strophic aria in f# minor and triple-time, is traditionally, operatically beautiful in a nineteenth-century kind of way: the vocal melody is spun out in long and lyrical phrases; the accompaniment is constructed from a lilting rhythmic motif; the whole grows in chromatic intensity and general vocal tessitura towards its climax; the orchestration is muted, relying heavily on solo flutes and strings; and so on. In fact, in all of the characteristics listed, both specific and generic, the piece would appear to be modelled on Katerina’s Romantic-styled aria of Act I, scene 3, although the connection is not commonly acknowledged; Example 8.12a and 8.12b reveal some of the motivic similarities between these two triple-time love songs in f# minor. It would seem that, at this time of crisis, Shostakovich drew on one section of *Lady Macbeth* praised by even the harshest reviewers – and praised surely not simply for its

reference to national and traditional models, but also for its adherence to the Socialist Realist principle of beauty.⁴⁵

Example 8.12a

Музыкальный фрагмент в 3/4 такта, тональность A-бемоль мажор. Включает вокальную партию с русскими и английскими текстами и фортепианное сопровождение. Текст: Ро-зи-та, сердце мое бо-лит, Ис-па-ни-я кровь-ю сво-их де-тей о-ро-сит. For Rosita, my heart aches, For Spain washed in the blood of her children.

Salute to Spain. 'Song of Rosita', bars 35–43.

Example 8.12b

Музыкальный фрагмент, начинающийся с такта 142. Тональность A-бемоль мажор. Включает вокальную партию Катерины и фортепианное сопровождение. Текст: Те-перь я ча-сто гля-жу на. Now of-ten do I look at.

⁴⁵ Ivan Martynov's summary of the work, though written later, provides a typical example of an orthodox Soviet text that condemns the majority of *Lady Macbeth* for its formalism while praising the 1/3 aria as 'beautiful', 'human, vividly emotional': see Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, 37–47;(39).

Katerina

них, ча - сто пла - чу, гля - дя от за - ви - сти;
them, and with en - vu bit - ter - ly weep and cry;

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. I/3; 142/1–10.

A final thematic link between a contemporaneous theatre work of Shostakovich and the opera *Lady Macbeth* serves to demonstrate a different kind of approved musical character: that of the monumental and heroic. A short piece of entrance music from *Hamlet*, provided in Example 8.13a, becomes the introduction to Katerina's d minor aria of Act IV, given as Example 8.13b: here its stately tempo, sustained triadic harmonies, militaristic fanfare echoes, quasi-Baroque trills and flourishes, dramatic tremolos, full orchestration and *fff* dynamic all conspire to suggest what is powerful, formidable, and epic.

Example 8.13a

Adagio

p

Hamlet. 'Entrance', bars 1–3.

Example 8.13b

526

Adagio ♩ = 63

fff

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. IV/9; 526/1–5.

3. (ii) The Distribution of '1920s' and '1930s' Musics Across the Opera *Lady Macbeth*

It should be obvious from the above discussion that the '1920s' musics rife in Shostakovich's compositions roughly up to the date of 1931/2 are congregated mainly in Acts I–III of *Lady Macbeth*, whereas the '1930s' musics exhibited in the works from 1931/2 onwards appear mainly in Act IV; it is intriguing in light of this to note that the final scene of the opera was, unlike others, written *after* the all-important April Resolution of 1932 – although the precise correspondence might well be coincidental.⁴⁶ There is a particular exception to this rule: Katerina's own material is more '1930s' in style wherever it appears – and the dramaturgical significance of this will be considered in Chapter 9. Table 8.3, 'Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*', supports these basic conclusions: the use of the 1920s styles (shaded light grey in the table) and 1930s styles (shaded darker) as detailed above is charted in the opera chronologically section-by-section,⁴⁷ revealing, for example, a much higher proportion of '1930s' musics in Act IV than elsewhere. Furthermore, where '1930s' musics do appear in Acts I–III, these are in Katerina's solo sections, as indicated by darker shading in the table.

The surveyed styles, products of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the 1930s, are also symbolic of these decades. Thus the opera, which 'works through' its use of unadulterated innovative '1920s' musics in the initial acts to arrive at a more conservative '1930s' finale, plays out in essence the passage of the age.

⁴⁶ Rosamund Bartlett and Levon Hakobian both note this fact, though they primarily attribute to it a different significance: Bartlett considers it a possibility, Hakobian a certainty, that the intrusion of the April Resolution mid-composition allowed Shostakovich to apply a quasi-Marxist gloss to his final act that was previously less developed: see Bartlett, 'Shostakovich as Opera Composer', 189–90; Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, 112–14. On the basis of Chapter 2, this seems unlikely: in fact, the surface Marxist narrative of the work is dramaturgically consistent from the outset.

⁴⁷ Section boundaries are determined on the basis of conspicuous musico-dramatic changes on surface and structural levels: for example, of genre-type, tempo, instrumentation, tonality and general dramatic narrative and musical material. *Lady Macbeth* is an overtly sectional work and, for the most part, its episodes are distinct. More significant sections or complexes of episodes are indicated on the table by dividing lines in bold.

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act I/ scene 1

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre type | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical light musics | Socialist Realist moods |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| I/1; _/1 | Katerina | (1) Arioso | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | |
| I/1; 11/5 | K | (2) Arioso/ folksong | √ | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15/1 | Boris, K | (3) Sectional dialogue/ monologue (<i>folk</i>) | √ | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 33/1 | | (4) Orchestral transition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 35/1 | Zinovy, Millhand, B, servants, labourers | (5) Free dialogue (<i>pastoral/ operetta</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | |
| 39/1 | Labourers | (6) Chorus (<i>mazurka</i>) | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 45/1 | Z, B, Coachman | Free dialogue (<i>operetta</i>) | √ | √ | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 48/1 | Z, B | (7) Duet (<i>Romantic opera</i>) | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 54/1 | B, K, Z | (8) Orchestral passage with sung/ spoken material | | | | √ | | | √ | √ | | | | | | | |
| 58/1 | Aksinya, B, (K silent) | (9) Recitative (<i>folk</i>) | | | | | | | | | √ | | | √ | | | |
| 62/1 | | (10) Orchestral interlude | | | | √ | | | | | √ | √ | | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act I/ scene 2

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre typage | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical light musics | Socialist Realist moods |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1/2; 70/1 | A, Shabby Peasant, Porter, Steward, S, labourers, K | (1) Chorus with soli (<i>galop/ film music</i>) | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 90/1 | K, S | (2) Free dialogue (<i>oom-cha</i>) | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 93/1 | K | (3) Arioso/ folksong | | | | | | | | | √ | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 100/6 | K, S | (4) Free dialogue (<i>Romantic orchestral</i>) | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | |
| 108/1 | B, K, SP, (<i>S silent</i>) | (5) Recitative | | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | |
| 113/1 | | (6) Orchestral interlude (<i>oom-cha, scherzo, fugue</i>) | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | | | √ | √ | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act I/ scene 3

| Act/ scene; Fig./bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre type | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical light musics | Socialist Realist moods |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1/3; 128/1 | K (<i>B off-stage</i>) | 1) Free dialogue | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | |
| 138/1 | | 2) Orchestral transition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 140/1 | K | 3) Aria (<i>Romantic opera</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 152/1 | | Orchestral passage | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | |
| 157/1 | K, S | 4) Recitative (<i>some spoken</i>) | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 161/1 | K, S | 5) Free dialogue (<i>operetta, folk</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 174/1 | S, K | 6) Free dialogue (<i>galop</i>) | √ | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 183/1 | (<i>K, S silent</i>) | 7) Orchestral passage (<i>galop</i>) 8) Free dialogue/ recit | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 194/7 | K (<i>B off-stage</i>), S | Free dialogue/ recit. | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | |
| 198/1 | | Orchestral passage (<i>oom-cha</i>) | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act II/ scene 5

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre typepage | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical light musics | Socialist Realist moods |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| II/5; 296/1 | K, (S) | 1) Free monologue/ dialogue <i>Romantic opera/ film</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | √ |
| 301/2 | S, (K) | 2) Sectional monologue/ dialogue <i>(waltz)</i> | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 311/5 | K, (S) | Free dialogue (<i>Romantic opera</i>) 3) Orchestral passage (<i>Mahlerian adagio</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | √ |
| 316/1 | K | 4) Free monologue (<i>military</i>) | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 320/2 | Ghost of B, K | 5) Free dialogue | | | | √ | | | √ | | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 324/1 | K, S | Free dialogue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 327/1 | | 6) Orchestral passage <i>(Romantic strings)</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | √ |
| 329/1 | K, S | 7) Spoken recitative | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 333/1 | Z, K | 8) Free dialogue (<i>fanfare, operetta</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 341/1 | K, Z | 9) Duet <i>(galop, Romantic opera/ operetta)</i> | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 348/1 | Z, K, S | Free dialogue/ recitative | | | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | |
| 351/3 | S, K | 10) Orchestral passage with sung/ spoken material (<i>march</i>) | √ | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act III/ scene 6

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre type | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical light musics | Socialist Realist moods |
|--------------------------|----------------|--|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| III/6; 360/1 | K, S | 1) Free dialogue | | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | | |
| 366/1 | Shabby Peasant | 2) Song (<i>music hall</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 373/1 | SP | 3) Free monologue (<i>music hall</i>) | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 384/1 | | 4) Orchestral interlude (<i>music hall, can-can</i>) | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act III/ scene 7

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre type | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical lightmusics | Socialist Realist moods |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| III/7; 392/1 | Sergeant, policemen | 1) Verse and chorus song (<i>comic opera, waltz</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 407/1 | Serg, policemen, Policeman, Teacher (Nihilist) | 2) Free dialogue (<i>comic opera</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| 416/1 | SP, Serg, policemen | Free dialogue (<i>comic opera, military, galop</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | | | | | |
| 423/1 | | 3) Orchestral interlude (<i>military, galop, dance</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | |

Table 8.3: Stylistic Distribution in *Lady Macbeth*; Act IV/ scene 9

| Act/ scene; Fig./ bar | Characters | Genres/ stylistic references | 'Low' genres | Wrong-note / parodistic | Parodistic genre typepage | Juxtaposition | 'Wrong' mood | Debunking | Musical brutality | Mechanistic figures | Melody as process | Tonal ambiguity/ dissonance | Textural complexity | Folk music/ nationalism | Traditionalism | Non-satirical lightmusics | Socialist Realist moods |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| IV/9; 464/1 | Old Convict, convicts | 1) Solo and chorus, verse and chorus structure (<i>Musorgskian</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 475/6 | K, Sentry | 2) Free dialogue (<i>Romantic opera, 8th String Quartet</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | √ |
| 482/1 | K, S | Free dialogue (<i>Romantic opera</i>) | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | √ | | |
| 485/1 | K | 3) Arioso | | | | | | | | | √ | | | √ | | | |
| 492/1 | S, Sonyetka | 4) Free dialogue (<i>operetta, Romantic opera</i>) | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | √ | √ | |
| 501/1 | S, K | Free dialogue | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 510/2 | S, K, Son | Free dialogue (<i>march, military, operetta</i>) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | √ | √ |
| 516/1 | Women convicts, woman convict, K, Sent | 5) Chorus with soli (<i>galop</i>) | √ | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| 526/1 | K | Arioso | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 534/1 | S, Son | Free dialogue (<i>operetta</i>) | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| 540/1 | Officer, convicts, Old C, Son | 6) Free dialogue with choral phrases | | | | √ | | | | | √ | | | √ | √ | | |
| 548/2 | Old C, chorus | Solo and chorus, verse and chorus structure (<i>Musorgskian</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | √ |

4. Experiment and Thermidor: Soviet Policy on Women in the Post-Revolutionary Decades

The ways in which the experiment–thermidor paradigm is both present in a different historical arena, that of the social history of women in the early Soviet period, and reflected in a different aspect of the opera, namely its libretto, forms the subject of the remainder of this chapter. The first two decades post-revolution involved a considerable shift in Soviet ideologies surrounding women: while the 1920s saw an attempt at female emancipation that had its roots in Marxist theory, the 1930s saw a return to traditional family values under Stalin with regressive implications. The standard narrative is charted in established texts by Richard Stites and Wendy Goldman,⁴⁸ although some modern historians challenge certain of its finer points: for example, Beatrice Farnsworth claims that the apparently radical marriage legislation of the 1920s was in fact less groundbreaking than it first appears, underpinned by a fundamentally conservative morality that simply became more visible in the 1930s;⁴⁹ and Elizabeth Wood and Sarah Ashwin argue that the Bolshevik programme in this area, far from constituting a genuine attempt to liberate women, was in fact a cynical endeavour to secure their loyalty to the state.⁵⁰ However, despite these objections, the notion that the 1920s was progressive and the 1930s regressive is the generally accepted view, and forms the basis of the summary below.

⁴⁸ Goldman's *Women, the State and Revolution* and chapters 10–11 in Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement* chronicle this shift in ideology and state policy in areas such as marriage, the family, children, abortion, prostitution, sexual morality, employment, education, women's organisations and rural life; see particularly Goldman's conclusion for a retrospective summary of the Stalinist sea-change.

⁴⁹ For example, Farnsworth argues that the state's apparently enlightened legal recognition of unregistered partnerships – more on which below – actually served to reinforce women's dependence on men in a number of ways: see Farnsworth, 'Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family'.

⁵⁰ Wood proposes that the Bolshevik government developed strategies to draw women into the party in order to ensure their necessary support: for example, offering female emancipation in exchange for their loyalty; setting up women-only recreational groups as a forum for their political education; manipulating constructions of gender to win over their commitment; and so on: see throughout Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*. Meanwhile, Ashwin and others claim that the government's attempt to transform gender relations and the family was an effort to gain access to and control over the private sphere for their own advantage, for example breaking women's dependence on their husbands in order to bind them in closer personal loyalty to state: see the introduction to Ashwin, *Gender, State and Society*, 1–14.

(i) *Marxist Ideology in Soviet Practice:
the attempted emancipation of the 1920s*

The motivation for the attempted emancipation of women in the Soviet 1920s was rooted, at least in part, in orthodox Marxist theory. For socialism's central objective – the abolition of the oppression of one group of people by another – must necessarily apply to gender as well as class: thus Bebel, writing in the nineteenth century, concluded that 'the solution of the Woman Question coincides completely with the solution of the Social Question',⁵¹ a concept that Lenin elucidated further:

Throughout the world socialism has set itself the task of combating every kind of exploitation of man by man.... we see inequality and the humiliation of women at every step, and we say that this is a violation of democracy specifically in respect of the oppressed.⁵²

The specifics of the Marxist-Leninist position on the emancipation of women also drew heavily on the standard Marxist texts on this subject, as summarised in Chapter 3: each critiqued the inequities and subjugation inherent in the micro-unit of the bourgeois marriage, conceiving of *proletarian* marriage as the free union of two entirely equal individuals of the wider collective family; each argued that, in order to create this condition of equality, women must be freed of their domestic servitude and enabled both to participate in the political sphere, and work in public industry.⁵³ In fact, perhaps the most significant difference between those Marxists writing in the nineteenth century and those Marxists governing in the twentieth was that the latter must put their egalitarian principles into action – and the ways in which the first Soviet government attempted to turn the envisaged emancipation of

⁵¹ Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, 5.

⁵² Lenin, 'The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement', 42.

⁵³ That the Marxist-Leninist position on women followed those Marxist texts summarised in Chapter 3 in all of these respects can perhaps best be appreciated by citing examples from Lenin's own speeches on the subject: thus see Lenin, 'Soviet Power and the Status of Women', 122 for a typical critique of bourgeois marriage; 'To Inessa Armand', 184 for an ideal conception of 'proletarian civil marriage with love'; 'A Great Beginning', 65–6, for a characteristic attack on women's household slavery; 'The Tasks of the Working Woman', 44 for a call for women's political involvement; and 'International Working Women's Day', 409 for a standard argument for women's work in the public sphere. Other essays, speeches and statements in Lenin, *The Collected Works*; Lenin, *On the Emancipation of Women*; and Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* demonstrate similar Marxist thinking and language on such issues.

women into a concrete reality is summarised below in four main and interlinked areas: in politics, at work, in personal relations, and in daily life.⁵⁴

The First Constitution of 1918 awarded the vote to all, regardless of sex, race, religion or nationality, and granted both men and women the right to be elected as deputies to the soviets. The constitution set down that work was the *duty* of every citizen; women, therefore, were not merely permitted, but actually required to seek employment. Various measures of the 1920s attempted to eliminate gender discrimination in hiring and firing and involve women in production, while mandatory quotas of female workers were also established.⁵⁵ Within the workplace, this revolutionary programme was extended: legislation of 1917–18 stipulated equal pay for both men and women, and provided the latter with paid maternity leave and generous back-to-work conditions.⁵⁶

This drive for equality can be observed elsewhere: in the controversial codes on marriage and the family passed in 1918 and 1926, for example.⁵⁷ A complete overturn of backward Tsarist law – under which a wife took her husband's name and status and gave up her right to travel, education and work – the 1918 code allowed couples to use either partner's surname, and granted each spouse freedom of movement, choice of abode and the exclusive right to their own property and earnings during marriage and in the case of separation. Furthermore, the legal ties of marriage itself were deliberately weakened: divorce – almost impossible under orthodox church law – became ever-easier to obtain by either partner;⁵⁸ meanwhile

⁵⁴ For a concise account of early Bolshevik legislation in these areas, see Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 34–7. Wood also summarises these laws, particularly in terms of their intended eradication of gender difference: see Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 49–52.

⁵⁵ See Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, 21 and Sacks, 'Women in the Industrial Labour Force', 193.

⁵⁶ For example, women were granted 8 weeks paid maternity leave before and after giving birth, and nursing breaks, medical care and cash allowances following their return to employment: see Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 394–5.

⁵⁷ Goldman and Farnsworth both analyse the codes and the debates surrounding them at length, although they interpret them differently: see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 48–58; 185–253; and Farnsworth 'Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family'.

⁵⁸ The 1918 code permitted divorce to be brought by the husband or wife with no grounds necessary, while the 1926 code made the process still simpler: either spouse could immediately fill out a form without the knowledge of the other, the ignorant party being informed by postcard that they were no longer married: see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 51; 299; 332.

the terms of the 1926 code undermined the institution still further, recognising *de facto* marriage as essentially indistinguishable from *de jure*.⁵⁹

If such legislation aimed at the eventual *otmiranie* or ‘withering away’ of marriage and its replacement with freer unions, other laws served to reinforce the marital bond: for example, clauses that enforced the payment of alimony and child maintenance in effect rendered women increasingly dependent on their ex-partners.⁶⁰ Yet although these provisions were inconsistent with the overall vision of egalitarian independence that the codes enshrined, they came into being from a genuine desire to safeguard women from the social realities of the age – and in this, such laws might be deemed truly enlightened. Elsewhere, this commitment to women’s welfare similarly outweighed ideological preferences. Therefore, although abortion was considered harmful to the State in the long term, a decree of 1920 legalised the procedure in order to provide a safe alternative to the dangerous back-street practice that was widespread – and thus Soviet Russia became the first country in the world to permit this operation by law.⁶¹ Similarly, although prostitution was considered an evil, prostitutes themselves were regarded as the victims, and extensive programmes of social work carried out amongst their number.⁶²

⁵⁹ Thus the legal rights of serious cohabiting couples – because in essence married (‘*de facto*’) – became the same as those who had registered their marriage (‘*de jure*’). The precise classification of the former was problematic, however: for an interesting summary of 1920s legal debates on the nature of marriage and the attempts to formulate a workable definition of the term, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 209–11; 234–6.

⁶⁰ That alimony provision had this effect is argued by modern scholars such as Farnsworth; it was also recognised by one leading Bolshevik of the time, Alexandra Kollontai, who proposed that a general insurance fund should provide for childcare to avoid the demeaning prospect of women’s reliance on their former husbands: see Farnsworth, ‘Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family’, 141–2; 149–51; 154.

⁶¹ For analyses of this legislation and the debates surrounding it, see Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 106–11; Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 254–7; Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 37–40. All agree that abortion was legalised by the government despite their opposition to it in theory, in order to protect women. The full title of the statute was in fact: ‘A Decree of the Commissariats of Health and Justice of the Russian Federation on the Safeguarding of the Health of Women’: Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 111.

