Lyrics, Voices and the Stories They Tell

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This thesis is dedicated to my two brothers, Ben, and in loving memory of Endre.

Summary

Situated within the field of Popular Musicology, this thesis takes a discursive approach to the relationship between lyrics and representations of the voice. Drawing on personal experience with lyrics and voices as a singer, performing songwriter, and researcher, it takes on several discourses of academic thinking, such as musicology, literary studies, and voice and performance studies. Interdisciplinary lines are drawn between these related fields to explore their discursive interactions. The thesis advances an approach suggesting that people's lifelong relationship with voice contributes to the development of a "Voice Recognition, Use, and Listening Competence". This competence is argued to be intertwined with individuals' lifelong relationship with voice and performance traditions within popular music genres, enabling them to identify coded meanings in the voice. Furthermore, this thesis investigates whether our knowledge and experience with voice and its everyday function as a means of expression and communication is transferred to how we write, perform and understand lyrics. It thus aims to highlight how somatic and semantic meaning contribute to different understandings of lyrical meaning.

To address these and related issues, the thesis introduces an analytical framework labelled “Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices”. This framework is designed to encompass experiences as a listener, reader, singer/performer and lyricist/songmaker, offering a broad perspective on how lyrical meaning is constructed and understood. These four approaches are applied to explore how the relationship between lyrics and the performativity and coded meanings of the voice contribute to our understandings of lyrical meaning. The thesis studies a selection of songs, lyrics, songmakers and performers, avoiding focus on specific genres or artists to provide a broader perspective. The examples also underscore the universal nature of coded meanings in the voice and the versatility of “Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices” as an analytical framework applicable to lyrics across various genres and artists.

In this way, the thesis makes a case for how lyrical meaning emerges and lives on in its interactions with performers and listeners, implying that our understanding of lyrics is never fixed. Moreover, it addresses how experiences of external and internal listening and auto-listening inform experiences and understandings of

lyrical meaning. Additionally, the thesis highlights the relationship between lived experiences, personal narratives and song narratives and how they are interwoven in the tapestry of our lives. The primary objective of this PhD project is to start a new conversation within Popular Musicology about lyrics, voices and the stories they tell.

Preface

I think of myself as lucky to have grown up with two elder brothers, surrounded by their albums and the highest quality 1970s Hi-Fi stereo systems. After they left home to start studies abroad, I had all of their albums at my disposal. I listened to the albums every day after school and, like many of my friends, I danced and sang along using a hairbrush as my microphone.

One of my favourite songs was Thelma Houston's "I've Got the Music in Me" (1975). The album was a "direct-to-disc recording" that was recorded live in the studio directly to a master disc. This was a technique that supposedly provided a much higher sound quality compared to the multi-track tape recordings we were used to. Although for me at 13, the sound didn't matter. All that mattered was the sensation of moving to the track and hearing my voice blending with Houston's voice. I still remember every phrase, every beat and breath, and to this day, I can sing the song exactly the way she did and feel the same sensation rushing through my whole being. I have no recollection of the content of the lyrics, only the pure sensation of merging with the song. In retrospect, however, I have realised that the lyrics definitely played their part in the experience. Articulating the exact feeling, "I've got the music in me", was probably more important than I realised at the time. I felt it while singing. I felt good moving as voice and body. I felt like I was flying on my wings like a bird. And all I wanted to do was sing-sing-sing-sing! I did what the song said, I sang, and I have kept on singing ever since.

As I started my professional life as a singer and songmaker, I found that even my own lyrics could change their meaning, even for myself, mostly due to how they were understood by others. I have thus heard actors and artists discover meanings in my songs that I never intended. I have also faced audiences who have read content into my music that I was not prepared to confront. All of these experiences have inspired me to embark on this project. My experience has, however, proved to be both a blessing and a challenge. Although this thesis is not a study of my own practice, it has been challenging to determine whether my inside perspective is informative or intrusive in this research. After a while, however, I was encouraged by my supervisor Stan Hawkins to acknowledge my profession as a songwriter and singer and to use it as an entryway into my investigation and to explore how my experience informs the themes of this project and thus my understanding. His

advice was extremely valuable as I worked my way through a new field of study, Popular Musicology. In searching for an "objective" academic point of view, I realised that my initial plan of only investigating unknown songs, from the fear of losing my objective position as a researcher, had to change accordingly. It proved impossible for me to ignore my embodied experience of singing and writing and to forget that I fell in love with pop songs and became a fan of songwriters, early in life. Memories and emotions popped up each time I started listening to a familiar song, and I had to come to terms with the fact that the songs I was curious about were the songs I loved or related to in some way. This curiosity was not necessarily due to their structure or sound quality, but why they meant so much to me, and how their meanings had evolved over time.

Although I must admit that, throughout this project, I have been hesitant to investigate some of the songs I cherish the most, it is because I am afraid it might disrupt what they mean to me. I have nevertheless decided to embrace my musical love story and to use this opportunity to revisit songs that were important in my life, and "observe my own becoming" as a researcher-artist. Specifically, I have set out to explore how lived experiences can be employed in investigations into lyric analysis, and how our understanding is formed and may change. Moreover, I am interested in how my own relationship with lyrics is grounded in the different ways and times they have been introduced to me, including listening, reading, performing and songmaking. To search for answers, I started to explore the tension between lyrics as written text and songs, and as such, the various ways representations of the external and internal voice come into play. The focus of this journey then became to investigate the interpretive space between lyrics as meaning and sound, and how the lyrical meaning is informed by our embodied experience of voice. Hence, my curiosity has revolved around how we move from a state of listening to conceptualising what the song is about and what it means in a split second. Moreover, my interest has been to explore the *ways* in which understandings of lyrics are formed and *why* these understandings can never be fixed.

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1 Introduction

> Tony: “Everybody gets the blues. There's a half-a-billion-dollar industry devoted to it.”
> AJ: “Prozac?”
> Tony: “No, the music business. They write thousands of songs about this shit. “Tears on My Pillow”, “Mona Lisa” …right?”

This quote is from the American television series *The Sopranos*, in which Tony Soprano is conversing with his son AJ about his depression following a breakup with his girlfriend. Clearly, neither the popular music industry nor popular music research would exist without the pop song. Similarly, there would be fewer pop songs if songwriters could not explore themes of falling in and out of love, love itself and, particularly, the loss of love. As Tony Soprano notes, there are “thousands of songs” on the subject.

A song occupies only minutes of our lives. When we hear it, we either engage or try to ignore it. If it is familiar, we will know that if it interrupts us, we will notice. It nonetheless demands our immediate attention, and whether we like it or not, it has a unique ability to engage us in the present, follow us into the future and open gateways to our past. The song makes us sing, feel, move, remember and dream. It brings forth a multitude of possible meanings, informing our thoughts and beliefs far beyond the minutes and seconds it occupies in the present. It changes our past and gains eternal life in our memories. It stays on and continues to affect us – even when only replayed in our memory. Lines get stuck in our minds, whether we welcome them or not. We cannot capture the song or hold it in our hands. Still, it reaches us wherever we go. We do not even have to turn our heads towards the source to identify it. It is accessible to everyone regardless of who and where we are, social class or financial status. We can feel it surrounding us, filling our beings with sound and emotion. No matter what we are doing, we can engage: whether we listen unwillingly at the shopping centre, choose to listen as a distraction while cleaning the house or simply because it makes us feel good. So, although songs only occupy a small space in time, they become meaningful in experience, stories, interwoven in the tapestry of our lives.

1.1 Lyrics, voices and the stories they tell

The popular song serves as a form of performing art and cultural practice. For some people, music is so integral to their lives that it is deeply intertwined with their sense of life's purpose, encompassing collective and personal musical experiences. As Keith Negus noted, a song's meaning is not confined to its identifiable components or performance. Rather, intricate narrative meanings emerge from and are articulated within individual pop songs, owing to their contextualisation within a broader social and cultural landscape (2012, p. 370). Given this multifaceted framework, the question arises: what roles do lyrics and voices play in shaping these complex meanings?

One of the statements that initiated this project is this quote by Allan F. Moore:

> I believe lyrics play a fairly minor role in enabling us to answer the questions 'to whom are we listening?' and 'how do I make sense of what they mean?', but they do play a role, and thus it is necessary to provide a treatment of them (2012, p. 109)

To find answers to Moore's question, I started investigating how different approaches to lyrics unveil different paths of understanding. However, the challenge was finding words to explain other words and language to describe the indescribable. As Roland Barthes asks:

> How, then, does language manage when it has to interpret music? Alas, it seems, very badly. If one looks at the normal practice of music criticism (or, which is often the same thing, of conversations 'on' music), it can readily be seen that a work (or its performance) is only ever translated into the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective. Music, by natural bent, is that which at once receives an adjective. The adjective is inevitable: this music is this, this execution is that (1977, p. 179).

To take Barthes's concern into account, then, how can our experiences with music be communicated and understood? Is it even possible?

The driving question I found running through the theories and publications I have encountered in my research has been whether rules of language, sound aesthetics, authorial intent or conventions determine listeners' understanding of lyrics. As I

started this enquiry, I thought I had to choose either to approach lyrics from the process of performing and writing or to investigate them as written text. Although pop lyrics tend to have a structure and form constructed to be linked with music, they also represent written text that can be studied separately, like a poem. According to Lars Eckstein, this involves perceptions of the voice of lyrics as external, while the voice in poetry is internal (2010, p. 10). There is therefore a difference between the reader immersed the silence of a reading experience and the listener hearing the performer's voice in a song in that inner vocalisation in reading implies that coded meanings of nonverbal language informs our reading (Moser, 2007a, pp. 279, 298). Even when we read, we can hear the sound of lyrics performed by a voice we know, or by an internal, acousmatic, virtual voice. Nevertheless, in close readings, lyrics are regularly treated as written text without encompassing the relationship between words and the coded meanings of the voice.

As a departing point, my position therefore was that reading lyrics involves listening to one's inner voice in its multiple possible representations. Interpretations and construction of meaning connected to musical engagement are therefore not a matter of cause and effect or experience first and understanding second. It is instead in the experience that it becomes real and meaningful indicating that listening, singing and creating music *can* have no purpose beyond the activity itself. The sense of meaning is found within the engagement connecting body and mind, thoughts and emotions at an intrapersonal level.

1.1.1 Listening and reading with the body and mind

Traditional theories and beliefs have often created a split between the body and the mind by viewing the knowledge of the body as mainly subjective. At the same time, the objective sense is situated within reason and abstract thinking. According to Lars Eckstein, this resulted in the embodied experience of music going unrecognised in Western music philosophy until Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty introduced their phenomenological theories. The Cartesian mind-body dualism, which had dominated the field, treated music as something transcendent and absolute, with little room for thoughts on music engaging body and mind. However, this changed to recognising that music can only become meaningful if people engage with their whole body. He writes: "It requires the

complicity and presence of a person who interacts with the musical source in reciprocal dialogue" (2010, p. 76).

Eckstein also refers to the phenomenological approach to music proposed by Thomas Clifton in *Music as Heard* (1983). He sums up Clifton's take on the descriptive vocabulary of traditional musicology as tools of formalist reconstruction rather than concepts describing people's listening experience grounded in "interdependent musical strata" and thus described by concepts like "'time', 'space', 'play' and 'feeling'". In this sense, music can be addressed both as a concept and as a sounding presence. However, concepts evoke various forms of experiences. For example, we can experience concepts by creating mental imagery, but this kind of experimental presence is distinct from the physical and tangible experience of what the concept is intended to represent (Ihde, 2007, p. 26). One can, for instance, refer to the timbre of an artist's voice, which is different from hearing it. The question then is how to identify and articulate these similarities and differences, and moreover, how the voice works in experience.

In seeking appropriate ways to investigate the interests of this thesis, I thus found myself relating to David Brackett's reflections, which were published in an added preface from 2002 in *Interpreting Popular Music: With a new preface by the author* (2023). Similar to the way he describes his training, my education was built on the traditional methods, which meant analysing and discussing art and classical music, leaving me unequipped to tackle and articulate the aspects of popular music. In 1986, the acknowledgement of the value of popular music had not made its way into the curriculum nor the musical canon of higher music education. As studies of popular music began to surface, however, it seemed like most were concerned with how meanings arising from pop songs, voices and lyrics, were prominently individually and socially constructed. Nevertheless, as Brackett also notes, the importance of musical syntax, including the characteristics of musical sounds, their production, differences, similarities and the relationship between gestures and their effects, was not entirely disregarded (2023, pp. ix, x). I thus align with Brackett in that the qualities of sound in music – how they are generated, their variations, their similarities and the connection between particular actions and their impacts – hold importance. I therefore set out to explore if there are ways to identify coded meanings in the voice, and furthermore, how these coded meanings aesthetically and somatically inform our understanding of lyrics in various ways.

For instance, to explain the ability of lyrics and voices to engage us as embodied beings is to recognise them as having sensuous, emotional and aesthetic meanings and effects. As Susan McClary reminds us, we should recognise "our bodies in accordance with its gestures and rhythms" as fundamental to how people orient themselves as embodied beings and how cognition and discourses are structured (2016a, p. 133). Therefore, as Gary Ansdell suggests, "the musicality of a movement, or style of identity that shows up for us within musicking" could instead be understood as part of the music itself and not the result (2013, p. 8). However, in reflection, people can create a distance between seeing themselves as the *experiencer*, the music as *what is experienced* and the *embodied experience*.

The other issue, then, was whether my training and education had equipped me with the vocabulary and language needed to explain and articulate embodied experiences of lyrics and voices and the stories they tell.

1.1.2 Reflection as an "experience of experience"

Following theories suggesting that our experience of meaning is in language, any form of musical meaning tends to be, as Mark Johnson and Steve Larson point out, measured against linguistic meaning (2003, p. 80). According to them, it is, however, not the idea of music as a language that is problematic but narrow linguistic views that leave out "the embodied and affective dimensions of linguistic and musical meaning" (2003, p. 81). This points to another approach discussed in this thesis, namely whether there are traces of intent or embedded meaning in lyrics and if "what is fixed in writing" merely manifests a prior idea – implying that musical and vocal "delivery" is mainly a means of communication.

In addressing these topics , among many of his other writings, this study has a particular interest in Frith's chapters on *Song as text* and *The Voice* in "Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music" (1996, pp. 158-182, 183-202,). In these chapters, Frith shares perspectives on the functioning and treatment of words in songs, the differences between poems and lyrics, and the relationship between the voice heard in a song and the songmaker's voice.

He furthermore highlights the ways the voice is dealt with and perceived, e.g., as a metaphor, a marker of artistic identity, authorship and stage persona, and vocal texture. All elements contribute to how lyrical meaning is constructed, thus suggesting that accepting that lyrics and voices tell stories acknowledges that they communicate something. However, this does not imply that all agree to treat music as a language. For example, Deleuze and Guattari argue against music as a language since the "components of sound are not pertinent features of language" (1987b, p. 96). On the contrary, they find no correspondence between the two. According to them, although the voice in music plays simultaneously on language and sound, its primary role is to hold sound. I thus find their position relevant to the ways in which words linked to music are experienced, perceived and composed.

These insights further reinforce my initial premise: lyrics matter on many levels and have various functions. Ultimately, they are communicated through a voice, implying that they convey messages, emotions and temperaments, serving as carriers of sound *and* sense. More significantly, as I have argued, lyrics and voices tell stories. The question is whether to investigate lyrics as representations of content or form or to explore how they constitute each other. Hence, to encompass the ways lyrics are both an object and an experience.

While lyrics read as printed text may evoke various sensations, given that reading lyrics creates a different relationship than listening to someone performing, it opens lyrics to other interpretations. The concepts we use, the way we articulate meaning and use language to communicate who we are, nevertheless provide entryways into our sense of self and how we relate to the world. Lakoff and Johnson write, "Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like" (1980, p. 4). Our conceptual system is thus central to the ways we experience reality, although most are usually unaware of how it actually works. In accepting the body as a formative category in experiencing music, the embodied experience must be related to mental and social processes. As Susan McClary reminds us, music is an example of what she calls the "technologies of the body". It serves as a domain where we acquire the capacity to engage with socially influenced patterns related to kinaesthetic energy, temporal perceptions, emotions, desires and various other aspects of human experience (Eckstein, 2010, p. 77;

2016b, p. 205). Reflection – an "experience of experience" – thus implies a level of intentionality involving "hidden" self-knowledge. Hence, there is a hidden or conscious "I" choosing by placing the attention on one dimension of what the "I" is experiencing in relation to "the world" (Ihde, 2007, pp. 36, 37; Kane, 2014, p. 134). Musical engagement involves our whole being, and different understandings are formed through experience and reflection.

The songmaker has, however, constructed the song as form, which means that there are stable elements – words, melody and structure – guiding our interpretation. People can, as such, form similar thoughts on the song's meaning and what it says – or is about. What a song means to one person or at a particular point in time will then be more or less different to what it means to someone else at another time. Its discursive meaning will thus also vary according to context and situation. As Allan F. Moore points out in his introduction to *Song Means,* the question is, "What meanings can experiencing a song have, and how does it create those meanings?" (2012, p. 1). For Moore, exploring song meanings is not actually about what a song means but *how* and by which *means* it comes to have that meaning. In other words, song analysis is not merely concerned with the properties of music, lyrics or the song itself. Is meaning then *ascribed to* or *inscribed in* the song? Or a combination of both?

While critical musicology's primary interest is criticism and analysis of the music itself, and thus meanings embedded in any musical text, Popular Musicology is mainly concerned with "the music industry, its output and its audience" (Scott, 2009, p. 2). Lyrics in music are then often interpreted as transmitters of content and as a means of communication. This view is apparent in the works of musicologists like Allan F. Moore, who acknowledges lyrics as "the most important aspect of the song", for many, saying that due to a lack of convincing attempts to measure their relative importance, "the closest we come to the sung lyric is in the words of conversation" (2012, pp. 108, 109). This is further seen in Richard Middleton's reference to the popular assumption, "the belief that music produces sense or conveys meaning, is unquestionable" (1990, p. 172), as well as in Simon Frith's conclusive remarks in "Why do songs have words?": "If music gives lyrics their linguistic vitality, lyrics give songs their social use" (1989, p. 93). These quotes illustrate what seems to be a general view of lyrics as transmitters of content functioning within a structured system as a form of language merely used

for communication. Even in cases where words are not primarily intended to communicate content, they can still be perceived as stories or messages directed at listeners, thus a form of language. However, these notions are not limited to lyrics but the overall understanding of pop songs. To determine the song's value, meaning and functionality it is not merely the words or the framing context that matter but, as Frith observes, also *how* and by *whom* the song is performed. According to him, because a song is always a performance where the singer depends on sounds instead of words, lyrics are the sign of a voice. Similar to speech and speech acts, songs therefore represent the content and structures of sound that are "direct signs of emotion" or "marks of a character" (1989, p. 90).

To explore these issues, theories on differences and similarities between living speech and written text come into play. In the same way, the timbre of the voice and vocal behaviour can indicate intent and temperament; lyrics represented in written form create a relationship between the reader and the text. Here, Ricoeur's definition of the difference between living speech and written text is highly relevant. He addressed this difference by pointing out how discourse and the subjective intention of the speaker overlap, while in written text, the text is freed from its author. Ricoeur writes, "With written discourse, however, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide" (1976, p. 29). To "free" the text from its author then indicates that it can be understood differently each time it is read. Roland Barthes clarifies, "Everyone can testify that the pleasure of the text is not certain: nothing says that this same text will please us a second time; it is a friable pleasure, split by mood, habit, circumstance, a precarious pleasure" (1973, p. 52). In other words, living speech and conversations are interactions between people, while speaking from a manuscript is not. Pop singing similarly follows a manuscript or a composed structure while the performance interacts with a listener. However, the ways in which the performer approaches the same lyrics, is as Barthes suggests, not certain, but a friable pleasure. Likewise, will the listener create different interpretations of the same song depending on circumstance, musical framing and the person singing.

This difference is apparent when we look at how we experience listening to a recording in solitude and attending a live concert. Fischer-Lichte points to how live music performance is an event that, as "analysis of mediality, materiality and semioticity" shows, shares in constituting equally informing elements (2008, p.

162). It is an event where performers and their audience coexist in an energetic presence. When we read lyrics or listen to songs, the lyricist or the musical text does not respond to the reader or listener but is brought into existence when read, interpreted and heard. Any form of lyrical and musical engagement then creates a living experience of dialogue between the materiality of songs and the recipient. It is thus here wherein the difference lies between dialogical art and interactive art. Sometimes, singing can, however, be enjoyed merely as an activity and not as a performance or an act of communication, the same way the verbal content of a song can escape the listener's attention while dancing and singing along.

Lyrics and voices therefore provide more than meaning or holders of sound, offering rhythmical and prosodic qualities and a story and sounds for the singer to convey. They offer everyone opportunities to experience the mere pleasure of singing.

1.1.3 Making sense of songs and the stories they tell

> *"*...we rarely listen to a voice en soi, in itself, we listen to what it says*"* (Barthes, 2009, p. 183).

One of the entry points of this thesis is inspired by this quote from Roland Barthes, who claims that when we hear a voice, our attention is drawn to what it says. The question is whether this applies similarly to the singing voice, that we rarely pay attention to the words, by themselves, but rather understand their meaning from the way they are expressed. How then approach lyric analysis without including the voice?

If we consider words primarily as carriers of semantic content in the form of, for instance, a message, a political statement or a poem, they are conveyed through an internal or external voice. However, although voices and words are holders of both sound and sense, they are primarily investigated as carriers of content. Subsequently, songs tend to be approached as two parts of a whole – music *and* lyrics. The importance of words as holders of sound or content is similarly divergent among performers and songmakers and between songs and genres. Dai Griffiths highlights how some tend to underplay the significance of lyrics. He claims that it is a tendency, particularly among non-musicians – in aesthetics,

sociology and cultural studies – to dismiss the significance of lyrics in certain situations. He continues, "Because there are clearly situations where the words don't matter in the slightest – classically, 'when you're dancing this hard' – this is enough to avoid attending to the words altogether" (2003, p. 40). As Griffith observes, many thus engage with music without paying attention to what the words mean. However, because lyrical content can be easily downplayed within certain styles and genres, it is not the same as saying words do not matter. It is rather a question of clarifying in *which ways* they matter in constructing lyrical meaning.

Embarking on this project then involved deciding whether I should analyse lyrics as *one* part of a song and music as the other, or focus on the song as a complete work of vocally performed art. As Stan Hawkins points out, any investigation into "musical text as an autonomous entity" involves transforming musical elements into quality while exploring its aesthetic value (2001, p. 1). Additionally, I sensed that readers' and listeners' internal experiences and engagement rarely came into play in lyric interpretation. Instead, analyses tend to reach for something beyond the embodied and physical. I, however, found that the way I approach lyrics is not through reading lyrics as text but in an oscillation between interpretation and embodied engagement. In this sense, song lyrics represent more than semantic units linked to a melody. I therefore decided to delve into how representations of voice are read into lyrics and how the relationship between them informs lyrical meaning.

In exploring these themes further, I took inspiration from Susan Sontag's reference to art's sensuous quality "as a counter-expression to abstract content", calling for increased attention to form rather than merely what art means or says. She argues, "Western consciousness of and reflection upon art has remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation" (1966, p. 2). According to her, these theories bring forth problematic issues concerning art and thus the need to "defend, explain, and legitimise" as an attempt to "tame" the work into something manageable and conformable. Sontag suggests that while the old style of interpretation added higher levels of meaning on top of "the literal one", the modern style of interpretation destroys as it delves deeper into the text to find a sub-text in search of the true meaning (1966, p. 3). Following these lines of enquiry is therefore to approach lyric analysis as an archaeological excavation into deeper – or higher – layers of meaning, paying less attention to how lyrics and

voices interact and come to mean. Subsequently, these approaches create a sense of form as “something” separated from content and therefore content as *essential* and form as an *accessory*. Hence, art becomes merely a product of the mind (Ahvenniemi, 2020, p. 5; Sontag, 1966). However, many interpretations of lyrical meaning delve into the deeper layers of the text, searching for traces of authorial intent and the song’s true meaning. These are discussions that also surface in connection with cover versions and media and in music education. Therefore, Sontag’s insights initially resonated with my fear of challenging former interpretations of lyrics by praised and established lyricists within the canon of popular music, which includes artists like Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell.

Interpretations of popular song often focus on the artist and what they are communicating through their work. The study of lyrics, on the other hand tend to revolve around what the lyrics are saying and the lyricist’s intent, underscoring how regardless of approach, meaning arises in experience. However, in continuing my reflections, Sontag’s intention is seemingly not to avoid interpretation altogether but to expand the interpretive horizon related to understanding art. As she suggests, it is only when art is interpreted as pure content that sensuous information is neglected. Recipients then forget to see, listen and feel. Sontag, therefore, calls for higher attention to form in art and criticism that reveals “the sensuous surface of art without mucking about in it”, which, according to her, seems even harder to do than formal analysis (1966, p. 9). Trying to make sense of and explain how lyrics and voices work, and thus how they come to mean, therefore implies shifting from experiencing to reflecting, and subsequently that any understanding is unstable because it relies on how lyrics are approached, which circumstance and context, and by whom. So, how investigate lyrics and where to begin?

1.2 The quagmires of lyric analysis

As the heading indicates, I will start by referring to Stan Hawkins’ article, “Musicological Quagmires in Popular Music”, and in particular to his claim that in “the quagmire of musicological excavation”, there is a category constituting the materiality of sounding substance. (2001, pp. 1,2). However, he observes that music scholars are drawn to details that are neither artistically intentional nor point

to their craft or artistic genius, but rather "says that the artist was there". The theorist's imagination thus comes into play in any form of musical narratology or interpretation as a creative act or a critical activity. Consequently, as a sonic phenomenon, music initiates a sense-making process that draws from internal and external semantics. Mark Reybrouck further elucidates this notion: "Music, then, is a carrier of immanent meaning, with sounding elements as recognisable entities that can be assigned some meaning or semantic weight" (2017, p. 78). Reybrouck's insight highlights the potential of music analysis to unveil the intricacies of interpretation and analysis. However – despite the shared interests among various approaches to song analysis, which include recognising the dynamic interplay between art and human experience, acknowledging interpretation as a creative endeavour and considering both emotional and structural dimensions of meaning in music analysis – distinctions exist in their specific focuses and methodologies. Much like approaches to general meaning, approaches to understanding musical meaning nevertheless tend to fall into two categories: semiotic and hermeneutic.

In the context of music, semiotics delves into how musical elements serve as signs conveying meaning. Semiotics adopts a systematic and analytical approach to decode the inherent meaning within the structural components of music, aiming to identify signs, their signifiers and their signified meanings. It thus asserts that meaning is constructed based on signs, and interpretation relies on recognising the signs, sign functions and codes within the object being interpreted. In his article "A Peircian semiotic theory for music", Thomas R. Turino writes, "The first step in semiotic analysis is to determine what is the sign, what is the object, what is the effect, and to whom, in any instance" (1999, p. 224). The semiotic process of assigning meaning to songs includes both the *external environment* – external reference and external semantics – and the *internal environment* – the body and mind of the listener. The listener then begins by identifying the sound as a real-time experience of the *object* before shifting to interpreting its symbolic representation as a *sign*. The next level of sense-making is the *pragmatic* level, involving the listener as a principal participant. In reaching beyond "the object-centred, aesthetic, and poetic approach" by integrating levels of reception, action, mental processing and computation, the pragmatic level acknowledges how our lived experiences, body and mind determine how we understand, create and engage with music.

In contrast, hermeneutics, stemming from biblical and literary studies, is rooted in the belief that texts possess intrinsic meanings requiring the “correct” interpretation. When applied to music, hermeneutics focuses on understanding music’s more profound meaning and cultural significance within its specific context. It emphasises music’s contextual and cultural aspects, considering historical, social and cultural factors. Hermeneutics seeks to unveil what music meant to its creators and audience at its creation, recognising its role in reflecting and shaping the culture in which it exists. However, in addressing the hermeneutic and semiotic approaches, Lawrence Kramer states that they are not mutually exclusive but intertwined. It is, therefore, not purely a matter of selecting one over the other but, instead, determining and discovering their relationship (2011, p. 21). Kramer furthermore argues that the hermeneutic approach implies the agency of the interpreter as creative and not merely “a decoder”. Signs are thus indispensable and not determinative, meaning that in many cases, and music in particular, signs only reach their semiotic status through interpretation. The interpretive process can even influence which features of the object become signs or cease to function as signs, demonstrating the dynamic relationship between interpretation and meaning. From a semiotic standpoint, the interpreter’s text represents the object’s meaning, while from a hermeneutic perspective, the interpreter’s text effectively brings forth that meaning.

Another aspect is how to describe observations and embodied experiences of art while acknowledging it as a creative act, involving more than the mind. Because, to make sense of the experience and to articulate and communicate our thoughts, reasoning and reflection, we employ and are limited by verbal language. For example, in the opening passage of *Art as Experience* (1958), John Dewey explains how a work of art is often discussed and identified as an object that exists physically apart from human experience: “The actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result is not favourable to understanding” (1958, p. 3). Dewey's insight extends to how the lyrics and voices emerge as a works of art with and in experience, which in this study is considered the source of the stories they tell. Furthermore, lyric interpretation is, as a creative act, grounded in sensory, emotional and bodily experience informing the cognitive process. Hence, it is necessary to constantly be aware of and bring to the table *how* works of art are interpreted and subsequently preserved for the future as fixed interpretations of meaning. Moving forward, I therefore acknowledge that any

understanding or perception of lyrical meaning merely reveals possible interpretations representing the ways we experience, reflect, reason, communicate and express ourselves in the moment. It is thus only then that Sontag's aim for commentary on art to make works and our own experiences real to us is fulfilled (1966, p. 9). How then can we integrate these insights into lyric interpretation?

1.2.1 Lyrics as poems, poetry or sound

Dai Griffith's text, "From Lyric to Anti-lyric" (2003), highlights what seems to be an ongoing debate about the importance of lyrics in pop songs and the varying perspectives within academic and non-academic circles regarding their role in music. His concept of anti-lyrics challenges the primacy of textual analysis in the study of song lyrics, emphasising the significance of vocal performance and its impact on the reception and interpretation of popular music. In addressing how "talking about the words in pop songs" has faced challenges, he refers to how Theodor Gracyk asserts that lyrics often don't matter much in rock music (2003, p. 40). This is a sentiment echoed by Bob Dylan, who, according to Gracyk, emphasised that his music is not primarily about lyrics. However, as Griffith reminds us, Dylan's extensive body of work, which includes both lyrics and music, might lead us to reconsider this perspective.

Initially, I find myself concurring with Griffith's reference to Frith's assessment of how readings of rock lyrics tend to be romanticised. Consequently, I am interested in whether this romanticisation extends to the author figure or author persona, influencing analytical readings of works by specific artists to be perceived as more significant than others. As Griffith's chapter shows, even though Bob Dylan once told an interviewer that "whatever I do…it's not in the lyrics" (Gracyk 1996:65, 63; 2003, p. 40), Griffith counters Gracyk's example in a footnote, referring to an interview from 1965 in which Dylan apparently states that "words are just as important as the music. There would be no music without the words" (Miles1978: 65, 69; 2003, p. 40). In searching for the origin of this interview, I found the answer referred to by Miles and Griffith in a transcript made from an audio tape of a press conference with Dylan in 1965 [1], published in *Rolling Stone Magazine*/Ralph J.

[1] The article notes that this is "the only full-length press conference by Dylan ever televised in its entirety. The transcript was made from an audio tape of the conference, and the only editing has been to take out statements concerning ticket availability and times of the local concerts – R.J.G".

Gleason (1965). It is thus worth noticing that Dylan was answering the question: “Would you say that the words are more important than the music?”. Reading his answer in the context adds a slightly different perspective to Dylan's emphasis on words. Some questions later, he also offers an insight into how he approaches his songmaking. The press asks if he always does his words first and thinks of it as music. “When you do the words, can you hear it?”. Dylan's simple reply is “Yes”, and the interview continues with the question, “The music you want when you do your words?” to which he replies, “Yes, oh yes”.

Instead of stating that lyrics matter more, I read Dylan’s response as a statement of their equal importance, without placing one above the other. He emphasises this further in his comments on how he hears the music when he hears the words. Interestingly enough, Dylan also says that he thinks of himself as “a song and dance man” in reply to the interviewer asking him if he thinks of himself “primarily as a singer or a poet” (1965). One way of interpreting this interview is that Dylan's lyrics matter to the audience and the music press. However, I find that his reply emphasises that there are no words without music, supporting one of the arguments of this thesis, that songs are not separate halves of a whole but rather a complete work of art. As Sheila Whiteley notes, lyrics differ from poems because their meaning is significantly shaped by how the words interact with musical elements such as harmony, rhythm, arrangement, and vocal expression (2009, p. 206). Furthermore, as Susanne Langer reminds us, “Song is not a compromise between poetry and music, though the text taken by itself be a great poem; song is music” (1953, p. 152).

Despite the distinctions made between poems and lyrics, and the arguments for treating them differently, as Langer notes, some lyrics can indeed be interpreted as poems. Additionally can poems not originally intended for music be adapted for musical composition. Furthermore, some lyrics can serve as sources of inspiration or as starting points for new songs, inviting songmakers to explore other forms and styles of writing. This exploration can expand and challenge familiar concepts, structures and language, and open new ways of telling stories. The inclination to perceive and approach lyrics as poetry may then be rooted in the common practice, which began with the Beatles era, of frequently including lyrics in record releases. Adding to this, as noted by Griffith, some notable songwriters, including Patti Smith and Leonard Cohen, started as published poets before becoming

songwriters, and others have published books of their song lyrics (2003, p. 42). Additionally, with the advent of the internet, lyrics have become widely accessible to the public, which highlights a blurring of the lines between published songs and poems.

Reading poems and lyrics also exhibit characteristic features in the text that indicate elements including form, structure and genre, and also the style of writing often associated with a particular lyricist and author. However, our everyday encounters with lyrics are in a musical form, in the shape of songs.

1.2.2 Lyrics as content and form

Originating in the external environment and yet referring to itself, music evokes sense-making processes that refer to both the sounding environment and our bodily resonance. Likewise, the song draws attention to its sound, its source and something else. Reybrouck writes, "The listener, then, does no longer conceive of the sound in its experiential qualities but at a symbolic level of representation" (2017, p. 78). Especially by adding lyrics to the mix – particularly the more logocentric genres – will the centrifugal tendency of linguistic meaning direct the listener's attention away from the words to their meaning beyond the lyrics. Hence, when we listen to a song on the radio, our minds start to identify the acousmatic source, whom the voice belongs to and what they are singing about. Furthermore, our interpretive mind immediately begins to search for what the song means and what it means to us. Because songs create and represent different meanings, the ways we make sense of our experience are more easily preserved for the future than the experience itself: this music is this, this execution is that. In lyric analysis, this encompasses what we can read out of the material and how it resonates with our mind, emotions and body in experience. However, in reflecting and commenting on what the lyric is about and what the lyricist intended, we use language. And, as Barthes suggested, music criticism can therefore be reduced to adjectives (1977, p. 179). What the analysts think about the lyrics, and what the lyrics are about, can therefore be regarded as more valuable information than what it does in experience. Subsequently, is the semantic meaning of lyrics often privileged over the somatic meaning which is more challenging to articulate and thus not favourable to understanding.

