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Phono-somatics: gender, embodiment and voice in the recorded music of Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey

by

Sarah Boak

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ABSTRACT

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PHONO-SOMATICS: GENDER, EMBODIMENT AND VOICE IN THE RECORDED MUSIC OF TORI AMOS, BJÖRK AND PJ HARVEY

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This thesis is a feminist enquiry into the relationship between gender, embodiment and voice in recorded popular music post-1990. In particular, the study focuses on the term 'embodiment' and defines this term in a way that moves forward from a simple understanding of representing the body in music. The expression of embodied subjectivity through the voice is crucial to this interpretation, and therefore is the central concern of this thesis. I describe this relationship between embodiment and voice in recorded music as phono-somatic. From the Greek, 'phono' suggests not only voice and sound, but also the process of recording itself. 'Soma' is the Greek for body. By connecting the two, phono-somatic as a term highlights the interplay between body and voice through the recorded medium.

Central to the analysis of phono-somatics is an exploration of the concept of 'the feminine'. The 1990s saw a new kind of female artist emerge, writing songs that focused on intimate topics of sexuality, gender and the body in an explicit, direct way. This study looks at the work of three artists – PJ Harvey, Björk and Tori Amos – who make challenges to dominant conceptions of gender and sexuality and looks at how they use phono-somatic strategies in their work. The thesis explores three key areas: feminine vocality and pleasure, embodied trauma and maternal bodies. It analyses the ways in which these women performers use an embodied language in their musical practices, of what this language is made, and of what it allows them to speak. Through the analysis, this study demonstrates that phono-somatic practices are used to move past representation, into embodied experience whereby norms around gender and sexuality can be challenged.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Sarah Boak, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Thesis title: **'Phono-somatics: gender, embodiment and voice in the recorded music of Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey'.**

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University:
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated:
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed:
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work:
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help:
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself:
7. Parts of this work have been published as:
   Boak, Sarah (2015) 'Mother Revolution: Representations of the maternal body in the work of Tori Amos' *Popular Music*, Volume 34, Issue 2, May 2015 (Cambridge University Press) pp.296-311

Signed: .....

Date:.....

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1.1: PJ Harvey, Björk and Tori Amos, Q Magazine, May 1994

(For image see Appendix 3, Example 1.1)

In May 1994 the cover of *Q* magazine featured three female singer-songwriters – PJ Harvey, Björk and Tori Amos – with the strapline 'Hips. Lips. Tits. Power.' (see Fig. 1.1). By this point in 1994, these three hugely popular female artists all had successful debut albums behind them and were being hailed as part of a new movement of female singer-songwriters (O'Brien 2012).[1] The 1990s saw a new kind of female artist emerge, writing songs that focused on intimate topics of sexuality, gender and the body in an explicit, direct way. These three artists pictured on the *Q* cover represented varying expressions from this new wave of singer-songwriters. Whilst their styles and backgrounds are noticeably different, the media discussion homogenised and ignored difference in order to create a sense of coherence or narrative around these musicians (O'Brien 2012, p.205). However, analysing the musical and lyrical content of their work does suggest a series of common themes in their work. These three women explored how everyday life is experienced *through* the body and at the centre of their songwriting was a specifically female understanding of the world. Drawing on female agency and power, their music told of experience through an embodied self.[2] The *Q* magazine cover does not fully represent the broad spectrum found in the work of these musicians, by reducing difference to form a coherent cohort and manipulating their musical material to sell magazines through cliché and over-sexualisation. However, the strapline of the *Q* cover does neatly draw out themes of female bodies, power and sexuality in its punchy four-word phrase.

[1] Amos' *Little Earthquakes* peaked at number 14 in the album charts in January 1992 with her follow-up *Under the Pink* going straight in at number 1 in February 1994. Björk's first adult solo album *Debut* peaked at number 3 in July 1993. PJ Harvey's *Dry* reached number 11 in the album charts in April 1992 and her second album *Rid of Me* reached number 3 in the album chart during May 1993 (Official Charts, 2015).
[2] Other singer-songwriters in the early 1990s who were working in a similar way include Fiona Apple, Liz Phair, Alanis Morrisette and Ani DiFranco.

Chapter 1

This study is a feminist enquiry into the relationship between gender, embodiment and voice in recorded popular music post-1990. In particular, the study focuses on the term 'embodiment' and defines this term in a way that moves forward from a simple understanding of representing the body in music. The expression of embodied subjectivity through the voice is crucial to this interpretation, and therefore is the central concern of this thesis. I describe this relationship between embodiment and voice in recorded music as phono-somatic. From the Greek, 'phono' suggests not only voice and sound, but the process of recording itself. 'Soma' is the Greek for body. By connecting the two, phono-somatic as a term highlights the interplay between body and voice through the recorded medium.

Using the *Q* magazine cover as a starting point, this study looks at the work of three contemporary female popular musicians – Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey – who make challenges to dominant conceptions of gender and sexuality and looks at how they use phono-somatic strategies in their work. I am interested in finding out the ways in which these women performers use an embodied language in their musical practices, what this language is made up of and what it allows them to speak. My hypothesis is that the relationship between the body and the voice is crucial to their musical output, and thus I explore the interchange between vocal sound, textual content and embodied experience.

Whilst beginning with the *Q* cover from 1994 this study moves past the period of the 1990s to encompass works written by the case study artists up to the present day. The focus is on phono-somatics within their work, and therefore I want to look at their full output rather than focus the study on a short period of time. However, the analysis of the musical material will be historicised to draw out a broader perspective of phono-somatics across the period. Thus, this is not a study of musicians in the 1990s, but rather of phono-somatic expressions in the music of the case study artists, analysed across the changing cultural and social landscapes of a longer period. I am interested in how the case study artists (Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey) utilise strategies of embodiment in their recorded works. In particular I want to ask what is the relationship between voices and bodies in this work and does this relationship create an embodied sound that moves beyond representation? Finally, as women identified as a female cohort with strong sexualities, what sort of phono-somatic responses to femininity are found in their work? Is there a female embodied vocality at work here?

1.1 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured into three main chapters. The first concentrates on a discussion of feminine vocality, through the lens of female pleasure, highlighting vocal representations of the female orgasm in the music of the case studies. The second chapter looks at embodied traumas, and the phono-somatic exploration of modes of violence. The relationship between gendered bodies and violence, expressed through the voice, is central to this chapter. In particular I look at music before and after 9/11 to identify how experiences of violence – and the discourses around violence and trauma – have been altered since the events of that day. The final chapter uses maternities and maternal bodies as a case study for further exploration of the concept of 'the feminine'. Differing modes of mothering, and of expressing the maternal body, are explored in the work of the three musicians I am focusing on. In my conclusion, I return to the notion of essentialism, and draw out suggested modes of engagement with phono-somatics that allow a more nuanced approach to the feminine.

The relationship between body, voice and gender in the work of Amos, Björk and Harvey is explored here through three specific themes: embodied voices, maternal bodies and violence embodied. The thesis is conceptualised as a female body itself, and these themes move from the top of this imagined body, through and down. Embodied voices (Chapter 2) focuses on sounds, of paralanguage and of female desire articulated through a female vocality, and thus focuses more on the upper body areas of the throat and the heart (as a symbol of desire). Violence embodied (Chapter 3) articulates the limbs of the body, which symbolise both attack and defence, which are explored in the chapter through the roles of victim and perpetrator. Maternal bodies moves down into the reproductive system of this figurative body. There are other themes suggested by these artists, that I have chosen to omit from this thesis. The most obvious are body as landscape/nature, technology embodied and embodying religion. I could not choose all of these themes, therefore I chose the three themes that most succinctly deal with phono-somatics within focused disciplinary areas, of which I will say more later in this section. The omitted themes would have necessitated dealing with larger theoretical areas – such as the notion of posthuman, in relation to technology embodied – when the areas for study (gender, body, voice) are already challenging enough to maintain clear boundaries for a PhD research project. Using the thesis as an imagined body in itself also helped to give the work shape, and these themes – nature, technology and religion – move outside of this imagined body. These are therefore themes that are to be considered for the development of this research, post-PhD.

1.2 Methodology

The three case studies for analysis are solo female musicians Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey as featured on the May 1994 *Q* magazine cover previously discussed. There are a number of reasons for making this choice, aside from their media representation at that point in the 1990s. To fully explore phono-somatics in relation to gender, choosing certain parameters was necessary. For an investigation into strategies of embodiment and the relationship to the voice, there are possible case studies of musicians working within a band set-up, such as Courtney Love of Hole, or Liz Fraser, previously of the Cocteau Twins. However, analysing solo artists will provide a clearer sense of how embodied performance strategies relate to notions of identity and subjectivity, conceived of on an individual basis. Combining analysis of women in bands with that of female solo performers could cause some methodological difficulties, as their performance contexts differ wildly. I have chosen to focus on three vocalists who also play instruments: Amos plays piano; PJ Harvey primarily plays guitar, though has released work on piano and other instruments such as the autoharp; and Björk engages with a wide range of both instruments and collaborators. There are gendered stereotypes around instrument choice (Green 1997; Abeles 2009) and each instrument produces divergent types of physicalities, particularly in terms of comportment and freedom of movement. Analysing how this translates in a recorded, embodied context will also allow for an analysis of the interactions between the voice and the body, and negotiations of space, physicality and sound.

All of the artists I have chosen refer to the body explicitly in their lyrics, which gives a strong starting point for an investigation of embodiment. There are also broad-brush thematic connections across their work that relate both explicitly and implicitly to the body: specifically love and sexuality, motherhood and pregnancy, death, religion and relations of power (both personal and political). I have deliberately chosen artists that compose their own material, with a high level of creative autonomy. Whilst this study does not rely on an author-centered methodology, it is important when analysing feminist strategies in popular music to evaluate musicians that are in control of the musical outputs they produce. These women have a relatively high degree of agency and are therefore able to provide a challenge to hegemonic structures. As female artists with a high level of autonomy they also disrupt and trouble dominant gendered discourses (Burns and Lafrance 2002) and can be approached through a feminist framework.

The term ‘singer-songwriter’ has been employed (Lankford 2010) to locate these artists within a specific genre or collective definition. This is problematic for a number of reasons. ‘Singer-songwriter’ evokes certain genres of music, being particularly linked to folk and acoustic. Whilst

some of the case study artists do have these elements to their music at points, their work also intersects with rock, punk and classical styles. There are connotations of confessional and autobiographical work that the term 'singer-songwriter' evokes, with problematic questions being raised about notions of authenticity, truth and intentionality (Whiteley 2000). Therefore in terms of collective definition, the most useful *modus operandi* is to consider the non-genre-based connections between these particular artists: how they work both together as a group but also the disjunctions between them.

The appearance of Amos, Björk and Harvey on the *Q* magazine cover represents what the media were defining as a new wave of outspoken, body-focused female artists from the 1990s. I am using this cover as a 'moment in time' which is extended and developed through this research, using these three artists as a lens. Though the grouping of women musicians at this time could have featured a number of different combinations – Alanis Morrisette and Fiona Apple spring immediately to mind – this cover is a neat springboard to explore how embodiment has developed in a group of women from this cohort. I am at once acknowledging Amos, Björk and Harvey as a group of contemporaneous women working in a similar way, and yet also am aware of the arbitrary nature of media definitions. However, when approaching these artists, I hope to develop a sensitive approach that balances similarity and difference.

This research project is based on a number of initial premises, which have been highlighted and discussed conclusively in other feminist works prior to this study. These assumptions form the point of departure for the research. First, I am assuming that these case study artists do disrupt and trouble gender norms and their work is feminist in orientation, as discussed across the musicological literature (Burns and Lafrance 2002; Whiteley 2002). On the basis of this, this study is concerned with understanding the specific modes of disruption in relation to gendered bodies and voices, and thus has an exploration of phono-somatics as its central thesis. The second assumption is that the interpretative spaces that these women create within their work are anti-hegemonic. Broken down more simply, this means the musical works offer up to listeners a viewpoint that is outside of the ideological, social and cultural mainstream. Listeners are encouraged to take a standpoint of resistance and to also question the norms that are being challenged through the work. This is clearly linked to the initial assumption, but moves one step further into the realms of reception of the artists' work. There are several issues that arise through basing the study on this assumption, such as the creation of meaning in popular music; the availability of multiple, or conflicting, interpretative possibilities; and the amount of agency

that listeners have to determine their own meanings. These issues arise in scholarly work on PJ Harvey, which engages with Adornian theory and the subject positioning of listeners (Dibben 1999; Clarke 1999). By working with the assumption that the works for analysis are largely anti-hegemonic and make challenges to the ideological mainstream, this study then asks through what embodied modes and practices this anti-hegemonic standpoint is achieved.

Studies relating to embodiment can be found across a vast range of disciplines – from anthropology to human geography, psychology to cognitive science. On this basis the methodological starting point for this study is necessarily interdisciplinary. Working with an interdisciplinary approach is both stimulating and challenging for a number of reasons. On the positive side, theoretical and methodological connections can be made that allows for research to develop in new and innovative ways. This can broaden the viewpoint of the researcher, and thus in turn the wider research community, and can allow for the transformation of existing paradigms and modes of approaches. The crossing of disciplinary boundaries can invigorate, stimulate discussion and debate, and can challenge disciplinary assumptions. However, there are also a number of concerns that interdisciplinary research raises. First, in methodological terms, crossing disciplinary boundaries means engaging with a vast range of methodological approaches and histories.[3] Formulating a clear and appropriate methodological outlook is a challenge in itself: however the researcher must also acknowledge, and find a way of working around, the logistical impossibility of becoming an expert in multiple fields of study. Second, linked to the problem of proliferating methodologies, there are obvious limitations to the amount of literature that a scholar can review. Delineating clear boundaries for literature reviews across an interdisciplinary topic is difficult and becomes a more pronounced concern when designing a PhD study.

In response to some of the problems of interdisciplinary work, I have chosen the primary and secondary disciplinary fields with which this study will engage, and I have made various decisions about the boundaries in terms of secondary literature. This study falls within two key disciplinary fields, with reference to a third area. The first is clearly musicology, as I am investigating music and musical practices. In this study, the texts for analysis fall into two categories: recorded musical works (albums and individual tracks) and music video. I will not be engaging with reception studies – for example, audience responses to these works/performances – nor will I be engaging with a directly author-centred methodology, and on both of these counts will therefore

[3] See Patricia Schmidt's engagement with Carol Vernallis' 2004 study *Experiencing Music Video* (New York: Columbia Uni. Press) in her doctoral dissertation *Thinking Inside the Box: In search of music-video culture* (p.14).

not be utilising ethnographic methods. On this basis, I will be approaching the study of these musical works and practices from a cultural studies perspective, particularly drawing on literary theory in terms of understanding texts and discourse(s).

The decision to include some music video analysis alongside recorded musical works has been taken in order to enhance the analyses of the recorded music and, where appropriate, clarify meanings within certain songs. The thesis is not methodologically focused on visuals, but rather visual material has been included in order to support and extend the phono-somatic qualities of the recorded music for analysis. The songs chosen can stand alone for analysis, due to their emphasis on the materiality of the voice, however the visuals I have incorporated in my discussion confirm and reinforce this embodied approach. In particular, songs that are perhaps more subtle either sonically or lyrically (or both) – such as Björk's 'All is Full of Love' which I explore in Chapter 2 – benefit from video analysis where the content of the video supports and even enhances the musical content.

The method for selecting the videos for analysis has been driven by the primary methodology of song analysis. I have first chosen the songs that contained phono-somatic elements, and then looked at their videos, selecting those that particularly support and develop these elements. It has not been possible to fully analyse all of the music videos that all three case study artists have released across their output, to establish if there are contradictions between the song content and the video content. It is possible that this may be the case, however this is outside the scope of the methodology for this thesis.

Including videos in this kind of examination is only possible due to the high levels of agency of the female artists under discussion, as otherwise outside control may have complicated or weakened the phono-somatic method. Here, all three case study artists have control over their output, both musical and visual. Theoretically speaking, visuals circulate with music, either tangibly in the video release or conceptually, in our own abstract mindscapes. There is an imagined somatic response to a voice (Connor 2000) with the voice never being fully disembodied, and bodies being implied through vocal sound: the 'vocalic body' in Connor's conception. Through analysis of video material the broader paradigm of phono-somatics can be explored through a more overt and embodied relationship between sound and image.

I am interested in writing about an experiential corporeal performance practice of vocality. I believe that this necessitates a particular mode of analysis more commonly found in ethnographic

studies – the reflexive mode. Musicologists also use this more individualised style of writing, where the authors deliberately make reference to themselves and their own experiences of engaging with the research (Rycenga 1997; Cusick 1994). Gail Weiss (1999) also explores this technique when she movingly describes the effect of cancer on her colleague, Honi Fern Haber, and described the shift it enabled in Haber's academic approach – from an 'academic' style of writing to a more embodied and personal response. This type of writing acknowledges that I am also an embodied listener, listening from my own standpoint, and that my engagement with these works is partial at times. Whilst it is important to retain rigour and scholarly precision, I believe that a wholly positivist outlook does not align itself to investigations relating to corporeal and situated strategies. I want to write my own body into this text and to allow different epistemological modes to be present.

It is important to note that within musicology the use of the reflexive voice has been heavily challenged, particularly within ethnographic studies.[4] However, my interest in using this viewpoint comes primarily from a feminist perspective and drawing upon standpoint theory makes comment on the creation of privileged knowledges and the prioritisation of particular types of voices. I do not intend to engage with these concepts in great depth in the thesis, for the sake of brevity, though I hope the tone and argument will clearly show my presence as an embodied researcher.

I am looking specifically at embodiment of 'the feminine' in these musical works. I have chosen women musicians for my case study artists and therefore the second key disciplinary field is that of gender studies. I will be primarily utilising feminist methodologies that focus on bodily practices, particularly those that deal with the intersection of bodies, voices and gender. It makes clear sense to approach these works through the theoretical framework of feminism, which has defined and outlined the cultural interplay of sex, gender and the body and has explained in a number of ways how particular definitions are constructed, perpetuated and regulated within a patriarchal framework. I have chosen to draw upon French feminist theory due to the centrality of themes of the body, desire, pleasure and maternity. I am also interested in exploring the 'essentialist' criticisms levelled against French feminist thought and revisiting these arguments, which I believe have not been fully explored, particularly in relation to popular music studies.

[4] For example, Skeggs (2004) argues that 'reflexivity is a privileged disposition that reinforces entitlement rather than de-differentiates social divisions, and individualization is a position only available for some' (p.171).

The third disciplinary area that I am investigating is that of embodiment studies. This has been the most problematic field to tackle in terms of its breadth and scope, and putting in place clear lines of engagement has been vital. Much of the work in embodiment studies – particularly that in the field of anthropology – engages with an ethnographic approach and this does not tally with my own study. I have found the definitions of embodiment in some of these studies extremely useful for demarcating the terms of my research, but the methods for ethnographic study are not easily mapped onto the study of musical texts. Much of this work comes from a phenomenological standpoint, and engages with the theories of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Husserl (2001). These theories are concerned with the direct experience of phenomena and work extremely well for participant observation and other ethnographic methods. However, when analysing musical texts, there are levels of mediation and interpretation that come into play, which problematise the wholesale use of phenomenological method. As I have chosen to focus on textual analysis, rather than other areas – such as reception studies, which may have necessitated a more ethnographic method – I have chosen not to engage with phenomenology as a theoretical approach. I will therefore be taking embodiment studies as a 'minor' discipline that influences this study. This means I will not be conducting a full literature review within the field, nor will I be engaging in detail with studies that directly utilise ethnographic methods. However, I will be looking at some of the literature that engages directly with definitions of embodiment and literature that crosses over into the areas of gender studies and/or musicology, particularly with an emphasis on textual analysis.

Taking musicology and gender studies as my primary fields of study has allowed me to define the limits of the study whilst remaining open to work from the 'embodiment studies' field will allow for disciplinary cross-pollination, where appropriate. I will now define terms of engagement within these three areas, beginning with embodiment, moving on to feminism and the feminine and ending with musicology and approaches to analysis. As I am not engaging wholesale with methodologies from embodiment studies, such as phenomenology, I choose to begin here to clarify my terms from the outset.

1.3 Embodiment

The aim of this research is to study embodiment within the work of my case study artists, as opposed to simply studying the body itself.[5] Theoreticians working in disciplines such as philosophy, human sciences, and anthropology have debated and redefined meanings related to the study of the body. As a term, 'embodiment' is increasingly being prioritised over the term 'the body', the latter having been problematised through the work of theoreticians critiquing the devaluation of the body within Western philosophy and metaphysics. Weiss and Haber (1999) argue that:

> The move from one expression to another corresponds directly to a shift from viewing the body as a nongendered, prediscursive phenomenon that plays a central role in perception, cognition, action, and nature to a *way* of living or inhabiting the world through one's acculturated body. (p.xiii)

It is precisely this experiential mode that I am interested in exploring within the works of these musicians. How can having a 'female' and 'feminine' body affect performance practices and how does the lived experience of composition and performance communicate to listeners through recorded music? How does this experiential mode manifest phono-somatically, through engagement with the voice? Embodiment studies are concerned with understanding 'culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the world' (Csordas in Weiss and Haber 1999, p.143).

The term 'situated' is in use in the disciplines of artificial intelligence and cognitive science and is closely linked to an understanding of embodiment, being linked to an agent embedded in an environment. Whilst this term 'agent' generally refers to a robot within artificial intelligence paradigms, theories of situated knowledge can be utilised to understand power, rhetoric and agency within wider fields, relating to agents and to the concept of agency itself. Situated theories have been clearly linked with feminist epistemologies such as standpoint theory (Hunter 1999). Within academic discourses 'unauthorised modes of knowing' (Hunter 1999, p.2) are often

[5] The embodiment resources website set up by Adrian Harris (2015) at the University of Winchester was a great source of information and many of the references in this section were found at this site.

suppressed and within popular music some gendered modes of musical articulation are also denied, sidelined or devalued. Hunter argues that:

> Aesthetics and epistemology are closely intertwined, for without articulation knowledge remains tacit, and the main focus of the extension of standpoint theory into aesthetics, is to argue for an understanding of 'situated' textuality, analogous to situated knowledge. Situated textualities are where people work on words together to build common ground for the articulation and valuing of knowledge. (1999, p.2)

I use this understanding of an embedded, embodied and situated perspective to articulate how these women musicians bring forward these types of knowledge, previously 'unauthorised', within their music and their performance practices. In particular my investigation is interested in those modes of expression related to embodied knowledge: that which is based upon corporeal, tactile and physical experience. This area of my work implicitly draws on cultural studies paradigms where music is explored as a text, and the intersection of voice/text/body is a fruitful area to discuss the applicability of situated theories of knowledge.

Embodiment is defined as an experiential term, which focuses on lived and unmediated experience. Within popular music studies, and in musicology more broadly, recorded music is regarded as both mediated and disembodied, particularly in relation to the voice (Dunn and Jones 1996). Embodied music and recorded music might then appear to be antithetical. However, feminist scholars have been exploring modes of listening and performing that access an experiential and embodied mode (Cusick 1994; McMullen 2006). This study aims to move the field forward by exploring how recorded music might also be able to express modes of embodiment that are closer to an unmediated experience.

The case study artists represent particular embodied feminine experiences in their studio recordings. But their work moves past representation into a performative space, where phono-somatics allow for a more direct and less mediated expression of bodily experience. Scholars to date have largely focused on corporeal performativity in live settings: the feel of an instrument, the erotic relationship between the bodies of performers, instruments and audiences (Le Guin 2006). Arguments have been made for resistant performative strategies by scholars such as McMullen (2006), who 'places emphasis on the in-the moment bodily *practice* of a performer'

through what she terms a 'sentient corporeality' (p.68). This definition draws attention to the senses, the exploration of the sensual and the 'feeling' body in performance practice. McMullen believes that sentient corporeality offers more radical potentiality for 'the rewriting of subjectivities' (2006 p.68) than 'intercorporeality' or 'face-to-face embodied collaborations' (2006 p.64). This focus on the body as a site of pleasure, deep attention and heightened awareness of bodily practice draws on the work of a number of feminist musicologists (Cusick 1994; Cusick 1999; Le Guin 2006).

There has, however, been little scholarly writing on the corporeal performative space found in studio recordings. In recordings, the performance spaces – and these are multiplied and mirrored through repeated playing – are neither intercorporeal nor in one temporal moment of performance practice. Taking McMullen's idea of 'sentient corporeality' it is possible to explore sensual embodiment strategies that occur in recordings, and repeat well after the performers' bodies have initially performed. Though McMullen discusses the possibilities of emancipation found within recordings, she argues that '[w]omen take refuge in this disembodiment' (p.64). The assumption here is that studio recordings are always, by necessity, disembodied. She notes that the 'slippage' of meaning in recordings – this sense of unstable, distorted and shifting meaning, as explored by McClary and other scholars – could be utilised for challenging hegemonic gendered meanings. If, however, we might understand some studio recordings as potentially more embodied – as I am suggesting as a hypothesis for this thesis – the process of recording is perhaps even more productive in terms of the opposition of gender norms. Thus, I am arguing that embodied feminine vocality in the popular music of my case study artists leads to a recorded embodiment that is similarly unstable and distorting in meaning.

Though recorded music is the focus of this thesis, I have also chosen to analyse various visual elements that strengthen the case that these artists work in an embodied mode. Recorded music will form the main of my analysis, but I will also draw on photographs, album artwork and videos that highlight embodiment strategies in the work of the case study artists. The voice may not necessarily be a central element of these analyses, as it is the body that may come more to the fore in a visual setting. However, this thesis is suggesting that the embodied standpoint – of being situated in bodies – is the foundation for phono-somatics. Visual analysis will reinforce this position.

1.4 Gender: Feminism and the feminine

Looking at the period from the early 1990s to the present day allows for an engagement with the development of feminist theory and how it has been framed within broader cultural spheres. In particular, the birth of third wave feminism and the description of culture as 'postfeminist' are theoretical shifts that happened leading up to and during this period. I examine whether conceptions of identity have moved too far into postmodern fragmentation in their desire to depart from the essentialised body and whether second-wave feminist projects can provide points of illumination for these questions surrounding identity. I analyse the work of these artists across the intersection of these 'waves' and to re-examine concepts of both essentialism and poststructuralist anti-essentialist thought in terms of their usefulness to understanding 'the feminine' and embodiment.

Throughout the 1990s the body was becoming of more interest across various movements and fields. In academia, feminist writers were exploring bodies in culture and focused on corporeality, reflecting and shaping the cultural zeitgeist (Butler 1990, 1993; Grosz 1994). Complex and involved theoretical work was produced that engaged much more transparently with culturally situated bodies, evidencing the performativity of not only gender, but also of sex, and how the two relate to bodily practices and norms (Butler 1990). The range of bodies analysed and conceptualised was broadened, and writers engaged with 'volatile bodies' – bodies that shifted and were dependent on cultural prescription (Grosz 1994). The naturalness of the body, and of sex itself, was being heavily challenged. A new playfulness was also becoming apparent in the academic literature: if sex and sexualities could be performed, then they could be moulded, played with, shaped and reoriented, in new and exciting ways.

In the early 1990s a third wave of feminism was developing that broke down some of the second wave feminist concepts of a singularly defined 'woman' and drew attention to difference, often through a more embodied notion of the self. Third-wave feminism is a contested and contradictory term, which has proven elusive and difficult to define. Broadly speaking, third-wave feminism set itself against the second wave, and openly critiqued many of its viewpoints. A range of voices and perspectives were encouraged within the third wave movement, and therefore contradictory and variant experiences of what it means to be a woman were presented. Whereas second-wave feminism had presented a 'unified front' through the concept of sisterhood, or the notion of 'woman', third-wave feminism was characterised through an understanding of difference, contradiction and complexity. The definition of the movement has therefore been problematic, as it has moved away from unifying or integrating tendencies, advocating for a

plurality of experiences. This plurality meant that third-wave writings highlighted identity as a key focus through the use of personal narratives (Snyder 2008).

The recognition of difference, particularly in the areas of race and nationality, is one of the key distinctions between the waves of feminism. Women of colour criticised the second-wave feminist 'sisterhood' as representing all women as equal, when white women's voices were prioritised and normalised. This was also the case in terms of other indicators of difference, such as disability, sexuality – particularly including trans voices – nationality, class and age. In terms of age, this new feminism – new feminisms may be more accurate – gave a voice to a new generation of women. Third-wave feminism allowed for younger feminists to challenge what they saw as out-dated and out-moded feminist ideas. Challenging the feminisms of their mothers' generation, they critiqued rigid and immobile views on standards of beauty and sexuality. Second-wave challenges to norms of beauty often seemed to reject any engagement with fashion, make-up or clothes so that 'being a feminist' became something that was set against popular culture. Third-wave feminists challenged this, arguing that one could still be a feminist and enjoy style and fashion, but more importantly engaged with these concepts critically, allowing an understanding of pleasure and of performativity.

The third wave of feminism emerged at a time when some commentators were arguing that Anglo-American society was moving into a postfeminist era. The split between the second and third waves of feminism, for some suggested that the feminist project was fragmented past the point of return, and that feminism itself is dead. Others believed that feminism's work was done, and – in what might be described as an 'age of equality' – society was fully postfeminist (Douglas 2010). The term postfeminism is, of course, full of contradictions: it can signify a conservative backlash against feminism, a moving on from the second wave of feminism, and the failure of the feminist project itself (Genz and Brabon 2009). The use of the prefix 'post-' is explored by Genz and Brabon (2009) who plot the problematic relationship between 'what has come before' and 'what comes after'. They argue that the relationship between feminism and postfeminism is more complex and nuanced than first apparent, and that 'post-' can signify a rupture and disavowal, and yet simultaneously a transformation and progression (p.4). The impact on the individual woman is explored by Negra (2009) who discusses choice and agency, as seen through a postfeminist lens and supported by a plethora of media images. The postfeminist woman has choice and female power is fetishized, however this is within strict boundaries, maintained by 'relentlessly stressing matrimonial and maternalist models of female subjectivity' (Negra 2009, p.5). The postfeminist woman has agency, as long as gendered norms are maintained.

The strapline to Susan Douglas' 2010 book *Englightened Sexism* – 'the seductive message that feminism's work is done' – highlights the problem with postfeminism. It is clear that women's equality around the globe has *not* been achieved, and that there are still strong conventions and norms around gendered behaviour. The issues with second wave feminism have not lead to a disavowal of feminism entirely, as postfeminists would suggest, but rather have evolved a more diverse and divergent range of feminisms emerging in the third (and potentially fourth) wave (see Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Findlen 1995; Heywood and Drake 1997; Synder 2008; Munro 2015; Tong 2014). From my perspective, the case study artists began their work at the time when the third-wave of feminism was developing, *not* during a postfeminist period. However, I need to acknowledge that this phrase 'postfeminist' was being used culturally by contemporaries and that postfeminist discourses around agency and female power were circulating at this time.

'Female' and 'The Feminine'

In order to begin, I want to define some basic terms from a gender studies context, to locate this study in its theoretical framework. The term 'female' can appear to be a neutral, easy to explain term, based on basic anatomy and biology and circulating within everyday discourse as evident and apparent (Tong 2014). However, as I alluded to earlier, scholars such as Butler (1990) problematised the category of sex, arguing that the sexed body – defined as 'female' or 'male' – was born from culture, as opposed to nature. Butler asserted that the anatomical configuration of genitalia associated with 'female' or 'male' is culturally regulated and maintained, through processes of discipline and management. The sexed body does not exist outside of its social and cultural meaning, and therefore cannot be said to be 'natural'. When using the term 'female' in this study I am, therefore, recognising neither a 'natural' or 'precultural' sexed body, but a body located in this cultural setting. 'Female' is a term that is discursively constructed.

As 'male' and 'female' culturally identify sexed bodies, the terms 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are words pertaining to gender. Within feminist studies, gender has long been seen as socially constructed, with norms and traits that identify each gender (Tong 2014). The binary division of gender maps on to sex, with masculinity associated with male bodies, and femininity with female bodies. As with sex, this is culturally regulated so that those whose gender identity does not match their bodily sex are punished in a variety of ways (Butler 1990). This is perhaps most obviously apparent in relation to queer and/or transgender bodies. The use of the term 'femininity' in this thesis relates to a cultural understanding of what femininity constitutes, and

my work highlights in particular divergences from the norms. The case study artists all have an interest in strategies of embodiment that draw on certain culturally prescribed notions of the feminine, which have to some extent been explored in the literature (Dibben 1995; Mazullo 2001).[6] I am interested in these modes of 'the feminine' in terms of their relationship to embodiment and what I am exploring is not whether these artists use the trope of 'the feminine', but rather how they use this through phono-somatic practices.

In my engagement with French feminist theory, I explore the notion of the essentialised feminine or female body. I began this study with a hypothesis that having a female/feminine body *does* have an impact on the case study artists' work. In Simon Frith's article 'Music and Identity' (in Hall and Du Gay 1996), the assertion that one can simply 'remove' identities and 'try on' others did not ring true for me, as a female performer. Having a female body – and singing, playing and composing from that standpoint – is not something that is easy to 'remove' from our understanding of personal identity. Furthermore, it may actively define and shape musical output.