⁶² For an overwhelmingly positive account of the Bolshevik government’s work in this area by one foreign visitor in 1932, see Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, 226. Elizabeth Waters’ article, ‘Victim or Villain’, examines the conflicting attitudes towards prostitutes in the 1920s, describing treatment that was by turn tolerant and repressive; I consider that, on the basis of her evidence, the ideology proclaimed by those at the top of the Party was less ambivalent and more generally sympathetic, and Stites’ short summary broadly adheres to this view: see Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia*, 373–4.

Other legislation, less reactive and more optimistic, attempted to allow Soviet Woman to realise her full potential by transforming her daily life or *byt*, primarily by relieving her of her maternal and domestic responsibilities. Thus from 1918 onwards, plans were unveiled to set up networks of nurseries, kindergartens and day centres; shared laundries, kitchens and dining rooms – and although these directives were not carried out on the lavish scale that the government had envisaged, certain of the projects did come to fruition.⁶³ If the programme was aimed primarily at the urban worker, other legislation focussed on the emancipation of the peasant woman, radically overturning centuries of tradition: law codes of 1918 and 1922 allowed women to participate in the previously all-male bodies that governed rural life, and to become fully equal members of the extended peasant family unit.⁶⁴ Other policy, such as that on education, overrode class boundaries, drives to eradicate female illiteracy throughout the 1920s being aimed at all sectors of the population.⁶⁵ Related projects were similarly determined: thus following the establishment of co-education in 1918, the following decade saw continued measures to encourage the enrolment of women in secondary and higher education.⁶⁶

Such campaigns were frequently carried out by the *Zhenotdel* or Woman's Department, the dual purpose of which was to educate women politically and draw them into the Party, and to affect the transformation of *byt*.⁶⁷ Its activities were numerous and varied.⁶⁸ Thus officials at the higher levels of the institution met with government departments and trade unions to influence policy decisions surrounding women, while its press department brought out publications for its

⁶³ For example, childcare centres such as crèches and Homes for Mother and Child were established in increasing numbers from 1917–22 and again from 1927–34, while communal dining was organised on mass in many of Russia's cities during the civil war period, though it diminished thereafter. For statistics on these trends, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 126–30; 313–14.

⁶⁴ For example, women became entitled to an equal share of the *dvor's* (the household's) possessions in the case of *razdel* (a division of the *dvor*) and formally permitted to occupy the position of *domokhozian* (head of the *dvor*). For a discussion of the effect of Bolshevik family law on peasant life, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 144–84.

⁶⁵ For details and statistics, see Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 397.

⁶⁶ See Dobson, 'Educational Policies', 267–8 and Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 397–8.

⁶⁷ For a concise summary of the institutional aims of the *Zhenotdel*, see Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 65–6.

⁶⁸ Mary Buckley provides a detailed summary of the different organisations within the *Zhenotdel* and the specific activities of each: see Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 60–107.

female audience that dealt with issues of politics and *byt*, of which *Rabotnitsa* (*Working Woman*) is perhaps the most well-known. The majority of the *Zhenotdel's* work, however, was 'in the field'. At nationwide local 'delegate meetings', selected non-party women participated in a formidable programme of educational activities, including political discussion groups, research visits, work experience in state institutions and involvement in election campaigns. Smaller-scale *Zhenotdel* enterprises – Women's Clubs, Red Corners, Peasants' Huts, Red Tents and Red Tea Houses – carried out similar work, organising literacy classes, courses in skills such as typing and weaving, and lectures on subjects as diverse as health, the law and agriculture. The initiatives ranged from the ambitious to the modest: one Women's Club in Azerbaidzhan set up its own textile factory, employing 1,500 workers by 1931,⁶⁹ while Red Tea Houses existed simply for women to drink tea together, listen to the radio and talk. Meanwhile, certain of the campaigns conducted by the *Zhenotdel* were more controversial: in central Asian areas of the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, hundreds of thousands of Muslim women were mobilised to throw off their yashmaks and veils.⁷⁰

(ii) *Soviet Woman as Wife and Mother:
the 1930s abandonment of the emancipation project*

If Marxist-Leninist rhetoric conceived of the New Soviet Woman as a fully equal counterpart to her male comrades, Stalinist discourse rather stressed her traditional feminine role as wife and mother.⁷¹ The idealistic concept that both marriage and the family would eventually 'wither away' itself dissolved in the 1930s, and various policies served to either deliberately or inadvertently celebrate

⁶⁹ See Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 87.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Although Buckley and others portray this as enlightened, there are those who disagree: for example, Ashwin argues that the mass unveilings were a brutal attack on Asian cultures, cynically motivated to demonstrate Muslim women's loyalty to the new regime, but in any case unwished for by many of these women: see Ashwin, *Gender, State and Society*, 4.

⁷¹ For an exploration of the government's changing ideal of Soviet womanhood in the 1920s and 1930s as promoted in magazines or literature for example, see Clements, 'The Birth of the New Soviet Woman'. The shift is powerfully demonstrated by trends in Soviet fine art throughout the period, as documented by Waters: while examples from the 1920s portrayed women as equal comrades and workers, the late 1930s in particular saw a sharp rise in images of mother and child: see Waters, 'Female Form in Soviet Political Iconography', 234–5; 238–41.

and reinforce the family unit over the collective. Changing solutions to the young Soviet Union's systemic problem with vast numbers of abandoned and homeless children or *besprizorniki* demonstrate this point: for the most part of the 1920s, such individuals were consigned to state-run children's homes in which they lived a communal existence; however, towards the end of the decade, they were rather placed with individual foster families, who received substantial reward for this service.⁷² Meanwhile, the forced industrialisation that took place during the First Five Year Plan (1928–32) curiously cemented the ties of marriage: the urgent demand for labour led to unprecedented numbers of women joining the workforce, a sudden trend which was unintentionally liberating in part; however, as inflation rose sharply, wages fell by a staggering 49% in real terms, allowing the State to get '2-for-1' on the price of its workers – yet rendering women necessarily dependent on the family unit for survival.⁷³ The gradual strengthening of such household institutions was to be unambiguously set down in later laws: legislation of 1936 made divorce harder to obtain and payment of alimony harder to escape, while simultaneously prohibiting abortion. The woman's position in the Stalinist family was unambiguous: 1930s propaganda promoted women's conjugal and maternal roles and celebrated her domestic responsibilities, while 1944 saw the establishment of Motherhood medals and similar pronatalist bonuses.⁷⁴

If such policies demonstrate an active attempt to create an ideal of womanhood that was markedly regressive, other slides backwards arose simply from a lack of interest in the female emancipation project.⁷⁵ From 1928, the overwhelming focus of the State was on industrialisation and collectivisation, to the exclusion of all else: thus the *Zhenotdel* was first instructed to face towards production and forget *byt*, then in 1930 abolished altogether. The liquidation of the *Zhenotdel* – a catastrophic development in the history of women's liberation in the

⁷² For a discussion of the *besprizorniki* problem and the state's shift in response to it, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, chapter 2; 197; 304–10; 317–27 and throughout.

⁷³ For a detailed discussion and statistics on this, see Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, 70–1; 76–82; 87–98; 103–5; for a concise overview, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 310–17.

⁷⁴ For details of the 1936 and 1944 Stalinist codes on marriage and the family, together with other pro-family and pronatalist policies and ideology, see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 296–7; 327–33; 337–41.

⁷⁵ Gail Lapidus provides a revealing statistic in respect to this: while 301 entries on 'women' were made in the index of party resolutions and declarations in the period 1917–30, the next three decades saw only three such items: Lapidus, 'Sexual Equality in Soviet Policy', 124.

Soviet Union – was anticipated by the gradual elimination of all women’s organisations within factories and unions from 1926 onwards. With the abolition of the KUTB (*Committee to Improve the Labour and Life of Women*) in 1932, the abandonment of women’s interests might be seen to be complete.⁷⁶

(iii) *The Stalinist Shift: Kollontai as Case Study*

The experiment–thermidor shift as it relates to the history of Soviet women in this period can be further and revealingly demonstrated by a brief survey of the Marxist-cum-feminist essays of Alexandra Kollontai, a prominent figure in Lenin’s first government and the only leading Bolshevik to attempt to develop a theory of sexuality post-revolution along wholly Marxist lines.⁷⁷ If Kollontai was at the far left of the Party on this issue as on others, some of her ideas were nevertheless echoed by other prominent figures in the 1920s;⁷⁸ furthermore, although her writings are generally presented as unrestrained outpourings of free-thinking radicalism, in fact they are carefully constructed on established political principles.⁷⁹ Maintaining in true Marxist fashion that the changing forms of marriage and the family throughout history had evolved in accordance with the method of production and economic structure of any given time, Kollontai drew in part on Engels to argue that bourgeois marriage, female monogamy, its attendant double standard and even the Romantic notion of possessing one another heart and soul all originated from the need to strengthen marriage in order to preserve capital within the family.⁸⁰ Under the shared production and consumption of communism, the family unit was not only

⁷⁶ Wood and Goldman chart the political tensions between the party and the *Zhenotdel*, the various liquidation crises of the women’s organisations, and their gradual dismantling: see Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 127–42; 160–93; 207–13; and chapter 2 of Goldman, *Women at the Gates*.

⁷⁷ Kollontai’s thinking in this area is set out in three essays in particular: ‘Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle’ (1911), ‘Theses on Communist Morality’ (1921) and ‘Make Way for the Winged Eros’ (1923); it is primarily from these works that the following summary is constructed. For an overall account of Kollontai’s life, work and ideology as expressed in her theoretical and fictional writings, see Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement*, 346–58.

⁷⁸ For example, articles by Trotsky and others in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 77–83; 95–8 demonstrate some similar ideas, expressed in like terminology, as Kollontai’s. Alix Holt claims that the extent to which Kollontai’s beliefs are fringe has been significantly exaggerated: see Kollontai, *The Selected Writings*, 201–15.

⁷⁹ Holt too makes this argument persuasively in Kollontai, *The Selected Writings*, 201–15.

⁸⁰ Kollontai, ‘Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle’, 242–3.

unnecessary but also harmful: such isolated cells weakened loyalty to the collective, while bourgeois marriage, because predicated on difference, was similarly at odds with the ideal of real equality between citizens.

Thus the proletariat required new forms of relationships and a new sexual morality better suited to its needs – and these Kollontai conceptualised as follows. Free unions of indeterminate length between members of the collective, if based on love, friendship, equality and mutual freedom, would serve to bind the working class together in unity as if by numerous ‘inner threads’; however, such liberated sexual relationships must crucially involve love, for sex without love would weaken the bonds of the proletariat, or even damage the health of the populace as a whole.⁸¹ For Kollontai, women would be able to manage their sexual lives in this fashion as the state would free them from all domestic and maternal duties: Soviet Russia would bring up, feed and educate its young – and thus mothers must learn to discard their proprietary loyalty towards their own offspring, recognising all children of the communist family equally as their own.⁸²

Kollontai’s writings of the early 1920s thus conceived of idealised New Soviet Woman as an extraordinarily liberated female prototype: the working equal of her male comrade, she was free to act on her own sexual and emotional desires unhampered by restrictive laws, household chores or maternal responsibilities. Yet to jump to a later Kollontai essay of the 1940s is to reveal that somewhere along the way, even this radical Marxist-feminist underwent a Stalinist sea-change in this area. The article opens in homage to the government that has ‘guaranteed all the conditions necessary for woman to fulfil her natural duty – to be a mother, the educator of her children and the mistress of her home’⁸³ – and these summative phrases, reviewing over two decades of Stalinist rule, reveal that the liberated dreams of female emancipation that gained currency in the 1920s had long since evaporated.

⁸¹ Kollontai, ‘Make Way for the Winged Eros’, 285–92.

⁸² Kollontai, ‘Theses on Communist Morality’, 226–8; 230.

⁸³ Kollontai, ‘Soviet Woman’, 315.

5. Mapping the Paradigm Shift: *Lady Macbeth* as the Summary of an Age

If the writings of Kollontai embody the narrative shift from the liberalism of the 1920s to the conservatism of the 1930s and beyond, so too does the behaviour of Shostakovich's Katerina. As outlined in Chapter 3, the central character begins the work a quasi-feminist, verbally challenging her male counterparts, halting the assault on Aksinya and lecturing the men on the achievements of Russia's women; however, after the initial scenes, her overt resistance to male authority ceases, and her increasing and overwhelming devotion to Sergey renders her a much more traditional operatic heroine. Elizabeth Wells notes this change in the central character, also relating it – though differently – to its wider historical context: for Wells, the Katerina of the original opera's Act I represents a quite literal representation of Kollontai's envisaged New Soviet Woman, although one that falls from this 1920s state of grace in subsequent acts by specific criteria.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, James Morgan also considers Katerina to share characteristics with the New Soviet Woman, though he places her reversion to nineteenth-century values a little later than Wells, at the close of Act II.⁸⁵

Yet this thesis rather conceives of Katerina's sea-change as it does of Kollontai's: that is, broadly representative of the experiment–thermidor narrative in a more general and far-reaching sense. Chapters 3 and 5 argued that, in Acts I–III of the opera, Katerina's spoken challenges, violent actions and sexual transgressions were amalgamated as a feminist protest expressed by the tritone C/F# – and it is easy to comprehend how this musico-dramatic subject matter, accompanied as it is by a host of '1920s' musics, resonates with the liberated ideals, brutal realities and sexual freedoms of this decade. Yet all things come to an end in Act IV: Katerina's 1920s-inflected journey has run its course, and the increased extent of her

⁸⁴ Wells perceives the Katerina of the opening scenes – assertive in her initial I/2 encounter with Sergey, yet openly desirous and accepting of sexual love in her I/3 aria – as a specific illustration of Kollontai's New Soviet Woman and notions of 'Winged Eros'; however, in her subsequent all-consuming and slavish devotion, she falls short of this ideal: see Wells, "The New Woman", 178–89. Wells' reading is relevant to this thesis; however, this study avoids its specificity, rather viewing Katerina as an embodiment of various general historical trends in the chapter that follows.

⁸⁵ Morgan also charts examples of Katerina's 'feminist consciousness' in the first two acts, viewing this as symptomatic of the 'openly feminist' New Soviet Woman; he too regards her to slip back from this model in the acts that follow: see Morgan, 'Shostakovich the Dramatist', 332–7. Morgan's observations are made in brief and, unlike Wells, he does not mention Kollontai.

conventional feminine attachment to Sergey, enclosed in the tonal status quo of a minor and couched in '1930s' styles, is similarly representative of a more monolithic and traditional age.

In the area of sexual morality, the essential dramatic narrative might be read as symbolic in slightly more specific terms. The early Soviet period saw the deliberate undermining of marriage as an institution and some acceptance of Kollontai-esque ideologies of free love; the early acts of *Lady Macbeth* see Katerina openly indulge in a passionately sexual extra-marital relationship without experiencing the faintest stirrings of guilt. Yet the 1930s saw a return to traditional values concerning marriage and the family, both in government legislation and corresponding practice – and in Act IV, Katerina, crucially just-married to Sergey in a Shostakovichian addition, pursues a course of monogamous devotion that is firmly within the bounds of wedlock. Once again, in each case, Katerina's behaviour and actions are made time-specific through the surrounding use of '1920s' and '1930s' musics. In such ways, patterns of experiment–thermidor – present in Soviet cultural and social history; evidenced and symbolised in the contemporaneous lesser works of Shostakovich or the writings of Kollontai; and embodied in the loose musical and dramatic narratives of *Lady Macbeth* – both map onto and reinforce one another. Thus this opera, composed at the crossroads of a career and the turn of a decade, presents a kind of summary of the age.

Chapter 9

Musico-dramatic Reflections of Soviet Historical Realities: Hermeneutical and Analytical Case Studies of Four Short Extracts

For the most part, this thesis has explored *Lady Macbeth* in its totality, drawing conclusions that are overridingly monolithic – and the following chapter first attempts to tie together certain of these interpretations both textual and contextual. Yet thereafter Chapters 9 then 10 rather consider those musico-dramatic aspects of this opera that work to complicate and even undermine its overall message, a project perhaps more in line with postmodern critical approaches; it does so through engaging in close analytical and hermeneutical readings of a number of short extracts from *Lady Macbeth*, relating these to the social history of women during this period in more detail than hitherto.

1. The Contemporary Resonance of Katerina: Soviet Historical Realities in Shostakovich's Opera

Chapter 7 identified a number of surface musical features, tonal processes and historical and nationalistic precedents at work in the final act of the opera, arguing along feminist critical lines that these served to endorse the dramatic defeat of the heroine. Yet those compositional elements of Act IV that legitimise the overthrow of Katerina – conventionally beautified styles; a long-overdue tonic resolution; tonal procedures such as complete mediant cycles, 'pivot-note' progressions and octatonic underpinning that are both suggestive in themselves of unity, and reminiscent of the Russian tradition; and the evocation of a 'homecoming' structure that is nationalistic in essence – have a wider remit: they function also to mark the historically symbolic musical shift to traditionalism that occurs at the close of the work as both natural and right. The implications of this are highly significant. For if the swing to 1930s musics and 1930s behaviour in the final stage of *Lady Macbeth* is representative of wider historical realities in both cultural and societal spheres, their artistic endorsement becomes singularly value-laden.

The demise of Katerina is sanctioned by certain compositional components of Act IV – and so too are the conservative attitudes towards both art and women that typified the Stalinist thermidor.

It is the traditional that is celebrated in and by the opera, and this relates to our reactions both to this piece in particular, and Shostakovich's output in general. Elsewhere this thesis has referred to those Soviet and Western accounts, both early and recent, that value the conventional or nineteenth-century passages of *Lady Macbeth* far above those other styles in use in the opera. Likewise, even today, it is Shostakovich's compositions of the 1930s and onwards that we tend to favour over his youthful works of the first post-revolutionary decade – and perhaps there is something poignant in this. For those truly avant-garde, proletarian experiments of the 1920s, while not fulfilling any of the usual aesthetic criteria by which we judge twentieth-century compositions in the West, nevertheless represented an attempt to create an art for the People that was born of a genuinely progressive ideology. In contrast, those works of Shostakovich most lauded today were differently shaped by both Stalinism and Socialist Realism: doctrines considerably less enlightened, to say the least.

If musicologists tend to assess those works of the 1930s and after in a generally more positive light than those that came before, so too do historians allow that the regressive Stalinist policies regarding Soviet women were actually more beneficial to this section of the population in some respects than the enlightened programme of the 1920s (once again, a seeming-paradox with a certain poignancy).¹ For in many ways, the envisaged female emancipation project simply did not work, the first post-revolutionary decade – in this arena as in others – being characterised by a vast gulf between ideology and daily life. The reasons for the failure of the attempt were of course tied up with the condition of the country as a whole: early Soviet Russia suffered an extended civil war, multiple famines and mass epidemics, all of which left an already underdeveloped country in devastation and financial chaos, and rendered any ideological agenda near-impossible to

¹ For example, Richard Stites asks whether women were worse off under the policies of experiment or thermidor; although he ultimately concludes in favour of the latter, he does acknowledge that there is a case to be made for both sides: see Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 390.

implement. Yet the measures taken to combat economic ruin also happened to hit women the hardest. The drastic cutbacks in state-supported social care and light industries under Lenin's New Economic Policy struck at sectors in which women made up a significant proportion of the workforce, while the severe reduction in state childcare resulted in mothers no longer able to seek jobs – and both of these factors contributed to the steep rises in female unemployment and prostitution in the period of NEP.²

In a sense, these impediments to the progress of female emancipation were circumstantial. Yet others barriers to its realisation were more endemic, in one way or another the result of a conflict between an ideology that was enlightened, and a populace that was backward³ – and examples of this can be found in all areas of daily life. Thus in the workplace, ground-breaking legislation on wages, appointments and maternity rights remained unheeded: women remained lower paid, less hired and more laid off, and if some of the reasons for this were practical – this labour market was a less attractive proposition to the employer due to women's relatively low levels of training and possible maternity demands, for example – others were simply born of long-held prejudices. Thus when the troops were demobilised and returned home after the civil war, men once more replaced women in the jobs that were 'theirs', while in general wives with employed husbands were considered less entitled to work than their male counterparts.⁴ A progressive agenda from the top was similarly incompatible with the age-old beliefs and practises of the rural community, which made up a staggering 84% of Russia's population at the time of the revolution; the individual rights handed to women by new Soviet laws flatly conflicted with the communal principles of the peasant

² Wendy Goldman explores this subject in most depth, taking as the primary subject of her seminal text in this area that 'the law, born out of the socialist libertarian tradition, was painfully at odds with life': see Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 143; 60–76; 110–11; 118–22; 126–32 and throughout.