Perspectives promoting that reflection and interpretation materialise as symbols of our relationship with ourselves and the world, are as Leschziner and Brett remind us, prevalent in influential theoretical perspectives of the twentieth century and contemporary models of cognition and action (2019, p. 20). Interpretation is, however, a creative activity. Nevertheless, it seems that lyric interpretation tends to be approached as a mental activity. This is in keeping with how scholars in sociology and social psychology often view creativity as an imaginative and deliberate mental activity involving the manipulation of symbols. How meaning is ascribed is then constructed in reference to both our external and internal environment and, as such, is then thought of as "a symbolic recollection of a sensory event, represented in memory and separate from the body" (2019, p. 8). This perspective tends to emphasise mental over bodily knowledge and extraordinary instances over habitual processes, leading to a limited understanding of creativity. However, interdisciplinary research on embodied cognition that has emerged since the 1980s emphasises the role of sensory and bodily processes in shaping knowledge representation, even at abstract conceptual levels. These theories suggest that when we think or discuss music we activate bodily states that are integral to the experience, which implies that these sensory and physical aspects play a crucial role in how people relate to and understand these objects of interest (2019, p. 10). Moreover, they claim that cognition is deeply intertwined with the body and senses, aligning with contemporary developments in cognitive science. They therefore challenge amodal theories of knowledge by asserting that bodily states are interconnected with the mental representation of experiences.

Drawing from these insights, my assumption is that because song interpretation emerges through a range of processes involving both conceptual and bodily knowledge, the same processes are activated when we read lyrics. Similarly, bodily states are activated when we hear a vocal performance. We therefore respond to the coded meanings of the performing voice, activate sensory and physical aspect in our own voice, and interpret lyrical meaning as the stories lyrics and voices tell in their various forms.

The question moving forward, then, is whether to treat lyrics primarily as *one* part of a song and music as the other – and therefore investigate lyrics, vocal performances, melodies, musical arrangement and production separately – or the song as a complete form.

1.2.3 Understanding and communicating lyrical meaning and experiences

As suggested so far, lyric analysis often ignites an enquiry into the inner source of the song. In the search for clues into what the songmaker or song "really means", there are ongoing discussions about whether authorial intent is embedded in the lyrical material, if it is traceable *in* the performing voice, or *as* the performing voice. In short, the questions are mainly concerned with *why* the song was written and by *whom*. Moreover, we are interested in *what* motivated the song, what it is about and how it is *delivered*. This presents a concept of lyrics as a means of communication, meaning that the artist – songmaker and singer – uses lyrics and voices to deliver a message. Which again connects the message with the messenger – but is it always a message?

According to Philip Tagg, music, in contrast to speech and the visual arts, appears to be naturally appropriate for conveying shared messages, as well as affective identities and connections among individuals in groups, with respect to themselves, each other and their environment (1987, p. 8). Our musicking and creative selves express musical knowledge through musical activity, which challenges how formal knowledge and theories are developed and articulated. We communicate our understanding of lyrics through words, which can provide relevant insight into how the interpreting mind works concerning discursive formations of meaning. Musical knowledge in terms of creative and artistic practice may then present itself as more valid when explaining what music "really is" and how it works.

To explain and communicate musical experiences and meaning, we use available verbal concepts, which can reduce the complexity of musical engagement. Embodied experience can thus be challenging and sometimes impossible to express with words. However, language is a "channel for symbolic interactions" where internal states must have a meaning that can be organised and, thus, "be communicated to others and interpreted in others to guide collaboration in work, love, and play" (Fonagy et al., 2002, p. 5). The question is where our knowledge and use of concepts, language and discourse are grounded, and what we want to say and with whom we want to communicate.

Taking these factors into consideration means that it is therefore not merely a matter of what the song is saying or how it is performed or produced, but rather of what it does in experience. It can thus lead to a desire to dig deeper into the song's essence, the songmaker's intent and the lyrics' “true” meaning, and subsequently, as a matter of cause and effect. In these matters, it is helpful to draw from Mark Johnson and Steve Larson’s statement, “We do not merely experience a musical work and then understand it. There is not experience first, followed by our grasp of the meaning of that experience. Rather, our understanding is woven into the fabric of our experience” (2003, p. 78). They suggest that our understanding and conceptualisation of music cannot be separated from our experience of it, which indicates that conceptual metaphors are grounded in our bodily experience. As Susan Sontag observes, then, whether one approaches art as a statement of the artist or as a model of reality, it is assumed that “the work of art is its content” (1966, p. 1). Content then demands interpretation. The artwork has something to say, and recipients want to understand what it says and means.

In other words, engaging with music evokes the desire to hear what it is about, which implies grasping an abstract meaning that can be extracted from the song. The idea that there is a core at the centre of things or a true meaning embedded in songs furthermore upholds the concept of a force driving them into motion. It thus seems like people not only want to interpret but need to experience the songs and artists they identify with as representations of something beyond reflection. Hence, there is a need for transparency and sensibility towards the reader in analytical studies and commentary, especially considering how song analysis can influence others’ musical experiences and sometimes determine their fate. Here, Nicholas Cook offers a perspective that provides helpful insight into the nature of musical analysis. As he says, we all seem driven by an urge to share our musical experiences – an urge that can sometimes feel as strong as a compulsion “to tell a secret”. In this sense, we seem to be “drawn to say what the music does not say” and thus focus more on what music is not rather than what it is (2000, p. 268). The question, then, is how to navigate the complex theoretical field of interpretation and its practises and, moreover, how to approach and narrate lyric interpretation and understanding without reduction or “fixation”.

The above issues also bring forth the question of similarity and difference in the search for *who* and *what* to compare with, and *how* to identify its uniqueness. In

other words, how can lyrical meaning be approached and what are the theories and methods that lend themselves to lyrics and voices?

Richard Middleton claims that even pop music analysis seems to "rush to interpretation", concentrating on connotation – the emotional and imaginary response to a song – rather than also paying attention to "a prior system of denotation", as well as the syntactic structure in music and the connected semantic process (1990, p. 220). However, several musicologists have introduced frameworks that provide different ways of understanding and analysing the musical codes that make up popular music. Some of these have been relevant to draw from in identifying coded meanings in the voice. Firstly, there is Stan Hawkins' claim in *Settling the Pop Score* (2017), that musical codes can only assume meaning through the cultural context of their location and that they innately are identifiable events in time and space. In this sense, any form of code identification will involve levels of "acquired listening competence" (2017, pp. 9,10). The challenge is, however, as Hawkins points out, that meanings assigned to these factors build on their cultural context, and hence, they rely on both shared and personal conditions. Locating codes within the musical text can, as such, be reductionist unless it is viewed as the *first* stage of discoursing how the code functions. Another view is suggested by Richard Middleton, who describes levels of coding in terms of "primary" and "secondary" significations, which are explained as "form and syntactic relationships" and "content and connotation" (Brackett, 2023, p. 9; Middleton, 1990, pp. 172-246). Middleton's focus is thus on the structure and organisation of the song and how this relates to the way the codes are decoded, while Stan Hawkins' interest is mainly in how listeners make meaning of musical elements and how their interpretation is connected to the social and cultural context in which it was created and received. Hawkins distinguishes between *stylistic* codes, which are detectable in performance, genre and musical trends, and *technical* codes, which include pitch, textures, and rhythmical and harmonic elements (2017, p. 10).

In acknowledging musical codes as unstable elements, Hawkins notes that this implies that in identifying coded meanings and their fixity, analysers must account for how they negotiate their own musical experience (2017, p. 10). Moreover, as suggested by Brackett, the concept of "musical codes" provides opportunities to explain how musical sound relates to factors outside of music itself, including

media image, personal details, emotions, historical context and social associations. They thus help to clarify the links between a piece of music and the conventions of its era, its connection to the broader musical language it belongs to and allows for insights into the relationship between musical sounds and the "human universe" conveyed by lyrics. According to Brackett, musical codes can therefore be explained as "aspects of musical communication that describe the relationship of a semantic system to a syntactic system, the relationship of content to expression" (1995, p. 9; 2023, p. 9). Brackett's approach to categorising musical codes emphasises the ways music can reflect and reinforce cultural values and identities. He identifies several different codes, including sonic codes (e.g., timbre, harmony), structural codes (e.g., form, meter) and expressive codes (e.g., emotion, performance style). Moreover, Brackett argues that levels of codes interact with each other to create the overall meaning and impact of a piece of popular music. Here, he considers the ways that different musical genres and styles are associated with particular social and cultural contexts. In this sense, musical codes are not universal but are instead shaped by the context in which they are created and consumed. Hence, as Hawkins reminds us, "Although there may be some consensus on the structures of denoted meaning, there is always an element of ambiguity in the coded text" (2017, p. 9). Therefore, the ways a song is decoded changes the way we relate to it, which indicates that any act of interpretation opens up countless possible understandings.

Additionally, it is important to take into consideration how, even when we engage in discussions about musical experiences or imagine musical concepts, we simulate the perceptual experience of these songs (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 10). This is the case even for songs that are unfamiliar or musical events we have not encountered in reality. Our relationship with sound, especially voices, is thus rooted in phenomenology due to its accessibility, familiarity and, therefore, complexity because these experiences are often hidden from our consciousness (Ihde, 2007, p. 17). Intuitive recognition of voices and vocal timbre – shaped by a lifetime of experiences – can, therefore, be difficult to access, prompting misinterpretations regarding certain aspects of songs, performers and ourselves. However, acknowledging these factors is accepting how sensory and physical aspects play a fundamental role in supporting the mental processes involved in creativity (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 10). While musicologists' common aim is to provide analytical tools for understanding how music works and communicates

meaning, they therefore rely on different knowledge and approaches to song analysis and categorisations of musical codes. As Allan F. Moore points out, they are also fans and listeners with individual access to sources of experience and knowledge, as well as personal taste, style and interests (2018, p. 86).

To investigate these themes, it is therefore helpful to consider Keith Negus' claim that a song's meaning is formed in an intersubjective and inter-contextual dialogue in which the interpreting author takes part (2012, p. 374). Moreover, it is useful to recognise that lyric interpretation involves employing bodily and sensory experiences that, as I make a case for in this thesis, encompass our lifelong relationship with various representations of sound and, in particular, the voice.

Building on these insights, this project has embarked on a journey to explore how people's understanding of lyrics and voices is informed by an internal, dialogic, creative and dynamic process that constantly evolves in response to specific and context-dependent interactions. Theories advanced and discussed in this project then centre around how lyrics, voices and their stories are perceived and understood, as well as discursively and intertextually related.

1.3 Aims, Contributions and Research Questions

To highlight how understanding is formed by building on experience as a *listener, reader, singer/performer*, and *lyricist/songmaker,* this thesis proposes "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices" as a framework for lyric and song analysis. The aim of this process has however been to be mindful of the fact that no method or model can explain and define the correct interpretation of lyrics and voice because there is no standard version, standard listener, reading or analysis to compare with. The *first* approach involves various modes of listening to vocalised lyrics. The *second* approach draws attention to reading lyrics as written text. The *third* approach considers singing as an activity in itself, as well as vocal performance. Lastly, the *fourth* approach explores how words emerge and are structured between words, voice and music in the process of writing.

The overall purpose of the framework is to advance an approach that can provide new insight into the ways lyrics play a role in constructing meaning in a song. In the context of this thesis, it is suggested as a framework for addressing the relationship between lyrics and voices within pop songs, how coded meanings in

the voice can be identified and how they inform the ways lyrics are understood. It is intended to highlight that a human's lifelong relationship with voice contributes to the development of a "Voice Recognition, Use, and Listening Competence" and that this competence informs how lyrics are created, read, performed and interpreted. Notably, this highlights the relationship between semantic and somatic meaning. More specifically, it shows how emotional and sensory experiences, the voice's physicality and bodily sound come into play in matters of identity and artistic expression, and therefore, inform how we understand musical and lyrical content, and thus lyrical meaning.

In addition, this thesis wishes to bring attention to the relationship between personal and musical narratives. It underscores the potential of this interplay not only for storytelling but also for revealing how songmakers and artists relate to themselves and to the world. It thus acknowledges people's capacity for change and transformation and how this should be an integral part of discussions on authenticity and persona. This perspective also extends to how we categorise people and music, highlighting the dynamic connection between these categories within the context of Popular Musicology. Additionally, it explains how non-verbal experiences – e.g., sensations, movement and emotions – are articulated or transferred into metaphors reflecting taste and opinion, which call for transparency at every stage.

Drawing on my profession as a researcher, songmaker and artist, I focus on the relationship between the words and the voice and build on my training and experience to explore how lyrics are performed and written, and moreover, how they are understood. Therefore, this project's interest is mainly grounded in my profession, education, and background, which might also explain my interest in lyrics and voices within popular music.

1.4 Research questions

The *first* hypothesis of this thesis is that the performativity and coded meaning in the voice matter to how we understand lyrics and, consequently, that the relationship between lyrics and voices matter in constructing the meaning of songs. The *second* hypothesis is that lyrics matter and that the way we understand lyrics and voices is never fixed. These assumptions have advanced two research questions, which are as follows:

- How and to what extent do lyrics play a role in constructing meaning in a song?
- How can coded meanings in the voice be identified, and in what ways do they inform how lyrics are understood?

To answer these and related questions, I will study a selection of lyrics, voices and songs to illustrate how the various approaches work separately or combined. Furthermore, I address issues related to how we understand lyrics, voices and songs and discuss some theories and methodologies dealing with these themes. I will, in particular, focus on music's experiential aspects and how they relate to life experiences.

Intending to respond to these and related matters, I have explored the following paths of enquiry:

1. Identify coded elements situating the voice as a carrier of meaning.
2. Explore the tension between semantic content and somatic meaning within lyrics, particularly to words and voices as carriers of both *sense* and *sound*.
3. Study the influence of discursive understandings of artists, their lyrics, voices and performances, and possible consequences.
4. Examine intertextual relationships and concepts of the lyrical and authorial voice.
5. Consider the relationship between lyrical and song narratives and personal narratives.

In following these lines of enquiry, this project wishes to promote a balanced approach in the field of Popular Musicology that combines academic and practice-oriented perspectives, ensuring its continued relevance. Moreover, it aims to emphasise how the experience of artists, musicians, and songmakers in research activities can bridge the gap between lyrics and voices, treating them not only as objects of study but also as experiences to be understood and explored within the context of Popular Musicology.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are as follows:

1. To introduce a framework for analysis that can facilitate a broader understanding of the significance of lyrics and voices in popular music.

2. To highlight how aspects of the voice are recognised as musical codes and the ways this informs our understanding of the vocal mediation of sound and meaning.

3. To demonstrate how a developed competence in voice recognition, usage and listening, acquired through lifelong experience with voice, enables listeners to identify the vocal source and recognise coded meanings in the voice that inform our perception of lyrics and voices.

4. To engage with the modalities of lyrics and their corresponding interpretation methods and contribute to this discourse as a researcher, performer, lyricist and songmaker.

5. To start a new conversation within Popular Musicology about the changing understanding of lyrics and engage with the current discourse on lyrics and voices in popular music. Additionally, it aims to show how this discourse provides insight into the relationship between the way songs are created and how musical experiences are transformed and transmitted.

In summary, this thesis makes the case that how people identify coded meanings in the voice is grounded in their relationship with voice. It furthermore builds on the notion that cognition is deeply intertwined with the body and senses, which implies that in constructing lyric and song meaning we activate emotions, memories and bodily states that are integral to the experience. It therefore aims to demonstrate how sensory and physical aspects play a crucial role in how people relate to and understand lyrics and voices, and therefore, connect with both semantic and somatic meaning in constructing lyrical meaning.

These questions, lines of enquiry and objectives are central to my research into coded meanings in the voice and to the development of the framework "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices".

1.5.1 Limitations

This thesis is mainly concerned with the experiential and embodied aspects of songmaking, writing, performing and singing. It will not delve into theories on listening perception but primarily use "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices" as entryways to explore themes related to phenomenological and embodied approaches to auto-listening and internal listening. Neither will it deal with the overall production, sonic or visual representation, or musical structures and arrangements.

I will not go into depth on thinkers and theories presented by philosophers like Susan Sontag, Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, and others, neither will I engage in an in-depth analysis of specific songs or methods, nor with an examination of theories about embodied subjectivity, becoming as a subject, ecological psychology or emotion perception and induction. Additionally, will I not delve into specific matters concerning language differences related to singing in our native tongue versus foreign languages but merely focus on the general experience of the connection between the somatic and semantic meaning of lyrics. I will, however, reflect on some writings that address these matters when relevant to how lyrics and voices come to mean. Moreover, I will explore the tension between becoming a voice through musical engagement and notions of songs as instruments for communication and self-expression.

1.5.2 Structure

Chapter 1 in this thesis provides a summary of the project's theoretical and methodological approach. It furthermore presents its questions, objectives and limitations, and engages in discourses concerning how we make sense of, describe and analyse lyrics, voices and songs. Moreover, it explores how intersubjective dynamics inform personal and shared understandings. It will introduce a section devoted to previous studies on lyrics and vocal performances and present an overview of existing theories and methods. It will analyse the strengths and

weaknesses of these studies, making a case for the necessity of the proposed framework.

Chapter 2 "Lyrics", investigates various approaches to lyrics as written text, narratives and language. It furthermore addresses voice as a metaphor and how theories on authorial voice and author function relate to lyrics. Moreover, it engages with discourses on external and internal listening, in addition to embodied listening. This section also addresses the relationship between the voice of the lyrics and the singing voice, and additionally how our understanding of music is grounded in our experiences as embodied beings.

Chapter 3 "Voices", explores the performative timbre and "grain" of the voice. It also addresses some terms and theories within the field of voice studies, and the voice as a musical and physical instrument. Furthermore, it explains how listeners develop a "Voice Recognition, Use and Listening Competence" through their embodied relationships with voice. Additionally, it explores how this competence enables voice identification. This chapter also investigates how points of view and focalisation in songs are transmitted through voice qualities and timbre. Moreover, it addresses musicological concepts concerning how artists exhibit various personae and characters in their performances.

Chapter 4 "…and the Stories They Tell", explores how we perceive the way lyrics and voices affect us, relate to us and the way they make us feel as stories we construct from how they come to mean in experience. Additionally, it illustrates how we rely on both semantic and somatic meaning in the construction of song meanings. This chapter furthermore explores the work of a selection of female artists and songmakers who have contributed to social discourses on women and sexuality, in addition to exploring theories and readings of authenticity and their possible implications. This section also investigates intertextual relationships in lyrics and how songs can advance political issues and beliefs. The last part of this chapter is devoted to confessional practices and various approaches to songmaking, and moreover, how creative processes can be both source material and a coping strategy. Hereunder, it covers how emotions and lived experiences, grief and states of mind provide entryways into testimonials and self-understanding.

Chapter 5 starts by listing findings that support the overall conclusion of this thesis. Additionally, it shares summary thoughts on the project and the process, and related themes and objectives.

Due to the interdisciplinary approach taken, the questions asked will mostly be answered in analysis and reflections within each chapter or theme. This aligns with the discursive style of research this thesis employs, which involves presenting and discussing multiple perspectives. Instead of focusing solely on a linear argument or one single hypothesis, this approach explores various perspectives, theories and discussions related to the issues raised throughout the project.

To begin with, I will give a brief overview of some studies on lyrics and voices, as well as models designed for identifying specific aspects of lyrics and vocal performances. I will discuss their strengths and limitations, thus presenting a case for why the framework is necessary.

1.6 Theory and Method

Before embarking on this project, I looked for publications on lyric analysis and found that the majority of research focuses mainly on lyrical content employing linguistic and literary tools and pop lyrics as sites for representation and communication of social and cultural values, emotions and personal narratives. I furthermore realised that studies on lyrics and voices in pop songs are minimally represented, meaning I had to rely on the limited existing literature. The need for research into the significance of lyrics is, among others, supported by Choi and Downie's study, "A Trend Analysis on Concreteness of Popular Song Lyrics" (2019). They argue that song lyrics are an often overlooked aspect of the growing interest in music complexity within Music Digital Libraries research. Drawing from the observation that the majority of popular songs contain lyrics of varying levels of complexity – influencing the overall complexity of the music – the study explores the intricacy of song lyrics. It examines potential computational methods for measuring it with a particular focus on the concreteness of song lyrics through trend analysis. Their findings reveal that the concreteness of popular song lyrics decreased from the mid-1960s until the 1990s and then increased. According to the researchers, the latest increase is associated with the emergence of hip-hop/rap and an increase in the number of words in song lyrics after the early 90s.

Another study from 2019 seeking to broaden the understanding of song lyrics computationally, "Decoding The Style And Bias of Song Lyrics" (Barman et al., 2019), performed a computational analysis of song lyrics, focusing on style and biases. The study found that popular songs exhibit distinct stylistic features that significantly differ from other songs. Moreover, it showed that tendencies in song lyrics align with existing societal biases, highlighting the significance of this analysis due to music's widespread consumption and its emotional impact on individuals. Studies have, however, shown that although listeners may choose to listen to songs with lyrics that seem "rich, thoughtful, persuasive, and emotional", findings are inconsistent regarding their importance (Barradas & Sakka, 2021, p. 651). The impact of prosocial lyrics in popular music and if and how the musical production elements interact with these lyrics to influence listeners is further studied in "Effects of Prosocial Lyrics and Musical Production elements on Emotions, Thoughts and Behaviour" (Ruth & Schramm, 2020). Using an original song maintaining consistent melodies and harmonies while altering lyrics and instrumentation, the researchers found that the acoustic version of the song was rated as the most emotional and appropriate. In contrast, the electronic dance version was perceived as the least emotional and fitting. Notably, there was a significant interaction between the lyrics and musical elements. Specifically, listeners of the unplugged version with prosocial lyrics displayed the strongest empathetic emotions. However, while prosocial lyrics influenced prosocial thoughts, they did not lead to changes in behaviour.

Lyrical content is also explored in "Why are Song Lyrics becoming Simpler? a Time Series Analysis of Lyrical Complexity in Six decades of American Popular Music" (Varnum et al., 2021). This paper explores the depth of song lyrics in reflecting cultural values and notes a recent trend of increased lyrical simplicity in popular music, specifically focusing on songs entering the U.S. Billboard charts. Additionally, "Catchy and Conversational? A Register Analysis of Pop Lyrics" (Werner, 2021) employs multi-dimensional register analysis to investigate the allegedly conversational nature of pop lyrics using a corpus of contemporary pop lyrics and linguistic tools. The findings support the notion that pop lyrics exhibit some conversational qualities despite being created through planned and performed production.

However, studies on lyrics in pop songs are scarce. Additionally, while acknowledging the relevance and significance of existing research, lyrics are rarely approached as conveyers of somatic *and* semantic meaning connected to coded meanings in the voice. This project thus aims to address this relationship and hopefully shed new light on how lyrics come to mean.

1.7 Lyrics and voices in pop songs

Although the mentioned studies have provided valuable insight into how we understand voices, there are few publications that specifically focus on the connection between lyrics and voices and how we understand them within popular music. The lack of research does not seem to be caused by musicologists' general lack of attention to voice. For example, Allan F. Moore places the singer "at the centre of the song" (2012, p. 91). The significance of the singing voice in a popular music context is moreover highlighted in theories advanced by Simon Frith in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996). His emphasis on the significant role of the voice and the vocal performance in how understandings of vocalised lyrics are informed has been a valuable contributor to the discourse of song lyrics. In drawing attention to songwriters and songmaking practice, he has also voiced views on lyrics being abstracted as written text and subsequently treated as poetry subjected to literary analysis. Moreover, he has commented on the ways in which lyrics are interpreted as a "sign of the times" in traditions within sociological analysis (Negus & Astor, 2014, p. 195). These insights and related issues will be explored in Chapter 3, where I also address Moore's passage on voice in *Song Means* and his perspectives on the ways vocal performances can be approached (2012, pp. 101-108). Expanding on Serge Lacasse, who suggests that timbre can be mechanically and technologically altered (2000b, p. 197), I have a particular interest in the embodied aspects of voice. Therefore, while Lacasse has analysed the recorded voice by paying close attention to various voice character including volume, spatial aspects, timing and tonal quality, my interest is in the sound emerging within the voice and the vocal timbre projected *into* the microphone. Lacasse writes:

> There are many mechanical ways of modifying a voice's timbre, like mirlitons encountered in section 1.2.1, or simply by cupping hands in front of the mouth. However, recording techniques have hugely increased the range of sounds available from a vocal source, for

example, by passing the voice through black boxes such as fuzz, flangers, telephones, and so on (2000b, p. 197).

The difference between his approach and mine is described in one preposition: the word *from*. By this, I am referring to the following line, “sounds available *from* a vocal source”. Lacasse’s perspective appears to be from the recording studio’s traditional producer or sound engineer position. At the same time, my approach is on the other side of the wall, which is the vocal booth and, therefore, not primarily the listener’s perception. I, however, align with Eidsheim’s point that recognising vocal timbre, voice quality and the “grain” of the voice involves the singer’s understanding of vocal behaviour, embodied knowledge of voice production and self-listening (2019a, pp. 12,13). Therefore, experience and knowledge of acoustic and physical voice production informs notions of how traces of “the body who sings” can be heard in the sound coming out of the speakers. I thus align with Askerøi’s account of how traces of the body producing the vocal sound, like movement, musicality and gestures, are always present in the disembodied voice as it appears, e.g., in recordings and on the radio (2013, p. 29). Technological mediation can, as such, be used as effects to enhance or distort aspects of the voice to create vocal textures and alter its aesthetic qualities and, therefore, how it affects and engages listeners. It can provide opportunities for creating vocal sounds that are not connected to merely one source, but which originate from or are a combination of many. Additionally, vocal tracks consisting of dubbed or stacked voices can create a vocal sound signature of an artist.

Even though processing the voice can emphasise, colour and add layers of texture to the voice sound, the singer employs their craft and intuitive knowledge of voice production in choreographing their performance, for instance by shifting between voice qualities and vocal effects. To illustrate, I propose characteristics separating voice quality from vocal timbre and how these terms can be used to cover different features related to voice. To support this proposition, I draw on studies concerning vocal timbre production and recognition and source identification (Agus, Suied, & Pressnitzer, 2019; Eidsheim, 2009, 2019; Mathias & Kriegstein, 2019; Wallmark, 2014). I furthermore refer to voice research and pedagogy (Eken, 2014; Steinhauser, 2008) and elaborate on how various understandings of Roland Barthes’s concept of “The Grain of the Voice” (1977) have contributed to the way we think about voice and how vocalisations are interpreted and analysed. Drawing

on Keith Negus and H. Porter Abbott, and the concept of focalisation as coined by Gerard Genette, I also suggest that focalisation can be extended to how we *hear* and *use* voice qualities to indicate points of view. These factors illustrate some of the ways voices matter in constructing lyrical meaning, which poses the question of how to approach the interplay between the voice and words in popular music and how they contribute to song meaning.

To explore some studies relevant to questions raised, I will start by referring to Dai Griffith's claim that it is time for a shift in how we view the words in pop songs (2003, p. 42). Instead of treating them as poems, he proposes that we consider them similar to poetry and, conversely, having tendencies towards prose. Griffith thus introduces the terms "lyric" and "anti-lyric" to describe these polarities. By adopting this framework, Griffith believes we can systematically analyse how lyrics function and how their role in pop songs has evolved, leading to "word-consciousness". He further suggests that a word-centric perspective could help shape the field and align with recent arguments in musical analysis. However, as Lars Eckstein points out, "Like few other art forms, lyrics fall between disciplinary chairs, which may explain why, to this day, hardly any veritable academic study has taken on song lyrics as its central subject" (2010, p. 12). In *Reading Lyrics* (2010) he has nevertheless, in pursuit of a "cultural rhetoric of lyrics", taken an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from literary, cultural, postcolonial studies, musicology, linguistics, sociology, ethnography and various other fields, breaking down disciplinary boundaries to explore the subject more comprehensively.

To summarise what can be stated regarding the musical meaning, Eckstein proposes a "Trialectical Approach to Musical Meaning" (2010, p. 72). Departing from Lawrence Kramer's assertion on how musical meaning aligns with general meaning, challenging our conventional thinking and thus mirroring the ways we make sense of life (2011, p. 163), Eckstein claims that our interpretation of musical sound and the associated experience develops through the intricate interplay of various but interconnected aspects of perception (2010, p. 74). His *first* concern is cognitive exposure to the formal properties of sound organisation. The *second* aspect is how musical sound is situated within contextual and generic norms that shape musical performances, including economic and institutional limitations. Eckstein's *third* point is the physical aspect: kinaesthetic and physical response. According to Eckstein, these three aspects – cognitive, social and physical –

mutually influence each other in shaping our perception of music. However, generic conventions may traditionally prioritise a specific element. For instance, musical styles associated with art music tend to focus on cognitive experience, folk music on social interaction and genres of pop often "relish in physical hedonism". This is despite the fact that, as Eckstein argues, all three aspects – cognitive, social and physical – are inevitably involved in shaping our understanding of music. He writes, "At the risk of stating the obvious: what music eventually 'means' to us is always a product of the trialectical dynamic interaction of the interdependent spheres of mind, society, and body" (2010, pp. 74,75).

Eckstein also draws on Lawrence Kramer's concept of "songfulness" to address the phenomenon where listeners often pay less attention to the literal verbal meaning of song lyrics than when the exact words are presented as poems. Kramer explains, "Songfulness is a fusion of vocal and musical utterance judged to be both pleasurable and suitable independent of verbal content. It is the positive quality of singing-in-itself: just singing" (2002, p. 53). He furthermore points to how the concept of "songfulness" is intentionally described without providing defining characteristics. He suggests that it is instead an aesthetic quality that appears to be immediately recognisable yet elusive when it comes to precise definition; this indefinability is inherent to its nature. It can, therefore, be challenging to explain it definitively or determine whether it relates more to the music, the performance or the listener's perception. However, according to Kramer, despite this challenge in defining it, the quality is unmistakable. It creates a sense of an immediate and intimate connection between the listener and the subject behind the voice, and therefore raises questions regarded how to identify aspects of the voice that communicate or "deliver" the song. This illustrates how the performance leads the focus away from the semantic meaning of lyrics, demonstrating the inevitable connection between lyrics and voices. It also explains scholars' interest in the connection between the artist and their music and its impact on listeners. This, in turn, highlights Moore's statement on how lyrics play a minor role in answering questions such as "To whom are we listening?' and 'How do I make sense of what they mean?" (2012, p. 109). Because it is the source of the voice we hear- the singer- that provides clues as to the song's meaning and how we interpret lyrics.

To get a better understanding of Moore's claim it is therefore interesting to explore how he and other scholars address the connection between lyrics and voices and related themes.

1.7.1 The vocal "delivery"

I will start with Moore's passage on voice in *Song Means* in which he offers a solution to how one can treat vocal "delivery" by proposing aspects of the singer's voice that can enable close characterisations of its functioning and effects. Similar to Frith's approach, Moore suggests that vocal meaning is not what is said but the perceived attitude held by the singer, which introduces "questions of trust and integrity" (2012, p. 102). Moore suggests four positional aspects as a starting point, with the vocal register as the first position. This position is categorised into three registers where the "lower" register that, according to Moore, may be difficult to reach, thus adds "gravity, sexiness, and melancholy (and, in metal, menace)". The following two registers are the "normal", comfortable register and then a "higher" register that, depending on the context, may extend into a falsetto read as virtuosic, light-hearted or embodied physical effort. Moore's second position is to determine in which cavity the sound of the voice appears to be resonating. By asking, "Where does the voice appear to begin?" he suggests how sounds connected to specific cavities in the body, such as a nasal tone, can be read as sneering, distanced or stylised. He argues that singing from "the head" might appear weak, careless or understated, while singing from the throat might appear "normal". At the same time, he suggests that a "chest voice" will signal greater care, presence and power that the singer can intensify by pushing from the diaphragm. Moore's third positional aspect is the singer's "heard attitude to rhythm", and the fourth is their "attitude to pitch", pointing out how the two latter positions, in particular, can alter even from moment to moment.

These four positional aspects of the singer's voice are, according to Moore, useful observation tools to determine the singer's attitude to lyrics. Furthermore, he claims that they can enable listeners to determine "whether the singer is conforming to the apparent meaning of the lyrics in the way they are delivered or is perhaps clarifying them, whether the singer is equivocal about the lyrics (or about their addressee) or is even subverting them" (2012, p. 103). To illustrate his point, Moore refers to Paul McCartney and John Lennon's vocal performance in

the Beatles' "She Loves You". Here, he comments on how the singers make use of a comfortable and high register, where the latter is used to emphasise the line, "she loves you" and the words "be glad". He goes on to observe how Lennon's last phrase is "strained" compared to how the same note is "comfortably reached" earlier in the song.

Moore's assumptions on how a vocal quality is physically produced support one of the central claims presented in this thesis, namely, that notions of how the voice is produced and its possible connotations are mainly based on a personal and embodied experience with voice. This is further underlined by his comment on how the strained voice signifies a sense of sincerity, emphasising the message. Comments on vocal performances exhibited in song analysis, reviews and the media, in general, can, therefore, contradict knowledge, methods and theories grounded in voice studies and research.

Another point of interest is how several scholars (Malawey, 2020; Moore, 2012) refer to a vocal performance as a *delivery*. Thus, the implication that there is an intent or a prior meaning embedded in the lyrics – or the song – which the singer *conforms* or *clarifies* is *equivocal* about or *subverting* (Moore, 2012, p. 103). Interpretations of a song then arise from the tension between many "voices" that together form the materiality of the song. The performance situation, music and vocal timbre can comment, contrast or underline the semantic content of the lyrics. It thus explains how the same song can adapt new layers of meaning depending on the context and who is singing. Moreover, it exhibits how the ways lyrics and words work in songs depends on how they are performed (Frith, 1996, p. 163). Similar to speech, it is therefore not merely the verbal content we respond to but also how it is delivered and thus the tone of the voice of the singer.

In this sense, the coded meaning of the voice can be perceived as contrary to the voice of the lyrics, much of which demonstrates craftsmanship. For instance, voice and dialect can support a performer's perspective. The words we use and the ways we use them therefore matter regardless of form, which also brings forth our relationship with language. For artists and lyricists from non-English-speaking societies, this presents a choice: to perform in one's native language or in English, which has long been a global language for popular music. For example, pop music written in English has been of great inspiration for Norwegian songmakers and

performers. Most pop songs played on Norwegian radio also have English lyrics and originate from artists outside Norway. Political factors influence this practice in Norway and other non-English-speaking countries, cultures and societies. However, Norwegian artist, composer and songwriter organisations, in particular, advocate for more extensive representation of Norwegian and Sami artists and songs in their respective languages[2]. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that English remains the most widely spoken language worldwide[3]. For artists aspiring to attain international recognition, choosing to sing in English thus becomes a strategic consideration.

Additionally, even among those primarily active in the Norwegian music market, many opt for English based on their genre and musical style, asserting that it facilitates the conveyance of emotions and that the words resonate more profoundly (Iveland, 2017, p. 28; Lie, 2004). Many Norwegian artists also experience a different connection to the lyrical content and the sound of the words, as well as a sense of intimacy and vulnerability when singing in Norwegian, in contrast to singing in English, which presents both advantages and challenges for the individual performer.

While this thesis does not delve into matters of language and dialects, these aspects underscore the ways lyrics matter for the singer, songmaker and listener. This, in turn, supports how the connection between voices and lyrics informs how lyrics come to mean in experience. Based on these insights, I believe that to understand lyrics, one has to consider the sound of the words, including perceptions of the timbre of a specific voice. Furthermore, assessments of the singer's vocal timbre and choice of voice quality must be thorough, as this is of equal importance as poetic devices and word sounds, mainly because there are no standard vocalised qualities with which to compare. Consequently, this raises the question of how to approach the significance of coded meanings in the voice and its role in our understanding of lyrics and pop songs.

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[2] https://www.tono.no/medietilsynet-anbefaler-okt-krav-om-norsk-musikk-i-nrk-kanaler/

[3] https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/#statisticContainer

1.7.2 To whom are we listening?

As Martin Pfleiderer argued in "Theoretical, analytical and empirical approaches to voice and singing in popular music" (2010, p. 1), despite the singing voice being of great interest in popular music research, for many decades there were few investigations published on the performing voice in itself. However, in recent years, scholars like Nina Eidsheim have contributed to the voice and vocal practice field. Her knowledge spans from creative and practice-based projects to scientific publications on vocal timbre production and perception and the tension between sociocultural aspects of listening and the performing voice. Eidsheim's competence and dedication to these themes are evident in her work, in which she has raised important questions related to racialised notions of voice, *The Race of Sound* (2019b), and advanced issues concerning structural power dynamics within vocal performative practises.