The term 'the feminine' is contentious and problematic to define. Essentialist politics have been heavily devalued and criticised, and essentialism has become a 'dirty word' in feminism. However some scholars have revisited notions of essentialism to nuance and rethink its use (Fuss 1989). After analysing works by the musicians in question, I will return in my conclusion to discussing essentialism in more detail. In this thesis I argue that the case study artists reference a particular understanding of 'the feminine'. I ask what the role of 'the feminine' is in their work, and explore both how it manifests itself musically and how it supports their challenge to gender norms. This study utilises a range of feminist theories of both bodies and voices, and engages with notions of essentialism around 'the feminine'. In particular, French feminist theory – specifically Cixous' conception of *l'écriture féminine* (1976) and Kristeva's use of *jouissance* – is a starting point for analysis of how a feminine embodiment can be sounded out, or vocalised.

In feminist discussions of bodies and embodiment, there is a tension between that of the individual and the collective. For example, in McMullen's writing (2006) she is concerned with avoiding generalisations and therefore aims to form an understanding of a specific individual physical experience of music through the subject of her analysis, Abbie Conant. Since each musician's relationship to her or his body, and to the racial, gendered, and other corporeal expectations is dependent on the style of music, McMullen argues for an individual approach.

[6] Both these articles argue that PJ Harvey utilises certain modes of 'the feminine' to create meanings in her work, though Dibben and Mazullo clearly differ as to what extent there are plural or multiple meanings open to listeners.

It is clear that generalisations concerning gendered bodies are problematic. In third-wave feminist theory, second-wave feminists were critiqued for singular definitions of the category of 'woman' (Heywood and Drake 1997; Baumgardner and Richards 2000; Snyder 2008), and third-wave feminists have explored the possibilities described by McMullen in her discussion of 'community': communities that can offer political unity, yet be alive to the presence of differences (Findlen 1995). However, focusing entirely on individualised bodily experiences of performance negates the transgressive potential of collective response – even that of what we might term a 'differentiated collectivity'. The norms around gendered bodies, and notions of appropriate cultural locations of those bodies, are so deeply embedded in our society that an analysis of individualised performance also must, by necessity, refer to generalised understandings of gendered bodies. Whilst McMullen describes 'difference' and 'uniqueness', parallels between the experiences of individuals can be – indeed must be – drawn out, to harness the potential for collective response. In my analysis of the case studies I am highlighting – as McMullen has done with her exploration of Conant's situation – specific practices of embodiment in the work of individual musicians. However, it is important to draw thematic connections between individualised bodies, and across the experience of individually embodied gendered subjectivities. This is not to say that the case study artists form a collective – as represented in the 1994 *Q* magazine cover – or have a wholly coherent sense of political identity. Rather, that within this music, feminist scholars can find some sort of collectivity of embodied experience rather than utter fragmentation into individual bodies. Acknowledging shared thematic content, whilst allowing for difference and disjuncture, gives a more nuanced approach to their work.

In much of the literature on embodiment within social and human sciences the breaking down of boundaries of the individualised body is a key theme (Shildrick 1997; Longhurst 2001, 2008). In these fields the notion of the individual body is problematised by emphasising the porous and fluid boundaries of the female/feminine body. In exploring feminine vocality in the work of my case study artists, liminality is a key theme in their work: many of the narratives explored and the sounds utilised play across various boundaries and highlight the fluid boundaries of corporeal performativity.

'Queer'

At this juncture it is important to note that the terms 'female' and 'feminine' not only map onto each other within cultural discourse, but these are supported and reinforced through heteronormative perspectives. In other words, these constructs exist within a paradigm where heterosexuality is normalised. The term 'female' and 'feminine' map together, and align with an

assumption that sexual orientation will be towards male sexed bodies. 'Queer' is a term that emerged out of gay and lesbian culture – which some may (incorrectly) understand as synonymic with the term 'homosexual' – but has broadened into a mode of practice which subverts and complicates binary distinctions such as gay/straight, female/male, feminine/masculine (Pickett 2015).

Jarman-Ivens (2011) describes the alternate dictionary definition of queer –something 'strange', 'odd' or 'bizarre' – and highlights how queer functions as a disruptive practice. Queer as a mode of practice functions to trouble and make bizarre those things that have been naturalised. Queer sits liminally in-between with an uncanniness, that unsettles and disrupts what appear to be stable categories of both gender and sex. I return to discuss queer more – and specifically in relation to voice — in section 2.3.2.

1.5 Voice

Voice studies is a nascent field, drawing on a range of disciplines, in a similar way to embodiment studies. Theorists from psychoanalysis, music, classics, sociology and many other subject areas contribute to a broad and nuanced understanding of the human voice, both in speech and song. Another parallel with embodiment studies is that the voice, once conceptualised as natural and biological, an anatomical expression of an inner essential self, is now theorised as a product of culture. Voice is therefore explored as a cultural artefact. However, as it is impossible to either separate the voice from the body or to fully unite the two, there is a fundamental problematic at work in the voice itself. Understanding voice as a cultural artefact is therefore complex: voice is excessive, functioning as 'something more' (Dolar 2006), both material and immaterial (Jarman-Ivens 2011), liminally situated across an inside/outside boundary and interpersonally in space(s) between bodies.

The complex relationship between bodies and voices is explored most notably in Roland Barthes seminal work 'The Grain of the Voice' (1977). Barthes explores the presence of the body, of the material, within the voice itself. This is the 'grain', where corporeality – and specifically the physiology of vocal production – is heard in the voice. Jarman-Ivens (2011) argues that

> [though] Barthes himself is unclear about the specifics of what this means, we might identify the grain in, for instance, the air in a whisper, or the movements of the lips, tongue and teeth against each other as the language is given sound (p.5)

To hear the grain of the voice is to listen to, and make audible, the body in the voice. This is the 'jumping off' point for my research. However, I am arguing that the material, the embodied voice can also be heard in the recorded medium. I will return to this point in section 1.6.

The primacy of language is undermined through voice studies, as it becomes apparent that the voice functions in many ways outside of and beyond language. Yvon Bonenfant (2010) explores timbre as an element of vocality, and identifies that this is only one element of what makes up the complexity of voice. Voices 'carry language, culture, accent, status or class, emotional content […] all of these contribute to timbre but are not wholly timbre; timbre is not wholly any of these things' (Bonenfant 2010, p.75). This definition of timbre – as excessive, liminal, difficult to pin down – exemplifies the philosophical conundrum of voice studies. Language communicates something through the voice, and yet there is more. Timbre communicates, but this communication is multifaceted, culturally situated and complex. The relationship between language and other elements of the voice is drawn out by Dolar (2006) when discussing accent, intonation and further defining characteristics of voice. He moves through different vocal practices that are outside of language or 'postlinguistic' (p.29), such as infant babbling, laughter, hiccups and singing. Dolar argues that these 'non-voices […] are not linguistic voices; they are not phonemes, yet they are not simply outside the linguistic structure' (p.32) there is therefore a paradox at work here, where yet again the voice is functioning in-between and liminally, across a series of boundaries. In section 2.3.2 I return to this concept, when defining the possibilities for queer vocality, as something outside of binary structures which is complex and indefinable.

'Authenticity'

The voice is not synonymic with identity itself, but of course communicates much about our identities (Bonenfant 2010; Meizel 2013; Dolar 2006) It is, therefore, useful to stop to consider the notion of authenticity, specifically in relation to embodied voices. As discussed in section 1.2, the case study artists have been described as 'singer-songwriters', a genre which is tied to notions of authenticity, as communicated semiotically through the voice (Whiteley 2000, Frith 1998). To be authentic is to reveal something of oneself, of the inner self, or of the 'real'. The authentic is set against the fake, and even against the idea of masquerade or parody. A voice which is authentic conveys something about this inner, 'real' self. However, the notion of the real is problematic in and of itself. Identity is both culturally formed and culturally maintained and therefore cannot be seen to exist outside of culture. Keith Negus describes how cultural theorists

have moved from essentialist ideas around identities

> towards the idea that cultural identities are not fixed in any essential way but are actively created through particular communication processes, social practices and 'articulations' within specific circumstances (Negus 1996, p.100)

The articulation of authenticity is therefore a cultural one, and the notion of the 'real' is to be problematised. This becomes even more apparent when considering gendered identities, and authenticity in the context of gender norms, as explored in section 1.4. Voices signify as authentic only within specific cultural contexts. Therefore, when a voice is labelled as 'authentic' it is signifying something about its context, and political/cultural efficacy within that context. In this study, when I refer to the notion of authenticity or the authentic, I am using this term to highlight a cultural construction of the authentic or the real, *not* something that exists as authentic in and of itself.

1.6 Musicology and approaches to analysis

In the early 1990s, a number of different approaches to the history of women's music were identified within an assessment of the state of feminist musicology (McClary 1993). McClary argued that since the 1970s, writing on women's music – more specifically feminist writing – had moved from a solely recuperative and somewhat 'ghettoised' field, and by the early 1990s had begun to engage in multifaceted debates in the broader musicological field. This history highlighted the important work carried out by feminist musicologists, in terms of excavating and bringing to light the work of women composers. The revision of the canon, and of narratives of musical history, was the crucial foundation stone for a burgeoning feminist musicology. As musicologists began to piece together histories of female composers and musicians, a contextual approach began to emerge:

> Unlike the more traditional surveys that trace a succession of "masters," these new accounts tend to pay attention to many kinds of activities besides formal composition, and they also observe far more closely the social conditions within which musicians have operated. For one of the chief tenets to fall by the wayside with feminist historiography is

> the notion that the individual artist operates autonomously with respect to context. (McClary 1993, p.401)

The early recuperative history of women's music neglected popular music, with a high-art focus in the first historical narratives of women. McClary rightly noted that the study of popular music by feminist scholars has emphasised just how significant women's contributions to music have been up to that point in history. The remainder of McClary's article focused on the move from a recuperative history to a feminist engagement with music criticism, and the broader problematics of criticism and context within an old-fashioned, entrenched musicology. She discussed concurrent work in the early 1990s, where feminist musicologists were beginning to engage with sexualities, difference, deconstruction and other modalities derived from feminist methods in other disciplines. The conclusion highlighted that the difficulties faced by these scholars within musicology were multifaceted and complex. Returning to assess feminist musicology in the year 2000, McClary noted that 'feminist criticism has […] brought musicology into the conversations that have dominated the humanities in the past twenty years' (p.1285).

In many ways, this study continues this theme of moving forward the field into the realm of feminist work in the humanities. This work draws together music analysis within a social context, using methods derived from literary and cultural studies as previous scholars have done (Burns and LaFrance 2002). The length and breadth of analyses of gender, sexualities and associated tropes in cultural and literary studies is vast, and relatively speaking feminist musicology has only just begun to explore these concepts in detail. However, the past ten years have seen a number of significant feminist works, including those that focus on voice and the lived musical experience of bodies (Jarman-Ivens 2011; Le Guin 2006). This study adds to these analyses by directing more attention to phono-somatic processes, through paying greater attention to embodiment.[7]

The primary mode of analysing my case studies will be musicological, from within a cultural/literary studies paradigm. Key methodological approaches and theoretical movements in the study of popular music have been debated and outlined (Middleton 2000). Middleton describes the fissures in musicology around analysing musical texts and discusses the problems of wholesale application of formalist analysis to popular music. He points to writers such as Covach

[7] There have been useful explorations of embodied processes outside of feminist musicology, such as those in music and disability studies (McKay 2013).

(1995 and 1998) and Everett (1995) using this type of musical analysis without discussing processes of making meaning, or how meanings become reified and objectified. Cultural studies approaches, and methods such as discourse theory or semiology, allow for a discussion of power structures, multiple meanings, cultural exchanges and situated bodily understandings of musical practices. However, as Middleton notes, some cultural studies investigations do not shift enough in their modes of analysis to discuss the specificities of musical artefacts. Language works very differently when vocalised in a musical context and therefore Middleton argues that the study of music necessitates analytical methods that differ from that used when analysing literature or film.

This split between 'traditional' or formal musicological analysis and a cultural studies or sociological approach is still a pertinent issue within popular music studies. In September 2008 the biennial IASPM UK and Ireland Branch Conference took place at the University of Glasgow. The opening plenary session of the conference was entitled and 'Approaches to studying Popular Music' and featured an open discussion between Prof. Allan Moore and Prof. Simon Frith. Crudely speaking, the discussion was based upon the opposition of approaches from sociology (Frith) and from musicology (Moore) – approaches that concern themselves with contextual or material issues and those in which analysing 'the notes' takes priority. From the discussion, it was clear that there are benefits to both approaches – as indeed Middleton outlines – and that this polarised distinction was a somewhat false creation for provoking discussion and debate. In reality, the lines of approach are much more blurred.[8]

For my study, I will be taking an approach that allows me to look at the context of how gendered, embodied meanings are made within music. I believe it is therefore necessary to look at what is happening musically – for example, harmony, rhythm, timbre, instrumentation – and draw conclusions about the relationship between musical attributes and a wider cultural context. In *Disruptive Divas* (2002) Burns and Lafrance take a similar approach and balance musical analysis of their case studies – Tori Amos, Courtney Love, Me'Shell Ndegéocello and PJ Harvey – with a cultural studies analysis. On the basis of their own areas of specialism they create what they term 'cultural-critical and music-theoretical accounts' (2002, p.xv). This takes the format of separate chapters written by Burns ('music-theoretical') and Lafrance ('cultural-critical') on the same musical text, for example, the Tori Amos' track 'Crucify'. In the preface, the authors note the

[8] This summary is based on my attendance at the conference, and personal notes taken. There is a published summary of the conference available in *Popular Music* (Webster 2009).

challenges of working in such a 'transdisciplinary' mode and point to two methodological tactics employed to give their arguments consistency:

> First we have ensured the coherence of our analyses by working almost simultaneously throughout the process of analytical development. In other words, each author uses the other's engagement with the text as a yardstick for the salience and legitimacy of her own discussion [...]. The second tactic relates to the actual writing process. Although we work together to select the most important narrative structures and themes, we are nevertheless examining considerably different phenomena. Consequently, our analyses are kept relatively discrete. The running heads at the top of each page will be constant reminders to the reader of who is "speaking" at any given point. (p.xiii)

As noted earlier, *Disruptive Divas* is an important study that draws attention to the music of female artists who are providing a challenge to dominant norms of gender, sexuality and desire, and forms the methodological launch point for my own work. In terms of analytical approach, I share Burns and Lafrance's commitment to working across (and between) sociocultural and music-theoretical paradigms. I would like to move this area of study forward by questioning whether the two types of analysis should be kept discrete, and whether Burns and Lafrance are indeed 'examining considerably different phenomena' (p.xiii). Whilst I am in complete agreement with Lafrance's assertion that 'the theorist must be sensitive to both the textual and musical constituents of a musical work' (p.29) I am unsure that separating out these two voices – the cultural theorist and the musicologist – is the best approach for the sensitive and holistic analysis that is being sought. Similarly, I believe that the music, lyrics and cultural context interact in a web of signification that cannot be separated out into 'considerably different phenomena'. Meanings are made across and between these areas. For example, in a number of her works, the timbre of PJ Harvey's vocal line, and the contour of the melody itself, is combined inextricably with the lyrical content concerning the cultural norms of feminine beauty. The lyrics cannot be divorced from the voice and the melody, nor can we isolate the production techniques utilised in conveying the lyrics from the cultural context of the lyrics themselves. Other variants, such as album artwork, biographical details, or critical reception, also play their part in the construction of meaning.

It is, of course, impossible to analyse every area of meaning within an artist's work. The approach that I would like to take is one that looks thematically at the works and uses the tools most pertinent for the area for discussion. Therefore looking at how the body is 'sounded out' in the work of an artist will draw me to particular areas of interest – for example, the voice, timbre and where the artist uses non-verbal sounds. Focusing in specifically on the voice, and the phono-somatic relationship of bodies and voices in this music, allows me to limit the scope of the topic area.

The thematic area of interest will determine the use of analytical tools. Therefore, I will not be using the wholesale application of formal musicological analysis, such as creating Schenkerian reductions of each track analysed. Whilst I may look at harmonic structures in a particular section of analysis, this will be done only in the context of an integrated thematic approach and will be context specific. As a popular musician myself, I will try and use the most appropriate and clear notational method of representation, which will situate the analysis in the context of how popular musicians talk about their work, rather than how formal analysts might approach the work.

Whilst analysis of live recordings or performances has obvious resonance for the study of embodiment, it is not so clear why the study of studio recordings might be part of a methodology for identifying embodiment strategies. Modern production techniques, such as the use of auto-tuning software to digitally enhance sung melodies, often give a smooth sound that feels divorced from the physical, lived experience of performing music. This is taken to its extreme with the use of vocoders, where the voice is made to sound robotic and divorced from the human (and therefore fallible) body.[9] Overdubbing and sampling techniques easily produce sounds that are more difficult to create in a live, embodied environment. Studio recordings then can be accused of being objectified, detached from bodies, in a sonically and visually sealed realm. High production values, coupled with overly stylised presentation in music video and CD artwork, can create an artificial and sometimes sterile environment where it is difficult to hear material bodies.

I would argue that the case studies I am investigating deliberately produce recorded music that evokes the bodily experience, making studio recordings that explicitly, or in some cases more subtly, draw attention to bodily experiences of performance. In some cases this means

[9] Dickinson (2001) looks at the notion of camp and argues that the vocoder occupies a boundary between the mechanical and the human which can be further troubled by camp re-appropriation. She argues that Cher's use of the vocoder in her 1998 single 'Believe' shows how 'a vocoder, like other camp objects, might complicate staid notions of reality, the body, femininity and female capability' (p. 345).

referencing the bodies of musicians that are actually performing the music, in others it means making references to the bodily performances that we enact in wider cultural settings, with particular emphasis on gendered and feminine bodies. Whilst these artists are embroiled in the music industry, making commercially available recordings, they are creating a particular type of performance space within their recordings that is rooted in bodily and material experience. This space is created by particular and deliberate techniques. For example, on PJ Harvey's debut album *Dry* (1992) the voice is close-miked, with breathy hisses and uneven tones being allowed to surface. However, the voice may also (on some tracks, e.g. 'Dress' and 'Oh My Lover') sit quite far back in the mix. This gives a strange embedded, almost echoic, sound, where the materiality of the voice is present not as a separate entity standing outside of the musical whole, but as an integral element. The production values are low, with raw and rasping sonic qualities being deliberately drawn out of the instruments and the voice, evoking the bodies of the players. This is physical music, grounded in physical experiences that are drawn out lyrically (e.g. in 'Sheela Na Gig' – 'gonna wash that man right out of my hair'; and 'Dress' – 'it's hard to walk in the dress it's not easy/I'm spilling over like a heavy-loaded fruit tree') and played out in sonic textures. On this basis, much of my focus will be on analysing individual tracks from studio albums in order to identify which modes of performance, composition or production allow these artists to invoke an embodied sound within a recorded context.

1.7 Musical context of the 1990s

In order to explore the work of three of these artists it is important to locate them culturally and historically, and to start by examining the musical context present at the beginning of their careers. This will situate these artists in a musical landscape, in terms of the production and history of music by women. This also positions my work in relation to feminist musicology, the recuperation of women's musical history and other strands of feminist enquiry as previously discussed. The relationship between popular music and embodied experience is entwined with that of the growth of feminism and women's liberation. I am suggesting that there was a shift in the cultural landscape that ushered in a new mode of writing embodied music expressed through a range of vocal strategies. The important question to ask is what was happening in the broader social, cultural and historical context of the early 1990s that allowed for women musicians to begin writing with this phono-somatic approach. What took place to allow for a cultural shift where women could express themselves musically in this way (and be commercially successful

doing so), and what were the specific characteristics of this group of artists? Were there other parallels in other styles and genres apparent in the early to mid-1990s?

With the advent of second-wave feminism, popular music culture began to reflect and express some feminist themes. During the 1970s and 80s, anthems such as Helen Reddy's 'I am woman' (1972) and Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin's 'Sisters are doing it for themselves' (1985) were hugely successful, carrying feminist messages into the mainstream.[10] However, these anthems tended to de-personalise, and like the second-wave feminism from which they sprung, had a homogenising tendency through essentialised terms such as the singular 'woman' or the undefined 'sisters'. Prior to the 1990s there were, of course, songs about women's specific bodily experiences, such as Loretta Lynn's controversial song 'The Pill' (1975) about female contraception, but these tended to be one-off statement songs, featured in genres such as country or folk that favoured candid storylines. Other songs, such as Tracy Chapman's portrayal of domestic violence 'Behind the Wall' (1988) or Joni Mitchell's 'Beat of Black Wings' (1982) which references an abortion, contain powerful narratives, but worked through third-person vantage points. Whilst disco anthems such as 'Love to love you baby' by Donna Summer (1975) and 'More, More, More' by Andrea True Connection (1976) represented female sexuality, this was very much through the lens of female desirability under the male gaze.

A number of cultural shifts had taken place that resulted in more frank discussions about bodies and sexuality in the 1990s. In the 1980s the AIDS epidemic, and the media representations thereof, had spawned a culture of fear and caution around both bodies in general, and sexual bodies in particular. The AIDS advertising campaigns of the 1980s in the United Kingdom featured graphic images of tombstones, and there was significant anxiety about how widespread the epidemic could be. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, it became apparent that the AIDS threat had lessened somewhat but its cultural impact had not. The AIDS crisis had engendered a culture where more open and frank discussions about bodies and sexualities took place, both in the private and public sphere. This, combined with a more liberal approach to homosexuality, meant that once taboo subjects were now being discussed openly in a range of settings. However, there was also a new seriousness about bodies. Whilst pre-AIDS popular culture saw the beginnings of musical explorations around taboo and explicit bodily experiences, with a playful

[10] Helen Reddy's hit reached number 1 on the Billboard chart in December 1972 and Eurythmics and Franklin spent 15 weeks on the Billboard Chart peaking at number 18, reaching number 9 in the UK charts (Billboard Charts 2015: Official Charts 2015).

and humorous approach to gender, sex, sexuality and bodies, the sobering, even distancing impact of AIDS was felt throughout.

Madonna's output during the early 1990s evidenced this. Whilst her book *Sex* (1992) and her tracks such as 'Erotica' (1992) and 'Hanky Panky' (1990) showcased an openness about sexuality and bodies, this was framed in a particular manner. Madonna's work was camp, theatrical and played on notions of drag and performativity. In essence, it was staged and removed from the everyday experiences of bodies. The photographs from *Sex* were all about fantasy, not reality: the post-AIDS sexual playfulness had to be framed in such terms. The women musicians that came to prominence in the early 1990s, including Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey, took their cue from a more confessional style of singing.[11] Their work followed on from artists such as Joni Mitchell, who were writing songs with an autobiographical and deeply personal approach. This emotional and truthful style of songwriting, which reveals flaws in the narrator and a complexity of character, became the vocabulary of the early 1990s. Building upon this emotionality and confessional style of singing, the 1990s scene of female musicians spoke more explicitly of bodily experiences and traumas, with a focus on personal bodily traumas such as rape and sexual abuse.[12] This mirrored the use of personal narratives in third-wave feminist writings. Just as second-wave feminist writings had borne songs that generalised female experience, the third-wave context of the 1990s was about personal and individual experiences, rooted in difference.

The Riot Grrrl movement was important culturally and musically as an expression of the changing cultural circumstances in the 1990s. Riot Grrrl shared similar characteristics to female singer-songwriters, with a lyrical focus on bodies, the challenging of gender norms and explicit content about taboo bodily subjects such as rape, menstruation, abortion and masturbation. In contrast, however, Riot Grrrl focused on a collective and D.I.Y. approach to music, levelling the musical field as punk had done before it. Being part of a group, and part of a community, was central to the Riot Grrrl ethos.[13] Musicians such as Amos and Björk raised themselves into a more singular and iconic position. Rather than being part of a community of women, they became role models and representatives, expressing the emotions, feelings and experiences of young women but from

[11] There were other female artists in the early 1990s such as Ani DiFranco, Alanis Morrisette, Fiona Apple and Liz Phair who could be considered alongside the case study artists as representative of this new phono-somatic style.

[12] Both Tori Amos and PJ Harvey's later work engages with more political topics, particularly post-9/11. It could be argued that Ani DiFranco has always engaged more overtly with politics in its broader sense, embodying the feminist maxim 'the personal is political'.

[13] Whiteley (2000) notes that Riot Grrrl stressed 'the importance of female address and identification' and was all about 'process and interaction'(p.209).

an iconic and individualised standpoint. Most importantly, they became idolised by audiences who felt they spoke the truth about their own experiences.[14]

Riot Grrrls drew directly from feminist heritage, and were explicitly part of the third-wave movement. There was anger around women's position in society, about the regulation and control of female bodies, and about the silencing of women's voices. Both Riot Grrrl and the 1990s female songwriters were emotionally expressive and personal. However, unlike some of the expressive music that had gone before them, Riot Grrrl voiced this anger musically, drawing more on the style of female punk bands such as The Slits or Poison Girls. This same anger translated into the work of the female singer-songwriters but perhaps in a more subtle way, for example in Tori Amos' 'Crucify' or 'Silent All These Years' (1991).[15] The cohort of women including the case study artists had a more troubled relationship with the term 'feminist'. Whilst the content of the singer-songwriters' music explicitly referenced frustration around the expectations placed on women, and discussed ways in which women could gain more power and more agency in their lives, the label itself was rejected by some of these women. Ani DiFranco explicitly owned her feminism, arguing that

> all decent people, male and female, are feminists. The only people who are not feminists are those who believe that women are inherently inferior or undeserving of the respect and opportunity afforded men. Either you are a feminist or you are a sexist/misogynist. There is no box marked "other". (DiFranco 1998)

Tori Amos had also been very vocal about her feminism, arguing 'I was born a feminist' (Amos and Powers 2005, p.12). However, others were much more reluctant to align themselves with feminist principles. PJ Harvey in particular disavowed the label, saying 'I don't ever think about [feminism]... I don't see that there's any need to be aware of being a woman in this business. It just seems a waste of time' (Bust Magazine 2004). Despite her protestations, the content of her

[14] This is not to say that Riot Grrrl did not have its icons but iconic status was avoided and discouraged, in favour of a more collective approach (see Meltzer 2010 on Kathleen Hanna).
[15] Schilt (2003) discusses how mainstream female musicians repackage the riot grrrl ethos in a commercial setting. She groups women musicians such as Morrisette and Meredith Brooks, that came post-1995, without acknowledging that this music had an earlier grouping in Amos, Björk and Harvey, who could also be seen as part of this cohort.

work clearly spoke of feminist issues and many felt it aligned well with the concerns of third-wave feminists (Drake 2002).

There is a problematic at work here with the concept of 'mainstream'. The 1990s saw the increase in popularity of what was described as 'alternative' music, and singer-songwriters such as Harvey, Björk, Alanis Morrisette et al, highlight the problems of the terms 'alternative' and 'mainstream'. On the one hand, many of these artists had significant mainstream commercial success. Morrisette's 1995 album *Jagged Little Pill* reached Number 1 in the Billboard charts (Billboard Charts 2015). Björk had significant sales with *Debut* in 1993, and was certified 2 x Platinum by the British Phonographic Industry by mid-1994 (BPI 2015). Yet on the other hand, the material they were releasing was, in parts, experimental and genre-bending, with subject matter that differed hugely from what had been heard in the mainstream pop charts. At this point in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term 'alternative' shifted in terms of its connotations. Music that had come from an underground or niche scene – and had specific sonic or lyrical qualities that were previously considered to be too abrasive or challenging for mainstream listeners – was now achieving mainstream commercial success. With the popularity of grunge – indeed the industry's invention of the term and capitalisation on all things grunge-related – the music industry had realised that 'alternative' music was a lucrative and untapped market. [16] Grunge can be described as a mainstream music despite it having 'oppositional qualities' (Strong 2011, p.12). The female singer-songwriters that also found mainstream success had been partly enabled to do so by this mainstreaming of the alternative that began in the late 1980s and, though they occupied a mainstream position, could simultaneously exercise a dissenting and oppositional voice.

[16] See Doug Pray's 1996 documentary film *Hype!* for a discussion of the media's role in the grunge scene.

Chapter 2: Embodied Voices: feminine vocality and female pleasure

2.1 Introduction

The human voice crosses the threshold between inside and outside and moves from the body into the external world. The voice is an expression of sound that begins in bodily interiority but is quickly expelled. The beginnings of vocal sound – whether spoken, shouted, sung or screamed – are within the body, but for the sound to register multiple boundaries need to be crossed. When listening to vocal music, the corporeal boundary of inside/outside is crossed twice: first with the expulsion of sound from the mouth and second with the receipt of sound in the listener's ear. In between these boundaries, there is a non-place (Auge 2008), where the voice 'operat[es] in the space between two bodies as sound waves' (Jarman-Ivens 2011, p.2).[17] Analysing the voice in popular music also necessitates thinking about another series of boundaries: those between sound, language and music.

This chapter is an exploration of feminine embodied vocality within popular music studies, through the lens of sexuality. In my thesis overall I seek to highlight specific practices of embodiment in the work of the case study artists. By engaging in a range of these practices, the musicians move past simple representation, and past a narrative strategy of characterisation, into an experiential and embodied mode. These musical tactics move their work from 'representations of the body' into embodiment. I argue that it is not representation that we hear – i.e. where there is a 'gap' between the thing itself and the thing represented – but rather an attempt at direct bodily expression in an unmediated fashion: to embody feminine experience.

This chapter will explore two particular linguistic features in the music of the case study artists: paralanguage and lexical breakdown (defined fully in section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Here I argue that by employing these linguistic strategies these musicians draw attention to the body, and in doing so are contributing to this general mode of embodiment in their work. Paralanguage and lexical breakdown are just two of the approaches that the case study artists take towards this embodied

[17] Jarman-Ivens (2011) describes this space in-between two bodies as a 'third space'.

mode. I analyse songs that feature these two linguistic practices to further explore the relationship between voice and body.

Using paralanguage and lexical breakdown, the voice of the singer is positioned in a liminal state across a number of boundaries. The relationship(s) between these boundaries are highlighted and problematised by the embodied voice. The initial boundary that is at play is between the body and the voice, and this forms the central study for this thesis, and specifically for this chapter. The problematic of embodying the voice arises in part because the voice has been conceptualised as disembodied (Dunn and Jones 1996). Within popular music studies, this boundary is further problematised through the recording process, which again has been theorised as a mode of disembodiment (Middleton in Clayton 2008, p.148). Here there are multiple boundaries at work, between embodied subjectivity located in the work, the expressive singing voice and the recording. The reception of embodied voices by listeners raises a whole series of other boundary issues, but is outside the scope of this thesis. Other important boundaries that necessitate attention in this context are those between text, language, voice and sound and those between individual and collective bodies.

In defining boundaries – and in highlighting the blurring and crossing of such boundaries – power relations must also be investigated. I will be using the concepts of containment and regulation, setting these against that of excessivity. Specifically, I will be exploring the conceptualisation of femininity – and female sexuality – as excessive and looking at how the relationship between body and voice is culturally mediated through the regulation of boundaries. Using the concept of *jouissance*, as expressed in the work of Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, I will explore feminine sexuality as a phono-somatic representation.

The music of Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey explores gendered identities, troubling the concept of femininity itself and reworking it into a more nuanced and multifaceted term. In terms of vocality, and how the voice is embodied in their work, I am concerned with how meanings accumulate around the concept of a specifically feminine vocality and its relationship to gender norms through different types of appropriate and non-appropriate vocal styles. The relationship between feminine vocality and power is critical, and I examine how in the case study artists' work the feminine can be utilised as a mode of empowerment. I will analyse these musicians' individual responses to cultural bodily norms of femininity in their music, to illuminate some coherent themes, whilst simultaneously recognising the fissures, fragments and discontinuity embodied within their work. My hypothesis is that, as white female singer-songwriters with a feminist orientation, these artists create a very specific performative space where they explore linguistic

play and the relationship between text, language, voice and sound. Within that space a range of femininities is explored, through a specifically feminine embodied vocality.

Articulating embodied femininity in music necessitates an understanding of female sexuality. In exploring feminine vocality in this chapter, I focus on feminine desire as expressed vocally, particularly through the female orgasm. When conceptualising embodiment through the voice, investigating female sexuality and desire as particular vocal modes of embodied expression allows the problematic of boundaries to be acknowledged. The expression of bodily pleasure occurs vocally. Sexual communication can occur without text, with non-verbal sounds, and therefore boundaries are highlighted through the very act of orgasm itself.

When analysing sounds that are without language, as will be explained further in my definition of paralanguage in section 2.1.1, ideas about essentialism and pre-linguistic nature must be engaged with. As explored in my introduction, embodiment as a term acknowledges that bodies are culturally ascribed rather than pre-cultural. Similarly, when looking at the boundaries between language and sound, non-verbal sounds may suggest a 'return' to a pre-linguistic self, and therefore a pre-cultural self. Concepts around authentic expression and the notion of the 'real' circulate in these discourses. It is therefore important to acknowledge that this conceptual work will by necessity be returned to throughout this analysis of embodied feminine vocality.

The songs for analysis in this chapter are PJ Harvey's 'The Dancer' (1995) and 'The Letter' (2004), Björk's 'Cocoon' (2001) and 'All is Full of Love' (1997), and Tori Amos 'Icicle' (1994). I will analyse these tracks with a particular focus on the vocal strategies of paralanguage and lexical breakdown through a phono-somatic feminine vocality.

