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Fatale, Fragile, and Furiosa: Redefining Female Tropes for a New Generation of Feminism

in Jeanne Shaffer's *Three Faces of Woman* for Clarinet and Piano

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Studies in
Music

by

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J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

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Introduction

From Judy Garland becoming the first woman to win the Grammy for Album of the Year, to Kamala Harris becoming the first woman vice president of the United States, countless iconic women have been foundational in prevailing past gender-based discrimination.¹ Despite these many triumphs, women have constantly been undermined based on their gender. Mary Ann Evans wrote her fiction works under the male pseudonym George Eliot because female writers were not taken seriously. Cecile Chaminade was infamously known for her compositions sounding as “too feminine” and critics speculated if that was the extent of her artistic abilities.² Actress Constance Wu was endlessly threatened for her “unladylike” response towards news that limited her professional career in 2019 and is still receiving intense scrutiny to this day.³ Present day culture still retains the negative stigma of being “feminine.” While women’s rights and representation have improved in parts of the world, musician and composer Jeanne Shaffer reflects on the specific storylines and archetypes that women have been forced to embody. Shaffer’s work “Three Faces of Woman” for clarinet and piano (1995) depicts three delineations of femininity that women have been reduced to. Shaffer’s piece uses different musical styles as vehicles to illustrate these ever-present stereotypes and the unyielding need to combat them. In this paper, I will dissect the feminine tropes that Shaffer has reflected in her composition by looking at the musical representations of Carmen and Micaela from Bizet’s opera *Carmen* and the title character of Strauss’s opera. With additional examples of other musical figures and pop culture references within the analysis of each individual movement, I will demonstrate how

¹“Beyoncé to Alison Krauss: 10 Times Women Made Grammy History.” The Grammys Recording Academy, February 22, 2023.

² Michelle Mai Aichele, “Cécile Chaminade as a Symbol for American Women, 1890–1920.” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019.

³ Constance Wu, *Making a Scene* (United States: Scribner, 2022).

Shaffer illustrates these tropes fusing together towards an activist trope that is pertinent to the ongoing fight for women's rights. Utilizing the form and genre of each movement, the motifs are developed upon revealing the underlying emotions the women experience underneath the stereotypes. The quotations of all three themes in the final movement unite to reveal how all three faces of women can help break the glass ceiling of gender discrimination.

Feminine Tropes in *Carmen* and *Elektra*

While women such as Hildegard von Bingen and Fanny Mendelssohn have had opportunities to perform and compose music throughout history, their abilities were constantly dismissed due to gender-based discrimination. The social expectations of genders were very influential upon the creative arts, but one of the most visible stages for gendered music semiotics is the genre of opera. George Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, based on the novella by Prosper Mérimée published in 1845, is a prime example of women's dehumanizing perceptions in artistic mediums. The two main female leads are opposites with conflicting ideals that represent two of the tropes found in Shaffer's composition.

Before delving into the musical motifs of *Carmen*, it is important to examine the intersectionality of gender presentation and race in Bizet's opera. Much of the music associated with Carmen and the Romani people, referred to as "gypsies" in the opera and novella, is the concept of exoticism. Europeans became increasingly interested in "non-European musical cultures" often discovered through the work of ambassadors and missionaries.⁴ This demographic did include music from various countries outside of European people. It is of the utmost significance that we recognize the intersectionality of the Femme Fatale trope and the

⁴ Anna G. Piotrowska. *Gypsy Music in European Culture: From the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*. (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2013).

common portrayal of Carmen as woman of color. Women of ill repute are often racially Othered as “dark ladies from the other side,”⁵ which has been used as a supporting element of discrimination against women of color. Our previous example Carmen is no exception. Carmen’s identity as a Roma plays a key factor in how she is perceived and presented throughout the opera and the original novel. Many of the musical symbols used to represent the character of Carmen are also infused with the likeness of the “gypsy” characteristic; liberated vibrant women who are, “shown as common criminals.”⁶ Regardless, the choice of Bizet, Merimee, Meilhac, and Halévy to portray Carmen in line with the many oppressive stereotypes that follow her identity as a Roma do play heavily into her persona as a Femme Fatale. Their delegation of this trope onto Carmen’s character is not a definitive persona to relate to people entitled “gypsies” and should be considered with discretion.

Micaela as the Femme Fragile

The first trope we are introduced to in the opera comes in the form of Micaela; the “bourgeois feminine ideal” of a woman who is unconditionally committed to her lover and prioritizes familial relations.⁷ Bizet highlights this musically in the reunion of Micaela and Don Jose in the middle of Act I. After the initial meeting of the two lovers, Don Jose begins to inquire about his mother, displaying his passion and urgency with his melody peaking at a high G. This is the broadest range seen yet in Jose’s music thus far in the opera, but Micaela completely contrasts this in her response. Seen in measures two and four of Figure 1, Micaela ascends only

⁵ Naomi Segal, “The femme fatale: a literary and cultural version of femicide.” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 13, no. 3 (2017): 102-117.