Another contribution that encompasses an extended approach to the performing voice is Victoria Malawey's *A Blaze of Light in Every Word* (2020). Her book introduces a comprehensive conceptual model for analysing vocal delivery, integrating research from music theory, pedagogy, gender studies and philosophy. It emphasises the singing voice's ability to convey mood, emotion and identity, often surpassing other musical parameters. Malawey's model for "Interpreting Vocal Delivery in Popular Music" (2020, p. 6) comprises three main categories: pitch, prosody and quality. While these distinctions serve as a valuable starting point, her model illustrates how they intersect and overlap, prompting questions about their precise application. It also highlights how explanations of timbral perceptions often involve labelling the sound source or using a combination of metaphor, onomatopoeia, vocal mimicry and gesture (Heidemann, 2016, p. 3). However, employing cross-modal metaphors to convey vocal impressions can be imprecise due to varying interpretations of both the voice and the associated metaphors. For example, Malawey's use of metaphors in her categorisations, like "buzziness", which encompasses nasality, twang and other sound qualities, as opposed to "clarity", can lead to axiology-based assessments. Some may instead argue that twang represents a distinct, clear sound rather than a voice quality associated with "nonharmonic" noise, as Malawey notes with reference to Wallmark's terminology "inharmonicity" (2020, p. 118; Wallmark, 2014, pp. 61,62). Another example is Malawey's reference to "focus" in the category of

Clarity, which begs the question of how a focused sound – seemingly related to the singer's attitude – can be detected as a sound quality.

In summary, I find that Malawey's model is a systematic framework for identifying specific characteristics of musical genres and recognising artistic individuality. Yet it could be developed further by integrating terminology and methods within voice studies and vocal performance. However, it provides insights that help answer questions raised in this thesis, particularly topics concerning Vocal Prosody (2020, pp. 69-93), which will be explored in Chapter 3.

To support the claim that the ways we identify coded meanings in the voice are grounded in people's experience with voice use and behaviour, I draw on literature describing human's lifelong relationship and embodied knowledge of the sound and functioning of the voice (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011; Lancker, Sidtis, & Kreiman, 2011; Stevens, 2008). I also build on these insights to make a case for how this knowledge enables us to recognise a vocal sound quicker than the sound of other musical instruments (K. Siedenburg, Saitis, Ch., McAdams, S., 2019, p. 10). These studies also suggest that the reason for this seemingly intuitive listening competence stems from "an evolutionary and ontogenetic point of view" (K. Siedenburg, Müllensiefen, D., 2019, p. 109). Voice, as an "embodied social form" representing a listening and communication human, is thus "supported by evolutionary and biological perspectives" (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011; Lancker et al., 2011, p. 2).

These studies provide the grounds for my *first* hypothesis that the performativity and coded meaning in the voice matter to how we understand lyrics. Consequently, the relationship between lyrics and voices matters in constructing the meaning of songs. It matters for the songmaker, the listener and the singer performing the lyrics, thereby supporting my *second* hypothesis that lyrics matter and that the ways we understand lyrics and voices are never fixed.

So, although lyrics may be underplayed in pop music genres and when experienced in the context of music, as many scholars agree, we require adequate methods and approaches to address them and understand how lyrical meaning is constructed.

1.7.3 …and how do we make sense of what they mean?

Even though Moore acknowledges the significance of lyrics and consequently calls for ways to treat them, his passage on the topic is relatively short, covering approximately nine pages of his chapter on "Delivery" (2012, pp. 108-118). Admitting his lengthy avoidance of what many consider "the most important aspect of the song", he nevertheless embarks on a short but enlightening account of his approach to lyrics. One of the aspects he draws attention to is "whether or not things change within the course of a song", where the situation described or the protagonist undergoes change, and where there is no change (2012, p. 109). Underlining the importance of identifying the semantic frame as a necessary context, depending on where the listener places their attention and the form of the lyrics, the listener can then negotiate their interpretation between what is said and what is implied. Moore furthermore emphasises how technical poetic devices, including alliteration, rhymes and inner rhymes, repetitions and grouping of events, can add expressive quality. He points to how rhymes and sonic content are rarely discussed and suggests developing John Michell's thoughts on how verbal sounds can carry intrinsic connotations that can modify but not control semantic content. Moore summarises Michell's views – "freely adapted and embodied" – in a table, "Michell's consonantal qualities", that provides an interesting take on coded meanings in words ((Michell, John (1988), 2012, pp. 114- 115). This example then illustrates how tables and transcripts can give insight, although only partial knowledge of tonality, modes and rhythm. This is similar to the limitations of metaphorical language used to describe timbre, personas and embodied experiences.

Another contribution that takes a different approach to song analysis with a particular focus on lyrics is Lori Burns, Marc Lafrance and Laura Hawley's article, "Embodied Subjectivities in the Lyrical and Musical Expression of PJ Harvey and Björk" (2008). The authors delve into how PJ Harvey and Björk approach the concept of embodied female subjectivity in their music. They argue that these artists go beyond conventional cultural norms and forms by infusing their lyrical themes into their work. According to the authors, this challenges analysts to explore and explain the connections between the real-life, embodied experiences conveyed through both lyrics and music. To address this analytical challenge, Burns, Lafrance and Hawley propose an analytical framework that encompasses

both broad and specific definitions of embodiment. They moreover claim that the meaning with embodied dimensions present in the lyrical narrative is conveyed musically through a dynamic mode of expression. This mode involves a "nuanced control of gestures, sound quality, intensity, and sonic interactions"(2008, p. 2). It is thus this dynamic mode of expression that the authors consider crucial for interpreting the embodied subjectivities conveyed in the music. The authors further perform two close readings of PJ Harvey and Björk's songs with different approaches to demonstrate how the analytic framework can function as a model that is both *explained* and sometimes merely *implied.*

I will not give an in-depth analysis of the framework but draw attention to how the first stage of establishing musical and lyrical settings situates interpretation in the realm of previous knowledge of the performer and their work. Their interpretation then derives from the work itself and the artist's personal life and career, reflecting how they are discursively perceived. Especially with the introduction of social media and the internet, it has become almost impossible to stay ignorant of celebrities' personal lives and myths narrated around their persona. Integrating reflections on how artists are discursively understood socially by scholars and the media thus brings much needed transparency into the analysis. This also illustrates how pop songs often are interpreted not as independent works of art in their own right but as an expression of something beyond the work itself. This reflects the point Simon Frith makes in reference to sociologists', in particular, treatment of pop lyrics as expressions of a rising youth culture in the 60s, promoting new attitudes to love and happiness and sexual freedom, still influences the understanding of lyrics. In his words:

> Content analysts are not innocent readers, and there are obvious flaws in their method. For a start, they treat lyrics too simply. The words of all songs are given equal value; their meaning is taken to be transparent; no account is given of their actual performance or their musical setting (1989, p. 79).

I nevertheless find that searching for explanations for lyrical content outside the song itself may also limit the horizon of interpretation. To form a deeper understanding of lyrical meaning, I believe that one must acknowledge the intricate formation of contextual, individual and collective understandings, which are discursive, transformative, ever-evolving and dynamic. Therefore, while

transcriptions offer insights into song performance and composition, and spectrograms provide detailed acoustic representations, they have limitations in explaining how individual creativity, performative vocal timbre and expression influence lyrical meaning. Additionally, they don't fully elucidate how lyrical meaning is constructed discursively and contextually through various approaches and modes of representation, both at individual and collective levels.

However, I recognise that concepts of voice are not only referring to the sound of a person singing, but also to the inner voice and metaphorical understandings of the voice in lyrics.

1.7.4 The relationship between the voice of the lyrics, the author and the artist

To address conceptual representations of 'voice' in lyrics and how they connect to theories about authorial voice and author function, I draw from Michel Foucault's theory of *author function* (1969) and William Echard's use of the term *authorial persona* (2018). I will furthermore build on David Brackett's thoughts on how music genres are defined and the relationship between musical categories and individual and group identities (Brackett, 2016a). I will extend his insights in addressing related questions, such as how a discursive power held by an author figure or persona can include genre, style and performance tradition. As Brackett notes, "related to the idea of a generalised iterability of genre is the idea of genres as the result of collective creativity rather than the product of an autonomous auteur" (2016b, p. 14). I will thus explore how a genre can, as such, be associated with a particular author figure who has drawn attention to a style or category of music.

The thesis will cover these topics and questions throughout, yet with a specific focus in chapter 2, where I will investigate the relationship between the voice of the lyrics, the voice of the author and the voice of the artist, and how the relationship between these concepts of 'voice' inform the overall understanding of lyrics. I furthermore look into how some artists construct personas as acts of rebellion or parody and thus play on authenticating elements like style or genre traditions and take the risk of being misunderstood and rejected. Others, however,

develop idolised personas, resulting in the constructed figure overshadowing the artist and their music.

To illustrate how these concepts are ascribed to artists and their performances, Chapter 3 addresses the tension between the artist David Bowie and the constructed figure Ziggy Stardust. Moreover, I discuss perceptions of differences between a staged or a natural vocal sound in relation to categories of personas (Auslander, 2004; Hawkins, 2020; Moore, 2012).

These themes are also related to notions of authenticity and originality. In Chapter 4, I address how these concepts are ascribed to performers, genres and performances and the possible implications of employing these concepts. Here, the study draws attention to potential problems arising from discussions regarding the "right or wrong" understanding of songs and calls for cautious use of concepts associated with authenticity in matters of who has "the right to sing" certain songs or styles. Categories of music and how they relate to categories of performers and audiences also bring forth discussions concerning what is understood as authenticators for songmakers and artists. To address some of the issues raised, I therefore look into writings on authenticity and authenticators (Hawkins, 2020; Moore, 2002, 2012; Scott, 2009) and how themes related to these concepts apply to comparisons that are made between originals and covers (Askerøi, 2013; Griffiths, 2002), stylistic influences in the voice (Malawey, 2020) and the relationship between the singer and the listener (Brackett, 2016a; Eidsheim, 2019b; Scott, 2009). I moreover explore the relationship between singers like Sade Adu, Billie Holliday and Sarah Vaughan, and torch songs (Frith, 1996; Holman Jones, 2010; Moore, 2000) and draw lines to Karen Carpenter and anorexic artists and their songs.

Except for some writings – including Freya Jarman-Iven's chapter, "Karen Carpenter: America's Most Defiant Square" (2011, pp. 59-94) – it seems Karen Carpenter's personal life has caught journalists' and scholars' attention, more than her music. Or, more precisely, they have been interested in the relationship between her artistic life, her songs and anorexia nervosa (AN). To exhibit how these issues are brought to the surface, I draw on George McKay's article, "Skinny Blues: Karen Carpenter, anorexia nervosa and popular music" (2017). Moreover, I refer to socially constructed narratives and beliefs about the anorexic body as a

gendered body (Brain, 2002, 2006), an androgynous body and AN as an illness (Wilson, 2016). To study the tension between how some anorexic artists understand themselves and their experiences and how they are understood, I draw on my personal experience with AN and my profession as a singer and songmaker, sharing my story in songs and the documentary "Weightless" (Endresen 2002), and how these experiences are central to how I interpret readings of anorexic artists and their songs.

The purpose of highlighting this topic is to exhibit connections and contradictions between how female anorexic artists are understood and the stories they aim to tell. Additionally, I aim to show how narratives and metaphors, providing coherence and meaning to embodied experiences, can be expressed in lyrics and how embodied experiences are metaphorically understood and transferred into mental representations. In exploring these themes, I have therefore used Lakoff and Johnsen's book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) as an entry point. They argue that although metaphors are mostly thought of as "a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language" confined to the realm of rhetoric and poetic imagination, the conceptual system is "metaphorical in nature" and governs how people interact and relate to others and the world (1980, p. 3). The term *metaphor* will therefore not be referred to merely as a literary or rhetorical device; instead, it points to its fundamental role as a cognitive structure that allows humans to metaphorically interpret and make sense of the world (Johnson, 1987, p. xx).

Another aspect of themes addressed is how creativity and imagination allow us to experience ourselves (Ihde, 2007, p. 120). While imagination is not entirely free and has its own unique structures and potentials, imaginative acts, especially those they consciously initiate, lead to a sense of inner self-presence, giving rise to the notion of a self. I will therefore aim to exhibit how the creative and imaginary mode allows us to experience ourselves and the world in new ways, which can explain why our interpretations and perceptions of lyrical meaning are both similar and different.

These aspects highlight themes running through this thesis: how subjectivity, identities and personas are socially and personally negotiated through lyrics and voices and how they relate to self-narratives.

1.7.5 Songmaking, confessions and responsibility

So far, I have been discussing songmaking as a creative and performance practice. However, songmaking can also be a way of acting on behalf of oneself and others by exhibiting specific circumstances and human conditions. The ways artists and their songs are discursively understood as political messages might, however, be threatening or supporting ideologies and regimes. It can thus become a matter of taking responsibility for one's life and society through actions. To explore how concepts of responsibility can be related to songmaking, Chapter 4 will take inspiration from Annabel Herzog's chapter on Hannah Arendt's understanding of responsibility in terms of political presence (2014). I will then draw attention to the singer-songwriter movement and songmakers, including Joni Mitchell and Carly Simon.

Furthermore, this chapter will draw on some topics raised by Michel Foucault in *Technologies of the Self* (1988) to address the ways in which confessional lyrics are understood and used as a songmaking and coping strategy. I will not engage in a deeper analysis of Foucault's theories but use this text to study the relationship between confessional narratives and self-narratives in a musical context and between lived experiences and the stories we tell. Here, I will draw lines between Clapton's songs after the death of his son and notions of how narrating real-life events into songs can help the songmaker deal with emotional turmoil or traumatic experiences. The writing process itself can facilitate a safe environment for reflection and allow them to revisit emotions without repeating what caused them.

The analytical challenge then extends beyond merely describing and articulating the indescribable; it also involves integrating numerous metaphors, terminologies and descriptions related to lyrics and voices from diverse academic disciplines and discourses. Furthermore, it necessitates the effective communication of discoveries, as presented in this thesis, through an interdisciplinary approach while remaining rooted in the realm of Popular and Critical Musicology. Thus, despite the challenges involved, verbal descriptions of sound are crucial to conveying what a performance signifies to listeners, songmakers, performers and analysts.

These studies contribute to my line of enquiry and thus my understanding of how vocal behaviour, voice identification, contextual and sociocultural conditions, language use and knowledge inform our experiences with lyrics.

While prior research – including the mentioned work – has delved into aspects of vocal performance, such as phrasing, voice production, voice quality and vocal timbre, as well as providing valuable insights into how lyrical content contributes to song meaning, this study takes on overarching perspective, examining how all these elements collectively inform our understanding of lyrics and voices.

In the following section, I will outline aspects informing the framework "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices", then explain how the framework can provide insights into the complexity of vocal and lyrical communication in popular music.

1.8 Developing the framework

As I have demonstrated so far, lyrics and voices provide a range of options and limitations related to the ways we understand them. However, working with the topics of this thesis, I found a lack of lyric analysis and frameworks that could encompass aspects of the relationship between interpreting modes of internal and external vocalisation and, thus, the tension between *listening, reading, singing* and *writing*. This may be because songmaking and performing, in contrast to listening, reading and singing, constitute experiences not shared by everyone. Nevertheless, as this project developed, I began to examine the way I approached lyrics and discovered that my attention was specifically drawn towards the relationship between the words and the voice. I furthermore suspected that this interest was grounded in my profession, education and experience, which intuitively influenced my approach to lyrics. Additionally, my knowledge was informed by numerous techniques for analysing songs, employed within both popular and critical musicology, providing insights from a range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, literary studies and voice studies.

Departing from the notion that musical engagement is rooted in bodily and sensory experiences, I, therefore, set out to explore if and how I could uncover and identify specific aspects in my approach to topics raised, and use them as an entry point for developing an informative framework for lyric analysis. Moving forward, the aim was to develop a method that would encompass listening, reading,

singing/performing, writing/songmaking and interpretation as creative activities that subsequently highlighted lyrics and voices as objects of study *and* as experience.

Moreover, the goal was for the framework to provide insights into how these activities are interconnected. As such, I focused on a selection of lyrics to investigate if it was possible to focus merely on one approach. I, however, discovered that although each approach provided new layers of meaning, they were connected. When I read the lyrics, I could hear my inner voice singing the words, the same way I felt words emerging through the voice as I wrote the lines. I also found that my understanding of songs – including my own – encompassed both similar and different interpretations. More specifically, I propose that by singing or vocalising lyrics, observing one's physical and sensory response to vocal performances and paying attention to representations of the inner voice – for example, an imagined, acousmatic, guiding voice or the sound of a familiar artist's voice – underlines how each approach can reveal different information and also how they inform each other. Investigating various approaches, I expanded on the notion that interpretation is one of the affordances of lyrics and voices, which explains why listeners form different perceptions and, over time, discover new meanings in recordings despite the song itself being the same. I thus believe that this understanding is crucial not only within the realm of popular music but also in grasping the dynamic and intricate relationship between semantic content and somatic meaning within lyrics.

Building on these insights, this thesis proposes "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices" as a versatile, informative framework for exploring lyrics, voices and the stories they tell, how they are created and the ways we understand them. Moreover, it is suggested as entryways to explore the way people's experiences are expressed and recognised in lyrics and how they are interpreted through our relationship with voice. The significance of each approach and how they can be applied will be addressed and explained throughout the thesis to provide insights into how lyrical meaning emerges within the song and how this process is linked to lyric interpretation. "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices" is therefore not intended as an overarching or specific method but rather a framework that can highlight some of the intricacies and depth of a musical experience, thereby advancing insights into the significance of the relationship between lyrics and voices in pop

songs. Neither is it intended as a method for close readings per se, but as a potential avenue for lyric analysis, offering diverse perspectives.

1.9 "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices"

To investigate the ways somatic and semantic meaning contribute to different understandings of lyrical meaning, this thesis takes on a discursive approach to address the relationship between lyrics and the voice. Specifically, it presents a framework for lyric analysis called "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices", designed to identify various aspects as a *listener, reader, singer/performer* and *lyricist/songmaker* and how these approaches can mutually enrich and inform each other.

The foundation for this framework and the methodological approach of this thesis focuses on the insights gained from four specific approaches, taking into account the multifarious perspectives and relationships inherent in this context. Moreover, as this thesis aims to explore, although these approaches are categorised separately for better understanding, they overlap and have cyclic and intricate interactions with one another, significantly in our understanding of songs, and our relationship with voice plays a pivotal role in shaping this understanding. Instead of analysing each approach separately, it thus seeks to illustrate how lyric interpretation involves a complex process often employing differing methodologies and how the four approaches can encompass close readings and their contextual and experiential aspects. It is therefore proposed as an informative framework that can encompass various methods and thus highlight how the various approaches mutually enrich and inform each other. To demonstrate its possible functions, one or a combination of several approaches will be used as entryways when focusing on selected material to substantiate the central hypothesis that lyrics matter in constructing the meaning of songs and, moreover, that voices matter to how we understand lyrics.

The four approaches and how they are employed in this thesis are as follows:

1. **Listening**

The objective of this approach is to explore various modes of listening to lyrics through various representations of voice, such as an artist's voice, one's personal and/or inner voice and an acousmatic voice. This approach also involves

recognising and identifying performative and aesthetic aspects of vocal timbre and voice qualities. Moreover, it encompasses exploring the "grain" of the voice: the in-between of the inner voice, the external voice and the lyrics.

This approach brings to the surface how and whether we can identify and demonstrate a skilled approach or emotional commitment in vocal performance, and how certain coded meanings in the voice tend to be associated with aspects of sincereness and authenticity. It also draws attention to how these coded meanings inform voice recognition and how mental imageries of the source are created in the absence of sensory inputs.

An example of how changes in voice quality can present changed focalisation, which is only detectable through the first approach, listening, is demonstrated in Chapter 3, by exploring the vocal performance in "Fool on the Hill" (Lennon & McCartney, 1967). Other songs will be referenced when relevant to demonstrate how the sound of a voice can exhibit a point of view that can be both contrastive and supportive of the perspective of the lyrics, as often seen in parody.

Additionally, the first approach will be discussed in Chapter 4 in the context of temporal shifts in available visual information and artist biographies exemplified by my close reading of "Smooth Operator" (Adu & St. John, 1984) by Sade from 1985.

2. **Reading**

The primary objective of this approach is to highlight lyrics as written text, through its semantic content, structure and topic. Moreover, it aims to draw attention to representations of the authorial and acousmatic inner voice, and how reading lyrics can evoke mental imageries of a vocal performance and the song.

This approach will be explored further in Chapter 4 by investigating intertextual relationships in lyrics and songs. To address how songs are intertextually connected, I lean on concepts of intertextuality and hypertextuality introduced by Serge Lacasse (2000a) and Gerard Genette (1997) with a particular focus on "God" (Lennon, 1970) and "God Part II" (U2 & Bono, 1988).

I will also briefly refer to the significance of lullabies as related to the development of language and voice behaviour and draw the line to intertextual or transtextual relationships in my lyrics to the song "Dilelol – Sleep my child" (Iveland et al., 2002). This example also illustrates how all four approaches inform writing.

To show how new insights are added by applying a combination of approaches the prosodic qualities of "Chuck E.'s in Love" (Lee Jones, 1979) and "Smooth Operator" (Adu & St. John, 1984) will be explored through the lens of the first and the second approach in Chapter 3. Additionally, to reflect on associations related to voices and categories of voices, "We Are the World" (Jackson & Richie, 1985) and "With God on Our Side" (Dylan, 1964) are explored in Chapter 4. Additionally, I describe how *listening* to the vocal performance and how the vocals are arranged, add other layers of meaning that inform how the songs are understood and created, which involves approaching lyrics from a performance and songmaking/writing perspective.

Another illustrative case of these approaches informing each other, and thus elucidating the relationship between the second approach, *reading*, and the fourth approach, *songmaking/writing*, is furthermore exemplified in Chapter 4, by examining how a poem, "Unending Love" by Rabindranath Tagore, inspired my lyrics, "Spellbound Heart" (Iveland, 2018).

3. **Singing/performing**

The objective of this approach is to exhibit singing as both an activity in which people engage without any purpose besides the activity itself and an activity associated with performing. The purpose of this approach is to explore the relationship between the somatic and semantic meaning of lyrics and voices by highlighting how the tension between the body, the voice and words is interpreted and experienced in performance and singing. It is, on the one hand, focused on the individual experience of the singing voice within the body and, on the other hand, on how we hear the body within the voice that sings. Therefore, this approach concentrates on the sensory and emotional experience of singing and how it relates to the first approach, which includes external and internal listening.

This approach will also be applied to address questions surrounding a singer's trustworthiness and authenticity and whether an artist possesses the qualifications

to perform within a specific genre or sing a particular song. It will be employed to study how these aspects are related to societal expectations and provide examples of how they can be projected on women, who may be expected to emphasise emotions and lyrical content. This also reflects norms in performance practices, where different genres can imply aesthetic biases, beliefs and values. These issues will be discussed in particular in Chapter 4, with reference to torch songs and female rock and soul artists, including Madonna, Sade and Billie Holiday.

4. **Songmaking/writing**

The objective of this approach is to explore layers of meaning, emotions, temperament, sensations, thoughts and musical ideas that emerge in between word and the voice in the process of writing lyrics and making songs. It seeks to investigate the tension between the lyricist's intentions and choices, style, authorship and lyrical content. It also brings forward the relationship between the lyricist's voice and the voice of the lyrics.

The fourth approach will be explored in particular in Chapter 4 by examining various forms of songmaking, including confessional lyrics, stream-of-consciousness as method and form, and songmaking as therapy. Connections will be drawn between lived experiences, personal narratives and discursive interpretations of songs and artists. To substantiate the discussion, examples given in Chapter 4 include "Finishing the Hat" (Sondheim, 1985), "Good News" (McCormick & Brion, 2020) and "Tears in Heaven" (Clapton & Jennings, 1992).

I will also refer to my own experiences of songmaking and lyrics, including those already mentioned, "Spellbound Heart" (2018) and "Dilelol – Sleep my child" (2002).

The relationship between the third approach, *performing/singing*, and the fourth, *songmaking/writing*, will be dealt with in-depth in relation to how female anorexic artists are perceived. I will here refer to artists like Karen Carpenter, lyrics by Maria Mena (2008; 2008), Livi (2020), Elysian Soul (2013) and my personal experience and artistic work. Moreover, these examples will exhibit how all four approaches are related and can be used as entryways into exploring the tension between expressions and metaphors grounded in lived experiences and metaphorical and discursive readings informed by perceptions, myths and beliefs.

These examples also show how insights from *singing/performing* and *songmaking/writing* can add new layers to insights gained through *listening* and *reading*.

1.10 The researcher-songmaker approach and voice of this thesis

After completing my master's degree at the Norwegian Academy of Music, where the primary focus was on artistic practice and performance studies, I encountered a new frontier in the form of Popular Musicology as I embarked on this journey. The field emerged after I graduated from the University of Oslo in 1986, where I pursued a degree in musicology. Since then, my career has taken diverse paths, including roles as a session singer, artist, lyricist, songwriter and voice teacher. Initially, I had not envisioned writing a conventional thesis; instead, I was drawn to the realm of artistic research. Additionally, my introduction to Popular Musicology left me somewhat disconcerted. I noticed that many perspectives seemed to approach writing lyrics primarily as a means to convey semantic content. Furthermore, I discovered limited material dedicated to the relationship between lyrical meaning and the voice in popular music, and subsequently the relationship between the semantic and somatic meaning in songs. It thus seemed that the prevailing emphasis was on deciphering what songs and artists had to say, staged personas and the sonic production, and therefore more toward the end product rather than the creative process. However, I realised that my research focus and the way I approach song analysis intuitively drew upon my experiences and insights as a singer, artist, lyricist and songmaker.

I was also quickly reminded of how my selection of songs, music analysis and understandings were informed mainly by personal interests and preferences drawing from tacit, unacknowledged values, passions and demography (Negus, 2012, p. 378). Thus, I began exploring how these experiences informed my perception of lyrics and voices as not mere means of expressing lyrical content but profound experiences. Moreover, I found that my background could be helpful in understanding how the craft of songmaking, writing and performing informs the ways lyrics are written and structured and songs are performed, and as such exhibit not only *what* lyrics mean but also *how* they come to mean.

Working with this thesis has, therefore, been a balancing act between locating myself in academic writing and exposing my musical skills, background and experience, which is a strategy that, according to Negus, is rare in musicology compared to other disciplines, such as anthropology and ethnomusicology (2012, p. 374). Additionally, it also became a concern in to be attentive to how song and lyric analysis – and here I am also referring to comments on my own work – is likely to be coloured by preconceived concepts and structured to seek evidence supporting existing assumptions. It, therefore, seemed to be a question of acknowledging that conditions such as demographics, socio-cultural background, musical skills and embodied experiences are equally crucial in musicological analysis and critical interpretation as personal and scholarly commitments to the process (Negus, 2012, p. 374). This is relevant to all research within popular music, whether one approaches the field from a musical or academic background.

This project has also shown that scholars within Popular Musicology have provided valuable insight into the current discourse of popular music. Furthermore, this discourse has exhibited how popular music is created, perceived and produced, and how these musical experiences are transmitted. It has also illustrated how certain interpretations projected onto artist and their music may have a determining power, shaping collective readings, discourse and future interpretations. The challenge, then, has been how to recognise tacit knowledge, embodied experience and circumstances informing perception while building on the personal interest necessary to motivate a research project. Any articulation of what music is, how it works and what it means calls for transparency and an acknowledgement of how understanding and interpretation are subjectively informed.

As a researcher-songmaker, I am again inspired by Susan Sontag's essay. For her, transparency is the most profound and liberating value in both art and critique. Transparency thus refers to "experiencing the luminousness of the thing itself, of things being what they are" (1966, p. 9). I therefore strive to be transparent, which involves acknowledging being a fan as well as a trained musician, and a lyricist and singer. What I find important then may vary from other scholars, musicians and fans, as arguably is the case among listeners in general. This thesis therefore takes on a first-person approach rather than the traditional academic third-person writer. Using "we" as a pronoun does not imply a unified, homogenous group but a continuation of the first-person perspective. As the American author Siri

Hustvedt highlights, the third-person discourse of academic writing where the person – the "authoritative Professor Nobody" – only exists as a name or list of names (2016, p. 302). The third-person discourse emphasises this "egoless" and objective authority by referring to a field or studies, speaking on behalf of science and not opinion or experience the way I have done as a creative writer. This cleansing of subjectivity from the text has thus become the signifier of those who know the rules of academic writing and, therefore, have the authority to offer reliable arguments and perspectives within their fields.

My journey into Popular Musicology, however, revealed how many of those who first appeared as anonymous names slowly emerged into "Professor Somebody Very Important" (Hustvedt, 2016, p. 302). Furthermore, I found their work increasingly relatable to my experience from artistic praxis as I recognised how all forms of expression and understanding constantly change, as they are creative, transformative and discursively constructed. The form of the written discourse represented in this thesis then makes a one-party argument, where I – as researcher-songmaker – address myself and not an adversary. Hence, as I constructed my argument, I tried to "anticipate possible objections, defences, attacks, etc., and deal with them" (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, p. 88) The internal processes of arguing, anticipating and addressing possible, imagined and anticipated objections are, as such, the argument and, thus, the thesis. As Lakoff and Johnson remind us, in a rational argument, "all of these steps must be taken, not just to win, but in the service of the higher purpose of understanding" (1980, p. 88).

In short, I have used the first-person approach to provide transparency as I have taken the necessary steps of developing a coherent line of investigation, trying to find logical connections between claims, and thus attempting to ensure to the best of my ability that the reader is sufficiently informed. Additionally, this thesis uses "they" as a gender-neutral pronoun in cases where gender is irrelevant when referring to someone whose gender is unknown or non-binary or when someone prefers gender-neutral pronouns.

1.11 Selection of lyrics, voices and songs

Embarking into this project, I have reflected on how particular styles and artists operate and influence their time and discourse and thus contribute to a canon. For historical and educational purposes, the fact that specific genres and artists tend to

be privileged while others are neglected can present a problem regarding who is referred to as significant and vital. Giving artists and their work “academic interest” forever imprints their value as culturally important in history, thus contributing to their canonisation. Additionally, music educators and scholars wield substantial influence, not confined to the field of Popular and Critical Musicology alone but also extending to their impact on individual students' engagement with music.

Despite my intentions to ensure a high level of transparency and clarification of my chosen point of observation in addition to a broad song selection, this thesis has highlighted only a few lyrics and artists, and ignored the rest. I also acknowledge that my deliberate focus on specific musical works and artists can contribute to endorsing these selections as meriting educational recognition and thus establishing their positions within the popular music canon. One question that has been brought to the surface has, therefore, been why some genres, artists and songwriters are worthy of popular musicologists' attention and not others. Is it only a matter of taste and nostalgia?

Many scholars address these questions, and the research field is consequently widening and thus challenging what can be seen as a pop music hierarchy emerging from the placement of certain categories of music and artists in the foreground and the neglect of others. One scholar who has brought attention to these issues is Freya Jarman-Ivens, who draws connections between academic and popular discussions, in that scholarly writing tends to focus predominantly on the works and achievements of a select group of elite musicians whose contributions are deemed as "valuable" or "worthy”. This illustrates what she coins “the blind spots in the scholarship” (2011, p. 60).

These issues also beg the question of whether we – as educators and academics – approach established canon and, more significantly, our readiness for critical examination and revision of this canon. Furthermore, it's essential to consider how teachings and research centred on specific artists and musical styles can inadvertently foster divisions among various groups and their associated music genres, as well as who has the right to perform what and how. If we become too fixated on particular aesthetic preferences within music styles and the nuances of vocal timbres and singing styles within these genres, the challenge thus becomes

how to accommodate those who are pushing the boundaries and rebelling against established norms of style. This friction is often the catalyst for progress, as history has demonstrated that ground-breaking developments often occur in unexpected domains. The question then becomes how to strike a balance between preserving historical, contextual, stylistic and technical knowledge without rigidifying existing categories that may resist change.

On the other hand, scholars' attention to specific songmakers can also reflect the fact that, like in historical documentation in general, the rebellious make waves while the mainstream does not, making the rebel more interesting. For example, the notion that voices are inherently truthful and revealing suggests that the untrained, unpolished or processed voice is more trustworthy than the trained voice. According to Jarman-Ivens, "what is common to those artists and music that are canonised in popular music studies is some perceived distinction from a notion of 'mainstream'" (2011, p. 63). The guiding principle then seems to be mainly oppositionality, where those who are perceived as distinct from the mainstream represent something original, significant and authentic. Their significance on the music scene may, however, only emerge over time. I have thus come to realise that my engagement with music has been as much with the "uncool" mainstream music as with the rebellious and unpolished genres or songmakers. This may be because I experienced the musical scene as a teenager until the start of my life as a professional musician and songmaker in the mid-80s, as more versatile and multivoiced than is reflected in much of the writings and teaching within Popular Music Studies. Hence, working on this project has also made me realise that artists I did not listen to growing up have had a great impact on the music makers that did engage me. Even though marginal at the time, artists challenging norms and causing friction between the established and the new pushed the field forward. Likewise, their influence on society, politics and my life has only become apparent in retrospect.

Based on these thoughts, my goal has thus been to treat understanding as a process of continuously re-entering and experiencing with different attention and be transparent and mindful of how this thesis builds on my engagement and academic interest in lyrical material.

Furthermore, I aim to draw attention to the potential consequences of associating groups of people with particular music categories, a topic addressed within the thesis. Instead of concentrating on a specific music genre, artist, or writing style, I have therefore included examples that offer a broad perspective on the questions raised regarding the interplay between lyrics and voices. The selection of examples then serves two primary purposes: *first*, to illustrate the universal nature of coded meanings in the voice, and *second*, to illustrate how “Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices” can be used as a framework for analysing lyrics regardless of lyrics, songs or artists. The thesis thus seeks to demonstrate that the questions, findings, and conclusions highlighted are relevant across different music genres and are not limited to specific musical categories.

Hopefully, this is reflected in the thesis in ways that can shed new light on some of the issues raised in this project.

The following chapter will focus on lyrics as written text and draw attention to connections made between the words, the text, the reader and the lyricist.

2 Lyrics

This chapter will explore the relationship between the first two approaches, *listening* and *reading*, in the suggested framework: “Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices”.

It will explore differences and similarities in listening to vocally performed lyrics and reading lyrics as printed text, and how these approaches inform each other. To address these issues, it will particularly discuss aspects of external and internal listening. Moreover, aspects connected to lyrical narratives, similarities and differences between lyrics and poems, and subsequently words as carriers of meaning and sound.

This chapter will also explore theories on how authorial voice, author persona, figure and function relate to lyrics. More specifically, I will draw on Foucault’s concept of *author function* (1969) and William Echard’s use of the term *authorial persona* (2018). I will furthermore refer to David Brackett’s thoughts on how music genres are defined and the relationship between musical categories and individual and group identities. I will extend his insights in addressing related questions, such as how a discursive power held by an author figure or persona can include genre, style and performance tradition.

To answer questions related to the initial two approaches, this chapter will also delve into topics and provide examples related to the third and fourth approaches: *performing* and *writing* lyrics.

The objective of the chapter is thus to examine some of the various ways in which lyrics are experienced, constructed and understood.

2.1 The Importance of Lyrics

I will start this chapter by referring to Dai Griffiths claims about how discourse about lyrics has had “a hard time” (2003, p. 40). He illustrates this further by quoting Theodor Gracyk, who declared that most lyrics in rock music “don’t matter very much”. Could Gracyk be correct? If he is, it would explain why those who learn my thesis topic tend to excuse themselves for not paying attention to lyrics when listening to pop music, especially the first time around. I usually agree,

as I find myself doing the same thing. So, is this to say that lyrics are not important? Because if they are not, why do we use words in songs?