³ Again, this thesis is primarily Goldman's, whose text demonstrates what she describes as 'the tragic contradiction of trying to build socialism in an underdeveloped country': Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, (253).

⁴ For an exploration of such sexual discrimination in the area of employment in the years following the civil war, see Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 151–60.

household or *dvor*, an institution that was deeply patriarchal in its makeup.⁵

In such communities in particular, the pioneering work of the *Zhenotdel* was met with indifference, mockery, hostility or even downright resistance. As outlined in Chapter 8, numerous provincial women's sections were shunned or liquidised by other Party cadres throughout the 1920s, while local protests against their existence also erupted in certain areas. Meanwhile, especially in the predominantly Muslim outlying republics of the Soviet Union, wives were often forbidden to attend women's clubs by their husbands, beaten and even on occasion murdered for failing to heed such warnings.⁶ Chapter 3 detailed similar acts of violence against women, oftentimes sexual, that became a disturbing feature of life in the 1920s. Somewhat ironically, this culture of brutality was fuelled by those radical theories and policies that aimed at the liberation of women: thus, as delineated hitherto, ideologies of free love were aggressively abused, whilst court cases regarding alimony that overwhelmingly ruled in favour of the wife triggered violent reactions from ex-husbands. In a sense, an enlightened agenda was unleashed on a population that was simply not ready for it – and so, as explained elsewhere, the attempt to bring about the 'withering away' of marriage left vast numbers of pregnant women or mothers abandoned, the potential avenues of alimony, childcare or employment all too often closed off to them.

For many Soviet women in the 1920s, the realities of daily life were bleak, despite the promise of a Bolshevik redemption. Conversely, whilst Stalinist policies of the late 1920s and 1930s moved away from the envisaged ideal of female emancipation, they nevertheless improved the lot of women in many respects. If an unforeseen consequence of NEP was that female unemployment rose sharply, an equally unintended consequence of forced industrialisation from 1929 onwards was that women flooded into the workforce as never before, even taking on those heavy industrial jobs that had previously been the province of their male comrades. Although this development occurred spontaneously and in spite of the government,

⁵ For example, the right to divorce and to alimony was at variance with the peasant household's principles of communal living and shared ownership, a complication that even resulted in legal conflicts between the Bolshevik family and land codes: this issue is explored in depth in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, chapter 4.

⁶ For examples of the at times extreme opposition of local party and non-party members to the women's sections, see Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 91–3; 97–101.

they slowly recognised the value of this particular source of labour: employing women was much to be preferred to employing undesirable types such as dispossessed peasants or *kulaks*, and employing *wives* specifically meant that the state could get its '2-for-1' on workers as wages almost halved in real terms. Thus the labour exchanges began to target women, some factory managers even organising 'bring your wife to work' campaigns.⁷ Meanwhile the state propaganda machine began to strenuously celebrate Soviet woman's dual role as Worker and Mother; in years to come, the female Stakhanovite worker, dramatically exceeding her production quotas, would be honoured as the Stalinist 'Heroine Mother', who similarly over-produced by bearing ten or more children for the socialist society.⁸

Albeit accidentally, women were offered a partial liberation of sorts through their entrance into employment – and other benefits followed. In order to retain the female workforce, various forms of state childcare and domestic enterprises reminiscent of the Civil War years – day centres, rural crèches, communal kitchens and laundries amongst them – were resurrected in the early 1930s, following their decline under NEP.⁹ Other changes to family life, though motivated by a conservative Stalinist agenda, nevertheless worked to improve the *byt* of Soviet women on the whole: thus the tightening of marriage laws and the aggressive enforcement of alimony payments – both policies aimed in part at strengthening the bonds of the family unit – greatly reduced trends of sexual hooliganism and female abandonment, a step in the right direction that was long overdue.

If this was general betterment, it came at a price: Soviet woman, more dependent on marriage, family and even the state, was forced to forgo notions of sexual freedom and gender equality. Yet there is considerable evidence that many women, less than receptive or hostile to the enlightened policies of the first post-revolutionary decade, welcomed the Stalinist shift to traditional values, even as something that they had wanted all along. In the letters pages of women's magazines such as *Kommunistka* in the early 1920s, fellow female communists and

⁷ For details and statistics on the explosion of women entering the workforce in this period and the state's response, see Goldman, *Women and the Gates*, 88–105; 126–39.

⁸ Thus stakhanovite and mother were positively celebrated in the press and officially recognised, for example through the designation of 1936 as 'Stakhanovite Year', or the introduction of decorations for motherhood: see Buckley, *Women and Ideology*, 114–15; 133–4.

⁹ For details and statistics, see Goldman, *Women at the Gates*, 313–6.

workers attacked Kollontai's writings on the new sexual morality as entirely alien to their own principles and way of life.¹⁰ Other protests against such liberated theories took a more active turn: those peasants who engaged in the *bab'i bunty* or women's riots – acts of civil disobedience aimed at disrupting the progress of collectivisation during the First Five Year Plan – were motivated in part by vague fears of communal wife-sharing or the socialisation of children,¹¹ and both these and similar demonstrations by rural women in the early part of the decade contained a strong anti-*Zhenotdel* element.¹²

If these examples are only representative of the views of specific sections of the female population, contemporary records of the numerous public debates concerning the 1926 code on marriage and the family provide a more comprehensive picture of Soviet women's reactions to both government ideology and the realities of daily life. Across the length and breadth of the country, women reported instances of male promiscuity and female abandonment, explaining that both the lack of childcare facilities and non-payment of alimony made it nigh-impossible for single mothers to find work or otherwise support themselves. Time and time again, such women opposed the concept of free union, the legal recognition of *de facto* marriage and the facility for divorce, calling instead for the strong reinforcement of marriage, the family and traditional values.¹³

In essence these women were traditionalists, ultimately opting not for sexual liberation, but rather for monogamous commitment. Once again, this is indicative of a conflict, between prevalent lifestyle ideologies on the one hand, and conservative ways of being that were deeply ingrained on the other; and once again, this resonates with the behaviour and character of *Lady Macbeth's* Katerina. For although this heroine in one sense enacts her sexual freedom, carrying out a passionate extra-marital affair that strikes at the very heart of the patriarchal

¹⁰ For example, a searing press critique of Kollontai's controversial article 'Make Way for the Winged Eros' by her fellow Bolshevik politician Polina Vinogradskaya cites numerous female delegates to the *Zhenotdel* who objected to or regarded as foreign the writings of Kollontai: see Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 119.

¹¹ For specific examples of related rumours and riots, see Viola, 'Bab'i Bunty', 194–9.

¹² See Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 82–4.

¹³ Wendy Goldman documents the debates surrounding the 1926 code, including and in particular the comments of the female delegates, in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, chapter 6 and Goldman, 'Working-Class Women'.

establishment, it has been demonstrated elsewhere that she pursues this course of action in a deeply traditional and conventionally operatic manner, overwhelmingly dependent and monogamously devoted to her lover then-husband Sergey. A crucial discrepancy therefore exists within the heroine herself, between her sexually liberated exploits yet essentially traditionally mind-set – and this discrepancy is mirrored in the musical content of her music. For while Katerina tonally rebels on a large-scale structural level, her acts of resistance expressed by the dissonant sharpened tonic and familiar resultant tritone as analysed in Chapter 5, her surface language presents no such problems to the ear. As observed elsewhere, the heroine's material is by far the most traditional of the work: she is the only protagonist to sing conventional and self-contained operatic arias, all of which are strongly rooted in one key; her vocal part is characterised by a Romantic lyricism; her melodic writing is shaped along familiar tonal and motivic lines and coloured by Russian folk phrases; and so on. Katerina is beset by two conflicting musico-dramatic elements: her (tonal) actions, and her (stylistic) character.

Thus several historical and operatic gulfs map onto one another: between a progressive ideology and a regressive populace; between Katerina's rebellious conduct and conservative attitude; and between her tonal resistance and stylistic conformism. The implications of these overlaying disparities might be teased out further. The overwhelming backwardness and traditionalism of those Soviet men *and women* who refused to implement or abide by the new laws, actively and even violently opposed change, abused liberated ideologies to their own advantage or called for the reinforcement of old-fashioned values suggests that, essentially, the views of the people as a whole on the subject of female emancipation did not alter very much. Such liberated progress as occurred was arguably superficial: beneath the surface of the radical and frenetic activity in this area in the 1920s, the mind-set of the populace en masse remained static and unchanged – and perhaps this situation rendered what was in essence a return to traditional standards in the 1930s inevitable. Similarly Katerina, although existing in a brave new operatic environment in which sex is visible and iconoclastic parody is everywhere, remains largely isolated and untainted by the 1920s hue of the initial acts: in her *raison d'être* and prevailing style she is ever the conventional Romantic operatic heroine,

and perhaps in this work – dominated as it is by one main protagonist – the gradual reversion in the final act to traditional values and musics both redolent of the 1930s and thus in keeping with the fundamental aesthetic of the central character is also to be expected.

2. Soviet Women in *Lady Macbeth*: Four Analytical and Hermeneutical Case Studies

If certain historical themes have a general relevance to this opera, particular aspects of the story of Soviet women might resonate with individual moments from the work in more detail. Thus four of the historical realities identified – the gulf between an enlightened ideology and a backward populace that rendered emancipation an impossibility; the disparity between the ideal of liberated woman and what women actually wanted all along; the notion that progress took place on the surface, leaving day-to-day life unchanged; and the sense that the Stalinist shift to traditional values was a return that was always inevitable – are seen to be reflected in the text and music of a number of short extracts or ‘case studies’ from the opera, analysed below.

(i) *On Progressive Ideologies and Regressive Peoples: the insurmountable gulf in I/2*

Act I, scene 2 of *Lady Macbeth* opens with the assault on Aksinya by Sergey and the male labourers that is now familiar (70/1–89/8); this episode is immediately followed by a short exchange in which Katerina berates her future lover for ‘mocking a woman’ (90/1–92/5) and a longer aria in which she sings to the men of the worth of Russian womanhood (93/1–100/5); and this in turn is followed by an extended passage in which Sergey semi-violently seduces our heroine before the on-looking crowd (100/6–107/5). It is clear from this brief outline of the progress of the scene that Katerina’s ‘feminist’ challenges have no effect whatsoever on the behaviour of Sergey or the men: before her assertive dialogue and articulate monologue, the labourers see their ringleader abuse one woman; after it, they watch him molest another. That Katerina’s words fall on deaf ears is perhaps to be expected: like the first Soviet government, she is struggling to convert an

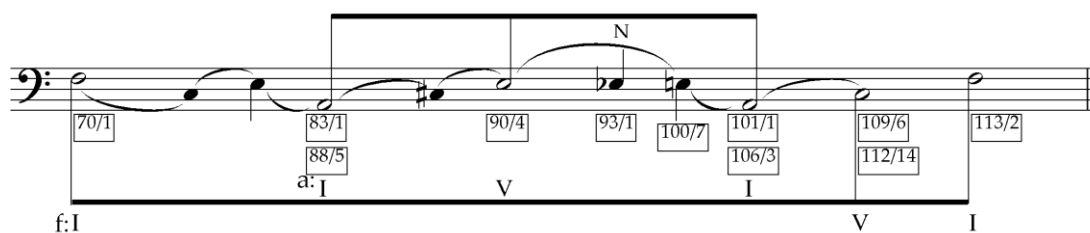
overwhelmingly backward populace and, as for the leading Bolsheviks, the gap between elevated ideologies and brutal realities proves too difficult to surmount.

In a number of its aspects, Shostakovich's musical setting highlights both the vast gulf between lofty ideals and common behaviour, and the corresponding impossibility of the former impacting upon the latter. The genre-type 1 passage that accompanies the assault of Aksinya is comparatively modernistic, containing high levels of dissonance and textural complexity; furthermore, the extract is representative of certain of those '1920s' musical trends – 'musical brutality', for example – as outlined in Chapter 8, marking it as thoroughly contemporary. Yet Katerina's initial challenges to Sergey make a decisive break with what has gone before: an unambiguously tonal language follows tonal confusion; straightforward harmonies supplant chromatic dissonance; and regular phrasing and a repetitive accompanimental pattern replace unpredictable musical prose, all marking *this* material as relatively regressive. Katerina's feminist monologue is similarly traditional in style: the speech is set as a self-contained aria that is tonally and formally conventional, its melody often diatonic and regular, its harmony often triadic, and so on. Yet the following passage, in which Sergey seductively overpowers Katerina in front of the labourers, reverts back to a more complex level of musical prose, illustrative of that 'melody as process' style identified in Chapter 8 as characteristic of 1920s Leningrad. The regressive language of Katerina's dialogue and monologue render both distinct from the bordering material of the scene; each sound as interpolations as foreign to the heroine's all-male audience as her quasi-feminist principles. In particular, Katerina's speech – stylistically, ideologically and even formally separated from what surrounds it – can have no bearing on the musical or dramatic course of action: at the close of the aria, the scene is returned to a contemporary soundworld, and Sergey resumes his predatory behaviour.

The tonal progression of I/2 supports the interpretation that Katerina's two attempts to confront the prevailing mentality of the men remain detached from the main narrative, and therefore ineffectual. The assault on Aksinya concludes with an extended bass pedal on B that is present intermittently for a total of 51 bars (84/7–89/7), the labourers' climactic cadence on E/e near the close of this extract (88/1–5) reinforcing the notion that this repeated B functions as a dominant pedal. Yet

although the Aksinya episode ends with the resumed B bass still sounding (89/1–7) and thus demanding of resolution, Katerina delays this tonal closure by interrupting with her reprimand in c# (90/1–3), and it is left to Sergey to provide the required resolution with his rejoinder in e (90/4–5). This exchange is then repeated, Sergey's final response affirming e as the prevailing tonic (91/1–4). Katerina's rebukes appear as interjections foreign to the main (tonal) argument, and soon dismissed – and in the passage that follows, this phenomenon is writ large. The tonal diagram of 1/2 shown as Figure 9.1 reveals that, on a large-scale level, e functions as the minor dominant of A/a throughout the central part of the scene (90/4–107/4). Katerina's aria in e_b, the lower-neighbour note to the dominant e, acts as a temporary interruption of an extended V–I progression – and yet its capacity to significantly disrupt this long-term cadence is really very little. Although the heroine's feminist monologue concludes in the tonic of e_b, it takes just four bars before Sergey reverts to the key of e once more (100/6–9) – and it is during the following passage, in which Katerina's future lover seduces her in terms of veiled threat, that the shift from e–a is decisively accomplished. Katerina's tonal and ideological challenge has no lasting effect on the musical or dramatic direction of these events, an operatic state of affairs that of course has broader historical resonances.

Figure 9.1: Tonal Structure of 1/2



In a sense, there are two oppositional sets of principles at work in this extended extract: Katerina's, which are progressive, and Sergey's and the labourers', which are regressive. Arguing along conventional feminist musicological lines, it would seem to be the latter that are legitimised by the workings of functional tonality: Sergey's various backward responses to Katerina's enlightened arguments are each validated by their taking place in the tonic (and large-scale

dominant) e minor. In the short dialogue between Katerina and Sergey that follows the assault on Aksinya, the decidedly *un*-enlightened mind-set of Sergey would appear to be endorsed by several aspects of the musical setting. This textual and musical exchange is provided in Example 9.1.

Example 9.1

90

Katerina *f*

От-пу-сти - те ба-бу; ра-ды-над ба - вой по - из-де - вать - ся.
Let the wo - man go;— so you en - joy— mock-ing a wo - man?

Sergey

90

mf

i IV7 i...

91

Katerina

Чтож вам ба - ба - для
So a wo - man's on - ly

Sergey *f*

Да над кем и сме-ять-ся то нам;
Who else can we— make fun— of?

91

marc.

bii v i i IV7 i...

Katerina
сме - ха да - на что - ли?
there for you to make fun of, is she?

Sergey
А на ка-кой же е-ще пред - мет?
What o - ther rea - son is there?

bi v i

- Katerina: Let the woman go;
so you enjoy mocking a woman? (Question: c#)
- Sergey: Who else can we make fun of? (Answer: e)
- Katerina: So a woman's only there
for you to make fun of, is she? (Question: c#)
- Sergey: What other reason is there? (Answer: e)

I/2; 90/1–91/4.

If Katerina's verbal challenges are more articulate and convincing than Sergey's verbal responses, this is reversed from a musical point of view. For although in the libretto Sergey replies to Katerina's questions with questions, in the score the phrases are structured in such a way that Katerina's *musical* 'questions' receive unequivocal 'answers' from Sergey. That her bars are in a foreign tonality, while his arrive at the anticipated tonic, has already been remarked upon; yet other more superficial elements of the music also serve to underline the protagonist's relative positions of weakness and strength. Katerina's questions explore the descending chromatic scale through a sequence of oscillating melodic shapes with no obvious finishing point; in contrast, Sergey's answers are entirely diatonic in e Phrygian, the vocal part in unison with the bass line and outlining the final cadential shape. Similarly, Katerina's accompaniment is characterised by its harmonic vacillation between i and IV₇ in c#; in contrast, Sergey's chord sequence is functional, the concluding three quavers strongly implying a decisive *bi-v-i* cadence in e. On repetition, Katerina's phrase is shortened, and several details of its melody

and harmony are varied; in contrast, Sergey's answer is an almost exact repetition of the first. If Katerina, in her music, vacillates, shifts and adjusts, Sergey is rather firm and unyielding – and thus, in this symbolic clash of ideals which carries a wider historical significance, perhaps it is the *un*-enlightened, rather than the enlightened, that is endorsed by the musical setting.

(ii) *What Women Want: Katerina's e_b minor aria*

In the above discussion, Katerina's aria in Act I, scene 2 was held up as both an example of relative musical traditionalism, and a statement of quasi-feminist principles. Yet the following interpretation argues that, in ways that are interconnected, the heroine's monologue is neither as compositionally conventional nor as genuinely ideological as it first appears. Beneath the surface, audible musical resistances disrupt both the traditional style and lofty text, suggesting that Katerina is perhaps less committed to her 'feminist' ideals than it would seem; rather, her wants are more 'feminine' in a normative sense – and in this, she is in sympathy with her real-life Soviet contemporaries, whose day-to-day desires were more conservative than the ideology imposed from above would allow.

On first hearing, Katerina's monologue sounds as a relatively conventional self-contained song that draws simultaneously on Romantic operatic and Russian folk traditions. The aria is tonal, even sporting the key signature of the tonic e_b, (highly unusual in the opera as a whole); and a loose ternary form with a central section beginning in the subdominant a_b, (96/7–) is in evidence. For the most part, the soloist carries the melodic burden, which is lyrical and expressive, whilst the orchestra receives a standard accompaniment that utilises simple and repetitive patterns. Much of Katerina's sung text is wholly diatonic, outlining scales, triads and dominant–tonic moves; similarly, her accompaniment makes much use of simple triads and basic added note harmonies, functional chord progressions, and mediant and parallel shifts thoroughly Romantic in origin. Yet if this is the main or 'primary style' of the aria, at certain points within the piece an alternative language emerges that is considerably freer and more contemporary. These 'second style' passages

take the form of extended woodwind solos, three for cor anglais and one for clarinet; in their general characteristics they approximate those developmental and organic respiratory instrumental monologues typical of the Leningrad modernist school in the 1920s, and defined in Chapter 8 under the heading 'melody as process'. The musical digressions of the 'second style' provide an audible resistance to the main material of the aria: the woodwind solos disrupt the primary melody and accompaniment texture, duetting freely with the vocal part; furthermore, they deviate from the established key centres, exploring other tonalities, chromaticism and modality.

On closer investigation, the presence of two distinct musics, if initially confusing, would appear to be associated with the dramatic dichotomy between public and private worlds. The 'primary style' is fundamentally allied to the presentation of the *text*, an open lecture to a group of men on the universal plight of Russia's women: initially it is Katerina's vocal part that provides a simple and repetitive melody that constantly reinforces the tonic e₂, while chromaticism and moments of embellishment remain in the orchestra (93/3–94/8); and indeed throughout, Katerina's line is more generally diatonic, 37 of her 57 bars both non-chromatic and consonant with the prevailing or implied harmony. In contrast, the tonal, chromatic and modal explorations of the 'second style' are specifically *not* assigned to a text, occurring rather in the orchestra, and often when Katerina has stopped talking: both the first chromatic inflection of the piece (93/9) and two of the four extended woodwind solos (96/1–7; 100/1–5) take place as the singer is silent; meanwhile, when Katerina's line does become non-diatonic, this is pre-empted or dominated by the cor anglais' chromaticism (95/1; 96/1–3; 97/5–98/1).