⁶ Piotrowska, “Gypsy Music in European Culture” 96.

⁷ McClary, Susan. “Synopsis and Analysis.” Essay. In *Georges Bizet's Carmen*, 69. Cambridge U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

in stepwise motion. Her thinner range in this musical banter displays the supportive and submissive role of the Fragile Femme by contrasting the emotional and expansive intervals that Don Jose expresses.

Figure 1: Micaela and Don Jose's Duo from Act I of *Carmen*

Micaela
- dras...
Un baiser pour son fils! Un baiser pour son fils! José! je vous le

JOSE. (très ému)
p Un baiser de ma mère! Un baiser de ma mère!

cresc. *p simplement.*

Figure 2: Later in Micaela and Don Jose's Duo from Act I - Micaela's concern at Don Jose expecting danger

Mi.
Quel dé.mon? quel pé.ril? je ne comprends pas bien... Que veut di.re ce .la? —

J.
- faut!
p Rien! —

Later in their duet, after Don Jose is explaining how the spirit of his mother, brought by Micaela's presence, will help him ward off danger. Indicative of the caring and sensitive nature of the Femme Fragile, Micaela's tone shifts, and is reflected by a triple subdivision of the beat in her following replies to Don Jose. In Figure 2, Micaela creates rhythmic dissonance by her entrance on the weaker part of the beat, but also with the change in beat division to a triplet. This instability and immediate change in character reflect the emotional sensitivity of the Femme Fragile, especially when the object of their affections is put under surprising circumstances. Her metaphorical representation of Don Jose's mother, whom she continues to care for even after Don Jose leaves her, and enduring love for him through all of his infidelity encourages pathos to

build in the audience and associated her with the particularly chaste imprint of maternal love as opposed to lust. She is used as a pathetic and oddly comedic device to contrast Carmen's salaciousness, revealing her as a Fragile woman, who is doomed to fate she refuses to accept.

Carmen as the Femme Fatale

Carmen is directly portrayed as a Femme Fatale character in Merimee's novella, which in Bizet extended in his musical representation of her. The Femme Fatale persona usually emerges the form of an alluring woman using whatever means necessary, often seduction, to accomplish her goal. After Micaela leaves, Carmen makes her appearance as the factory girls are returning from their work (which happens to be near the military barracks) Carmen, the last to emerge of the women, immediately draws the attention of the soldiers and beings the infamous Habanera aria. Prior to her entry, the men have been exclaiming, "Carmencita!" awaiting her presence with religious fervor. To continue this momentum of Carmen's persona, Bizet incorporates descending chromatic lines and the use of rhythmic elongation as a vehicle for Carmen to express her observations on love.

The accompaniment begins with a standard Habanera bass line: a staccato ostinato that emphasizes the stronger beats. This continuous and steady progression allows Carmen's solo line to float on top of the rhythmic foundation, which is markedly independent, as seen in Figure 3. Notably, the solo line is written in chromatic progressions, but the elaboration of the half step intervals is what creates the seductive aura of Carmen's aura. ⁸ Homing in on the vocal line from beat two of measure 4 into beat one of measure 5, the chromaticism is shifted rhythmically from

⁸ McClary, "*Georges Bizet's Carmen*", 76.

a duple division to a triple division. The effect of this change lies in the chromaticism. Starting on tonic, the melody descends to C# on the weak beat of measure four, but sustains the natural seventh of a chord, C natural, with a triple division through one whole beat. This stretched duration on the natural seventh of the key is not common amongst minor chord progressions, but the effect that Bizet creates where Carmen, “alternately coaxes and frustrates” through her musical lament is further highlighting the trope of the Femme Fatale.⁹ Leaning into the chromaticism, and even further creating not only harmonic but rhythmic tension entraps the listener musically, much in the vein of how the soldiers are being allured by Carmen’s charismatic and seductive disposition. While Carmen and Micaela are portrayed as complete opposites, they reflect two key tropes that women are delineated to. The modest and devoted woman, Micaela, ultimately is left for the seductive, “wild” woman who ends up rebuking the male protagonist in the end for other lustful pursuits. While they both revel in affection for Don Jose within the opera, they represent the dichotomy of the social expectations of women to fall into these conflicting categories.

⁹ McClary, “*Georges Bizet's Carmen*”, 76.