To grasp performed lyrics linked to music is a complicated task, and understanding the content the first time around can be challenging. This is partly due to our mind privileging some pieces of information over others, causing us to identify musical sounds and the voice before making sense of the words. However, different layers of lyrical and musical meaning can emerge with each listening and reading lyrics. Repeated encounters, a new insight or a changed context can all make listeners appreciate other aspects of the song but also open them to the risk of disappointment. For instance, a discrepancy may arise when an initial interpretation of lyrical meaning does not align with the actual words of the lyrics. In such cases, lyrics transcend mere expressions of semantic content, even though they are often analysed in this manner. This point is illustrated by a statement from Simon Frith, who notes that sociologists, particularly in the 1960s, treated pop lyrics as expressions of an emerging youth culture that promoted new attitudes towards love, happiness and sexual freedom (1989, p. 79). According to him, these analytical theories are contingent upon prior notions of "youth and sexuality", leading analysts to treat lyrics as "too simple" by focusing mainly on the content and neglecting their musical context. Consequently, without taking performance and musical aspects into account, all lyrics are given equal value, which ignores the song's communicative significance. These perspectives illustrate how the way we approach lyrics – e.g., reading as printed text and listening to songs – can construct different lyrical meanings. Moreover, while reading can allow for a deeper study of lyrical structure, content and form and, as such, can function as a poem if intended for singing, listening adds other layers of information that can broaden the perception of meaning.

In exploring these issues, I am reminded of Ricoeur's answer to the question "What is text?" which is initially "any discourse fixed by writing" (2016, p. 107). In this sense, discourse is already pronounced in some form. Therefore, One question is whether to treat the recorded song as a fixed performance and consequently written lyrics as conserved vocalisations. Another question is how to draw the line between the relationship between songs and lyrics and the relationship between speech and written text.

Ricoeur explains how, on the one hand, speech establishes a relationship between message and speaker and message and hearer. Spoken discourse refers back to its speaker and the situation. On the other hand, written text disconnects the author's mental intention and the verbal meaning; that is, its semantic autonomy. He writes, "The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author" (1976, p. 30). In this sense, authorial intent is irrelevant in determining the text's meaning. The author chooses the lyrical structure and the words, limiting the interpretation horizon. Their chosen language, concepts and metaphors, thus, depend on shared conventions readers and listeners understand. Lyrics can, however, still acquire meaning independent of their author's intention in that songs create a relationship between lyrics and the internal and external voice. This, in turn, points back to Frith's statement that by treating lyrics as expressions conveying messages and attitudes, their successes will depend on how they reach the audience. Perspectives that tend to surface, especially within specific genres, including confessional songs and singer-songwriters. They, therefore, bring forward issues and challenges related to the tension between a staged persona and the "real" person, and as such the notion of lyrics, songs, personas and the body as tools for metaphorical expressions of identity and inner states.

This further highlights how expectations connected to an artist's self-promotion and revealing "truths" about themselves in their songs and the media can lead to unintended consequences regarding their self-perception and work. Expectations mainly brought on the singer as the artist or front figure in a group, as they are the voice performing lyrics. So, if lyrics do matter, why haven't we found tools to treat them, and why have words in music had such a hard time?

2.1.1 Listening to lyrics when reading

Our everyday encounter with lyrics is mostly through listening. The many ways we are activated when engaging with lyrics and voices are thus the ways we know songs and how they come to mean. Sometimes, we listen in solitude, other times in the company of others. The act of listening to a song, then, is meaningful in itself, but the fact that listeners distinguish between songs and prefer one over the other shows that different tracks afford different interpretations and meanings. People even choose between versions of the same song, posing the question as to

what degree meaning is imposed on the listener contra the determining role of the listener deciding a song's meaning (Moore, 2019, p. 163).

To differentiate between the ways we listen, it is useful to draw on Michel Chion's three distinct modes of listening (2009). The first mode is *causal* listening, followed by *semantic* listening, which involves decoding a message through a code or language. The third mode is *reduced* listening, which entails a focus on the quality of the sound itself. Although these modes of listening address different objects, they overlap and operate simultaneously.

As Chion notes, the most common way of listening is causal listening, which can take place in a number of situations and various places. Sometimes, we recognise the source immediately, while we might, on other occasions, struggle to identify even sounds that are familiar to us. Causal listening can also involve recognising a category of sound, which can also imply a "causal history of the sound itself", including pressure, speed and amplitude (2009, p. 2). It therefore points to how the first encounter with an auditory impulse evokes an investigative urge, causing the mind to search for explanations and clues that can lead to more information about the origins of the experienced sound. In situations where the cause is visible, sound can offer additional information. For instance, when you tap an enclosed container, the sound can indicate if it's empty or full. When the cause is not visible, sound, however, becomes the primary source of information. We thus might rely on our existing knowledge or logical deduction to identify it. However, depending on where we place our attention and the reading and listening situation, we will thus engage in all categories. This means that when we hear a song, we hear it differently. As Nicholas Cook puts it, "Meaning lies not in musical sound, then, nor in the media with which it is aligned, but in the encounter between them" (2000, p. 270). The musical elements and listening context then lead our attention to specific aspects of the songs, as well as what we as listeners bring to the experience. Some are interested in what the song does in experience, some in the musical arrangement, some in the content of the lyrics, and others focus mainly on the voice and its source, the artist.

Likewise, when we read lyrics, we understand them differently. However, regardless of the ways we approach them, the horizon of interpretation is not endless but grounded in the material at hand. In reading, the way the lyrics are

structured, how they appear visually and the sound of words and rhythm pronounced by the inner voice inform our understanding. When we hear a song, the musical context and the listening situation, and at the same time, the coded meanings in the sounding voice frame our interpretation. Hearing a song on the car radio then evokes comparisons between what is heard and what is known, what grabs or escapes our attention, leaving some things out and prioritising other things. The mind thus selects, organises and interprets while keeping both eyes on the road. However, as our mind is trained to identify some sounds as important for our survival and others as secondary, the sound of a siren or a red light will most likely be prioritised even though the song affects us more strongly and in other ways than the experience of driving.

I, however, find that reading lyrics engages my whole being as it activates my body, senses and emotions which opens similar pathways as listening. Moreover, it involves levels of inner listening supporting my earlier extension to Moser's statement (2007a, p. 279), that the reading experience is never completely silent.

2.1.2 The inner acousmatic voice

In solitude, the mind can become caught in an ongoing dialogue with itself, listening and responding in language. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us, language is understood as the existence of verbal images – traces of words we have heard and spoken. However, the conception of language remains the same in that 'there is no subject', whether its traces are physical or imprinted in the unconscious. He writes:

> Whether the stimuli, in accordance with the laws of neurological mechanics, touch off excitations capable of bringing about the articulation of the word or whether the states of consciousness cause, by virtue of acquired associations, the appearance of the appropriate verbal image, in both cases, speech occurs in a circuit of third-person phenomena. There is no speaker, there is a flow of words set in motion independently of any intention to speak (2005, p. 203).

The inner acousmatic voice can thus have metaphysical connotations and represent the psychoanalytic voice, the voice of wisdom, the voice of God, the voice of awareness, the self behind the self or the higher self, among others. It can assume the role of a friend who always listens or someone with observing and judging

awareness who evaluates our thoughts and actions. These voices then engage in an inner dialogue with another acousmatic voice representing "the self" or the observer and, as such, contribute to negotiations and mediations of self. As Foucault reminds us, disclosure and the renunciation of self can act as a process of self-constitution or as rituals of religious redemption (1988, pp. 48-49). Yet are these metaphysical and imagined voices merely representing aspects of a self-analytical, self-mediating, reflecting subject through internally constructed acousmatic entities appearing to have their own agencies?

To address these topics, Brian Kane draws attention to cultural theorists and philosophers Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar and Jacques Derrida. For example, Derrida proposed that the metaphysics of presence is grounded in an experience of the voice as a transparent medium enabling a sense of self-presence, a speaking subject, able to listen to ourselves speaking ((Slavoj Žižek, 2005, p. 194) 2014, p. 207). On the other hand, Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar suggest that the inner voice is not identifiable as "my own". It is thus not one's own, deep within the self. The inner acousmatic voice is, therefore, neither exactly my voice nor that of another, but rather someone addressing me without being attached to me or any particular source. In songmaking, these inner voices can serve as inspirations and methods of writing.

Additionally, lyrics can also be structured as an inner dialogue. For instance, the narrator can address oneself as opposed to an identified figure or specific "you". Songs can likewise not be framed from "singer to listener" (West, 2022, p. 72). In these contexts, the source of the inner voice is a given, and the acousmatic question is already answered. Exploring the acousmatic inner voice thus brings forth multiple roles, such as the experiencer, dreamer, interpreter, thinker, observer and negotiator. The way we engage with the inner voice can therefore serve both as guides and frameworks for writing, and as a means of revealing who we are becoming, as well as who we experience or need ourselves to be. This engagement can also reveal what we believe in, our uncertainties, and what we know.

2.1.3 Reflective listening

Richard Schechner argues that while a painting or writing takes place in the physical object, such as on the canvas and/or printed words, any form of

performance is not situated *in* art but located *between* – as action, interaction and relation (2013, p. 30). This suggests that although what is fixed in words or on canvas is unchangeable in itself, it only exists as an experience between the work and the action connected to it. In other words, a musician performing, and a listener listening, are both in a performative state. Listening and performing are thus performative acts, something we do. Schechner argues that art then can be performative or analysed "as" a performance. Listening to the voice of words – lyrics and poems – would then imply a form of acousmatic listening experienced, evoking images, sounds, thoughts and feelings as a sensed, embodied experience. This raises discussions of whether to treat music as mainly an *embodied* experience, related to the phenomenological theories suggested by Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, among others, or in accordance with traditional Western theories promoting notions of *absolute* and *transcendent* qualities in music (Eckstein, 2010, p. 76). These are qualities that seem to mainly rely on the reflecting mind's capacity for abstract thought and subsequently interpretation as mainly a mental activity.

In his keynote on reflective listening, Lasse Thoresen explains Kant's definition of enlightenment as the liberation of the individual mind from the dictatorship of the authorities (2019). In other words, our ability to separate individually formed thoughts from the thoughts of others allows us to develop personal values and beliefs in contrast with authorities and other people, and thus, the musical genius' ability to create a unique, original piece. This way of thinking also furthered performed music as a merge between the musical and the existential, which meant that musicians should be able to synthesise the *precise* and *correct* with the *truthful* and *genuine* emerging from within. Combined with a distance allowing the individual to perceive music as it evolves temporarily, these aspects were understood as the essence of musical quality both in music creation and performance.

These views then resonate with music performance on several levels. For example, there is the focus on demands of correctness from musicians – what the composer and musician do – in reference to established norms. Similarly, the standard of correctness also sets the rules for research on music that is required to follow academic norms. However, original thought like original music is often not adaptable to established norms. Neither are specific criteria, conventions and

discursive notions placed on the acquired training as a musician, which vary among styles, genres and performance practices within popular music. In some genres, even the "non-skilled musician" is the "correct" sound. Nevertheless, the demands for originality and authenticity in both performance and songwriting are apparent among listeners, critics and scholars. As Moore writes, to exhibit originality or to be valued as original is firstly understood as someone offering something different in their performance style or songs rather than copying or deriving material from another source. Secondly, it can be read as someone practising their music and songmaking in keeping with the origins and traditions within the practice (2012, p. 259). The question is then where perceptions of authenticity are grounded. Moreover, it raises discussions of how and by whom values are ascribed to a performer or performance. Is it all in the hands of the audience?

2.1.4 Centripetal and centrifugal potential in lyrics

An audience is actively engaging with the music, their social environment and their inner dialogue and imagination. When we attend a performance of our favourite band at a festival with friends, we move and experience sensations of joy and excitement. We sing along and hear our voices blend in with the crowd. We feel connected to the music, the band and each other. Hence, there seems to be a connection between the layers in music and layers of awareness in people. Something in us resonates with something in the song, indicating a potential for meaning in music, which is actualised in experience (Varkøy & Westby, 2014, p. 174). Even after a concert, each time we think about or hear the songs we reconnect with the experience with all our senses and emotions. Memories and feelings are evoked, but still, the experience in the now is different. It thus echoes Gary Ansdell's emphasis on the importance of not separating psychological, existential and social aspects of musical experiences or solely focusing on the formal properties of music (2013, pp. 8-9). Instead, he suggests that we should consider the "ecological principle", which is one of his four proposed key 'principles' concerning the people-music-health link – or "total ecology" of musical experiences[4]. This, therefore, acknowledge the dynamic interaction between

[4] Continuity principle: "…there is an essential continuity between music in everyday life, and music in 'specialist life'"; Paramusical principle: "music does very little (if anything) on its own"; and the Salutogenic principle: "music does not usually treat illness; it helps health" Ansdell, G. (2013). Foreword:

individuals, their personal preferences and the broader social and cultural contexts in which music is employed.

The experience itself, however, leads us to look for a cause that tends to go beyond the song itself in search for explanations and deeper understanding. For Gadamer, "the cognitive dimension of aesthetic experience", like all linguistic experience, is both *centrifugal* and *centripetal*. When encountering a work of art, we experience a centrifugal impact that challenges our recognition. As Nicholas Davey explains, "It awakens us to the hermeneutical sublime, to what lies beyond but nevertheless shapes our normal range of understanding" (2016). These moments also initiate a centripetal return, drawing our attention inward, towards our responses and the material. William Echard extends this theory in explaining rock as an overarching category that exerts a unifying influence on its various subgenres or subtraditions. This centripetal force serves to emphasise the common elements within rock. However, there is also a centrifugal force at play, which directs attention to the diverse voices and expressions within rock music, and to "the centrifugal potential implicit in every utterance" (2018, p. 183). This furthermore relates to how our understanding of lyrics involves comparisons with marks of genres and the lyricist's body of work, to the possible interpretations, and the ways they affect us and come to mean in experience.

The way lyrical meaning is perceived and connected to what it means to the individual is then based on the experience of engaging with the body, senses and the imaginative and reflecting mind. The centripetal and centrifugal forces and our desire for stability and identity make us look for evidence that stabilises our understanding and, at the same time, clues that point to uniqueness and genius. As fans, we need to believe in idols and their songs. Some even stay faithful to their idols through legal battles and accusations, even when it means going against the rest of society. This also challenges the researcher's relationships with songs and artists, which were formed at a young age. As Moore writes, in connection with his attempt to investigate himself when he became a fan of Leonard Cohen's song "Hallelujah", "It has become common currency among musicologists of popular music to worry about maintaining the twin positions of fan and scholar" (2018, p.

To Music's Health. In L. O. Bonde, E. Ruud, M. S. Skånland, & G. Trondalen (Eds.), *Musical Life Stories: Narratives on Health Musicking* (5 ed., Vol. 6, pp. 3-12). Norges musikkhøgskole. .

86). Again, this illustrates how emotions, intent and lyrical meaning are informed by factors outside the lyrical content, which have led many to determine them as less important for constructing song meaning. Instead, they focus on the voices communicating the song, whether they are external or internal.

2.1.5 The voice of lyrics

When reading a familiar song lyric introduced to us as music, readers not only hear the melody but also the singer's voice singing the melody in their inner ear. The obvious example might be to imagine the lyrics to the Beatles' song "Yesterday" with a different melody, which might seem rather impossible. To further Frith's earlier mentioned point, then, although lyrics can be read as written text and remembered as words, they are not an end in itself but "come to life" in the performance. This occurs either by an external voice or through our inner voice or an artist's voice singing in our imagination. However, even if we are reading unfamiliar lyrics, there is still a voice "singing off the page" for our inner ear. Pointing to differences and similarities between reading and hearing words, Don Idhe explains how one can hear "a singing of words in writing", supporting how a familiar author's voice is present in their writing (2007, p. xx). Thus, challenging the theory of printed text as something that only refers to itself rather than at the same time to the author. Dealing with lyrics, then, raises questions of whether there are traces of intent and meaning embedded in lyrics or if meaning merely emerges from the encounter between music, lyrics, the singer and their voice. The question then is if and when the lyricist's authorial voice or lyricist deserves our attention.

Roland Barthes's ' famous concept, "The Death of the Author" (1977, pp. 142-148), promoted the idea that the author is no longer actively present in their own work, returning only as a "guest"(Allsup, 2013, p. 65). However, while Barthes and postmodern theory rejected notions of authorial agency in the text, discourses within popular music insist on a heard presence of the songmaker, a genre or an original performance in the song, particularly in covered songs. As articulated by Simon Frith, "What is the relationship between the 'voice' we hear in a song and the author or composer of that song? Between the voice and the singer?" (1996, p. 185).

To investigate how the voices in lyrics and poems manifest themselves, I will begin by examining the distinctions and commonalities between poems and lyrics and what authorial intent can be in the context of songs.

2.1.6 What lyrics ask us to do

One traditional approach to lyric interpretation is to analyse them in two modes of representation: the *intended* form – the written lyrics – and the *realised* form – the performed song. In songmaking, words and melody may also be approached separately. Bob Dylan notes that he hears words as music when he writes (Gleason, 1965). Lyrics, as they appear on a screen, written by someone else, can equally create a sense of words "singing off the page" and fall into the form of a song, like in the case of the creative relationship between Elton John and Bernie Taupin. Paul Zollo writes, "Famously, Bernie would toil hard on lyrics, spending days or weeks if necessary to perfect them. Elton would then take the finished lyrics, and usually, in little more than 15 minutes, compose the perfect melody" (2021). This thus exhibits how words and lyrics *afford* musical activity.

The term "affordance" is a concept invented by James Gibson, who uses it as a reference to how perceptual information affords an action depending on the relationship between its property and the human receiver's perception. He explains the term as follows:

> The verb *to afford* is found in the dictionary, but the noun *affordance* is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does (1979, p. 127).

For Eric Clarke, however, the consequence of encountering a physical object is not only a matter of physical matters and perceptual qualities but just as much "the social nature of affordance for human beings" (2005, p. 38). He points to how the physical properties of a violin affords burning but still is regarded as a musical object due to its social function. In other words, what we see and hear triggers the mind to search for clues in the environment and in our memories that can help provide necessary information and clarification. The matter at hand in a musical context is then if voices, lyrics and songs have affordances and, in that sense, "ask" something of us, why do we respond differently? Moreover, as Einarsson &

Ziemke asks, “if affordances are opportunities for behaviour, why do we not act on every possibility?”(2017, p. 3)

The simple answer to these questions is that we are different. We have different bodies, know different things and live different lives. The listener’s embodied experience of music and culture is then a vital part of our perception (2005, pp. 2, 5; Einarsson & Ziemke, 2017). We thus have both individual and collective responses to songs. Our engagement is therefore not predetermined by the song as a constant. However, it can be explained as an ongoing interaction between an organism and its environment or an ecological relationship between the perceiver and its environment. The objects and phenomena we encounter thus afford actions that are influenced and limited by the environment and our perception and ability to categorise it. By including interpretation as *action* afforded by music, one thus challenges the concept of “passive listening” and the ideology of autonomy where music is presented or socially constructed as having no function in itself (Clarke, 2005, p. 205). Music, lyrics and voices, then afford movement, and thus action – song and dance – and equally the *act* of interpretation.

The line between what music does to and with us, or what people do when encountering music, informs our understanding and experience, and may therefore be challenging or not possible to determine. However, separating the two modes of representation – lyrics as written text and song – can allow for analysis of how they interact and relate. It also prepares grounds for describing lyrical structures as well as vocal characteristics in objective terms and understanding the song's somatic meaning. Much in the same way as we discuss interpretations of paintings and sculptures, everyone may agree on materials and use of colour but still have contradicting opinions on what the painting symbolises and the artist’s intended purpose behind their art. Colours and forms as the raw materials of a painting can as such be compared to how tones and rhythms make up music as they share the characteristic of producing an immediate sensory impact (Kittang, 2001). In this sense, the immediate sensed effect of lyrics as a written text is “ink on paper” or letters on a screen, and thus a tactile and visual form that is not directly connected to their sounding representation.

2.1.7 The shape and form of lyrics and poems

Lyrics tend to have a regular shape and structure consisting of repetitive patterns and pace, which separate them from the more irregular structures of poetry. If it is written in a regular structure, indicating song lyrics, the general expectation is that these words are accompanied by music holding sound and rhythm. In contrast, the more irregular structures have another sensed effect. The shape and form of lyrics then afford musical structures, while a poem might not. As Susanne Langer points out, "A poem that has perfect form, in which everything is said and nothing merely adumbrated, a work completely developed and closed, does not readily lend itself to composition. It will not give up its literary form" (1953, p. 154). To address her claim, I will explore how the first lines of my favourite poems by Alejandra Pizarnik, For Janis Joplin (fragment) (2016), work in me.

> To sing sweet and die soon
> No:
> To bark.
> Like Rousseau's sleeping gypsy:
> This is how you sing, plus the lessons in terror
> You have to cry until you break
> In order to make or utter a small song

The title of this poem creates an image of Janis Joplin in my mind, and I can hear the sound of her voice in my inner ear. The following line evokes a feeling of sadness. I can feel a heavy sensation in my chest, and all I think of is her early death. As Pizarnik writes, Joplin's singing was never sweet. It was more of a bark and a scream. The fourth line sets up an image of Rousseau's painting in my mind. I sense the darkness lit up by the moon while the lion sniffs at the shoulder of the sleeping gipsy. I know Joplin's music, her life and her death. A few years later, Alejandra Pizarnik died in her early thirties after struggling with mental illness. I am also familiar with Rousseau's painting. It is all imprinted in my mind and impossible to ignore as I am reading the words, fully aware that the poem would probably not carry the same meaning for others. To me, this poem is an example of a self-contained, autonomous form. The thought of linking it to music feels distant. I imagine that it would not only interrupt its shape and pace but disturb the sound and images formed in my imagination, like watching a film after you've

read the book. The poem affords time and space for contemplation, while the song is immediate. I can hold a book with poems in my hand and study its contents in silence. The song is disruptive. It appears and disappears. If I pause, it is gone.

While the objective phenomena of lyrics as written text or performed song are two separate objects that can be studied independently through listening and reading, it is *how* we as individuals and together engage with lyrics and voices that matter. Moreover, it is how words and music equally afford musical behaviour, interpretation and creative activity in a particular context that informs our understanding. How we approach lyrics through listening and reading is however also how they are represented as form, and thus written, which points to the fourth approach, *songmaking/writing* and the intentions, craft and task of the lyricist.

2.2 Writing lyrics – "The task" of a poet

Throughout history, thinkers have had conflicting thoughts on poetry as well as the task of a poet and their place in society. While Plato claimed that poetry is not a holder of truth but, like rhetoric, evokes emotions that keep us from seeing "the real truth", Aristotle valued poetry and the poetic forms. He defined poetry as a "better thing than history" because the poet relates to "the general truth" and not "specific events", and a poem should portray what is possible and not actual things (Yanal, 1982, p. 499). Aristotle believed that the task of the poet was to use their emotional experiences as guides into the human condition and general truths. While historians and scientist could base their findings on reason and data, the artistic mind should investigate how humans dealt with the products of reasoning and happenings, their everyday lives, relationships, dreams and feelings. A poet's work could thus help people understand their experiences by enabling them to see themselves as experiencing individuals and, at the same time, as witnesses. By doing so, poetry could bridge the gap between *objectivism* and *subjectivism* and create a better understanding of human life and the world.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, objectivism has dominated how Western culture structures society and education. While *objectivism* relies on science, precision and impartiality, insight, imagination, art and emotions represent the *subjective* perspective and, in this sense, a "higher" truth (1980, p. 189). How people navigate between the two will then differ from person to person and between cultures and aspects of life. While Plato's view is that truth is absolute,

and art is a product of illusion, this way of thinking has placed art in opposition to reason; Aristotle believed that the task of a poet was to use their emotional experiences as guides into the human condition and general truths. Historians and scientists based their findings on reason and data. At the same time, the artistic mind should investigate how humans deal with the products of reasoning and happenings, their everyday lives, relationships, dreams, and feelings.

Extending Aristotle's notions of the task of the poet to songmaking would mean that lyricists should concern themselves with the questions people ask when experiencing life and the world as embodied beings. According to Susanne Langer – a philosopher known for her work in aesthetics and philosophy of mind – poesis, or poetic art, rather than literature in the narrow sense, creates an illusion of life that is a virtual life and not a virtual past (1953, p. 268). For her, literature projects images of life as virtual memories and the sound and meaning of the words that formulate them create "the illusion of life" and drama leaves the poetic illusion open to human response to the past as an act "directed toward the future" (1953, p. 306).

This means that readers and audiences know that it is not real life that is documented or performed on stage but composed stories that can bring new light to our experiences. It might be exactly this awareness of an illusion being played out on stage, in novels and lyrics, that enables us to endure recalling painful memories and complex emotions. The safety of knowing that it is not the same events repeating themselves allows for new insight[5]. Because we need our sufferings, questions and conflicts to be resolved or at least have some sort of meaning. History has shown that no matter how advanced and civilised we consider ourselves to be, natural disasters like famine and epidemics leave us

[5] It is important to note that these situations are not experiences as "safe" for everyone. Revisiting past events as audience, performers and songmakers, also opens the possibility of evoking traumas and pain in ways that rather than being healing, can enforce embodied experiences and memories. For example, the study, "Music, Rhythm and Trauma: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis of Research Literature" by McFerran et al. found that beliefs about music's effects on the brain sometimes overshadowed therapeutic principles like responsiveness and compassion. The findings therefore suggest that a spectrum of approaches is necessary so that one can attend to the individual in context and determine what music-based approach would meet their needs and desires at a given moment in time.

feeling as helpless in modern as in ancient times. Such as in the aftermath of a disaster or during a pandemic when people were concerned with the same topics despite different circumstances, cultural and geographical belonging, and historical time. Aristotle's claim that historians should deal with historical events and poets with general truths then seems to be as relevant today as before. Regardless of how we perceive the quality of lyrics, share the same ideologies or beliefs or have similar life experiences, lyrics and voices still evoke the same universal questions about us, our lives and the world that have been asked and answered in various ways for centuries.

2.2.1 The connection between the creator and their work

Engaging with lyrics and voices in the context of this thesis involves so much more than what categories, markets and industries indicate. It also involves accepting the craft involved in performing and writing. Additionally, it requires acknowledgement that songmakers within popular music are as motivated by an inner drive and passion for their work and their audiences as listeners are curious, competent and drawn to a wide variety of songs. Nevertheless, they, like others, need to pay their bills. They thus rely on their music to generate income. It is therefore important to remember that discussions around whether composers and songmakers are commercially motivated have persisted for centuries. For example, around 1850, Richard Wagner famously claimed that the music performed in Parisian opera houses at the time was highly commercial, while his music had a political message that, according to him, had the power to liberate society.

Assumptions like these are, however, easier to project onto popular music today due to the ways its online accessibility offers a more immediate response to its commercial value and, from a different angle, its relevance to people in general. Of course, a vast amount of music production does cater to the commercial market. However, it is helpful to acknowledge the distinctions between the *conditions* of the popular music industry and the *appeal* of pop songs, and their *quality* and the songmakers' *motivations* behind creating and producing them. Hence, if less credibility and value are automatically placed on commercially successful songs or music created on demand, it could potentially lead to a devaluation of a vast number of musical works that have appealed to a large number of people. I thus suggest that assessments based on the connections between how artists' products

are meticulously packaged and designed, and the credibility of them and their work, tend to reduce popular music into mere consumption and neglects the significance of songs as genuine works of art affecting people's lives. Moreover, these attitudes downplay the artistic and personal motivations for artists like Taylor Swift and Sufjan Stevens, each with their unique approaches, who manage to connect with large audiences by drawing on their personal experiences in their music. This mirrors the timeless human inclination to be drawn to art and storytelling throughout history, long before the emergence of commercial markets.

Poetic descriptions of human experience have thus had a significant impact on how people see and deal with the challenges and dreariness of life. Although, when reading any form of writing while fully aware of the absence of the writer in their text, one nevertheless seems to search for traces of their personal lives in the work, as well as look for explanations and answers outside the work. Furthermore, fans tend to trust them to tell "the truth" about themselves. Listeners and readers who are interested in lyrics make this connection even when fully aware that any dialogue between them and the author or artist is the product of their imagination. They know that any dialogue is grounded in the recipient's imagination and thus on their impression of who they are – based on their work or public persona – and not with the real person. The vital question to ask is *why* fans, scholars and music critics tend to focus on the relationship between the song or performance and its creator, the artist and the "real" person. Furthermore, the challenge is how to approach this connection in song analysis.

According to Stan Hawkins, "the quagmire of musicological excavation" encompasses a category constituting the materiality of sounding substance. Music scholars are, however, drawn to details that are neither artistically intentional nor which point to their craft or artistic genius, but rather "says that the artist was there" (2001, pp. 1,2). How then do we draw lines between artists, their craft, task and work?

Despite numerous attempts to deromanticise and demystify the artist, perceptions of songs as acts of communication and self-expression draw attention to the artist as an identifiable and historical figure. Fans want to know the artist. The audience searches beyond the song for a believable story. The artists then become a mix between a figure of imagination, half-icon and half-human, who feel the same

things and struggle the same way as we do. And we think we get to know them through their songs and search for a stable authorial persona upon which to rely. William Echard writes: “The centrifugal potential of multivocality can be damaging to the impression of a strong authorial persona, which requires that everything point back to itself centripetally” (2018, p. 182). However, even when the artists deviate from anticipated patterns, followers may, in retrospect, re-evaluate their idols’ actions and either reject them or find reasons for including their actions in keeping with the already stabilised persona. If we acknowledge that listeners’ perceptions are informed by numerous factors, and therefore are likely to change, the same aspects relate to songmakers and artists. Interpretation and songmaking are like any novel and imaginative process connected to bodily and sensory experiences. The relationship between the things we do with our words and what we say with our actions thus informs the ways we are understood and experience ourselves. It shows us that the words we use can be transformative and perform actions.

2.2.2 Performativity and how to do – or not to do – things

In his lecture series “How to do things with words” (1962), John L. Austin introduced the term “performative” to explain that words are not merely statements but can also perform actions. He used this term to distinguish between constative and performative utterances, a differentiation that, depending on non-linguistic conditions, shows how speech itself can be performative and have transformative power (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). In other words, “performative” implies that words can perform actions, not just make statements. Jacques Derrida challenged Austin's definition of the performative, pointing out that it relies on a distinction between serious and non-serious speech acts, which reintroduces the idea of authorial intention that Austin had rejected. He argued that the ability to quote and cite speech acts is crucial for the performative's success. As Brackett notes: “…if a performative speech act could not be recognised as such on stage, it could not be effective in a nontheatrical setting. Derrida thus claims that such citationality or iterability is a necessary condition for all communication” (2016b, p. 12). Performative utterances, as speech acts that are self-referential and constitute reality, then succeed or fail depending on institutional and social conditions. However, as Fischer-Lichte argues, this definition of performativity is not merely connected to speech acts but can also refer to physical action (2008, pp. 24-29),

for instance, in performances by artists like Marina Abramović and Yoko Ono. Both artists perform self-referential acts constituting reality in ways that transform themselves and their audience through experimental, embodied and discursive statements challenging concepts concerning female and vocal behaviour and the borders between the private and the public. In some of her pieces, Abramović has been injured by herself or the audience to the extent that people have feared for her life, raising the question of whether it is possible to measure whether the work was a success or a failure.

According to Fischer-Lichte, Butler and Austin referred to "practises of everyday life" as ritualised, public performances rather than aesthetic processes (2008, p. 28). She argues that artistic performances such as Abramović's "Lips of Thomas", where the spectators are "suspended between the norms and rules of art and everyday life, between aesthetic and ethical imperatives", call for an added aesthetic theory of performance that can shed new light on the relationship between performativity and performance[6]. This would be not as manifestations of unscripted social conventions but of emerging as self in the experience of being and acting. This then offers a perspective on how becoming is a process of choice and action and not just as manifestations of unscripted social conventions but as emerging in the experience of being and acting. Performativity, then, is connected to both activity and speech, which implies that the words we use are not merely statements but can also perform actions. To return to the earlier point, analysing lyrics poses the question of how to read them either as written text existing independently of its author or as "authored" lyrics where the lyricist's intention and meaning are embedded in the text itself. Moreover, it asks if lyrical meaning is inscribed in the work itself or primarily determined by social discourse and the inner discourse of the interpreter.

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[6] On October 24, 1975, Yugoslavian artist Marina Abramović presented her performance Lips of Thomas, at the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck. On the platform for media art, LIMA, there is a 2012 version of a video installation "Thomas Lips". The website provides a description of the performance including how Abramović referred to "various Christian themes and rituals of repentance"…"whipping herself until she eventually lies down on a cross made out of ice blocks". https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/catalogue/art/marina-abramovic/lips-of-thomas-1975-2005/9370

2.2.3 Recognising the artist's voice

A common perception then seems to be that the *artistic* voice's creativity – representing the author/creator of the work – is traceable in art and that this voice should be recognised as part of the work itself. Of course, here, there is a difference between the singer's voice and the vocal dramaturgy as a personal presence, which is impossible to ignore in a song. It is nevertheless worth investigating the ways "the artist" informs our engagement with their art. Any kind of music analysis is a complex task, sometimes forcing the analyst to choose between perspectives instead of combining them. However, much could be gained by focusing on the relationship between them. To grasp the song's overall intersubjective meaning, we study it much in the same way we read a written text, not only through its *perceivable existence* but also through its *potential existence* (A. Kittang., 2001, p. 12). In other words, our personal experience of the song can only be formed by a sensing *and* understanding of consciousness. We get to know ourselves the artwork and get a sense of the artist. But can we recognise the artist's voice in their work?

A piece of art is generally viewed as a representation of the artist's relationship with themselves and the world. Many fortunate enough to have encountered art by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch have been encouraged to observe how his work draws one's attention beyond the image portrayed on the canvas. The paint strokes evoke a sensation of the hand holding the brush, creating straight, curved and distorted lines in bold colours and even orange skies about to burst into flames and darkness. His state of mind is traced in the strokes, connecting them energetically to his intentions. Our desire, then, is to not only see what he sees but feel what he feels, connecting us through a shared or different experience of being in this world. Spectators and critics discuss the process of creating and how the experience of being in this world manifests itself in what is considered an authentic, honest statement. The art is not enough. People want to know who the artist is, and if they can't figure it out, stories are made based on their own imagination. If these projections turn out to be false, they can disrupt the perception, making them dismiss the artist and/or their work. If an authorial persona produces music or behaves in a surprising manner, preconceived expectations are challenged in a way that can either make us discard it – and sometimes the artist – or, in retrospect, explain the new concept or information as part of the existing persona. This is exemplified in the case of Bob Dylan, who has

explored new ways of expressing himself and presenting his music, thus continuously upsetting critics and fans. He changed the narrative voice in his lyrics from critiques of society – topical songwriting – to personal stories and confessional songwriting. This shift made some critics redefine and defend his new songs as poetry, while others rejected the new style of writing. Christa Ann Bentley describes how strains of the folk revival accused Dylan of "losing contact with the people" and selling out for fame, and focused this fault on new songs that "[seemed] to be all inner-directed, now, inner-probing, self-conscious – maybe even a little maudlin" (2019, p. 419). On the other hand, critics legitimised Dylan's work as poetry, and elevated his music as art, naming him "the poet laureate of young America". Following Bob Dylan's new status, Leonard Cohen became a main figure in the singer-songwriter movement.