2.1.1 Paralanguage

The term paralanguage is used to explain vocal sounds that are made without the use of words (Poyatos 1993). These sounds include screams, gasps, grunts, laughter, lip-smacks, murmurs and sighs. Paralanguage is a term that covers sounds that may commonly be seen as particularly expressive or emotional, and perhaps more expressive or emotional than language. The connection between the body and the voice is essential here. In the theorisation of paralanguage, voice is often aligned with language, and therefore with the mind, the rational and the cultural. It then follows that non-verbal sounds are aligned with the body: with the emotions, and with the 'natural'. For example, Simon Frith describes paralinguistic sounds as 'inarticulate articulacy':

sounds that 'escape […] from a body that the mind – language – can no longer control' (Frith in Lacasse 2010, p.225). Frith is clearly articulating this dichotomy, and evoking even further ideas around control. There is significant literature around the regulation and control of bodies, and the body as a site of power: following on from the work of Michel Foucault (1979), feminists such as Bordo (1993) and Davis (1997) explored the disciplining of the female body.

Analyses of the voice in popular music studies have often discussed vocal expressivity, but have neglected detailed discussion of paralanguage itself. Studies have tended to disperse their discussions of these vocal sounds throughout the literature, rather than honing in on paralanguage as a discrete area for analysis, and neglect certain key elements of this type of vocal production (Lacasse 2010). Scholars that do discuss paralanguage, such as Lacasse (2010) who focuses on emotional expressivity and the impact of paralinguistic analysis for vocal training, do not clearly highlight its applicability to understanding the relationship between the body and the voice.

The use of paralanguage allows musicians to draw attention to the body, as the analysis of work by my case study artists will evidence. Instead of employing production techniques to remove sounds such as breath and the moistening of lips, to disembody the voice, these sounds are retained in order to become a part of the timbral palette of the song. Furthermore, including paralinguistic features such as screams, whispers, moans and yelps, focuses attention onto the bodily source of the sound.

2.1.2 Lexical Breakdown

I use the phrase 'lexical breakdown' to describe points at the end of words and phrases where language tails into sound and is broken down, turning into sound and wordless vocalisation. Lexical breakdown is linked to paralinguistic utterance, as the sound becomes more divorced from language as it temporarily progresses and then itself becomes paralanguage. However, I am treating them as two distinct elements of vocal sound. Lexical breakdown highlights more tangibly the liminal state of embodied vocality, as it exists across the boundary between language and paralanguage. Together, and within the context of a popular music song, these two concepts create breaks in the flow of sung text and language. These ruptures make the body more apparent, by moving the focus away from the narrative or the imagery of the lyrics, and highlighting the source of the sound: the body itself. If the lyrical content of a track focuses on embodied experiences (of either a character, narrator or singer themselves), the use of

paralanguage and lexical breakdown further heightens this embodiment. In this instance, not only does the text itself relate to the body, but the vocal sounds of broken language and paralinguistic utterances allow this bodily narrative to be corporeally situated.

2.2 Feminine phono-somatics

2.2.1 Feminine vocality

The expression of femininity through a phono-somatic, embodied vocality necessarily locates this study within a feminist framework. The case study artists are exploring a range of femininities through vocalised, corporeal sound. Through expression of this sound they are highlighting the experience of female bodies in the world and within patriarchal culture. The often quoted theory that women need to 'write the body' in order to subvert patriarchal structures comes into play here (Cixous 1976): these musicians are writing from a disruptive and anti-normative stance (Burns and Lafrance 2002) and writing the body is one mode of disruption they employ. In her theory of *écriture féminine,* Cixous uses the word 'writing' but she also makes reference to female speech and song. She uses these concepts interchangeably, and in doing so describes an empowered femininity where creativity is expressly related to both body *and* voice. Cixous links writing, singing and speaking with the body and urges women to 'Write your self. Your body must be *heard*. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth' (1976, p.888 my emphasis). By using the word 'heard' instead of 'read', Cixous directly links her concept of writing with the concept of listening, rather than with reading or seeing. For her, writing the body is as much an aural, or auditory, process as it is a textual one, and in her conception sounds and texts cannot be divorced. As she links repression directly with muteness, speechlessness and aphonia – loss or absence of the voice through disease – music plays an important part in women finding their voices. In fact, she delineates the voice, specifically through song, as an infinite, cyclical and fundamental element of femininity:

> In women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating […] that element is the song, first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. (Cixous 1976, p.881)

Here, in the idea of 'first music', there is the suggestion of an essence: a voice that exists within each self, which resonates throughout women's lives. The question of whether this is an essential, 'natural' voice or whether this is an acculturated voice needs to be fully unpacked. For this study, the important connection that Cixous makes is the relationship between voice, body and text. In particular, drawing on how phono-somatic expression of the body – through both the voice and text – allows for agency and power in the articulation of femininities.

At the intersection of the terms 'gender', 'vocality' and 'embodiment', feminine voices and female bodies can inhabit an empowered space. Through strategies of resistance and transgression – in particular, with the challenging of cultural norms – embodied female vocality reclaims power. In exploring this intersection of terms, the negotiation of power in a patriarchal context becomes a central concern. In song, the relationship between voice and text is apparent when transgressive women whose

> unruly sexuality and disturbing vocalizations threaten to overwhelm the "civilized" order espoused by the text. The mastering of that threat is enacted both thematically, through the defeat or death of the woman character, and discursively, through the containment of her utterance within a textuality identified as masculine, thus opposing her literal, embodied vocality to his metaphorical, disembodied "voice". (Dunn and Jones 1996, p. 7)

Here, there is a return to metaphors of boundaries, with a use of containment that specifically references the power dynamics at play within a phallogocentric social system.[18] The notion of transgression – the overstepping and exceeding of boundaries – therefore is at the heart of embodied feminine vocality. Containment acts as a metaphor for patriarchy and which feminine excess tries to resist. The opposition of masculine *voices* (as metaphorical and disembodied) against feminine *vocality* (as literal and embodied) invokes the Cartesian mind/body division (Descartes 1986) that itself underpins patriarchy. Transgressive embodied vocality and excessive female sexuality rail against this containment.

Containment has been theorised by Johnson (1987) in his exploration of 'image schemata' or what he also calls 'embodied schemata'. Here Johnson describes how meanings are made through various schemata, highlighting the physical and embodied structure of these schemata, and

[18] Phallogocentrism is the primacy and privilege of the phallus and of language. This term derives from psychoanalytic theory, and has been used throughout much feminist literature, particularly poststructuralist scholarship (Cixous 1976; Haraway 1984; Butler 1999).

therefore the relationship between the body and the mind. The mind is, according to Johnson, embodied. He explores 'containment' within the schematic structure relating to '*in-out* orientation' (p.21) and argues that there are five 'entailments or consequences of these recurring experiential image-schematic structures for *in-out* orientation' (p.22) These five are as follows:

1. experience of containment as protection from/resistance to external forces
2. containment limits and restricts forces within the container
3. due to 'this restraint of forces, the contained object gets a relative fixity of location'
4. due to fixity 'the contained object becomes either accessible or inaccessible to the view of some observer. It is either held so that it can observed, or else the container itself blocks or hides the object from view'
5. transitivity of containment ('if I am *in* bed, and my bed is *in* my room, then I am *in* my room').

   (Johnson 1987, p.22)

In terms of feminine vocality, this theorisation of containment can be utilised in a number of helpful ways. If the voice, as traditionally bound to text and to masculinist agendas, is within the container, then *female* vocality is the element of restriction and limitation. Co-dependent on this female vocality is female sexuality and excessivity. These elements are also restricted and it could be argued that in the fixity of the container – of the voice, as experienced in a masculinist paradigm, which is particularly fixed in textuality – female excessivity is out of view, blocked or hidden. The element of transitivity is more complex to explore, but points to the larger context of the container. By utilising Johnson's exploration of the container, within the *in-out* schemata, it becomes apparent how female vocality – phono-somatically embodied – has a political imperative against the forces of containment. The potential of female phono-somatics are that they break the entire schemata of *in-out*, which epistemologically speaking reinforces masculinist paradigms of knowledge. Embodied female vocality moves past the image of the container, as through its very excessivity it cannot be contained. The politicising of transgressive phono-somatics may be useful in the construction of a specifically feminist musical aesthetics (Cox 1991).

2.3 Voice and sexuality

One key element of non-verbal sound play is its relationship to sexuality. In *Voicing the Popular* (2006) Middleton explicitly states his interest in the notion of 'voice' and makes a clear link between the voice and a sexual terrain (pp.92-93). However, Middleton is clear that 'the sexual positioning of voices is not fixed' (p.93) and points to two particular discursive traditions that shape our understanding of how voice works. First, the voice as 'a site of masculine authority' (p.93), in relation to language, *logos* and power, and secondly the voice which is 'persistently coded as female' (p.93), having an anatomical interiority and invisibility that is symbolically linked to female genitalia. This phallicisation or invagination makes a clear link between the voice and the sexual organs, which Middleton argues is a 'column' through which energy flows between the two corporeal sites (p.93). With this link between voice and sexual organs there is a need to explore the relationship between the voice and female orgasm more explicitly, for in the work of these women musicians lexical breakdown and the use of paralinguistic sounds can be understood as a challenge to this site of masculine textual authority.

There is little work in popular music studies on sounds of the orgasmic female voice. Although there has been brief discussion of female orgasm in popular music (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996) the possibility of embodied female vocality acting as an excessive and transgressive expression of female sexuality demands more attention. Conceptualising the voice as inextricably linked to sexuality, through the body, is something that is key to understanding the paralanguage of popular music. Lacasse refers to the sensual erotics of vocal expression briefly when discussing Tori Amos' ''97 Bonnie and Clyde' (2001), and refers to 'the materiality of [Amos'] voice' (p.235) but does not suggest that further exploration needs to take place to analyse the relationship between voice, body and sexuality. I therefore want to focus the discussion on analysis of tracks that feature orgasmic sounds, in a variety of different contexts.

2.3.1 Female orgasm in popular culture

Taking a broader perspective on the female orgasm in popular culture, female desire is inseparable from the female body, and this desire is also heavily regulated within patriarchal culture. This regulation occurs through specific cultural norms around female sexuality, and these norms problematise desire for women. The dominant paradigm is of women's bodies as available to men, existing under the male gaze (Mulvey 1975) with submissiveness necessary due to the

threat of sexual violence. The virgin-whore dichotomy – where a woman needs to be pure to be desired, but also a whore to have relations with men – sets up the inability for women being able to fulfil either role successfully. In cultural terms, a range of female sexualities where women may have some agency have been formed into stereotypes – 'cougar', 'slut', 'gold-digger' – but the majority of these are derogative by nature. They show women accessing some kind of sexual power, but being punished in terms of reputation.

The film *50 Shades of Grey* (2015), based on the bestselling novel of the same name, highlights how in normative female sexuality female desire is controlled by a dominant male, here in a portrayal of a sadomasochistic relationship. Whilst this example features the BDSM subculture, it is a mainstream film representing a culture – i.e. not written from within that subculture, from what might be termed an authentic perspective – for circulation within mainstream culture and therefore responding to, and reflecting mainstream sexual attitudes.[19] The film demonstrates a specific cultural understanding about the power dynamics between men and women, in terms of heterosexual desire.

Given that female sexuality is so regulated, one might expect an absence of female desire – most explicitly expressed through female orgasm – in popular culture, which raises a number of questions. Does popular culture engage methods of regulation and containment in relation to female orgasm? What forms does the expression of female orgasm take in popular film, music and literature, and are there multiple forms expressed? Whilst these questions are substantial enough to be the topic of a thesis, here I will suggest some brief hypotheses in order to situate my analysis within a wider debate. These questions also sit within a history of feminism, with the impact of the various 'waves' of feminism having a bearing on how female desire is expressed culturally. My hypothesis is that even within patriarchal culture, where female desire is controlled and contained, there is potential for non-normative expressions of female desire. Additionally, I suggest that these points of subversive or disruptive possibility occur temporally around moments where feminism, within its wider social and cultural contexts, experienced shifts or development(s). By briefly looking at the broader context of how female desire – and specifically

[19] BDSM is defined as 'bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism (or submission), and masochism' (OED 2015). *The Guardian* represented negative responses to the film from BDSM participants (Smith 2015; Corvid 2014).

female orgasm – is represented in popular culture, this lays the foundation for a deeper analysis of the case study material.

In popular culture, the female orgasm is represented as performative (or theatrical) and sound-orientated (as opposed to body-orientated). The female orgasm can also work symbolically as a representation of male sexual prowess, more than (or instead of) a demonstration of female desires and pleasure. Here, I will explore these modes of representation to highlight possibilities for non-normative female sexualities.

Female orgasm as performative

The female orgasm is performative due to its elusivity. As female sexual organs are located internally and, unlike the male erection, there is less visibility to female pleasure and arousal, sound plays an important part as an 'announcement' of pleasure. The creation of sound in female orgasm gives rise to a sense of theatricality. However, what is happening sonically and what is happening physically does not always align, and the definition of the sound of orgasm is unstable. The female orgasm is therefore – sonically speaking – a potential source of insincerity, fakery and unreality. This has been explored in popular culture, most notably in the 'fake orgasm' scene in the 1989 film *When Harry Met Sally*. Here the central characters, Harry and Sally, discuss sex across the table in a diner. Discussing the female orgasm and the potential for fakery, Harry argues 'well, they haven't faked it with me'. When Sally suggests that he might not know that they are faking, Harry asks her 'you don't think that I could tell the difference?' to which she responds negatively. Sally then proceeds to fake an orgasm at the diner table, to prove her point, then calmly resumes eating her food. The argument made here is that the female orgasm is performative and unstable, and contains no definitive element of pleasure in its manifestation. Whilst the body is embodied through sound, orgasmic sound is another marker of female excessivity, which cannot be contained or defined.

Jouissance

Jouissance is a term that can be usefully drawn upon for an understanding of female pleasure, because it more accurately represents these unstable, liminal and excessive qualities of feminine desire (Cixous 1976, 1986; Kristeva 1982, 1984). The term is derived from Lacanian theory, though is challenged and reworked by French feminists. In Lacanian terminology *jouissance* is concerned

with pleasure that is excessive, and goes beyond the pleasure principle, as set out in Freudian literature.[20] The translation of the term is usually enjoyment, though the original French has connotations of sexual pleasure, most specifically orgasm. However, rather than being synonymic with pleasure, *jouissance* is usually set against pleasure, as pleasure is temporally confined, with an end point, whereas *jouissance* is excessive and unlimited (Buchanan 2010). *Jouissance* has a political and revolutionary imperative, which is to break out of constraints of phallogocentrism: transgressing boundaries of language and of social systems, such as patriarchy. However, in Lacan's work, the outcome of transgressing these boundaries is a negative one, with the transgression disrupting and overwhelming the subject and the notion of a balanced 'psychical subjectivity' (Johnston 2014).

The transgression of boundaries through *jouissance*, and the excessivity of specifically feminine *jouissance* has been viewed in more positive terms by French feminists, in opposition to the Lacanian model. The revolutionary potential for women to go beyond pleasure, into transgressive territory, offers a model of feminine agency, power and creativity. As I have outlined, Cixous sets out such a model in *l'écriture féminine*, pointing to the female voice as cyclical and infinite. Cixous offers the deconstruction of Lacan's signification of the phallus, and a challenge to the passification of female sexuality (Alexander 2013). *Jouissance* functions not only in terms of sexual excessivity, and complete ecstatic pleasure, but also signifies the ability to enjoy other sets of concurrent 'rights', such as political and economic (Cixous and Clément 1986, p.165). Therefore access to pleasure – to a full, expansive and excessive feminine pleasure – also grants access to power, participation and agency.

Kristeva argues that *jouissance* originates in the pre-oedipal stage of communication between infant and mother (Cox 1991) and she explores modes of writing where *jouissance* is uncoded and textually disruptive (Lechte 1990, p.68). She conceives of:

> the notion of writing as 'negativity', and thence as 'rejection' – a writing which constitutes the subject in process as exceeding the limits of the punctual, static, transcendental subject of phenomenology. The subject in process is a subject of flows and energy charges, of jouissance and death. (Lechte 1990, p.124)

[20] Freud defines two principles that 'govern mental functioning': the pleasure principle and the reality principle. In terms of the pleasure principle, Freud argues that 'the whole of psychical activity is aimed at avoiding unpleasure and procuring pleasure' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, p.322).

This notion of flow and energy, as set in opposition from the static containment of the subject, is particular to *jouissance* as a moving, active excess. This flowing movement of *jouissance* has a specific relationship to maternity, which is drawn out in both Kristeva and Cixous' work, and is fully embodied. The maternal body – which I will return to in greater detail in Chapter 4 – signifies the embodiment of the 'pre-symbolic', of the pre-linguistic. Lechte describes this, specifically in Kristeva's work, as 'the 'materiality' of the symbolic: the voice as rhythm and timbre, the body as movement, gesture, and rhythm.' (Lechte 1990, p129). *Jouissance* as excess, as pleasure, as orgasm, as breaking the boundaries of logos and the containment of phallocentrism, is found in the pre-symbolic and vocal realm.

Female orgasm as sound-orientated

The representation of female orgasm is particularly sound-orientated in popular culture. The sounds that specifically represent female pleasure and female orgasm consist of breathy tones, sighing, moaning and a particular type of pitched semi-scream. Pitch is of particular interest when considering representations of female orgasm in popular music; the 'notes' prove elusive through the use of glissandi and part-spoken, part-sung tone. Sounds that are higher in pitch may connote away from the body, invoking metaphors of otherworldliness and – paradoxically – purity. High-pitched sounds are related to femininity and carry stereotypical gender associations.[21] Although the sounds of female orgasm play across the vocal registers, the stereotype is that of a crescendo of sound, rising in both volume and pitch to a climax. Perhaps the description of female orgasm as a 'little death' – eroticism as death (Bataille 1962) – could also be linked to the idea of sound moving away from the body to another world, as it increases in pitch. However, in female orgasm there are also lower pitched grunts and moans, which suggest visceral and guttural embodied sounds. The scream sits sonically between pleasure and pain, and thus the orgasm is liminally situated.

Within popular music culture, the sound of orgasm features most famously in 'Je t'aime, moi non plus' by Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg (1969) and Donna Summer's iconic 'Love to love you baby' (1975). Other songs in this vein followed, such as house anthem 'French Kiss' by Lil Louis (1989) (Corbett and Kapsalis 1996). In both the Birkin/Gainsbourg and Summer tracks, there is a specific model exemplified: a woman coming to orgasm in response to masculine sexuality, and

[21] The literature on male falsetto is testament to this, with high voices being associated with femininity (Moore 1993: Napier in Ewans 2004: Giles 1994).

the orgasm being a sonic reflection of his sexual ability. The title of Summer's track lays the foundation for this analysis, with her desire being reflected in relation to him: it is loving him specifically that causes her pleasure. Of course, desire is constructed in relation to another person, and there is a need to tease out how female sexuality – in particular, female heterosexual sexuality – exists outside of male prowess. A second model that can be traced in popular music culture is the female orgasm as solo pleasure through masturbation, but similarly this is often framed through the longing for a man. For example, 'I Touch Myself' by The Divinyls (1990) references masturbation in relation to the desire for another.

In both of these models sound is prioritised over touch or embodied experience. Naturally, as we are dealing here with a musical text, the sonic representation of female orgasm is a shortcut to explaining what is happening in the text. But there is also a kind of disembodiment at play here, a distancing from female desire as embodied phono-somatically, with the focus being placed on the longing for a man and outside of the body where the pleasure is located. The instances where female orgasm moves away from these limiting models are where the instability, unpredictability and performativity of female desire are highlighted in the cultural text. Similarly, where the link is drawn more directly between the body and sound – through a phono-somatic paradigm – the orgasm becomes more fully embodied.

The transgressive work of female popular musicians, such as Courtney Love and Madonna, has been explored by feminist musicologists working in popular music studies, in order to explain the challenges they make to dominant understandings of gender and, in particular, femininity (McClary 1991; Burns and Lafrance 2002). These musical works allow for a 'breaking out' of containment through repeated motifs of gender rebellion and disruption. The cohort of female singer-songwriters debuting in the 1990s – of which my case study artists are three examples – demonstrates an understanding of female power and agency which is rooted in sexuality. In 'You Oughta Know' (1995) Alanis Morissette's question about her own perversion puts the narrator's sexuality full and centre. From Björk's 'Big Time Sensuality' (1993) to Liz Phair's 'Fuck and Run' (1993), these artists' expressions of their sexuality was unashamed. This articulation was about their own pleasure as expansive and uncontainable rather than that which can be enclosed within the boundaries of norms. There is a lack of a sense of guilt or shame, as might be traditionally expected from a self-orientated expression of female desire.[22]

[22] See Groneman (1994) on nymphomania and the construction of female sexuality, where guilt and shame are recurrent themes.

2.3.2 Queer vocality

The voice as a site of liminality offers the potential for multiple readings. The possibility for the queering of voices exists across blurred and transgressible boundaries. The mediatory function of the body, working between body and language, is explored by Jarman-Ivens (2011) who notes that the voice is situated the in-between what is discursively seen as feminine (body) and masculine (language). The voice is queered, sitting liminally between these gendered discourses. This position is one of tension, of danger, of resistance and is heightened by the voice existing simultaneously as signifier and outside of – and/or resistant to – signification (Dolar 2006; Jarman-Ivens 2011). In this chapter, the specific focus is on queering voices that explore phono-somatic, paralinguistic sounds: those that are embodied, but existing outside of language structures.

In trying to define queer there is a paradox, as queer resists definition through its multiplicity and flexibility. Queer opens up through the process of definition, rather than closing down or narrowing, and highlights potentiality, performativity and contradiction. Queer can be seen as an:

> open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically. (Sedgwick 1993, p.8)

There are two key elements here. First, the position of queer is one that is liminal, malleable and shifting. Queer is a process or an act (Jarman-Ivens 2011, p.16), which is, as Sedgwick argues, 'open' and ever-shifting (Sedgwick 1993, p.8). Second, queer theory has historically been orientated around the destabilisation of norms around gender and sexuality, and the denaturalisation of these categories.

In relation to embodied voices, and specifically what I am terming 'feminine vocality', Sedgwick's 'excesses of meaning' gives a particular vantage point, allied to the notion of a positive feminine *jouissance*. An essentialist paradigm might view the feminine voice as something natural, pre-cultural, biological and innate. Using a queer methodology, where meaning is excessive, allows an escape from essentialist reduction. Feminine vocality need not 'match' to female bodies, but rather allows for the exploration of culturally constructed qualities of femininity through a range of voices, where meaning does not signify in a singular fashion.

Exploring the voice in terms of gender, it is apparent that:

> what is important in the ontology of the voice is its capacity always-already to detach the signifier of the vocal wave form from the signified of the identity of the voice's producer, and in turn to keep open the possibility for multiple gender identities, at least until such time as identity is conferred upon the voice's producer by the listener. (Jarman-Ivens 2011, p.2)

The voice is a key signifier of queer identities, precisely because of its liminal quality. This possibility of multiple, queer identities exists not just for gender, of course, but also for sexualities. The history of popular music as supportive of hetero-normativity is long evidenced, particularly through the work of scholars who focus on queer readings and music that challenges this propensity (Jarman-Ivens 2011; Goldin-Perschbacher 2008; Whiteley and Rycenga 2006; Brett et al 1994).

In the analysis of songs, I want to address the possibility of the embodiment of queer desire through female orgasm in sound. As with Jarman-Ivens' exploration of the queer voice (2011), my case study artists all have voices that are culturally 'matched' to their gender. They all sound as women, singing from female bodies. The point here is to explore the queer elements of vocality within their work: voice as performative, voice as material, voice as liminal. Exploring the female orgasm as performative supports a reading of the voice more broadly as performative, denaturalising vocal difference (Dame 1994). In this denaturalisation, feminine phono-somatics function in a queer space, challenging the listener through excessivity, performance and parody.

2.4 PJ Harvey 'The Dancer' (1995)

Paralanguage and lexical breakdown are vocal strategies that allow for phono-somatic play. Examples of both are contained in 'The Dancer', the final track of PJ Harvey's 1995 album *To Bring You My Love*. Furthermore, these two linguistic strategies are placed within a narrative context that plays on notions of disembodiment and embodiment through imagery of religious and sexual ecstasy.

The song draws on a long tradition of the 'lament' song both harmonically and in terms of the narrative, which focuses of lament and loss (Rosand 1979). Harmonically, the track features a descending tetrachord pattern, one of the most common chord sequences found in both art music traditions and the folk/popular vernacular: the bass line brings to mind both Claudio Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa* and George Harrison's 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps'. The outcome of using this chord sequence is that it restricts the vocalist to a limited harmonic palette, as the simple chordal pattern cycles repetitively.[23] The vocalist is more 'on show' in the sense that, because the instruments follow an ostinato pattern, the vocals become more of a focal point. In these harmonic conditions, the need for vocal expression is greater, in order for the song to emote. In 'The Dancer', PJ Harvey utilises the full range of her voice working from her lower range in the verses (down to E3) up to a sung E5 in the middle eight, with partially spoken notes sounding up to D6.

The narrative of the song begins with an extravagant description of a man, appearing like a 'phoenix out of fire flames'. The narrator relates that he is 'dressed in black with a cross bearing my name' and thus paints a picture of religiosity, with a clear symbolic vocabulary. It is apparent from the first verse that the narrator is having some kind of visionary experience, which situates the narrative in a potentially disembodied space. As the song progresses the lyrics suggest that this visionary man is no longer accessible to the narrator, and the remainder of the song is therefore a lament for this lost man and this lost vision. The tone of the language evokes a disembodied, otherworldly state, with allusions to God, to 'splendour and glory' and, perhaps most importantly, references to flying. The narrator's vision flies away from her bodily, situated experiences, taking her into an unearthly realm.

Although the narrative is focused on a disembodied heavenly experience, the vocal timbre and expression highlight and emphasise the body, though a materiality of sound. At the end of each line, on the very last word, Harvey's voice breaks the word, swooping down in pitch into an 'uh' sound. For example, the first line ends with the word 'flames', which becomes 'flames-uh', the second ends with 'name' and this becomes 'name-uh'. The 'uh' is sounded as half spoken, half sung, lower in pitch and perhaps then, at least symbolically, more visceral. This lexical breakdown, where a word becomes elongated, changed or distorted, is a point where the body becomes more apparent. The Barthesian grain of the voice is heard in the part-spoken nature of the word, in the loss of language from a word to a sound, and in its depth of frequency which suggests the visceral

[23] This is of course a restriction within tonal music, where the melody chosen sits within a diatonic context.

and corporeal – that the vocal tone is coming from a body beyond words (Barthes 1977).[24] The 'uh' at the end of each line sounds lower and more animalistic, and female pleasure is suggested through the grunting quality of the vocal 'uh'. The religious ecstasy painted in the lyrics is not entirely disembodied in a vision world as was first suggested in the lyrics, but is linked to a tangible bodily ecstasy through the paralinguistic sounds of desire – and suggestion of orgasm – beginning to appear at the end of each line.

In the middle eight of 'The Dancer' the phono-somatic sound of the female body in orgasm is made much more explicit, and the disembodied vision becomes very clearly embodied through the sexuality of the narrator. Given the religious symbolism of the track, this embodiment is reminiscent of late-medieval female Christian mysticism, as expressed in the work of Margery Kempe. Kempe's writings explore not only medieval and, more specifically, religious attitudes to women but link these to an exploration of the female body, described as a 'translation of body into text' (Lochrie 1991, p.61). The writings differ from other medieval religious texts, whose disembodied standpoints disavow the corporeal, by representation of bodily sensations in terms of both the everyday and the otherwordly (Harding in Lomperis 1993, p.180). Laments also function not only as a mode of expressing loss, but as a method of connecting with the spiritual or supernatural world (Porter 2015).

The body in orgasm is represented directly through paralinguistic utterance in the middle eight of this track, with a move from text into sound, as at 1.50. Harvey uses an 'ah' sound to represent sonically the sound of orgasm. There are six 'ah' phrases that occur in this section. This non-verbal sound is expressed through the excessive use of glissandi, as Harvey swoops up and down to the notes. She moves between speech and song in glissandic phrases, with the notes proving elusive in terms of absolute pitch. There is a freedom of sexual expression here, a *jouissance* and a lack of containment. Outside of the glissandi, the peak notes of each 'ah' vary significantly in pitch, and many of the biggest vocal leaps in this track align with this paralinguistic feature. The verse melodies are simple and the notes move stepwise, within a major third (C4 to E4) then dropping paralinguistically down to E3 at the end of the verse with the 'uh'. In this orgasmic section, Harvey's vocal tone is markedly breathy, conveying physical qualities and highlighting the body from which the sound production is made. In representing some of the sonic qualities of female pleasure, Harvey places the narrative of lament into a corporeal place. By using the sonic qualities

[24] Dunsby (2009) and Jarman-Ivens (2011) discuss the use of Barthes term 'grain of the voice' and its use as a mythologised 'slogan'. Importantly, Jarman-Ivens returns to Barthes' theorisation, drawing out how the 'grain' can be defined as 'those aspects of the voice where the physiology of vocal production is audible' (Jarman-Ivens 2011 p.5). It is this phono-somatic definition of the 'grain' that I am referring to here.

of desire and pleasure, but aligning them with metaphors of loss and longing, this narrative becomes a masturbatory fantasy.

The excessive pitch leaps and glissandi in the middle eight of 'The Dancer' could also be read as parodic: a comedic representation, a ridiculing of female pleasure as currently unattainable. This mocking, knowing tone of the orgasm sound suggests previous sexual experience, and implies that the satisfaction that this orgasm brings – as imagined, or masturbatory desire – is a limited one. The narrator's 'black and empty heart' is here linked to sexual sin and sexual knowledge and – without the presence of the male figure – 'peace' is unobtainable. Laments are not always sung by innocents and are often related to sexual experience or physical love. Laments can be sung in mourning for lost virginity or innocence, or by widows to express the loss of their husbands. Harvey creates an embodied version of the lament, with the loss of sexual innocence sounding through the sarcastic tone of her vocal representation. Harvey's voice comes from a place of knowing, not a place of naivety. This is an experienced body, one already voiced in desire and sexual ecstasy.

In terms of *jouissance*, Harvey presents a narrative where feminine pleasure is circumvented and frustrated. The phono-somatic representations of body through the voice highlight the possibility of *jouissance*, through the melodic range and representation of female desire in its broadest sense. Yet modes of containment are at work. Harvey outlines the performative qualities of orgasm through an embodied vocalisation, but the subversive potential of this female orgasm is normalised by repetition, bring replayed over and over, in a stylised, theatrical fashion, in the middle eight.[25] The narrator's lack of both agency and the possibility of pleasure is a reminder of the broader definition of *jouissance*. Participation and access are denied to her, with desire functioning imaginatively, but being contained and limited within masculinist structures, through the controlling influence of the male protagonist. With the last word of the song, 'heart', the lexical breakdown is repeated, but the word is extended melismatically, the melody descending downwards, in opposition to the upward melody of a climactic climb to orgasm. The frustration of desire is phono-somatically embodied.

[25] See Butler (1990).

2.5 PJ Harvey 'The Letter' (2004)

Paralanguage is foregrounded in the very title of PJ Harvey's 2004 album *Uh Huh Her*. The title points to a gendered expression of paralinguistic sound, with 'Uh Huh' being paralinguistic and the reference to 'Her' being gendered. On this album, 'The Letter' deals most explicitly with embodiment, and here Harvey explores both the senses and the sensual.[26] The narrative of this song is of a woman engaging in the act of letter writing with her lover. Through this motif Harvey explicitly links language, communication and textuality with the body and the (hetero-) sexual act.

The lyrical theme of embodiment found in the verses is based around Freudian symbology, from Freud's 1916 lecture on 'Symbolism in Dreams' (Freud [1916] 1973, pp.187-192). The pen described by Harvey is representative of the penis, and the envelope of the vagina, with paper being symbolic of a woman. The narrator describes 'your beautiful pen' and gives him overtly sexual instructions, couched in double entendre (for lyrics, see Appendix 3, Example 2.1). In order to critique what could appear as a straightforward and crude use of Freudian imagery and sexual pun, Harvey uses the sonic world to undermine and disturb this vocabulary. Lexical breakdown is configured as a particular mode of sonic disruption, used throughout the track to show that the act of letter writing – and by extension textuality itself - cannot fully realise desire. The Freudian model of phallogocentrism is transgressed through the sounding out of phono-somatics, and the excessivity of *jouissance* that breaks through the text.

Throughout the track, lexical breakdown occurs at the ends of phrases that lead from the verse sections into the chorus. This song is in strophic form, with three verses, all of which lead directly into a chorus section. The last line of each verse describes points of movement into desire, psychically and physically imagined. The desire in the narrative is at once present in the minds and hearts of the lovers, but also projected forwards into the future to a point where the lovers are together in physical contact. The lexical breakdown of each final verse line is used as a compositional tool to move from the carefully worded metaphors of the verse sections into the chorus. The chorus section of 'The Letter' is unusual, as it consists of a wordless sound: an 'oh', sung in aural evocation of orgasm. This is the climax from the imagined sexual event symbolised through the letter writing between these two lovers.

[26] Burns, Lafrance and Hawley (2008) analyse embodied subjectivities in 'The Letter' and in Björk's 'Cocoon' in order to outline what they call 'a music-analytic method for the interpretation of the dynamic musical processes that are engaged in a socially constituted artistic expression' (Abstract). My analysis highlights some of the musical elements they engage with, but here I focus in on the relationship between body, voice and text through the lens of phono-somatics.