If the 'primary style' conveys Katerina's public words, then the 'second style' might convey her private thoughts. Possibly this is implicit in the very natures of these dichotomous musics, the stock phrases and tutti orchestrations of the former more suited to general delivery, and the free meanderings and solo instrumentation of the latter more appropriate for private contemplation; commentators on both Shostakovich in general and *Lady Macbeth* in particular certainly hear several of the composer's extended woodwind recitatives, specifically those written for cor

anglais, as intensely personal meditations.¹⁴ Yet the public/ private association of these distinct musical languages has also been more explicitly established in the opening scene of the opera: in her initial monologue, Katerina confesses her most intimate thoughts to woodwind solos in the ‘second style’ (I/1;_ /1–11/4); she then follows this with a ‘primary style’ folksong that issues more generalised declarations on the merchant wife’s predicament (11/4–14/8). A short oboe theme, marked * on Example 9.2a, marks this transition from the personal to the impersonal; significantly, this phrase reappears in cor anglais variation in Katerina’s I/2 aria as shown in Example 9.2b, similarly denoting a shift from private reflection to public proclamation.

Example 9.2a

I/1; 11/1–6.

¹⁴ Pauline Fairclough considers the extended cor anglais recitative in the recapitulation of the first movement of the Fourth Symphony to be such a private and emotionally-laden confession: a reworking of previous material that alludes to a crowd scene in *Boris Godunov*, the use of this particular instrument – specifically employed by Shostakovich in his middle-period symphonies as a “‘direct” voice’ of lamentation – marks a shift from public to private worlds: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 130–36. For Lev Lebedinsky, writing about Act IV of *Lady Macbeth*, a similarly intimate effect is produced as Shostakovich imitates the intonations of the human voice in his woodwind writing, so that they ‘seem to be telling some tale of woe, complaining of something’: Lebedinsky, ‘Preface’, 15.

Example 9.2b

Katerina

би - ли?
bea-ting?
*

И - ной раз
There have been

f dim.

1/2; 96/3–8.

If the emergent ‘second style’ musically disrupts the ‘primary style’ of the e_h aria as suggested above, this now takes on a dramatic significance: Katerina’s personal thoughts would seem to conflict with her spoken words. Examples 9.3a and b provide examples of such disturbance on a tonal level: in both cases, the meandering cor anglais line shifts away from e_h to explore a modal e minor before reverting to the temporary tonic/ dominant area of E_b, once more, as annotated on the manuscript. On each occasion, it is the bass arrival at the dominant that prompts the cor anglais’ return to the fold and initiates a perfect cadence in E_b/a_b; the tonal resistance of the ‘second style’ woodwind solos in e might thus be seen to be subdued by the functional harmonic progressions of the bass. Such an interpretation is reminiscent of certain of those feminist musicological readings encountered in Chapter 4: in particular, those analyses of vocal pieces that conceive of chromaticism, ornamentation or similar in the female vocal part as feminine struggle against the formal, tonal and crucially masculine bass line to which the singer must eventually submit.¹⁵ Yet in Katerina’s aria, the feminist formula is somewhat turned on its head: for it is the stylistically and formally conventional ‘primary’ material, firmly rooted in the tonic e_h, that is specifically allied to an expressly feminist text, and Katerina’s private woodwind thoughts that are in musical and tonal contradiction with her progressive spoken ideology.

¹⁵ For example, both Susan McClary’s interpretation of Monteverdi’s madrigal ‘Lamento della Ninfa’ and Judith Peraino’s reading of Dido’s first ground-bass lament each understand their subject in this way: see McClary, ‘Excess and Frame’, 81; 86–90; Peraino, ‘I am an Opera’, 117–19.

Example 9.3a

95

Katerina

MOM вы - шли? А как ба - ба_
any wis - dom? Haven't you heard about

Katerina

— и ной раз всю семь - ю кор-мит не зна-ешь? А
 — *the times when women kept the whole fam - ily from star - ving? And*

1/2; 94/7–95/7.

Example 9.3b

96

Katerina

не вра - гов би - ли?
gave the ene - my bea - ting?

96

Katerina

И - ной раз
There have been

I/2; 96/1–7.

Both the stylistic and tonal content of Katerina's 'second style' meditations give some clue as to the subject of her musings. The woodwind solos explore both the language identified as 'melody as process' and the key of e minor, both of which form the basis of Sergey's seduction in the passage following the aria; furthermore, in the dialogue that precedes it, the tonality of e has explicitly been associated with Sergey's regressive responses to Katerina's feminist rebukes. Perhaps, while Katerina sings about women in e₇, she thinks about Sergey in e – and at least one operatic director has interpreted the scenario in this way. In the 1966 Shapiro film of *Katerina Izmailova* – crucially, a production for which Shostakovich himself wrote the screenplay – Vishnevskaya-as-Katerina nominally addresses her lecture to the labourers whilst actually directing all her attention at her future lover, smiling coquettishly and ruffling his hair in an unmistakably flirtatious fashion as she pleads for the recognition of Russia's downtrodden women. Even within the score, there is an indication that Sergey himself *hears* Katerina's real concerns: on the close of her aria, he leads her gently into e minor with the words, 'Well then, madam, allow me to take your hand *if that is so* (100/6–11), an otherwise surprising response to a statement of feminist beliefs. In fact, there is a vast disparity between the heroine's professed ideology of female independence and her actual wish for an all-consuming relationship predicated on dependency – a longing that, if emerging wordlessly in her I/2 song, is given full textual realisation in her aria of I/3. This gulf within Katerina is reflective of one that existed in Soviet society as a whole – and in her real wants, the heroine is in keeping with the majority of her real-life contemporaries, whose desire for traditional realities far outweighed their desire for female liberation.

(iii) *On Superficial Freedoms and Unchanged Realities:
running on the spot in Aksinya's recit*

Throughout *Lady Macbeth*, there are several passages characterised by their movement or freedom on the musical surface, yet stasis or rigidity beneath. This musical version of 'running on the spot' is something that the analyst David Fanning considers typical of Shostakovich's output as a whole, terming it 'motion within motionlessness' – and if this phenomena encourages obvious politicised interpretations, Fanning explicitly makes this link in his study of the Tenth Symphony.¹⁶ In the context of this opera, a feminist hermeneutical reading, interpreting such superficial musical movement as feminine struggle along familiar lines might be appropriate; and certain of these extracts could also be seen to resonate with the social history of Soviet women in particular. For above, it was suggested that the liberated progress that took place in this area was ultimately superficial, the decidedly *un*-liberated realities of daily life remaining unchanged in many respects for many women – and this historical theme might be understood as dramaturgically realised in one of those extracts previously analysed in Chapter 6. In her Act I, scene 3 aria in f#, Katerina yearns for an escape from the entrapment of her bourgeois marriage, envisaging this in the form of a loving sexual relationship that the musicologist Elizabeth Wells considers an embodiment of Kollontai's enlightened ideals of 'Winged Eros'.¹⁷ Ultimately the heroine considers that this will never come to pass – 'no one, no one will ever come to me' – and if she is wrong in a literal sense here, she is perhaps right in essence. For although Sergey does become her lover, this union proves to be as degrading and restrictive as was her marriage to Zinovy: Katerina remains unliberated, her personal life in this respect fundamentally unaltered. This disparity between superficial change and fundamental stasis is mirrored in the musical setting of the aria, as the voice-leading analysis that appears as Figure 6.3 in Chapter 6 reveals. The more detailed graphs

¹⁶ Fanning reiterates that this is a characteristic aspect of Shostakovich's music in many of his writings: for example, see Fanning, 'Shostakovich in Harmony', 37–8; Fanning, *String Quartet No. 8*, 8. In his analysis of the Tenth Symphony's second movement, Fanning argues that the combination of frenetic surface features and tonal paralysis is in effect a musical portrait of Stalinism: see Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist*, 44.

¹⁷ See Wells, "'The New Woman'", 181–2.

show that numerous neighbour-note progressions decorate the foreground and middleground of this piece, creating an illusion of movement; however, as explained at length previously, these embellish a largely static background in which $\hat{5}$ is present in the same register almost throughout, yet never fully resolved.

Similar passages can be located elsewhere in *Lady Macbeth*. Near the close of the first scene, Aksinya describes the 'tall' and 'handsome' womaniser Sergey to Katerina in a recitative in c minor (58/1–61/2), before Boris breaks in with orders for his daughter-in-law in f minor: Katerina's freedom-through-adultery, doomed from the outset, is thus envisaged in the minor dominant c, whilst her repression by Boris takes place in the tonic f – and Chapter 5 charted the dramatic significance of these functional tonalities. The dominant here operates as both an alternative tonal space expressive of Katerina's potential escape, yet one that is compelled to resolve to a tonic expressive of her suppression – and this dramaturgical duality between freedom and boundedness is mirrored in other aspects of Aksinya's recitative. On the surface of it, this soprano and bassoon duet is characterised by an unfettered fluidity reminiscent in several aspects of the 'melody as process' style identified in Chapter 8: the extract given as Example 9.4a shows how the solo lines work together in a loose polyphony, changing time signatures, unpredictable silences and note lengths, and irregular phrasing contributing to a lack of discernable pulse; furthermore, the recitative is usually performed with considerable rubato.¹⁸ Yet Example 9.4b reveals that Aksinya's apparently spontaneous speech-like recitative is actually bound to the bassoon's underlying sustained notes: her melody either moves to a new pitch alongside the bassoon, or first decorates and then gravitates towards these long-held pitches.

The particular qualities of the unadorned bassoon part, moving mainly in semibreves, and the more ornate soprano part, utilising quicker note-values, is even reminiscent of a cantus firmus technique – and the foreground voice leading analysis of this extract provided as Figure 9.2 does demonstrate that this short compositional extract is entirely founded on the bassoon line. Aksinya's material,

¹⁸ This is true, for example, of both the Mstislav Rostropovich (1979) and Myung Whung Chung (1993) recordings of the opera; in particular, both insert a break and considerable *ritardando* at the close of the recitative (60/4–5).

Example 9.4a

59

Aksinya

Всем взял: и ро - стом, и ли -
he's got it all: he's tall and hand -

59

Aksinya

цом, и кра - со - то - ю. Он пре - жде
some, with a good fi - gure. He used to

I/1; 59/1-5.

Example 9.4b

58

(to Sergey) (to Katerina)

Aksinya

Че - го встал? Че - го о - ста - но - вил - ся?
Why are you standing there? Why did you stay be - hind?

58

p

(Exit Sergey.)

Aksinya

Ра - бот-ник но-вый, де-ви - чур о - ка - ян-ный, ка
That new la-bou-rer, he's a dreadful wo-man cha-ser, name

I/1; 58/1–7.

far from being free, is an elaboration of bassoon descents from $\hat{3}$, $\hat{8}$ and $\hat{8}$ in c minor. Furthermore, the whole remains rigidly fixed in this tonal area, only decisively shifting away from this key after Aksinya has stopped singing, and just prior to Boris' entrance in f minor. Stylistic looseness is an illusion: this music is closely integrated, highly patterned and tonally static. The prospect that Sergey and free love might liberate Katerina from her predicament – a possibility that forms the unmistakable sub-text of Aksinya's speech – is similarly a false one: in her personal relationships, Katerina will remain entrapped – and in this her fate uncomfortably mirrors that of many of her real-life Soviet counterparts.

(iv) *Running Over the Same Old Ground:*
futile struggle and cyclical return in the c# passacaglia

The opening piece of *Lady Macbeth* – a monologue in a minor sung by Katerina and discussed at various points throughout this thesis – exhibits certain of those musical representations of freedom/ stasis explored above, alongside other musical items dramaturgically expressive of return or cyclism. On the surface of things, Katerina's material (I/1; _/1–11/4) is as stylistically unrestricted as Aksinya's recitative: as revealed in Example 9.5a, the course of the meandering 'melody-as-process' woodwind soli is unpredictable, the harmonic shifts unexpected, the phrase lengths irregular, and so on. Yet, as briefly outlined in Chapter 4, there are also musical signifiers of boundedness here: the two recurring leitmotif 'A' and 'B', whose first appearance in the opera is shown in Example 9.5b, are founded on a pivoting motion that ever-returns 'escaped' notes back to the tonic or other

Figure 9.2: Foreground Voice-leading Analysis of Aksinya's Recitative

351

FOREGROUND

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{b2}$ $\hat{1}$ ($\hat{8}$) $\hat{\#7}$ $\hat{b6}$ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{b2}$ $\hat{1}$ ($\hat{8}$) $\hat{7}$ $\hat{b7}$ $\hat{6}$ $\hat{b6}$ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{b2}$ $\hat{1}$

c: I II I VII^{o7} V II V^o I I⁷ #VI^o IV[#] bVI-V V^o - #VI (interrupted) f: II^o-V I

significant pitches;¹⁹ and Katerina’s vocal line is tied to the accompanying instrumental lines through techniques of pedal point and heterophony, as was Aksinya’s.

Example 9.5a

Moderato andante. ♩ = 80

I/1; /1-6.

Example 9.5b

Katerina

Ах, не спит - ся боль - ше,
Oh, I don't feellike sleep anymore,

¹⁹ Similar motifs are a recurring feature in Shostakovich’s music: intriguingly so, in the context of Fanning’s assessment of the composer’s stylistic ‘motion within motionless’. For example, a figure based on the scalic movement and single-pitch pivot of Leitmotif A forms the central theme of the Second Symphony (for its first appearance, see 76/1) and recurs in the finale of the Twelfth (92/1–), each in association with emotive literary subjects. Meanwhile, a version of Leitmotif B appears in the finale of the Eighth String Quartet (65/9) in a deeply emotional context, as Fanning also notes: see Fanning, *String Quartet no. 8*. Michael Mishra also considers the Leitmotif A-type figure – which he labels a ‘wedge’ motif – as ‘something of a Shostakovich trademark’: see Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 56–7.

Katerina

но - про - бы - ю.
but I'll try. —

$1/1$; $1/6-2/4$.

This musical expression of both surface movement and underlying rigidity²⁰ is accompanied by other compositional elements evocative of recurrence and circularity. Although the monologue as a whole strays into various foreign and modally inflected tonalities, it is pulled back to the home area of an aeolian a minor on several occasions, twice for a restatement of the first two bars of the opera; Example 9.6 provides an annotated example. The opening motif itself is fashioned from a pivoting tonic motion as described above in the bass, leading into a circular melodic contour in the treble, both of which are marked on Example 9.6; throughout the extract, similar thematic ideas suggestive of return and cyclism proliferate on the small-scale.

Example 9.6

(Katerina tries to sleep)

²⁰ Gabriella Rosso's semiotic analysis of the arioso unwittingly points to a similar coexistence of the musically free and unfree: Rosso argues that the piece exhibits the unstructured qualities of monody, yet also uncovers vestiges of conventional aria structures; furthermore, she shows how much of the arioso's material is in fact strictly generated from the orchestra's opening motifs: see Rosso, *La Monodia di Katerina*, 83; 89; 91–2.

4 *p*

Katerina

Her, не спит - - - ся.
 No, I can't sleep.

4 OPENING BARS

CIRCULAR MELODIC MOTION

BASS PIVOT MOTION

I/1; 3/1–4/2.

These loose extra-musical meanings are, through a familiar formula, both expressive of and expressed by Katerina's text. In her monologue, Katerina longs for freedom whilst recognising that she is entrapped in her marriage to Zinovy; and, as touched upon in Chapter 4, although she attempts musico-dramatic escape by trying to sleep and reminisce in other key areas, she is ever returned to her miserable tonic reality. In the first chapter of Leskov's novella, the prototype for Shostakovich's opening number, the sense of fruitless struggle and continual return is tied to the notion of time passing in perpetuity: Leskov's piece covers the 'five long years' of Katerina's monotonous daily existence, switching freely between past, present and future tenses in its departures from – and returns to – the subject of the heroine's boredom never-ending.²¹ If this literary text loses something of its effect in its condensed and present-tense operatic rewrite, perhaps those elements

²¹ Leskov, 'Lady Macbeth', 19–21.

of Shostakovich's setting explored above work to restore it – and at least one director certainly heard the scene the Leskov way. In the Shapiro film of *Katerina Izmailova* – with the screenplay, as previously stated, written by Shostakovich – the pivoting and circular opening motif is visually realised by a swinging clock pendulum. As Katerina both musically and textually yearns for liberation from her peculiarly feminine predicament, a sequence of shots shows her, bored and ignored, in various domestic situations and at various times; yet on the recurrence of the opening motif, we are always returned to the ticking clock. The long struggle for freedom would appear to be ultimately futile against the seemingly circular passage of time – and this hermeneutical reading of Katerina's monologue resonates with certain realities of the age. For when viewed from a historical perspective, the partial progress made in the area of female emancipation in the 1920s seems doomed to failure, given the particular nature of Russian society at this point; and what was in many respects a return to traditional values in the 1930s was perhaps always inevitable.

Certain of these interpretative conclusions are relevant to another seminal extract from *Lady Macbeth*: the instrumental passacaglia in c# minor, which follows the death of Katerina's first victim, Boris, and forms the orchestral entract between the fourth and fifth scenes (284/1–295/13). For many, this piece constitutes the musical and emotional high point of the work, and thus it has been subject to various dramatic readings: some, Richard Taruskin amongst them, feel the interlude to be a cathartic summary of what has gone before, whereas others, for example Alla Bogdanova, sense it as a prophesy of what is to come; some, such as Caryl Emerson, perceive the composer's own narrative voice to emerge in the extract, whereas others, such as Paul Edwards, consider the attempt to fix a narrative to it ultimately impossible.²² While Edwards is right that no dramatic reading can be absolute, a number of commentators loosely concur with an interpretation based on the form of the passacaglia itself, hearing the invariable and unrelenting tread of the ground as expressive of what is inescapable and foreordained. Thus Alexander

²² See Taruskin, 'The Opera and the Dictator', *The New Republic* (20 March 1989), accessed on-line (20 April 2008); Bogdanova, "'Katerina Izmailova'", 62; Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 69; Edwards, "'Lost Children'", 182.

Ostretsov, writing in 1933, sensed in the inexorable repetition of the bass line a struggle for freedom that is helpless, whilst Lyn Henderson, writing in 2000, described the same phenomenon as symbolic of the dramatic unfolding of events that are inevitable.²³ These kinds of intuitive comments come closer to this thesis' analysis of the passacaglia, which is in turn in keeping with the hermeneutical reading of Katerina's opening monologue provided above: both extracts are musically and dramatically expressive of fruitless struggle and cyclical return, interconnected themes that carry a wider historical significance.

The interlude in c# closely succeeds Katerina's murder of her abusive father-in-law Boris: a bloody deed that, if understood along the Marxist lines on which *Lady Macbeth* is predicated, constitutes an act of legitimate protest by the oppressor and against the oppressed. However, as the feminist musicological reading of the opera that formed Part II of this thesis revealed, the power that Katerina accrues through her murderous opposition is short-lived: by Act IV, the heroine is defeated in her course of action, and returned to victimhood once more. The lengthy and climactic passacaglia that follows Katerina's first deed of resistance might communicate that her efforts are and will be futile, even before the operatic plot bears this out – and Shostakovich himself, describing the interludes in general as 'a continuation and development of the musical thought [that] play a very important part in the exposition of what happens on the stage', would perhaps have understood the piece to function in this way.²⁴ Certainly a standard feminist interpretation of the passacaglia would hear a narrative of struggle and submission in the relationship between its comparatively fluid upper voices and the more rigid bass – and the musicologist Judith A. Peraino analyses Dido's first ground-bass lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* along these lines. Peraino details how the heroine's vocal part – disjunct, chromatic, dissonant, ornate and irregular – strains against the 'obsessive cycling' of the strongly tonal ground, before gradually submitting to its melodic and rhythmic contours and 'relentless' cadences.²⁵

²³ In Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 230; Henderson, 'Shostakovich and the Passacaglia', 53. For similar comments, see also Lebedinsky, 'Preface', 18; McCreless, 'The Politics of D minor', 121.

²⁴ Shostakovich, 'About My Opera', 252.

²⁵ Peraino, 'I am an Opera', 117–19.