Figure 3: Opening of Habanera from *Carmen* by Georges Bizet; piano reduction

Allegretto quasi andantino

p

Love is
L'a - mour
A - mor

pp

just like a bird re - bell - ing, And how to con - quer him, who knows? Vain his
est un oi - seau re - bel - le Que nul ne peut ap - pri - voi - ser, Et c'est
mi - ste - ri - o - so au - gel - lo Nes - sun lo può do - me - sti - car, O - gnor

simili

Georges Bizet, *Love is Like a Bird Rebellious (Habanera from "Carmen," Act I)* ed. George Cooper (New York, New York: The University Society Inc, 1910)

Elektra as the Femme Furiosa

Micaela and Carmen are illustrated as common persisting assumptions of women. The Femme Fragile: Micaela; the soft spoken but imminently loyal woman, despite her heartbreak with her partner's infidelity. She is strong in her religious faith and intentionally caring about her partner's family, heightening her maternal instincts. Carmen is the epitome of the Femme Fatale; charismatically aware of her charm using it for her own benefits, but seemingly careless when it comes to the emotions of her romantic pursuits. The final trope presented in Shaffer's work reveals a dichotomous nature. In literature, we consider Electra of Greek antiquity to be representative of the Femme Furiosa: a hot-headed "mad" woman who is reduced to her "emotional" pursuits, typically vengeance, even when fighting for something she strongly believes in. As part of her daily ritual, Elektra can be seen grieving her father, Agamemnon, in solitude; the staff on the estate laughing at her expense. Elektra witnesses the murder of her

mother and her mother's partner at the hand of her brother, Orest, where she is left in a state of, "ecstasy and madness."¹⁰ In Strauss' musical interpretation of the story, premiered in 1909, Elektra is further portrayed as a mad woman. Moreover, her musical depiction is so unique that it has been coined the Elektra chord, containing "a bitonal synthesis of E major and C-sharp major."¹¹ The leitmotif depicting Elektra's hatred begins with a shortly sustained note, followed by a burst of rhythmic activity ending with another sustained pitch, as shown in Figure 4.¹² The rhythmic activity in this motif is indicative of the impulsive and reactionary behavior of the mad woman; she feels anger and then acts upon it before pausing a moment to assess. In the final movement of the piece, Shaffer directly references this concept with sixteenths leading into beat 2 and then beats 1 and 3 of the following measure, providing the initial reaction of the *Femme Furieuse* and allowing the sound to settle.

Figure 4: "Elektra's Hatred" leitmotif, Rehearsal 5 from *Elektra*



The final movement of the work, *Feministe Furieuse*, translates to *Femme Furiosa* in French. The character Imperator Furiosa from *Mad Max: Fury Road*, directed by George Miller and

¹⁰ "Elektra." Metropolitan Opera Elektra, 2023.

¹¹ H. H. Stuckenschmidt and Piero Weiss. "Debussy or Berg? The Mystery of a Chord Progression." *The Musical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1965): 453–59.

¹² Richard Strauss, *Elektra* (Berlin, Germany: Adolph Fürstner, 1916), 9.

released in 2015, offers a contrast to the preconceived notions of this trope and elicits a resilient and powerful woman who utilizes these once thought weaknesses as strengths. Imperator Furiosa's presence is marked with that of a vanquishing commander; wisdom, strength, and above all, unmatched power. Fulfilling an aspect of her Furiosa-prophecy, she seeks vengeance on Immortan Joe for relinquishing her from her duties due to the unattractive conventionality of her mechanical arm.¹³ However, within her quest to prevail over Immortan Joe, she is fighting for a safer and more just life for the people of the Citadel. This synthesis of the expected trope of the Femme Furiosa with the aspects of a gallant vigilante fighting for a more just system is the trope Shaffer is synthesizing in her final movement. While Imperator Furiosa is a woman seeking vengeance, she is a powerful authority who fights to ensure liberation for all women and refuses to let any limitations stand in her way. Much like Furiosa is a culmination of the spectrum of stereotypes that are placed on women, the final movement absorbs the themes of the prior movements to emerge anew. Shaffer's Feministe Furiuese is a rewriting of the end of the story for Micaela, Carmen, Fantine, and Elektra: They are no longer confined by these limiting personas but are breaking free as a beacon for women's autonomy.

I: Femme Fatale

To set the scene of the piece: the first movement of *Three Faces of Woman* is entitled *Femme Fatale*. Many examples may come to mind at the use of this trope: Circe, Cat-Woman, Lara Croft, or even Lady Macbeth, all magnetic and seductive women, most of whom ultimately

¹³George Miller, *Mad Max: Fury Road*. (May 2015; Hollywood: Warner Brothers), DVD.

brings their romantic pursuits to their demise, often under constant scrutiny.¹⁴ Upon the initial entrance of the cigarette girls, Carmen is solicited by the soldiers as if she is a prostitute. The confinement of Carmen to that ideal is further evidenced throughout the opera; when she is dancing in the tavern, her aria during the Habanera, and her death, on behalf of Don Jose, resulting from her infidelity.

The manuscript identifies this movement as “Larghetto/Blues”¹⁵ The blues as a musical genre is most commonly recognized as a song with a slow pace, regardless of the particular mood being elicited, it is an authentic and emotional release containing what is now known as a blues harmony.¹⁶ Similarly, the songs of prominence in the genre in the early twentieth century, the blues songs of today are centralized on human sexuality.¹⁷ There have also been stirrings among many scholars that the blues are a form of protest music and Shaffer’s music does reveal a glimpse of the dissent often used in blues. Using the blues as a contextual genre, this first movement utilizes chromaticism and dissonance, rhythmic and harmonic, to further exemplify the trope musically. In Shaffer’s interpretation, the small chromaticisms are utilized in the same vein as blues improvisations; they allow for a relaxed feeling but further highlight the spectrum of emotions the soloist is experiencing. Rhythm is an essential part of the blues and is typically up to the performer’s discretion, emerging from the same vein as folk music, and the uniqueness of having more rhythmic liberty allows Femme Fatale elements to emerge much more than if it had been written in a more strictly metered scherzo or waltz form.