The wordless chorus has two effects. First, it highlights the ineffability of desire and physicality, by using a vocal sound that could be seen as more adequately representing sexual longing. Second, the lexical breakdown draws attention to the source of the sound: the body. By removing the lyrical content, meaning is derived from vocal timbre. The vocal timbre here suggests physicality and sexual desire, with its evocation of orgasm. The removal of the textual, in order to highlight the material, is paradoxical in a song that focuses on letter writing as the expression of feelings through words. The chorus – the summation of the feelings the narrator has for her lover, and the movement from the carefully expressed desire of the verses – communicates meaning without lyrics, without words. The primacy of textuality is therefore challenged and desire is embodied in the space outside of language.

Wordless melodies have been subtly introduced throughout this piece to support the shift into a wordless chorus as a compositionally effective technique. These melodies begin with the heterophonic relationship between the guitar and vocal line at the start of the song. A wordless male vocal drone is heard throughout verse 2 and in the latter half of verse 3, and a repeated female vocal 'oooh' throughout verses 2 and 3. The culmination of all these wordless sounds is in the last extended chorus and outro section, which is a carefully composed tapestry of wordless sounds. With close listening, it becomes apparent that various vocal sounds have been integrated subtly into the harmonic palette. There are voices very low in the mix, singing individual lines that combine in counterpoint and create a vocal pad. These voices are heard almost subliminally, not as voices forward in the mix but rather as part of the supporting instrumental harmonic texture. Paralinguistic vocal sounds function here as instruments, as a compositional technique that fully embodies the piece. The voice is acting as a call that is outside language and is bodily situated, to allow the two lovers to meet outside of the constraints of language or of Freudian sexual expectation.

In looking at the embodiment of the orgasmic voice in this track, there is a relationship with other representations of orgasm in popular culture. The pitch of the melody in the chorus sections is one particular variant that allows for comparison. The stereotype of the female orgasm as high-pitched and sounding hypersexualised or theatrical in orientation, as heard in the 'fake orgasm' *When Harry Met Sally* representation, is the popular cultural norm for comparison. In 'The Letter' the pitch and melody of the chorus challenges dominant representations of female orgasm in three ways. First, the pitch is in a lower vocal range, the highest note being F#4, which in a female pop vocal range sits in the middle of the register. Second, instead of rising in pitch as the climax progresses, the melody moves downwards with a repeated motif of F4 to E4 to D4, repeating four

times, the second time adding a drop to the B3, as the tonic note at the end of the phrase. This could be interpreted as the orgasm here being imagined – a projected physical longing – and therefore not functioning as a full climax. Third, the orgasm is not the melodic climax in the song. The melody reaches its peak in the bridge, with the lyric 'I need you' and again with 'Oh baby', where the voice switches from the chest register into the head register, peaking at C#5. The association of higher pitch, and in particular the head register or more falsetto style of singing, is that of femininity. It is as though in direct conversation with the lover here in the bridge – where the lover is addressed directly – a traditional mode of femininity is inhabited vocally. However, in the sections with more oblique reference to the lover, or the orgasmic chorus where lexical breakdown occurs, feminine vocality is more nuanced and more guttural. Conceptually speaking, lower sounds are perhaps more associated with the body and materiality.

Harvey's representation of *jouissance* is one that is fully embodied, which she achieves through this sonic presentation, but also through reference to the use of all of the senses. Figure 2.1 highlights the points in the lyrics where each of the senses is invoked.

Hearing	Bridge
Sight	Verse 1 Verse 3
Smell	Verse 1
Taste	Verse 2
Touch	Verse 1

Figure 2.1: Table of sensory references in PJ Harvey's 'The Letter' (2004)

See Appendix 3 example 2.2 for lyrics

Whilst touch does feature, it is the only sense that is not evoked directly, in the sense that the bodily touch between the two lovers is an imagined event, functioning through metaphor and symbol. Through the imagination of touch and through references to giving a 'sign', Harvey is positing a feminine epistemological trope, outside of the control of the pen. She is perhaps suggesting that sixth sense is a possible embodied mode for these lovers – bodily desire can be experienced through alternative modes of experience: through intuition and imagination. This is a

possible way of the narrator 'knowing' her lover, in both a sexual and epistemological sense. I am interpreting this mode of feminine knowing, and this phono-somatic experience of orgasm, as a queering of desire.

2.6 Björk 'Cocoon' (2001)

Focusing on recorded popular music necessitates thinking more broadly about the musical object, and it is important to note that studio recordings often circulate with music video, particularly for tracks that are released as singles. I am therefore considering Björk's 'Cocoon' in conjunction with the video, to show how the sounds of female desire and orgasm work together with visual elements.

The video for 'Cocoon' begins with a line of ten apparently naked Björk figures, standing in an empty space. All of these 'Björks' are identical, wearing a very pale skin-tone bodysuit, with an effect of nakedness, and all have the same coiffured hairstyle, which – particularly in conjunction with the pale skin – is reminiscent of a geisha. The ten figures are in slightly different poses: most are standing upright, with head bent down slightly at a variety of angles. Only one is completely bent over, giving the impression of a lifeless doll. Some have their arms hanging down by their side: others have one arm across the body. There is a vacant expression on their faces, and they are all moving very slightly, as if puppets dangling from a string. Musically, the warm sound of a Rhodes keyboard is heard, shot through with vibrato, though the liner notes in *Vespertine* do not specify an instrument for this track. At 0:06, the electronic beats begin, with a sound that is reminiscent of a coin being entered into a slot. As if this was a strange vending machine, one of the figures begins to flutter her fingers, then moves forwards and walks to their left, in front of the line of remaining figures, across and then off the screen.

The screen goes dark, and the video cuts to a full body shot of a single figure standing alone in the middle of the screen, again in an empty space. This Björk figure has her eyes closed, with her shoulders rising and her hands clenching a little, her head moves, and we begin to see these initial movements are ones of rapture. The camera moves in to waist height, and as Björk begins to sing, her hands are palm up, and are raised to just below her breasts. The hands play an important role in this video, emphasising tactility and the centrality of touch. Hand gestures also suggest a broadening out of *jouissance* to extra-textual, with them functioning outside of the phallogocentric paradigm. Though 'gestures are an integral part of language as much as are

words, phrases and sentences – gesture and language are one system' it is important to note that including gesture in a conceptualisation of language necessitates 'broaden[ing] our concept of language to include what seems, in the traditional linguistic view, the opposite of language – the imagistic, instantaneous, nonsegmented and holistic' (McNeill 1992, p.2). The inclusion of the gestural in a broader understanding of language challenges the dominant phallogocentric model and presents an alternative which aligns more with *l'écriture féminine*.

In the video, as Björk begins to sing, palms placed upwards under her breasts, a red thread starts to grow, coming out of each of her nipples and lengthening in a circular way. Björk's fingers carry on moving and they appear to whip the threads into a circular form: they move up and over her shoulders and twist themselves down to the floor. As she sings, she whirls the threads around with her hands and fingers and at 1.26 she tangles her fingers up in the threads, and there is a close-up of a web of red thread and fingers. At 1.31 her fingers are released, and she throws her head back, with the words 'who would have known', her eyes closed. The thread moves behind her head, and begins to circle her body. From 1:22 to 2:07 the shot has been focused on Björk's head, shoulders and hands. At 2:07 the camera moves to a full body shot, making visible the extent of the encircling of Björk's body. The red thread has worked its way very loosely around her body, in particular her legs, and has begun to circle her waist. From 2:17 the thread tightens and is closely wound around her legs. Björk still throws her head back, closing her eyes, and playing out the facial expression of orgasm and desire.

The vocals for 'Cocoon' are evocative in their sound from the outset. Björk sings in a voice that whispers and shivers, with a paralinguistic breathlessness that immediately connotes desire. The song is a love song, and the lyrics speak ecstatically – indeed almost religiously – of a sexual relationship: 'Who would have known that a boy like him/Would have entered me lightly restoring my blisses'. At 2:31, Björk sings even more explicitly (for lyrics see Appendix 3, example 2.3)

The explicit sexual narrative, in combination with the breathy shivering voice, and the rapturous face and naked body of Björk in the video, is a clear representation of female desire and female orgasm. Björk uses her voice in particular to embody the sounds of desire, the sounds of *jouissance*. When she begins to sing the first word 'Who', she uses a technique that emphasises the breath before the note itself. As Nicola Dibben argues, Björk's vocal style connotes a 'naturalness' and authenticity:

> Like other pop vocalists her voice sounds untutored, which suggests that she, and her music, are unsullied by human or technological artifice: the noisy breaths, explosive consonants, shrieks, howls and guttural explosions are the opposite of trained (classical) vocal styles. (Dibben 2009, p.54)

In this particular track, the noisy breath becomes the signifier of orgasm, and as the track progresses, the breath becomes deeper, and more apparent in the mix. This phono-somatic breathing draws attention to the body, and closer to materiality. The body becomes more visually central here, and the link between the voice and the body across a corporeal boundary is emphasised, as at 3:00 the thread comes streaming entangled out of Björk's mouth. At 3:04, the narrative changes somewhat, as the words 'who would have known' are sung melismatically, with the words breaking down into sound, with strong breath and gasps, as though the materiality of the voice is breaking through the story. The orgasm threatens to overthrow the narrative, breaking into a wordless, excessive climax. Visually, Björk's body moves in with more force at this point, with the hands outstretched to the side, moving up and down with the shoulders, representing the physical contraction of the body in orgasm. The narrative returns at 3:16 with the phrase 'A train of pearls', suggesting a climax with male ejaculation, with the train being a clear Freudian symbol of the phallus (Freud [1916] 1973) and pearls being linked – particularly in slang vernacular through the phrase 'pearl necklace' – to semen (Partridge 2006). However it may also be possible to read this return from excess and climax in a number of alternative ways, one being as female ejaculation. Björk goes on to describe the movement of the train of pearls between mouths (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 2.4). The symbolic relationship between the mouth and vagina is referenced here, and the columnic link between the sexual organs and the voice is again clear, through the paralinguistic vocal play (Middleton 2006). Here there is also a move into a queer space, where boy and girl, female and male ejaculation, penises, mouths and vaginas are all brought together in a plurality of excessive ecstasy and pleasure.

The video also highlights the liminality of the female body, and problematises the boundaries of the body, through the red thread emerging from Björk's nipples, and the thread moving in and out the mouth. The mouth features more prominently in the video when the orgasmic sounds reach their peak at around 3 minutes. The viewer/listener is drawn to the embodied voice at this point in the track, through the paralinguistic breathiness of orgasm. Female sexuality, reproduction and sensuality are also highlighted visually through the cyclical movement of the thread around the body, enveloping Björk in a cocoon by the end of the video. The metaphor of the cocoon represents an embodied change, or metamorphosis, which has only become possible through the experience of *jouissance*.

2.7 Björk 'All is Full of Love' (1997)

Here I want to pause to discuss Björk's vocal style more generally, as she utilises a range of vocal techniques and strategies across her output, some of which explicitly signify embodied experiences. Her use of a broad lexicon of paralinguistic sounds serves to highlight the materiality of the voice. Of the three case studies, Björk has the most consistent and repetitive use of vocal sounds, which can be seen across her output.

One of Björk's most used vocal sounds is a strong 'belted' vocal tone, and this is particularly apparent when Björk uses her upper register, and particularly nearer the end or climactic point in her songs. Various examples of this can be found across her output, from the album *Debut* onwards. This vocal style is used on 'Human Behaviour' (1993) during the choruses, when Björk sings 'and there is no map'. She develops this style at the climactic point later in the song at 2:22 with the lyric 'and a compass wouldn't help at all', and then the following line the tone becomes louder, stronger and also higher. This song, as with many others across Björk's output, has lyrics that are difficult to decipher, and are missing from the transcriptions in the liner notes. This point at 2:31 the words are indecipherable, as though the tone of the voice has taken over language. In actuality, these are glossolalic utterances, similar to those used by artists such as Liz Fraser from the Cocteau Twins or Jónsi Birgisson from Sigur Rós: nonsense languages, made from improvised vocal sound.[27] At this point in 'Human Behaviour' linguistic clarity is lost. This could be read as linguistically excessive, extending from language into wordless paralanguage, with phono-

[27] See Miller (2003) for a discussion of glossolalia in the work of Sigur Rós.

somatics placed at the forefront of the sound.[28] Glossolalia is an extension of lexical breakdown. Often defined as speaking with (or in) tongues, I am here using it in a broader, non-religious context. I am defining glossolalia as vocalisations that approximate language but have no intelligible meaning, and are in essence nonsensical. Glossolalia is expressive (Miller 2003) and in certain types of music can 'arise from […] corporeal transformations' (Eidsheim 2011, p.139). The expressivity of the body through the voice occurs in glossolailic singing, and as such it is a phono-somatic practice where the lived experience of bodies can be expressed outside the dominance of linguistic structures.

Returning to the specific song for analysis in this chapter, 'All is full of love' is a narrative that focuses on the excessive in terms of love and affection. Björk sings with the narrative focus being a person's acceptance of a bountiful source of love (for lyrics, see Appendix 3, Example 2.5). As the title of the track suggests, love is abundant here – *all* is full of love. The song has a sensual quality, with lush instrumentation and harmony giving a sonic portrait of a physical world of desire.

The melody is a simple and focuses on a limited pitch range of just less than an octave (Bb3 to Ab4) for a large section of the track, which could be viewed as melodic containment. There is a simple melodic motif featured with the vocal line 'All is full of love'. The pitch range is then extended at 2:00 when the backing vocal develops this motif in two ways. First, the motif begins up a fourth, breaking out of the previous pitch containment. Second, Björk also sings the backing vocal line. When this voice enters, at first it appears to be the main vocal. But when the melody re-enters, it is apparent that the voice has been multiplied. This, combined with the new motif, gives a sense of proliferation, of mirroring, of fullness. The backing vocal repeats the phrase 'All is full of love' in Björk's more powerful and belted vocal style, as though this is a clarion call, heard over the more restrained melody circulating within the octave. At 2:23 the melody appears to breakdown lexically for a moment, to move out of the contained pitch, into a more climactic section, returning with the phrase 'All is full of love' which continues until the end of the track. The voices overlap, mirroring and doubling the call, with the phrase being layered and exchanged between the voices. Here, the limitations of the narrow range are exceeded, and the excess of love – being all and everywhere – is finally realised through the voice. Containment has been replaced with the joy of excess, the completeness of pleasure, evoked through the circularity of the feminine voice. In 'All is full of love', the sounds of the body and the sounds of orgasm appear

[28] 'Venus as a boy' (1993) is another track in which this belted voice is apparent, but there are many more across Björk's output.

through this metaphor of excess. Desire is expressed through the strong vocal, which represents a letting go, and a release in a way that challenges, and queers, dominant representations of orgasm in popular culture.

The video for 'All is full of love' features a robot that is in the process of being built, with its face in the image of Björk. The video begins with a shot of the robot lying on its side, being tweaked by two machines on either side. The Björk robot has its eyes closed, and is singing the song. The whiteness of the robot connotes purity, and the lighting of the video supports this with a luminous quality. At 0.53, when the robot Björk sings 'you have to trust it', it opens its eyes slightly and glances towards the camera, directing its gaze towards the viewer. The eyes are realistically human, and the first liminal boundary is troubled: that between human and robot.[29] From this point, as the machines work on the robot, there are several close-up shots of machine parts working and moving, in and out of the robot, being lubricated by liquids. The sensuality of the song and the reference to love in the lyrics, give this imagery symbolic power, connoting sexuality and bodily fluids. The video conflates technology and corporeality. The robot itself is built to accentuate femininity, with clear curves and breasts apparent. As the machines move in and out of the robotic Björk, – another boundary being crossed and re-crossed – there is a clear symbolism of penetration that becomes evident.

This visual reference to penetration is troubled and queered by the narrative of the video, where the doubling that explored vocally is also enacted visually. Another Björk robot appears, singing the backing line I explored as vocally extending and breaking out of the containment from the singular voice. Here, the visual appearance of another robot highlights the importance of multiplication in this track. The self is doubled, the voice is doubled, and *jouissance* is also doubled. Despite the imagery of penetration, it is feminine sexuality that is being explored here. The circularity of the phrase 'All is full of love' occurs with the introduction of the second voice, and the second Björk robot. The first robot is sitting down, and the second robot is standing, singing 'All is full of love' and smiling at the end of the phrase, her gaze entirely fixed on the seated Björk. As the seated Björk looks down at herself, her pelvic area is flowing with white fluid: this is not ejaculatory, but surges, envelops and overruns. The excessivity of female sexuality is highlighted here, building towards *jouissance*. At 2:11 the queer narrative is extended further, with the two Björk robots pictured holding each other and kissing, one on the right moving her hand across the other's buttocks, and machines entering them on both sides at various points. At

[29] See Haraway (1984) for a feminist manifesto that outlines the figure of the cyborg: part-human and part-mechanical.

2:45 the hand of the right robot is in-between the legs of the second. Björk is configuring queer desire as a visual representation of the construction of desire, sexuality, gender and the body itself. The doubled robotic self is in love with its mirror, flowing and circling with feminine desire, expressed phono-somatically through the multiplied voice.

2.8 Tori Amos 'Icicle' (1994)

In Tori Amos' song 'Icicle', from *Under the Pink* (1994), there is a lyrical representation of female sexuality in relation to masturbation. In the narrative, this sexuality is explicitly positioned in opposition to religion, specifically Christianity. The story takes place during a church group, and there are references within the lyrics to conventions of Christianity, such as 'Easter dresses' and 'the good book'. The wittily phrased opening sets up this contrast of female desire against religiosity (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 2.6). This made clearer through a spatial metaphor of upstairs and downstairs: the church group being downstairs, and the narrator is masturbating upstairs. The reversal of traditional religious metaphors – where things that are higher are more pure and closer to heaven and those that are lower are more base – occurs here with Amos' narrator being positioned upstairs.[30] This underscores one of the key metaphors in the song: that of female sexuality and female agency being chosen and prioritised over patriarchal and religious norms. Through the act of masturbation, she is prioritising her femininity and her female body (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 2.7). Here she is actively choosing female desire and the female body, over patriarchal religion, which prioritises masculinity and draws her away from the body, seeing it as a site of impurity. Amos' narrator has agency and choice, choosing to forgo the prayers, and the Easter dresses, choosing instead to be in pyjamas and following what Amos is setting up as her own embodied religion.

Historically, in much Christian theology the body is seen both as impure, something to be regulated, and as a dangerous site where both temptation and 'ungodliness' are found. Biblical scriptures encourage the subjugation of the body to the will of God, using discipline and control.[31] The body is seen as an instrument of sin. However, Amos is embracing the body as something to be explored, rather than to be feared or regulated. Amos's narrator is using the body as her own

[30] In Genesis 6-8 (King James Version) God creates the firmament, as above the water, then creates the land masses, calling the firmament 'heaven'. This sets up the spatial metaphor from the outset of the Bible.
[31] 1 Corinthians 9:27 (English Standard Version) 'I discipline my body and keep it under control'.

religion, unashamedly taking refuge in her own embodiment rather than in the pure body of Christ. The narrator is not only exploring the body but also actively enjoying the body, again opposing Christian theology around asceticism and hedonism.

Having earlier declared 'I think the Good Book is missing some pages', Amos' narrator asserts her own agency. With the lyric 'Feel the word' she describes a tactile and embodied experience of her own religion. Text and language are experienced through sexuality, and specifically through the sense of touch. The phrase is repeated six times (the last time just as 'feel it'), which mirrors the physical repetition of masturbation where repeated movements bringing an orgasmic climax. Melodically, this phrase is contained and restricted, moving within a semitone from Eb4 to E4 and then back to the Eb, highlighting the physical repetition with a sonic one. With the third iteration of this phrase a vocal crescendo is noticeable with Amos' vocal tone appearing more urgent and impassioned. Immediately after this repeated phrase, as the song's melodic climax is reached, Amos' voice rises up, both in pitch – moving up the octave to Eb5 – and in volume, as there is also a dynamic shift, a crescendo that has begun part-way through the repeated phrase. The vocal timbre also shifts during this section of the song, becoming more creaky voiced and breathy, the lyrics being paralinguistically articulated. Female orgasm is explored here, specifically through vocal expressivity.[32] In the narrator's orgasm, this expression of female desire and sexuality, possibility is located. In the context of opposition to a patriarchal religion and the celebration of the female body, this is specifically the possibility of female agency and power through *jouissance*. The narrator is returning to the power she has identified in the female body, in her own sexuality, and notes that in other areas of her life she could have accessed or utilised this power and agency (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 2.8). During masturbation, the female body gives the narrator power enough to oppose Christianity, but yet outside of that embodied context, this power does not appear to translate to her wider experience.

2.9 Conclusion

The orgasmic sounds featured in the tracks discussed provide a challenge to the dominant representation of female orgasm in popular culture. The orgasmic sounds heard in these tracks are varied and nuanced vocal representations of female orgasm, which allow for the excessivity of feminine vocality to play out, in a way that aligns with my discussion of Dolar's notion of excess in

[32] See also Whiteley (2000) pp.203-204 for a brief discussion of this orgasmic element in 'Icicle'.

section 1.5. The paralinguistic exploration of vocal timbres, in combination with lexical breakdown and glossolalia, set the voice in a particular liminal space in relation to text, language and sound. The outcome of this is twofold. First, the fullness of female pleasure, of *jouissance*, can be abundantly explored in this phono-somatic space. The dominance of masculine textuality is challenged, and ruptures in the flow of language allow for an embodied feminine vocality to emerge. Second, voices here become queered (see section 1.4 and 2.3.2), through the circumventing of boundaries and the breaking out of containment. Returning to Sedgwick's notion of queer, her 'open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning' (1993, p.8) are made clear in these tracks, through the moving between boundaries of varying kinds. These voices sit in uncomfortable spaces between gender expectation, sexual exploration, knowing and unknowing, sound and language.

The orgasmic stereotype, returning to the examples by Meg Ryan in the film *When Harry Met Sally* or Donna Summer's 'Love to love you baby', is not present here. Instead, a range of vocal strategies are employed by the case study artists to phono-somatically render their bodies through the voice. PJ Harvey disrupts this trope through displaying a mocking and sarcastic vocal tone and theatricalising the orgasm, and Björk's sensual whispered and mirrored breathiness points to a more organic female sensuality. Amos' self-exploration and self-pleasure deposes the primacy of patriarchal structures, and asserts female agency.

Through using paralanguage and lexical breakdown to represent the sound of female orgasm, these singers draw the listener's attention to the body, to a space outside of the vocal narrative, and open up a performative space of embodied experiences. Feminine phono-somatics allow for a queered space, of boundary crossing and of excessivity.

Chapter 3: Violence embodied: traumatised bodies and post-9/11

3.1 Traumatised bodies and the voice

> To listen to the crisis of a trauma […] is not to listen for the event, but to hear in the testimony the survivor's departure from it: the challenge of the therapeutic listener, in other words, is *how to listen to departure*.
> (Caruth 1995, p.10)

The traumatised body is featured heavily in the work of the case study artists, and bodies in trauma are explored on both an individual and collective level. This chapter investigates the relationship between trauma, embodiment/disembodiment and the voice. Embodying trauma enables a departure from the trauma, and this is an important element in healing (Caruth 1995). The relationship between embodiment and the voice may result in a recuperative space being engendered through music, and it is this space that I want to explore. In trauma studies literature, the separation of the self from the body, or subjectivity/identity from the body, is recognised as a post-traumatic strategy of coping (Kammerer and Mazelis 2006). In analysing the positioning of the voice and the body in the case study artists' work, I show how the voice can 'stand in' for identity, for mind and for subjectivity.

The motif of the trauma sufferer floating above their body, and witnessing violent events from afar, is a common one in trauma literature. The subject separates from the body, in order to protect oneself from the trauma. If the subject and body are separate, and the subject is viewing the event – and the body - from elsewhere, then the trauma is happening to someone else. The problematic of this survival solution as a mode of dealing with trauma is that, post-traumatically, the body and the mind are separated. Trauma survivors often face the problematic of a disassociation with, and a disgust for, the body:

> Behaviours that are adaptive – for example, dissociation that removes one from traumatic events […] eventually exacerbate the troubles in trauma's wake. Adaptations that began as coping mechanisms end up as problems. (Kammerer and Mazelis 2006, p.5)

Kammerer and Mazelis also outline some of the main impacts of trauma. Many of these impacts, whilst they are psychological manifestations of trauma, have a bodily effect. The physical list of impacts of trauma that they cite includes eating disorders, self-inflicted violence, substance abuse, increased STIs through risky sexual behaviour or prostitution, bodily pain and poor body image. They then move on to discuss impacts of trauma that cannot be described as either physical or psychological:

> Less easy to capture, much less to quantify, are lack of trust (Sadavoy, 1997), fear of forming relationships, and lack of ease in one's being (Briere & Elliott, 1994) – the disorientation and disconnection that trauma creates (Saakvitne, 2000).
> (Kammerer and Mazelis 2006, p.5)

This 'lack of ease in one's being' is a disconnection with the very fabric of the self: the traumatised self is a separated self, which is wounded and partial. Across this subjective rupture, the manifestation of the disembodied and traumatised self, is where healing needs to occur.

The voice bears witness to the traumatised body, with the body existing as the site of trauma. The material for analysis focuses on corporeal experiences of violence – of rape, murder, physical violence – but by embodying these experiences phono-somatically, the voice cannot help but hold sounds of damage and trauma. The body is in the voice and the voice is in the body. The voice itself can, of course, function separately as damaged and traumatised (Stras 2006) but here the focus is on how the trauma shifts positions, between the body and the voice, even when only the body has been traumatised. By allowing the voice to sound out phono-somatically as traumatised, the denial of trauma is avoided. By recognising two elements – one, that of the traumatised body, and two, that of the damaged voice (which can represent damaged subjectivity) – trauma can be healed. As the voice is situated in a 'third space' between the speaking/singing body and the

listening body (Jarman-Ivens 2011) the damaged voice is never fully identified with the traumatised body, and therefore avoids collapsing into the trauma. The voice therefore functions as a recuperative and healing mechanism.

Extending this, the exploration of bodily trauma through the voice as a therapeutic device also functions in a positive framework. Metaphorically, this gives the trauma victim 'a voice', otherwise framed as agency or subjectivity. The dichotomy of subject and object is often mapped on to the voice and the body, and although this paradigm can be useful – for example, in viewing the voice as an assertion of subjectivity outside of the traumatised body – it must by necessity also be troubled and disrupted. The structures by which this logic is maintained also support other hegemonic viewpoints through which oppression and subjugation are manifested. Furthermore, the upholding of such structures reinforces the very culture of violence. In particular, I will return to discussing gender and violence in section 3.3.

In a phono-somatic paradigm, the materiality of the voice often functions paralinguistically, as outlined in the previous chapter. I am moving from discussing vocal expression of pleasure to that of pain, yet there is an area between the two that is of interest. The sonic ambiguity of the scream underscores the liminal quality of phono-somatics. In the analysis of the scream as sitting between pain and pleasure, care must be taken not to denigrate or dismiss the significant pain of those who have experienced trauma. Rather, in analysing the scream as such I am pointing to the voice as a source of ambiguity, as an in-betweenness (see section 1.4), which is precisely why it functions recuperatively. The therapeutic dimensions of voice come precisely because of its liminal qualities and the multiplicity of meanings found in vocal expression. For example, in Tori Amos' 'Precious Things' (1991) the song begins with a repetitive breath sound – functioning percussively as part of the rhythm section – then lyrically opens with 'so I run faster', which highlights the bodily paralinguistic opening of the track. The narrative tells of running away but being caught, of schoolyard loyalties and of boys. The breath sound becomes obscured by the drums and bass, which enter at the chorus. At 1:16, after the chorus has finished, the breath becomes audible again and the sound of a scream is apparent. It is this element that is crucial in my discussion. The scream sits somewhere between pleasure and pain, evidencing the liminal qualities of paralinguistic phono-somatics. The border crossing of body and voice, and that of pleasure and pain, is shown here. The lyrics of the track also evidence the movement between pleasure and pain, with the oft-discussed lyrical opening (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.1) (Rycenga 1997; Trier-Bieniek 2003) and the narrator's desire to enact violence on the boys that give her this pleasure. The scream repeats later in the song, and as a motif highlights the

ambiguity of sound, particularly that which functions paralinguistically. The articulation of trauma through the voice can operate in a range of ways, which will be explored in the songs for analysis in this chapter.

3.2 Narrative and witnessing

Narrative retelling of trauma brings with it a 'witnessing' that is crucial for the healing process. Laub identifies three levels of witnessing through discussion of his own experiences as a Holocaust survivor, and his work recording the accounts of other survivors (in Caruth 1995). First, 'being a witness to oneself' (p.61), for which one needs a sense of subjectivity and of identity. Laub argues that the Holocaust itself removed both the possibility of subjectivity and of address to another. Without access to a subject position, witnessing becomes an impossibility:

> […] when one cannot turn to a "you" one cannot say "thou" even to oneself. The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself*. (Laub in Caruth 1995, p.66)

Here, the importance of subjectivity is clearly apparent. The second level of witnessing is '[…] participation, not in the events, but in the account of them' (p.62). Here, the listener becomes a witness through the retelling of events. When reliving trauma narratives in musical form, the concept of listening becomes even more heightened and multifaceted. Third – and perhaps most pertinently for the case study artists – 'the process of witnessing is itself being witnessed' (p.62). The musicians are making public the act of witnessing, as discussion of the critical attention to and central themes of PJ Harvey's 2011 album *Let England Shake* will make clear. To be a witness to events creates a particular sonic sphere, in which trauma and violence are musically explored and the possibility of healing is presented.

3.3 Gender, bodies and violence

The social construction of femininity has a particular relationship to violence, as violence is inextricably bound up with notions of power and of social control. The inequality of gender relations in society is in part upheld through the use of, and potential for, violence, both on a physical and emotional level:

> Much of the violence in contemporary society serves to preserve asymmetrical gender systems of power. For example, compulsory aggression as a central component of masculinity serves to legitimate male on male violence: sexual harassment is a means of controlling the public behavior of women: assaults on gay, lesbian and transgendered people are a way of punishing them for "gender transgressions": and rape is a standard tool for domination in war, in prison subcultures and in too many intimate relations. (O'Toole et al 2007, p.xii)

The mechanisms of punishment for the transgression of norms around gender and sexuality are structured through discourses of violence. As these mechanisms are culturally situated, they can occur on both a personal and collective level, for example, rape as both a weapon in warfare and in close relations (O'Toole et al 2007). The interpersonal experience of gendered violence acts to reinforce the cultural norms of gender, through the individual standing in for the whole.

The musical material for analysis in this chapter does not just focus on violence towards women, but also considers violence perpetrated by women. The upheaval of gender norms around femininity and violence – the switch from female victim to female perpetrator – finds its most potent expression in the embodied voice, when women phono-somatically sing narratives of violence. Storytelling and narrative are central to this chapter, as these women musicians recount tales of violence in varying ways. Vocal strategies of either embodiment or disembodiment have disparate effects on narrative. On the one hand, bodies can be brought to the fore of the narrative, re-connecting the voice and subjectivity with the materiality of the body, and presenting an opportunity for healing. On the other hand, the voice can be disembodied: distanced from the source of the sound, or from the violence itself. This post-traumatic coping strategy can be interrogated in terms of the subject/object boundary. The body becomes the object and the voice becomes the subject. Yet if the perpetrator of the violence recounts the

narrative, this embodied healing/disembodied distance is switched around. Put another way, what happens when the voice is embodied and corporeally situated, *and* that body is the source of the violence? Or does the voice of a violent perpetrator become disembodied, to cope with their actions, in a mirroring of the victim's ability to cope through a distancing strategy?

3.4 Individual and collective violence in the post-9/11 world

In discussing violence and trauma, I distinguish between collective and individual experiences of violence. I define 'collective' as violence upon a group or community of people, whether perpetrated by an individual or a group. I define 'individual' as violence towards a single individual, most usually by a single person or very small group of people, otherwise expressed as 'interpersonal trauma' (Brown in Caruth 1995; Kammerer and Mazelis 2006). This distinction between collective and individual is important for a number of reasons. First, when examining narratives of violence, there is a difference between relating experiences of violence towards oneself as the sole victim, or towards oneself as a community experiencing violence. Dealing with trauma as a community is a radically different experience than dealing with trauma as an individual. Certainly communities of support are available to those who have suffered an individualised act of violence: for example, Finding (2001) discusses online communities of rape victims, and Tori Amos' personal engagement with support for rape survivors through RAINN and individual interactions with fans. However, community needs to be sought out by the individual following the traumatic act: it does not come to the individual as a natural part of the experience of trauma. On the other hand, communities who suffer violence together are automatically sharing a collective sense of trauma, without having to actively seek others who have similar experiences. Whilst the experience of collective violence and the resultant manifestation of trauma can differ drastically from person to person, or an individual may choose to distance themselves completely from their traumatised community, shared experiences are a fundamental element of trauma in this context. A traumatised community may become fractured, but there always exists the possibility of shared healing, within that traumatic space.

Second, narratives of violence that relate to the collective more readily draw upon notions of community, race, class and nation and therefore need to be assessed in a different light. This is not to say that individual narratives do not explore these concepts, but they tend to be located in a more subjective and individualised conceptual framework.