The same symptoms of helpless resistance could be read into Shostakovich's interlude in $c\sharp$, which in several of its features – its use of the ostinato bass, densely contrapuntal texture, imitative melodic entries, quasi-Baroque flourishes and elaborate ornamentation – are indeed evocative of a Purcellian era. The passacaglia theme, provided in Figure 9.3, is looped twelve times to form the basis of the extract; its final move $G\sharp-C\sharp$ always implies a perfect cadence in $c\sharp$, and on several occasions (292/1 perhaps being the most conspicuous) the tonic arrival is more explicitly reinforced. Above this reiterated bass pattern, the chromatic and highly decorated upper parts weave around each other, often with little adherence to the ground – that is, until they are 'pulled back' in alignment to $c\sharp$ at the final cadence. Example 9.7 provides one such example: viola and cello duet in Baroque fashion, their lines interacting through motivic imitation, decorated suspensions and resolutions, and melodic sequence to suggest various fleeting and generally flat-based key centres, most notably A_b . Throughout, their established rhythmic pattern remains unshaken by the changing note values of the bass, whilst their tonal wanderings are often independent of the pitches of the ground: the momentary shift to A_b sounds against a G pitch in the bass, for example. Yet as the passacaglia theme approaches $G\sharp$ for the final perfect cadence in $c\sharp$, the imitative motivic alternation between the upper parts breaks down for the first time, a switch to longer note values occurring at the point of cadence; furthermore, the duetting viola and cello are drawn within the tonal orbit of the bass to present the final tonic harmony, while the polyphonic entry of the second violin in $c\sharp$ reinforces the V-I progression in the ground.

Figure 9.3: *Lady Macbeth* Passacaglia Theme



Elsewhere in the interlude, the semi-independent upper voices similarly stray into different tonal areas before being returned to $c\sharp$ at the final cadence: this

Example 9.7

287

mp espr.

Ab

Third Entract; 287/1–288/1.

phenomenon can be observed leading into figures 236/1, 290/1, 291/1 and 292/1, for example. More significant alternative tonics also ultimately give way to c#: while a modal d minor is strongly suggested in the melodic parts in the second and third statements of the passacaglia theme (285/2–286/9), and C major in the sixth, seventh and eighth (289/1–292/1), both are swept away by those reinforced presentations of the overall tonic cited above. What takes place on the surface of things must inexorably submit to those fundamental cyclical patterns beneath, a

feminist critical formulation relevant to both Katerina’s dramatic fate, and to those narratives of transitory progress and perhaps-inevitable return observable in certain historical realities of the age.

Yet this standard feminist hermeneutical reading of the passacaglia might be taken further. For it is not simply the upper voices that escape then surrender to the tonic: arguably, this tonal journey also takes place within the passacaglia theme itself. In fact, the unusual pitch content of the ground bass has been analytically interpreted in a number of ways. Several Russian theorists understand its structure to be a modal one based on $c\sharp$, though still they analyse it differently: Alexander Dolzhansky, the first to theorise extensively on modes in Shostakovich, even offered two distinct explanations of the theme himself at various points in his career. These are summarised by Ellon Carpenter, alongside other modal interpretations of the passacaglia by Russian scholars, in her comprehensive survey of such theories, and the diagrammatic presentation of Dolzhansky’s modes that appear as Figures 9.4a and b is closely based on that of Carpenter.²⁶ First Dolzhansky explained the theme as an example in practice of the ‘near-maximum lowered mode’: that is, one containing four diminished intervals in relation to the tonic, as shown in the diagram. Yet elsewhere he cited it as the earliest instance in the composer’s output of a mode based on the ‘Alexandrian pentachord’, a six-note segment from the octatonic scale as annotated below.

Figure 9.4a: Dolzhansky’s Interpretation: the ‘Near-Maximum Lowered Mode’



Figure 9.4b: Dolzhansky’s Interpretation: the ‘Alexandrian Pentachord’



²⁶ Carpenter’s survey is ‘Russian Theorists on Modality in Shostakovich’s Music’; her discussion of *Lady Macbeth’s* passacaglia is at 93–4; 108–9.

Several more recent authors follow the ‘Russian’ theoretical view that the passacaglia is founded on a ground bass both modal and based on c#: thus Carpenter accepts Dolzhansky’s first explanation above,²⁷ while Fanning adheres to his second.²⁸ Yet other scholars, Eckart Kröplin and Michael Koball amongst them, regard both theme and interlude to be rooted in a more tonally conventional d minor. Kröplin and Koball offer no justification for their analytical conclusion, suggesting it to be a seeming-misdiagnosis that Fanning also notes.²⁹ Neither do they infer any wider hermeneutical meanings from the tonal operation of the passacaglia (nor, perhaps less surprisingly, do any of the analysts referred to above). Yet a recent article by Patrick McCreless that likewise views both ground bass and interlude to be ‘in’ d minor both provides musical evidence for this surprising assertion, and also explores the extra-musical associations of this tonal analysis.

McCreless argues that on the initial appearance of the ground, listeners are likely to understand D as the first note of the theme: for, as shown in Example 9.8a, the bass line emerges out of a gigantic c# harmony that merely leaves the low C# sounding in its wake, and thus it is the D that marks the first point of motion. Thereafter follows seven pitches that are fully diatonic to a natural scale of d minor, and the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent that forms the close of this collection is just one of several small-scale features that McCreless considers to reinforce the tonality of d. The final G#–C#, then, is a temporary transfer to c# that replaces the expected V–I cadence in d through chromatic displacement, before the tonic key emerges once more. For McCreless, the ‘sinking’ downwards shift to c#, occurring at the end of each of the statements of the passacaglia, creates the destabilising sensation of ‘shifting sands’ – and he goes on to chart other applications of this semitonal displacement technique in Shostakovich’s output, particularly in relation to the tonality of d and its upper and lower neighbours, that work to similar effect. These occur mainly in those problematic compositions written between 1931 and 1949, a period fraught with political dangers. Thus the impression that the musical device engenders – ‘the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁸ Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 34.

²⁹ Kröplin’s flat statement that the key of the passacaglia is d minor is repeated at Kröplin, *Frühe Sowjetische Oper*, 224; 230; Koball’s mistake is referred to in Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 34.

feeling that we are not anchored, that the ground is shifting or that meaning itself is compromised’ – takes on a wider historical relevance, *especially* so as the technique ever-evokes the climactic moment from that most iconic symbol of artistic persecution, the opera *Lady Macbeth*.³⁰

Example 9.8a

Third Entract; 284/7–10.

McCreless’ survey of this tonal trope in connection with the key of d and across Shostakovich’s output as a whole is comprehensive, and the hermeneutical conclusions that he draws from its usage are fascinating. Yet his article begins, and is indeed founded, on one fundamental problem: it is almost impossible, notwithstanding any amount of written justification, to experience the passacaglia or its central theme as ‘in’ d minor. For, as Fanning points out in response to Kröplin, the theme’s arrival at c# is explicitly reinforced on a number of occasions:³¹ one such example in which its tonic triad appears fully-voiced, thickly-orchestrated and at a dynamic of *fff* or above is given in Example 9.8b. At no point in the interlude does d minor come close to being presented unambiguously in this way. In fact, there are further indications in the music of the upper parts that c#, rather than d, is the home key – although tonal accounts of the passacaglia, overwhelmingly focussing on the theme itself, tend to overlook this material. For example, the opening is texturally structured through the entrance of the string parts one-by-one, from low to high, the whole building to climax; significantly, four of these contrapuntal entries, three unequivocally outlining c#, take place at the

³⁰ McCreless, ‘Shostakovich’s Politics of D minor’, (125).

³¹ Fanning, ‘Shostakovich in Harmony’, 34.

point of the V–I cadence. Yet the surest sign that the passacaglia is in $c\sharp$ is heard at the outset: before the first appearance of the theme, the tutti introduction to the interlude provides us with a gigantic extended perfect cadence in this key, six bars of a dominant pedal in the bass resolving to a tonic harmony marked *ffff*, as shown in Example 9.8c. Following this colossal assertion of $c\sharp$, it is hard to hear the emerging passacaglia theme as somehow not rooted in this tonic.

Example 9.8b

290
Fl.
fff

290
f

fff

Third Entract; 290/1.

Example 9.8c

284
fff

Tr-ni. Tuba
fff

V-ni
fff

V-c
C-b.
fff

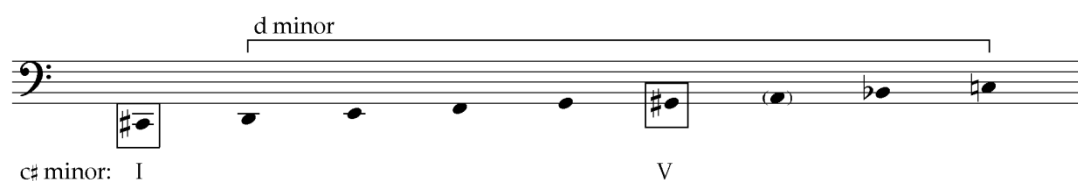
8^{va}



Third Entract; 284/1–7.

Yet McCreless is right that the central part of the ground does explore a modal d minor: only crucially, this sounds as a move *away from* the tonic c#, an upwards semitonal shift that – in a kind of inversion of McCreless’ thesis – the final V–I return in fact serves to stabilise. In fact, an analytical interpretation that understands the modal structure of the theme similarly does exist in the Russian theoretical literature, although it is usually overlooked in favour of Dolzhansky’s above. V.V. Burda understands the ‘tonic’ of the ground-bass to be c#: yet this tonic is also the displaced seventh degree of d minor, the mode that lies a semitone above it and to which most of the theme’s pitches belong, as shown in the summary based on Carpenter in Figure 9.5. In Burda’s view, the pitch G# is introduced at the close of ground to ‘clearly’ re-state the tonality of c#, and thus to (though apparently unsuccessfully!) ‘avoid misunderstanding’.³²

Figure 9.5: Burda’s Interpretation: a Displaced D Minor



The passacaglia theme comprises a shift from c# to d that is then ‘pulled back’ to c# once more. Thus contained *within the ground itself* are those same patterns of tonal escape and enforced return observable in the relationship between the upper parts and the bass as detailed above – and therefore even the very theme might be interpreted as playing out that sounding-struggle and submission as understood by feminist critics, experienced in other of the opera’s

³² In Carpenter, ‘Russian Theorists on Modality in Shostakovich’s Music’, 109; for a summary of Burda’s theories in general, see 101–3.

moves from the tonic to the semitone above and back explored elsewhere in this thesis. The similar use of the same pitch collection based on c# elsewhere in Shostakovich's output might support this reading. In the fourth movement of the Eighth String Quartet, the theme shown in Example 9.9 exploits the same mode as that of *Lady Macbeth's* passacaglia, analysed by Fanning after Dolzhansky.³³ Yet an extrapolation from Burda might be more appropriate: as in the opera, the unison melodic line in the lower strings first implies a perfect cadence in c# (54/1–2), then emerges upwards from this to explore a natural d minor unfettered (54/5–55/8) before being repeatedly then finally pulled back to a low C# (55/9–). If this musical phrase might be heard to communicate resistance and defeat introversively, the extroversive signifiers that abound in the quartet reinforce this interpretation: for, as detailed in Chapter 4, this particular piece is popularly understood to tell a biographically-influenced story of the composer's personal entrapment.

In respect of the *Lady Macbeth* passacaglia, the fact that the ground itself contains the shift to d is significant for another reason. For as previously stated, the first of the two main 'alternative' keys presented by the upper parts, weaving around the ground in seeming-fluidity, is d minor, this being strongly suggested over the second and third statements of the theme (285/2–286/9). Therefore the errant tonality in the melodic voices is actually derived from the fixed theme of the bass, d minor both contained in and generated from the first presentation of the ground. Moreover, the second significant key area to which the upper parts apparently escape is similarly present at the outset: for the held C that spans bars 5–6 of the ground, emphasised by its comparatively long duration and high pitch, is 'composed out' on a larger scale, becoming something of an alternative tonic throughout the sixth, seventh and eighth rotations of the bass (289/1–292/1). What seemed like tonal freedom on the surface of it was in fact preordained from the start: a further musical expression of inevitability as encountered hitherto in both the drama of

³³ Fanning understands the mode as containing four diminished scale degrees and being based on the Alexandrian pentachord, both after Dolzhansky; he makes the musical link with *Lady Macbeth* and cites two more usages in Shostakovich's output, more on one of which below: Fanning, *String Quartet no. 8*, 110–11. Interestingly, a recent article by David Haas explores the composer's extensive use of a very similar collection also based on C# (c#-d-e-f-g-a-b), arguing that this 'Shostakovich mode' – which has its roots in Berg's *Wozzeck* – acts as a 'vagrant sonority' for travelling between different keys and scales; again, Haas notes the connection between this all-important hallmark and the passacaglia: see Haas, 'Shostakovich and *Wozzeck's* Secret', (343; 347).

Example 9.9

The musical score for Example 9.9 consists of three systems of piano and bass staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure numbers 54, 55, and 56 are indicated in boxes above the staves. The score includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *espress.*, *cresc.*, *dim.*, and *p*. There are also articulation marks like accents and slurs. A dashed line with an 8^{vb} marking is present below the first system. The second system is marked with an 8 below a dashed line. The third system is also marked with an 8 below a dashed line.

String Quartet no. 8/ mvt. 4; 54/1–56/13.

fruitless struggle and cyclical submission enacted between the upper voices and bass, and the similar narrative of temporary escape and enforced return played out in the theme itself.

Once again, this interpretation is supported by its easy application to another of Shostakovich's works. The scherzo section of the Fourth Symphony's

third movement (167/1–190/16) is governed by its large-scale shifts between c# and d, as analysed by Pauline Fairclough: in particular, Fairclough highlights how the triumphant climax in D (184/1–) is subject to a violent ‘pull back’ to c# that occurs alongside quotations from the assaults on Aksinya and Katerina in *Lady Macbeth* (186/8)³⁴ – and the significance of this precise coincidence in relation to the above reading of the opera’s passacaglia is self-evident. Furthermore, and as in the earlier piece, the c# material that opens the scherzo is based on the passacaglia mode, analysed straightforwardly by Fairclough as another incarnation of the Alexandrian pentachord and yet – as demonstrated in Example 9.10 – displaying the same marked melodic shifts from c# to d and back again that both encourage tonal misdiagnoses of d minor, and make Burda’s explanation so plausible.³⁵ The sudden wrench from d to c# that occurs later and on the large-scale – marked as it is by powerful extroversive signifiers of struggle and defeat – is therefore and once again predestined from the outset.

Example 9.10

167

Allegro $\text{♩} = 84$

Symphony no. 4/ mvt. 3; 167/1–4.

If such modes, keys and tonal tropes became a characteristic of Shostakovich’s later output, perhaps their particular usage in both the Fourth Symphony and *Lady Macbeth* is much of its time. For the passacaglia tells us that progress is transitory, return inescapable – and if this is relevant to the particular

³⁴ See Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 190–97.

³⁵ Fairclough proposes that the theme is based on the Alexandrian pentachord in response to other scholars who mistakenly label the scherzo in d, having in her view misread C# as a leading note: see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, 190–91.

operatic fate of the heroine Katerina, it might also resonate with the histories of those real-life Soviet women, who hoped for something better in the 1920s, and accepted something worse in the decade that followed.

Chapter 10

'What Can I do?'

Katerina's Diegetic Singing

Chapter 9 located certain contradictory factors that worked to complicate *Lady Macbeth's* monolithic and overwhelmingly conservative message of feminine struggle and endorsed defeat or traditionalism; likewise, this chapter explores one aspect of the opera that undermines its generally regressive position: the possibility of Katerina's *actual* singing, within the internal dramatic world of the work. The heroine's diegetic singing has far-reaching implications that might even touch on the metaphysics of the genre; perhaps most significantly for this thesis, the character's performance acts are associated with her resistance, agency, and dramatic understanding, and thus it enables her in ways that are familiar to more recent feminist or postmodern critical thought. And yet, in true postmodernist fashion, the meaning of the heroine's diegetic singing is neither singular nor fixed. For although her *choice* to sing might be empowering, it is a decision born of a desperation that mirrors certain historical realities of the age – and when understood thus, the wider significance of Katerina's singing might either form the bleakest or the most optimistic message of Shostakovich's opera.

1. 'What Are You Singing for?' Katerina and her Diegetic Performance in I/1

As touched upon elsewhere, Katerina is the only character to sing what basically constitute ariosos or arias in this opera; these help to distinguish her musically from the other protagonists on the basis of a dramaturgical dichotomy as outlined in Chapter 2. One such piece, the heroine's b₁ minor 'folksong', is heard near the beginning of the work (I/1; 11/5–14/1). In several of its textual and musical features – its reflective subject matter, self-contained formal structure, relatively traditional tonal language, operatic lyricism and so on – the arioso is typical of Katerina's other Act I songs. Furthermore, various aspects of its setting present us

with the significant dramatic possibility that the folksong is *actually* sung, within the fictitious world of the work – and once more, the same can be conjectured of other of the heroine’s pieces in the first act. Such an operatic phenomenon is referred to by an assortment of names in the relatively sparse and disparate collection of musicological writings that touch upon this subject;¹ however, in film criticism, the word ‘diegetic’ is standardly applied to music that exists within the internal narrative of the film, and this term shall be applied accordingly throughout this discussion.

Katerina’s b_b minor ‘folksong’ immediately follows her monologue in a minor that opens the opera: a stream-of-consciousness set to seemingly unstructured musical prose that was discussed at length in Chapter 9. In contrast to the apparent free-flow of the monologue, the self-contained song exhibits elements of poetic and musical structure and device, and this contradistinction between the two pieces is highlighted by a considerable shift on the musical surface. As Example 10.1 reveals, a modal a minor is succeeded by b_b minor on a tonal level, while the local harmonic progression foregrounds the tritonal move from $e-b_b$; meanwhile, comparative metrical fluidity is replaced by a repetitive rhythmic pattern, this alteration in style marked by the new tempo $\downarrow = 100$.

This sudden surface shift might suggest that Katerina launches into a new mode of delivery here: one already hinted at by the use of the word ‘folksong’ to describe the arioso. In fact, this self-contained piece exhibits many textual and musical characteristics of the genre, rendering the suggestion that it *could be* a sung

¹ One scholarly exchange between Edward Cone, Peter Kivy and David Rosen examines the distinction between that singing which takes place within the world of the opera and that singing which is rather the normal mode of speech, considering the impact of this relationship on the characters in the context of a general discussion on the metaphysics of the genre: see Cone, ‘The World of Opera’; Kivy, ‘Opera Talk’; Rosen, ‘Cone and Kivy’s World of Opera’; and Kivy, ‘Composers and ‘Composers’’. Meanwhile, Carolyn Abbate studies isolated moments of actual performance within particular operas in postmodern vein, exploring this highly ‘charged’ phenomenon as a site in which multiple narrative voices emerge: for examples, see Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, (97); 4–10; 29; 96–8; 117–23; 131–5 and throughout. These writers use different terms to distinguish between singing-as-singing and singing-as-speech in the genre: thus Cone et al refer to ‘realistic song’ and ‘operatic song’ respectively: Cone, ‘The World of Opera’, 126; and Abbate to ‘phenomenal’ and ‘noumenal’ music: Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 5 and throughout. Others apply their own terms: for example, Brooks Toliver uses “‘singing”” and ‘singing’ respectively: Toliver, ‘Grieving in the Mirrors of Verdi’s Willow Song’, 291.

Example 10.1

I/1; 11/1–9.

interpolation in popular style a tempting one. Its text, given in full in Example 10.2a, might conceivably be that of a folk-song: it contains a number of rural references; it paints a picture of country life in its diurnal round; its emotion is simply expressed; its characters ('the farm-labourers', 'the merchant's wife') are stock figures; and its two main sections each demonstrate evidence of poetic structure, repetition and scanning, as annotated in the example. Similarly, its music sounds as a folk song, albeit of a distorted twentieth-century variety: the extract given in Example 10.2b reveals a simple and repetitive melody of conventional phrase structure diatonic to b , aeolian, and accompanied by a reiterated rhythmic motif. Moreover, and as touched upon in Chapter 8, the piece draws on a number of elements particularly characteristic of Russian folk: the modally-inflected minor key, the emphasis on the flattened seventh, the melodic use of falling fourths and fifths, the predominant use of minor-triad harmonisation, the parallel chord movement and tonic drone in the accompaniment, and so on.

Example 10.2a

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|
| The ant drags along its straw, | Муравей таскает соломинку, | (10 syllables) |
| the cow gives her milk, | корова дает молоко, | (8) |
| the farm-labourers pour out the flour, (<i>patterning</i>) | батраки крупчатку ссыпают, | (9) |
| but <u>I alone</u> | <u>только мне одной</u> | (5) |
| have nothing to do, | делать нечего, | (5) |

I alone am depressed,
 to me alone life is unkind, (*word repetition*)

только я одна тоскую, (8)
 только мне одной свет не мил (8)

me, the merchant's wife.