The singer-songwriter movement started with the introduction of a poetic form of lyrics in pop during the late 60s by a circle of artists in the US and Canada. Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen and Neil Young were among the new voices entering the music industry who were described by critics as composers, lyricists and singer-poets because of their confessional lyrics, which were perceived as a more vulnerable form of songs and thus categorised as *high art* (Bentley, 2019, p. 416). In turn, poetic lyrics then became regarded as a higher form of art. Their creator was subsequently seen as the source of the song's message, which resulted in a search for clues and traces of content in their storytelling and appearance. Lyrics needed to no longer merely "serve" the music or showcase a brilliant voice but express political views emerging in the 60s. Hence, they challenged traditional concepts of family, education and morality in a way that defined a group of young people promoting lifestyles based on the principle of personal freedom (Papayanis, 2010). In the early 70s, the discourse surrounding these artists resulted in an impression of them as songmakers who were not motivated by commercial gain, even though some were positioned at the *centre* of the musical industry. According to Jarman-Ivens, these notions of songs as art might also have contributed to value judgements found in popular discourse and academic literature as to which songs and songmakers are considered worthy as objects of study. Additionally, it might have led scholars to privilege genres of music that promoted political views and "opposition to high culture", and consequently, the devalued genres of music as standardised and too conformist (2011, pp. 60, 62). Is there, or should there be, a

connection between the author or lyricist's voice and the reader and listener's interpretation?

2.2.4 Authorial Voice

Paul Ricoeur states that interpretation implies that a text may be construed differently, thus causing the objective meaning to differ from the authorial intent. He therefore claims that as the meaning of a text goes beyond the author's personal intention, it may be interpreted in multiple ways. Solving the issue of correct understanding can therefore not be achieved by merely referring to the author's supposed intention (2016, p. 172). Ricoeur's thoughts, however, beg the question of whether it is possible to have an objective meaning of a text and thus read it thoroughly "freed" from the author.

According to the "Death of the Author" theory, first proposed by French literary critic Roland Barthes in 1967, the author's intentions and biography are not essential to interpreting a text. Barthes believed that a text's meaning is constructed through the reader's interpretation and that the author's intended meaning is irrelevant. Other philosophers and literary critics who have contributed to this theory include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Wolfgang Iser. Foucault argued that the author is a product of society and culture and that their influence on the text is unavoidable. Derrida believed that meaning is not fixed or stable, and the author's intention is only one possible interpretation. On the other hand, Iser focused on the reader's role in constructing meaning. He argued that readers bring their own experiences and biases to a text, which shapes their interpretation. This means a text can be read in multiple ways, depending on the reader's perspective.

Overall, these theories suggest that the meaning of a text is not fixed or predetermined by the author but is instead shaped by various factors, including the reader's interpretation, cultural context and literary conventions. "The Death of the Author" theory has thus had a significant impact on literary and cultural studies, challenging the traditional view of the author as the sole source of meaning in a text. If sounding music is "the work", the author can arguably never be removed from the text, as their sounding presence constitutes "the work". Still, the song's future career – the various constructions of meaning formed by recipients – is outside the author's influence. Listeners get a sense of knowing the artist and

songmaker. By forming an independent relationship with their music, we hear them talking to us. As such, there are similarities between the way we relate to songmakers and what Roland Barthes suggests, namely that the interpretation of a work is often attributed to the person who created it, as if it always represents the voice of a single individual, and thus the author, communicating with us through "the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction" (1977, p. 143). Extending Barthes's thoughts to lyrics and voices, then, how can we address and explain the relationship between the voice singing, the voice of the lyrics and the authorial voice?

Through people's tendency to connect what is said to the individual saying it, the authorial voice can be perceived as the voice of the lyrics. The performer is then an interpreter, a narrator and, subsequently, a gateway into the song. However, as Simon Frith writes, how we read lyrics is not entirely random (1996, p. 184). The lyricist composes and structures the text and "sets up the situation". The grammatical person – the perspective taken in the story as a first, second, third or omniscient person – is also an essential feature of the voice in narration. Moreover, Abbott writes, "In some cases when the voice is strong or interesting enough, it may be that the narrator herself, rather than the story, is the centre of interest" (2008, p. 66). In short, while reading creates a relationship between the authorial voice, the voice of the lyrics, and the reader, listening to a song or oral poems sets up an added relationship with the performer that can support, comment, contradict and sometimes overshadow the authorial or the voice of the lyrics. Lyrics thus consist basically of the voice of the performer actualising the material, in other words, the storyteller or lyrical narrator.

Since the authorial voice, perceived as a virtual presence in the material, can be "hidden" in the performed song, listeners may respond to the performing voice as the "author" of the performance and their relationship with the lyrical narrator. The performativity of the timbre and "grain" of the voice adds colour to the story, thus becoming a significant element in constructing meaning. Listeners' tendency to personify musical sound as characters, actions and gestures, and musical elements embedded with emotions, as the "drama of the music" provides added "voices" and layers of information (Negus, 2012, p. 372). For them, the sounding voice tends to be privileged and depending on the lyrics' lyrical form and narrative voice, the singer can add meaning by injecting their intentions. As Lawrence Kramer

outlines, “In everyday parlance, music is interpreted by being performed. The performer’s actions both reproduce the music and produce an understanding of it” (2011, p. 1). Kramer’s statement then highlights the tension between treating a vocal performance as interpretation or creation. In this sense, interpretation is a construction of *another* meaning, while creation is a process of invention. Covers then draw attention to this distinction, with some cover versions viewed as “new” originals in assessments of “good or bad” interpretations. The artist is then equally submitted to assessments on whether the lyrics are “delivered” in a trustworthy, genuine and unique manner.

When examining song lyrics, the voice of the writer or the performer who originally sang the song can be sensed as a virtual presence. For example, when reading lyrics written by Bob Dylan, people familiar with his songs can internally “hear” his distinctive way of singing and the timbre of his voice. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that people who know his songs are informed by his body of work to understand the meaning of the lyrics. To explore this topic further, I will draw attention to Michel Foucault's concept of the *author function* and its relevance to popular songs.

2.2.5 Author function

Whether song lyrics can be understood as literature is a discussion that was brought to life again after the awarding of The Nobel Prize in Literature to Bob Dylan in 2016. The question is, can a songmaker be eligible for a literary prize? Some argued that since lyrics are artfully arranged words often published in print intended for reading, such as many of Bob Dylan’s lyrics, songmakers can be recognised as literary authors (Kania, 2020, pp. 1-2). Rather than literature, songs can be treated as literary works that can be appreciated independently or as musical *or* literary works. Another position is to interpret the songs as a whole as literature. The Swedish Academy used this last interpretation and most commentators, endorsing the importance of the musical setting and performance in Bob Dylan’s songs. In rewarding him with The Nobel Prize for his lyrics, they recognised his work as a performing singer and songmaker as inseparable parts. The question is how wide these parameters are stretched within the realm of his artistic persona in establishing the grounds for acknowledging his authorial voice. Are they

considering his personality and beliefs, as well as the impact he has had over decades?

As noted, Roland Barthes pronounced "The Death of the Author" by arguing that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (1977, p. 142). He furthermore suggested that the notion of a named author controlling the narrative is a modern European concept emerging from the Middle Ages due to "the prestige of the individual". This then led the act of writing to be understood as the voice of its creator speaking through the work. In other words, people tend to look to the author for explanation or true meaning. The individual behind the work is then identified with the work itself. In this sense, any successful piece of work subsequently constitutes its creator as a successful *person,* while a failed piece of work is also the failure of its creator. The connection between the author and their work is also discussed in depth by Michel Foucault in "What is an Author" (1969). Here, Foucault claims that research into authenticity and attribution has led to the individualisation of the author as the person preceding the text and, therefore, connected to it. The author is not only structuring and composing the text but also appearing as a figure, leaving traces of intent and personal biography in their work.

While all texts are written by "someone", Foucault points to the different attitudes taken towards a text written by authors in the way questions are asked and answers expected in search of the intended meaning. According to him, this can lead us astray, looking for a correct interpretation and forgetting that the author's intended meaning resides *within* the text. Hence, any criticism is only the construction of new meaning and not a description of the old (1969, p. 300).

In clarifying Foucault's position, it is necessary to distinguish how one treats a text written by a *writer* and an *author*. The writer is the actual person existing outside the text, while the author is "whoever can be understood to have produced a particular text as we interpret it" (Nehamas, 1986, p. 686). Contrary to a *written* text, such as a letter or a contract, the *authored* text can be interpreted. The author is then not just referring to an individual existing outside the text, but a character manifested, though not depicted or described, in the text. Nehamas notes, "They (authors) are postulated to account for the text's features and produced through an interaction between critic and text. Their nature guides interpretation, and

interpretation determines their nature" (1986, p. 686). For Foucault, the proper name of an author is then not just referring to a specific person but also to an "author as a function of discourse" (1969, p. 314). For instance, when we hear the name of the Norwegian author and playwright Henrik Ibsen, we connect it to him as a historical figure and, at the same time, to his body of work. According to Foucault, "the proper name (and the author's name as well) has other than indicative functions. It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description" (1969, p. 303). For him, the problem of what goes into the author's "body of work" is both theoretical and practical. To include everything the author has written would bring on a continuous set of decisions about what should be included. This would then involve decisions based on who we *want* or *need* the author to be.

2.2.6 Author function in song analysis

In extending Foucault's notion of *author function* to song analysis and interpretation, it is interesting to explore the ways songs are understood through the songmaker and performer's body of work. One example is Burns, Lafrance and Hawley's close reading of PJ Harvey's song "The Letter" (2008), where they introduce PJ Harvey as "an active profile in alternative rock…renowned for her development of resistant social and innovative sonic strategies" (2008, p. 6). They furthermore note that she is "celebrated for her gritty, raw, bluesy, disturbingly emotional tracks". This introduction not only clarifies their position regarding PJ Harvey but also implies that their forthcoming analysis is informed by Harvey's body of work. This is in keeping with Foucault's theory of how readings of the works of a known author are differently understood than works by an "unknown" writer. It also demonstrates how listeners – including analysts and fans – need to believe in the artist relies upon the survival of the "authorial persona" (Echard, 2018). In other words, what is read into their work is connected to what the artist intends to express.

To understand how an author figure or persona is discursively constructed, it is helpful to draw on William Echard's contribution to discussions revolving around the concept of authorship within the framework of dialogical intertextuality. He explains how the "author emerges from the textual universe as much as he or she dissolves into it", underlining that both processes are at play in most cases (2018,

p. 183). Echard's focus then is on the *authorial persona* rather than the *authorial function*, emphasising that the author's existence as a persona is secured because the elements of authorial identity are distributed within the text. As a result, these components are conserved in the continuous process of textual creation, "preserved in the ongoing activity of textuality". The authorial persona – author – is thus "guaranteed survival" (2018, p. 183).

Adding to the mentioned readings, Foucault also widens the use of the concept by saying that an author can occupy a "transdiscursive" position as an author of a theory, tradition, and genre (1969, p. 309). However, as Brackett notes, authorship and creativity are portrayed as less of an isolated act of individual inspiration that breaks away from tradition or taps into divine inspiration (2016b, p. 14). Instead, they are viewed as engaging in an ongoing conversation with fellow participants in a specific artistic domain. According to Brackett, artists, whether consciously or unconsciously, consider the possibilities and limitations of the genre or genres they operate within. This awareness informs their choices as they adjust to the audiences they intend to reach. In this sense, genres are not a product of an autonomous author, which means that the concept of authorial intent must be understood also as a result of collective creativity, and not merely ascribed to the individual lyricist, songmaker or artist.

However, genres and styles are still referred to as bearers of tradition and, thus, markers of authenticity. In the context of popular music, this implies that an artist or musical style can hold a position as *author figure*, and thus "*author",* of a genre or category without being its authorial source or originator.

To extend these thoughts further, then, one could say that the author function can be ascribed to the artist or songmaker as they appear as a virtual or actual person. Their musical authorship is distributed in their music and performances, intertextually and discursively contributing to constructions of authorial identity, authorial persona and body of work. Moreover, this raises the issues explored by Foucault and Echard. Furthermore, as Stan Hawkins underscores, there is a consensus among scholars that when we first encounter a song, especially in the realm of rock artists, our attention is often drawn to the singer's subjectivity (2020, p. 240). To gain a comprehensive understanding of rock artists' roles as performers, individuals and storytellers, it becomes imperative to delve into the

multifaceted aspects that define them in these capacities. The process of creative growth and even the transformation of styles, alter egos, and personas are crucial aspects of an artist's personal experience –"lived subjectivity" – and their ability to survive in the music industry (2020, p. 240). Through this exploration, we can fathom their significance as performers and individuals in that the role of a performer intersects with that of the songmaker, lyricist or composer. Moreover, it is evident that the songs they make influence our perceptions of them.

Without engaging in an in-depth examination of theories about subjectivity or becoming as subjects, I will reflect on some writings that address these matters and explore the tension between the process of becoming a voice through musical engagement and notions of songs as instruments for communication and self-expression.

2.2.7 Becoming a voice in songmaking

In "The Clamor of Voices"(2019a), Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin discuss the concept of the voice as a unique means of expression, implying subjectivity. Their chapter references Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), which they consider to have significantly impacted humanistic projects. However, it also highlights a paradox: while the voice plays a fundamental role in conveying meaning, it remains separate from the meaning it helps create. Often functioning as a disappearing mediator rather than a direct contributor to sense-making, reinforcing or identity. They write, "The voice may be linked to subjectivity, we're told, but it is reliably neither sense-making nor sense-reinforcing (though, unreliably, it can be both). Nor is it ever identical to either one" (2019a, p. 4). To explore how these aspects emerge in songmaking, I will start with my experience and, thus, how lyrics and voices are linked to my sense of becoming a voice.

In my practice as a songmaker, I usually find the words and melody, harmonies and structure emerging as form within the creative process. It, therefore, involves a simultaneous act of listening and singing, engaging body and mind in ways that often bypass the awareness of a conscious mind. All these elements mutually constitute and influence one another, serving as driving and framing components of the creative process. I, however, sense a difference in awareness between moving as voice – where I am attentive as voice – and moving with the voice –

where I pay attention to my voice as it moves. This is similar to the distinctions between "Me" and "I" within the context of consciousness, where "Me" pertains to the self as an object of experience, and "I" represents the self as a subject of experience (Woźniak, 2018, p. 1). However, I am the one experiencing the two layers of attention, which indicates that both experiences are subjective. It nevertheless points to how we can shift between the two in a creative process and likewise in reflection and writing, including narrating self and life experiences into lyrics and songs.

In her article elaborating on "Subjectivity in the Music of Björk", Nicola Dibben notes how the discourse surrounding Björk's work "encourages listeners to receive the music as if it offers up Björk's own subjectivity and, in particular, her affective life" (2007, p. 173). Dibben highlights that many lyrics in "Vespertin" centre around themes of domestic life, love and romantic relationships. They thus invite autobiographical interpretations and position Björk within a cultural context where the musical works of female songmakers are often understood as forms of "confession and autobiography". Dibben writes,

> Björk has done much to encourage such interpretations by attributing autobiographical meanings to her music, declaring that 'if there is a place to reveal yourself, then it's in the songs' (cited in Deevoy 1994) (2007, p. 173).

During my search for the source of this quote, I located a transcription of an interview with Björk, PJ Harvey and Tori Amos in *Q Magazine* dated 29 May 1994 (1994)[7]. In this transcript, a similar statement by Björk is given in response to a question regarding whether the artists ever felt that they occasionally revealed too much of themselves. Björk replies:

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[7] The article "Hips, Lips, Tits, Power': The Controversial Misogynistic Cover That Angered Tori Amos, PJ Harvey, and Björk" from May 26, 2023, discusses the significance of an interview featuring these three artists. Despite having collectively released just five albums at the time, their commonality lay in their unique and non-commercial musical styles. The moment captured on a memorable cover photographed by John Stoddart would later be viewed as a historic milestone. It represented a pivotal moment for women artists, challenging the male-dominated grunge era and serving as an inspiration for future generations of female musicians.
https://english.elpais.com/culture/2023-05-26/hips-lips-tits-power-the-controversial-misogynistic-cover-that-angered-tori-amos-pj-harvey-and-bjork.html

> I think if there is a place to reveal yourself, then it's in the songs. It's not like you decide, OK, I'm going to reveal myself. It's just a certain need. You're just focusing on the things you're talking about and not necessarily yourself. I compare what I do to sleeping because most journalists seem to get that pretty easily. There's no way you can decide what position you're going to be in when you wake up in the morning. You just roll around the bed, and it happens. And if you don't do it for a week, you go mad.

Björk here refers to how revealing oneself through songs is not necessarily a conscious, premeditated decision or a primary motivation for performing or writing. It can feel more like an urge, a voice and words emerging from within in the process. Furthermore, the themes discussed in songs does not always revolve around the artist's personal life. Instead, revealing oneself in songs can occur in the moment. It is thus not a matter of what the subject *is* but rather how subjectivity exists, or subject-ness manifests itself.

Becoming as a subject can therefore be approached as a dynamic process, emerging from what we *do* rather than merely projections of a stable essence representing who we "really" are. It thus implies that subjectivity is an inherent and essential part of conscious experience. Whenever we are conscious of something, that experience has a subjective aspect. In a sense, this implies that all songs, lyrics or vocal performances refer to a personal and unique perspective or point of view that each individual has when they are conscious or aware of something. We thus make ourselves known as a voice in singing and performing. This process is akin to the experience of a listener who can find elements of themselves within the songs as they unfold. Consequently, music can "offer a subject" for both the artist and the listener to identify with, which for the listener can be distinct from that of the artist and songmaker (Dibben, 2007, p. 173). Our body, voice and mind are not merely vessels for emotions, consciousness, and creativity, but where our experiences, expressions and readings of the world and ourselves are grounded. Nor is songmaking practice and popular song form merely useful means for self-identification and self-expression, communication or expressions of temperament and content. Musical engagement can instead prepare situations for the artistic voice and the "I" of the songmaker to emerge from the practice itself.

The way the artist's subjectivity, staged persona and real life are discursively understood and read into their material contributes to the development of an author persona or figure. Despite the collaborative nature of songmaking and the music industry's celebrity system, it is the performed song that reaches the audience drawing their attention to the artist as the one representing a band or a group's collective subjectivity. Searching for signs that can indicate whether a performance or a persona is self-representative and genuine, however, implies notions of stable and fixed identities and interpretations.

2.3 Reflective thoughts on lyrics

The overall objective of this chapter has been to explore the various ways in which lyrical meaning is constructed, experienced and articulated, with a particular focus on the two first approaches in "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices" *listening* and *reading*. It has explored differences and similarities in *listening* to vocally performed lyrics and *reading* lyrics as printed text, thus illustrating how meaning emerges in interpretation, not as truth claims but as temporary understandings of the lyrics as text and, therefore, an event experienced in the now.

To illustrate how the two approaches are connected, it has demonstrated how reading involves creative acts of interpretation activating all aspects of consciousness and our being. It has, therefore, drawn attention to the nuances of both external and internal listening experiences. As Ricoeur emphasises, "To read is, on any hypothesis, to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text" (2016, p. 120). Thus, it has aimed to show how this open-ended nature of lyrics allows for multiple readings and interpretations.

It has drawn parallels and distinctions between lyrics and poetry, explored words as conveyors of meaning and sound and addressed aspects related to lyrical narratives. Additionally, it has exposed how experiences with performing, songmaking and writing lyrics provide insights into how an author's intentions can be considered significant or unimportant. Hence, although we experience our engagement with lyrics as an event, contrary to living speech, lyrics are structured, so approaching lyrics through reading exhibits identifiable and repeatable

meanings inscribed in the material. Therefore, it has also explored how theories on authorial voice, author persona, figure and function relate to lyrics.

In summary, this chapter has illustrated that how we encounter lyrics informs how they are understood and the stories we tell. Thus, it has drawn attention to how reading experiences activate a virtual voice- sometimes, it is the sound of an artist's voice and other times, it is an inner acousmatic voice and, therefore, the reader. This chapter has consequently drawn the connection between lyrics and representations of voice and thus concentrated on the relationship between the first two approaches. Moreover, it has addressed topics and provided examples related to the third and fourth approaches: *performing* and *writing* lyrics.

How, then, does our relationship with voice inform the way we recognise its coded meanings? Moreover, how does it inform lyrical meaning?

In extending these thoughts further and answering the questions raised, the following chapter will address how voices and lyrics are not always about communication or associated with performing but can be an activity in which people engage without any purpose besides the activity itself.

3 Voices

To delve into matters concerning people's relationship with voice- how we use it, perceive it and describe it- this chapter will mainly concentrate on the *first* and *third* approaches in "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices": *listening* and *singing/performing*.

It will focus external listening, and on phenomenological, embodied, self-listening and auto listening experiences of listening to one's own voice and the voices of others. Furthermore, it will explore how to identify coded meanings in the voice and connect its timbre to a specific person or category of people. It will address notions of "The Grain of the Voice", introduced by Roland Barthes, the distinctions between "voice quality" and "vocal timbre", and how we perceive and differentiate them.

This chapter will also illustrate how even though not all are vocal performers, we all have a relationship with voice, pointing to why the *third* approach encompasses both singing and performing. It will moreover employ the third approach to investigate connections and differences between them. In addition, it will delve into the performativity of the voice and how we recognise vocal behaviour through our embodied experiences with voice.

Additionally, it will draw on the *fourth* approach to consider if and how the voice is used and discursively understood as a means of communication and self-expression and a transmitter of identities, emotions, intent and temperament.

3.1 The voice – in the body – and the sounding voice

People have an individually formed physical vocal apparatus situated in and masked by the body, producing sound recognised as voice. Its sound catches the listener's immediate attention. The physical structure of this apparatus is exclusive to each of us, making every voice sound unique. However, the challenge most are faced with is in describing how a particular voice sounds and what exactly it is that makes it unique, and thus the aesthetics and traits of the somatic voice. As Paul Zumthor notes, "The paradox of the voice is that it constitutes an event in the world of sounds the same way the body is an event in the tactile world, but that it still manages to escape our comprehension" (1984, p. 75). The mediation and

materiality of the voice, its performative and structural functions have thus been studied in-depth within many academic disciplines. Jody Kreiman explains how the human voice has been an object of study in Sanskrit Hindu text from 200 B.C.E., as well as in thirteenth-century writings. In Western thinking, theories on voice quality as underlying characteristics of the speaker and as aspects of rhetoric, and thus the relationship between voice and speech, were established at the time of Aristotle (2019, p. 493). While the Romans were mainly concerned about how vocal emotion could evoke an intended response, others regarded the expression of emotion as a window into the speaker's soul (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011, p. 302). Explanations as to why most are more interested in the effects of vocalisation rather than the functioning of the voice may lie in its complexity as an instrument hidden inside the body or further because we hear it as a vehicle for language articulating sounds that carry meaning. Don Idhe notes, "the multidimensioned possibilities of dramaturgical voice… exceed the dimension of mere expression" (2007, p. 196).

The voice can, however, also sound like something else. It can mimic animals and birds and non-communicating or non-musical sounds. For example, Olivia Louvel describes the voice of Yoko Ono as "powered and projected acts as a noise device similar to the noise effect of a heavy truck passing by at 1 m, 90 dB (decibel)" (2019, p. 17). The tension between how the voice is experienced and expressed has thus existed in performance theory and practice for decades. However, although various voice studies and song analyses have given us valuable insight into how vocal performances contribute to the construction of song meaning, there is, however, little to be found on how the coded meanings of the voice inform lyrical meaning.

While the reader can hear the song playing and the voice singing as they read the lyrics, the listener sings along with the instrumental version of a familiar song. As noted, listening to a sounding voice implies another human being. It demands attention, and we use it from the moment we are born. From that moment, we begin to explore its various functions. As Fisher-Lichte suggests, "With each breath, the voice also, if not first and foremost, directed the listener's attention to its own special qualities and expressed the subject's bodily being-in-the-world to others" (2008, p. 128). It is thus one of humans' basic ways of connecting with others and the world and we use it for our various purposes. We speak our minds, whisper

secrets and sing in the shower. We use the voice to communicate our inner state, our thoughts and feelings and to sing songs as an everyday activity or profession. We chant at the football stadium, sing at a concert and hum silently along with the songs we know. We can even "hear" our inner voice singing along while listening in headphones on the way to work. The song is, therefore, always there, as form, as a piece of art offering its existence (Varkøy & Westby, 2014, p. 184). The voice can reveal the world and us in it, while lyrics offer ways to draw attention to or away from themes and subjects. In this sense, lyrics and voices draw attention to the song – to the words, music and to the vocal source. The vocal performance thus presents who is singing, what are they communicating and what it means to the listener. How then, do we recognise the coded meanings in the voice that allow us to distinguish between voices and understand what they are communicating?

To explore these topics, I will investigate Roland Barthes's concept, "The Grain of the Voice", and outline some theoretical and methodological approaches to voice.

3.1.1 Exploring "The Grain"

When we hear a *song,* we also hear *someone* singing. Due to our relationship with voice and the voice as a transmitter of words, *who* is singing is thus imperative to how we perceive the song and what it is about. Moreover, as Simon Frith points out, in music, the voice is usually treated as a leading element accompanied by an instrument, not vice versa (1996, p. 188). Therefore, mediations of the voice, its sound, melodic phrasing and movement often guide the process, while other musical sounds are surrounding and supporting features.

Vocalisation then represents an individual act unique to each person. Consequently, the voice resists simplification and cannot serve as a stable reference point. There exists no standard voice for comparison. In response to these complexities, Nina Eidsheim proposes a reconceptualisation of the traditional emphasis on signification, advocating for a greater focus on vocalisation both as an action and an object of knowledge. The methodological and theoretical implications for analysis should consequently be from "the perspective of verbs, rather than nouns" (2015, p. 3). This again makes the voice a product of the individual, produced as an embodied sound – action and gesture, making

everything that goes into the vocalisation – including breath, phrasing, timbre and quality – fit into Roland Barthes's concept of "The Grain of the Voice" (1977, pp. 179-189). Therefore, as Eidsheim asks, "What if words, music, and writing are supplements to something, but not fundamentally to signs? Add to this the idea that voice reflects experience, for example, in its "grain…" (2015, p. 128). So, if we accept the "grain" of the voice as an embodied sound emerging in and from the singer engaged in music and vocalisation, how does it come to be and make itself known?

The concept is often explained as the indescribable, unique voice feature, allowing us to recognise and identify one another merely by its sound. However, the challenge is that the voice is a personified musical reference due to its location in the human body and thus belonging to a tactile embodied domain. Its complexity may, therefore, have contributed to the success of Barthes's term as something "indescribable" (Rudent, 2020, p. 3). The term thus sticks in the reader's mind, which might be because most understand it as a reference to a general notion of the "graininess" of things. Hence, the varied interpretations of Barthes's metaphor may have contributed to the myths surrounding the voice as a mystery. This view is supported by musicologist, pianist and author Jonathan Dunsby, who points to how the "grain" has become "a slogan" that has figured in the discourse on Western art music and popular music. He claims that Barthes's idea of "The Grain of the Voice" is mythologised in a sense that people tend to form an intuitive understanding of the term and that any exploration into its original meaning is seemingly purely positive or as "a celebration of Barthes insight" (2009, pp. 113-114). Catherine Rudent explains this by referring to how the first English publication of "The Grain of the Voice" in 1977 was taken out of its initial "resolutely psychoanalytic context", which meant a change in contextual environment informing the meaning of the text.

The other point to consider in connection with the term is that Barthes was talking about two singers of lieder and classical music, as well as the space between language and voice as a specific part of music (2020, p. 3). Building on these interpretations of Barthes's use of the term, it seems likely that he was not describing the sound or timbre of the voice but the voice as a source for music *and* language. Hence, as philosopher and composer Rebecka Sofia Ahvenniemi writes, "the encounter between a language and voice" (2020, p. 15). She argues that due

to Barthes's description of verbal expression as theatrical and tactical, building on cultural and oratorical codes, any use of Barthes's theory to describe vocal expression of language as purely subjective and spontaneous as opposed to a communication of fixed ideas is misleading. This leads to another aspect of Barthes's explanation of how the "grain" comes to be, namely in articulating body and language.

In *Image Music Text* – a collection of translated articles – Roland Barthes suggests that "the "grain" is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs" (1977, p. 188). This implies that the "grain" is not only the timbre of the voice, but as Dunsby explains, "the very friction between music and something else, which something else is the particular language (and nowise the message)" (2009, p. 115). The "grain" of the voice then acts as the indescribable feature identifying and separating vocalisations, emerging from the friction or intersection between language and music. In his passage on the aesthetics of textual pleasure, Barthes furthermore elaborates on the term "writing aloud", which belongs to the "geno-text" and thus is not expressive but rather "an erotic mixture of timbre and language"(1973, pp. 66, 67). In other words, the "grain" of the voice.

Here, Barthes derives from Julia Kristeva's terms, "geno-text" and "pheno-text" as "the bio-physiological entity constrained by social coding, on the one hand, and a perceivable signifying system on the other" (Dunsby, 2009, p. 115). He further explains "writing aloud" as not phonological, as in "the clarity of messages" and "the theatre of emotions". On the contrary, it is phonetic in that it conveys "the articulation of the body, the tongue, not that of meaning, of language". Hence, "writing aloud", or vocal writing of a text, is not speech, but the sound of speech, "the anonymous body of the actor into my ear: it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss" (Barthes et al., 1973, p. 67). Kristeva's reference to language proposes discourse as the way signifying practices are generated, including non-verbal systems of signification such as music. Barthes extended this theory by distinguishing between "pheno-song" and "geno-song". "Pheno-song" is the structure of language, the representation and cultural value of the performance, and its expression and style of interpretation and communication, while "geno-song" is the materialisation of the voice and its sound signifiers (1977, p. 182). Additionally, the emergence of the "grain" includes situations involving the materialisation of non-verbal singing, e.g., scat singing, sound poetry,

humming and vocalese as forms of "musical language". The "grain" thus becomes more than timbre and quality as it situates vocalisation as a sounding presence of the human body and language rather than communication, which implies a signifier or transmitter of sound, temperament and content.

In summary, the performativity of the "grain" and timbre of the voice suggests that voice is something we *do* rather than something we *have*. The concept of "language" referred to in Barthes's text can, therefore, be read as both a verbal language of sense and reflection and a performative act. Thus, it is in "the doing" that the voice is embodied and made meaningful.

3.1.2 The voices in our lives

People listen to and use their voices daily, communicating with others and engaging in social activity. Thus, our ability to recognise voice without musical training informs lyrical meaning. So, where is this knowledge of voice grounded? When does it start?

Humans' earliest experiences with the sound of another human are the vibrations of our mother's heartbeat and muted voices as "melodic patterns of sound and silence" heard through the womb (Stevens, 2008, p. 146). We then continue to form a lifelong relationship with our voice from the moment we enter the world screaming. We learn to separate one voice from another and how to communicate verbally and non-verbally by listening to familiar voices. This way, appropriate vocal behaviour and language are learned through speech movements and emotions perceived in caregivers' voices, recorded as referential units in our minds. Hence, the knowledge we achieve through physical and affective interaction and the emotional experiences of receiving and responding with our own body and the bodies of our caregivers.

Because of the unique quality of the voice as a communication tool as well as a musical instrument, caregivers use the act of singing and speaking to communicate intentions while at the same time teaching us which type of voice is appropriate in which context. They calm us down by singing a lullaby, expressing their love and passing on knowledge. They speak to us long before we understand the meanings of words so that we can begin establishing prosodic structures of language as

babies. The first year of life is thus generally recognised as the most critical year for laying the grounds for language and mathematical thinking (Pathak & Mishra, 2017, p. 677). Most children then learn to communicate semantic content and meaning at two years old, while understanding music and prosody as expressions of emotions and meaning (Stevens, 2008, p. 147). As children mature, adults continue to modulate their voices to match the age of the particular child whose voice develops into a darker timbre, signalling the transition from childhood to adulthood through changes in voice quality and speech patterns. People also acquire the ability to imitate other sounds and voices by intuitively understanding the function of the larynx that produces those sounds. When children engage in play, taking on various roles and mimicking specific voices and body language – much like comedians and actors do on stage – this becomes part of a child's vocal socialisation.

The importance of activating the voice and communicating with others from an early age is supported by a study by Samantha Carouso-Peck and Michael H. Goldstein at Cornell University. Their research, "Linking Vocal Learning to Social Reward in the Brain" (2019), found similar responses in humans and songbirds in activities controlled by the neural song system and affected by social factors. They write, "Humans and songbirds must both achieve the complex task of learning to produce sounds which are functional for communicating with conspecifics" (2019, p. 3009). Their findings revealed several parallels in how birds learn to sing and humans learn to speak during a specific developmental period practised through immature vocalisations and a baby's babbling. They also found evidence of social feedback's influential role in developing mature forms of communication for both humans and songbirds. Vocal activity and behaviour, then, are familiar to most, which can make it easier to relate to and, as such, more complicated to investigate. Our lifelong knowledge of its many functions also informs the way we talk about voice. Terms and descriptions then do not only refer to what the voice sounds like, or what its coded meanings, but also to the imagined physical conditions necessary to produce specific vocal qualities.

People activate their voices and use them for different purposes. Although speech and singing employ similar aspects of the voice and vocal behaviour, we approach them differently. We also differentiate between living speech, the way we use the voice in play, to communicate and conversate, and holding a speech. Similarly,

singing can be approached as a performance and an artistic expression but also as a vocal activity without any intended purpose, merely something we enjoy. However, whenever we use our voices, for whatever purpose, we draw attention to the sound, and ourselves.

3.1.3 Communicating voices and how to understand them

Because the larynx is hidden in the body of a particular human, the sound of a voice draws our attention towards the vocaliser. Moreover, we listen to what they say and try to understand who they are. As Frith observes "…we assume that we can hear someone's life in their voice" (1996, p. 98). Consequently, when someone uses their voice to express words in a musical context, connections are made to everyday behaviour and "the features and problems of speech" (1996, p. 159). Just as the interpretation of spoken words depends not only on their literal meaning but also on their delivery, so too are lyrics understood based on their expression. Listeners identify and recognise the performer's voice through the words sung. To supplement this understanding, people instinctively look for additional cues like body language, gestures, facial expressions and variations in vocal tone. The voice and body are thus performative in that they communicate something beyond the words and music itself. The artist or songmaker presents voices connected to specific aspects of identity, connecting the artist's life to the listeners via music. Moreover, as Hawkins asks, "How, then, does the artist's identity become a central building block in musical comprehension?" (2001, p. 10).

For both audiences and researchers, the discursive interpretations of the artist and their biography can become key elements in deciphering the meaning of a song. Therefore, it is challenging to disentangle the role of songs as a communicative medium and its musical form. However, for musicologists, compartmentalising music into categories of styles and genres is useful for discourse and intertextual analysis between songs and performance practices that share a set of musical conventions and aesthetic qualities. Additionally, it can provide insight into structural features and creative and contextual conditions that inform our individual and shared understandings. As Susan McClary reminds us, if "socially grounded rhetorical devices" are not understood and thus considered as main contributors to the ways music creates its intersubjective effects, the medium will remain "privatised and mystified, impervious to cultural criticism" (2016a, p. 204).

The question is, if people share understandings, does that mean they come from similar backgrounds, or are there stable or transcendent qualities in music? Suppose we view interpretation as solely individually formed. In that case, it will not be possible to explain how listeners often seem to agree on several levels of interpretation that seemingly belong in the realm of subjectivism. It can thus be helpful to differentiate between *sharing* and *share in*, as noted by Keith Negus, referring to how people have the capacity to collectively understand and agree upon the meaning, and importance of various texts, objects, and customs, without sharing the same demographic characteristics or prior life experiences (2012, pp. 377, 378). This ability is fundamental to how individuals acquire language and communicate effectively.

This means that the numerous ways people engage with and understand lyrics and voices are derived from individual psychological factors, cultural and social conventions and rituals. People can, therefore, have similar understandings of songs and empathise with each other's stories, even when separated by geography, culture and historical time. These insights are essential for analysing and interpreting the meaning and significance of lyrics and voices and understanding how they "work" in experience, and the ways they affect us. However, since our everyday use of the voice is through speech as a means of communication and self-expression, it seems likely that we transfer some of the ways we understand speech to how we understand other uses of voice.