Third, writing this in 2015, with some of the musical material having been written post-9/11, necessitates some discussion of violence in the post-9/11 world. I separate these two notions of

collective and individual violence to see if there has been any shift of understanding post-9/11. My hypothesis is that interpersonal, individual violence post-9/11 is framed in a different way, and draws more heavily on the concepts normally explored through narratives of collective violence. Therefore, splitting these two concepts pre-9/11 was an easier and structurally clear way of analysing the outcomes of violence. 9/11 problematises this, as violence of any kind becomes located in a cultural framework of collective violence. The individual has almost ceased to exist outside of the collective. Terror, and the possibility of violence, has become a communal experience rather than an individual one. Through the lens of gender, the threat of violence is something that structures everyday life, described as 'insidious trauma' (Root in Caruth 1995). In this context, the shift from an individual concern of violence to a post-9/11 collective anxiety mirrors the experience of women.

In this chapter, the songs for analysis by Tori Amos are her cover of the Boomtown Rats' song 'I Don't Like Mondays', featured on her album of covers by male artists *Strange Little Girls* (2001), and her a capella song 'Me and a Gun' from her debut album *Little Earthquakes* (1991). PJ Harvey's album Let England Shake (2011) will be analysed broadly, with specific reference to the two tracks 'Bitter Branches' and 'The Words that Maketh Murder'. I will also look at 'Down by the Water' from Harvey's 1995 album *To Bring You My Love*. Amos' tracks focus on the individual, as the victim ('Me and a Gun') but then also as the perpetrator ('I Don't Like Mondays'). The later Harvey tracks are expressions of collective violence, drawing on experiences of warfare, but 'Down by the Water' expresses individual perpetration of violence, and aligns with Amos' perspective in 'I Don't Like Mondays'. Finally, Björk's 'Earth Intruders' (2007) from *Volta* will also be examined, to give a broader perspective of violence drawing on thematic material around nature, the environment and space.

3.5 Tori Amos 'I Don't Like Mondays' (2001)

Scholarly writing on Tori Amos has largely focused on her explorations of trauma, violence and their relationship to masculinity and femininity. I seek to extend this previous work on Amos by linking these explorations of violence and trauma in her music much more closely to the notion of embodiment.

Burns and Wood (2004) analyse two Tori Amos covers – Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' and Eminem's ''97 Bonnie and Clyde' – in terms of authenticity, appropriation and intertextuality.

They use Henry Louis Gates' notion of 'Signifyin(g)' and focus their attention on 'the voice as the site and vehicle of an artist's Signifyin(g) expression' (Burns and Wood 2004, abstract). For Burns and Wood, the authentic authorial voice carries with it the potential for social change and a political agenda, and in the analysis of Tori Amos' work, they situate this in a framework of anti-discrimination:

> We may not be able to see Amos as experiencing the same traumas of racism that Holiday experienced, but she does carry cultural memories and traumas authentic to her own experience and she has made such trauma a strong thematic feature of her work. Her work in general has revealed a contemporary social conscience regarding the boundaries and restrictions that are placed on women in certain social, cultural and religious contexts. Her own cultural history (she is part Native-American Cherokee Indian) has raised her sensitivity to racism and gender discrimination. Many of her songs explore themes of power and what she herself refers to as patriarchal structures. ([28])[33]

Burns and Wood note that this anti-discrimination stance is heightened on the 2001 album *Strange Little Girls* in which Amos responds to rising levels of violence experienced in our culture. Amos comments on this through the lens of gender, by choosing to cover songs originally sung by men. The album provides a clear commentary on the intersection of violence and gender, and how these power structures are culturally embedded. In Burns and Wood's analysis of Amos' version of ''97 Bonnie and Clyde' they show how she 'gives the murder victim a voice by offering the song text from her perspective' ([49]). This subjective turn works well on many of the tracks on this album, allowing violence to be viewed from a new perspective and giving voice to trauma.

One of the elements of Burns and Wood's analysis of ''97 Bonnie and Clyde', that is useful to draw upon when focusing on embodiment, is their analysis of the voice and its particular qualities. The analysis focuses on the voice as an expression of the victim's subjectivity. They look at how the voice is recorded, the vocal tone and quality, the expression given through the voice, and production techniques employed. In this example, the vocals were recorded inside a box that restricted Amos' movement, in order to 'relate […] psychologically to the dead mother' ([53]). The

[33] This web source uses paragraph numbers in square brackets, which I am using in place of citing a page number.

quality of the vocal tone is 'cold, quiet and detached' ([53]) with a speech-like articulation. The production techniques also are an element that is used to build a particular relationship between the voice, the victim and the listener:

> In the final mix, her voice is very forward and highly compressed so that even her whispers suggest a close proximity to the listener. ([53])

Burns and Wood also argue that Amos conveys various emotions through 'nuances of expression' ([53]), and vocal strategies such as whispering, gasping and utilising a harsher, more abrasive tone. These paralinguistic features are also discussed by Lacasse, which I have discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. In both the analyses by Burns and Wood, and by Lacasse, we see interpretations that relate the voice to subjectivity and subject position, particularly in terms of female subjectivity and norms of femininity. However, in both analyses neither the voice nor subjectivity are fully related to the body. The body is only mentioned in passing.

This chapter aims to fill this gap in the scholarly literature by addressing phono-somatics: the embodied quality of the voice. Focusing on the track 'I Don't Like Mondays' I take some of the elements of vocal analysis that Burns and Wood employ, but in doing so can also view the voice as part of an embodied subjectivity. As a cover version, there is an immediate comparison to the original song, made famous by The Boomtown Rats in 1979.[34] The song is written about a school massacre which occurred in San Diego, California in 1979. What particularly distinguishes this act of violence is that the perpetrator of the attack was a sixteen-year-old girl, Brenda Ann Spencer. This type of event is shocking in and of itself, but the shock factor is heightened further through the lens of gender, as massacres of this type are overwhelmingly perpetrated by men (Kimmel and Mahler 2003).[35]

One of the most striking differences between the two versions is the atmosphere created through the dramatisation of the song. The Boomtown Rats' original version is a highly theatrical piece,

[34] The song was released as a single in July 1979 and stayed at Number One in the UK charts for four weeks (Official Charts 2015). It was released on the Boomtown Rats' studio album *The Fine Art of Surfacing* in October 1979.

[35] Kimmel and Mahler (2003) argue that studies of school shootings prior to 2003 had ignored gender: 'Conspicuously absent is any mention of just who these youth or teens are who have committed the violence. They pay little or no attention to the obvious fact that all the school shootings were committed by boys – masculinity is the single greatest risk factor in school violence' (p.1442).

where certain compositional elements and specific modes of delivery combine together to highlight the shocking subject matter. For example, the opening piano section begins with a glissando, which suggests a dream-like quality and sleep. After this initial glissando, there is a return to reality – or, perhaps more pertinently, an awakening from a dream – by the final note of the glissando, which is heavily accented and sustained in a minor tonality (See Figure 3.1). This note continues throughout the first fifteen seconds of the opening section, featuring as a drone on the strings, which increases the tension, and drama. A pentatonic piano motif is introduced directly after the glissando, which is also strongly accented and defined. These accents give a dramatic and gripping opening. This is then heightened at the beginning of beat 4 by two quaver staccato stabs from the drums, strings and piano in the background, and these stabs punctuate the drone. The drone then begins again on the first beat of the next bar, as a drone note that lasts for almost two bars, until beat 4 of the second bar when the staccato stabs interrupt again. The method of highlighting the subject matter in such a dramatic fashion serves to move the narrator and the listener away from the subjectivity of the perpetrator to a broader viewpoint. The music sets up a theatrical dynamic, and where the subject matter is alarming there is a sense of spectatorship. This is a dramatic story worth telling, and the connection with the individual perpetrator is distanced, not allowing for a close understanding of their psychological trauma.

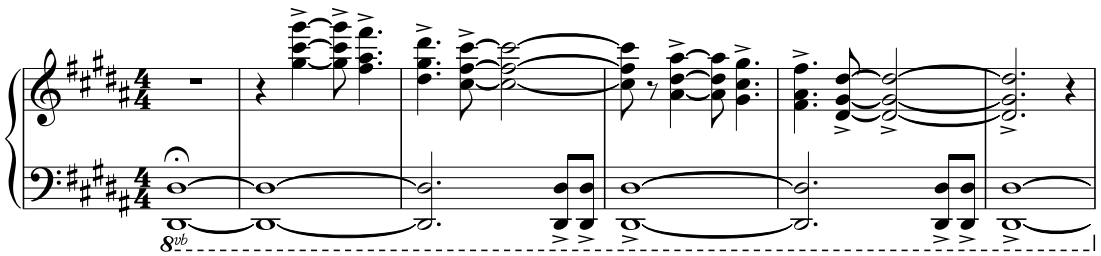

Figure 3.1: The Boomtown Rats' Introduction to 'I Don't Like Mondays' (1979)

From the very start of Amos' version, however, there is an interiority, closeness and sense of calm to the song. The Fender Rhodes sets the tone for the vocals, with the warmth of its sound repeating a four-note pattern that is then mirrored heterophonically by the entry of the vocals in bar 3 (See Figure 3.2). The voice begin with an 'mmmm' sound, which has a reassuring tone, such as when a mother sings as a child is falling asleep. Similar production techniques are employed in this track as Burns and Woods note with the Eminem cover. These techniques suggest a closeness between the listener and the vocalist, with close miking allowing the breath and vocal rasps to be heard. This sense of closeness and intimacy, with the warmth of the initial 'mmmm' sound, is

supported by the simplicity of arrangement. There are only vocals, Rhodes and bass, the latter not being very clearly defined as separate to the sound world of the Rhodes. The sense of warmth, proximity and interiority is retained throughout the track. In opposition to the Boomtown Rats' original, Amos brings the listener in to the story world, asking them to come closer and listen. It is not a showy spectacle, dramatised and heightened in tension. This is rather a call to listen carefully and attentively, for subtleties in the story.

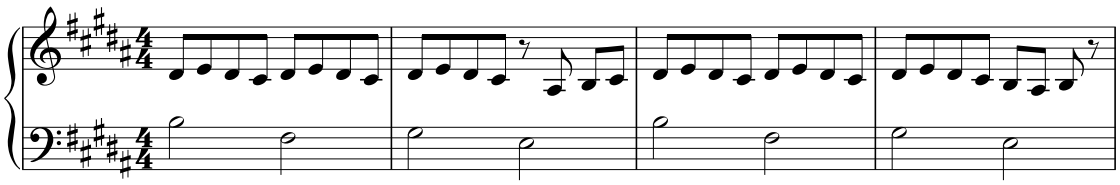

Figure 3.2: Tori Amos' Introduction to 'I Don't Like Mondays' (2001)

When looking at modes of narrative delivery, three elements are of particular interest here: the gender of the narrator, the vocal tone and the tense of the narration. These allow us to understand how the voice is used in an embodied fashion, not only in terms of the story being embodied by the singer, but also how the central character, the female perpetrator of the violent act, is embodied. These three elements are bound up together and have an impact on each other. As mentioned earlier, when a man sings the narrative there is a distancing from the gender of the subject. Even at points in the song where the singer is singing in first person – here, in the chorus section – there is a distance put in place by the fact that the singer, Bob Geldof, is a man singing from a female subjective position. When Tori Amos sings the chorus of the track the gender distance collapses: this is a female voice is singing in first person, from a female subject position. This adds to the intimacy of the Amos' version and gives Amos access to a psychological level of embodiment in terms of the analysis of trauma. More complex layers of witnessing are allowed, with the subjectivity of the perpetrator open to exploration and her own trauma being at the centre of the narrative. The chorus is the point of witnessing, where the trauma can be healed. The narrative changes tense with a shift from third person – which gives the context to the story – to first person – the subjective position of the perpetrator of the violence. The lyric 'Tell me why?/I don't like Mondays' is taken from the real-life event, where Brenda Ann Spencer gave her reason for the massacre as 'I don't like Mondays'. The chorus ends with the statement 'I'm gonna shoot the whole day down'. In the Boomtown Rats' version, the opening compositional set-up is a storytelling one, where Geldof is dramatising a shocking event that he has heard about. In this

version, because the gender distance between the narrator and the subject allows it, there is another analogy that can be made. Geldof is linking the phrase 'I don't like Mondays' somewhat inappropriately with his dislike of the working week. Adding in the vocal tone, we have a petulant expression of the reason. The backing vocals ask the question 'Tell me why?' and Geldof answers tetchily, 'I don't like Mondays'. In the Amos version however, the shift to first person in the chorus is very different indeed. Amos, with the gender distance closed, clearly represents the girl herself. There are no backing vocals here, so the first person perspective becomes the girl asking a question 'tell me why I don't like Mondays?'. This shift of the question mark between the two versions is barely perceptible but becomes an embodiment of traumatisation, where the narrator is a girl trying to understand her own psychological distress. As Burns and Wood note, Amos' Eminem cover has a markedly different vocal tone, and this is certainly also the case in 'I Don't Like Mondays'. Geldof's version has a sneering, almost angry vocal, typical of a punk or post-punk style. The vocal is staccato in delivery at some key points in the narrative. The quietness and intimacy of Amos' vocal tone in the first person chorus, coupled with the close miked production technique, draws the listener into an empathetic relationship with the character. There is a smoothness to Amos' voice, but throughout the track there is frequent use of vocal fry which punctuates this smoothness. The use of vocal fry brings trauma into the voice on both a metaphorical and literal level, with the damage of the vocal folds. In the chorus particularly, Amos' creaky voice reveals the damaged first-person perspective, as vocal fry occurs each time the word 'I' is spoken. The damaged self, the damaged subject, is phono-somatically rendered through the use of vocal fry.

One of the key lyrical moments in Amos' version of the song is marked by changes in the vocal style, in the delivery of the lyrics, and in the musical tempo, and at this point clearly separates itself psychologically from the Boomtown Rats' version. In the original version, the line 'and the lesson today is how to die' is marked with a percussive attack to the phrase 'how to die' (2:35), with the vocals, the chords and the drums all marking the same rhythm with heightened intensity. The rhythm is fast and intense, with the phrase taking place in just half a bar. There is then a short pause, as the harshness of this 'lesson' is allowed to sink in. In the Amos cover, however, the phrase 'how to die' (2:15) is marked by two important changes. First, she changes the vocal tone – which is already mellow and calm – to very quiet, then whispered on the word 'die'. Second, she stretches out the phrase over two bars. The pause from the original song is retained, but not in as dramatic a fashion as in the Boomtown Rats' version. Amos' Rhodes continues after the word die, but when it stops we hear a breath intake from Amos, before she continues. This clear link to the

body of the singer embodies the narrative, drawing attention to breathing by setting it against the word 'die'.

The release of *Strange Little Girls* in 2001 occurred just after 9/11. As I have argued in the introduction to this chapter (section 3.4), pre-9/11 trauma and the individualised body functioned in a different way, relating to the individual and not the wider communal body. Here, however, Amos is relating trauma perhaps the other way round – from the communal experiences of violence in a school shooting, back to an individualise perspective of a single victim, here conceptualised as the traumatised and trauma-inflicting narrator. In the context of 9/11 the reception of this song works across the boundary of the individual and the community, oscillating unsteadily between subject positions. Amos' notion of the interior functions here to psychologically breakdown trauma as something embodied in 'self' coming from 'other'. The traumatised voice of the narrator as perpetrator collapses the difference between individual and community, through the figure of the damaged self.

3.6 Tori Amos 'Me and a Gun' (1991)

The track 'Me and a Gun' from Amos' debut album Little Earthquakes has been discussed extensively in both academic literature and the popular press from a range of different perspectives (Grietzer 2013; Whiteley 2000; Finding 2011; Gordon 2003). As a first-person rape narrative that describes an act of sexual violence as experienced by Tori Amos herself, its power is irrefutable. The musical setting is a simple a capella arrangement and, as the only song on the album that features just voice, this only increases its efficacy. The rest of the album is not necessarily 'commercial' in its output, in the sense that the themes cover topics such as masturbation, incest and sexuality, but the musical elements are much fuller, which gives a balance to the provocative subject matter. In 'Me and a Gun', however, the musical setting draws stark attention to the narrative.

Discussion of the track to date has largely focused on Amos' personal experience of rape, her interactions with fan communities, the set-up of the RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network) helpline and the importance of this specific song for rape survivors. There are two chapters in particular that are useful to draw upon: Deborah Finding (2011) and Bonnie Gordon (2003). In 'Unlocking the Silence: Tori Amos, Sexual Violence, and Affect' (2011) Deborah Finding explores 'trauma art' and 'affect' (p.41) and using the work of Jill Bennett (2005) posits that

> […] there are three types of affect to consider when approaching Amos's "Me and a Gun": first, discomfort or anxiety leading to empathic thought and improved understanding or insight, second, validation of one's own experiences and "healing," and third, motivation to take action, such as helping others. (p.41)

Finding relates these three elements to what she terms 'the spark in the narrative that allows an affective connection to take place' (p.43). Most importantly for this discussion, she relates the affective connection back to not only the mind, but the body. For her PhD thesis, Finding surveyed over 2,000 Tori Amos listeners, and in this chapter argues that Amos' listeners have a better understanding of rape and rape myths because they have a visceral, affective understanding of sexual violence. The song is the vehicle for this understanding, and creates connective chains of support, inside and beyond the narrative itself. Laub's levels of witnessing are clear and apparent here, as the witnessing of one person's trauma to herself (Amos), is shared musically as a second level of witnessing, and that narrative is held up as a example of witnessing. Finding's point that the visceral qualities of the song allow a greater understanding of sexual violence supports my hypothesis that feminist, or anti-hegemonic standpoints, are supported in the work of these case study artists through an embodied vocality. In this case, the prevalence and normativity of sexual violence against women is being challenged through an embodied voice experiencing trauma.

Bonnie Gordon's 2003 chapter 'Tori Amos's Inner Voices' sets out an analysis of 'Me and a Gun' that focuses on the female voice, and the possibility of subversion through it. Gordon argues that the track 'performs a quest for voice and a desire to make accessible very interior sensations and feelings' (2003, p.188). She eloquently explores the materiality of the voice, and how 'Me and a Gun' highlights the embodied element of vocality 'with its focus on the raw materials of voice and the sensations of a painful experience' (2003, p.188). Gordon is concerned with the relationship between interior feelings and exterior expression via the voice. As noted in my chapter on 'Embodied Voices', Middleton (2006) specifically conceptualises the voice as sexual. Gordon continues this theorisation but brings gender more clearly into play. Paralleling Dunn and Jones' (1996) argument about the subversive qualities of the embodied female voice, Gordon argues that:

> […] the singing voice engenders a heightened state of corporeality and thus renders song different from and excessive over speech. Because it is so fundamentally of the body, the reception of sung performances is always inflected by constructions of gender and of the body. From ancient courtesans to Madonna, the singing voices of women have carried provocative, erotic connotations. Taken as a sign of sublime purity, or devilish sexuality, arresting power or devastating weakness, the female voice wields a potentially unruly force. (Gordon 2003, p.189)

Gordon is outlining a conception of the female voice as powerful and fully embodied. In her theorisation, female vocal performances are sexual and sensual, but always engage with notions of gender and power. By also drawing attention to Amos' performance style (as discussed in my Introduction), as a strong, sexual, visceral style, Gordon reads Amos' work as particularly powerful. She argues that Amos is not positioning herself as 'an erotic spectacle' or repeating 'images of women as sex objects' (p.190), but rather is negotiating a potent space between audience, instrument and performer:

> Rather than displaying a sexual subject, the performance creates a sexual subject with an intense erotic presence and with physical control over the audience and instrument. (Gordon 2003, p.190)

Gordon's use of the word 'control' here is very telling: Amos is completely in charge of the situation, and is using her voice, her body and her instrument to create the desired effect from her performances. Gordon's reading of Amos' work is all about power and control, and, through quotes from various interviews with Amos, she evidences that Amos is fully aware of her own sexuality as both an energy and a power. Rather than viewing Amos as a 'confessional' singer, Gordon 'read[s] her self-expression as a calculated use of her voice to claim power' (p.193) and views it as a feminist act, where a gap between the experience – in the case of 'Me and a Gun' one of rape – and the representation of that experience becomes politically charged for a broader social purpose.

In this exploration of the embodied self, and the relationship between body, voice and trauma, Gordon's chapter is important as it draws attention to 'the out-of body experience that allows

survival' (p.195). She briefly discusses the role that the voice can play in the healing process, and in the bringing together of a separated self. Gordon has already conceptualised Amos' voice as powerful and strong, but broadens that conceptualisation to her earlier understanding of the power in the female voice:

> Through music, the voice reclaims the body lost during the experience of rape. The material voice then creates a metaphoric voice. (p.195)

This is central to my understanding of the separated self. The embodied voice – one that sings from a corporeal place, which connects sexuality with sense of self and of power – brings back the connection between the physical and the psychological. In Gordon's chapter, she outlines a series of boundary crossings, and shows the voice as inhabiting a liminal position between the interior and exterior, the physical and psychological, the private and the public. This links clearly to the notion of voice in section 1.5, where I highlight the voice as theoretically situated in the in-between, working across a number of conceptual categories. Gordon also argues that the material presence of a body in performance – in this case, Amos' performing body – draws a link back to that traumatised body that was experiencing the rape first hand. The embodied voice also allows for the broader aesthetic and political space that Gordon discusses to open up, thus allowing for the healing of others, as Finding has described.

'Me and a Gun' functions in a pre-9/11 context as an individual response to an individual trauma, and yet Amos *does* relate this to community in some senses by presenting her own traumatised individual body as a model for other survivors. However, in my conception of pre- and post- 9/11 bodies, it is clear that this is still and individualised body. The traumatised body here is not perceived as raising the possibility of terror in the broader communal understanding of bodies, but rather is presented as a mode of recuperation in an individualised context.

3.7 PJ Harvey 'Bitter Branches' (2011)

'Bitter Branches' is the 9th track on PJ Harvey's 2011 studio album Let England Shake. The album won the Mercury Music Prize in 2011, the first time an artist has won the prize twice (BBC News 2011). One of the reasons for its wide critical acclaim is that it provides a commentary on current

conflicts and more broadly on the prevalence of war and violence, giving a politicised, serious and yet emotional voice to songs that also feature hooks and melodies.[36] Harvey argues that

> […] the record is dealing with a lot of things that are happening in the world right now – conflict, shifts in power, the change in society and in countries' relations to each other. Although I sing specifically from the point of view of an Englishwoman in England, I hope that I'm addressing feelings that are much more universal. […] the nature of conflict is timeless, this cycle of war that has been here since time began and will be here long after we're gone. It's something we all live with. (Harvey in Breihan 2011)

Harvey's own experience of 9/11 is important to note. She was touring in Washington DC on 11 September 2001, and this was the day that she received the prestigious Mercury Music Prize, the first time the award had been given to a female artist. Harvey gave her acceptance speech from her hotel. In an interview with *The Guardian* she said:

> I can remember looking out of the hotel window and seeing armoured vehicles driving up the street and the Pentagon on fire, so of course everything took on an entirely different perspective. It felt very strange to not even be in the place where the prize was being given and then to be on the telephone and to look out of my window and see that scene. (Harvey in Lynskey 2011)

When accepting the Mercury prize for the second time with *Let England Shake*, Harvey made reference again to her experience (BBC News 2011). Having a personal experience of 9/11 situates her work even more strongly in the context of the negative and global impact of violence, and this translates into being a key theme throughout Let England Shake.

In 'Bitter Branches' Harvey writes about a collective experience of war. The narrative highlights three focal points for this collectivity of experience: the experience of soldiers, the experience of their family, specifically their wives, and experience that is located in 'the wide world'. The

[36] See positive reviews in *The Guardian* (Empire 2011) and on *Pitchfork* (Plagenhoef 2011).

narrative moves between these three vantage points. The wider world is a political point for Harvey. The implication in this particular track is that as Harvey is exploring war and violence, she is witnessing the spread and expansion of violence in our modern world. As she depicts how this violence spreads (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.2), she is drawing a lineage between experiences in trenches, which is implied through the line 'standing in line and the damp earth underneath', and modern warfare. The spread of this violence has grown, and this album comments on the post-9/11 world, where the threat of violence has moved out of the warzone and into everyday life. By showing these three spheres of experience – the soldiers, the wives, and the wider world – she is noting that violence is prevalent and inescapable.

Harvey's use of language within 'Bitter Branches' highlights her stance on warfare and violence more generally. The language throughout is very simple, but points clearly to Harvey's view that the impact of war is a negative one. Though Harvey argues that she is at pains to allow the listener their own interpretation,[37] the language gives a clear sense of this negativity. The most immediate is the use of the word 'bitter' in the title of the track. The description of the 'bitter branches spreading out/there's none more bitter than the wood' emphasise that, as observed earlier, violence permeates and spreads, and that this carries bitterness. The word 'bitter' has a number of different meanings: 'a sharp, pungent taste', 'caused by or showing mental pain or resentment', 'painful or difficult to accept' and 'harsh, virulent' (OED 1995). Harvey's compositional approach is very deliberate and it is fairly certain that this word was chosen deliberately for the variety of inferences. The definitions here also link clearly to an embodied experience of war, with sensory implications of taste and touch being drawn out, alongside the more emotional elements. The bitterness of the branches as a negative expression about warfare is heightened by the metaphor of twisted branches. The wood is not growing straight and true, with war and violence having an impact even on the 'natural' world. This imagery is further developed through the use of the word 'spread', inferring a poisoning, not only with the growth of the tree being twisted, but also perhaps the growth of something almost cancerous. The natural world is being spoilt and poisoned by the impact of violence. The trees embody the violence and it spreads into 'the wider world'.

[37] '"I didn't want to tell people what to think or feel," she says. "I wanted to remain a narrator"' (Harvey in Lynskey 2011).

The link between this natural world and the embodied world of the soldiers who are traumatised by war is made very clear. The soldiers experience the branches twisting underfoot through their bodies, with their very sense of equilibrium and balance in danger. There is a link here to the notion of subjectivity being disturbed, as in Laub's experience and subsequent theorisation of the Holocaust. They carry the weight of their rifles held high in the air, bearing the weight of conflict in their bodies. They also carry emotional weight, as Harvey describes how they are 'holding their young wives who wave goodbye'. There is a clear link here between corporeal and emotional experience.

The bodies of the wives, the women, are also poisoned by the effect of violence. The wives actually embody, and become the violence, as their arms become the limbs of the tree at the end of the song (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.3). The bitterness of violence spreads into their corporeal experience of the world, and the women's embodied subjectivity is also traumatised. In Kammerer and Mazelis' exploration of trauma and disasters (2006), they note that scholarly literature points to the 'cumulative', 'additive' and 'summative' (p.5) impact of trauma for the individual. However, they also note that trauma 'reverberates' (p.6) across generations, and within families and broader communities. They argue that there is 'a more general transferability' (p.6) of trauma, with 'the impact of trauma not experienced directly, but rather through contact with […] someone who has directly experienced trauma […] or even through hearing about a traumatic event […]' (p.6). In Harvey's depiction, the spreading of trauma through the natural world to those soldiers directly experiencing the horrors of war, through to their families, and into the wider world, highlights the huge reverberations of violent trauma.

As with Tori Amos' interpretation of 'I Don't Like Mondays', vocal tone is important in this album in terms of highlighting the relationship between the body and the voice. With Amos' expression, I identified a collapsing of distance between the body and the voice. In Harvey's work, the voice is separated further from the reality of trauma:

> I knew that I wanted the music to offset the weight of the words. That was very important. I wanted the music to be full of energy and to be very uplifting and unifying, almost insightful in its creation of energy. It took me a long time to find out how to sing such words because to sing it in the wrong voice would have given it the wrong feeling – maybe too self-important and dogmatic. I wanted the songs to be much more ambiguous than that. This was the way that the language was best moved from lip to ear. (Harvey in Briehan 2011)

Harvey shows that the expulsion and reception of sound is a corporeal one, with the movement of language from one body part to the next. Yet Harvey describes the songs on *Let England Shake* as 'ambiguous', so the voice is also liminally situated across meanings. The vocal tone suggests that a recuperative space engendered by the phono-somatic representation of trauma is less apparent here, with the voice sitting uncomfortably as a witness to trauma on one hand, but as a separation and denial of the seriousness of violence on the other.

In 'Bitter Branches' the voice is doubled throughout. The melody does not feature a solo voice at any point, and this adds to the sense that this is a song about collective embodied experience. The form is not fully separated out into verse or chorus sections, but there is a distinctive change, made so by the change between vocal tone and gender of the voices. In the main sections of the song, which would be best described as the verse, the melody is sung by PJ Harvey and doubled an octave below by a male voice (either John Parish or Mick Harvey). After eight bars of the melody, the chords change and for four bars Harvey's melody is harmonised by her own voice. This pattern then repeats again, with Harvey's voice doubled an octave down by the male voice, but the four bars of female-only voice harmony is elongated to eight bars. For ease, I will call the female and male voiced section the verse and the female voiced section the bridge, though these sections are not hugely harmonically differentiated. The chords in the verse section move between C minor and Bb and back, but the tonality of the track overall is uncertain. The C minor functions as the tonic, but there is a suggestion of Eb minor tonality. When the chords change to the 'bridge' section, the song oscillates between G and Ab. Though the tonality suggests the chord of G minor (and many online transcriptions of the song list this chord as G minor) the melody features B, and therefore I am naming this chord as G major.[38]

The bridge section is noticeably different in timbre and dynamics to that of the chorus section. The verse section is belted in a chest voice by Harvey, with a loudness that match the use of the electric guitar, upon which the chords are strummed energetically. The male voice singing the octave below lends to this fullness of vocal timbre. The B section is softer in terms of dynamics, and Harvey's melody moves into the head register to support this change. In my reading of the chord sequence, I am suggesting that this bridge section features major chords, and therefore there is a difference between the harmonic function of the chords that support this difference in

[38] For example, see E-chords (2015) for a fan transcription that lists the chord as G minor.

vocal quality. The quietness of the bridge section does not stay. As the lyrics develop, Harvey moves from the soft head voice and shifts back into the belted tone of the chest voice before the chords change again. Lyrically, the bridge section aligns with two key themes, that of the symbolic colour white and the mention of the soldiers' 'wives'. The introduction of this softer, more stereotypically feminine vocal sound, with the female-only vocal happens in combination with the references to 'white' and 'wives'. Femininity here refers to peace, both sonically and in terms of the absence of violence, with the colour white being symbolic of peace itself, and also symbolising purity. The melody does not stay in this quiet place of peace, with the violence spreading sonically through the voice, by the overtaking of the head voice with the chest voice, and the crescendo back into the chorus section.

9/11 is very clearly evoked by Harvey on this track, with the traumatised voice separating from self through vocal tone and vocal doubling, and acting as a reverberating warning of trauma. This vocal strategy sits clearly within a post-9/11 cultural trope where the generational reverberation of trauma (Kammerer and Mazelis 2006) relates to the notion of collective vulnerability and the notion of terror.

3.8 PJ Harvey 'The Words that Maketh Murder' (2011)

In 'The Words that Maketh Murder' the vocal ambiguity that Harvey discusses (Briehan 2011) is particularly apparent. The tone of Harvey's voice in the track works across a series of boundaries and on the whole feels insecure, with an almost otherworldly feel at points. Harvey uses a wavering, nasal tone to begin the first verse and this is featured throughout the track, particularly in the verses. Although the melodic range is fairly limited in the song, there are melodic glissandos, swooping up an octave, combining with the wavering tone to give an insecure sense of melody. At 1.46, the verse is sung out of tune, almost microtonally situated, and this contributes further to a sense of liminality. The vocal strategy that Harvey employs creates a melody that can't be pinned down, that works across boundaries, and therefore cannot be embodied or located corporeally.

If, as Barthes argues, the grain of the voice is 'the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs' (Barthes 1977, p.188), what then happens when a composer takes a deliberate stance that appears to disembody and distance the sound of the voice from the body? In the track 'The Words that Maketh Murder', the narrative is full of references to bodily

experiences – of bodies in trauma, bodies ripped apart – and yet from the very first line the narrator states that they want to distance themselves from these experiences, as they sing 'I've seen and done things I want to forget'. The voice is deliberately placed sonically, to allow this forgetting, and to create a gap between the self – or as we might alternatively call it, identity – and the body. The grain of the voice is used here to distance from the body.

The body in trauma is expressed lyrically in a way that aligns clearly to Kristeva's concept of the abject. There is a sense of disgust and repulsion throughout the lyrics. The body is dismembered and taken apart in the narrative, both literally and figuratively. The narrator tries to erase the memories of bodies – and embodied experience – precisely because the body cannot be conceptualised as whole once the traumatised body has been encountered. Not only that, but the traumatised body is literally in pieces in this narrative. The discussions of 'soldiers' – corporeally whole, with a clear identity – very quickly move to 'lumps of meat', with 'arms and legs […] in the trees' and later, 'flesh quivering in the heat'. The body has become abject, as the corpse itself, which Kristeva describes as the primary source of abjection (1982), is further dismembered. The subject – in this instance, 'soldier' – becomes an object – a 'lump of meat'.