купчихе. (3)

Example 10.2b

Katerina

Му - ра - вей та - ска - ет со-ло - мин-ку, ко - ро - ва да-
 The ant drags a - long its straw the cow

Katerina

ет мо - ло - ко, бат - ра - ки круп -
 gives her milk, the farm la - bourers

Katerina

чат - ку ссы - па - ют, толь - ко мне од - ной
 pour out the flour, but I a - lone

1/1; 12/2–13/2.

If this arioso *could be* a folksong, perhaps there is a conceivable dramatic reason for the heroine to actually sing such a piece at this point in the narrative. She is alone; she cannot sleep; she has spent the day in bed, drinking tea, and going back to bed again: she *might* sing a song to alleviate her boredom or even to

console herself, and a directorial interpretation of this scene that allowed for Katerina's diegetic singing would certainly be a plausible one. In fact, in her dialogue with Boris that immediately follows the arioso, there is considerable support for such a supposition. This section begins with a prosaic and conversational exchange concerning Boris' dinner that is suitably set to natural speech rhythms in a fragmentary musical prose style, as shown in the extended extract given as Example 10.3. Yet mid-discussion, Katerina launches into a very different text, proclaiming almost to herself rather than Boris: 'Whether the sun's shining,/ or a storm is raging,/ it's all the same to me now./ Oh!' (1/1; 16/3–7). The disjunct between these lines and those that preceded them is highlighted by several abrupt changes on the musical surface: most notably, the shift to a new time signature of $\frac{4}{4}$ and new tonal area of a minor. These kinds of surface markers were encountered previously in the transition from Katerina's a minor monologue to her b_b minor folksong, possibly signifying her entrance into a new mode of delivery – and here they might denote similarly. For both the words and music of Katerina's exclamation is again indicative of folk singing: it makes reference to the cyclical rhythms of nature; its basic emotion is strongly expressed; it exhibits some poetic patterning; its minor tonality is modally inflected; its melody is simple, repetitive and diatonic; its phrase structure is conventional; its standard accompanimental patterns recur; and the final 'Oh!' on a high A pitch constitutes a vocal 'whoop' typical of certain Russian folk musics.²

Yet on this occasion, to suppose that Katerina might be singing is not necessary: Boris' response simply tells us that this is so. For the heroine's folk-ish declaration immediately prompts the following exchange:

Boris: What are you singing [поёшь] for, have you nothing else to do?
 Katerina: What can I do?

1/1; 17/4–6.

This short altercation, appearing as it does in the twelfth bar of the first conversation of the opera, is absolutely crucial to an interpretation of the work that follows. The dialogue confirms two pieces of information previously supposed of

² Esti Sheinberg lists high-pitched falsetto 'whooping' as a characteristic signifier of the Russian folk genre: Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque*, 131; 133; 135–6.

Example 10.3

Allegretto. ♩ = 120

Boris *p*

Гриб - ки се - го - дня бу - дут?
Will there be mush - rooms to - day?

Allegretto. ♩ = 120

f
sfp

16

Katerina *p*

Бу - дут.
Yes there will.

Boris *cresc.*

Бу дут? смот - ри я о - чень люб - лю гриб - ки да
There will? You know, I'm ver - y fond of mush - rooms, es

16

dim.

p

17

Katerina

f Све - тит ли сол - нце,
Whe - ther the sun's shi-ning,

Boris

ска - ши - цей, ска - ши - цей
pe-cially with buck-wheat gruel

17

Katerina

и ли гро-за бу-шу - ет, мне те - перь все рав - но. Ах!
or a storm is ra-ging, it's all the same to me now. Oh!

Boris

f Че
What

Katerina

А что де-лать?
What can I do?

Boris

го по - ешь де - ла те - бе дру-го-го нет?
are you sing-ing for, have you no-thing else to do?

cresc.

I/1; 15/5-17/6.

the b₁ minor ‘folksong’: firstly, that Katerina’s singing is diegetic, at least on occasion; and secondly, that she sings to alleviate her predicament, out of emotional need. This latter phenomenon is in fact integral to Katerina’s actual singing, as a closer examination of her folk-ish outburst at ‘whether the sun shines...’ suggests. Whatever the weather – and by implication, whatever the day and whatever the situation – the heroine’s existence is so truly awful that she can do nothing to alter it: and so she sings a snatch of ‘cheerful’ folksong. The kind of merry nihilism of this act is encapsulated in the curiously hybrid nature of its musical setting: on the one hand, an *allegretto* tempo marking, jaunty rhythms, an ‘oom-pah’ accompaniment and lively clarinet flourishes; on the other, a ‘flatter-than-minor’ mode, alien chromaticism and semitonal dissonance. The ‘bitter-sweet’ style persists in the heroine’s subsequent remarks to Boris – Example 10.4 shows Katerina lamenting her childless state to a dance-like melody in the minor mode that cadences on a sustained discord – and the fact that it develops into her normal language in the conversation that follows is highly significant. For arguably from this point onwards, actual or diegetic singing, born of emotional necessity, becomes to some extent the way in which Katerina *talks* – that is, within the dramatic world of the opera itself.

2. Choosing to Sing False Texts: Female Singing as Resistance, and the Paradoxes of Power

Katerina’s status as the *only* major character who actually sings within this opera is in fact carefully preserved in the libretto. Throughout, there are a number of references to other protagonists speaking (‘Говорить’) or similar; examples are given below.

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Boris: | I kept <u>saying</u> [гов ^о рил] to my son | (I/1; 18/5) |
| Zinovy (to mill-hand): | <u>Speak</u> [Говори] up | (I/1; 35/2–3) |
| | (Boris breaks off his <u>conversation</u> [разгов ^о р] with Sergey) | (I/1; 47/4–5) |
| Boris: | I’ll <u>shout</u> [кричать] if I want | (II/4; 224/7–225/1) |
| Second foreman: | That’s what I’m <u>saying</u> [гов ^о рю] | (II/4; 269/4–5) |
| Priest: | Boris Timofeyevich <u>said</u> [гов ^о рил] | (II/4; 281/5–7) |
| Katerina (to Zinovy): | I don’t like people <u>talking</u> [гов ^о рят] to me... Kindly explain what... you’re <u>talking</u> [гов ^о рите] about I won’t allow you... to <u>talk</u> [гов ^о рить] to me...(II/5; 341/1–342/9) | |

Example 10.4

21

Katerina *p*
 ма гру - шу... са мой ве-се-ле - е мне бы-ло - бы, ког да_ бы со
self am sad if I_ on-ly had a baby how hap-py should I be, how hap

Boris
 Ну!_ Well?

21

Katerina *ff*
 мно - ю был ре - бе - но - чек.
py, how hap - py_ should I be.

ff *dim.*

I/1; 20/5–21/5.

In contrast, on the very few occasions in which ‘speaking’ (or similar) is referred to in connection with Katerina, it is in a negative sense in some way. Thus a lonely Katerina laments that she *cannot* talk (or ‘say’: ‘сказать’) as she has ‘no one to talk to’ (I/3; 130/1–3); later she declares that she *will not* talk (or ‘speak’: ‘говорить’) as she doesn’t ‘even want to’ (II/5; 345/8–10). Moreover, if the boundaries between Katerina’s diegetic and non-diegetic singing are blurred in her opening dialogue with Boris, in the utterances of the other protagonists the distinction is carefully preserved. For example, we are told by a stage direction that

the self-contained piece sung by the labourers as they journey to the mill is unequivocally a diegetic song: *'in the distance is heard the singing [поют] of the foremen coming to work'* (II/4; 261/1). Likewise, Boris clearly separates his singing from his talking as he reminisces how he loitered under the windows of other men's wives, 'singing songs [песнипел], talking whatever nonsense [врал = told lies] came into my head' (II/4; 205/5–9).

Yet one other minor character in the opera does explore that curious grey area between diegetic and non-diegetic singing, as does Katerina. At the opening of scene 2, a group of labourers assault the maid Aksinya in a passage discussed elsewhere in this thesis; as previously described, Aksinya repeatedly struggles throughout to a wordless 'Oh!' set to a falling semitone motif or single pitches high in her register. On the surface of it, this is musical onomatopoeia, representative of a shriek or scream – and yet, just as Boris informed us that Katerina was singing in the opening scene, the workmen too suggest that Aksinya sings. At the very outset, the Shabby Peasant likens her cries to those of a nightingale, while the Porter also declares her to be 'singing' ('заливается' = 'trills') just like that bird (1/2; 70/3–7); meanwhile, the chorus of labourers repeat the refrain 'what a pretty voice [голосок]' throughout the episode.

That it is Aksinya that sings is highly significant: one of only three female protagonists in the opera, her character is also curiously conflated with that of Katerina in a number of ways to form a generic 'female victim', as argued in Chapter 3. Thus singing becomes an act particular to gender in this work: the women sing; and the men do not. Furthermore, the female characters' singing is associated with their resistance: thus Katerina's sudden outburst of folksong in her dialogue with Boris is an insolent non-reply that frustrates her father-in-law, while Aksinya's repeated vocalisations are similarly an obstruction that the labourers must overcome. The notion that singing – albeit not necessarily of a diegetic variety – might destabilise male authority however briefly is a familiar feminist musicological concept, and this thesis has uncovered examples of such score-based musical resistance written into the female vocal part along McClary-esque lines. Yet a comparatively recent body of critical literature touched upon in Chapter 4 rather explores how the technically virtuosic or timbrally beautiful female singing voice

disrupts in a more metaphysical sense, performer challenging composer in the stakes of absolute control – and this broadly postmodern idea, eagerly taken up by the New Musicology, shares similarities with those Bakhtinian theories of the multi-voiced or polyphonic artwork currently fashionable in Shostakovich studies, and also referred to in Chapter 4.

Diegetic singing in opera particularly complicates the power relation between character/ singer and author/ composer; this is amply demonstrated by conflicting arguments put forward in two texts on *Carmen*, the first by the musicologist Susan McClary, and the second by the literary theorist Peter Rabinowitz.³ McClary understands Carmen's diegetic singing to act as a powerful weapon against her fellow characters on a number of occasions.⁴ Yet when the composer himself is brought into the equation, McClary places him firmly back in control, suggesting that Bizet deprives his heroine of the ability to truly express herself through assigning her performance numbers.⁵ However, Peter Rabinowitz, in direct response to McClary, argues rather that Carmen's diegetic singing allows her to escape from the patronage of the narrator. For although characters in opera have no access to the music that they sing in the normal way of things – this being presented to us by the author in a sense 'behind their backs' – when a protagonist actually sings within the dramatic world of the work, they themselves choose to provide us with music of which they are self-aware.⁶

The McClary/ Rabinowitz exchange highlights something of a paradox: the heroine, through her diegetic singing, might gain a certain power due to what Rabinowitz terms her 'agency in self-presentation';⁷ however, owing to the essentially artificial nature of the performance genre she is fundamentally incapable of giving vent to her genuine emotions in a straightforward fashion. Certainly there

³ The former is a companion to the opera in the *Cambridge Opera Handbooks* series: McClary and Robinson, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*; the latter is an article written in part in response to it: Rabinowitz, 'Singing for Myself'.

⁴ For example, McClary details the Act I incident in which Carmen sings a song in response to the lieutenant's questioning, arguing that her employment of an 'alien discursive mode' in mockery of the situation is powerfully subversive: McClary and Robinson, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, 85; see also 21; 75; 87 for similar arguments.

⁵ McClary and Robinson, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, 75.

⁶ Rabinowitz makes a detailed diversion via literary theory to construct his argument: see Rabinowitz, 'Singing for Myself', 135–43.

⁷ Rabinowitz, 'Singing for Myself', 136.

are examples in *Lady Macbeth* of diegetic song being used expressly for the propagation of *dishonest* texts – and perhaps this offers some support to McClary’s view. Thus in the initial scene, the labourers bid farewell to Zinovy in a piece that exhibits many of the criteria of song as defined above – a self-contained formal structure, poetic repetition and patterning, relative musical traditionalism, and so on – and furthermore allows for the possibility of its actually being sung, as an ostentatious gesture of servitude demanded by Boris. Yet the workmen’s homage to their master is far from genuine: the text forms an unmistakable example of Stalinist-era ‘doublespeak’, the insincerity of which is emphasised by Sheinberg-esque indicators of musical irony, as annotated in Example 10.5.

The Izmailov’s downtrodden workers are obliged to sing for their superiors: an act suggestive of their bondage, as their allusion to the prologue of Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* serves to emphasise. In the earlier opera, the miserable masses are likewise coerced to beg Boris to assume the throne by the boyar Mikitich, who threatens them with the whip; in response, the crowd sing the chorus of supplication ‘Why are you abandoning us, father?’ (Prologue/1; 6/1–10/1), certain phrases of which (eg. ‘To whom would you abandon us? [На кого ты нас покидаешь]’), are echoed exactly by Shostakovich’s labourers as underlined in Example 10.5. To be forced to sing for your master, on demand and against your will, could be regarded as symbolic of the very essence of slavery; yet, if viewed differently, there is a power in the act. For if the artificiality inherent in performance inhibits the expression of truths, it simultaneously renders song ideally suited for the presentation of untruths – and thus it provides an essential tool of survival for the subjugated singer, able to hide their real emotion behind a protective mask of theatrics. Shostakovich’s workers and Musorgsky’s masses are the deceivers, while merchant, boyar and ruler are the duped: perhaps it is the latter, rather than the former, who are therefore deserving of our pity.

Later on in *Lady Macbeth*, Katerina herself makes closer reference to the *Boris Godunov* prologue: dramatically addressing her father-in-law – a different Boris – just moments after his death, her piece includes both the textual allusion identified previously, together with the generally acknowledged melodic quotation evident in Examples 10.6a and b. That this is a deliberate – and to a Russian operatic

Example 10.5

41 Extremes of dynamic and pitch

fff

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

fff

fff

fff

Без хо - зя - и - на бу - дет скуч - но скучно, то с кли во без - ра - дост но,
 With - out the mas - ter life will be drea - ry, drea - ry, dull - and joy - less,

41 'Heavy' dance:
brass accompaniment

Abrupt
interruption:
brass crotchets

Distorted norm:
'wrong-note'
accompaniment pattern

42

'Wrong-note's:
F replaces E,
E replaces D, etc.

Semitonal
juxtaposition

(Boris: What are you sniggering about?
 Your master has to go away
 and you don't show any sign
 of grief or regret!

Labourers: We do!
 Why are you leaving us, master,
 why? why?
 To whom would you abandon us? (На кого ты нас покидаешь?)

To whom? To whom?)
Without the master life will be dreary,
dreary, dull and joyless,
(home without you is not like home;
work without you is not like work.
Not like work, not like work.
Pleasures without you are no real pleasures.
Return as quickly as you can!
Be quick!)

I/1; 37/1–44/15.

audience, conspicuous – reference to the earlier opera in fact serves to emphasise several of the qualities inherent in diegetic singing discussed above. For once again, certain features of the extract hint at its actually being sung: the whole is a self-contained number clearly separated from what precedes and follows it through explicit changes on the surface; both text and music demonstrate elements that are repetitive and structured, thus in essence poetry rather than prose; the diatonic melody in the Dorian mode (often labelled the ‘Russian minor’)⁸ – with its melodic emphasis on the flattened seventh, prominent leap of a fifth, and flexible metric repetition of the initial phrase – is suggestive of the folk genre in general and Russian folk in particular; and there is a dramatic rationale for Katerina to sing here, Russian women traditionally performing such a lament on the death of their men.⁹ Yet if this is not convincing in itself, the fact that Katerina’s melody foregrounds the act of singing through its evocation of the opening chorus of one of Russia’s most famous operas must reinforce our perception that this music is ‘sung’, rather than ‘spoken’, within the work. Similarly, although we know that the heroine’s declaration of grief is a fake – Katerina has just poisoned the man she purports to mourn, after all (!), and the crude irony of the lament is underlined by the parodistic accompaniment of leaping staccato bassoons a semitone/ tone apart and raucous piccolo clarinet and voice unisons high in the register – the fact that the extract echoes the well-known sham pronouncements of Musorgsky’s coerced peasants still serves to emphasise its insincerity.

⁸ For examples, see Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 133; 137–8.

⁹ For details of such laments, see Zemtsovsky, ‘Russian Federation §II: Russian Traditional Music, 1. Russian, (ii) Song’, in *Grove Music Online* (accessed on 14 November 2012). One early critic certainly heard Katerina’s piece as a mimicry of the traditional folk lament, citing it as the only example of ‘pure ethnography’ in the opera: Sollertinsky, ‘*Lady Macbeth*’, 309.

Example 10.6a

275

f

Katerina

Ах, Бо - рис Ти - мо - фе - е - вич, за -
Oh, Bo - ris Ti - mo - fe - ye - vich, why

275

b^b Fl.

Katerina

чем ты от нас у - шел? На ко -
have you left us? To whom

276

Katerina

-го ты нас Зи - но - ви - ем Бо - ри - со - ви - чем по - ки - нул?
have you a - ban - doned Zi - no - vy - and me? _____

Katerina: Oh, Boris Timofeyevich,
 why have you left us?
To whom have you abandoned (На кого ты нас...
Zinovy and me? с Зиновием Ёрисовичем покинул?)
 (What will Zinovy and I
 Do now without you?)

И/4; 275/1-276/5.

Example 10.6b

6 **Meno mosso**
f *mf*
 Alto На ко - го ты нас по - ки - да - ешь, о - тец наш!
 Why for - sake us and leave us help-less great boy - ar?

6 **Meno mosso**
f *sf* *mf*

mf *mf*
 A. Ах на ко - го - то да о - ста - вля - ешь, кор - ми - лец!
 Ah, un - to whom would you. leave your child-ren, kind fath - er?

mf *mf*

Boris Godunov. Prologue/ 1; 6/1–9.

That Katerina does not reveal her true emotions in her song is of course not to be pitied. For if, through the act of diegetic singing, the oppressed heroine gains the apparent ability to escape the solicitous control of the composer and present herself, the act of *quoting* must magnify her agency still further. In ‘choosing’ to sing this appropriately false song from the operatic repertoire, it seems as if Katerina, rather than Shostakovich, makes the reference to *Boris Godunov*: a powerful action that at once places her on a level with the audience. It is to an exploration of these and similar ideas that this discussion will presently return.

3. The Foregrounding of Singing in Katerina's f# Aria: Two Alternative Readings

(i) *The Temporary Ascendancy of Katerina-the-role: a negative interpretation*

Thus far, the effect of diegetic singing in opera upon individual protagonists and their relations has been partially explored. Yet the significances of such a phenomenon might be more far-reaching than this, for when a character actually performs within the work, they foreground *singing* itself in a way that comes precariously close to destroying the dramatic construct on which the genre is founded. In opera, singing stands for talking – and an operatic audience must accept this false premise on some level for the artwork to be meaningful. However, leap-of-faith made, a protagonist's switch from 'talking' to 'singing' might well remind us that everything we watch is in fact performed: a dangerous possibility that others also note in passing.¹⁰

If the dramatic illusion of realism is shattered, this might ultimately affect our perception of the character that sings, a prospect that powerfully emerges during the performance of Katerina's f# minor aria in Act I, scene 3. This poetic, traditional and self-contained song fulfils those criteria reiterated several times above that allow for the option of its actually being sung; furthermore, its dramatic context is conducive to this possibility. In fact, the situation here is almost identical to that of I/1, in which Boris informed us categorically that Katerina sang as delineated above: once again, the heroine is alone in her bedroom, bemoaning her boredom and contemplating sleep although she does not really want to. A textual allusion heightens the similarities between the two scenarios: in the later scene, Boris orders the heroine to go to bed immediately, for 'what have you got to do?' (что делать тебе?), a line that strongly recalls Katerina's defence of her own singing – 'what can I do?' (А что делать?) – in the earlier dialogue (I/3; 135/2–5 and I/1; 17/6). The reference suggests that, as hitherto, Katerina sings to alleviate her overwhelming sense of ennui – and on each occasion, her choice of song is dramatically plausible. Thus in I/1, she picked a snatch of folksong as her refuge, a

¹⁰ For examples, see Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 10–11; Toliver, 'Grieving in the Mirrors of Verdi's Willow Song', 291; 301–02.

genre with which, as a woman of poor rural stock, she would realistically be familiar. Meanwhile, in I/3, she opts for a song that evokes the Russian nineteenth-century parlour genre of the domestic/ urban romance (*bitovoy romans*) in both its general and specific features – its suggestion of Russian folk refracted through an Italianate operatic lens; its prominent melodic sixth in the opening vocal phrases, corresponding to what has been termed the ‘sixthiness’ (*sekstovost’*) distinctive of the idiom;¹¹ its harp-heavy orchestration; and so on – and once again, this is a style with which a merchant wife of the 1800s would conceivably have been acquainted.¹²

If the fact of Katerina’s f# aria being diegetically sung foregrounds both operatic singing and the nature of the genre itself, the musical content of the piece serves to emphasise these elements still further. For acknowledged references to the *bitovoy romans* aside, this number is first and foremost a conventional Romantic operatic aria, the style of which is late nineteenth-century, as summarised in Chapter 6, and the primary purpose of which is to showcase the soprano voice. The singer who takes the title role is here provided with opportunities to demonstrate considerable vocal technique and beauty of tone: the part explores an extensive range of almost two octaves, from c#’ and b, ’; the climax on the sustained high b, is preceded by an extended build-up of 22 bars during which pitch and dynamic build relentlessly without a single resting place (I/3; 142/7–145/1); awkward intervallic descents comprising non-diatonic pitches, together with large intervallic leaps such as octaves and ninths, abound (eg. 144/1–4 or 146/1–2); and unprepared shifts to pitches high in the register are frequently marked *pianissimo* for expressive effect (149/4–5). Arguably it is the soprano who plays Katerina, rather than the character of Katerina herself, that is of primary importance during this aria

¹¹ For an analysis of ‘sixthiness’ as defined in Russian scholarship and in relation to the *bitovoy romans* and Tatyana’s music in *Eugene Onegin*, see Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 55–60.