3.1.4 Communicating voices and how they affect us

People communicate through various forms of signs, not only through words but by non-verbal gestures, facial expressions, body language and a tone of voice that may indicate the opposite of what the actual words are saying. Sometimes, our vocal and physical behaviour nuances are too subtle for anyone outside our inner circle to detect. Yet, at other times, they present themselves as loud and disturbing expressions of emotion. According to Merleau-Ponty, "the words, vowels and phenomes are so many ways of 'singing' the world", and one should always consider their function of representing the emotional essence of things (2005, p. 217). He points to the connection between the expressed word, gesture and meaning and how the emotions extracted from words trigger behaviour such as

facial expressions, body language and *tone* of voice, thus connecting gesture and meaning.

One of the well-known researchers on nonverbal communication is Professor Albert Mehrabian who introduced the 7%-38%-55% rule (1972). This rule suggests that communication is composed of 7% verbal, 38% vocal (tone of voice, pitch) and 55% nonverbal (facial expressions, body language) elements. Mehrabian's research thus underscores the importance of nonverbal cues in communication, suggesting that visual cues are our primary means of perceiving communication, followed by vocal elements. It is, however, crucial to clarify that Mehrabian's 7%-38%-55% rule is often misinterpreted. It is designed specifically for understanding emotions and attitudes in particular situations, not for all types of communication.

Even though Moore extends this model to songs, suggesting that a similar breakdown could be applied to songs: 7% lyrics and 93% music (2012, p. 109), this adapted rule may not apply to acousmatic listening, where no visual or additional lyrical cues are available. In such cases, physical movements and gestures can only be inferred from vocal qualities. Additionally, listeners' perceptions are shaped by various production elements, including voice processing and musical arrangements. It is thus plausible to suggest that listeners construct mental imagery of the performance, searching the voice's timbre for emotional nuances and gestural hints.

It is also worth considering how we bring our own bodies and senses when we hear an uttering or a song. Moreover, how we activate the bodily states that are fundamental to our association, experience and understanding when we think or talk about songs (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 10). In this sense, it seems that any examination of sound thus begins with phenomenology, which according to Don Idhe is easier because of our familiarity and closeness to our own experience, which in tur, makes it more challenging (2007, p. 17). People’s relationship with the sound of a voice thus illustrates Idhe’s position on how we experience an intuitive recognition of voices and vocal timbre formed by a lifetime of using and listening to our own and other people’s voices. Intuitive perceptions of the embodied voice are then developed through peoples’ experiences as physical bodies producing voice, as vocally expressive beings and through a lifelong

relationship with voice. This allows us to imagine the effort and intent motivating and producing a vocalised sound and draw conclusions regarding the speaker's state of mind and physical appearance.

However, in our eagerness to familiarise the unfamiliar, we can get it wrong. Our need to recognise our surroundings can make us highlight or downplay certain elements. In other words, what is thought of and said to be true regarding another person is based on how these truths relate to human functioning – interactional properties – and should not be regarded as true statements of "properties of objects in themselves" (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, p. 164). Additionally, as Moore points out, some listeners have a particular interest in the content of lyrics, which makes the calculation in Mehrabian's rule not as straightforward as it would seem (2012, p. 109). Moore's answers to his questions – 'to whom are we listening?' and 'how do I make sense of what they mean?' – are therefore not found in words alone. On the contrary, for him, lyrics play a relatively minor role in voice identity processing and understanding the singers' meaning. It might, then, be interesting to reframe his statement and propose that the singer's vocal delivery is afforded by both the sound and content of the lyrics. Furthermore, we should highlight how the singer adjusts their voice and phrasing accordingly, and thereby makes lyrics crucial for both the singer and the listener. To what extent they matter and how they come to mean, therefore, varies between songs, genres and performances, and among artists and songmakers.

In short, despite the use of shared conventions, language and gestures, structure and form, the ways we understand lyrics and voices on an intrapersonal and sociocultural level are therefore never fixed. Something new is added each time we encounter the song and each time the song reaches the audience. All of this depends on the constantly changing historical conditions, context and state of mind of both performer and receiver. The singer designs their performance by building on experience from previous performances, the material and their body and inner ear. They adjust their singing based on the imagined or real-time response from an audience and sociocultural conventions. According to the philosophy of dialogism, this implies "a qualitatively different approach to understanding culture" (Bostad et al., 2014, p. 1). Its epistemological emphasis is on intersubjectivity and its dynamic approach to connecting specific utterances with a "living tradition" positions it as a dialogical concept, perceived as an emerging phenomenon that

integrates elements from both the immediate and historical social context of the performance.

Additionally, other non-musical elements also contribute to placing a song geographically within a culture or genre. For example, the name of a band or an artist and the way they dress and act are all visual and nominative aspects, including beliefs, ideology and notions of belonging and authenticity related to genres (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 72). In articulating these beliefs and behaviours, the artists and audience are linked together in a broader community or as a group, sharing both musical and ideological beliefs and preferences. The artists' gestures, posture and appearance communicate something not required by the music but by conventions associated with a genre, culture or position. Categories of music and genres should then not be approached as something pre-given and universal. Even though categories of people are associated with categories of music, these categories change, as do how we understand the language of music in relation to the world. Adding to this, advancements in sound recording and transmission technology have altered the way we connect types of music with groups of people. It also made a wider range of music available to people who previously had limited access to it. However, universal use and similar features of music like beat, tonality and voice do not mean that the same piece of music is necessarily understood in the same way across borders or historical times. Thus, bringing forth interesting questions regarding the ways and to what extent music, as an embodied, aesthetic and emotional "language", is communicated and understood. Even though some indicate that singing is comparable to speech, there are significant differences in the way we approach and use the possibilities embedded in the voice.

We not only use but also perceive singing and speaking differently, despite their similar functions and sounds. For instance, most of us can differentiate between speaking and singing in that singing utilises a larger range of tones than ordinary speech. However, this isn't always the case. Rap and death growl are some examples of music genres with melodies that have less movement but due to vocal prosody, timing, spacing and pacing of words, they are still perceived as singing. So, the question moving forward is how and if our understanding of songs is connected to how we make sense of what we hear, particularly how we recognise

vocalisations, speech and sound. To search for explanations, I will elaborate on theories related to people's relationship with vocal sounds.

3.1.5 Traces of Someone or Something in Sound

On the first page of his introduction of *Music as Heard* (1983), Thomas Clifton writes: “Music is an ordered arrangement of sounds and silences whose meaning is presentative rather than denotative”. Clifton argues further that it says nothing about the intent or identity of the composer, nor the score or the instruments. For him, they are all dispensable. He specifies:

> Music is the actualisation of the possibility of any sound, whatever, to present to some human being a meaning which he experiences with his body – that is to say, which his mind, his feelings, his sense, his will, and his metabolism (1983, p. 1).

With this definition, Clifton suggests that “music, as an end in itself”, is distinct from compositional technique and sounds as physical objects. Interpreting images and sounds is also an essential survival skill. Hearing a sound thus evokes a search for environmental clues that allow source identification, examining thoughts and memories, and oneself and one’s surroundings for information and clarification.

Erik Clarke contends that perceivers are highly structured organisms that adapt to the environment and world as “a highly structured environment subject to both forces of nature and the profound impact of human beings and their cultures” (2005, p. 17), which means that the ecological approach to perception is to consider how the properties of a physical object determine its stimulus information informing sensory domains. When an object strikes a piece of wood, it sends out a sound that specifies its properties in a way perceiving organisms resonate to, without decoding the information within the wood itself. However, Clarke argues that if ecological theory relied solely on how organisms resonate with information that specifies objects and events, perception would be explained merely as “a magical affinity between a perfectly structured environment and a miraculously endowed and adapted perceiver” (2005, p. 19). To support his claim, he underlines the importance of considering the relationship between perception and action, perception and adaption, and perception and perceptual learning.

In other words, our perceptual system is not arbitrary or magical but a result of how one tunes into, adapts to and learns from continual exposure to the environment. This depends on how the perceptual system is organised. How, then, do we recognise vocal timbre and the ‘body’ in sound?

Don Idhe suggests that any examination of sound begins with phenomenology, which is easier because of the familiarity and closeness connected to personal experience. The phenomenological approach is also more difficult for the same reasons. Idhe writes, “Potentially anyone can do a “phenomenology”. But nothing is harder than a phenomenology because the very familiarity of our experience makes it hide itself from us” (2007, p. 17). Emotions and musical behaviour can appear from out of nowhere as a response to a specific harmony as “instinct” or intuition. People thus experience sounds through and within their bodies. When they hear a voice, they not only interpret *what* they hear and *who* they are listening to but can mimic the physical behaviour that produces the quality of the sound, in addition to imagining the emotions or intentions that motivate the sound. Together, this sets up the voice as a connection between listener and speaker, which operates on multiple levels. Explaining how these connections are made is, therefore, challenging because it involves integrating insights from various fields of knowledge.

However, challenges regarding identifying and explaining how musical sounds are created by and experienced through our bodies are not limited to how we hear the voice. When identifying other musical instruments, most can and will imagine the physical action needed to make them sound the way they do based on previous experience as bodies interacting with the world. For example, can even non-drummers recognise the sound of something being hit hard or softly and the quality of the material being hit, based on their experience of hitting things (Zagorski-Thomas, 2018, pp. 274-275). How things may be approached with greater or lesser energy may also be perceived as a performative act expressing a state of mind. This is not only regarding which instrument is the source and the physical effort required to make the sound but also an imagined emotional motivation, meaning or intent. It thus suggests a connection between what we hear and how the sound is produced.

In summary, one of the sounds we are most familiar with is the voice. Drawing on Idhe's insights, to reveal and explain how we experience it within our bodies is, therefore, challenging, if not impossible, to fully describe. We can, however, explore some of its basic functions and how we recognise its many qualities.

3.1.6 Recognising voices

Voice recognition can be witnessed early when an infant turns their head towards a familiar voice. This can suggest that the ability to identify voice "timbre, pitch and melody" is encoded in a child's mind. However, exactly how it affects the developing brain is difficult to specify. Studies show how we are affected from birth by non-linguistic sounds, body and facial language, and physical touch. These impulses inform the "sensory – motor – affective matrix of our earliest experience of sensory-motoring, the world, and our nascent self" (Stevens, 2008, p. 147). Humans care for infants without understanding verbal language through a prosodic sing-song way of melodious speaking and singing called "motherese". Infants seem more interested in this specific form of maternal singing and the *prosody* of the caregiver's speech than speech itself. Here, pitch, in particular, is shown to help the infant learn about social situations and the cognitive and social distinctions between them. Through pitch cues in the caregiver's vocalised response, a child is introduced to voice behaviour and distinguishing between play and reality and ordinary or extraordinary situations. Singing, lullabies and motherese affect the child's sense of security and socialisation. Infant-directed speech is also essential for emotional, neural and linguistic development. Victoria Stevens states, "As children begin to use and understand words, intonation patterns facilitate the development and use of language itself" (2008, p. 151). In addition to helping the child to become accustomed to the "feeling of sound motion", lullabies function as a bonding process, promoting healthy parent-infant attachment and preparing the grounds for later development of language, speech, movement, music and reflection.

The human voice is therefore among the most crucial sources of sound in our surroundings (Mathias & Kriegstein, 2019, p. 176). Its timbre not only functions as a transmitter of speech but carries a wealth of information about the speaker, such as their gender, approximate age, physical stature, place of origin and current emotional state. However, even though we know what the timbre of the voice

conveys, it is challenging to find appropriate methods for identifying coded meanings of vocal timbre – how is it recognised and described – in pop songs. As a starting point, it is thus helpful to explore how the term is generally used.

3.2 Understandings of vocal timbre

Vocal or voice timbre is a concept that refers to the sound of a human voice signalising the physical structure of the larynx, personal identity and state of mind used to communicate a message, content and self-expression. Furthermore, the term explains how people can separate one auditory sensation from another even when they appear simultaneously in the same pitch and volume. Associated Professor Emely Dolan, whose research interests have been on topics related to orchestration, timbre, aesthetics and instrumentality, explains timbre as sound that should be valued as merely sound that affects us and not as a "sonic manifestation of abstract principles" (2019, p. 4). However, as highlighted by Zachary Wallmark, timbre lacks its own domain-specific vocabulary, meaning it is primarily described metaphorically (2014, pp. 1, 127).

In light of these issues, Kai Siedenburg, Charalampos Saitis and Stephen McAdams underline the importance of researchers redefining the terminology and specifying their approaches within the field of timbre research. They further clarify their approach to the term by suggesting four conceptual distinctions, which can be summed up as follows: 1) "Timbre is a perceptual attribute" located in the listener's mind and not in the audio signal or musical score. 2) "Timbre is both a quality and contributor to source identity", indicating that *s*ounds can be qualitatively dissimilar yet produced by the same source. Timbre, as a collection of auditory sensory features, can also contribute to identifying sound sources and events. 3) "Timbre functions on different scales of detail". Hence, the differences between two sound sources can be significant or subtle. 4) "Timbre is a property of fused auditory events", implying that two or more auditory events can fuse into a single auditory image and thus contribute to the same timbre (2019, p. 5). How, then, can these concepts help us understand and recognise timbre?

In his thesis "Appraising Timbre: Embodiment and Affect at the Threshold of Music and Noise" (2014, p. 8), Wallmark connects "timbral reactions and appraisals to their embodied-cognitive grounding" (2014, p. 8). He contends that

even though timbre plays a significant role in the musical experience, there are limited explanations for "how it operates" and, consequently, people's emotional reactions. He furthermore suggests that people's reactions and appraisals to vocal timbre intuitively mirror the functioning of the larynx and bodily circumstances of vocal sound production. Based on a broad interdisciplinary field of research, he then makes four "interrelated claims". The first claim is: "Timbre is a verb", which indicates that we perceive it as a sound implying bodily actions. His second claim is that "We understand many dimensions of timbre via mimetic similarities to vocal expression". Moreover, timbre perception is motoric and, therefore, perceived as something we do with our voices. The following claim posits that "Physical exertion leads to timbral anomalies that are often heard as "noisy". "Noisy timbre" then is perceived as a result of energetic actions of the vocaliser's body, leaving acoustic traces that in its high frequented or noisier forms can trigger negative "psychobiological reactions". Lastly, Wallmarks fourth claim states that "The *somatic markings* of timbre enable and constrain affective response". Hence, various somatic markers of timbre can function as triggers for psychobiological reactions (2014, p. 26). Wallmark overall approach to timbre perception thus seems to align with notions suggesting that the way the sound of a voice strikes our ears and affects us relates to how we perceive timbre. Furthermore, it supports people's ability to intuitively and consciously mirror the positions of the body, larynx, vocal tract, lips, tongue and jaw needed to produce the same sound.

Vocal timbre in music then is partly perceived as an aesthetic choice made by the performer and as a sound contributing to source identification. On the other hand, timbre perception is also *action-oriented,* and thus, something we do with our voices that causes listeners to mirror the physical functioning of the larynx needed to produce the particular sound. In other words, although people sound different from one another, they can imagine the physical effort and movement that goes into producing certain voice qualities. Listeners can sing along with a song on the radio and intuitively adjust their sounds to match the singer. This ability is advantageous in a choir, in which singers can blend in and become a part of the voice sound of the group.

In my understanding, then, timbre in a musical context is performative, emerging from the interaction between the musician's activity and the instrument's physical

properties. For instance, musicians often refer to timbre in choosing their instrument merely by sensing and listening to how it responds.

3.2.1 Performing timbre

While different musicians can use instruments like drums or a keyboard, the *timbre* resides in the relationship between the player, the instrument and the sound. Similarly, the mediation and materiality of the voice, and thus its timbre and "grain", make it an identifiable sound. However, the physicality of the voice and connection with its source implies that it cannot be used by someone else. The instrument itself – the vocal apparatus and the sounding voice – are forever linked. However, we cannot visually observe our vocal apparatus when we sing. Therefore, we must rely on our auditory perception as we sing. As a result, the singer's self-listening, as highlighted by Nina Eidsheim, plays a primary role in assessments of vocal timbre and voices. She argues that the way a person uses their voice is influenced by their own perception and how their community perceives it. Additionally, they are shaped by numerous instances in which they receive vocal corrections, either directly or indirectly, from others (2019a, pp. 12,13). However, regardless of the actual sound produced, listeners will form their own judgments based on what they hear.

As a performer and songwriter, I can relate to these suggestions in how I draw upon my experience with everyday speech and singing and training, to adjust how I choreograph my performance. For the most part, however, it feels intuitive, like an urge, motivating my lyrical and musical movements. The most effective way to describe it is that I transition between two levels of attention: being attentive and paying attention. When I am attentive, I become the voice and move as the voice. When I pay attention, I observe the sound, movement and my body as I sing. Singing thus connects my voice, words and melody into one cohesive movement; in that moment, I am the experience – I am the song. Alphonso Lingis describes this shift between paying attention and being attentive by referring to how setting a rhythm, a deliberate act at first, soon shifts into a pulse continuing on its own. He writes, "The purposive attention fades out, leaving an unfocused sensibility that enjoys the vibrancy of the rhythm of hammering in the radiance of the skies and the freshness of the breeze" (2007, p. 8). The oscillation between being attentive and paying attention and between the reflective and pre-reflective state of

consciousness becomes a dialogic movement between experiencing and reflecting. During the creative process, individuals thus rely on information and stimuli that are closely linked to sensory experiences, including the appearance, sound and texture of musical instruments (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 10). For many songmakers, this is essential to allow for the flux and flow of ideas, movement, words and sound emerging from their bodies and the musical material.

This thus relates to the relationship between the creative process of interpretation and experiencing a performance linking the song, the singer and the audience together (Zumthor & Engelhardt, 1984, p. 75). Hence, as Paul Zumthor observes, the vocalised sound cannot become an end in itself because it arises from the contact between the people present at the performance. Although Zumthor is most likely referring to a live performance in front of an audience, I would argue that listeners can have similar experiences when listening to recordings. This is so even when the singer is unknown or not visible, as with acousmatic listening. which is arguably one of the most common ways of listening to music in everyday life. Moreover, as Philip Auslander comments, the main way people consume popular music is in a recorded form. Regardless of its ontological status, it thus represents a phenomenological experience of a performance (2004, p. 5). Additionally, only relying on auditory information gained through listening can open up other sensations and imaginations, and moreover, diminish the distance between singer and listener. It can therefore make us more attentive to the timbre of the voice, which is the main feature that allows us to differentiate one voice from another.

The coded meanings embedded in the sound not only help us identify a person or group of people but also their temperament. It is thus a significant marker of personal and artistic identity in vocally performed songs. However, it is challenging to analyse and describe.

3.2.2 Interpreting vocal timbre

Vocal timbre can be approached as a performative and aesthetic musical choice and through embodied recognition of the physical behaviour needed to produce the sound. The information perceived as embedded in the vocal timbre then enables us to identify singers' intentions, emotions and states of mind. Further, this informs how lyrical meaning is derived from a vocal performance, connecting

listeners to the performer and the singer to the song. Hence, it connects the singer with the song's meaning in the same way one associates the message with the messenger. Why, then, is it essential to convey the impact of popular vocals and how can we articulate the quality of a voice's timbre, explaining its significance?

In addressing questions related to the analysis of vocal timbre, I have gained valuable insights from Kate Heidemann's article, "A System for Describing Vocal Timbre in Popular Song" (2016). She suggests that analysts' traditional avoidance of delving deeply into timbre may be attributed to the unclear link between the acoustic and physical characteristics of timbre and how listeners perceive it. Instead, analysts have often opted to examine more quantifiable musical elements, such as pitch structures and rhythm. However, with the increasing diversity of timbral qualities across all music genres, avoiding this aspect of analysis is no longer viable, especially in popular music, where timbre is a prominent tool for experimentation and distinguishing between artists and styles. Timbre, particularly vocal timbre, thus presents an intriguing yet perplexing challenge for analysis – it is an essential facet of the musical experience that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, it proves as elusive to fully comprehend as it is to explain. Heidemann notes,

> The acoustic components of timbre typically cannot be characterised according to a single unidimensional scale of sound frequency, amplitude, or duration, although listener perceptions of timbre are impacted by all these elements of sound (2016, p. 3)

Assessing the influence of vocal timbre then always involves making comparisons; however, it is crucial to remember that no universally consistent, standard human voice exists. Therefore, as this thesis argues, our relationship with voice is included in these comparisons.

Another author addressing the challenges inherent to defining vocal "qualities" and "timbre" is Victoria Malawey, who argues against perceptual studies, claiming that any attempt to explain a singing voice verbally may even distort the listener's memory (2020, p. 98). Her position is that these difficulties stem from a lack of language, which should be addressed and countered by a system that could include the perceived "gestalt" of a vocal sound. As Wallmark reminds us, metaphors for timbre are not arbitrary but reflect "deep, embodied and fundamentally transformative characteristics of sonic experience" (2014, p. 126). This suggests

that the verbal concepts and suggestive words used to label an experience have the power to change the memory of what was experienced. In this sense, the different ways of approaching voice suggest that people encounter voice either as an object, what the voice is – its sonic markers, acoustic properties and physical structure of the vocal apparatus – or by experiencing what the voice does. Thus, it affects us and demonstrates how traces of a human are heard embedded in the sound.

Moreover, the way we conceptualise timbre and explain its effects in a musical context exhibits how songs can be perceived as a shared meaningful experience and simultaneously as a unique listening experience where each person adds their own meaning to the overall understanding. This is why one person's description of the event and interpretation will differ from another's. The obvious challenge of communicating a personal encounter with voice then require reproducing a psychological and neurological process verbally in a way that makes sense to others. Even dealing with "basic qualities", like opera or falsetto, to fully describe aesthetic features or the singer's "heard" emotional presence, one turns to adjectives like dark/bright, big/small or rich/plain, also indicating value. Additionally, singers alter their timbre according to the texture, mood or aesthetic quality they want to convey. For instance, a mental imagery of brightness or a colour can make the singer adjust their voice to a timbre reflecting that image. Similarly, a word associated with specific colours or images can afford specific vocal activity. For example, metaphors like "a starry night" can add brightness to the vocal timbre while "a deep ocean" can inform a darker or fuller voice quality. The way we sense textures also impacts vocal sounds. For example, the word *cool* will afford different temperament and quality in the voice than *tool*, while *soft*, *warm* and *love* will be communicated differently than *hard*, *cold* and *hate*.

In summary, the sonic markers of the voice, formed by physical structures and the singer's aesthetic choices of voice quality and effects, create a unique timbre and style that allows us to separate one singer from the other, and to understand their style, what they want to communicate and what they mean. How, then, do we encounter the voice as an *acousmatic sound* with no recognisable or visible source?

3.2.3 Acousmatic voices and the vocal sound source

In his book *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (2014), Brian Kane argues that the moment humans encounter sound as a material, vibrational force, it creates an immediate somatic and affective impact that bypasses listeners' cognitive categories and forms of representation (2014, p. 225). According to Kane, the term "Acousmatic" is derived from one of Pythagoras' followers describing various mythemes of the Pythagorean school and the Pythagorean veil, or the separation of visual and auditory information, for pedagogical purposes. Pythagoras employed the veil as a device for attentive listening during lectures in the dark and in silence. In placing himself behind the veil, he aimed to develop techniques for concentrated listening that ensured no visual distraction. Later, the adjective "acousmatique", coined by the French writer and poet Jérôme Peignot in 1955, was found to have a non-Pythagorean origin. Here, the term means "the distance that separates sounds from their origin", which relates to visual elements identifying the sound source (2014, p. 251). If it is a human voice sound, an *acousmatic voice*, we thus try to identify the vocaliser. As Ahvenniemi notes, "A voice evokes specific expectations that an instrument does not" (2020, p. 13). Hence, even when someone sings without words or mimics the sound and phrasing of an instrument, we usually hear it as a person singing. Our embodied competence in voice recognition then enables us to process various information about the relationship between the speaker and the listener and allows us to perceive features of the voice that help us differentiate between speakers (Mathias & Kriegstein, 2019, pp. 176-177). These abilities therefore inform our answer to the acousmatic question, which according to Nina Eidsheim, is foundational when a vocal source is hard or impossible to identify (2019b, pp. 9-12).

Mladen Dolar explains the acousmatic voice as one that cannot be identified or placed. It is thus in search of its origin and body. However, even when it seems to find a physical source, there is a disconnect, and the voice doesn't fully align with the body it's associated with (2006, pp. 60,61). Therefore, we use our relationship between our knowledge of the workings of the voice and voice recognition, to decode meanings in the voice to identify a person or a category of people. This ability not only enables us to identify an external voice sound but also informs the way we identify acousmatic internal voices emerging in a reading and writing

experience. Thus, when meaning is assigned to an expression and creates images of unknown sound sources, the voice user then relies on this competence. Additionally, while the voice can appear disembodied in its sonic form, it inherently carries traces of the body, as it cannot be produced without it. When a voice sounds musical or set in a musical context, and it sounds like a human, it is therefore quickly identified as such. The vast amount of information transmitted through its timbre enables the listener to recognise the speaker's identity, intent and temperament, and construct an understanding of the spoken message. However, even if the voice appears to originate from another human source or category of people – due to its characteristics indicating elements like bodily size, gender and age – our perception is not infallible. We sometimes get it wrong. Nevertheless, we tend to get it right.

The acousmatic experience of sound, then, isolates hearing from seeing, guiding the listener's focus exclusively towards the sound itself. When a voice's origin is concealed, only the listener exists within the sonic realm; no other presence occupies "the room". Acousmatic listening, therefore, stands in contrast to a "natural" or direct form of listening, where the source of sound is visible or physically present. However, the voice or the vocal apparatus is always hidden *inside* the human body and thus *veiled* or *masked* by a human body. The apparatus producing the sound can thus never be unmasked. Brian Kane writes, "As such, the voice can never be unveiled; it is, pardon the pun, structurally un-a-veil-able" (2014, p. 212). The inherent connection between sound and its source, as described by Kane through the terms "phoné" and "topos", and its consequent link to a specific human being, suggests that, according to the Pythagorean theory, our curiosity naturally gravitates towards the origin of vocal sound. In the case of a human voice and not an AI-generated voice sound, this is arguably a real person. It thus illustrates how the sound of the acousmatic voice indicates that a body produces it. Nevertheless, it is unique in that even if its timbre confirms it as a human voice; it has specific markers of a particular person or a category of people.

Building on the notion that there is "no unified or stable voice", Nina Eidsheim distinguishes between what a voice *is* and *what* we identify into three "interrelated correctives" (2019b, p. 9). Her first point describes how voice is collective, as opposed to singular, composed of bodily and acoustic conditions and personal style derived from vocal upbringing and training. The second suggestion reflects on

voice as cultural, as opposed to innate, and as such understood as a product of shared vocal practice and a manifestation of a specific culture rather than a singular preference. Eidsheim's third claim is that the voice's source is not the singer but its listener. For her, the voice is not merely created within the vocaliser but in the listener, which includes both external listeners and the singer's self-listening. Hence, the listener is so influential and dominant that when examining the assessment and definition of vocal timbre and voices, Eidsheim suggests it is more beneficial to approach the process from the listener's perspective. Thus, in the listening process, we recognise and project assumptions about "the nature of the voice" (2019b, pp. 9-12).

The "nature" of the voice, in the context of Eidsheim's text, describes how vocal timbre brings forth not only assessments of value based on cultural and social conventions but also the assumed identity and personality of the vocaliser. Hence, despite the voice being a producer of musical aesthetics, sound and style, we tend to treat it as a means of communication and self-expression. This notion is transferred to the pop voice, often perceived as a site for expressing intent, content and constructing identity. Determining exactly what we hear as specific in someone else's voice is nevertheless challenging. However, although these detectable differences between and within voices are complex and can affect us differently, several scholars, voice specialists and researchers have developed terms that can function interdisciplinary.

In the next section, I will briefly explain some of these terms and how they relate to the sounding voice, starting with approaches to "vocal timbre" and "voice quality".

3.2.4 "Vocal timbre" and "voice quality"

The most common terms used to describe characteristics in the voice that enable us to identify a specific person or genre are *voice quality* and *vocal timbre*. These terms are, however, frequently used in an overlapping or interchangeable way to define some of the same features. In this passage, I will address some descriptions of the terms and propose a solution for how they can be used separately.

Two people can produce similar but not the exact same sounds, which probably makes the voice an instrument with more identifiable features than other instruments, as it is inseparably connected to a particular person. While lyrics are separated from the lyricist, the singer's voice is part of the song – the artwork – itself and thus the text. Through their timbre and mediation, they can, as such, underline or contradict first, second or third-person perspectives in the lyrics. They can employ various voice qualities and effects like breath or constriction to mimic others or create their signature sound. This is particularly noticeable in animated films and musical theatre when the same actor can take on several roles in the same drama. However, even if some actors manage to produce almost unrecognisable voices, the timbre of the voice still has unique markers of a specific person, which allows us – for the most part – to identify the source. These features that enable us to distinguish between voices do, however, tend to be "invisible to analysis"(Wallmark, 2014, p. 23). As Nina Eidsheim points out, vocal timbre describes source identity, the vocaliser's state of mind, musical genre, age and diagnostically, regarding vocal and respiratory health. In short, Eidsheim concludes that timbre is traditionally seen as everything besides the duration and pitch that can be used to make "truth claims about voice and the person emitting the vocal sound" (2019b, pp. 5, 10). She also claims that although timbre is often described by analogy using terms of colour that can imply racialised descriptions, the term can also describe variations in the perceived vocal imprint in reference to form, intervals and variations in sound connected to the German term "klangfarbe", or tone-colouring.

Jody Kreiman and Diana Sidtis open their introduction to *Foundation of Voice Studies* by arguing that the reason why one should care about "voice quality" is that it is "one of the primary means by which speakers project their identity" (2011, p. 1). Their definition of voice quality resembles Wallmark's notion of timbre as "somatically marked with different bodily meanings and affective implications" (2014, p. 26). These claims furthermore align with Eidsheim's statement, suggesting that "the relationship between timbre and the construction of identity may be understood more accurately through notions of performativity" (2009, p. 2). In other words, some aspects of the voice are uniquely connected to a particular individual.

In contrast, other features can be achieved by positioning the larynx and the vocal tract regardless of range or pitch. It can thus be helpful to label these features differently. Drawing on the Estill Voice Modell (Steinhauser, 2008), I suggest that *voice quality* can be used to describe aesthetic and genre and performance-specific features, e.g., opera, twang, falsetto, sob, belting and speech. Hence, tone colouring or timbre variations can be produced throughout the pitch range. *Vocal timbre* then can be applied as a description of vocal sound emerging from the relationship between vocal quality, the physical conditions and anatomy of the person producing the voice, and the performativity of voice; moreover, it is in keeping with the notions mentioned above regarding projections of identity and meaning. Singers can, as such, employ a variety of vocal qualities within the same song and performance as aesthetic and musical aspects of timbre, which is in itself is individually, physically *and* performatively determined.

One of the vocal sounds frequently referred to in song analysis is falsetto.
In the following passage, I will briefly summarise how it is described and used.

3.2.5 Falsetto as timbre, register and quality

Male high-singing traditions are represented in many traditions, from African-derived oral to European-derived concert music, where the classical singing notions are falsetto and countertenor (Jones, 2019, p. 39). It might then be helpful to note that one usually distinguishes between the *falsetto range,* a high male pitch, and the *falsetto quality* within most forms of voice methods and studies. The *term f*alsetto is, however, widely used as a general description of when the male higher vocal register overlaps the female range. It is referred to as a technique, a quality and a function, although most experience it and hear it as a timbre that sounds differently from the "natural" voice (Eidsheim, 2019b, p. 107). Studies also suggest that voice identity processing for familiar individuals is more likely to fail if someone uses falsetto than other recognisable variations of familiar voice qualities (Lavan, 2019, p. 2241). The falsetto quality also has various connotations. For instance, in acting, men often use the falsetto to impersonate women. Hence, the associations to this high-pitched, somewhat rigid sound are characterised as "female", while the low register tones represent masculinity, virility and manliness (Steinhauser, 2008, p. 39).

The term and physical structures employed in producing falsetto are explained differently between disciplines such as voice science and musicology, pop singers and classical singers, as well as in the music press and media. This might be because falsetto can be referred to as both a specific *pitch range* and a *quality.* While some think of falsetto as the vocal sound associated with jazz, blues, gospel, rock or pop singers performing in a high register, the falsetto quality resembles the flute's tone, produced by stiff vocal folds, involving only the thinned outer layers. At the same time, the rest remain relatively still (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011, p. 62). Therefore, male and female singers can produce a falsetto quality, but related to female voices, the sound is generally referred to as “head voice”. The physical condition of the larynx performing a falsetto quality favours the top register for a loud sound, while it will weaken and soften in the mid and low register. It is also generally performed with no vibrato and perceived as a transparent and less emotional expression.

The high-pitched, intimate and smooth vocal sound, often “sweetened” with a light vibrato, is a different quality that is more typical of soul and pop vocal sounds. It thus involves other positioning in the larynx. Although sounding in the same high register, it appears to be smoother and more dynamic than the breathy flute-like sound of falsetto. Adding a fuller voice to sing or speak more loudly will change the vocal sound into a different quality, such as *speech, mix* or *chest voice*. For example, a countertenor or singer in a hard-rock band screaming at the top of their voice in a high register can use the falsetto on specific notes and phrases and alternate with other voice qualities. Qualities can additionally be used for functional reasons to project sound acoustically or to create illusions of physical spacing in a recording and thus construct an imagined proximity between the singer and the listener. For instance, a low speaking, whispering quality will give the impression of closeness instead of a belted sound.

The way singers employ voice qualities like falsetto then can become “recognisable vocal signatures” of specific genres, performance traditions and artists, as shown in Stan Hawkins and Broch Ålvik’s close reading of A-ha’s hit song “Take on Me” (2019, p. 83). Their study exhibits how Morten Harket’s vocal compulsion, in addition to being a principal device for exhibiting emotions, marks out A-ha’s sonic *signature.* However, while analysing vocal performance, it is possible to identify elements of vocal sound closely associated with vocal timbre

and voice qualities; analysis of how we perceive vocal performances involves recognising elements not included in either category. These elements include language-related aspects such as recognising phonemes, how words are articulated or the presence of accents, which are essential for a comprehensive analysis of vocal performance (Heidemann, 2016, p. 3). I will therefore elaborate on one of the features that, in addition to vocal timbre, is associated with vocal signature, namely, vocal prosody.

3.2.6 Vocal prosody

One way a singer's signature is identified, thus allowing us to separate one vocal performer from another, is through vocal prosody. In speech, "prosody" is connected to systematic features within each language, "thought to be rule-governed and distinct from other structural levels of linguistic analysis" (Palmer & Hutchins, 2006, p. 3). Classical studies of linguistic prosody have concentrated on poetry and characterised it as examining the stress and phonetic characteristics of syllables and words that impact the measurement of rhythm and meter. "Musical prosody" is how the performer adds variation beyond what the composer determines. This mediation or manipulation is similar to speech as it is used for "certain expressive and coordinating functions" and thus to communicate emotion and clarify structures indicated in the musical score and by the performer's interpretation (Palmer & Hutchins, 2006, pp. 2, 3). The emotion-specific effect of the cognitive processing of speech then causes listeners to respond differently according to how the tone of voice matches the affective meaning of a spoken word (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011, p. 303). In other words, the mediation and materiality of a voice can exaggerate, contradict or diminish the content of an uttering.