¹⁴ R. Ostberg “Femme Fatale” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified November 2, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/femme-fatale>.

¹⁵ “Shaffer, Jeanne (1926-2007)” Arsis Press Composers, last modified 2023. <http://www.arsispress.com/Composerscores/Shaffer.html>.

¹⁶ Karin Anna Pendle, *Women and Music : A History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 462.

¹⁷ Dick Weissman, *Blues: the Basics*.(London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 20.

The hints of the Femme Fatale trope are apparent from the very beginning. For comprehension purposes, the figures included will be from the arrangement for Clarinet and Piano, but sound examples will be from Richard Stoltzman's performance with the Warsaw National Philharmonic.¹⁸ In Figure 5, the clarinet can be seen opening with a chromatic line with three sets of sixteenth notes with a five-let leading into the following measure where the piano enters. While the piano enters on the downbeat, it is on a weaker beat, two, which creates an underlying sense of rhythmic instability. Shaffer's explicit notation of the consonant to dissonant rhythmic structure already develops the precursor to the style yet to come. The precise repetition of the half step interval in conjunction with active rhythms elicits a sense of calculation and malintent. Chromaticism in music is a deviation from the "normal" diatonic tonality, however, Shaffer's implementation of it as a soloistic device to open the entire piece provides the underlying effect of deception. Because the clarinet enters by itself, the listener would perhaps interpret it as a cadenza, and this is especially present in Stoltzman's interpretation as he utilizes great rhythmic liberty.¹⁹ It is not until measures two and three, when the piano enters, that the audience fully processes the synthesis of the clarinet's line with the piano's accompaniment. The beat before the piano enters, the clarinet disrupts the perceived pulse, created by the sixteenths with a five-let, which creates a brief suspension in time where the listener is unsure if the soloist is speeding up or continuing a virtuosic cadenza. The harmony provided by the accompaniment (the piano or the orchestra) adds to the magnetic intensity of the clarinet's solo line.

¹⁸ Richard Stoltzman. "Femme Fatale," track 1 on *Clarinet Concertos by Women*. CD. Peter Kelly, 2003.

¹⁹ Stoltzman, "Femme Fatale," *Clarinet Concertos by Women*, 2003

Figure 5: The opening of “Femme Fatale”

Larghetto/blues Jeanne E. Shaffer
Op. 193, no. 1

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the clarinet and piano parts for the first measure. The clarinet part begins with a melodic line starting on the first beat, marked *mf*. The piano accompaniment enters on the second beat of the first measure, also marked *mf*. The second system shows the continuation of the music for the second measure. The clarinet part has a slur over the first two measures and a fingering '5' above the second measure. The piano part continues with a bass line and chords, marked *mp* in the second measure.

The effect created is one of a siren is drawing a sailor in from sea. The clarinet’s opening ascent fully captures our auditory attention and when the accompaniment joins in on the dominant of the key. Shaffer formulates this by having the piano enter on the dominant as opposed to the tonic of the key is similar to the effect of a half-cadence; while waiting for the tonal grounding point, the listener realizes that they have already been transported to the dominant of the key. In addition, the full tonality of the harmony is not revealed until beat two of the second measure. This delay further reveals the trance the audience has been under; the dominant chord being delayed, even for a single beat, further grounds the idea of being

entranced. The musical *Femme Fatale* was created when the clarinet opens with her solo sixteenth notes. The audience, captivated by the clarinet's opening line, is then presented with the dominant tonality of the key, feeling enveloped, or already consumed by the powerful presence of the trope.

Further expanding on the *Femme Fatale* idea of seduction, Shaffer uses traditionally weak beats as grounding points for her melodic and harmonic lines. A similar example of this can be seen in the Broadway show, *Chicago*. Probably one of the first images to come to mind when hearing the phrase "Femme Fatale," is the "Cell Block Tango," which presents the stories of six women, imprisoned for murder, all with motives stemming from lust or vengeance. The genre of the tango in which the story is portrayed in is revered as a seductive dance itself; ear-marked with emphasis on the weaker parts of the beats and syncopation as indicators of the *Femme Fatale*. In Figure 6, a reduction of a habanera rhythmic pattern is shown, where a bass percussion voice provides the downbeat, and a click-like timbral percussion instrument, most consistently played by castanets or claves, entering on the following weaker part of the pulse with an eighth note pushing to the subsequent quarter note. This relatively simple rhythmic structure of syncopation provides an incessant motion that hypnotizes the listener and further draws them in. Shaffer's interpretation of this technique can also be seen in the red boxes in Figure 7, with the piano holding a tied note on the upbeat of the second pulse of the measures.