¹² For descriptions of the characteristics of the *bitovoy romans* together with manuscript examples, see Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 17– 18; 29; 55–60. Marina Frolova-Walker also considers Katerina’s aria an example of a ‘drawing-room romance’ and thus a comment on her class: Frolova-Walker, ‘Russian Opera’, 187. That her piece does indeed draw on the *bitovoy romans* is reinforced by its connection with a more obvious parody of the genre in a contemporary work by Shostakovich: Mashenka’s opening song from the music-hall revue *Declared Dead* (1931) is a gentle skit on the urban romance; significantly, it evokes Katerina’s night-time reverie on watching the doves outside of her window in aspects of its text: ‘of an evening,/ Under the window on the little bench,.../ To listen to the song of a nightingale.../ And talk about love’: in McBurney, ‘Declared Dead’, 55.

– and this statement is supported by two aspects of the composition’s history. Firstly, the easy replacement of its 1932 libretto with a different and non-specific love-text in 1935 as detailed in Chapter 6 demonstrates that the dramatic content of the piece is really of little significance. Secondly, both the performance of the aria on at least one occasion as a stand-alone number and the publication of the song as an isolated piece for commercial sale – a phenomenon unique amongst the vocal music in this opera – are each suggestive of the true nature of its function.¹³

Katerina-the-character is here overwhelmed by Katerina-the-role; her dramatic credibility thus undermined, she temporarily acts as a vehicle through which the singer performs. In becoming a medium for performance, the part is made suitably generic: the f# aria might belong to any number of stock Romantic operatic heroines. Such protagonists typically sing such songs on two occasions: the first, when waiting for love, as the examples from the Russian repertoire provided in Chapter 6 serve to demonstrate; and the second, when waiting for death, as the traditional feminist criticism after Clément and explored elsewhere would of course attest. For Katerina, as for so many of these women, love and death are intertwined: the entrance of Sergey at the close of the song in which she yearns for such a lover marks the beginning of an affair that will culminate with her suicide, and that sex and violence are so conflated for the heroine is emphasised from the outset by Sergey’s immediate assault. As argued in Chapter 6, the shift into the arena of Romantic opera at the point of Katerina’s aria sets such familiar plot structures in motion, the formal closure of which we require: thus we *want* Sergey to become Katerina’s lover, although we know him to be a womaniser and a rapist, a state of affairs that is undoubtedly uncomfortable. Yet the foregrounding of the act of singing itself both facilitates and eases our desire. For as the singer who plays Katerina eclipses the character of Katerina herself, the protagonist becomes unreal, thus an unsuitable candidate for our emotional concern: what we can and should wish for Katerina the person is somewhat different to what we can and should wish for Katerina the stock operatic role. A generic type, the singing woman is made the

¹³ The aria was performed by the soprano Oda Slobodskaya as part of the Proms series under Sir Henry Wood in 1935: Fairclough, ‘The ‘Old Shostakovich’’, 268. Meanwhile, an issue of the *Music Educator’s Journal* in 1965 contained an advert by the Southern Music Publishing Company of New York, listing Katerina’s aria amongst its publications for purchase: ‘[Untitled Advertisement]’, 185.

object of a communication from composer to audience that draws on our knowledge of operatic convention, allowing us to desire the love-death of our heroine.

(ii) *Desdemona, Katerina and Operatic Self-Awareness:
a positive interpretation*

Seen in this light, the singing of the f# song constitutes a bleak moment for Katerina – and yet, one other feature of this specific piece might permit a more positive alternative interpretation of its performance. For although not previously acknowledged, in fact the composition draws closely on an aria from a different work – namely, Desdemona’s ‘Willow Song’ from Act IV of Verdi’s 1887 opera *Otello* (IV; D/1–P/24) – to significant effect. The dramatic contexts in which Katerina and Desdemona sing their songs are notably similar: both heroines are preparing for bed in their bedrooms, the former alone and the latter alone but for the company of her maid, who is silent; both are awaiting the arrival of their men, one of whom comes to rape, and the other to murder. Likewise, there are several fundamental musical connections between the two pieces: both are in f# minor, with occasional shifts to F# major; the relative tempo markings – ♩ = 80 for Katerina’s aria, and ♩ = 84 for Desdemona’s – are virtually identical; and each exhibits some elements of verse structure, four discernible verse-beginnings punctuating forms that are otherwise more fluid.

There are other, more specific musical references to the earlier aria in the later one, as a more detailed comparison of their opening material will serve to demonstrate. Examples 10.7a and b provide the first vocal phrase of Desdemona and Katerina respectively, revealing the latter to be something of a melodic reduction of the former: as annotated on the manuscript, both ascend from the tonic $\hat{1}$ to the tonic $\hat{8}$ before falling to dominant; $\hat{5}$ is then elaborated prior to the final descent to $\hat{1}$ once more. In their static harmonisations, the phrases are also similar: each accompaniment employs the tonic triad throughout, with just one use of ii/ \flat ii as shown in the example. These kinds of parallels are extended to the first ‘verse’ of each piece in its entirety: both follow the same broad tonal trajectory,

exploring the keys f#, b, D and f# (*Otello*: IV; E/8–G/9, LM: I/3; 140/1–141/11). Meanwhile, a number of incidental motivic and expressive motifs from the Willow Song recur in the f# aria: for example, the gently caressing falling thirds that Desdemona sings to the repeated word ‘salce’ are echoed in Katerina’s reiteration of the like-sounding ‘совсем’= ‘savsyem’ (compare E/18–21 with 149/2–150/5), while equivalent ascending leaps of octave/ ninth to sustained F#”/G#” pitches high in the register are similarly emphasised through sudden drops in dynamic (compare M/6–8 with 149/4–5).

Example 10.7a

Desdemona

1 8 5 5

"Pian - gea can - tan - do nel - l'er - ma
The poor - soul sat pi - ning, A - lone and

pp *ppp*

I ii/I I

Desdemona

lan - da, pian - gea la me - sta
lone - ly, There on the lone - ly strand.

ppp *morendo*

Otello. IV; E/8–17.

Example 10.7b

Lady Macbeth. I/3; 140/1–7.

In its understanding of the significance of Katerina’s large-scale reference to *Otello*, this discussion builds on an article on the earlier opera by the musicologist Brooks Toliver. Toliver explores the peculiar make-up of the relevant scene from *Otello*, in which a chain of women actually sing: the diegetic nature of Desdemona’s song is made unequivocal by the text that precedes it and its insertion in quotation marks; meanwhile, the music that she recalls was sung to her by a jilted servant, Barbara, who ‘used to sing a song [cantava una canzone]: the Song of the Willow’ (D/7–8); further, the text of the song itself takes as its subject another ‘poor soul’ who sits and sings: ‘Willow! willow! willow! Sing willow [cantiamo]!’ (E/9–21). Toliver details how this Russian doll of songs about singing is fluidly integrated with the material that surrounds it, Desdemona breaking off from her narrative several times to make asides to her maid, Emilia, and rearranging and misremembering the structure of the piece. He argues that this dramatically realistic treatment of the heroine’s singing serves to de-stylise and humanise her in a way that breaks down the barrier between character and audience, to powerful effect: for if Desdemona sings and hears *as we do*, she must also become aware of herself as a performer, as we are. For Toliver, the notion that Desdemona achieves such self-awareness is reinforced by Verdi’s detailed stage-directions involving a mirror, that potent symbol of self-reflexivity: he concludes that, over the course of singing her song about singing, ‘she ‘wakes up’ to her status as a singer in opera... She looks at

herself in the mirror, and she recognises that she is ‘singing’.¹⁴

Toliver’s multi-layered argument focuses on the tension between dramatic realism and self-reflexivity and their eventual rapprochement; he does not go on to consider the effect of Desdemona’s self-realisation on her character and our perception of it – and yet this is considerable. For when Desdemona realises that she is a singer, she comprehends the very essence of her being: an understanding that elevates her above the other protagonists in the opera and on a level with the audience. It might be that all diegetic singers in opera, in choosing to perform, are similarly self-aware of themselves to some degree; certainly when Katerina’s f# aria evokes the earlier heroine’s Willow Song, the effect is magnified. For if – as argued regarding the melodic allusion to *Boris Godunov* in Katerina’s II/4 lament – diegetic singing endows our heroine with the ability to present *herself*, it would appear that she, rather than Shostakovich, makes a cultured reference to Verdi’s *Otello* that would speak to an educated opera audience. A singing Katerina quotes Desdemona-quoting Barbara-quoting the nameless soul, all of whom sing – and thus Katerina tells us that she knows herself as a specifically *operatic* performer.

Toliver’s interpretation of the Willow Song might be extended still further: for when Desdemona sings, she becomes aware not simply of what she is, but also of the nature of her fate. That the heroine begins to be semi-conscious of what will soon befall her at this point in the work is abundantly clear from the libretto: on a number of occasions – and in lines that Toliver convincingly argues are actually sung – Desdemona seems to experience a premonition of her own death, for example imploring Emilia: ‘if I should chance to die before you, see that I’m shrouded in one of those bridal sheets’ (C/9–15). Her choice of song even implies that she senses her end to be tied up with her marriage to the warrior Otello, for the ‘poor soul’ of its text – the first in the interlinked chain of singing women unlucky in love – sings how ‘he was destined for deeds of glory,/... and I to love him and to die’ (M/2–N/8).

This link between the heroine’s diegetic singing and her presentiment of death can be observed in another opera, Berg’s *Wozzeck* (1925), a composition with closer links to Katerina: enthusiastically received by the young Shostakovich at its

¹⁴ Toliver, ‘Grieving in the Mirrors of Verdi’s Willow Song’, (303).

Russian première in Leningrad in 1927, the near contemporaneous work has since been bracketed with *Lady Macbeth* in numerous general accounts.¹⁵ In Act III, scene 1 of *Wozzeck*, the central female character Marie imparts a story to her son, quite probably through the medium of actual song (III/1; 34–41): her text forms a self-contained number that is – almost uniquely in this opera – tonal, thus suggestive of an insertion; moreover, because of these distinguishing features, it recalls the only other like-piece in the work, a lullaby sung by Marie to her boy in I/3 that is unequivocally diegetic. While singing her story to her boy, Marie seems to become semi-cognisant of their interlinked futures. For in describing apropos of nothing the ‘poor little child’ who ‘hadn’t got a father and... hadn’t got a mother’, she describes her own son exactly as he appears in the final tableaux of Berg’s opera, *Wozzeck* having killed his wife and then himself in the scenes that followed Marie’s prophetic song.

The diegetic singing of these heroines would appear to necessarily precipitate two conditions of being: the first an awareness of self, and the second an awareness of destiny. If the connection between the two is at first hard to understand, in fact it is perfectly logical. For as Desdemona and Marie come to know themselves as female singers in tragic opera, they simultaneously recognise that – true to type – they must die, once again an understanding that places them on a level with an educated operatic audience. It is possible that, in her f# aria, Katerina – actually singing, foregrounding performance and the genre itself, and even quoting a song of singing women who must love and die from the repertoire – is aware of herself not simply as a singer in opera, but also as a heroine of the ‘dying type’. An interpretation that credits her with such understanding might help to make sense of the highly problematic events that follow her song, and such a reading is given below.

¹⁵ For standard details of *Wozzeck*’s Leningrad première and its impact on various of the young Shostakovich’s works, including *Lady Macbeth*, see Fanning, ‘Shostakovich, Dmitry’, in *The New Grove* (2001), 23: 283; 288–9.

4. 'I Have no Husband but you Alone':
An Operatic Heroine Sings her Fatalistic Choice

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the events that take place in the immediate aftermath of Katerina's aria are highly troubling, from a feminist point of view. In the pages that follow, Sergey enters Katerina's bedroom and sexually assaults our heroine; still worse, she proceeds to accept him as her lover, thus first conceiving of an all-consuming and fatal devotion to her rapist that is musically glorified throughout the remainder of the work. Although Katerina initially struggled against Sergey, her conversion is quick: Example 10.8 provides the dialogue that takes place immediately after the notorious instrumental interlude that depicts her assault.¹⁶

This conversational exchange reads oddly, in part the result of a number of textual cuts and alterations made to the passage between 1932 and 1935 that have been detailed thoroughly by Laurel Fay. In particular, Fay notes the messy re-assignments of the line 'let's not speak of that': this belonged first to Katerina, a response to Sergey's mocking speech regarding her eagerness and Zinovy's impotence that was soon deleted from the opera, and only later to Sergey in the context as seen above.¹⁷ This said, it is the extant text as it appears in the 'polished' original version of 1935, justified in Chapter 2 as the most relevant version for the subject of this thesis, that will be analysed here – and in fact this excerpt is strange for reasons other than its numerous amendments. For in just a few lines, Katerina demonstrates an extraordinary and unaccountable *volte-face*: in her first response she protests to Sergey; in her second, she accepts him absolutely.

Perhaps the musical setting of this exchange, provided in Example 10.8, offers some clue to its understanding. Following her assault, Katerina is the first to 'speak' – and in fact, she does so in a style that might best be described as 'speech-melody'. Her initial reproach to Sergey – 'Why, why Seroyzha? I am a married woman' – displays little 'musical' content, being unmelodic, unrhythmic and

¹⁶ In the manuscript example, Katerina's first line – because altered in the 1935 Muzgiz version of the score – is given in Soudakova's translation, the remainder in Pemberton Smith's, as justified in Chapter 3. However, the libretto excerpt and the following discussion draws on Fay's more suitably literal translation of the text: see Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth to Katerina*' 166–7.

¹⁷ Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth to Katerina*' 165–7.

Example 10.8

192 *Moderato* ♩ = 96

Katerina *p*

За - чем, за - чем, Се - ре - жа, Я му - жня - я же - на.
Let go, let go, Se - ro-zha, I'm a mar-ried woman.

194 *p*

Sergey

Не на - до об э - том.
You must-n't speak of that.

194 *p* *espr.*

Katerina *p*

Нет у ме - ня му - жа Толь - ко
I have no hus - band but

Katerina

ты о - дин.
you a - lone.

Katerina: Why, why Seroyzha?
 I am a married woman.

Sergey: Let's not speak of that (Не надо об этом).

Katerina: I have no husband,
 only you alone.

1/3; 192/1-194/13.

unaccompanied; rather, it is shaped by the pre-existent rhythms and intonations of the spoken word. For example, the setting of Katerina's opening exclamation, 'Зачём, зачем' ('Why, why?'), both emphasises the accented syllables through relatively long note values and throws away the unaccented syllables via up-beats; moreover, the query ascends in pitch, thus matching the typical rising inflection of a question in spoken Russian. Meanwhile, Katerina's statement, 'I am a married woman', is realistically unvarying in its pitch content, barely alternating between the notes d', e', and f'; in fact, the whole phrase is restricted to the limited vocal range c'-a', a span more in keeping with the speaking than the singing voice. If all of these written-in factors conspire to suggest sung speech, the *lack* of an accompaniment also allows the performer to affect a free delivery more in accordance with normal spoken dialogue – and in practice, this passage is invariably sung *rubato*.

Katerina's second and consenting reaction to Sergey – 'I have no husband, only you alone' – is sharply contrasting in its musical setting. The phrase is memorably melodic, containing a number of recognisable musical motifs – triad, falling minor third, minim/ crotchet pattern, scalar descent – some of which repeat. This simple and eminently sing-able melody is supported by chugging strings articulating reiterated triads, a standard accompaniment in art song or opera. If Katerina's first response to Sergey is evocative of speech, her second is thus evocative of song: a basic construct that Sergey's intervening sentence would seem to support. For Sergey, on hearing Katerina's rebuke, tells her in idiomatic Russian to stop *talking* – 'let's not speak of that' – an instruction that prompts her to change to a different mode of delivery when voicing her acceptance.

That Katerina *sings* her vow of commitment to Sergey is both fitting and significant. This line marks the beginning of the end for Katerina: from this moment onwards, her unwavering devotion to her lover will govern her every action, culminating in her suicide – and thus the fatal sentence marks her entrance into the operatic genre as a fully-fledged Romantic heroine, who must love and die for that love. The seeming-switch from speaking to singing at this point thus foregrounds opera in a manner that is appropriate; further, it carries with it all of the associative

baggage of diegetic singing as explored above. Through performing, Katerina chooses to present herself, aware both of her status as a singer in opera, and consequently of her impending fate. When seen in this light, her shift from 'speaking' to 'singing' on 'I have no husband but you alone' suggests a self-conscious acceptance of her operatic role and its destiny. As she quietly sings her strangely simplistic melody over pulsing hypnotic string chords, she both foretells her future with Sergey and decides to accept it in a manner that grants her some measure of authority.

Exactly why Katerina chooses this fate for herself is initially harder to understand; however, a second diversion to an episode from Berg's *Wozzeck* might help to explain it. The incident of Marie's seduction in Act I, scene 5 of this opera is markedly similar to that of Katerina in its dramatic content, as the musicologist Elizabeth Wells also notes:¹⁸ like Sergey, Marie's suitor, the Drum Major, is first charming then violent; like Katerina, Marie first struggles and cries 'let me go!' before quickly capitulating (I/5; 698); in both extracts, the sexual act becomes an instrumental interlude; and on both occasions, the heroine goes on to develop an infatuation with her attacker. Yet it is the precise wording of Marie's eventual submission to the Drum Major that is of particular interest: finally giving up all resistance, she consents to be his mistress for 'it's all the same to me! [Meinetwegen, es ist Alles eins!]' (I/5; 708–9). For Marie, Katerina and countless other women of their type, day-to-day existence is so dreadful that it matters little what choices they make – and it is in this spirit of conscious fatalism that these heroines accept their assailants as their lovers. Likewise, it is in such an attitude of nihilistic detachment that Katerina chooses to sing at the outset of the opera, when – as discussed at the beginning of this chapter – she performs to herself a snatch of bitter-sweet folksong. In a text that explicitly echoes Marie's, she tells us that whatever life might bring, 'it's all the same to me now [мне теперь всё равно]' – and thus she sings, for 'what can I do?' Once again, the connection between deciding to sing and deciding to submit is not coincidental: for to choose to sing as a tragic operatic heroine *is* to choose to accept a miserable destiny.

¹⁸ Wells, "The New Woman", 170–71.