Victoria Malawey aligns with linguists in her definition of prosody as "the pacing and flow of delivery", which not only determines specific markers of musical genres but also identifies artistic individuality (2020, p. 6) In her chapter on prosody (2020, pp. 69-93), she proposes a systematic approach highlighting five elements of vocal prosody, which, according to her, tend to be overlooked in vocal performance analysis. These elements are: 1) *Phrasing*, which encompasses inter-phrase connectivity (the pauses or spaces between phrases) and intra-phrase connectivity (the connectivity within a phrase); 2) *Metric Placement*, involving distinctive metric displacements categorised into three structural levels: Inter-beat

displacement, intra-beat displacement and micro-level displacement; 3) *Motility*, which reveals the singer's vocal capacity, technique and the ease and fluidity of their singing; 4) *Embellishments*, covering melismas, pitch bends and timbral variations; and 5) *Consonal Articulation*, relating to percussive and rhythmic effects tied to style, genre and technology.

Malawey also draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's literary categories, specifically "social speech types" and "individual voices". She argues that although pop recordings generally display less diversity than Bakhtin's two voices, they can still be used to identify markers of musical style by separating genre-specific voice style markers (akin to Bakhtin's "social speech types") and artist-specific style markers (akin to Bakhtin's "individual voices") (2020, p. 89). For instance, it can distinguish between performers and genres and how artists, while developing a unique style, are informed by other performers and performance traditions. These distinctions then can be achieved through, for instance, identifying metrically non-regular versus regular phrasing or metrical flexibility, as Malawey indicates by noting how Woody Guthrie's phrasing influenced Bob Dylan's singing style (2020, p. 91). They can also be implied by voice qualities and effects- including breathiness, vibrato and vocal fry- and the timbre of the voice. For example, while the connection between speech and unembellished speech-like vocal performance can signify an untrained voice, it may also convey artistic expressions as honest and genuine (2020, p. 14). As such, Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan's speech-like delivery not only connotes expressivity in favour of an emotionally marked singing style but, as Malawey notes, contributes to reinforcing their identity as authentic artists. "Speech-like" singing, as opposed to speech quality, indicates a communicative approach similar to the way people engage in a conversation. Because the sound of a voice generally draws our attention to a person and to what they are saying, the speech-singing style tends to draw our attention to the message of the lyrics, contrary to an elaborate vocal performance, which might be perceived as a musical feature rather than verbal communication.

Nevertheless, lyrics and voices encompass more than mere semantic meaning or objects of aesthetic appreciation. However, in popular music, I find that the voice is mainly investigated from two entry points. The first involves discerning its sonic markers related to how the song is produced, and sometimes also how these aspects are related to its acoustic properties and the vocal apparatus's physical structure. It

is thus investigated as mere sound through *listening,* but also in terms of how the sound is produced within our bodies through the third approach, *singing and performing*. Secondly, interest seems to centre on what the voice accomplishes, how it influences us and how we perceive the vocaliser's intent and state of mind interwoven within the sound. This approach builds upon our emotional response and the intimate connection we experience with the person creating the sound and the song as audiences, and thus through *listening*. I would argue, however, that both approaches are at play at all times. This is because our understanding of how its sound is related to how it is produced and how it works is an intuitive engagement informing how we understand all forms of vocalisations. It also encompasses how we perceive the relationship between the somatic and semantic meaning of lyrics and how they are connected to the way songs are made and performed.

3.2.7 Rhythmic and prosodic qualities in "Chuck E.'s in Love" and "Smooth Operator"

Lyrics afford vocal performativity in how they are rhythmically, verbally and melodically structured. An example of lyrics that afford specific prosodic and rhythmic phrasing is the one-line chorus and title of Rickie Lee Jones' hit song, "Chuck E.'s in Love" (1979). Her laid-back phrasing and stream of consciousness-formed lyrics searching for "him" reveal a questioning mode while describing how his behaviour has changed before explaining everything in one line: he – Chuck E. – is in love. Her emphasis on the sound "e" is set by the letter "E", which continues into the next word, "is". The writing of the name itself determines the timing and rhythmic emphasis implemented in the music and vocal performance. There is no way around it.

Another example is "Smooth Operator" by Sade Adu (1984). Richard Middleton notes:

> The clichéd phrase of the title is set to a melodic and harmonic riff, which is worked into a seamless musical flow, and the lyric-melodic idea takes on the "mythic" character of a sound-gesture. At the same time, the quotidian quality of the words – their denotation and connotations – seems to remain important (1990, p. 231).

Middleton draws attention here to how the word “smooth” affords a sustained sound while “operator” is pronounced in a “mechanical rhythm”. In “Smooth Operator”, Sade’s vocal timbre has a transparent, breathy quality that flows smoothly within the musical texture and bossa-vibe. She leaves an impression of being an emotionally detached observer – watching from a distance – while drawing the listener into the nightclub. The phrase's prosodic and rhythmic qualities and metaphorical meaning set up an image of a guy moving in the corners of a nightclub and in the shadows of the city. They suggest that “all of us” recognise “that guy”.

Middleton also notes how words with denotative power and musical and onomatopoetic dimensions – prosodic and rhythmic qualities – can simultaneously serve as metaphors. They can, as such, exhibit how “the rhythms of pace and pause” together with “the sensation and ideas in every word” constitute a space in time shaped in the mind of the poet and listener (Wainwright, 2015, p. 10). This is seen in Rickie Lee Jones’ lyrics, where the letter “E” followed by punctuation indicates a metric placement and an emphasis on that letter. The question surfacing while reading and listening then is: who is the girl Chuck E. is in love with that causes him to disappear? The answer is not revealed until the end when the lyrics are as follows: “Cause Chuck E.'s in love with the little girl singin' this song”. And then in the last line, “He's in love. Love with me”.

In the case of "Chuck-E.'s in Love”, it might be natural to assume that the lyrics came first, but it could just as well have been the phrasing of the melody that called for a specific lyrical form. Furthermore, I find that both performances illustrate Malawey's five elements of Vocal Prosody – Phrasing, Metric Placement, Motility, Embellishments and Consonal Articulation – as well as the connection between performers and genres (2020, pp. 69-93). For example, in Rickie Lee Jones' performance, her vocal timbre, phrasing, speech-like singing and her seemingly laid-back approach to phrasing and groove can be interpreted as a reflection of the lyrical form and style of music and the semantic content.

Both songs demonstrate how words on paper, whether in the visual form of lyrics or the ‘natural’ way of expressing words and sentences, might have influenced their musical composition, mediation and understanding and thus the third and fourth approach, *singing/performing* and *songmaking/writing*. Moreover, these

examples emphasise how the first two approaches, *listening* and *reading*, are performative acts and how all four separately and combined inform each other and offer different insights.

3.3 Singing With or Without Words

As I have argued in previous chapters, the timbre of the voice is one of the primary markers of style, signature and identity in performed songs. In addition to other musical elements such as structure, time and overall sound, vocal timbre is thus imperative to projections of lyrical meaning. We listen and respond in everyday speech and conversation, but the singers' words are written. Simon Frith argues that contrary to written poetry, the performance is a necessary aspect of both song lyrics and oral poetry (1996, pp. 181,182). There is, nevertheless, a difference between oral poems and lyrics. As Frith points out, while poems can be written in "free" and formally structured verse forms, lyrics are "scored" by the music. Still, as vocalised words, they are generally perceived as communication of meaning, originating from one person directed at another. However, in living speech or a conversation, words are adjusted and retracted based on feedback from the other person. Therefore, a performed song shares the same conditions as an oral poem.

Paul Zumthor differentiates the oral from the written poem by underlining how the vocalised sound originates from within and without mediation connects two lives (1984, p. 75). Performed words thus imply the presence of a human voice – "the mark of a person" – and are therefore made meaningful by their rhetorical and vocal context (Frith, 1993, p. 32). It is then not just the tone of voice, but because the vocal apparatus is innately situated in a human body, the vocaliser's identity also informs our understanding. Underlining Frith's point that the sound of the voice indicates what the singer means, and not the words (1989, p. 90). While some performers approach performing as an opportunity to communicate lyrics and focus on conveying their semantic content, narrative or message, others find that the possible connotations of words disrupt musical intent and vocal aesthetics. They thus rely on a various selection of voice sounds that are not associated with specific words or verbal meaning.

Here, sound poetry, rooted in long traditions of using vocalisations, resembles or has a connection to a national language without promoting the more conventional,

semantic message. In oral performances, the artist explores the structural, phonetic, rhythmic and prosodic qualities and characteristics of voice sounds that make *no sense* rather than conveying semantic content. Thus, to say that oral poetry is a form of *nonsense* would, however, be to disregard the complexity and creativeness of this art form and the significance of the performing voice. Rebecka Sofia Ahvenniemi argues that even in a *vocalese* performed without words, "one hears that someone sings without a text" (2020, p. 13). In other words, in every vocal performance, even when the voice resembles the sound of an instrument, the presence of a human being is embedded in the sound of the voice. These expressive qualities, recognised as manifestations of personal expression, might be why vocal music shares the status of language and evokes other expectations than musical instruments. Ahvenniemi's intention seems to be to challenge the frameworks used in art interpretation and language itself. Interpreting language involves actively constructing and creating language. She therefore claims that to move beyond a limited understanding of how a piece of vocal music communicates with us, it is essential to interpret it in a manner that recognises its complex nature (2020, p. 23). In this sense, the embodiment and cultural aspects of the performing voice, along with other musical elements, are not mere add-ons to the content. Instead, they are part of – and are integral components of – the work's meaning from the outset.

The *polymorphous*, self-serving voice is thus not restricted to serving as a medium for language, nor to signify a "de-semantization", but rather to introduce "a multiplicity of meaning in the words" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 128). Put another way, the sound of the voice itself *creates* sense and new meaning by mimicking or replacing language. In doing so, the performer makes their voice heard as an expressive and aesthetic musical sound, not merely as a language carrier. It thus shows how singing is both an activity that we enjoy and a performance practice that offers a vast number of possibilities and experiences in everyday life and art. However, despite many musicologists' attention to the communicating voice and aspects of the voice as marks of personae, singing is seldom discussed in academic literature as a valuable activity in itself. For instance, as described by Brian Eno:

> I like singing. It's one thing that makes me really happy. I particularly love singing backing vocals. I've got a great voice for stacking. It's very thin…My voice being like an engineer's pencil rather than a paintbrush, you can really build it up. It's the biggest thrill for me, actually. I could

> happily spend the rest of my life being a backing vocalist (Brian Eno qtd. In Morley, 2001, Albiez & Pattie, 2016, p. 120).

The voice is instead mostly treated as a means of communication motivated by intent. However, our experience of activating the voice in a musical setting can also be perceived merely as an activity where one emerges in what feels like intuitive musical behaviour. Vocal activity then is afforded by musical material, and we engage without reflection. In other words, singing is both an individual and group activity, a practice and a profession. The ecological aspect of singing in a group and participating in a social setting also confirms being a part of a larger unit, connecting with others or with a higher entity. Brian Eno describes this kind of singing as a "loss of ego" one can experience in communal gospel singing (Albiez & Pattie, 2016, p. 134).

In this context, the main focus is to hear one's voice blending with others. These settings can thus make the *physical*, *aesthetic* and *emotional* sensations feel even more intimate. Similar sensations can also arise in a stage performance when the singer is intuitively aware of the sensory connection between the larynx and the voice resonating in the body, all while responding to the music. Consequently, according to Nina Eidsheim, identifying a sound source from the listener's perspective encompasses the internal listening experience of the vocalist. She asks, "It is not only the so-called listener, presented with a voice, who heeds the silent question Who is this? The so-called singer is also constantly faced with the same silent question: Who is singing?" (2019b, p. 186).

In this manner, the singer and speaker become both the producers and listeners of their voices, adapting their vocal behaviour based on their perception of their voice, direct feedback from others and the cultural conventions of their context (2019b, p. 13). The voice thus transcends being just a tool or a means of communication and self-expression; it is instead who we become as a voice within the experience, or simply just something we enjoy doing with our voices.

3.3.1 The (un)importance of lyrics

As mentioned, Brian Eno, enjoys merely the act of singing. He is also an artist who has tackled issues regarding the relationship between a singer's voice, their

personality and the meaning of a song. By extracting his voice from the music by employing technologically mediated vocal sounds and other voice sources, he has aimed to invite the listener *into* the track by creating a space for them to enter. He thus wanted to challenge how the voice, as an authentic centre in music and focal point of a song, can add unintended meaning. Eno also created techniques for generating lyrics based on phonetic and rhythmic clues by recording himself improvising over backing tracks. He then used phrases from various takes, adding and subtracting words until he felt the lyrics had no "life" beyond their musical settings. Based on his assumption that popular music listeners paid little attention to the meaning of the words and more to how the voice sounded, Eno argued that his lyrics were receivers rather than transmitters of meaning that were "just about to evocate enough to simulate some sort of interpretation to take place" (Albiez & Pattie, 2016, pp. 120, 121). Eno later reflected on his earlier methods when saying that what you really want to be doing as a songmaker is to write lyrics that are outside your understanding – and that feels like something you want to do while singing without knowing why (Brian Eno qtd. in Z, 1991, Albiez & Pattie, 2016, p. 122).

Eno's practice illustrates that by using words that are open for interpretation, distancing the songmaker's and performer's vocal identity from the lyrics, one challenges the way we perceive a song as an expression of a particular artist's experiences or intent. Likewise mimicking words as timbral and rhythmical expressions will open possibilities for other interpretations and meanings. These types of oral expressions without conventional meaning are a genre of music performance originating from the first human uttering of a sound, cry, signal and chant.

Another way of experimenting with the sound of and not the sense of words is a form of deconstruction. The performer uses her voice and vocal apparatus to articulate units of vocalised sound resembling words or instruments to create patterns and movements. When verbal semantics are removed from music, the timbre of the voice still expresses aesthetic and emotional content much like any other instrument does. However, the associative space connected to the vocal expression by itself is more open for interpretation. "Detached from language" and with "the power of rationality", the voice can then emerge as "the opposite of logos" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 127). It can become dangerous and seductive, and

transmit emotional, corporal and embodied experience and subjectivity. In this sense, the self-serving voice can fulfil embodied, aesthetic and stylistic functions and project the performer's state of mind. Thanks to the vocal apparatus's capacity to imitate non-human sounds, it can also lead to the misguidance and confusion of the listener. Some singers create voices mirroring birds and animal sounds, sirens and noise, leading our attention away from the vocaliser's identity and the voice in general, and that can give singers a sense of musical freedom. Musical movement then is not limited by verbal communication, nor is the listener immediately able to recognise the sound as representing a human being, nor how the vocal sound is produced. In his introduction to poet Jesper Elving and composer Jesper Holmen's "Beyonsense sounds" (2015), Schweppenhauser asks: "But what if verbal language suddenly does not carry a conventional semantic meaning? Is it then becoming – music?"

In his passage on the early days of Tin Pan Alley, Simon Frith claims that the words to these songs would be un-rememberable without music. He continues by stating that, "Unlike lyrical poems (…), song words are only remembered in their melodic and rhythmic setting" (1996, p. 160). At first, this claim struck me as rather bold, but in retrospect, I find myself agreeing with Frith's statement – not as a general rule, but when read within the premise of lyrical material realised as a song, and thus performed and remembered as music and not received and recalled as written text. This again points to how we tend to recall lyrics according to the way we experience and remember them. So, returning to the earlier question, does this mean that lyrics are not important? Is it mostly the sound of lyrics and not the content that matters?

While Brian Eno has experimented with removing his voice from his songs challenging identifiable and narrative aspects of voice and lyrics, jazz-singer, composer and lyricist Sidsel Endresen, who is a Norwegian artist representing a vast tradition of singers and songmakers using the voice as musical texture, rather than a transmitter of content. Her work aligns with specific traditions within jazz, experimenting with "disconnecting" music from the "boundaries" of verbal content. In an interview for the Norwegian Academy of Music, she reflects on the flexibility of the voice and the challenges of using it as an instrument (2016). Endresen has, as such, regarded herself as "a channel" for music with a focus on working sonically with improvisation rather than with semantic and emotional

features. As a skilled real-time composer, she thus values how this perspective allows her to break away from pre-set musical forms, emphasising that her focus lies in the journey rather than the end result.

Another tradition of singing without words is scat-singing. Scat-singers improvise and alternate vocal prosody and qualities, thus stylising sounds and syllables with no associated verbal meaning. By separating the vocal line from its verbal meaning, scat singers enter the domain often referred to as "absolute" music (Bauer, 2001, p. 303). In this context, musical sounds appear to exist independently of the extramusical connotations that words convey, a space typically associated with instrumental music. Despite being a praised and respected form of music performance, scat-singing has therefore been seen as a vocal imitation of other instruments. It has, therefore, received less consideration as an expressive medium in its own right (Bauer, 2001, p. 318). However, scat singing provides opportunities to explore variations in timbre, shapes and musical movement, and the way they generate musical meaning. Therefore, the way these singers can exhibit vocal skills and musical knowledge and creativity can elevate our understanding and acknowledgement of their contribution and what voices can do. This also shows how the performing voice carries layers of affective, conceptual and aesthetic meaning in itself, similar to the body and movement of a dancer. The body and the voice are thus coded with various recognisable elements and meanings, allowing us to identify others and, in particular, those near us.

3.3.2 Morten Harket as *The Masked Singer*

People express themselves through words, gestures and body language. When people hear a voice and pick up on gestures, especially ones that seem familiar, they picture who it belongs to and what they look like. These clues are important to us in identifying who the speaker is. The reality singing concept, *The Masked Singer*, provides many examples of how audiences respond when identifiable features are covered and adjusted. In this show, celebrities perform anonymously in body and face-covering costumes while the audience and a panel of judges are asked to guess who they are. The only information provided is the sound of the voice. Other signs people generally rely on to identify a person, such as body language and facial expressions, are thus not only hidden behind the mask but covered by heavy, elaborate costumes. This makes it harder for the performers to

give away clues about how they naturally move or gesture. The audience is, however, given small cues in brief introduction videos. Although the participant's voice is distorted, the attentive listener and viewer can pick up enough information to piece it together.

I will illustrate this point using a personal anecdote. In 2021, I heard a familiar voice on the British version of *The Masked Singer* that I thought I recognised as Morten Harket, known from the Norwegian band A-ha. Yet, I wasn't entirely convinced. In the 90s, I worked as a backup singer on tour with Harket and thought I would recognise nuances in his voice, but I still questioned myself. Interestingly enough, Harket's daughter, Tomine Harket, said she knew it was her father singing from the start. According to her, there was some sort of vibration in his voice that she recognised from hearing him singing with his family, which illustrates, as Jeanette Bicknell reminds us, how the intimacy of singing in a private context seems to "spill over into public singing" (2005, p. 269). In dealings with a familiar voice, one expects a similarity between vocal timbre in private and public settings. We thus cannot only detect nuances in voice timbre projection but also hear a "disconnected" sound; that is, if the speaker or singer uses a voice quality that seems different or detached from their "personal sound". How, then, are voice characteristics related to how we understand songs? Moreover, how are they identifiable as codes and thus involve people's relationship with voice?

To search for some explanations, it is helpful to look at the relationship between the "natural voice" – belonging to the *real* person – and the performed or staged voice. Moreover, we must consider how vocal qualities and timbre can be identified as codes indicating points of view and project possibilities of ambiguity in following or countering the voice of the lyrics or narrative perspective. These are aspects that can only be detected through the first approach of the framework, *listening*, and further, to the relationship between *listening* and *reading*.

3.3.3 Voicing Points of View and Focalisation

The narrative perspective or subject position in songs is generally perceived as the person singing. More often than not, lyrics in pop music tend to be written in the first-person narrative voice, referring to me, "I", or a collective "we", as the "experiencer" telling the story from a first-person perspective. Sometimes, the

narrative voice represents an anonymous or silent "I", a collective subject such as we, or a third person, as an observing or omniscient narrator. However, because the voice is the mark of a person, the singer's voice tends to be privileged over the voice of the lyrics. In other words, if the song "I Don't Know How to Love Him" from the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" (Lloyd Webber & Rice, 1971) is performed by another character than Maria Magdalena, the song would be understood differently. The song reflects Maria Magdalene's inner thoughts and unrequited feelings towards Jesus, which can be categorised as a torch song. Although the lyrics describe a love interest, the song is not directed at any particular recipient. However, it is rather a form of self-communication, which illustrates that even when the lyrics have a first-person perspective or point of view or describe a particular person or event, the performer's focus can vary.

The same song performed by different people, settings, or styles can thus change the lyrics' "point of view". Here, Keith Negus provides an illustrative example by referring to how Randy Newman's song, "You've Got a Friend in Me", allows for different interpretations, from the friendship between a boy and his toy in *Toy Story* to other forms of friendly relationships. Thus, depending on how the song's performance and context construct positions for the listener and "the poetic possibilities of ambiguity" (2012, p. 379). But as Negus highlights, the song's possible interpretations are not limitless. It still operates within certain parameters set by the material itself and how the artist mediates the song. For listeners, the generation of materiality then emerges before meaning is ascribed (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 170). In songmaking and music performance, the creative and performative space is thus determined by performers and songmakers.

To investigate how different perspectives are expressed and understood, I have found it useful to turn to concepts introduced by Gerard Genette. He draws attention to the problems with terms like "perspective" and "points of view" by offering another term to replace the more traditional terms, namely "focalisation", which is a term that has since been debated and criticised. I will not discuss the term further but instead refer to Genette's categories to illustrate the differences between lyrics taking on the same "point of view". As H. Porter Abbot writes, "Focalization is an awkward coinage, but it serves a useful purpose that the vaguer and more disputed term point of view cannot" (2008, p. 66). Abbott explains how focalisation represents the lens through which readers see characters and events,

noting that, similarly, listeners tend to perceive action through the vocaliser. Genette suggests three main categories of focalisation: 1) zero; 2) internal (focus *through* a character that can either be fixed, variable or multiple); and 3) external (focus *on* a character) (1983, pp. 10,11, 189-198). In other words, lyrics written as a first-, second- or third-person narrative may have zero internal or external focalisation. Their focus can be on themselves and their experience, someone or something else, or merely descriptive.

3.3.4 Focalisation in "Fool on the Hill"

Expanding on Negus' notion of how a song's ambiguity can allow different interpretations (2012, p. 377) and Genette's categories, I find that the performer can illustrate possible focalisations merely through the timbre of their voice. The timbre of the performing voice can thus afford other focalisations than the perspective of the lyrics. An example is in the Beatles' song, "The Fool on the Hill" (Lennon & McCartney, 1967), performed by Paul McCartney. Although the lyrics appear to be an objective documentation of events, it seems clear that there can never be an objective lens. Any reporter or historian makes a choice based on their subjective experience. Someone is placed in the foreground and others in the background, creating a context leading our attention in the direction the narrator intended. So, when the observing narrator notices a man standing alone on a hill, the voice in the story is the observer aware of things the people in the lyrics are not, including the observed main character and people surrounding him. The focalisation of the narrator is external, and the narrator is an unidentified "someone" watching someone else. Reflecting merely on the listening experience, the voice singing can, as such, be perceived as the narrator, which illustrates the difference between printed and performed text. The voice of Paul McCartney at the beginning of the song indicates the position of an observing narrator "in the know". The first verse starts as follows:

> Day after day, alone on a hill.
> The man with the foolish grin is keeping perfectly still
> But nobody wants to know him, they can see that he's just a fool
> And he never gives an answer
> But the fool on the hill sees the sun going down
> And the eyes in his head see the world spinning around (0:03- 0:40, 1967)

No one besides the observing narrator wants to know or listen to him. But as the story evolves, it seems obvious that the character in the narrative doesn't care. He, as "the man of a thousand voices", knows that "the fool" is the people ignoring him and what he has to say. The narrative voice then tells the story from an informed but detached perspective, focused through "the consciousness of a character" (Culler, 1983, p. 10).

As said, focalisation can vary even if the perspective is stable, variations that can be indicated merely by the timbre of the voice and therefore only detectable through listening. "The Fool on the Hill" also exhibits how a shift between focalisations can occur within the same song. McCartney's vocal timbre starts with an equal quality of a non-emotional, observing storyteller, simply accounting for a happening, thus matching "the voice" of the lyrics. But as the song develops, the music – both the instrumentation and rhythm – changes, and the quality of the voice and phrasing slightly takes on a more speech-sounding voice. The storyteller then changes position from an omniscient observer to someone carefree on a merry-go-round in: "Ohh oh-oh-oh-oh Ohh-oh-oh, Round and round and round and round and round" (2:02-2:15). The change in mood is further emphasised by McCartney's phrasing in the following chorus: "He never listens to them; He knows that they're the fool. They don't like him, the fool on the hill" (2:17-2:29). McCartney then returns to the original melody, repeating the chorus one last time and confirming that "the fool on the hill" knows what he knows as he watches the sun going down. Ultimately, the bridge returns like a coda (2:43) as McCartney again shifts his voice to a speech-shout quality similar to someone completely caught up in the moment. This continues as the song fades, indicating that the song, in the same way as a merry-go-round, will keep on going. Despite what "the wise" character or fool tells us, we are all on the ride with our eyes closed, letting the world run its course. In this way, McCartney's vocals illustrate how a shift of perspective – focalisation – can be indicated merely by the quality of a voice. In this sense, the perspective of the lyrics is not the only indicator of a narrative voice or the storyteller, as the vocal performance sets the premise in ways that the text, taken by itself, cannot. I therefore find that extending Genette's theory to songs provides the possibility of an added perspective.

However, while Paul McCartney may have had a specific man in mind when he wrote the lyrics, as many forums and song analyses indicate, to assume anything about his intention would be pure speculation. Nevertheless, I can describe the way I hear it. For me, it is a story of a visionary person neglected by their time, which reminds me of a beautiful woman with silver hair who used to walk her bike through the streets of Oslo, shouting at the top of her lungs. Her mission was to warn everyone of the dangers individuals and society imposed on Earth. She called on us to take time to care for and watch over the world. At the time, she was written off as a mad woman, which made her message so easy to dismiss. No one paid her very much attention except by rolling their eyes before turning away. Decades later, Greta Thunberg uses her voice to deliver the same message as the old woman with the bike, and hopefully, no one can ignore her in the same way.

3.3.5 Focalisation in parodic songs

Lyrics and songs can also present humoristic and parodic points of view. Some are intended to be provocative, some are just for entertainment, and others have elements of both. Similar to how lyrics can open for different interpretations, vocalised sounds then expand on "the poetic possibilities of ambiguity" (Negus, 2012, p. 379). As shown in "The Fool on The Hill", the singer's voice can contribute to or alter the way we hear the story and, as such, contradict the voice of the lyrics. Sometimes, it is merely by small nuances indicating differences between a natural voice and a stage voice or by character voices that are clearly distinctive from the artist's "real" voice. Stan Hawkins writes:

> In pop texts the boundaries between the artist's own speech and someone else's can be ambiguous to the point of confusion. And, lest we forget, the great parodic pop texts of the late 20th are manifested in a carnivalesque atmosphere of partying, festivity, and simply letting go (2001, p. 4).

In Monty Python's song "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" (Idle, 1979), a situation is specifically illustrated by lyrics that probably have added layers of meaning for those who have seen the film *Life of Brian,* 1979. This is exemplified in the lines: "Life's a piece of shit, when you look at it, Life's a laugh and death's a joke, it's true" (1:46-1:53). The song is sung at the end of the film by the character played by Eric Idle, who tries to cheer up Brian Graham Chapman after being

crucified with a group of others who also join in. “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” became very popular as an ironic gesture towards British stoicism, the communal “stiff upper lip in the face of disaster”, and also as a parody of musical drama, musicals and animated films.

A different example of parody in a pop song is “Backwards” by Rascal Flatts (Chagnon & Mullins, 2006). Their song is a comment on traditional country music, lyrics and singing style, which, alongside their appearance, displays features that denote clear links to stylistic markers of the country music genre. One common joke about country music is that if you play a country song backwards, you get your wife, dog and truck (or horse) back. Their song then references this joke, with the first chorus starting as follows, “You get your house back, You get your dog back, You get your best friend Jack back, You get your truck back, you get your hair back, You get your first and second wives back” (0:43.0:50).

This song seems just as much a self-parody as a parody of style. However, the humorous effect mostly relies on whether the listener is familiar with the storyline in traditional country lyrics. Again, this highlights how the context, the listener’s state of mind, and background come into play. According to Genette and, subsequently, Lacasse, these lyrics can be categorised as examples of architextuality, referring to an abstract relationship linking it to a particular genre or style, and hypertextuality, an imitation of many or one particular hypotext. As I understand it, then, “Backwards” can fit into at least two of the subcategories suggested by Lacasse, namely “parody” (although not referring to a particular hypotext but rather a style and structure) and a form of “travesty” that aims to “*debase* the hypotext” (2000a, pp. 37-43). Thus, parody can materialise in various musical elements, including lyrics, staging and arrangement. Additionally, expressive and stylistic use of vocal qualities and timbre can open possibilities for interpretations of musical and poetic ambiguity by implying attitudes held by the singer. Merely through adjusting vocal gestures and the voice quality, the singer can be perceived as a narrator, commenting, supporting or contradicting what is communicated verbally as much as constituting an artistic self. These are aspects that are only manifest in the performance, and therefore, are only detectable through listening.

While Lacasse's description of hypotext excludes commentary elements, I would therefore argue that a performed parody can be treated as a form of commentary text, either as elements presented in the new lyrics or in how a song is vocally performed. This then blurs the lines between these categories. As Genette explains, the etymology *ode* – the chant – and the *para: "*along" or "beside" suggests that parody means "singing beside" (1997, p. 10). Singing *beside*s, then, is not the same as singing *along,* but rather "singing in another voice". In other words, parody should represent a counterpoint that *can* be a form of voiced, non-verbal commentary. For instance, when the song is not altered but musically performed in a style different from the original or intended form. This would be seen when a song mimics a particular person or a type of personality in a "parodic" way to mock them or their work. In his essay, Lacasse points to how "Weird Al" Yankovic's parody (hypertext) of Nirvana's song "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (hypotext) mimics the style of the song but with different lyrics. According to Lacasse, "Genette characterises a parody as retaining the stylistic properties of the original text while diverting its subject" (2000a, p. 41). While Lacasse finds Yankovic's singing similar to Cobain's vocals mainly as a stylistic feature, there is also an immediate sense of parody in Yankovic's voice quality and phrasing.

This is also apparent in the singing style of Eric Idle in "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life". Their performance is thus in keeping with Genette's description of parody as someone "singing beside" as a counterpoint and not mimicking to sound the same as someone in particular or according to a specific style. Instead, their performance creates an ironic distance and, as such, both a verbal and non-verbal commentary. They thus exhibit another aspect that clearly distinguishes how we understand various performances differently and where literal analysis of lyrics and *reading* lyrics as written text may stray from how we interpret them through *listening* and *performing* them as songs. These examples also reveal how singers can present a contradicting or commenting voice to the voice of the lyrics and, as such, the lyricist's voice.

The staged voice can also project different characters, identities and personas.

3.3.6 Stories of the rise and fall of Ziggy Stardust

As mentioned, people can detect nuances in the voice and thus distinguish between the "natural voice" – belonging to the *real* person – and the performed or staged voice. However, the relationship between these positions is not always indicated in the voice but more so in how a person presents themselves in different contexts. Sometimes, pop artists take on a stage persona or project a fictive figure, similar to how actors take on characters in a play that are more or less distanced from their previous work and personality. The performance, figure or projected image then takes the risk of taking precedence over the artist, which can result in the performer being unable or unwilling to identify with who they find themselves becoming or how they are understood by others.

One example of a created character that at one point created a distance between the performer/songmaker and the persona is David Bowie and his character, Ziggy Stardust, "…an omnisexual alien rock star, sent to earth as a messenger" (Light, 2016). Based on his fascination with science fiction, Bowie developed this hedonistic rock star figure who communicated peace and love to humanity at the end of its existence. However, Ziggy Stardust, a spaceman who set out to save Earth, is destroyed by his belief in himself as a prophet, and his fans or disciples take bits of him. Although he only existed for about a year from 1972, it is interesting to observe how discussions regarding who Ziggy Stardust represented and whether he was Bowie's alter ego, a projection of Bowie's double personality or autobiographic are many and continuing.

Bowie narrated the album, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* (1972a), in the same way as an author of a book by presenting three viewpoints from different areas. He also stated that the character Ziggy, inspired by the singer Vince Taylor, represented an alien rock star he had created for performance value. However, altering between the character Ziggy and himself, while facing the fact that people wanted Ziggy more, seemed to profoundly affect Bowie. Ziggy Stardust became more than a fictional figure or a role he played. Bowie started to become him and believe in his superiority, projected through the life and image of the character. Bowie explains:

> At first, I just assumed that character onstage…Then everybody started to treat me as they treated Ziggy: as though I was the next best thing, as

> though I moved masses of people. I became convinced I was a messiah. Very scary. I woke up fairly quickly (Light, 2016).

Bowie's descriptions of his relationship with Ziggy and who he *became* when performing him are similar to the story in the song "Ziggy Stardust" (1972b). The first line sets up Ziggy playing the guitar: "Ziggy played guitar. Jamming good with Weird and Gilly, and the Spiders from Mars" (0:24-0:34). After a while, Ziggy causes envy and frustration because he seems caught up with himself: "So we bitched about his fans, and should we crush his sweet hands" (1:28-1:34). Towards the end, the lyrics go as follows: "He was the Naz, With God-given ass, He took it all too far, But boy, could he play guitar" (1:58-2:10). They then conclude, "When the kids had killed the man, I had to break up the band" (2:28-2:34).

David Bowie didn't break up his band but famously announced the last performance of Ziggy Stardust only a year after his first appearance. He later explained how he found most rock characters to have a short life span and did not want him to become too "cartoony" (Light, 2016). Nevertheless, Bowie reached his intention of changing the music industry by taking inspiration from theatre to create a show rather than merely focusing on the music. In doing so, he demonstrated how a rock star like himself can create and recast their image into a character, regardless of what the fans and the industry expect them to do. Possible problematic issues are, however, brought to the surface when the song, the performance or the characters evolve into a "figure" that overshadows or alters the artist's experience of self.

The relationship between Bowie, his songs and characters or personas highlights how who we become in creating and doing – *performing* and *songmaking* – contributes to our understanding of ourselves and how others understand us. As Stan Hawkins observes, "Above all, personas are reliant on empathy. Hence, they imply signifying practices that accentuate the material conditions of a performance"(Hawkins, 2020, p. 250). Therefore, their survival hinges on the artist's ability to establish rapport with their audience and how they address questions regarding the relationship between the artist's personal narrative, their "real life" and the negotiated personas within their artistic life and music. Equally

important, as Bowie's connection with Ziggy Stardust has demonstrated, is the relationship between staged personas and the artist's self-understanding.

In light of Bowie’s description of how he “became” Ziggy, I will now address some ways personae, characters, songs and performances are viewed as *tools* or *means* of expression.

3.3.7 The real person, performer, persona, character and protagonist

To begin with, I will draw attention to Simon Frith’s suggestion that, in pop, the singer is heard as “personally” expressive (1996, p. 186). In other words, it is not only what is determined by lyrics and the musical composition that is heard but also the physical, gestural and emotional dimensions of personal engagement. Adding to a self-expressing position, performers are involved in double enactment in the sense that they take on a star personality – artistic persona or identity – and a song personality determined by the music and lyrics. According to Frith, then, “the pop star’s art is to keep both acts in play at once” (1996, p. 212). Here, Philip Auslander offers a systematic and expanded account of Frith’s distinction by setting up the *real person*, representing the performer as a human being; the *performance persona*, which is “the performer’s star personality or image”; and the *character*, or “the performer’s song’s personality”. As Auslander specifies, these three layers can be active simultaneously (2004, p. 6; 2009, p. 305).

Allan F. Moore, however, takes a slightly different approach. For him, the identity of the performing voice operates at three levels: the *performer*, an identifiable historical figure; the *persona*, the identity assumed as a performer; and the *protagonist*, a figure existing merely within the song (2012, p. 181). Moore illustrates how these layers can be identified by pointing to Bowie’s work as a *performer*, thus identifiable as Bowie and a *persona* like Ziggy Stardust. The “individual” heard in the song is then the protagonist. However, as Moore writes, although the “three levels of identity” are distinguishable, “this protagonist cannot easily be identified with either Bowie or Ziggy” (2012, p. 181). To identify which level is presented, we then tend to rely on information outside of the song. As Moore points out, in cases like John Lennon’s performance in “All You Need Is Love” by the Beatles, the original recording was televised, proving who was singing. In support of his statement, he refers to Lennon as someone who had

worked hard to "ensure that the persona he presented was the individual he was trying to be" (2012, p. 181).