Figure 6: Beginning measures of Cell Block Tango from *Chicago* – Piano reduction.

Moderate Tango

N.C.
LIZ: ANNIE:

Pop Six

(claves)

(bass drum)

Kander, John. *Cell Block Tango*. Edited by Kander & Ebb. Los Angeles: Unichappel Music Inc.,1975

Figure 7: MM 20-25 of “Femme Fatale” from *Three Faces of Woman*

23

23

23

mp

p

The monologuing line of the clarinet, however, weaves in and out of this pattern, making it near impossible for the listener to hear a higher organization of phrasing. Marked by the red boxes in Figure 7, the accompaniment is very subtly syncopated. The suspension of the weaker part of the beat, or the “upbeat”, would most likely disrupt the listener’s perception. However, since the line starts on the weaker division of the first pulse of the measure, the listener is not necessarily as jarred by this subtle shift in overall pulse. These rhythmic patterns in the accompaniment, while not concurrent with syncopations in the solo line, still complement the main musical dialogue. Not only do these tied figures create a slight suspension in time, but the constant shift of syncopation between the solo line and the accompaniment allows for a continuous, steady pulse to support the listener. In other words, even though the syncopation usually provides rhythmic dissonance, it’s effect in context provides unnoticeable rhythmic dissonance.

II: Femme Fragile

The Femme Fragile is more ambiguous as a trope, referencing a spectrum of a feminine presence who is confined to her domestic duties to a woman and who is known for being sensitive and in touch with her emotions. Using the berceuse, or lullaby, as a foundation, Shaffer surveys the various meanings of the Femme Fragile within this genre, but with the utmost transparency, the maternal expectations placed on a woman. Lullabies are a musical semiotic for infancy, and subsequently, sleep. While Western art has developed its own tradition of the genre, some form of lullaby can be found across cultures. Two consistently trademarks of a lullaby are its entity as an infant-directed singing and its use to soothe or comfort someone to the state of

slumber.²⁰ While lullabies are mostly used for lulling infants and children to sleep, they also are used to create a hushed atmosphere. Shaffer's compositional choice to put the *Femme Fragile* trope into the berceuse form creates the connection that not only are women constantly directly associated with domestic child-bearing duties, but their voices and personas are consistently hushed and greatly pitiful.

The berceuse creates a direct connection between a woman's expectation to bear children and conjure her "maternal instincts." However, within the staple aspects of the genre—a compound meter, a "rocking" like rhythmic pattern, and hushed dynamics—Shaffer unravels these aspects within the label of "*Femme Fragile*." Specifically, she uses an obscure compound meter contrasting with soothing melodic lines with rocking-like rhythmic patterns to unearth the complexities of motherhood and the ubiquitous assumptions that women are defined to their sensitivity.

The *Femme Fragile* is known as a sensitive and martyr-like woman who is ultimately prophesized towards an often pathetic and untimely demise.²¹ Juxtaposed with Carmen's character in Bizet's opera, Micaela represents core characteristics of the *Femme Fragile* trope. Micaela, while not ultimately facing her death, was betrayed by Don Jose for Carmen, still unconditionally cares for Don Jose and takes care of his mother as she slowly passes on. Despite Carmen ultimately rebuking his lustful advances, Don Jose never shows remorse for abandoning Micaela and his mother, making Micaela an object of pity for the audience. Her musical theme can be connected to the compound rhythm division that is a staple of the berceuse genre. In

²⁰ Michael C. Thomsett, "Lullaby," in *Musical Terms, Symbols and Theory: An Illustrated Dictionary*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2012), 119.

²¹ Barabara Korte. "The 'Femme Fragile': Decline and Fall of a Literary Topos." (*Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 1987), no 105 (2009).

Figure 8, measures 44-46 of Micaela's air from Act III is displayed. While the aria is written in duple beat divisions, the placement of a triple subdivision on the fourth beat in both measure 44 and 46 alludes to the characteristic triple subdivision of a berceuse, reinforcing the idea that she is to be hushed or pitied, and her role still lies within the domestic duties. This triple subdivision can be seen in Shaffer's second movement with the prescribed compound meter. While it is not entirely in the same vein of compound rhythms in a simple meter, the effect is still felt with the precise groupings of three eighth notes in the accompaniment line, as seen in Figure 9.

Figure 8: MM of 44-46 Act III: Air from George Bizet's *Carmen*

Allegro molto moderato. $\text{♩} = 96.$

Fl.

Clar.

Bassoons

Horns in E flat

Allegro molto moderato. $\text{♩} = 96.$

Violins

MI.

voir de près cette fem- me Dont tes ar- tifi-ces maudits Ont fi-

p *cresc.* *mf* *f* *ff* *mf* *cresc.*

p *arco* *mf* *f*

Figure 9: MM 1-4 of “Femme Fragile” from *Three Faces of Woman*

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Femme Fragile" from the musical "Three Faces of Woman". The score is for a clarinet and piano. The clarinet part is in the upper staff, and the piano part is in the lower two staves. The piano part includes markings for "plucked string", "p", "ppp", and "string gliss. up". The music is in 4/4 time and features a melodic line in the piano part with a glissando effect.