In the final section of the song, what Osborn (2013) calls the 'terminal climax' – a thematically independent climactic section at the end of a song – the repeated phrase 'What if I take my problem to the United Nations?' is heard. Harvey's song has an intertextual relationship with Eddie Cochran's 'Summertime Blues' in a number of ways – for example, with the rhythmic shuffle, and the thematic content of summertime represented in Harvey's track by references to heat and the flies – but the line 'What if I take my problem to the United Nations?' is the most direct reference. In Cochran's version, the narrator seeks to complain to the UN but his Congressman tells him that he's too young to vote. In this scenario, the narrator is voiceless. In the context of Let England Shake, and its post-9/11 commentary on various conflicts, there is a parallel here with protests against the age of young men drafted to Vietnam being three years under the voting age. The state of being powerless and voiceless is central to the narrative here, and is the state in which the song ends. The body has been dismembered, turned into an abject object and distanced from any sense of subjectivity. Even the narrator, who is the only person with a sense of subject position in the track, ends the song in a voiceless state, calling out to the UN with no hope of their voice being heard. This voiceless state adds to the disembodiment, as the body has been denied a voice, and therefore ultimately denied subjectivity. The abjection of self and the removal of voice points to a powerlessness which circulates in discourses post-9/11.

The very notion of 'terror' is predicated on the inability to see what is coming, or the magnitude of violence contained therein.

3.9 PJ Harvey 'Down by the Water' (1995)

The recuperative space engendered by connecting the voice and subjectivity back to the body presents an opportunity for healing. However, as apparent in 'The Words that Maketh Murder', the voice can be disembodied: distanced from the source of the sound, in this case distanced from the violence itself. This post-traumatic coping strategy can be interrogated in terms of the subject/object boundary. The body becomes the object and the voice becomes the subject. Yet what happens if the perpetrator of the violence recounts the narrative? What happens when the voice is embodied and corporeally situated, and that body is itself the source of the violence? Or does the voice of a violent perpetrator become disembodied, to cope with their actions, in a mirroring of the victim's ability to cope through a distancing strategy?

The 1995 track 'Down by the Water', from the album *To Bring You My Love*, evidences a different type of trauma, where the perpetrator of the violence is a woman who has murdered her daughter by drowning.[39] Trauma is embodied narratively in this track through a series of representations of vocal sound and soundlessness. The narrator describes sound from her own perspective and also from the perspective of her victim (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.4). Later, it becomes apparent that the victim does have a voice, as the narrator says 'I heard her holler, I heard her moan', but the victim's voice is not heard directly.

In contrast to 'The Words that Maketh Murder', the vocal tone at the beginning of 'Down by the Water' is strong, with a vocal raspiness, particularly at the end of phrases, where the words tail off, sliding down in pitch and ending with guttural vowel sounds and/or breathiness. This vocal approach is one whereby the body is clearly heard through paralinguistic features in the expression at the end of these phrases. This vocal approach does not alter significantly until the last section of the song.

This is another track where Osborn's 'terminal climax' is at work. At the end of the song (2.03 to the very end of the track at 3.15) a repeated phrase references the traditional song 'Salty Dog Blues' (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.5). This is in markedly different in vocal tone as these

[39] See Maerz 2005.

lines are whispered. The whispered section at the end of 'Down by the Water' is where the emotion in the narrative, expressed through the grain of the voice, changes. The voice has moved from hollering and moaning, to a close whisper. As Lacasse explains in his discussion of Tori Amos' ''97 Bonnie and Clyde', Poyatos' framework of paralanguage sees the whisper as an expression of intimacy, confidentiality and secrecy. The role of whisper in a narrative also draws the listener and speaker together, and Poyatos' configuration describes whispers as affiliative, as 'a closer bond between speaker and listener' (p.234).

In 'Down by the Water', all of these characteristics of whispered narrative are apparent. The narrative here does not close, as the mother's whispered plea for the return of her daughter repeats in a never-ending whisper that is faded out at the end of track, giving a sense of a permanent loop. The mother is embodied through bodily sounds, and the listener is drawn in close to her experience through the presence of the paralinguistic whisper. However, the trauma is never healed. The voice expresses a longing that cannot be fulfilled. In this sense, one might say there is the possibility of an empathetic space at the end of this narrative, despite the abjection of the mother's actions. However, there is one voice that is not allowed to sound in this narrative: that of the victim. The daughter becomes the object in this story; with her subjectivity negated she is also voiceless. In a pre-9/11 context, the individual trauma experienced here is objectified. It does not stand in for the whole community, but rather as listeners we are brought closer to the phono-somatic body, to hear a tale of individualised violence.

3.10 Björk 'Earth Intruders' (2007)

The natural world is a key theme in the work of Björk Guðmundsdóttir and her 2007 track 'Earth Intruders' looks at violence through this lens. There is a relationship between body, nature and sound in her work with Björk's creative use of sound acting as an embodied expression of nature. Using sonic palettes that bring the body to the fore of her work, Björk articulates a fundamental relationship between body, nature and sound which is at the heart of her creative practice. Similarly, her engagement with the female body can be distinguished from that of Amos and Harvey, because of her recurrent theme of situating the female body within the wider natural world.[40] Not only that, but for Björk the female body becomes synonymous with nature itself. The

[40] Amos and Harvey both refer to the natural world at points in their work – as highlighted earlier, Harvey uses metaphors of trees in 'Bitter Branches' (*Let England Shake* 2011) and Amos draws on the seasons and

female body *becomes* the landscape. The two are inextricably linked, and nature is embodied in the corporeal world. The metaphor of the body as fecund and fertile, reproducing and assimilating/being assimilated by the natural world, is central here and locates Björk's work in an embodied space.

Björk maps out an embodied sound, where body and nature are interconnected, and the characteristics of this landscape are drawn from the Icelandic natural world. Throughout Björk's output, she highlights congruence between the body and nature, and is therefore drawing on a broader understanding of nature by linking the human with the natural world and the focus is often on the Icelandic landscape (Dibben 2009). Whilst the Icelandic natural context *is* crucial to her work, it is the *lived* experience of bodies in this natural world that is the focus. From diving into the ocean in 'The Anchor Song' from *Debut* (1993), to taking the 'Sun in My Mouth' in *Vespertine* (2001), nature is a tactile, corporeal experience. Nature is experienced through the body. However, in Björk's work, nature is more than something that is just encountered by a human being. Björk unifies nature and the human (Dibben 2009). The natural world is not separate from the human: the two are inextricably linked, and therefore the experience of nature is one that is, by necessity, embodied. The self that encounters nature is not separate, but linked. Nature and the body have become the same thing. In 'Hollow', from her 2011 album *Biophilia*, Björk makes this link explicit (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.6). The symbolism here not only represents the human narrator as linked to all species found in the natural world, but also as part of the earth itself. Here, the earth swallows up what is human, and the narrator becomes located within the ground. In art and literature, trees are often used symbolically to portray things that are everlasting or immortal, and Björk refers explicitly to this concept in 'Hollow' as she talks about 'the trunk of DNA' and then later being part of 'the everlasting necklace'.[41] In doing so, she locates humans within universalist discourses of the natural world.

The violence of 'Earth Intruders', from her earlier album *Volta* (2007), evidences a slightly different approach to the natural world. The title itself, one of intrusion and violation, sets the scene with a wider planetary (or inter-planetary) context. This is combined with both musical and lyrical references to tribal cultures. Immediately Björk sets up a global context, a global perspective for the song. This broader world-view has become more frequent in her later output, for example across *Biophilia* (2011). In *Volta* (2007) this global perspective is intertwined with a

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snow in 'Winter' (*Little Earthquakes* 1991) – but not to the extent that it becomes an overt theme throughout their output.

[41] See The University of Michigan's online Dictionary of Symbolism (Protus 2015).

political sensibility – as is often found in Björk's work – with tracks such as 'Declare Independence', dedicated to the Faroe Islands and Greenland (Dibben 2009). 'Earth Intruders' sets up a paradigm of violence from the beginning, both through the title and through the sound world, the track beginning with the sound of marching feet. The sound of bodies is apparent from this first moment, with this embodied sound that explicitly references bodily aggression.

The violence expressed in 'Earth Intruders' is a reaction to governance and dominion, and Björk's explanation of her influences highlights the song's political standpoint. In an interview with MTV, Björk discussed a dream that she had of:

> a "tsunami of millions and millions of poverty-stricken people" [which] swelled high above the airplane she was a passenger on. Eventually, the wave overtook the plane, hit land and razed the White House into oblivion. (Harris 2007)

Later in the interview she discusses

> "I am like many people, [in that I'm] quite upset about how things are in the world now, and while I am a musician, I wanted to maybe be a spokesperson for the people in the street, who are pretty pissed off in general," she explained. "I am just one of all these voices, and the fact that somebody like me has had enough shows you it is a pretty intense time we live in. Emotionally, I was just really, really hungry for something quite full-bloodied and visceral, musically speaking". (Björk in Harris 2007)

Björk has long been known for her environmental politics, and is an outspoken spokesperson on a range of political topics. Here, the violence of this song is a direct expression of her global politics and a candid representation of social issues. The 'intruders' here are linked to the natural world, being represented as 'muddy with twigs and branches'. Lyrically they are represented as 'sharp shooters'. The words 'carnage' and 'turmoil' are introduced – standing alone as single word vocal exclamations – and it is unclear whether the intruders are commenting on what has been created by them, or what they are coming into. Later in the lyrics (2:28) there is a more explicit discussion (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 3.7). The turmoil here appears to be already in existence, with the intruders responding to it. Björk's discussion in interview maps onto this reading well, and

therefore perceiving the 'intruders' as digging takes on a different meaning. The perspective is narrowed. The intruders are not coming from a different planet, or from a different place, but rather are intruding into the turmoil of the modern world, uncovering buried trauma in the sense of intruding into silence. It is the digging up of the earth – the digging up of those whose bones have been buried, through violence and trauma – which functions as a metaphor for witnessing and recuperation following trauma. The bones of the traumatised are uncovered and these 'sharp shooters' are therefore fighting injustice in response to violence.

With the line 'grinding the sceptics into the soil' a monolithic, hegemonic viewpoint is made dominant, with no position for discussion. There is an uncomfortable parallel with the absolute maintenance of control over discursive or dialogic perspectives, one that accompanies any violent or hegemonic social system. So the marching group of earth intruders are digging up the traumatised, but are using motifs of violence to do so. In their recovery of the traumatised, trauma is also being inflicted. The line 'forgive us, tribe' suggests this ambiguity: perhaps apology is given for the uncovering of the buried trauma, perhaps for the return to violence after the (relative) peace of denial.

The idea of a tribe is one that appears through the track, both musically and lyrically. The African drums represent this entering after the introduction of the marching feet at 0:11. On this track Congolese group Konono No 1 play electric likembes (also known as mbiras or 'thumb pianos'). The use of instruments from an African context draws on images of colonialism, the trauma of which is here being uncovered by the digging up of bones.

The creative use of sound in Björk's work is particularly apparent at the end of the track. There is cymbal breakdown, which ends with fade out of the marching feet and more 'natural' sounds are interspersed with the man-made: a foghorn with rain, birds with bell ringing and ship sounds. The foghorns begin a musical dialogue with the whirring of machinery, they begin to form a harmony which eventually develops into an ostinato pattern. As the marching feet sound has gone, this eerie sound world represents the absence of human contact. The machines and ships are seemingly working without the presence of the tribe, of the humans. The sound is a disembodied one, returning to the natural, non-man-made world, returning to the earth.

These images of embodied and disembodied experiences are configured through the vocal world, which is constructed in a cyborgian mode to represent this ambiguity between the natural and the technological. The main statement 'We are the earth intruders' is sung initially by Björk singularly, but this phrase repeats through the song, building into a main chorus section. After this

initial solo line, it is sung by a chorus, or 'tribe', of Björk voices that are heavily processed, technologically mediated voices. The varied statements that begin 'We are the earth intruders' are more processed than the single Björk melody that intersperses the choruses. The voice, in uncovering the trauma of bodies, moves in and out of the 'natural', sitting in an uncomfortable liminal state. Moving from solo to chorus, natural to processed, the voice symbolises the instability of the traumatised body.

Post-9/11, this song represents a communal response to violence, and also a communal violence itself. By revealing the earth as traumatised, the notion of terror is not only explored in the bodies of the victims – here defined by Björk as a community or tribe – but in the body of the earth itself. Post-9/11 our notion of communal violence, perpetrated and upheld through discourses of terror, permeates the entire globe.

3.11 Conclusion

The representation of trauma and violence in these songs highlights a plurality of approaches. However, key themes emerge around the positioning of the voice and the body. The voice functions phono-somatically as a recuperative space, where bodily traumas are expressed and given witness to. This witnessing is a process, which happens across a number of boundaries, again related to the understanding of voice functioning liminally (see section 1.5 in relation to Jarman-Ivens 2011 and Dolar 2006). It is not clear-cut nor 'once and for all'. There is a movement across boundaries of silence and sound, inside and outside, the natural and the technological, and the voice moves in and across these boundaries during the process of healing. Metaphors of disassociation and association are evoked, such as with the distancing of the voice from the trauma in PJ Harvey's *Let England Shake*, the whispered voice of the perpetrator in Amos' 'I Don't Like Mondays' and the processing of the tribal voice in Björk's 'Earth Intruders'. The voice moves in-between, shifting and repositioning in relation to both the body and the trauma.

In this sense, Caruth's notion of 'how to listen to departure' from trauma is vital (1995, p.10). The separation of voice from trauma can give rise to this recuperative space, and examining phono-somatics as a therapeutic device is a key element of this departure. The study of embodiment within popular music has an analytical model to offer, in terms of understanding trauma and violence in relation to the body and the voice.

In terms of post-9/11 culture, it is clear to see that the notion of terror has expanded how the case study artists related to bodily trauma, and that individualised trauma is now experienced through a collective lens. Amos, Björk and Harvey explore the relationship between the individualised body and the communal body, and break down the boundaries between the two in post-9/11 culture.

Chapter 4: Maternal Bodies

The maternal body is a complex and contradictory site, one that challenges the dominant codes of popular culture and its associated power relations. Visual representations of the pregnant body were largely absent from Anglo-American popular culture as a whole until the 1990s, when a photograph of Demi Moore appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, making it de rigueur for 'celebrities' to pose when pregnant.[42] Though Tyler (2001) argues that the Moore photograph offered a challenge to dominant discourses of female bodies and sexuality, the boundaries of such poses do remain highly regulated. The huge proliferation of 'celebrity baby bump' images across the media in the post-Moore years has lessened the challenge that these photographs make.

In popular music culture, however, there is a distinct lack of visibility of the pregnant body in music video, live performance and as represented in song. The pregnant musician extends a series of taboos associated with pregnancy, due to the physicality, aurality and temporality of musical performance. In this chapter, I explore these taboos in more detail and highlight how the pregnant performing woman, by both moving her body and making sound through time, enlarges the threatening possibility of maternities. She is both visible and audible.[43] Representations of maternities have the same effect when maternal voices and bodies are given musical space. Therefore, while the visual element of pregnancy is indeed absent from popular music culture, I would also extend this statement further to highlight a sonic absence of pregnant bodies, or – in a wider conception – of maternal bodies. Here, I am concerned with a number of questions around sound, embodiment and physicality within recorded music. Can we hear the maternal body in popular music? How might female performers 'sound out' a maternal embodiment?

Embodying the maternal is particularly problematic because of the discourses around female musicians and sexuality. The role of women in music is highly regulated through the male gaze, and through concepts of excessive sexuality. Female bodies are sexualised and subject to the male gaze. However the pregnant body is considered to be outside the realms of sexual desire, as will be explored in this chapter. Therefore drawing attention to the maternal body – either visually or aurally – troubles these discourses and challenges norms around women in music.

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[42] *Vanity Fair* August 1991, Volume 54, Number 8

[43] See Walker (1998) for discussions about the masculine imagination and the relationship between an (imposed) silence and the maternal body.

Using work from my three case studies, I will define the concept of the maternal body, looking specifically at the idea of 'maternal traces'. I will explore the strategies through which the artists make the maternal body both visible and audible, through the lens of embodiment as outlined in my thesis Introduction. Furthermore, I explore how they use the figure of the maternal body to challenge dominant tropes around sexuality and therefore to redefine common conceptions of 'mother' and 'mothering'.

4.1 Popular music and the maternal body

Though images of pregnant celebrities have become normalised, performances by pregnant musicians still carry a 'shock' value. Twenty years after Neneh Cherry's pregnant performance of 'Buffalo Stance' on *Top of the Pops* in December 1988 (see Tyler 2001), which at the time provoked media response of shock and indignation, M.I.A. performed 'Paper Planes' at the Grammys whilst heavily pregnant in February 2009. Commentary on websites such as bittenandbound.com – whose strapline is 'the *not so pretty* side of Hollywood' (my emphasis) – describe M.I.A.'s outfit as 'shocking'. It is not the clothes that are shocking in themselves, as popular music culture encourages performances by women wearing tight or revealing clothes. On a pregnant body, these clothes take on a different cultural resonance: it is maternity combined with sexuality that becomes shocking. The attire normally worn by pregnant women serves to cover and hide the pregnant body, and reduce any sexual connotations. This is clearly apparent in the Daily Mail review which notes that:

> The singer overlooked a traditional empire line dress in favour of a daring sheer confection that exposed most of her baby bump. The outrageous number, by British designer Henry Holland, featured strategically placed black and white polka dot pieces. (Daily Mail 2009)

Sheer clothes have been worn by many popular women musicians, but it is not the exposing of flesh that is being brought to attention by the Daily Mail, but rather the exposing of the baby bump. The suggestion is that the bump should be out of sight and not drawn attention to.

In *Maternities* (2008), Robyn Longhurst explores the discourses of pregnant bodies described through the use of negative words and phrases that draw upon cultural notions of fatness, disability and ugliness. For example, in terms of popular celebrities, media responses to Kim Kardashian's pregnancy during 2013 illustrate this, as she was branded 'fat' as she gained weight (Hollywood Life 2013). In addition to this, the pregnant body is culturally very clearly defined as a non-sexual body, no longer sexually available or sexually active. Longhurst notes that this non-sexuality is the case 'despite the fact that at the same time they are clearly marked as having been sexually active' (p.53). The performative nature of popular music heightens this sexual paradox, as the female performer is subjected to the gaze of the audience, as voyeur, and the female musician connotes 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey 1989). The pregnant performer troubles and disrupts the sexuality of the gaze, by being simultaneously sexually available, in a voyeuristic sense, and non-sexual as a pregnant woman.

The gaze is also at play in the imagination of the listener, and artists who use strategies of embodiment draw out physicality within their work. This then replicates the gaze, and concurrent discourses of sexuality, within an aural context. I will be looking specifically at recorded music, as opposed to live performance, to demonstrate just how embodied recorded music can be, on a number of varying levels. I also want to show how the discourses around performing pregnancy/maternities also translate to the recorded medium.

4.2 Theorising the maternal body

My use of the term 'the maternal body' foregrounds a body which is formed of overlapping temporal stages: stages that leave traces and imprints and a body that is fluid with problematic boundaries. In this conception the maternal body moves from pregnancy to motherhood, encompassing such potential stages as miscarriage, childbirth and lactation. Tyler (2001) makes a distinction between pregnancy and motherhood in order to conceptualise pregnancy as a form of 'transitional subjectivity', arguing that 'motherhood already implies a self/other, mother/child distinction, which does not exist in any simple binary form for the pregnant subject' (p.124). Whereas Tyler discusses transitional subjectivity only applying to the pregnant body, the bodily experiences of motherhood – moving from pregnancy, through birth, to being a mother - also require a conception of a transitional form of subjectivity. For example, it is not clear when one becomes a mother. When a woman miscarries, or has a stillborn baby, a relationship has often already begun between the woman and the foetus. She may have made conscious decisions

around her bodily practices – such as reducing caffeine intake, taking pregnancy vitamins, curtailing exercise – in order to nurture the growing foetus. In effect, she has become a mother well before the point of childbirth. Miscarriages or stillbirths evoke feelings of maternal grief for women who experience them. The 'beginning' point of motherhood is unpredictable and therefore can begin much earlier than at the point of childbirth.

The epistemological framework by which motherhood implies mother/child and self/other distinctions is a problematic one. Not only can motherhood begin earlier than at the point of childbirth, a neat mother/child division does not occur at the moment of birth. The pregnant body does not simply vanish post-birth. There is a significant recovery period, where a woman may still look pregnant as her uterus shrinks. Stitches and wounds from birth mark a woman's body as 'other' – she is not pregnant, yet is still bearing bodily marks of carrying a child. Post-childbirth bleeding, yet lack of periods, locate the newly maternal body in a liminal, in-between space. Pregnant/not pregnant and pregnant/mother are not clear-cut distinctions: they overlap, clash and blur.[44]

These physical experiences of motherhood are also accompanied by emotional or conceptual shifts. When a child is born a mother is learning —learning to become a mother and adopting new identities in the process. As the child grows these identities shift, multiply and change. The definition of 'mother' is not fixed. It is a 'becoming' – like De Beauvoir's conception of becoming a woman (1997). This process of becoming is bound up in cultural constructions of acceptable (or non-acceptable) forms of mothering.[45] My definition of the 'maternal body' is a fluid body upon which the varying temporal stages of maternities – such as pre-conception, conception, pregnancy, miscarriage, stillbirth, childbirth, post-birth and lactation – leave traces and imprints.

The pregnant body can also be conceptualised as abject, in Kristeva's definition of the term (1982): as a body to be feared and controlled, due to its fluidity, lack of boundaries and the problematisation of the self/other boundary. Longhurst (2001) shows how discourses around pregnancy serve to encourage women to withdraw from public spaces and to confine their activities to private spaces as their pregnancies progress. The abject status of pregnancy, as threatening, leaking, seeping and problematic, requires control and confinement. Longhurst

[44] I am aware that these kinds of discussions have informed pro-life arguments in the US and want to make it clear that my conceptual framework is not supportive of pro-life sentiments. Instead it gives a more nuanced view of mothering where a plurality of identities is possible. Within this framework, a woman's agency and control over her own body, and her own self-definition as 'mother', are central.

[45] See Longhurst (2008) for a detailed discussion of acceptable forms of mothering and the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' mothers.

argues that pregnancy highlights sexual difference and 'otherness'. Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Grosz, she discusses how academics often talk about 'the body' in a way that seems to neglect the material realities, the messiness, of bodies. Longhurst is concerned with 'The leaky, messy, awkward zones of the inside/outside of bodies and their resulting spatial relationships [...]' (2001, p.2). Masculine knowledge production is based upon rationality and is divorced from the material body. The Cartesian duality of mind/body is mapped upon the masculine/feminine binary, with the masculine being rational, contained, clean, ordered and located in the mind, the feminine being emotional, fluid, messy, amorphous and materially embodied. Longhurst argues that

> when geographers speak of the body they still often fail to talk about a body that breaks its boundaries – urinates, bleeds, vomits, farts, engulfs tampons, objects of sexual desire, ejaculates and gives birth. The reason this is significant is that the messiness of bodies is often conceptualised as feminised and as such is Othered [...]. Ignoring the messy body is not a harmless omission, rather, it contains a political imperative that helps keep masculinism intact. (2001, p.23)

It is therefore important to analyse representations of maternal bodies with these gendered power relations in mind. Discourses around maternal bodies are concerned with the abject and these bodies are othered as such. In *Maternities* (2008), Longhurst discusses the politics and queering of breastfeeding. Lactation is another element where the maternal body is considered abject yet, also, lactation symbolises female power (Cixous 1976). Longhurst discusses how women can queer breastfeeding and she problematises concepts of 'the naturalness' of breastfeeding by introducing examples of interspecies breastfeeding and adult breastfeeding. The maternal body, as a lactating 'Other', is a body with porous boundaries, and can signify as the site of transgressive movement.

4.3 Tori Amos: Visible maternities

I begin by analysing two maternal images that Tori Amos has made available to the public. By comparing images of a pregnant Amos that were released in *Vanity Fair* in November 2000 and an image of Amos breastfeeding that was released as part of the artwork to her *Boys for Pele* album

in 1996, it becomes apparent that Amos is playing with different ways of making the maternal body visible, to different effects.

As noted earlier, photographs of the maternal body have become common for the pregnant celebrity, and therefore Tori Amos's photograph for *Vanity Fair* magazine (Fig. 4.1) fits into this fashion.

Figure 4.1: Amos' Vanity Fair photoshoot (2000) see Appendix 3, Example 4.1

One can argue that Amos is making visible the maternal body – and therefore its disruptive potential – in this photograph. However, the challenge to dominant norms around femininity is minimal. Amos reclines on what appears to be a bed, covered in white sheets. The symbolism around the colour white has long been bound to notions of femininity, through ideas of purity, virginity and also connotes white as racially dominant. Amos' head is nearest to the viewer and her body lies further away from the viewer and is slightly out of focus. Therefore, whilst her pregnant belly is exposed, with one hand protectively resting on it, the lack of focus gives the photograph a dream-like quality. Amos's facial expression is also 'dreamy', as she gazes into the distance, past the viewer rather than at them. The combination of soft, dream-like aesthetic qualities, of the reclining – and therefore compliant – pose, of the protective hand between the viewer and the pregnant stomach and the lack of direct eye contact does not challenge. There is the possibility that this photograph could be read as a sexualised image, as one of a woman reclining on a bed with flesh showing, ready for a sexual encounter. This physical pose replicates so many compliant 'feminine' photographs that have gone before it, and clearly circulates within this photographic convention. However, four year earlier, Amos had already represented the maternal and lactating body in a way that challenged dominant tropes around sexuality, childrearing and body politics, in the artwork to *Boys for Pele*. Sitting calmly in a chair, she breastfeeds a piglet (see Fig. 4.2)

Figure 4.2: Boys for Pele (1996) artwork, see Appendix 3, Example 4.2

In comparison to the *Vanity Fair* photograph, this pose provides more of a challenge to dominant visual representations of the maternal body. Amos sits upright in a chair, with the viewer having a clear and in-focus view of the scene: her shirt is opened and both breasts are partially visible. There is an interiority to this scene, as Amos not only looks away from camera, as in the pregnant photos, but seems to be 'lost in thought'.[46] However, the presence of the breastfeeding piglet renders this act particularly shocking. Amos is not looking directly at the camera in an aggressive way to provoke comment. By looking away and being 'elsewhere' in her thoughts there is no recognition of this situation being in any way 'abnormal'. Amos makes visible the maternal body in these two examples, but in the *Boys for Pele* image we see more of a challenge to dominant norms.

4.4 Tori Amos 'Spark' video (1998)

The video for Amos's 1998 single 'Spark', taken from the album *from the choirgirl hotel* (1998), highlights a significant theme in her work: the control and regulation of the female body. This is crucial to understanding how the othering of the female body – and then specifically the maternal body – works on a general basis, and how Amos's representations allow for female agency. Her output clearly explores how female bodies are curtailed and controlled, and by challenging this she highlights the relationship between embodiment, power and sexuality. The symbolism in this video is powerful and draws on a number of themes that occur frequently in Amos's songs. Most importantly, the video is an embodied narrative, featuring images and visual cues that directly reference notions of power and control and also bodies moving through time and space.

The album *from the choirgirl hotel* shows Amos exploring the maternal body in relation to miscarriage. Amos notes in her autobiographical book *Piece by Piece* (2005) that the album deals directly with loss and comes 'from a place of grief' (p.163). In 'Spark', Amos sings of her central character: 'but she couldn't keep baby alive'. In the audio commentary for the video, she explicitly references her own personal experiences of miscarriage. However, the video also deals with broader themes around miscarriage, pregnancy and bodily control. If a pregnant woman is a threatening presence due to her problematic body boundaries – the possibility of her waters breaking, splitting herself into two, the 'leaky' status of her body – then the miscarrying body is

[46] The scene is almost highlighted by the presence of shadow around the breastfeeding pair. The only other element in view is the window through which Amos is lazily gazing.

even more problematic in its fluidity. Her body is both leaky, but also an aberration which society prefers to hide. The miscarrying body is feared in multiple ways, and representations of miscarriage are silenced due to cultural stigmas.

The video begins with a close-up of the central character, Amos, lying on a forest floor, blindfolded with her hands bound behind her.[47] She is writhing and her feet are moving around in the soil. The camera then pans out and we see that Amos lies next to a car that has crashed into a tree, in woodland. In the video commentary Amos describes how she had been influenced by David Lynch's 1990-1991 television series *Twin Peaks*, in terms of the feel and the look of the video and the complexity of plot. The colour palette of the video is a clear homage, with its muted and earthy tones, and the shroud-like dress that Amos wears is reminiscent of *Twin Peaks* character Laura Palmer's wrapped dead body. Amos's character, still blindfolded and bound, gets up onto her feet and starts walking, trying to find where she is. At this point, a second character is introduced, a male figure whose face is never seen, who keeps checking his watch. The camera focuses on close-ups of his smart, shiny shoes and his expensive watch. He is moving around, searching for someone, and the assumption is made that he is looking for Amos. We realise that something traumatic has happened and that she is stumbling through the woods trying to escape.

Images of Amos bound and blindfolded suggest how she and her body are subject to regulation and control. As the male figure is only ever partially visible in the video, the faceless man represents not one single man, but patriarchy itself: as he is faceless, with a 'corporate' image, he is not an individual but rather part of a system. The image of constant watch-checking supports this idea of control – set against the surroundings of the organic or 'natural' world, his world is ordered, controlled and measured, with time. Time, in this image, represents a masculinist and linear function, against the cyclical reproduction that we will hear later in Amos's track 'Your Cloud'. He is searching for Amos in order to exert his control.[48] Here, Amos is acknowledging that the female body is subject to regulation and control within a patriarchal culture. Following this, there is imagery that suggests Amos is referencing the miscarrying body more specifically, within broader tropes around the female body.

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[47] See the audio commentary to the video on *Fade to Red* DVD and pages on Here in my Head Fansite (2011) for more detail on the narrative.

[48] In the audio commentary for the video on the *Fade to Red* DVD, Amos also describes the process of being blindfolded in terms of control. 'I think being blindfolded for most of this [video] was really trying for me. You're out of control when you're blindfolded and I thought it was a reference to how a lot of us feel when we're going through a very dark patch [...]. And a lot of times we don't get the help we thought we were gonna get. So she has to help herself'.

As Amos moves through the woods, she comes across a tree with the name 'Skeeter' etched into it. Being still blindfolded and bound, she runs her fingers over the word, with her senses coming into play with a softness of touch. In the audio commentary, Amos notes that 'Skeeter […] was a fond name that we called the little person before I miscarried'. Referencing her own loss, Amos draws attention to the name through touch, and embodies her maternal grief through language ('Skeeter') yet also through the language of the body. This sensuality and materiality draws attention to the maternal body in a very subtle way.[49]

In the next section of the video, Amos finds her way to a river, which is a pivotal point in the narrative. She walks quite calmly into the water, rather than fleeing swiftly as the narrative so far would suggest. It is as if she is aware that this is a positive action, which will be beneficial to her. As her head moves under the water she starts to shake it from side to side. Her blindfold falls from her eyes, and she emerges from the water able to see. Although her hands are still tied behind her back, she regains some of her own agency and control over the situation.[50] In relation to the themes of control and power over the maternal body, one could read this image as an acceptance, or a re-claiming, of the fluidity and leaky status of female bodies. Through her experience of plunging her body into the water her boundaries are even more fluid.

'Spark' can be read as a contestation of power, in which a woman is trying to escape regulation and control and to engage more fully with the fluidity and immeasurability of her maternal body. By resisting the 'measuring' of the patriarchal figure – who is trying to measure her in time – and by plunging herself into the water to find release, she is able to 'help herself'[51] through and beyond the impact of her miscarriage, and regain agency. However, the threatening status of the leaky maternal body is not resolved in this video. The last image of the video is Amos kneeling in the road, as a car which had stopped pulls away without her, with blood running down her fingers and a single droplet hitting a leaf. This could be suggestive of either miscarriage bleeding or of the resumption of menstruation, and as such the narrative is unclear and unresolved. The people in the car have not rescued her, and therefore she has to rely on herself. Although the central

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[49] One could also see a parallel with Caruth's (1996) exigesis on Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* where a soldier unintentionally kills his lover, then hearing a terrible noise from a tree, cuts down the tree, without realising her soul was imprisoned inside. Thus doing so, he wounds her twice. Caruth sees the repetition of a trauma being the only way to know it. In some sense, Amos's wounding of the tree, and repetition of the child's name, is her way of knowing her trauma. In the broader sense, writing the song 'Spark' is also a repetition of the trauma, and a way of exploring and bringing the trauma into consciousness.

[50] In the audio commentary to the video Amos mentions baptism and the sea of Galilee, so clearly identifies this point in the narrative as a defining, religious moment for the central character. The imagery of water suggests cleanliness and purification.

[51] As per the DVD audio commentary.

character has a will to live and learns to use her own power, she is still feminine, still potentially maternal and still fluid.

Amos represents the struggle for personal freedom and agency in a specific way in the track itself, through the use of processing on the voice in combination with melodic containment and a changing narrative viewpoint. The verse begins with the line 'she's addicted to nicotine patches' suggesting that the subject is not in control of either her own body or bodily impulses. There is a contained melody here, with the opening lines moving within a minor third (from A3 to C4) suggesting restriction. The melody moves outside of this containment with the line 'She's afraid of the light in the dark', with the highest note of the melody moving up the octave to A4. The metaphor of being afraid of light in the dark suggests being fearful of something that would be of benefit, and the melodic freedom that accompanies this supports this reading. After this line, the vocal returns to the same contained pitch range. The same pattern occurs in the second verse, with the melody being confined on the line 'she's convinced she could hold back a glacier' but then breaking out of containment on the line 'But she couldn't keep Baby alive'. There is an oscillation here between powerfulness and fear, agency and repression, and there is a sense that the subject of the narrative isn't being truthful to herself. The metaphor of the light in the dark represents the notion of truth, and as such, the parts of the narrative that move outside of melodic containment are those moments where the truth is spoken. Sonically, this is supported by the use of heavy vocal processing in the verses – which here represents concealment – with a more open and naturalistic vocal sound in the chorus, which represents truth and reality. This reading is complicated by a shifting narrative perspective from third person 'she' in the first two verses, to second person 'you' and first person 'we' in the chorus, then to first person 'I' in the third verse. The sense of who is in control, who has agency and who is being truthful is complex and shifting, mirroring the fluidity and ambiguity of the maternal body presented in the video.

