

'Musicology with Music'? Lawrence Kramer and the Rhetoric of Musicology

NITTA Takayuki

Lawrence Kramer is a leading figure in the development of the controversial New Musicology which introduces postmodernist modes of thinking into musical studies. Kramer's concept of the New Musicology is especially evident in the first two chapters of his *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (1995).

In recent years Kramer has been criticized for his selfish and arbitrary interpretations of musical works. For example, Leo Treitler points out in Kramer's essay on Schumann's *Carnaval* the lack of historical understanding and some errors of musical analysis. According to Treitler, Kramer sees in musical works only what he wants to see. Most of his arguments seem to be too arbitrary to be academically tenable.

This arbitrariness, however, is a logical outcome of Kramer's self-referential discourse: 'musicology with music', to paraphrase his own words. On the other hand, the object of study is less the music itself than interactions between music and language, i.e., rhetorical figures of musical sounds. On the other hand, he claims that, by means of their performative power, musicological writings be engaged in the production of those rhetorical figures. Consequently, musicologists are able to discuss objects they make.

Kramer's self-referential 'musicology with music' reveals the rhetorical and arbitrary nature of musicological writings in general, and even implies that the classification of discourses on music into rhetorical categories will be one of the future directions of musical studies. Kramer's discourse, which rhetorically depends on catachresis (an abusive imposition of words), is an allegory of the unavoidable arbitrariness of musicology.