Another example of the *Femme Fragile* is Fantine in the musical *Les Misérables*. Her story is very much representative of the trope; after getting fired from her factory work, she is forced to become a prostitute to provide for her child she had with a man that left her. While she is engaging in promiscuous activities, her motives are what separates her from Carmen. Similar to Micaela, she is left by the man who once loved her but still persists despite damning circumstances. Fantine may not be pure, but this is her last resort to continue survival for herself and her daughter. Fantine’s lament “I Dreamed a Dream” is perhaps one of the most recognizable songs of the musical, and while not prescribed as a berceuse or even written in compound meter, the melodic figure is indicative of the berceuse characteristics. From the very beginning of Fantine’s singing, an eighth-dotted-sixteenth rhythm is established, shown in Figure 10. The song is written in 4/4, but the use of the dotted rhythms creates the same effect of the “rocking-like” rhythm common in the berceuse form.²² While her melody is not fully in the vein

²² Claude-Michel Schönberg, “I Dreamed a Dream”, in *Les Misérables* (New York, NY: Music Theatre International, 1985), 112-126.

of a rocking-like rhythm in a compound time, the energy of the motif provides the subtlest propulsion forward, revealing that while Fantine is being hushed, she is still in motion.

Figure 10: Opening of Fantine’s vocals in *I Dreamed a Dream*

The image shows a musical score for the opening of Fantine's vocals in the song "I Dreamed a Dream". The score is in 7/8 time and features a melody with a rocking-like rhythm. The lyrics are: "I dreamed a dream in time gone by / When hope was high and life worth liv - ing. / I dreamed that love would ne - ver die." The tempo marking is "non troppo cantando".

While the berceuse form is most commonly notated in a 6/8 meter, Shaffer’s use of the 7/8 meter in the lullaby form not only creates an unequal division of beats, but the “extra” eighth note beat division allows a multipurpose tool for phrasing and creating the character of the movement. Dotted rhythms are often used to create energy, for example the “Scotch Snap” of a sixteenth note on the strong beat followed by a dotted eighth note, which would potentially undermine the tone of a lullaby or a lament.²³ While the dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythmic motif does provide motion, Shaffer uses it to further exemplify the trope to propel the longing and sorrow that the Femme Fragile experiences. Fantine continues to work as a prostitute to provide for her daughter she cannot afford to care for, even as it slowly kills her. Micaela continues to love Don Jose and his family unconditionally after discovering his relations with Carmen. The Femme Fragile is a martyr; unyielding in effort for a cause she cannot change. Micaela’s musical gesture triplet syncopation and Fantine’s dotted eighth sixteenths do provide small bursts of motion, but as a symbol of the pain they are enduring. 1, the rocking rhythm is established in the

²³ David & Nicholas Temperley, “Music-Language Correlations and the ‘Scotch Snap.’” (*Music Perception* 29, no. 1 (2011): 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2011.29.1.51>)

introduction of the movement. In the right hand of the piano, the final articulated note is the duration of two eighth notes as opposed to one, and while this extension of the pitch may seem like it makes the beats feel uneven, or potentially create a hemiola-like figure, the effect creates a lyrical, elongated phrase that does not create a disjunct listening environment.²⁴

Other scholars might argue that the left hand of the piano counters this assertion by having an articulated pitch on the seventh beat, combating the atmospheric quality of the elongated melodic line. Within the unequal beat divisions, the tonality actually contradicts this and utilizes the seventh beat as an anacrusis to the next idea. Looking at the left hand in Figure 11, the key is established with the tonic chord being arpeggiated with the tonic, fifth, and seventh through the first five beats. The remaining two beats contain the tonic and dominant pitches leading into the tonic on the downbeat of the following measure. While the left hand in the accompaniment is tonicizing the key, the right-hand lands on the supertonic on the sixth beat. Simultaneously, the left hand permeates with the tonic and dominant underneath the sustained supertonic, leading the left hand to the tonic and the right hand to the dominant on the following downbeat. While not a common chord, the elongation of the supertonic over the Do-Sol idea in the left hand presents dissonance. In contrast, the articulation of the seventh beat in the left hand on the dominant helps propel the listener through both that harmonic and rhythmic dissonance. The harmonic structure is crucial in Shaffer's varied use of the seventh beat. Her specific use of the left hand's articulated dominant pitch on the final beat in measure 3, while the right hand sustains the supertonic over the seventh beat unearths the versatility of the seventh beat and how it can reveal the conflicting nature of the trope. While one musical idea is pushing forward, the other is fixed to the prior beat. The synthesis of the seventh beat and the rocking-like rhythms helps perpetuate

²⁴ Richard Stoltzman. *Clarinet Concertos by Women*. CD. Track 2, 0:20. Peter Kelly, 2003.

the Femme Fragile trope. There is an ever-present uneasiness rhythmically, but the overarching melody creates a translucent façade where faint reaches of the emotions underneath can be seen.