4.5 Tori Amos 'Your Cloud' (2002)

In much of her recorded work, Amos sounds out the possibility of reproduction, foregrounding the reproductive potential in the female body. This is where the maternal body begins, at a point even before conception. Prior to conception, there is possibility. This idea of maternal traces – where each possible stage of maternity overlaps and leave traces – can be seen clearly in 'Your Cloud', which appears on the 2002 album *Scarlet's Walk*. This album was written when Amos was

pregnant with her daughter, and in her autobiographical book *Piece by Piece,* Amos reflects upon the ways in which the creative process of songwriting was inextricably linked to this pregnancy:

> During the pregnancy with Tash, the *Scarlet* seed started coming. During the first half of the pregnancy, while I was at the beach house in Florida, I would play piano for three hours every day. So the songs were developing daily, as was this little girl inside me. I would [...] play to Tash, who would kick to the rhythm [...]. (2005, p.176)

The album *Scarlet's Walk* is also about a journey towards motherhood and as such sounds out the reproductive possibility of the female body. This is a concept album, portraying a journey across America taken by protagonist Scarlet (loosely based on Amos herself). Scarlet's journey moves through various emotional states and relationships, ending when she gives birth to a baby girl, mirroring Amos's own experiences of becoming a mother.[52] In comparison to *from the choirgirl hotel*, with its theme of miscarriage and loss, *Scarlet's Walk* is both sonically and thematically very different. The production values are lighter, and the effects and electronics that are employed on *from the choirgirl hotel* to make the sonic landscape dark, sounding out her grief, are absent. This acoustic and more 'upbeat' sound could be read as optimistic, moving forward from her earlier work to a place where childbirth might be possible.

Amos explicitly references the symbiotic relationship between mother and child when discussing 'Your Cloud'. According to Amos, the song discusses the forcible removal of Native American people from their land, but also explicitly references relationships among mothers, their bodies and their children:

> [it's about] the separation [...and] the tearing apart of a tear [...]. Cutting that apart – the division. It's about separating that which you cannot separate. Not really. There will be strands, there will be molecules [...] taking a child away from its mother. That doesn't

[52] See Here in my Head Fansite (2011) for detailed information on the narrative of the album *Scarlet's Walk*.

> mean that there aren't pieces of that child still in that mother just because it's been, you know, delivered from her womb.[53]

Lyrically, Amos represents the maternal body as a transitional subject – to borrow and re-define Tyler's phrase – with unclear boundaries between mother/body/child (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.3) This idea is mirrored harmonically thanks to the track's cyclical chord progression from I (Dbmaj7) to IV (Gbmaj7), which moves round and round throughout the verse, setting up the theme of inseparability. The indivisibility of mother and child that Amos describes in her commentary is dramatised musically by the use of inversions, voice leading and an unsatisfactory resolution to the tonic (see Fig. 4.3).

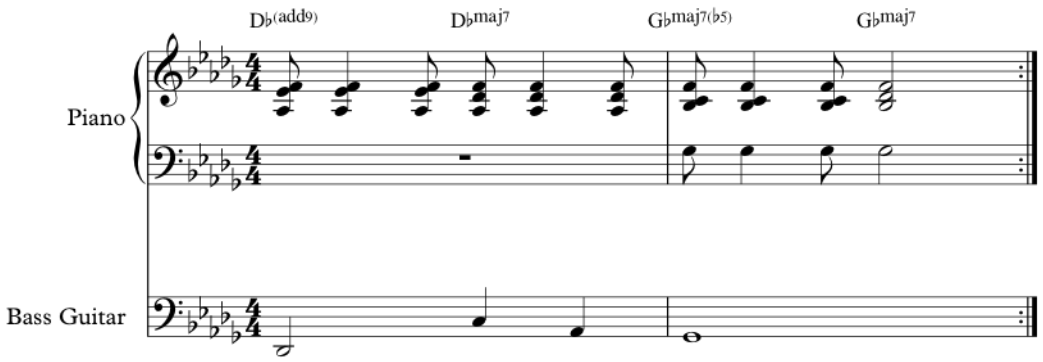

Figure 4.3: Introduction to 'Your Cloud' (2002)

There is a repeated piano motif in this introductory section, which gives a sense of enclosure, as the central melodic motif moves from an Eb to a Db over chord I, to a C and then back to Db over chord IV. The key note of Db occurs on the IV but when we return to the I (elaborated with a ninth: Db add9) the melody has moved to the ninth which is Eb. This repeating turning movement does not resolve, and as such the theme of indivisibility and circularity is musically manifested.

[53] A limited edition disk called 'Scarlet Stories' was released when purchasing the album *Scarlet's Walk* from certain shops, which contained audio commentaries from Amos on each of its songs. This content was originally found at Here in my Head Fansite (2011) and is also available at Toriphoria Fansite (2015).

Similarly, when the voice enters, the melody only resolves to the tonic at one point at the end of the fourth bar of the verse (with the word 'pages') and again at end of the sixth bar (with the word 'this').[54] These Db tonic melody notes also sit over the IV chord (Gbmaj7), frustrating any real sense of resolution. The repetition of the chords here is also matched by their rhythm, which Amos articulates in four phrases across the introductory two bars (see Fig. 4.3). This rhythmic repetition adds to the cyclical feel of the verse. This is further extended through the formal structure of the track. It is difficult to say exactly which section should be named as 'verse' or 'chorus', due to these cycling and repeated chords. A slightly higher melody, first entering at 1:00, is the only shift in the musical material that could be interpreted as a move from a verse to a chorus, and this is certainly not a definitive sectional break. The first significant harmonic break in this cyclical chord progression does not occur until at 1:26, at what structurally feels like the bridge. However, after returning to the original harmony at 2:00 this bridge section repeats at 3:25, making the listener question whether this is actually the bridge, or the chorus. This structural indivisibility also gives a sense of reproduction and cycles, supported also by the harmonic material.

In the bridge, the idea of reproduction is further enhanced through the use of the voice, with one central vocal line overdubbed in repetition and giving the impression of multiple voices singing in unison. Whilst this form of overdubbing is a standard production technique in popular music, its presence here aptly supports the subject matter of the album. One vocal line is sung by more than one version of Amos – it is unclear where each voice ends and begins, mirroring and doubling the reproductive possibility of the maternal body. This overlapping voice also sits centrally in the stereo field. At the very beginning of the bridge, supporting voices (sung by Amos) enter behind the melody singing 'stay here, stay right here'. But this 'here' is a further multiplication of voices towards the outer left and outer right of the stereo field, locating it in multiple places simultaneously. The stereo field thus makes the body of the listener more apparent in relation to the plural bodies of the vocalists, and multiplies the situated bodily experience.
In 'Your Cloud' we have a sense of fertility and the possibility of pregnancy, the idea of cycles standing for female reproductive cycles as a sonic representation of the womb.[55] The narrative isn't contained in this womb, as during the bridge Amos refers to 'body maps' (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.4)

[54] The full lyrics are available in Appendix B.
[55] In *Disruptive Divas* (2002), Lori Burns uses the notion of 'containment' in relation to the track 'Crucify', which also has a cyclical chord sequence, but I detect a different logic at work in 'Your Cloud'.

The corporeal 'line' of this narrative has movement and trajectory. In the context of a song that focuses on the maternal body, talking about the body as land infuses it with a sense of fertility and possibility. Amos is mapping out a fecund, reproductive and multiple body. Therefore, it is apparent that the physical, emotional and geographical location of the narrative subject's body has an impact on how we read the harmonic structure of the track. Moreover, when we consider this spatial location, it becomes clear that the maternal body is embodied in movement. The narrating body is moving towards pregnancy and is temporally configured, in tandem with the embodied yet unborn child, in a state of eternal motion: running off the map and into uncharted territory. Linguistic representations of bodily movement are employed by Amos throughout the track, with metaphors of 'running', 'shooting up' – which again can be related to the notion of fecundity - and 'jumping off': it is clear that the maternal body is mobile. By blurring the boundaries between mother and child, Amos problematises 'where you end, where I begin' and ensures that there is movement even across definitions of the self. In her conception, movement leaves traces across maternal subjectivities.

4.6 Tori Amos 'Playboy Mommy' (1998)

Theorising Amos' work through the lens of 'maternal traces' allows a view of the maternal body as a shifting, overlapping terrain: a corporeal geography that encompasses fertility, pregnancy and childbirth, yet also more problematic maternities such as miscarriage and the sexualised mother. The track 'Playboy Mommy', from the album *from the choirgirl hotel,* was written after Amos had suffered miscarriages. This miscarrying maternal body structures much of the musical material on the album, which was released four years prior to *Scarlet's Walk*. 'Playboy Mommy' brings together a number of the themes discussed so far and clearly shows how Amos' representation provides a challenge to dominant cultural conceptions of mothering, the maternal body and sexuality.

In the introduction to 'Playboy Mommy', Amos uses the theme of openness to signify loss. The track begins with drums and a melodic motif, played on a Kurzweil synthesizer. The timbre of this introductory section is reedy and strong, the Kurzweil sound being reminiscent of a harmonium or melodica. At 0:19 (Bar 9) the vocal enters and the Kurzweil drops out, being replaced by a piano.

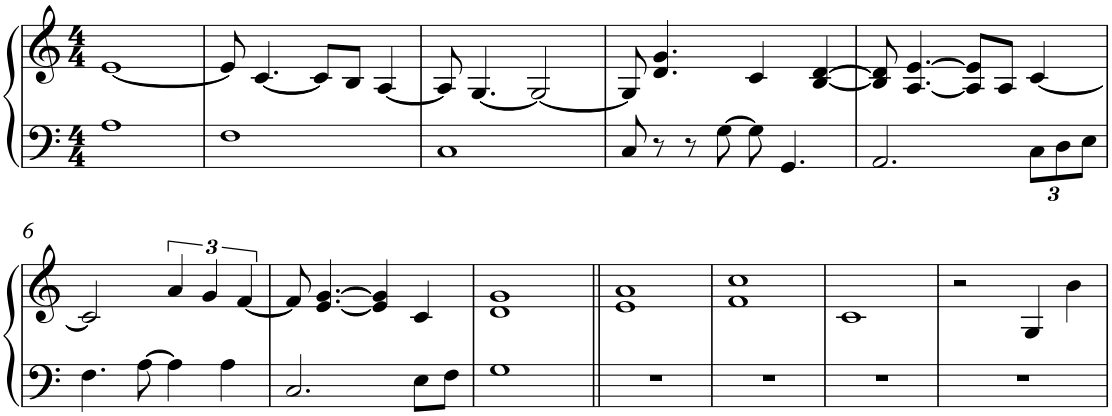

Figure 4.4: 'Playboy Mommy' (1998) Kurtzweil and piano accompaniment, bars 1-12.

The vocal is accompanied by piano, playing chords Am, F major, C major and G major in shell voicings – we have open roots and fourths/ fifths of E and A for the Am, and F and C for the C major, and then root notes only for the last two chords (see Fig. 4.4). The initial melody moves between B and C, filling in the third of the A major chord, but otherwise the ear is left to 'fill in' the absent notes, to get a sense of the tonality. The introduction then removal of a strong timbral palette, and the openness – and possible ambiguity – of the initial chords give the verse an opening sense of space. Similarly, the twelve-bar verse begins without bass, which only enters in bar five of the verse at 0:25. While the initial spatial and harmonic world that Amos sets up in the first four bars of the verse could possibly signify the reproductive potential, with possibility of gestation located in the open and empty womb of the 'Playboy Mommy', in the context of *from the choirgirl hotel*, the harmonic openness better signals a loss.

Lyrically, this motif is spelt out quite explicitly (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.5). The song's narrator is a woman speaking about (and later in the track directly to) her miscarried child, as she loses a baby. The lyrics foreground loss as central to the narrative and are supported by the musical material in the opening bars of the track.

'Playboy Mommy' is constructed around a paradox that is central to Amos's conception of the maternal body: the unashamedly sexual mother. Being dressed for a night on the town, in her high heels, the narrative reveals that she has a few 'friends' and amongst these are 'American soldiers'. Whilst this could be read in a number of ways, the term 'playboy' – with its connotations

of sexual promiscuity – clearly outlines the sexual narrative at work here. The lyrics go on to talk about the possibility of the miscarried child being 'ashamed' of this name of 'Playboy Mommy'.[56] However, the central character – clearly understanding the importance and potency of a name – is not afraid to 'say it loud' and in the chorus repeatedly asks her daughter to 'tell 'em my name'. Amos is inverting the gender of the playboy, appropriating a masculine sense of sexuality and is playing with the sexual expectations and bodily norms associated with femininity. In revealing that the playboy is not only an unashamedly sexual woman, but is an unashamedly sexual mother, Amos transgresses multiple conventions of female and maternal sexuality.

There is a relationship in this track between unashamed sexuality and notions of blame – from both the narrator and the miscarried child who 'judge[s] so harsh' – that undercut the idea that the narrator has simply appropriated a stereotypically masculine sexuality. In verse two, when the narrator poignantly says 'I'll say it loud, here by your grave, those angels can't ever take my place', this tussle between pride and blame concludes in an acceptance of sexual status, and an opposition to the notion of angelic motherly femininity. It is important to note that this woman is a mother – a Playboy *Mommy* – before she has given birth to a baby. For this woman, the act of carrying a child, to whatever point in the pregnancy, and the potential to give birth, makes her a mother. The overlapping traces on her body of motherhood, mothering potential, pregnancy, miscarriage and future fertility, are apparent. The song plainly shows a woman who is full of maternal love and maternal feeling as she sings to her miscarried child. She is mothering whilst pregnant, and continues to mother – and keep the name 'mommy' – post-miscarriage. Traces of varying identities overlap upon her body.

Overall, the lyrics depict a series of boundaries and boundary transgressions, which make clear how the maternal body is a site of contestation, where power is negotiated. At once sexual and non-sexual, a mother and a non-mother, the central narrator sits somewhere in transgressive territory. The repeated image of crossing a bridge occurs throughout the track, and supports this analysis. A bridge might be termed a 'non-place' (Auge 1995) and highlights the liminal status of this mother. The narrative also moves between the physical world and the spiritual world of the afterlife. We have the invocation of angels and a miscarried child being embodied spiritually, after death. There is also an important break in the 'feel' of track in the musical bridge. The latter occurs straight after the pedal steel solo section during which the piano also features prominently

[56] The fan site Here in my Head (2011) references an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine (25 June 1998) in which Amos describes that '"Playboy Mommy" dealt with my feelings of rejection – "Wasn't I enough to be your mother, didn't you want me? Well, don't come, then. Go choose some little right-wing Christian for your mother". It's a human response'.

and the band has a fullness of sound, in more of a country rock style. At the introduction of the bridge at 2:57 however, the pedal steel drops out, the drums become more understated – though the shuffling rhythmic pattern that features throughout the track is still heard – and the piano is played more sparsely. We move from a full band rock feel to a quiet and more introverted world, signifying a shift in tone and approach. Lyrically, there is an evocation of a spiritual world that has warranted this quietening (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.6).

Religious symbolism is present with the symbolism of church bells and the introduction of two words – 'Gloria' and 'Hosanah' – usually uttered during the Christian worship of God.[57] Amos is representing a holy world, but this is a world that the Playboy Mommy cannot find. Her compromised morals and her deviation from motherly norms have prevented her from finding spiritual salve. I am reading the use of orchids here as symbolic of fertility and childbirth – more material than spiritual and also with an anti-religious undertone and sexual suggestion.[58] Situating herself 'where the orchids grow', in a place of sensuality and materiality, the divine becomes inaccessible. In bar seven of the ten-bar bridge, at 3:11, with the introduction of 'Gloria', the shuffling rhythmic pattern of the track changes for the first time, highlighting this movement to another world. The shuffle ends and a cymbal hit is placed on beats one and three of each of the remaining four bars of the bridge. The introduction of a harmony vocal line pitched above the melody also supports this representation of a transition between the material and spiritual worlds. This harmony line is also sung by Amos and comes in on the word 'Gloria'. The vocal tone in this line is breathy, with vibrato, which signifies an angelic otherworldly voice. Playboy Mommy's miscarried child is crossing a bridge between the material and the spiritual, being embodied in the track yet without physical form: moving, in a metaphorical or spiritual sense, across this liminal non-place. The bodies of the central characters of this song are crossing the boundaries between our world and the next.

'Playboy Mommy' also evidences an ambiguous relationship between the embodied subject and movement, which shows that the narrator can neither fully embody the role of 'playboy' nor of

[57] Amos' relationship to the deity figure is complex and has been discussed to some degree in the scholarly literature – particularly in reference to 'Crucify' (*Little Earthquakes)* and 'God' (*Under the Pink)*. As the daughter of a minister, religious references abound in all her work and this is an area that warrants further scholarship.

[58] Karen E. Quinn (2009) argues that 'Artists may have avoided [representing orchids] for a variety of reasons: early on, their lack of a religious association, later their sexual symbolism' (p.228).

'mommy' without troubling norms and expectations. From the first line of the lyrics we have a metaphor that works on two levels of oppositional meaning. Initially, the line 'In my platforms I hit the floor' could be read as the narrator being ready and 'glammed up' in her shoes, about to begin dancing, using the colloquial phrase 'hitting the dance floor'. However, the missing word – 'hit the [dance] floor' – is telling, and the following line – 'fell face down' – shows movement, but of a different kind. Instead of a dancing body, we have a falling body: in motion, yet moving away from dance, involuntarily and with force, or violence. The embodied perspective represented is one where control of the body, and of movement, is lacking. The ability to dance evades this embodied maternal subject. The musical material provides opportunity for dance, with a groove being set up by the drum pattern that begins at the start of the track. The rhythm of the drums throughout – except the four bar 'Gloria' section of the bridge - emphasises the offbeat with a shuffling snare and hi-hat rhythm on beats two and four. However, despite this rhythmic groove, the narrator is only embodied lyrically in two places during the track: on the floor, when she falls at the start of the first verse, and 'here by your grave' in the second. Despite the presence of a groove for the listener, the danceability of the track is inaccessible for the playboy mommy, whose transgressive maternal body is restricted by spaces of loss: loss of movement and loss of her child.

4.7 Björk 'It's in our hands' video (2002)

Images of the maternal body, and its associated stereotypes, are explored and played with in the video for Björk's 2002 single 'It's in our Hands'.[59] Shot by Spike Jonze, the video features a heavily pregnant Björk, filmed in night vision, walking amidst the undergrowth of a fantasy world featuring giant flowers, plants, insects, and other animals. Discourses of the maternal body as organic and natural are at the forefront of the video, as the imagery presented is wholly naturalistic, with no traces of anything man-made and only the figure of Björk herself representing human subjectivity. The technological – which is a key theme in Björk's output (Dibben 2009) – is entirely absent here. Björk's work is widely seen as representative not only of an Icelandic sound, but also of the Icelandic landscape and natural world. I want to spend some time outlining this naturalist trope in Björk's work, as a broader theme within which maternity is

[59] 'It's in our Hands' was a single release that did not appear on any of Björk's studio album releases, though was released on her *Greatest Hits* and was played live during the *Vespertine* tour.

being conceptualised. The natural themes change from album to album, with her subject matter ranging from volcanoes to winter landscapes to the sea (Dibben 2009). The body is also seen as part of this natural world, as is explored in detail during the album *Medúlla* (2004) as I have analysed in the previous chapter. In approaching this video, where the only human subjectivity represented is Björk herself, it is crucial to return to the personification of nature as a central theme in Björk's work. Rather than simply commenting upon nature as something external to herself, with Björk acting as observer, she:

> […] embodies the natural world: she sings "I'm a fountain of blood in the shape of a girl", "I'm a tree that grows hearts" on 'Bachelorette' from *Homogenic* in 1997, and "one breath away from mother oceania/your nimble feet make prints in my sands" on 'Oceania' from *Medúlla* in 2004. (Dibben 2009, p.69)

In so linking herself to the natural world, Björk is exploring the relationship between the body and nature, and seeing the two as intertwined and inter-relational. Crucial to this, is an acknowledgement of power and agency. Here, Björk is situating power with women – through the words 'It's in our hands' – and is locating this power with that of nature, but found *within* the maternal body. Rather than conceptualising the human body being 'civilised' or part of 'culture', Björk returns to an ideology that views the body as naturalistic, even perhaps animalistic, as I will explore in my analysis. There is a return to the idea of the pre-cultural here, and of the eternal, set outside of culture.

The motif of the eternality of nature is one that Björk has explored visually and lyrically across her output. In 'Bachelorette' (1997) Björk embodies herself as a tree, her body as part of the natural world, she again returns to the idea of nature as precultural. The tree here functions as a symbol of longevity and eternity. This is reinforced through her singing, particularly at the end of the song. After this final verse concerning trees, the song breaks down lexically, and Björk begins to sing in a non-linguistic, glossolalic style. She sings syllable strings then repeats them, as though what she were singing was linguistic, but there is no language or direct meaning to be found. In recourse to the pre-linguistic, Björk strengthens this notion of nature as everlasting by reminding the listener that nature exists prior to culture, and therefore prior to language. Here, she is returning to an essentialist body. Embodying the precultural, she is therefore suggesting that the body also exists preculture.

In the documentary film *The Inner or Deep Part of an Animal or Plant Structure,* Björk talks about 'primitive elements'. She defines these as things that happened 'before all of this', referring to 9/11 and 'the crisis that is going on in the world today'. Wanting to represent in her work 'an individual before entering society' she engages with concepts of essentialism (Björk in Gestsdóttir 2004). Theoretically speaking, this is dangerous territory. Essentialist politics have been heavily devalued and criticised, and essentialism has become a 'dirty word', particularly in feminism or race studies. However some scholars have revisited notions of essentialism to create a more nuanced account of not only its limitations but also its strengths (Fuss 1989). Björk's recourse to the precultural and prelinguistic has ramifications for a framework drawn from embodiment studies, which I will return to in my conclusion.

In 'Bachelorette', at the melodic climax of the song, Björk uses glossolalic singing, with vocal sounds that could be described as 'open'. In much of her work she uses vowel sounds and these are sung with an open mouth, often belted, particularly in climactic moments of tracks. These vowel sounds are what might be called 'pure vowels' or monophthongs, suggesting infancy, being sounds made easily from the lungs without the need for teeth, or excessive use of tongue and jaw. This vocal technique links to Björk's comments about returning to a primal or prelinguistic culture. Coupled with lexical breakdown, this brings the listener closer to the bodily source of the sound. The song 'Bachelorette' ends with this glossolalia – Björk does not return to expression through language, the song ends in a wordless state, evoking and embodying the precultural.

As the instrumental accompaniment fades out, a new sound – the sound of an accordion – is introduced at 4.48. The accordion is an noteworthy choice for a number of reasons. First, the accordion is a breathing, embodied instrument, with lungs and ribs.[60] Using an instrument with bodily qualities has a particular effect here. Throughout the track Björk has used a highly textured sound palette – which is in particular created by the use of complex beats – and one that suggests romanticism and expressionism through the use of strings. However, at this part of the track she moves to a sparse texture, of one instrument behind the wordless vocal. The vocal connects the two sections, but the accordion mirrors the qualities of the voice here: the breathiness and the bodily connection. Second, in a sound world where Björk is drawing on natural elements, there is a connection with hearing the accordion as reminiscent of the sea.[61] In a sense Björk is returning to the pre-linguistic body, and returning to some sense of origin, of the ocean, of the sea and to

[60] See Deborah R. Vargas (2012) *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music* and Martha Mockus (2008) *Sounding Out.*
[61] The accordion was used in traditional and folk music, particularly by those who travelled, and is an instrument associated with the singing of sea shanties.

an ‘essential’ or ‘authentic’ bodily experience of the natural world. In the video for Bachelorette, Björk returns to nature, by returning from the man-made back to the ‘home’ of the forest, and sonically speaking there is a return to nature, to the primordial sea.

In ‘The Anchor Song’ (1993) Björk outlines a similar paradigm, where a return to the natural world – again, that of the ocean – is accompanied by simple and sparse brass instrumentation. As she sings about diving to the ocean floor, the ocean embodies ‘home’, again returning to discourses about preculture and essentialism. In other tracks, Björk does not embody herself as home with the sea, but uses the metaphor of the ocean as something to commune with, or longed for. In ‘Violently Happy’ (1993) this is made explicit in the lyrics (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.7). The connection between the ocean is embodied through the voice here, the breathing body of the accordion in ‘Bachelorette’ is replaced by the human voice, communicating through primal, paralinguistic sounds of a ‘roar’, a shared language prior to culture. In ‘Atom dance’, from *Vulnicura*, Björk’s 2015 album, the ocean is sought out as solace from pain, and the longing for the ocean is palpable. Nature is defined as home, as eternal, as pre-cultural and essential.

Within this wider conceptual framework set up across Björk’s output, I want to now return to the video for ‘It’s in our hands’. Björk appears very comfortable in the natural environment of the video, with a smiling face and assured body language, as would be expected given the repetitive assertion of nature as ‘home’ in her output. The initial scene of the video shows night vision footage of Björk walking through undergrowth, smiling over her shoulder to the viewer as she repeatedly sings ‘Look no further’. She beckons to the viewer with a hand signal, to follow her into this wild world, and this relaxed, happy imagery clearly links with the lyrical reassurance. She is completely immersed in this natural world, and is totally at ease. The camera is focused on her head and shoulders, following her further, viewing her through gaps in the undergrowth, the scene framed by leaves, as she moves further into this world. At 0.38 the camera angle changes, and the foliage has changed from leaves to bare branches of trees. Here there is also a move from a head and shoulders shot, to a full body shot, as Björk turns towards the camera. It is only at this point do we see that she is heavily pregnant. The camera full body shot is short, from 0:38 to 0:41, then cuts away to a head shot, returning to the full body shot from 0:45 to 0:53. The camera does not linger on Björk’s pregnant body, which highlights the naturalisation of the pregnant body here: maternal bodies are not seen as abnormal or a focus for attention in this setting. At 1:05, there is a two-second full body shot, with Björk standing on the forest floor next to a huge pinecone. The size of the plant and animal life in the video is scaled up, to make Björk appear to be very small. At 1:18, the first animal life is introduced, with a large insect – a grasshopper or

cricket – walking behind Bjork. She neither reacts to the insect life, nor draws any attention to it. Even at 2:17, with the presence of a jellyfish, which of course has the potential to harm, Björk smiles whilst singing the chorus, 'It's in our hands'. The conceptualisation of the maternal body as 'natural', combined with the size of the animal and plant life, and the relaxed attitude to the environment, suggests that Björk is completely immersed and integrated into this natural world.

Returning to the ocean as conceptualised as 'home', at 2:43 Björk is fully submerged in water. She is ecstatically smiling, whilst singing and swimming, again evidencing that her maternal body is located comfortably in this naturalistic setting. The maternal body is again conceptualised as a fluid body, with water symbolising birth and cleansing as in Amos' video for 'Spark'. Here though, no bubbles come out of Björk's mouth, and there is no struggle for breath. There is a symbiosis in evidence. At 3:09, Björk is standing still, facing the camera, with her eyes above the water line: the water is still, but her mouth and nose are submerged beneath it. Her eyes are focused on the camera calmly, and her eyebrows appear to be raised slightly, perhaps being playfully humorous.

As discussed earlier, women are encouraged to remove themselves from public spaces as their pregnancies progress (Longhurst 2001) and Björk's video troubles this concept. Whilst the video does present an organic image of maternity, it also represents two transgressions of corporeal maternal norms: first, that of a pregnant woman in a music video, and second, that of a pregnant woman, walking alone in the dark of night, in a potentially dangerous environment. Björk plays with what is culturally acceptable for pregnant women on these two levels. Lyrically, there is a statement that could be interpreted as a comment about the protective discourses around women's bodies, and concurrent physical inhibition (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.8). When Björk sings 'it's in our hands', she gives power back to women and thus births an idea of the maternal body as powerful and potentially transgressive.

4.8 Björk 'Mouth's Cradle' (2004)

The voice is the central instrument in Björk's 2004 album *Medúlla*, and despite its heavy electronic processing, 'naturalness' is a key theme on the album. The concept of the voice as representative of what is authentic – or natural – is central to the construction of the singer-songwriter as truth-teller (Whiteley 2000). The phono-somatic relationship between the voice and the body in a song – in the context of a whole album – where the voice is the focus, is shifted somewhat. In recorded music, the voice works in a two-fold context of interaction: first, in terms

of interaction with other instruments and second, in relationship to the recording process itself, and the processing and manipulation of vocal sounds. With relation to the first interaction noted, on *Medúlla* the voice is only – for the most part – interacting with other voices as instruments. The context of a band setting is absent, and therefore the sound palette is limited. However, unlike more 'stripped-back' recorded vocal works with no instrumental context – and here Amos' *a capella* 'Me and a Gun' is a comparison – Björk employs significant electronic processing. This of course has an impact in terms of genre, how the voice semiotically communicates meaning and levels of authenticity (Frith 1998). In the context of a largely unprocessed, acoustic vocal recording, the singer-songwriter communicates a level of truth and authenticity that appears unmediated, and therefore potentially closer to the body. I want to argue that through other techniques, Björk draws attention to the body, through the very act of vocal manipulation and processing. Her recorded music is phono-somatic in a way that is less obvious than the solo *a capella* singer-songwriter model, but no less embodied.

On *Medúlla* phono-somatics are rendered through a combination of vocal strategies. Paralanguage is one such strategy, and a wide range of non-lexical sounds is explored on the album. Björk's collaborative approach to composition (Dibben 2009; Goldin-Perschbacher 2008) allows for a variety of singers with culturally diverse approaches to vocality. These include Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq Gillis, beatboxer Rahzel, vocalists including Mike Patton (previously of indie rock group Faith No More) and of course Björk herself, with her phono-somatic approach to vocality, which I have explored in previous chapters. *Medúlla* is a tapestry of vocal sounds, and though it is largely *a capella* it does not function in the traditional *a capella* model. The paralinguistic sounds that populate this album – the breath, murmurs, moans, gulps and gasps – form the musical textures that would ordinarily be made by instruments. The sound of the album is visceral. Another vocal strategy on the album is that of glossolalia, with songs 'Öll Birtan' and 'Miðvikudags' sung in 'nonsense syllables that could suggest a new type of emergent language' (Malawey 2011, p.142). In *Medúlla*, Björk extends the practice of wordless, glossolalic singing – which previously has only been present in sections of her songs – into full songs.

Medúlla (2004) was written when Björk was pregnant, and – as with Amos' *Scarlet's Walk* (2002) – pregnancy and maternities influenced the writing process and subject matter. In the documentary *The Inner or Deep Part of an Animal or Plant Structure*, Björk describes giving birth as a 'primal force', and that experience developed into this sense of the visceral, an embodied depth which permeates the album. She describes creating a vocal album that had 'a strong feeling of heart, blood and meat. And at the same time I wanted the lower half of the body to merge into

the music'. The vocal sounds are deeply corporeal, embodied sounds that evoke a physicality that borders on primitivism. *Medúlla* is a phono-somatic return to the pre-cultural, and the symbolic.

The figure of the maternal body is central to this representation of the pre-cultural, with songs such as 'The Pleasure is All Mine' and 'Mouth's Cradle' explicitly exploring maternities.[62] In my analysis I focus on 'Mouth's Cradle'. The breastfeeding maternal body is the focus of the song, as a source of purity and love. The maternal body is not presented clearly in the lyrics, but appears opaquely (Goldin-Perschbacher 2008, p.127). However, extra-musical sources point to its centrality (McNair 2004). What *is* clear is the discursive apparatus that Björk uses to conceptualise the maternal body. There is very specific language used to highlight how the maternal body sits within tropes that have been consistently brought to the fore across her output. Dibben (2009) outlines key themes in Björk's work – those of Nationalism, nature, technology, sound and emotion – and it is clear that the maternal body works across a number of these broader themes. More specifically speaking, the concept of the pre-cultural, the natural and the authentic are explored through the maternal body.

In 'Mouth's Cradle', the relationship between maternal body and breastfeeding child is nurturing, but in both directions. The ambiguity of the lyrics suggest that the 'support' found is supportive of both the mother and child, and that the fruit of the relationship between the pair is that of an unconditional love. Words such as 'simplicity', 'purity' and 'hope' situate the relationship in a particular utopian space. This aligns with Björk's familiar trope of the pre-cultural, or the 'natural' as authentic and as nourishing (Dibben 2009). The maternal body is configured as a refuge away from political concerns of the modern world (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.9). This recourse to the natural, to maternity embodied, as a sanctuary away from the world, is a pleasurable one. Malawey (2011) argues that there is an inversion of the normal expected relationship between parent and child, where the parent is the one supporting the child. Here, the child supports and nurtures the parent, and pleasure is central to this.