When Katerina vows ‘I have no husband but you alone’, she elects to bind herself to Sergey in a conventional and monogamous relationship, in essence matrimonial, for the want of a better option. There are connections to be made here with the social history of Katerina’s real Soviet contemporaries, as detailed in Chapter 8: these women, like our heroine, ultimately opted and even argued for a chance to return to traditional family values at the close of the 1920s, the promised alternative of female emancipation being better in the ideal than in the actuality. Established historical accounts of this subject do frame the desires and demands of these women in the language of choice: thus the scholar Wendy Goldman considers that a vocal majority consciously entered into a ‘bargain’ with the state, accepting the burdens of unreconstructed family life to protect themselves from the brutal social realities of the age – and paying the price of their freedoms.¹⁹ Katerina, like her real-life counterparts, makes her stoic decision to accept Sergey based on an assessment of her wretched predicament, and in a sense this is one of the bleakest messages of the opera. Yet her fatal choice might also be viewed in a more positive light: for in consciously resolving to play her role as a tragic operatic heroine, Katerina demonstrates an authority and understanding that destabilises the otherwise regressive position of Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth*.

¹⁹ See Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 335–6.

Conclusion

The main body of this thesis presented a feminist reading of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* that demonstrated the overall message of the opera to be ideologically regressive – and the details of this are provided in the chapter summaries below. Yet while this interpretation formed the stuff of this study, its overall objective lay further back. Above all, the thesis aimed to broaden the scope of contexts and methodologies through which we might examine a musical work, and in particular to integrate the critical, analytical and hermeneutical in its discussion of extra-musical meaning. In doing so, it hoped to add to that body of research that draws on such combinative approaches: a relatively limited literature within the discipline of musicology as a whole, and one particularly underdeveloped in the field of Shostakovich. For scholarship on this composer has been dominated by accounts limited in their methodological remit, and rigid in their presentation of narrowly politicised arguments. Chapter 1, in summarising recent trends in Shostakovich studies and situating these within the wider context of developments in musicology as a whole, examined these tendencies further: it would seem that it is the peculiar qualities of Shostakovich's music – its bewildering array of eclectic musical styles, its excessive use of musical topoi, its exceptional conditions of creation and consumption – that have encouraged such dogmatically political accounts of its extra-musical signification. Such interpretations become problematic only when presented as absolute truths, predicated on an assumption of the composer as the ultimate creator of meaning: this chapter rather argued for a more listener-centric philosophy, allowing that multiple sub-texts might be legitimately applied to this music. Thus the subsequent analytical-cum-hermeneutical reading – drawing in its approach on other isolated examples of such integrated work in the literature – was offered as one way, but not the only way, of hearing *Lady Macbeth*.

If writings on Shostakovich in general are overwhelmingly politicised, then those on this opera are particularly so. Chapter 2, the first to examine *Lady Macbeth* itself, provided essential information on the musico-dramatic content of

the opera, together with the facts surrounding its creation, reception and revision; it went on to negotiate the political dimension of this work and the literature that surrounds it, outlining how this study would both build on the current debate and develop it along different lines. The material of this chapter was split into six areas of discussion. The first provided a comparison of the Leskov novella 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk' and the Shostakovich opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, demonstrating how Shostakovich's adaptation of the literary original is radically altered in concept. In its rehabilitated version, *Lady Macbeth* might be read along Marxist lines; the second section of this chapter detailed how a basic Marxist narrative does exist on the surface of the opera, and summarised those Soviet and Western studies that acknowledge or variously develop this Marxist analysis. In a sense, these texts accept *Lady Macbeth* 'at face value' – yet there are those who do not understand the work in this way. The third part of this discussion reviewed the revisionist and anti-revisionist literature that rejects the orthodox Marxist position and offers alternative, though equally politicised, accounts.

That this opera gives rise to interpretations that are highly conflicting is at least in part due to its chequered reception history, and section four detailed the twists and turns of this extraordinary narrative. An all-too-familiar event in the story of *Lady Macbeth* has since coloured aesthetic and scholarly judgements of the work; part five of this chapter explored how Stalin's reaction to the opera has skewed both Soviet and Western scholarship, though differently, and led to the creation of several mythologies regarding the composition's various versions and revisions. Yet despite the contradictions that abound in the literature on *Lady Macbeth*, the conclusion to this chapter argued that these wildly disparate accounts are in essence in agreement. All accept and build upon one overriding ideological principle that lies at the heart of the opera: namely, that there exists a musico-dramatic opposition between the oppressed, Katerina, and her oppressors that acts to absolve the heroine and justify her crimes as legitimate resistance. This thesis also borrowed this core concept, though knowingly, and for its own feminist ends – and this study might thus be described as *differently* political.

Chapter 3 therefore conceived of the binary oppressor/ oppressed along gendered lines, and of the heroine's actions as feminist struggle. The chapter aimed to highlight those particular aspects of *Lady Macbeth* that begged a feminist examination, and to begin to outline certain of the feminist arguments that would form the basis of later chapters of the thesis. In so doing, it necessarily summarised other references to these issues in the musicological literature, thus demonstrating how this study would both build on previous concerns, yet move beyond them in its adoption of a more rigorous critical approach. The chapter was divided into three main parts. The first detailed instances of masculine oppression and feminine resistance in both libretto and score, and re-presented the plot synopsis of the opera along these lines. In its handling of this subject matter, the work draws on a number of literary and historical models, both pre- and post-revolutionary, and the second part of this discussion explored some of these potential sources. Other musicological texts that allude to this material tend to uphold *either* Tsarist *or* Soviet life as the artistic basis of the heroine's oppression; in summarising these responses, section two showed how this discrepancy is in part founded on political agendas. Yet in fact the two interpretations need not be mutually exclusive: Katerina's subjugation resonates with both pre- and post- Revolutionary models as the oppression of women was ingrained in both societies – and thus this study aimed at a greater universality.

A point of agreement between commentators on *Lady Macbeth* concerns the feminist credentials of the work – and yet, the common and unsubstantiated assumption that this opera is a 'feminist' text is highly questionable. The third section of this chapter highlighted those aspects of the piece that are problematic in this regard – namely, its trivialisation of sexual abuse and its idealisation of the heroine's devotion to her rapist – thus demonstrating the need for a complete reassessment of *Lady Macbeth's* relationship to certain feminist areas of enquiry. The concluding part of this discussion began to explore issues relating to the heroine's oppression, suggesting that the opera's emphasis and potential endorsement of Katerina's victimhood – as distinct from in the Leskov original – might be a less than enlightened move by Shostakovich.

In Chapter 4, the methodological tools adopted for such a critical reading of the opera – namely, musical analysis, and feminist musical analysis – were explained further, their application justified. The introduction to the musical analysis section of the chapter began by outlining the central focus of analysis in this thesis: the examination of functional tonality using conventional methods and terminology; it went on to explore both objections to and limited examples of other such work on Shostakovich, and argued particularly for its relevance in the case of *Lady Macbeth* – a largely tonal and relatively traditional piece – although such analytical explorations of the opera are virtually non-existent. Crucially, this thesis applied its musical analysis to *extra*-musical ends, and the relationship between these spheres formed the bulk of the first part of Chapter 4, itself split into three main subsections. The first explored the way in which the scores of Shostakovich and specifically *Lady Macbeth* tend to be examined in the literature on this composer: overwhelmingly, texts both political and non-political focus on the surface or ‘extroversive’ elements of the composition in any discussion of its extra-musical message or dramaturgical significance. Yet the second subsection identified certain limitations in relying solely on the extroversive as a signifier: for example, the concept of ‘leit-tonalities’, often referred to in writings on opera in general and *Lady Macbeth* in particular, might not correspond to how we actually experience key on listening. Meanwhile, ‘introversive’ musical elements such as functional tonality, habitually regarded as ‘purely musical’, tend to be excluded from explorations of the *extra*-musical – and yet, as the third subsection of this discussion revealed, these components of the score do signify, though differently. The conclusion of the first part of this chapter set out certain assumptions that would form the basis for much of the subsequent analysis of the ‘introversive’ aspect of this opera, and indicated how this would be carried out throughout the thesis as a whole: most notably, both the dramatic and musical components of the work are considered to operate in a symbiotic relationship, each expressive of the generalised experiential meanings of the other.

If the first half of this chapter in effect argued for the marriage of musical analysis and musical hermeneutics, the second half explored one strand of feminist

criticism that in essence does just that. The first subsection of this discussion detailed the nature of and background to that particular branch of feminist musicology that maps the operation of functional tonality onto large-scale operatic narratives of female transgression and overthrow. These and related approaches had not hitherto been applied to *Lady Macbeth* – although in fact they are remarkably apposite to a study of this work – until this thesis brought such methodologies to bear on the opera. In doing so, it might have seemed a little out of step with more recent feminist and critical developments, and the second subsection investigated some of the potential objections to such a research project: for example, to its overridingly text-based approach, or to its totalising whole-work conclusions, both preoccupations that might seem a little old-fashioned. Yet the third put forward the many cases for its defence, for instance, arguing that such work has been too quickly passed over and too little developed; it also identified certain areas of enquiry relating to ‘traditional’ feminist musicology that would benefit from further scrutiny – the question of artistic endorsement, for example – and indicated how these would be explored across the thesis as a whole.

Chapters 1–4, grouped together as Part I of the study, thus acted partially as a musicological and critical preparation for the main feminist analytical reading of *Lady Macbeth*, presented in Chapters 5–7 or Part II. First Chapter 5 examined the dramatic and tonal structure of the opera in its entirety – a project hitherto overlooked – exploring how these interlinked narratives operate in tandem, on both the small and the large-scale, to tell a familiar story of feminine struggle and defeat that is fundamentally regressive. The first section of this essentially two-part discussion initially explained how the basic tonal structure of the opera maps onto the fundamental dramatic plan of the story, a tale of oppression and resistance understood along Marxist/ feminist lines: thus the heroine’s period of protest is underscored by a structural tritonal dissonance between the dominant, c, and the sharpened tonic, f#, while her initial and final phases of subjugation take place in the tonic status quo. The section went on to examine how the work’s main functional tonalities, in themselves expressive of generalised extra-musical meanings, are given a more precise textual realisation on their small-scale appearances in Act I: in

specifics, $f\sharp$ ($\sharp I$), G_b ($b II$), c (V) and their resultant tritone become involved with themes of feminine (sexual) escape, struggle and resultant crisis; in contrast, the tonic f is associated with masculine oppression of a violent nature. The second part of the chapter considered how these dramaturgical significances are borne out across the work as a whole, although in a manner that is more flexible. In four scenes from Act II–IV of the opera, the large-scale operation of the work's primary key centres varies in tandem with the dramatic narrative, a procedure that is traced in action. However, despite this more fluid treatment, the functional tonalities remain ever-involved with concepts of feminine resistance and oppression: the former, for example, in the explicit eruption of tritonal crisis in III/7 following the discovery of Katerina's violent struggle; the latter, for instance, in the absolute presentation of tonic defeat in IV/9, the scene of the heroine's ultimate overthrow.

Of course, such tonal and dramatic resolutions of conflict do not necessarily celebrate the examples of female subjugation that they accompany – and Chapter 6 considered the question of endorsement further through its detailed examination of three short extracts. In the first of the chapter's two main sections, the initial establishment of the tonic f near the close of I/1 was examined using voice-leading analysis. The modulation from G_b ($b II$) to f (I) initiates a dramatic instance of shocking brutality, whilst the decisive arrival at the tonic is achieved through forceful stylistic and procedural means: this foregrounding of violence effectively condemns the act of female oppression that takes place at this point. However, the second part of the chapter provided analyses of two later passages from Act I in which the progression of G_b ($b II$)/ $f\sharp$ ($\sharp I$) to f (I), while still expressive of feminine defeat, is somewhat differently achieved: in these examples, the familiar musico-dramatic resolution is softened and even made desirable through its dramatic, stylistic and tonal handling, and female subjugation is thus endorsed.

The concept of a last-act endorsement of the heroine's final overthrow, through strategies of beautified tonic resolution, is a more familiar one to feminist criticism of opera – and Chapter 7 focussed on Act IV of *Lady Macbeth* in isolation. However, the chapter discovered Katerina's defeat to be celebrated via various different musico-dramatic means, thus moving beyond the standard feminist

paradigm. The first of its three main sections examined how several aspects of the internal tonal organisation of IV/9 – its cyclism, pivot-note progressions and octatonicism – work to engender a sense of ‘rightness’ in the listener; it went on to demonstrate that these compositional procedures have particular precedents in Russian music, a fact that also serves to legitimise the work’s close. The second pursued the issue of nationalism in Act IV, arguing that the Russianisms in the final scene constitute a musico-dramatic ‘homecoming’ with its roots in the Russian operatic tradition; once more, this general allusion to the national repertoire reinforces Shostakovich’s conclusion as both natural and right, and a specific reference to Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* strengthens the effect still further. That Katerina’s brutal defeat is made satisfying in these ways renders this opera a conventional one, when viewed through the lens of feminist criticism – and other aspects of the heroine’s treatment in the final act are also notably regressive. The last part of this discussion therefore moved beyond the question of endorsement to explore how the *actual* physical death of Katerina is dramatically and formally marginalised in IV/9, whilst her guilt-ridden confession is magnified to become the emotional climax of the act: both musico-dramatic strategies that are far from being enlightened.

If Part II of this thesis scrutinised the text of *Lady Macbeth* in relative isolation, Part III – comprising Chapters 8–10 – broadened the exploration of the opera into other historical and musical spheres. Chapter 8 began this contextual examination by considering the wider cultural resonances of the work’s regressive conclusion: the shift in Soviet society from the pluralistic and experimental tendencies of the 1920s to the monolithic and backward leanings of the 1930s was seen to be embodied in the chronological passage of the opera as a whole. The chapter first detailed the experiment-thermidor paradigm in the area of Soviet musical life and the compositions of Shostakovich, tracing this pattern in the musical narrative of the opera; it went on to examine the same historical shift in the social history of women in this period, mapping this onto the dramatic plotting of the work. The first of its five main sections provided the relevant history of musical life in the Soviet Union as it relates to the wider cultural context of the period, both

revealing the familiar pattern of experiment and reaction as outlined above in established accounts of this subject, and necessarily engaging with recent challenges to this standard version of events. The second went on to define the basic features of certain innovative musics of the 1920s and traditional musics of the 1930s in general, a necessary pre-emptory to the main body of the chapter. This principal discussion took place in section three, essentially a survey that both located certain characteristics of '1920s' and '1930s' musics in the dramatic, incidental, ballet and film compositions of the young Shostakovich, and simultaneously used the examples from this overlooked repertoire to further define the details of these historical styles. Instances of similar representative passages were traced in *Lady Macbeth*, and their distribution across the length of the opera charted; this revealed a greater concentration of '1920s' musics in Acts I–III and of '1930s' musics in Act IV, a narrative shift that does of course resonate with the times.

The remainder of the chapter, which dealt with aspects of the social history of the period as reflected in the dramatic narrative of the opera, was a shorter discussion consisting of two main sections. The first, section 4, detailed the radical attempt to emancipate women in the 1920s, a project that was largely undone by a return to traditional values in the following decade; this shift from the revolutionary to the reactionary was both evidenced and symbolised by a survey of the writings of the Marxist-feminist, Alexandra Kollontai. Meanwhile, the second, section 5, looked at the ways in which this sea-change might be reflected in the development of the central protagonist's character, ideologies and behaviour across the course of the work. On the surface of it, Katerina begins the work a sexually liberated quasi-feminist, although she ends it a far more traditional and monogamous operatic heroine – and this superficial transformation from '1920s' to '1930s' standards maps onto those developmental shifts encountered above in other historical and musical spheres.

Thus far, the thesis had developed largely monolithic conclusions pertaining to the opera in its entirety, firstly in its textual isolation and secondly against its contextual backdrop. Chapter 9 first amalgamated these textual and contextual

readings, before going on to partially deconstruct the overall message of the work in more postmodern a vein. The first of its two main parts therefore began by considering how certain score-based aspects of *Lady Macbeth*, as encountered in Chapters 5–7, might impact on the basic Soviet historical narrative reflected in the opera, as delineated in Chapter 8. Most significantly, those musico-dramatic features seen to endorse the heroine's Act IV overthrow in the feminist reading of Part I were *also* understood to legitimise the contemporaneous cultural and social shifts to traditionalism that are reflected in the chronological passage of the opera: thus *Lady Macbeth's* finale celebrates not only Katerina's downfall, but also the defeat of those positive innovative musical and feminist projects of the first post-revolutionary decade – and crucially, in favour of the Socialist Realist and Stalinist reaction of the second.

Of course, neither historical reality nor artistic message are really all that simple, as the remainder of Chapter 9 – which went on to explore both this history and the way in which it relates to the behaviour and music of Katerina in more depth – would attest. The Bolshevik programme of feminist emancipation, for example, was fraught with difficulties, the actualities of daily life in the 1920s bleak; many Soviet women therefore welcomed the backward move to traditionalism in the decade that followed – and the discussion revealed how this gulf between a progressive ideology and a regressive populace maps onto various disparities inherent in the opera, for example, between Katerina's rebellious conduct and conservative attitude, and between her tonal resistance and stylistic conformism. The second section of the chapter identified other main aspects of the story of Soviet women that similarly resonate with this work: four of these historical realities were seen to be reflected in a number of short extracts from the opera, and the text and music of each were analysed in order to arrive at this hermeneutical interpretation. For instance, the notion that the frenetic progress of the 1920s toward the goal of female emancipation was actually superficial, the mind-set of the population as a whole remaining unchanged, was seen to be embodied in a number of excerpts from the opera that exhibit movement on the musical surface, yet tonal or structural stasis beneath.

Chapter 9 revealed how such historical complications, reflected in both musico-dramatic inconsistencies and individual extracts of *Lady Macbeth*, destabilise its cohesive overall message; Chapter 10 continued this project by exploring how one aspect of the opera in particular – namely, the Katerina’s diegetic singing – in part empowers the heroine and thus disrupts the overwhelmingly regressive position of the work. The first of the chapter’s four main parts set up the notion that the character of Katerina *actually* sings in *Lady Macbeth*, establishing this likelihood through examples taken from its initial scene. The second went on to reveal how diegetic performance is drawn up along gendered lines in the opera, Katerina’s singing tied up with her resistance, self-expression and agency – in relation to the other characters, and even to the composer himself – in complex ways that are familiar to more recent feminist debate, and revisited here. For although a heroine might struggle to express her true emotions through a performance act that is by its very nature artificial, as a number of ‘false songs’ in *Lady Macbeth* attest, she may also gain the ability to present *herself* through her diegetic singing in a manner that lends her authority – and once again, there were examples to be found in this opera.

Perhaps less discussed in the literature are the metaphysical issues that arise from such singing, although these do impact upon feminist concerns. The third section of this chapter proposed that diegetic singing in opera works to underscore the genre itself, to various and contrary effect: two interpretations of Katerina’s f# aria are therefore provided, one negative for the heroine in outlook, and one positive. The former suggested that, through the foregrounding of operatic performance, Katerina becomes a stock character whose traditional fate is easy to desire. Yet the latter rather argued that the aria’s large-scale allusions to Desdemona’s ‘Willow Song’ from Verdi’s *Otello* – a diegetic song through which the heroine gains an understanding both of herself as a singer, and of her impending destiny – signify Katerina to be similarly self-aware, and for similar reasons. This second reading helped to make sense of one highly problematic moment in *Lady Macbeth*: that in which Katerina accepts her rapist as her lover. The final part of this discussion suggested that the heroine’s decision to sing at this point signifies her

conscious acceptance of her conventional operatic fate; this nihilistic 'choice' mirrors that of Katerina's real-life female contemporaries, who opted for a return to traditional values in the 1930s for the want of a better alternative. If this message seems bleak, it might yet be interpreted positively: Katerina, like her Soviet counterparts, demonstrates an understanding of her fate and an authority in accepting it – and thus the regressive position of *Lady Macbeth* is challenged in part.

There is a scholarly tension here that deserves unpacking: for the later chapters of this thesis would seem to query the cohesive overall reading that came earlier. Yet to include and lay bare the multi-faceted components and complexities of this interpretation of *Lady Macbeth* was quite deliberate: in a sense, the first part of this study provided a 'traditional' feminist analysis, the second, a postmodern one – and to foreground this is fitting in a thesis that has tried throughout to be self-reflexive about its approach. For it is the method of this study, rather than the finer points of its interpretation, that is ultimately of importance. Above all, this thesis, through its integration of the critical, analytical and hermeneutical, aimed to broaden the contexts and methodologies through which a musical work might be examined: it made the attempt in order to demonstrate that such a diverse approach will, hopefully, yield results that are profitable and insights that are interesting. To carry out a project of this kind in relation to a composer overwhelmingly subjected to monolithic and narrowly political readings is particularly appropriate. Yet of course this kind of combinative method might successfully be adopted in exploring composers other than Shostakovich, operas other than *Lady Macbeth*.

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