Figure 11: MM 3-4 of “Femme Fragile” from *Three Faces of Woman*



III: Feministe Furieuse (scherzo)

The final movement, the Feministe Furieuse, which is also understood as the “Femme Furiosa,” is assumed to be a vengeful and vexatious woman, focusing on a fixed finality. While there are flickers of the impassioned and driven woman that audiences might assume to be present, there is much more complexity, revealing these stereotypes are nothing but glass ceilings to shattered. Shaffer’s synthesis of the Femme Furieuse theme and themes of movements prior into the scherzo character illustrate the modern woman: these tropes are ideologies that have been forced into our lives, we acknowledge them, but we refuse to let them define who we are.

In examining how Shaffer illustrates this third movement, it is important to look at how the scherzo form is utilized. The scherzo became more prominent in multi-movement works such as Haydn's utilization of it as the final movement in *Divertimento in F major* in 1766, the scherzo is known as a light-hearted, sprightly-paced dance utilized as a standalone movement in chamber music, solos, and orchestral works.²⁵ These characteristics are written into its name: scherzo means "to jest" or "joke" in Italian and are often used a dance-like movement to replace a minuet.^{26 27} Mendelssohn's reinvention of the scherzo began to redefine the form as a rapid, fast paced dance full of energy and rhythmic activity, a prime example is his incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.²⁸ This exemplification of a scherzo is more complex than that of Haydn's and, there are elements of both present in Shaffer's final movement of the piece. With these considerations in mind, Shaffer's utilization of the scherzo character suggests a frantic, angry sound. However, the musicality directions regarding the tempo, shown in Figure 12, contrast this notion. The tempo is marked as *molto allegro* as opposed to a *vivace* tempo often associated with scherzi. This subtle but markedly different tempo allocation allows for the themes to feel less frantic and more intentional.

²⁵ Thomas Schmidt-Beste, *The Sonata*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 96.

²⁶ Schmidt-Beste, *The Sonata*, 96.

²⁷ Russell, Tilden A., and Macdonald, Hugh. "Scherzo." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 19 Mar. 2023.

²⁸ Benedict Taylor, "Formal Jests: The Sonata-Form Scherzo in Mendelssohn's Mature Chamber Music." *Music Analysis* 40, no. 3 (2021): 451–501. <https://doi.org/10.1111/musa.12182>.

Figure 12: MM 1-2 of “Femme Furieuse” from *Three Faces of Woman*

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Femme Furieuse" from "Three Faces of Woman", Op. 193, No. 3. The score is for Clarinet and Piano. The tempo is "Molto Allegro". The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is common time (C). The Clarinet part starts with a dynamic of *f* and features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Piano part starts with a dynamic of *f* and features a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The score is numbered 1 at the beginning.

Despite including a hint towards a madwoman persona in the opening of the final movement, Shaffer embarks onto a new form in the reappearance of the themes and tropes of the Fatale, Fragile, and Furieuse. Shortly after the third iteration of the Furiuese theme in measure 3, as shown in Figure 13, a quotation of the Fragile theme is present. Reappearing in a duple-subdivided time signature, the Fragile theme is elongated, and the end of the motif ends in minor. The quick pace in which the Fragile theme resurfaces after the initial Furiuese statement is much more than just a passing reflection, and this is supported by the role the accompaniment plays. In the opening iterations of the Furiuese idea, the piano part in Figure 13 can be seen emphasizing the arrival of the clarinet on beat 2 and providing an anacrusis for the final beat of the measure. Following this unison rhythm with the clarinet and accompaniment, the clarinet enters with a variant of the Fragile theme and the accompaniment launches into sixteenth-note figures underneath. The effect of the clarinet soaring over this rhythmic activity provides depth to theme and represents the tumultuous role the Fragile plays from the movement past. With the left hand in the piano providing two sixteenth notes simultaneously with the note in the melody of the shortest duration recalls the pulse of the Femme Fragile idea. The piano not only supports the

melody when there is a glimpse of the smallest division of the beat on the upbeat of the second pulse of the measure, as seen in Figure 13; measure 4, but it also provides anacrusis for the next down beat the clarinet enters on. While it can easily be examined as supportive musical motif, the left hand of the piano provides the propulsion that allows listeners to hear the movement of the Fragile theme.

Figure 13: MM 3-6 of “Feministe Furieuse” from *Three Faces of Woman*

The image shows a musical score for measures 3-6 of "Feministe Furieuse" from *Three Faces of Woman*. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment and a clarinet line. The piano part has a complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand, while the right hand plays chords and moving lines. The clarinet line has a melodic phrase in measure 4 that is highlighted with a green box. The piano part has dynamic markings of *ff*, *f*, and *mf*.