In Kristeva's conception of *jouissance*, feminine pleasure is maternal and she highlights the cyclical nature of femininity as pre-symbolic. In 'Mouths Cradle' *jouissance* is suggested in a number of ways. It is the voice that highlights *jouissance* as a maternal pleasure and its embodied source, through recourse to an essential pre-cultural self. This is, of course, not without theoretical problems, but at this point I want to set that aside and examine what Björk does with the voice in order to accentuate these themes. In this track, the voice functions as a site of

[62] See Goldin-Perschbacher 2008 for an analysis of maternities in 'The Pleasure is All Mine'.

intimacy (Goldin-Perschbacher 2008) bringing the listener into a close relationship with the singing body. The multiplication of voices also, of course, multiplies bodies, or at least the idea of bodies – even if it is Björk's singular subjectivity repeated, the recording process fools us by creating something physically impossible for one person to achieve sonically. The multiplication of subjectivities is a theme in Björk's work – as seen in the analysis of the video 'All is Full of Love' – and also occurs in the work of the other case study artists, and I will return to this point in my thesis conclusion.

Jouissance is highlighted through the breath, that bodily function that symbolises a cycle of life through the in- and out-breath, and through Björk's liminal placement of the breath in her musical context. In bar 2 of the song, a voice enters extremely quietly, sounding just as a breath – rather than a note – and repeating a rhythm, which crescendos throughout the opening bars of the song. The breath sounds as if the person is breathing in and out in quick succession. As the voice gets louder, a pitch is identifiable and the rhythm becomes more clear. This movement from bodily sound – that of the unpitched breath – into sung sound, with pitch and eventually vowel sounds of 'uh ah'. Music theorist Victoria Malawey (2011) has bravely transcribed these opening bars to 'Mouth's Cradle' and other sections of songs on *Medúlla*. I hear a liminal relationship between the breath, the pitched sound and the rhythm, which is not easy to notate.[63] Malawey transcribes the rhythm as two semiquavers followed by a quaver, which would be either matched with an out-breath (first semiquaver), an in-breath (second semiquaver) and an out-breath (quaver). However, in order to have an initial out-breath, there must be an in-breath. As Björk uses a paralinguistic framework, and uses the textures of breath and other mouth sounds as part of her sonic palette, she encourages these sounds rather than removing them. I hear an in-breath before this rhythmic pattern, one that needs to be included in a transcription of this vocal sound. Björk is using this breath sound as part of the vocal texture. Similarly, Malawey notates the vocal sound a little later than I hear it – I hear it very faintly at the end of bar two, whereas she notates it on beat 3 of bar 3 – and pitches it as Eb4 straight away. In my analysis, I hear the sound earlier, but I hear it more as breath rather than pitched sound. As the vocal increases in volume, Malawey notes a change in the rhythmic pattern in bar 6, to a semiquaver, followed by a semiquaver rest, then a crotchet. But the breath is still there, in the spaces between the notes, despite the pitched qualities now being louder than it. As such it forms an important part of the rhythmic pattern.

[63] Malawey's transcription is excellent, and is as near as possible to the sound presented, serving her argument about musical emergence well. However, popular music scholars have discussed at length the impossibility of transcribing certain types of sound into Western notation and here is an example where there are elements of the music that are unrepresentable in this form.

Removing the breath from an analysis of these vocal sounds neglects a very important element of the track. This is a phono-somatic sound, drawing attention through the voice to the body, a body which Björk has outlined as a fundamental concern of the album's sound palette. The liminal qualities of this sound raise lots of questions: where does the vocal begin? Where does it become pitched? Is the breath a note? Is there a privileging of pitched textures over other vocal textures such as breath or other mouth noises? This opening breathy vocal signifies pleasure – here I return briefly to the theme of Chapter 1, the female orgasm and female desire as expressed paralinguistically – in alignment with the lyrical content of the song. Björk sings that 'this tooth is warmth-like', suggesting that breastfeeding is pleasurable and highlighting the sensual aspects of maternity (Goldin-Perschbacher 2008). In 'Mouth's Cradle' Björk is attending to concepts of the natural and the authentic (as explored in section 1.5) through a vocal sound that is phono-somatic with pleasure, but also liminal situated excessively (Dolar 2006) between the technologised and the 'natural', between the sung, the spoken and the breathing voice.

4.9 PJ Harvey 'C'mon Billy' (1995)

The theme of sexualisation of the maternal body, explored in the work of Amos and Björk, is also found in the work of PJ Harvey. In her 1995 album *To Bring You My Love,* Harvey focuses on longing and lost love, through the lens of the blues. When the maternal body appears, it is located firmly in a context of sexual lust and longing for an absent lover.

In the track 'C'mon Billy' the narrator is trying to entice her absent lover to 'come to me' and 'come to your lover's bed'. The vocals evoke the sounds of orgasm and desire, using paralanguage – non-verbal utterances – to highlight the embodied sexuality of the narrator. Combining these vocal sounds with the lyrics of longing and lust embodies the narrator in a sexual framework. The phrase 'C'mon Billy' is sang in a half sighed voice, reminding Billy of the pleasures once found in this sexual relationship. The breaths found at the start of phrases are clearly heard, and in context, remind the listener of the sexual act: this breathing increases particularly throughout the last section and the track itself ends with a breathy sigh. Harvey's voice also evidences sexual power, with a strong tone and growling effect, as she sings 'I remember/lover's play'. This animalistic and sexual growl firmly locates the narrator as a sexual character. It also suggests that the narrator perhaps once had power in this relationship. However, the lyrics evidence that Billy is an absent father and that this power has shifted (for lyrics see Appendix 3, Example 4.10). She still

retains some power as, when she swears that Billy is the only lover, the potentiality for other lovers and the possibility that she may not have been faithful is suggested.

The combination of sexuality and, at times, powerful vocals, with a pleading maternal subjectivity, situates this mother in a complex web of emotional states. On the one hand, she is a mother, on the other she is sexual. Harvey, however, shows the narrator as focused away from the child. Traditional notions of doting motherhood are inverted here, as the only remark that could potentially be read as directly about the child is 'Damn thing gone crazy'. The maternal body is here embodied through paralinguistic sound, but is focused on lust, sexuality and their lover, not on maternal love for the child. Here, Harvey is troubling conceptions of femininity (as explored in section 1.4) pointing to their culturally constructed nature. The body of the sexualised mother is phono-somatically rendered, and though she is embodied through heterosexual desire, the category of woman is significantly destabilised through the undercutting of maternal feeling.

4.10 Conclusion

The case study artists use a range of strategies to make visible and audible the maternal body. Through musical and extra-musical approaches, they challenge dominant notions of both maternities and sexualities, which regulate and structure the culturally situated maternal body. They draw attention to the limitations of stereotypical conceptions of maternities, and more specifically of maternal female sexualities, through visual representations – in photographs and videos – and through musical sound worlds. By embodying female experience, they locate the female body as a site where power is contested and reworked, and highlight the possibilities for resistance and agency. As they draw attention to sexual maternal bodies and highlight their liminal status, they allows us to identify new modes of conceptualising embodied female experience. This clearly links to my discussions in section 1.4, in that the understanding of femininity as linked to female bodies in a conventional way is ruptured here. For example, Amos draws attention to trauma and loss as potential sites of opposition to patriarchal norms.

Maternities are configured as pleasurable, as sensual, as sexual in all three women's explorations of the maternal body. My theorisation of maternal traces, and of a complex understanding that allows for maternal sexualities to be recognised, needs to be extended to include analyses of how a range of artists engage with concepts of maternities and mothering. In particular, in a music industry that focuses on the sexualisation of women's bodies for voyeuristic pleasure, it is vital to think about how other embodied standpoints can be suggested. How do women convey

embodied maternities through music and through performance? How can women articulate maternal sexualities, or highlight the complex liminalities of the maternal body through musical expression? What do these cultural expressions say about female power and agency?

With the case study artists, their work communicates a nuanced understanding of female bodily experiences. By highlighting maternal bodies, and embodying them sonically and visually with a multifaceted, plural approach, they allow for a new conception of female power within popular music. Rather than a postfeminist maternal body – where female agency is subjugated to the culturally dominant norms of maternities (Nega 2009) – this is a third-wave strategy to destabilise the very concept of maternities in relation to femininity (see section 1.4). Recognising the absence of maternal bodies in the music industry, they draw attention to a key female experience, and present a complex, multidimensional account.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The relationship between the voice and the body in the recorded music of Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey is one that can be conceived of as experiential and disruptive. Phono-somatics allow for identities to be explored through music, in a way that disrupts and challenges hegemonic viewpoints. Furthermore, the radical potential of the voice – as a site of agency, power and control – is amplified through its embodiment. The three case study artists have used compositional strategies to draw attention to the embodied qualities of the voice, and have allowed phono-somatic approaches to permeate through lengthy songwriting careers. In doing so, a number of key thematic areas are visible in their work, and the analysis of these has been the focus for this thesis. I have identified phono-somatic approaches within their work, both on a broader level of analysis (which might be described as meta analysis) and then also in terms of specific and distinguishable musical parameters.

I have located the case study artists in the context of 1990s' society in the introduction to this thesis, where the body was being brought to the fore of both cultural practice and academic study. Embodied strategies in music and other fields began emerging in a post-AIDS, liberalised culture. In my main chapters I have explored themes in the case study artists' work that clarify the relationship between voice, body and gender, specifically how phono-somatics manifest in their recorded music and in selected videos. I now want to return to the broader historical perspective, to recap the themes I have discovered in the artists' works, and to re-historicise their phono-somatic practice within this broader context set out in my introduction. This study was specifically conceived to look at the work of the case study artists across their output of just over twenty years, rather than to locate them singularly in the 1990s. The three musicians have significant longevity in their careers – all have been commercially productive from the early 1990s through to 2015 with no substantial breaks – and this allows for a broad and shifting historical and cultural perspective across the period. Feminist scholarship in the 1990s talked about 'living one's body in the world' (Butler 1987, p.131) and, as a study of female embodiment and voices post-1990, the understanding of how bodies and voices – and the relationship between the two – develop over time allows for a deep understanding of performativity, particularly in relation to gender. This study concludes with further reflections on historicising the themes explored in previous chapters. In particular, I want to draw attention to how phono-somatics are located culturally, and therefore develop and change throughout time.

5.1 Historicising the case study artists

The changes from the early 1990s to the present day have had considerable impact on the relationship between the body and voice, in a number of ways. Vocally embodied strategies are received and decoded by audiences in relation to cultural context. Changing attitudes to sexuality and pornographies are critical during this period, with a growing sense of liberalisation that began in the 1960s. There has also been a wider acceptance of homosexuality, and greater cultural representation of lesbian, gay and bisexual communities. Transgender people are now becoming more visible within popular culture, and at the time of writing this is seen as an area where public attitudes are beginning to shift.[64] This liberalisation of culture is continuing, and has grown and developed throughout the period for analysis, though it is not without limitation. In this conclusion, I want to explore a number of areas more deeply: specifically, sexually explicit cultural content and representations of sexual violence. After a broader discussion of politics in the period, focusing on the impact of 9/11, I will then move on to outline changes in feminist politics and thought, before returning to the work of the case study artists.

5.1.1 Sexually explicit culture

Sexual content in popular culture has changed greatly over the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, with sex being represented in ever more explicit ways. In many ways, this period has seen explicitness decoupled from the erotic. There is a key distinction between that which is pornographic and that which is erotic which needs unpacking here. The erotic and the pornographic of course overlap, and are subjective by their very nature. However scholars have unpacked these concepts to provide broad-brush definitions (Stras 2015). Pornographic material 'engages with its consumers on the level of physical arousal through explicit sexual content' (Stras 2015, pp.2-3) whilst the erotic also occupies a positive aesthetic, emotive or intellectual position, as well as being explicit and arousing in content.

In mainstream culture from the 1960s onwards, explicitness about women's bodies became permissible, as long as in context of the erotic rather than the pornographic. This liberalisation

[64] The recent high profile coming out of trans woman Caitlyn Jenner (previously Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner) has been reported positively in the media, as has Jenner's receipt of the Arthur Ashe Courage award given for excellence across the sporting world (Dooley 2015; Lutz 2015). This is not to denigrate the tangible presence of both transphobia and homophobia in contemporary culture, more to note that attitudes are shifting and changing.

occurred partly because of the loosening of boundaries of expression for women, with women's fiction and sexual memoirs becoming honest about female desire. Books such as Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973) and Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* (1977) saw more mainstream approval of erotic culture. Other cultural forms across the 1960s and 1970s saw the exploration of explicit sexualities, for example in director Bob Fosse's semi-autobiographical bio-pic *All that Jazz* (1979). In the film, musical theatre numbers 'Take off with us' and 'Air-otica' are sexually suggestive, both in bodily terms with dancers moving in sensual and explicit poses – such as the main dancer bending over to look through her legs at the camera – and in lyrical terms, with lines like 'our crew […] only live to service you'. Vocally, the song 'Take off with us' is punctuated with whispered, breathy sections, paralinguistically representing sex. By doing so, 'Take off with us' sets up the erotic context, and then the next number 'Air-otica' moves into more explicit territory. As one of the dancers says 'Welcome aboard Air-otica', there is then a reprise of the phrase 'take off with us', but in slower and more breathy tones. Here, 'take off' signifies the removal of clothes, as the dancers begin to remove layers of clothing, some in pairs and some alone, this removal of clothes happening slowly throughout the scene until some of the dancers – both male and female – are naked. The phrase 'let us all get to know one another […] just reach out your hand and introduce yourselves' signifies sexual interactions: physical exchanges which happen between opposite and same sex pairings of dancers, then move into groups. The movements between the dancers are aesthetic and sensual, but there are also body positions that are highly suggestive of penetrative and oral sex. The culmination of the scene is literally climactic, with musical representation of orgasm through fast repeated keyboard glissandos and insistent percussion, ending with the dancers falling to the floor, spent and exhausted. In this scene, the distinction between the erotic and the pornographic becomes clear. None of the dancers are objectified, but rather present sexualities as consensual, equal and mutual. As the dancers each give their name they present individual embodied subjectivity, as opposed to objectified body parts without an identity. This scene highlights the erotic as positively aesthetic, sensual and intellectual, rather than simply concerned with physical arousal.

Post-AIDS, representations of sexualities in popular culture of course continued, but a different mode of the erotic was at play. Madonna's book *Sex* was released in 1992, to great controversy and media hype (Frank and Smith 1993, pp.7-12). The aesthetic of Madonna's book was autoerotic: a masturbatory fantasy of staged photographs, founded upon theatricality. In the pictures, the sex presented is neither 'realistic', as in the memoirs of the 1960s and '70s, nor tangibly physical as in *All that Jazz*, but is firmly in the realm of fantasy. Importantly, the vast majority of sex presented in Madonna's book is not penetrative sex. This explicitness was

grounded in an aesthetic framework necessary in the post-AIDS world: sex as theatrical, as simulated and therefore safe. In *Madonnarama* (1993) Douglas Crimp and Michael Warner describe *Sex* as queer but not 'queer enough', arguing that the photographs are titillation for Madonna's then boyfriend (p.93). They highlight that the tastes and preferences of queer men in the photographs are 'not being reflected here; they're being shoved aside so that the guys can serve as signifiers of something else' (1993, p.95). Distancing itself from mainstream pornography, through the appropriation of queer iconography, *Sex* manages to both be explicit and yet strangely not erotic, by being a simulacrum of real sex. The mutuality of *All that Jazz* comes from its embodied qualities, but the queer representations in *Sex* are disembodied. The individual subjects posing in the photographs are not given agency and their sexualities are not embodied within the work. Madonna's book objectifies – which suggests that it is situated in the realm of pornography – but its distance from penetrative sex and the staged quality of the photographs even problematise that categorisation. Critical reception described the book as boring and anticlimactic (Frank and Smith 1993, pp.11-12) which implies that what was being touted as erotic during this period did not fulfil this categorisation.

With the birth of the internet, online pornography and other explicit visual material has changed the moral landscape. Children and young people now have access to sexually graphic images from a young age, and what is 'acceptable' – in terms of the broad cultural, moral landscape – is no longer easy to define, given the proliferation of sexual images. Returning to Stras' (2015) definition of the pornographic, it becomes clear that pornography is divorced from the day-to-day, lived experiences of bodies. There is a reductive quality to pornography: arousal through the movement of body parts cast loose from their contexts of aesthetics, narrative or intellect.
The internet-age expansion of the visually explicit has also translated into music video. Commercial pop videos have also pushed the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of nudity and sexually explicit material. The 1989 video for 'If I could turn back time' featured Cher in a sheer body-stocking outfit and was banned by television stations such as MTV. Shakira's 2009 hit 'She Wolf' featured the singer in a nude coloured leotard, gyrating and appearing to be fully naked and Nicki Minaj's 2014 video for 'Anaconda' features close-up shots of female buttocks jiggling and twerking, to accompany the objectifying lyric 'Oh. My. Gosh. Look at her butt!'. The dividing line between the explicit erotic and the pornographic is difficult to define in the music video, because aesthetics are central to the text.[65] However, using the criteria of embodied sexuality as erotic, and the pornographic as objectified, subjectivity becomes the dividing line.

[65] It is worth noting that Minaj is critiquing 1990s' notions of sexuality.

When women's bodies are reduced to mere parts, outside of a sense of subjectivity, then the erotic – according to Stras' broad definition (2015) – cannot be present. Whether the objectified is always pornographic in the context of music video is something for future research to explore.

The liberalisation of popular culture, and the increase in sexually explicit material – both that which might be considered erotic and pornographic – has changed the cultural landscape in which the case study artists present their work.

5.1.2 Sexual violence in popular culture

Explicit content can also include representations of sexual violence. This is an area where cultural attitudes have shifted somewhat but there is significantly less liberalisation in the sense that sexual violence still underpins cultural norms and attitudes. The lack of appropriate legislative support for victims of sexual violence, and the evidence provided by statistics showing that the reporting of sexual violence crime is low and with an excessively low conviction rate, have impact on the broader context here (Sable 2006). Culturally there are recurring motifs, including blaming victims' conduct for sexual assault (Ullman 2010) and the removal of agency in women's sexuality through modes of objectification, which combine to create an ethos of acceptability for sexual violence. In popular music culture, Robin Thicke's track 'Blurred Lines' (2013) and the accompanying video feature a composite of these elements. The title of the song itself presents the area of women's consent as 'blurred', and the lyrics extend this through motifs of control and agency. In essence, consent in the song revolves around the line 'I know you want it', where the male narrator sets up a subject position that allows him to speak on behalf of the woman. The suggestion is that whether the woman consents to sex or not does not matter, as his knowledge is privileged over hers and the 'blurred lines' around consent allow him to make a decision. The video features the fully clothed male singers with a number of female models naked except for a thong, some of which are flesh-coloured, to give the illusion of total nudity. The women look at the cameras very directly, and walk to and fro in front of the singers, who are mostly in one position, watching the women. The women do not have a voice here, as the men sing the narrative of the song, and as such are presented as objects to be looked at. The direct look in the camera does suggest there may be some agency at work here, but I interpret this as a reinforcement of the triangle of the male gaze, as set up in Mulvey's theorisation (1975).

Despite the prevalence of sexual violence in contemporary culture, there has been significant media and public outcry against both the video and the lyrics of 'Blurred Lines' (Lynskey 2013) suggesting that there is a turning moral attitude towards representations of sexual violence. Young feminists have been the instigators of much of the critique of 'Blurred Lines', suggesting that the third (and potentially fourth) wave of feminism (which I will return to in section 5.2) has a direct impact and influence in media culture, perhaps more so than second wave feminism. Female-composed autobiographical rape narratives, such as the earlier discussed Amos' 'Me and a Gun' or others from similar singer-songwriters from this period such as Fiona Apple's 'Sullen Girl' (1996) highlight another mode of discussing sexual violence, and have contributed hugely to the undermining of dominant discourses.

With this increasingly explicit culture, where there is a plurality of sexualities and a more liberal approach to the cultural representation of sex, there are still modes that are privileged over others. Within a patriarchal system, the threat of male violence underpins sexualities and therefore controls and regulates them. The male gaze, which objectifies and structures visual culture, is predicated on a male dominance that is ineluctably maintained by the threat of male violence.

5.1.3 Politics and 9/11

Political changes during this period have had an impact on how bodies and voices are conceptualised: in particular, post-9/11 the relationship between the individual and wider communities has been problematised, as I discussed in Chapter 3. This study provides evidence that 9/11 has had a particular influence on cultural and social understandings of both voices and bodies. The singular voice of an individual has now been problematised, in that the way in which individual trauma is related and received in culture now relates explicitly to broader societal traumas in the context of terrorism. The individualised body of the early 1990s has become replaced by interconnected bodies, in the sense that the individual body in Anglo-American culture post-9/11 stands in for societal bodies more broadly. In the work of the case study artists, phono-somatic explorations of the individual versus the social occur. In 'Mouth's Cradle' Björk uses the figure of the maternal body, and the breastfeeding relationship, to move away from the politicised communal body. In the maternal body she sets up something sacred, arguing that 'I need a shelter to build an altar away/From the Osamas and Bushes'. Here, Björk is recognising

that 9/11 has had an impact on all aspects of bodily life, and is trying to reconnect with the individual experience of bodies outside of post-9/11 culture.

The musical material of all three case study artists has become increasingly politicised as they have become more established performers. I have charted the move from individual narratives to an engagement with broader cultural and political themes: Björk's explicit reference to Bush and Osama bin Laden, and her political calls for independence; Harvey's unflinching portrayal of war in *Let England Shake*; and Amos's inflammatory song 'Yo George' from *American Doll Posse* (2007), in which she discusses 'the Madness of King George' and mourns the changing political climate with the line 'Where have we gone wrong, America?'. Within a framework of 'alternative' or 'indie' music, whose genre rules (Frith 1998) celebrate authenticity, truthfulness and outspokenness (Whiteley 2000) this has translated into a wider perspective, which both aligns with and challenges feminist thinking. In the 1990s, the second-wave slogan 'the personal is political' well described the initial mode for indie singer-songwriters.[66] Many songs were presented from an individual perspective, which might be autobiographical, or at least interpreted by audiences as such. In second-wave feminism, however – as outlined in my Introduction – individual experience often was made to stand for the whole, and in doing so eradicated difference. It may be argued that the case study artists' representations privileged certain subject positions (Western, white, middle-class, able-bodied etc.) despite Amos arguing that 'we see things from different points of view and that affects people in different ways and I think that should be encouraged' (*Q* 1994). In the third wave of feminism individuality is prioritised and difference is celebrated, sometimes at the expense of collectivity . However, there is a paradox at play here in the work of the case study artists, as rather than becoming more individualised they have become more politicised, highlighting how the post-9/11 world brings bodies closer together through the notion of 'terror'. This notion of terror is similarly linked to the permanent threat of male violence present in women's experience of modern culture.

[66] Although the phrase 'The personal is political' was the title of a 1969 essay by feminist Carol Hanisch 'The feminist thinkers who are usually given credit for coining the personal is political […] contend they had nothing to do with authoring the phrase. Instead they cite millions of women in millions of private and public conversations as the phrase's collective authors' (Burch 2012, p.139).

5.2 Feminist theory during the period

Significant changes in feminist thought occurred during this period since the debut work of the case study artists: third-wave feminism evolved in the early 1990s and through into the new millennium, during which time there was also the suggestion that this was a 'postfeminist' age. At the time of writing, in 2015, there is discussion about the internet age heralding a fourth wave of feminism, with internet feminist activism and heightened understanding of issues of intersectionality building on the work of previous waves of feminism (Munro 2015). Placing the work of the case study artists in the context of feminist thought allows an exploration of ideas about female identities and, specifically, gendered identities as experienced through the body. The use of phono-somatics is an embodied mode of engaging with gendered identities and conceptions of femininity. The changing ways that feminism has engaged with the concept of femininity set the context for engagement with these musical works, where varied phono-somatic expressions of femininity are explored.

5.2.1 Essentialism

In the 1980s, the turn from liberal feminism, with its focus on equality, to what is described in the US as 'difference feminism' allowed women to better acknowledge that which had previously been described as 'feminine'. Through definition as feminine, certain qualities and traits had been devalued and therefore difference feminism became a project of revaluation (Gendered Innovations 2015). For example, care-focused feminists such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings evaluated feminine traits – such as those associated with mothering – in relation to values, asking the question 'whether the key to all human beings' liberation is to embrace the values and virtues traditionally associated with women' (Tong 2014, p.127). Critiques of difference feminism describe its tendency to:

> romanticize traditional femininity and masculinity and to reinforce conventional stereotypes. This approach fails to take into account that women and men across classes and cultures hold many different perspectives and values. (Gendered Innovations 2015)

Though its critics view difference feminism as reductive, it is a useful lens through which to begin to explore essentialism. The same can also be said for French feminist theory, which has long been criticised as essentialist.

Bodies do not exist prior to culture – they are formed through their very location within culture – and in using a framework of embodiment I have made it clear that I am referring to the embodying of an *acculturated* body, not a body existing prior to culture. The analysis of my case study artists has shown that Björk in particular draws on motifs of essentialism and pre-culture. As a feminist scholar approaching the voice and the body through the lens of gender, this approach troubles and disturbs my feminist understanding of embodiment.

Exploring essentialism helps to better understand and locate the musical practices that feature these essentialising discourses. This analysis is vital to understanding the problematic of politicisation, which has developed within recent feminist anti-essentialist contexts. Third-wave feminism has rightly highlighted difference, but in doing so has undermined shared characteristics that had given women – as defined in a unified way – a political imperative. Using the term 'coalition' has been suggested as a counter to the fragmentation and de-politicisation found in anti-essentialist thinking, and to provide an alternative to the essentialist notion of 'unification' (Stone 2004). Allied to this term is the concept of genealogy, which draws together women's divergent and disparate positions, identities and narratives and 'provides a way to reject essentialism (and so to deny that women have any necessary or common characteristics) while preserving the idea that women form a distinctive social group' (Stone 2004, p.136).

Stone (2004) points out that essentialism is also configured as a shared characteristic for all women, even if the theorist considers these characteristics as socially constructed. She separates biological essentialism from a wider definition of essentialism. Using the work of Hartsock, MacKinnon and Gilligan as examples, Stone highlights that these theorists were pointing to a universal form of social construction to which all women are subject. A definition of essentialism that includes both the biological and the socially constructed highlights that the central problem of essentialism is its universalist tendencies. Critiques of essentialism stem from the fact that one particular world-view was being allowed to dominate as representative of all women's experiences, either in biological or socially constructed terms. Here the idea of 'privilege' began to emerge within feminist circles, as the experience of white, heterosexual, middle-class women functioned as what was considered the 'norm', effectively silencing the voices of women speaking from other standpoints.

Feminisms of the 1990s, which were emerging at the same time as the debut work of the case study artists, highlighted the proliferation of women's experience and in particular, the acculturation of bodies (Butler 1990, 1993; Grosz 1994). Emphasising the centrality of difference in women's lives destabilised the notion of a collective identity and undermined the possibility of social and political activism based on this collectivity (Stone 2004, p.141). Stone posits a genealogical approach in order to form some basis for collective political activism without recourse to essentialising strategies. She argues that:

> Any such 'genealogical' analysis of women must start by recognising that concepts of femininity change radically over time, and that these changing concepts affect women's social position and lived experience. In particular, a genealogical analysis of women is premised on the view – articulated in Judith Butler's work – that women only become women, or acquire femininity, by taking up existing interpretations and concepts of femininity. As Butler puts it, taking on a gender involves finding 'a contemporary way of organising past and future cultural norms, a way of situating oneself in and through those norms, an active style of living one's body in the world'. (Stone 2004, p.149)

Third wave feminism highlighted that defining 'woman' as a single unified category was problematic. As such, the third wave has a complex relationship with the notion of femininity. At the core of the majority of contemporary feminist thinking is anti-essentialism. Some third-wave feminists have embraced cultural expressions of femininity that were rejected by their second-wave counterparts. The critiques of standards of beauty for women lead to a rejection of traditional markers of femininity – such as high heels, corsets, make-up and bras – and an anti-fashion approach (Hollows 2000). Part of the acceptance of these cultural structures of femininity was the fact that third wave feminism was predicated on the basis of finding a space to negotiate and subvert from within. Feminists could understand social and cultural conditioning, and yet enjoy performing and playing with identities, 'contradictions and possibilities of fashion and beauty practices' (Hollows 2000, p.143). The outcome of this approach is the reworking and reinterpretation of what it means to be a woman, and the adaptation and redefinition of modes of femininity, outside of essentialising discourses.

Returning to Björk, it is clear that feminist thought across the period of her ouput is at odds with her desire to return to the universal and pre-culture. Her phono-somatic representations of the

pre-linguistic symbolise her desire for a utopian past. Whilst Björk and the other case study artists are expressing lived experiences of existing in a female body, and much of their work aligns with feminist aims, describing their work as feminist in its entirety is at odds with the feminist theory I have explored. This is evidenced by Björk's problematic use of essentialist language. The notion of genealogy (Stone 2004) is perhaps useful here, as Björk is aiming in her work to uncover layers and histories of human beings, in particular with her exploration of the themes of nature and technology (Dibben 2009). However, this form of genealogy undermines the notion of social construction and is set up through a paradigm of utopian imagination. It cannot therefore be described as feminist, as contemporary feminism has disavowed essentialism.

5.3 Concluding remarks on the case study material in context

In this thesis I have explored how the case study artists utilise strategies of embodiment in their recorded works. Embodiment – as an experiential mode through which to compose – allows these musicians to examine a range of subject positions and identities in their songs. I have shown how the embodied experience of the case study artists is multiplied, queered and redefined through phono-somatics, and it is this that delineates a feminine embodied vocality. This, however, is not an essentialist paradigm, but rather a series of subject-positions taken up by the case study artists, in relationship to modes of femininity. Femininity is questioned, dismantled and reorganised by these musicians, in destabilising ways. Early in her work Harvey explicitly challenges gender norms around beauty, comportment and agency in 'Dress' (1992). She plays with expectations of women showing how female agency and power can be sought, but then can turn into the source of frustration, for example in 'The Dancer' (1995). Both Harvey and Amos turn around patterns of violence, through their story-telling of female perpetrators in 'Down by the Water' (1995) and 'I Don't Like Mondays' (2001) respectively. Björk blurs the boundaries between male, female, human and machine in the video for 'All is Full of Love' (1997), troubling the first-person perspective of the woman singer-songwriter.

My analysis shows that the case study artists use linguistic and sound-based techniques, such as the use of paralanguage, lexical breakdown and glossolalia, as embodied practices. By using these techniques, they draw attention to the body, and to its lack of stability. In my chapter on 'Embodied Voices' I highlight how these methods are liminal, even perhaps without orientation. Phono-somatics are situated across multiple boundaries, between sound and language, between

speech and song, and as sound situated across the boundary between voice and body. By destabilising the 'naturalised body' through vocalisation, language is also destabilised (Eidsheim 2011). As linguistic clarity is lost, 'othered' meanings are able to surface.

The case study artists were identified in *Q* (Deevoy 1994) as a female cohort with strong sexualities, and this is clearly shown through my analysis of phono-somatic responses to femininity in their work. Sexual bodies are at the centre of feminine phono-somatics, and much of the case study artists work is concerned with sexualities, with the lived experience of sexual bodies. The voice therefore functions as embodied in relation to sexual desire. From the breathy, shivering tones of Björk's 'Cocoon' (2001) to the lexical breakdown appearing at the end of sentences in PJ Harvey's 'The Letter' (2004), sexual desire breaks through the text and undermines the primacy of language. The material body is heard more closely, through the physical sounds of sex in their work. Sexuality is presented in the broadest sense, as complex and contradictory, and ultimately as excessive. *Jouissance* explodes through the text, from a sensual excessivity that is expressed vocally.

Having identified a playfulness around gender and sexuality, it is important to note that these musicians do focus in on experiences that are common to a number of women. For example, Amos' 'Me and a Gun' (1991) speaks to women who have experienced sexual assault, and gives a female perspective on the predominant culture of sexual violence. In Chapter 3 I have identified this notion as 'witnessing' (Laub in Caruth 1995) and have associated this particularly with the exploration of trauma in their work. However, it could be said that the case study artists more broadly embody certain types of female experience across their output, and bear witness to living from a female body, albeit from specific perspectives.

Motherhood is one of the central themes of female experience explored in the work of these musicians. Björk and Amos were both inspired from an autobiographical standpoint, and in all three examples motherhood is embodied phono-somatically . They sound out maternities, in sensual, sexual and complex ways, with maternal traces reverberating throughout their work. These musicians complicate notions of acceptable femininity and they bear witness to the instability of norms in relation to female bodies. They present mothers as sexual (Amos' 'Playboy Mommy'1998), as violent (Harvey's 'Down by the Water'1995) and as preoccupied with other interests over that of their children (Harvey's 'C'mon Billy' 1995), undermining stereotypical configurations of motherhood.

I have outlined the phono-somatic relationship between voices and bodies in this work and have identified that this relationship creates an embodied sound that moves beyond representation. This happens through the prioritisation of embodied experience, where the materiality of 'bodily-being-in-the world' (Csordas in Weiss and Haber 1999, p.143) is expressed vocally. The work of the case study artists is embodied in many ways: through the use of corporeal lyrical reference, a visual focus on bodies in videos and artwork, linguistic sound play that highlights the material, and musical material that draws attention to bodies through the use of motifs, dynamics, instrumentation and more. Using these varied phono-somatic strategies, Tori Amos, Björk and PJ Harvey challenge the notion that the recorded voice is disembodied and express a complex, challenging and contradictory range of femininities.

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