This of course can also be applied to the Fatale at the start of the first movement. In the third movement, remnants of the Fatale movement, specifically the rubato, cadenza-like section, are not heard until measure 17, as shown in Figure 14. Direct similarities to the original iteration of the Fatale theme are apparent, including the piano becoming tacet for the clarinet's long, and cadential phrase. However, the thematic idea of the Fatale in the final movement is definitively not a direct quotation of the original. Notably, the second beat in measure 17 is a dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm as opposed to straight sixteenth notes, and the same pattern follows on beat 4.

The sixteenth note follows similar intervallic patterns of the original iteration of the Fatale motif, but these rhythmic alterations provide a grounding and reflection point for the listener. The silenced accompaniment supports this while the clarinet continues the thematic synthesis alone, which makes the small suspensions of pitches in measure 17 that much more compelling, creating the effect of someone's train of thought or internal monologue. In measure 31, a more direct motif can be traced from the Fatale movement. The pitches are altered to be more dissonant than the theme's earlier appearance. It retains similar rhythmic value of the original, but more condensed within the prescribed time signature. The effectiveness of the theme at this moment lies in the support of the accompaniment. On beat one of measure 31, both hands are playing sixteenth notes in the likeness of the Furieuse theme underneath the introduction of the Fatale theme. Without knowing what follows the first pulse of the measure, the listener might be inclined to predict the reemergence of the Furiuese theme. This creation of two simultaneous thematic materials has been seen in development sections of music before, but the effect of using these two representations of women combining is indicative of the actualities of women.

Figure 14: MM 17-18, 31-32 of “Feministe Furieuse” from *Three Faces of Woman*

Redefining the Tropes: Themes for a New Era of Feminism

The more pronounced themes of the Fragile and the Fatale heard in the final movement reflect how women experience these oppressive stereotypes. Shaffer herself prescribes that, in order for women to help break down these barriers, it is “necessary to break the stereotypes” of the first two personas presented in the final movement.²⁹ Should each movement be taken individually as small etudes, they could simply be considered a caricature of a certain depiction

²⁹ Arsis Press Composers. “Shaffer, Jeanne (1926-2007).” Arsis press composers, 2023).

<http://www.arsispress.com/Composerscores/Shaffer.html>.

of women. Quantifying each movement as an exaggeration of a type of woman undermines the point that Shaffer is illuminating that the Fatale, Fragile, and Furiosa tropes are categories that women are reduced to and can be much more applicable if looked at individually. The intertwining of the Fragile and Fatale theme in the final movement of the piece provides a foundation to illustrate the havoc they have caused. Each iteration of the individual themes in the final movement builds on each prior one, culminating in the conclusion that all of these tropes must be considered to prevail against the prejudices they have created. The significance and presence of these themes are often perceived in the likeness of each individual trope, but the synthesis of all of these “faces” of a singular woman, as the title suggests, is that women as a whole face discrimination because of these gender-based stereotypes. Shaffer herself says all tropes presented in the piece are, “present in herself and probably most women” in her program notes.³⁰

While some may argue that these gendered perceptions are antiquated, the effect they are having is still being endured. Considered to be one of the “most important American composers living today,” by her compositional colleagues, Joan Tower is no stranger to the barriers women composers have experienced.³¹ In a recent phone interview, Tower said that the representation of women’s participation in music has an “abysmal history,” so much to the extent that many women composers, “were not even acknowledged until the 1990s.”³² As of 2022, only 7.7% of repertoire performed by orchestras around the world were composed by women.³³ The disparity

³⁰ Arsis Press, “Shaffer, Jeanne”

³¹ “Joan Tower.” Bard College, 2023. <https://www.bard.edu/faculty/details/?id=3066>.

³² Joan Tower (composer), phone interview to author, November 1, 2022.

³³ Donne - Women in Music. “Research.” Donne, Women in Music, April 15, 2023. <https://donne-uk.org/research-new/>.

that women face in regard to being diminished to a singular categorization and spans far beyond the field of music. Over the past two decades, women in the United States have only made, on average, 82% of the salary that their male counterparts make.³⁴ As recently as 2000, Research conducted reported that 1 in 4 women have experienced rape or an attempted-rape at some point in their life.³⁵ As of June 2022, the United States Supreme Court reversed the landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade* that had previously ensured women's right to choose what happens to her body in the case of pregnancy.³⁶ The overturn of this decision created a huge wave of states abandoning abortion protections, and several that decided to ban abortions altogether without regard for any other circumstances. These stereotypes that women face are much more.

³⁴ Carolina Aragão, "Gender Pay Gap in U.S. Hasn't Changed Much in Two Decades." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, March 1, 2023.

³⁵ Bonnie S. Fisher, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael G. Turner. "The Sexual Victimization of College Women." *PsycEXTRA Dataset*, 2000.

³⁶ Dan Mangan and Kevin Brueninger, "Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*, Ending 50 Years of Federal Abortion Rights." CNBC, June 24, 2022.

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