As I understand it, Moore here refers to "the individual" and "the performer" as the same entity, represented in "the persona". "He" then corresponds to the real person. So, if we accept that Moore's *performer* corresponds to a combination of Frith and Auslander's *real person* and *performance persona*, there seem to be at least four levels in combining the two models. Hence, if Bowie performs the song "Ziggy Stardust" as the character Ziggy, Bowie is the *real person*, *performer* and *persona* who takes on the identity of the *protagonist* or *character*. If Bowie performs the song as the artist and person David Bowie, he represents the *real person*, *performer* and *persona.* The markers that distinguish between the categories and how to apply them seem somewhat unclear. As Philp Auslander rightfully points out concerning Bowie's constructed identities like Ziggy, Aladdin Sane, The Thin White Duke and others, it is not clear whether it is appropriate to view these named entities as characters that he portrays, as alterations or evolutions of the Bowie persona itself or the Bowie identity as the consistent persona across these portrayals (2004, p. 7). It is thus interesting to note that although Auslander here suggests that instead of seeing Bowie's identities as characters, they could represent transformations, he still refers to Bowie as the Bowie persona and not to Bowie as a *real* person. Additionally, the lines between the *real person* and *performance persona,* and *persona* and *character*, may be blurry and indistinct (Auslander, 2004, p. 7). Applying these categories as representations of personae, characters, artists and protagonists as singular, isolated entities may therefore, on some occasions, not reflect their intended purpose.

While some characteristics can be easy to hear when comparing a singer's recognisable vocal timbre and signature with the character voices they create, for instance, in animated films and musical theatre, other nuances are diffuse. However, to apply these categories to acousmatic sound requires traces of each persona in the voice alone, and thus methods of identifying them. Questions concerning whether the artist is staging personae in their performance practice and repertoire merely by employing vocal styles and techniques thus bring forth notions of layers of voices that are staged as opposed to a sincere "natural" voice emitting from an essence (Eidsheim, 2019b, p. 186). According to Martin Pfleiderer, listeners distinguish between chosen vocal patterns and strategies and

someone's "personal" or "real" voice (2010, pp. 3,4). As I see it, these themes give rise to two questions:

1. What are the traits of a natural or personal voice, and how can we employ methods to identify their vocal timbre, indicating their differences?
2. How does vocal timbre relate to the *real person*, the *performance persona,* and *the persona* and *character*? Can it help us identify differences and similarities between them?

Even though the timbre of a specific voice is indescribable for us, we can still recognise it, and refer to it, in conversations and song analysis, expecting others to understand what we mean. For instance, if someone mentions how the voice of Eva Cassidy demands immediate attention, they don't have to explain why. We can agree with a silent nod. Likewise, I can still hear the sound of my brother's voice internally, decades after he passed, without being able to describe its timbre to someone else. The coded meanings embedded in the voice can thus only be experienced through listening. For instance, the sound of Bruce Springsteen's voice represents the stage persona that, according to him, has been developed by drawing inspiration from his father's experiences. In an interview connected to the release of his memoir, *Born To Run* from 2016, Springsteen explains:

> When I was looking for a voice to mix with my voice, I put on my father's work clothes, as I say in the book, and I went to work…I wanted to be the reasonable voice of revenge for what I had seen his life come to. It was all of these things (2016).

Springsteen is most likely referring to both the authorial and, thus, the metaphorical voice and its timbre, as they collectively encompass the sound of his voice and its connection to his songs and the lyrical content that defines him as an artist. Despite his success as a rock artist, diverging from the working-class narrative, his stage persona and vocal timbre continue to embody this figure. This illustrates how coded meanings in the voice can signify who we are and who we used to be or pretend to be. Moreover, it shows how these meanings emerge in *performance* and are only detectable for others through *listening*.

The purpose of advancing persona categories in song analysis, then, may not be to create distinct separations but rather to provide ways of explaining how performers

can exhibit various characteristics and stylistic features in stage appearances, videos and public life. Depending on how their appearances are related to their music and the contexts within which they operate, different personae and identities seem to be ascribed to performers as public figures, artists and historical figures. The categories addressed above can, as such, provide useful tools in investigations into how performances are interpreted and analysed and, consequently, how meaning is projected and ascribed. This is specifically related to how we search for explanations of the songs in their makers and for the lyrics in the lyricist. As Barthes says, if their voice confides in us, our focus as researchers should be on "the text" as it is written instead of on the *real* person who writes it (1977, p. 143). Hence, extending Barthes's thoughts to songs, lyrics and performances as "the text" will exhibit the differences and similarities between reading lyrics and listening to songs.

While reading involves listening to various forms of inner vocalisation and cases where the lyricist is unknown, listening to a song implies hearing the singer, and as such, the "real" author of the performance. Barthes's statement can, on the other hand, point to readings of songs where the life and personality of the songmaker are read into "the text". It thus points to how the voice is employed in matters of communication and self-expression, and additionally, understood as a site for exploring identities, emotions, intent and temperament.

3.4 Reflective thoughts on voices

This chapter has focused on the performative nature of the voice and thus the *third* and *fourth* approaches in the suggested framework, *performing/singing* and *songmaking*. It has furthermore shown that *listening* to the voice implies identifying coded meanings indicating a specific person or category of people. More specifically, it has studied notions of the performativity of the "timbre" and "grain" of the voice as something we *do* rather than something we *have* (Barthes, 1977; Eidsheim, 2009, 2015).

This chapter has addressed the differences and similarities between speech, singing and performing. It has drawn attention to how some genres and songmakers distance themselves from the content of lyrics, either by replacing them with sound, or by removing or altering their vocal sound. Additionally, it has

highlighted how singing is an activity that can be pursued merely for the pleasure of activating the voice.

In addition, this chapter has also made the case that – despite not everyone being vocal performers – there exists a universal relationship with the voice, which explains why the third approach encompasses both *singing* and *performing*. Moreover, the content reviewed revealed how the performativity of the voice and vocal behaviour is recognised through embodied experiences with the voice.

It has also argued that, due to people's relationship with their own voice, they can mirror the sound of another voice and mimic non-human sounds. Even in analyses where the analyst's voice is not explicitly included, either by choice or unawareness, it has been suggested that the primary source of their knowledge about voice is primarily grounded in experiences with their own.

Further, this chapter has suggested that the third approach, *singing/performing*, can provide insights into the ways embodied simulations have significant implications for comprehending the creative process of performers. It showed how vocal performers utilise their own bodily and sensory experiences in their songmaking and singing, and consequently, how this contributes to our ability to understand and foresee possible somatic responses (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 10).

In summary, this chapter has revolved around how coded meanings in the voice are employed, recognised and understood, and how the voice informs lyrical meaning. Voice qualities are produced, perceived and interpreted in diverse contexts, emphasising the significance of combining listening with transcripts and tables when evaluating vocal performance. Therefore, I align with Kate Heidemann's suggestion that when analysts describe a vocalist's timbre within a lyric and song analysis context, they should be aware of their own vocal sound and associated vocal tract configuration, and thus both how it feels *and* how it sounds (2016, p. 10). Moreover, song and performance analysis should pay attention to which sensory and physical aspects are involved in producing specific vocal sounds. This awareness would enable us to integrate well-structured experiential information into descriptions of the voice, bridging the divide between quantitative measurements of vocal timbre and the descriptive language we employ to express

our knowledge and associations. The significance of these considerations thus lies in the fact that they are easily overlooked while being fundamentally important.

Furthermore, as this thesis has highlighted so far, while some research aligns with these goals, further detailed work is needed in this area to develop sufficient frameworks for analysis, specifically in understanding the relationship between lyrics and voices.

Building upon these insights, I have proposed that people's lifelong relationship with voice places it in a distinctive position compared to other sounds. Then, as this chapter has outlined, this enduring relationship with voice contributes to the development of a "Voice Recognition, Use, and Listening Competence", which in turn informs our understanding of lyrics. As such, there are aspects that are only detectable through *listening* and *performing* that also inform *songmaking/writing*.

To solely concentrate on the relationship between voices and lyrics while disregarding any prior knowledge about the song or the artist as a "real" person may not be feasible or essential. As a listener-analyst, it is more about recognising our connection with the artist and the songs and maintaining transparency in our readings. On that note, I will conclude this chapter with another personal anecdote.

As a young girl and music fan growing up in the 60s and 70s, the life of the real person creating and performing the songs *did* matter. Some female artists used their personal experiences as source material, thus projecting thoughts on being a young girl with dreams and desires. As Carly Simon sings in "Boys in the Trees" (1978):

> Here I grew guilty
> And no one was at fault
> Frightened by the power in every innocent thought,
> And the silent understanding passing down
> From daughter to daughter
> Let the boys grow in the trees (0:50-1:23)
>
> Do you go to them or do you let them come to you?
> Do you stand in the back, afraid that you'll intrude?
> Deny yourself and hope someone will see

And live like a flower
While the boys grow in the trees (1:27-1:57)

Listening back, I now recognise qualities in this song that allow it to live a life independent of its maker and thus carry levels of meaning for those unfamiliar with Carly Simon and her work. Nevertheless, as a fan who knows this song by heart, it seems impossible not to associate it with Simon as a person and artist. It is equally impossible to ignore memories evoked by the words, Simon's voice and the song.

Lyrics and voices, then, affect us differently and often unconsciously, influencing and challenging our personal and social awareness. They can evoke unwanted emotions but also have a cleansing effect, weaken the power of feelings of grief and sadness, plus awaken dormant feelings. In solitude, they offer companionship and in a shared space, they allow us to connect. Moreover, the way we encounter them provides us with the stories they tell, the stories we experience and the stories we create.

The objective of the following chapter is therefore to contribute to the discourse on lyrics and voices, how we understand and create them, and the various ways they are told. It will employ all approaches in "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices", *listening, reading, performing/singing* and *songmaking/writing*, and specifically draw attention to some female artists and songmakers.

Moreover, will it focus on intertextual relationships between lyrics and how songs can advance political issues and beliefs. This chapter is also devoted to confessional practices and various approaches to creative processes as both source material and coping strategies.

4 …and the Stories They Tell

This chapter will employ all four approaches to lyrics and voices, demonstrating how they can provide new insights independently and through their intersections. This will be achieved by examining a selection of songs and artists. Without delving deeply into a specific topic, genre or songmaker, I will address concepts of intertextuality, perspectives and focalisation, and the connection between categories of music and categories of people. Furthermore, I will explore theories on authenticity and their possible implications.

Additionally, this thesis section will offer examples of various forms of writing and theories on creativity while examining the connection between lyrical and musical narratives and life narratives. It will also include examples from my own practice. Moreover, it will explore concepts and metaphors employed in addressing issues related to mental health, grief work, femininity and ethnicity within the context of pop music.

In employing all four approaches and exhibiting how they work separately and combined, this chapter will highlight how they allow us to deeply understand the interplay between them and appreciate the ability of lyrics and voices to engage us as embodied individuals. This entails recognizing their sensuous, emotional, and aesthetic significance and influence. As mentioned in the introduction, our bodily responses to gestures and rhythms are pivotal in shaping our perception of ourselves as embodied beings and in structuring our cognitive processes and discussions. Furthermore, I proposed that the experience of ourselves and the song that emerges through musical engagement should be viewed as an integral aspect of the music itself, rather than merely an outcome of the experience. When all approaches are combined, it becomes evident that all our senses are actively involved. This also showcases additional aspects that come into play, including rhythm and harmonies, as well as elements that indicate and evoke emotions and movement.

The stories we hear and tell through songs, then, do not only rely on the lyrics, voices and songs themselves but also on the listening context and what the listener brings to the situation. Hence, the stories we hear and the stories we tell will vary due to various factors, including how we respond with our senses, emotions and

bodies. To explore some of these aspects, I will start by drawing attention to how we engage with music and how songs make us move and feel.

4.1 Connecting with songs, lyrics and voices

The way we interpret lyrics and voices depends on the ways they invite us into their own world, how we feel, behave and experience ourselves in this engagement, and thus the stories they tell. Lyrics and voices therefore affect us on many levels and in so many ways. Songs can also create a sense of movement, pace and rhythm, and tensions between balance and imbalance. Nevertheless, the experiences and qualities people generally associate with music seem to be related to emotions. Some even express that their engagement and taste in music rely on their emotional connection to the song, the artist's performance and the performer. This is much like the relationships we form and how we perceive others in our daily lives, relying on our ability to recognise the expressions of emotions in others. In fact, from around 11 years old, most of us can "identify emotions at the adult level" (Sharp et al., 2019). Emotional intent heard in a singer's voice similarly transcends formal training or choice of qualities. It is something we detect, recognise and identify in each other's voices depending on the ways we are taught and experience vocal behaviour and our training.

Emotional contours thus draw the listener into an embodied and conceptualised experience and consequently connect the listener and the singer. emotional engagement further increases the sense of closeness between what is expressed and the receiver, dissolving the distance between the performance, the song and the listener. Sometimes the result is to give a higher value to a song, songmaker and performer who evokes emotions in people. Songs then instigate a complex process in the listener involving the body and mind, emotions and imagination. Musical engagement can, as such, affect our mood by invoking how it feels to experience life as a person with a physical body, a beating heart and a questioning and reflecting mind. This way, a song can create a sense of movement mirroring "the journey of life", dealing with life events and challenges, passing through various stages before reaching a stable point at the end. Expanding on these views, emotional responses to music and rhythms can engage and mirror tactile, bodily sensations of how it feels to be a physical being.

What then are the inherent properties of music that lead individuals to perceive it as a dynamic force with an agency, capable of evoking and eliciting emotions through the sound itself.

4.1.1 Connecting with movement, time and emotions in music

Humans' experience of music as a physical and emotional force has interested scholars across disciplines over the decades. For example, as Mark Johnson outlines, Eduard Hanslick – music critic, aesthetic theorist and author of "*The Beautiful in Music"* (1854) – identified the ways that people are drawn into "embodied patterns and contours" of music and how they experience them as "emotionally moving". Hanslick insisted that music introduces us to "the dynamic properties of our feelings, not the feelings themselves"(1997-98, p. 96). These patterns of intensity sensed through increasing or decreasing rhythmic tempo, tension and release, crescendo and decrescendo, combined with variations in pitch, thus reflect how people respond to life when encountering the world. These are, as such, crucial to humans' "vital experience of music". A century later, John Dewey claimed that there would be no change in a world of mere flux or pure stability. In a constantly changing world, change is not a cumulative process, as it lacks a conclusion. Neither will stability and rest exist. On the other hand, in a world that is already fully finished and concluded, there would be no sense of anticipation, tension or the need for resolution; if everything is complete, there can be no fulfilment (1958, pp. 16, 17). For Dewey, then, all interactions that affect stability and order in "the whirling flux of change" are rhythms. Nature and life itself thus have cycles that are both special and temporally patterned like ocean waves, ebb and flow, contrasts of "struggle and achievement", "balance and counterbalance", and "breaks and reunions". These "rhythms of life" "form the drama in which action, feeling, and meaning are one" (1958, p. 16). In this sense, if the world were "finished" or completed, there would not exist any opportunity for resolution or a state of fulfilment.

Songmakers can similarly make use of intervals, rhythms and melodic structures to express emotions and movement and to engage and disrupt. They can create an experience of time in a virtual life that differs from the way we perceive time in real life. Hence, the virtual time in music is audible and represents inner feelings of tension and release. Musical patterns, including rhythmic, harmonic and

melodic structures, as well as phrasing and instrumentation, therefore, play a role in conveying emotions in this virtual time. In this sense, subtle nuances are detectable through listening and not by examining the score, as communication is an oral performing art, and its rhetorical function is perceptible through hearing (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2010, pp. 402,403). These perceptions can be suggested in the structure itself as a developing melodic and harmonic movement through resistance and flow, resolving in the key to the song. As Susan McClary observes, even if sound waves are designed to "resemble physical gestures", they do not possess any form of power, yet listeners still make sense of them building on a life of embodied experiences (2016a, p. 134). Music can thus feel like it inhabits a force of power and causes a tactile sensation in the body, enforcing the impression of music as a physical phenomenon.

If we accept that the foundation of our conceptual systems is rooted in our sensory perception, bodily movements and our experiences, both physical and social (Lakoff, 1987, p. xiv), then the tension between balance and imbalance is something we immediately experience, which the body recognises and responds to without conceptualising. Movement with music is thus triggered without thought or reflection, and emotions, sensations and movements conveyed through songs are something that we intuitively recognise. How we make sense of them is therefore rooted in bodily experiences, which suggests that our thinking is embodied. Moreover, as Candace Brower suggests, the evidence of embodied origins to musical conventions is found in the way we articulate our experiences (2000, p. 333). This is for instance evident in how we describe a melody as moving step by step, which mirrors the bodily sensation of walking. These concepts thus arise from our capacity for abstract thinking, grounded in "embodied meaning and inference patterns" (Johnson, 1997-98, p. 97). Hence, notions of "unstable" tones and melodies being "drawn upward" or "gravitating downward" to find a "resolution" essentially characterise them as elements influenced by the forces of gravity

Although listeners have similar experiences of physicality and sensations evoked by music, is not to say that they perceive songs in the same way or according to the songmaker's or performer's intentions. It thus exhibits that music does not do anything on its own. It has no real power (Ansdell, 2013, p. 8). Nor does it have a consciousness, meaning that the way we describe what we hear is what we imagine

to be true, not what is literally true (Trivedi, 2011, p. 118). Even when the rational mind is fully aware of its lack of such properties, perceptions of physical motion, gestures and emotions embedded in a song, and thus also its source, therefore connects the virtual and non-musical with musical materiality. To say otherwise is to rely on mythological explanations, to suggest that music is the cause of something else, and thus that the musical can be separated from the non-musical. Instead, individuals engage with music in diverse situations, influenced by their personal preferences, as well as contextual and shared interpretations. The notion of a song as a physical force, a power or a journey, is therefore not "caused" by lyrical narratives, the temporality of songs or by other musical elements; rather, it is movement and emotions emerging within the experience. It is not a result of, or separate from, music but aspects of musicking, much of which is experienced and conceptualised intuitively. This explains why humans can have shared *and* unique individual responses.

For example, Patrik Juslin and Petri Laukka's study on "Expression, perception and induction of musical emotions" (2004) identified various specific features that seem to contribute to how emotions in music are perceived. Minor mode and low sound level are associated with sadness, while simple and consonant harmonies are typical of happiness. Juslin and Laukka also found various features used similarly in different emotional expressions, such as *fast tempo* expressing fear, anger and happiness, meaning that each cue is insufficient. Rather, the number of cues used and their correlation increase their perceived emotional expression. Hence, it is the way that multiple musical features are used together that convey emotions; therefore, the combination and correlation of these cues enhance the perceived emotional expression (2004, pp. 220-222). Therefore, because listeners may perceive any emotion in music, no one can say that the listener is "wrong", highlighting the complexity of physical and emotional expression in music and the role of various musical elements in conveying different emotions.

In summary, encounters with lyrics and voices in their various forms can be energising, troubling and complex, making us sad or happy. However, what we hear does not necessarily mirror what we feel. For example, Andrew West refers to a psychological study that showed that participants listening to sad music reported perceiving the sadness in the music but felt a positive emotional response, which according to West might be the reason why many pop songs are about

heartbreaks. He notes, "as a community of listeners, we are, it seems attracted to the sound of turmoil" (2022, p. 12). In other words, one can feel both sad and entertained by "happy" music and optimistic lyrics, and also feel a sense of relief, recognition and comfort in "sad" songs. Even though listeners identify themselves with lyrical content and empathise with the story, it thus seems to be musical material – or the combination of both music and lyrics – that has the most significant impact on memories, emotions and actions (Barradas & Sakka, 2021, p. 665). Whether we approach lyrics and voices from a musicological perspective or as performers, songmakers or fans, we thus respond, engage and reflect on our musical experiences in one form or another. However, the ability to recognise and respond to patterns and elements within musical sounds and their influence on listening appears to set musicians apart from the "average" listener.

4.1.2 Differences and similarities in musicians' and listeners' ability to identify emotions in music

Since the recognition of emotions in music depends on psychoacoustic cues and musical features, there has been long-standing speculation that musical training may enhance this ability. This supports a study investigating how musicians identify emotions through auditory, tactile, and audio-tactile cues (Sharp et al., 2019). In the study, participants listened to melodies expressing happiness, sadness, fear/threat and peacefulness, and rated each excerpt for these emotions. The stimuli were delivered through headphones and a haptic glove with audio exciters. The findings indicate that musicians and non-musicians perform similarly in identifying basic emotions like happiness and sadness. However, significant differences emerged between the two groups regarding the more complex emotions in music, like fear/threat and peacefulness, suggesting that musical training enhances emotion identification in both auditory and tactile contexts. This aligns with existing research showing that musical training enhances various aspects of music processing, including pitch, timing and timbre, as well as emotional understanding of music.

In light of these findings, it appears plausible that musicians possess a heightened sensitivity to their instruments' functionality and aesthetic characteristics. I suspect that my background as a performing artist and session singer may contribute to my inclination to focus on the voices within songs. My training also informs how I

interpret and create songs. Here, Vanina Leschziner and Gordon Brett's study, "Beyond Two Minds: Cognitive, Embodied, and Evaluative Processes in Creativity" (2019), offers interesting insights into how chefs, who primarily cater to diners seeking unique dining experiences, aim to deliver extraordinary dishes. They often achieve this by combining existing recipes with novel elements. Consequently, it is natural for chefs to blend heuristic knowledge (information used frequently and retrieved effortlessly) with analytic thinking when crafting dishes to make them both appear innovative and ensure they possess the necessary sensory appeal for their restaurants (2019, p. 17). I find these insights relatable as to how the degree to which songmakers rely on either type of thinking – heuristic or analytic – varies and is connected to the task at hand and their style of music.

As a musician, I also know that it is never about how we talk about our playing, it is all about how we play. It is also relatable to how I move *as* voice and, *with* a voice, to create a performance presence and interact with the material and context presented in the moment. Even knowing that sound is merely sound – measurable waves, one can sense with the body – it can be perceived as a force that has the ability to motivate and affect people emotionally and physically. As such, I can conceptualise it as something happening *to* me and simultaneously as a sensation emerging from *within,* meaning that the song affords both a centrifugal and centripetal activity. This is illustrated by author Giles Smith's reflection about listening to his favourite track, and the ability of music to both transport us out of ourselves, and at the same time, centre us (1995, p. 40). The resulting idea is that musical understanding is not based on mere thought and reflection but on the experience itself. Musical identification can, as such, blur the line between subject and object, which makes listening something we *do.* Like any other musical engagement is thus an activity with the potential to dissolve the distinction between subject and object (Clarke, 2005, p. 150). We become one with the song, feel the groove and start to sing along and dance as Stevie Wonder sings in "Sir Duke" (1976), "You can tell right away at letter A, When the people start to move, They can feel it all over" (0:40-0:45). Similarly, we become a part of and find ourselves in the mere activity of listening as an embodied experience.

To approach listening as an embodied experience then can be to treat it as an intimate pathway to our being and thus intricately connected to emotions, contrary to seeing, which leads to reflection and reason. As Idhe notes, "There is an old and

deeply held tradition that vision 'objectifies', and, contrarily but not so widely noted, there is also a tradition which holds that sound "personifies" (2007, p. 21). In drawing attention to a need for a philosophy of listening and an ontology of the auditory – and thus to what Merleau-Ponty calls a "singing of the world" – Idhe's aim is not to replace visualisation as the basis of the human experience of the world but to move toward a different understanding rooted in the phenomenology of auditory experience (2007, p. 15). According to him, vision has been preferred as the most reliable sense throughout history [8]. Idhe notes how the Western tradition's emphasis on visual perception has greatly contributed to its rationality and understanding. However, the strong preference for sight can, paradoxically, lead to a certain neglect of the richness of the global human experience, including the equally profound dimension of listening (2007, p. 8). This "latent visualist tradition in philosophy" is, according to Idhe, deeply rooted in English and most related Indo-European languages, as evidenced by the pervasive use of visual metaphors and meanings. Terms like "enlightenment", "insight" or "lightbulb-moment" thus illuminate how sight is connected to knowledge and clarity, while "the inner voice" refers to human conscience, intuition and belief systems. These understandings have thus become the root metaphor for thought, dominating our understanding of thinking ingrained in language and culture.

Additionally, the connection that listeners feel to the song and whether or not they identify with the genre or the artist are significant factors in how they talk about music. Regardless of how we approach lyrics and voices, they tend to make listeners reach beyond the sounding song in search of their meaning. Sometimes, people detect traces of the songwriter and performer's body and mind in the performance. They subsequently feel their own bodies and senses being activated, even from merely recalling the song in their memories. Moreover, they sense the artist's ideas, emotions, beliefs, attitudes and personalities resonate with their understanding and experience of self. Most of the time, this is done without reflection and merely as an intuitive response. The songs, the artists, the lyrics and voices thus become genuine experiences integrated into everyday life, our memories and our life-narratives. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, "Most of the truths

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[8] For example, Aristotle notes, "Above all, we value sight . . . because sight is the principal source of knowledge and reveals many differences between one object and another". Ihde, D. (2007). *Listening and Voice – Phenomenologies of Sound* (Second Edition ed.). New York: State University of New York Press. For Aristotle, sight was a commonly valued sense because it is associated with differences and distinctions and is tied to a metaphysics of objects, making it the "objective" sense.

we accumulate – about our bodies, the people we interact with, and our immediate physical and social environments – play a role in daily functioning" (1980, p. 160). These "truths" are so familiar that we seldom think about them. However, as unconscious interpretations, they are persuasive in structuring how we understand, navigate and conduct ourselves in relation to other people and the world. How then do our experiences, background and training inform our understanding of lyrics and voices?

4.1.3 Experiencing life, the world and ourselves in songs

According to Keith Negus, there are different opinions among musicologists concerning the impact that the listener's demographic and lived experiences have on song analysis (2012, p. 374). While some argue that the musical material can reveal possible interpretations, others position the listening *experience* as the text. Negus points to Tia DeNora's attempt to convey how people's use of music and ways of positioning themselves can be unpredictable. At the same time, musical scholars like Eric Clarke and Nicola Dibben are concerned with how musical material informs "values, knowledge, and aesthetic understandings". Clarke and Dibben argue that a listener's comprehension and analytical interpretation of musical material are linked. They connect the social meaning of songs to formal musicological analysis, critical interpretation and the concept of "subject position".

For example, in exploring the relationship between words and music in "Magdalena" by Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention and "Taut" by Polly Jean Harvey and John Parish, Eric Clarke demonstrates how the subject position of songs is specified by "features of the musical material" (2005, p. 94). Dibben draws on Clarke's use of this concept in her analysis of Jarvis Cocker of Pulp to offer a perspective on "masculinity and pornography through visual imagery, song lyrics, use of voice, lead guitar motives, and instrumental timbre" (2012, p. 374). According to Dibben, songs afford "subject positions on behalf of its listener", which people can identify with, in turn informing socio-cultural belonging and self-formation, and offering ways of revisiting emotions and memories (2007, p. 171). However, as Negus points out, the claims following the mentioned examples of musicological hermeneutic analysis performed by Clarke and Dibben suggest that "their interpretations are comprehensive enough to contain the meanings with

which all listeners will have to contend" (2012, p. 375). Thus, they assume to have identified the "position" of an abstracted "subject". The point of interest, then, is which elements attract our attention and what makes us identify with lyrics and voices. Take a step further, how do we read ourselves, our lives and the world around us into the stories they tell?

4.1.4 Songs introduce new possibilities and understandings

Carole King, Carly Simon and Joni Mitchell were among a group of female artists who represented a generation of women coming of age in the 60s as independent women. In singing songs about love affairs and experimental ways of living, they not only contributed to the creation of a new style of feminine songwriting but became some of the most important voices introducing novel understandings of what it meant to be a young girl or boy growing up in the 70s. As a girl born in the early 60s, I belong to this generation of women. My favourite at the time was Carly Simon, and I used to love singing along with her songs and hearing how her deep vocal register resembled my own singing voice. I would turn the speakers up, dance and sing my heart out. I particularly enjoyed the sound of my voice blending with her voice, which probably is one of the main reasons for my falling in love with the mere sensation of singing and doing backing vocals.

These songwriters' lyrics also captured me. In particular, I resonated with the way Joni Mitchell's confessional lyrics exhibited poetic narratives of lived experiences, as exemplified in the song she wrote after putting her daughter up for adoption, "Little Green" (1971). The first verse ends with the lines, "Call her Green for the children who have made her. Little Green, be a gipsy dancer" (0:29- 0:43). The next verse continues by addressing the lyrical subject of the song's relationship with the girl's father: "He went to California, Hearing everything's warmer there, So you write him a letter and say, 'her eyes are blue'" (0:45- 1:04).

As with the lyrics to "Little Green", Joni Mitchell often used her life experiences as source material. Her way of telling stories and writing songs led her to be categorised as a confessional songwriter. However, nothing she described was unique to her. On the contrary, her ability to address issues relating particularly to women allowed her listeners to read themselves and their lives in her songs. She was not merely interested in telling the truth about herself but wanted to reveal and

express human truths (Papayanis, 2010, p. 650). How, then, do we read ourselves and our lives into songs?

Simon Firth asks if we automatically become the "you" in the writer's narrative and if we therefore are obligated to adopt the writer's feelings (1996, p. 184). He points out how we can enjoy lyrics without necessarily inserting ourselves into the storyline. With this in mind, and from my own experience, I find that listeners neither automatically become *the other* nor *merge with* the story's subject. Regardless of the level of musical engagement, they still position themselves in relation to the song. In other words, although the narrative of a song may not directly mirror our own experiences, we can still establish an emotional and aesthetic connection with it. Furthermore, we can acknowledge its value in advocating for certain beliefs and mindsets that resonate with or oppose our own. For instance, during this era, songmakers promoted ideas such as women's sexual agency and challenging gender norms.

As mentioned earlier, Susan McClary, suggests that music holds a primary position among cultural "technologies of the body" that shape our experiences. Because music intersects with the body and thus challenges and constitutes "norms of subjectivity, gender and sexuality", it is therefore the site of the politics of music (2016b, pp. 204, 205). Marilyn Adler Papayanis' readings of Joni Mitchell's songs support McClary's thinking in referring to how Mitchell's storytelling introduced narratives of sexual freedom to popular music that helped legitimise new choices made available for young women of their time (2010, p. 642). However, despite Firth's description of rock in the 1960s as "a new sort of sexual articulation by women as well as men", women continued to be objectified and, thus, constructed as sexualised subjects and treated as sexual objects (2010, p. 645). Nevertheless, they started to gain economic and social autonomy as women and demanded to be recognised as thinking women who were in control of their sexuality.

Songmaking can thus be a way of challenging the norms of society and advancing issues related to political and structural injustice, which leads us now to Hanna Arendt's understanding of responsibility.

4.1.5 Songmaking and responsibility

According to Annabel Herzog, Arendt addresses the difference between being born as something – a *natural* condition – and joining or forming a group, which would be a *political* condition (2014, p. 191). The distinctions between these conditions do not imply leaving one group favouring the other. It is instead a matter of natural fellowship and political membership, and of becoming active and letting one's natural condition become a political reality. Responsibility can then only come from challenging one's community through one's initiative; as Herzog writes, "Responsibility consists of acting; but acting publicises a passivity that is always there" (Arendt 1958, p. 208, Herzog, 2014, p. 191). This then becomes a way of taking responsibility for one's responsibility. Even if it does not feel like a political act, it is still a way of challenging one's community. Hannah Arendt became responsible by making her *natural condition*, or natural fellowship of being born into a group, become a political reality or *political condition*. In other words, she was accepting the given but transforming its meaning through action, which in a democratic context means voicing one's opinions. In songmaking and performing, taking responsibility can be narrating lived experiences into songs or expressing attitudes and beliefs through rebellious performances and genres. As emphasised by Stan Hawkins, even though the way we perceive rock performances is constantly evolving, the aspect of subject positioning relying on the interplay of human expression implies that performers carry a significant social responsibility (2020, p. 250). For some artists, this means using their position to advocate for specific ideologies or address social and political injustice. In this sense, artists and songmakers can take responsibility for natural conditions and make them a political or socially challenging reality through their work.

Hence, looking back, I have realised that the songs and lyrics I listened to as a teenager probably had a more significant impact on me and my friends than any pronounced political agenda. They thus contributed significantly to preparing the grounds for the future generation's opportunities to express themselves. However, artists who challenge cultural and societal norms, especially concerning gender, race and identity, still face bias and criticism towards their person, music and appearance. I therefore want to draw attention to discursive understandings and perceptions of one artist in my generation who continues to explore, excite, and provoke, namely Madonna.

4.1.6 Madonna – a puppet or a responsible genius?

At the time I first heard of Madonna and saw her initial videos on MTV, discussions about her music, appearance and vocal style were prevalent at social gatherings, among musicians and in the media. Speculations about how she secured her record deal and dismissive comments regarding her “limited” vocal abilities and provocative artistic image suggested that she had no legitimate claim to the level of success she had achieved. As Susan McClary notes, some viewed her as a commercial puppet, while others described her as someone who harnessed her gender and sexuality for self-promotion. McClary furthermore describes how critics responded to Madonna’s visual images and narratives, as enacted in her videos, by calling her everything from a feminist who inspires girls to control their sexuality to a “porn queen in heat”. She suggests that these responses, which appear to be the majority of reactions to Madonna, imply that her music is irrelevant. Converse to such viewpoints, McClary finds that Madonna can be perceived as the head of a corporation producing representations of herself rather than a representative for the “authentic” and spontaneous artist of “rock mythology”. (2016, p. 213). Either way, she is not a puppet.

Given my admiration for Madonna and as someone belonging to the same generation, I am interested in McClary’s use of “authenticity” in this context. Perhaps she refers to artists often associated with a specific style or attitude that has become synonymous with rock music as “authentic figures of rock mythology”. This is a genre label intertwined with a rich and diverse mythology that has evolved over the years. It encompasses tales and legends about the artists and the culture and lifestyle surrounding it, sometimes overshadowing the actual music. Rock artists have often been associated with ideas of rebellion, individuality and authenticity, concepts that resonate with how Madonna's persona has been interpreted in discursive discussions. Consequently, the question arises: what characterises an “authentic” rock artist if not someone who consistently challenges conventional ideas regarding female behaviour and appearance in their music, videos and public presence?

For instance, in “Like a Prayer” (1989), a song co-written and produced with Patrick Leonard, Madonna explores a young girl's devotion and love for a God-like figure. This song delves into complex issues of sexuality and Christianity,

weaving references to the Catholic Church, mysticism and the Black Gospel church and choir (Susan McClary, 2016, p. 165). The lyrics capture the dualistic nature of the girl's relationship: “Life is a mystery. Everyone must stand alone. I hear you call my name. And it feels like home” (0:10- 0:30). Here, there are parallels to be drawn between traditional worship testimonies and human relationships. However, the lyrics contain religious and subtle sexual connotations: “When you call my name, it's like a little prayer. I'm down on my knees. I wanna take you there” (0:37- 0:45). Madonna's treatment of sensitive religious themes, then, was both unexpected and controversial (Susan McClary, 2016, p. 163). So, why is she – as a rock artist – not “authenticated” by her performance and material?

Beyond Madonna's music, videos, performances and provocative style, she has used her platform to confront ageism and misogyny by challenging the media's relentless focus on her appearance and that of women in general. This demonstrates that Madonna is not a puppet to be manipulated as others see fit or dehumanised as an idealised female figure. Therefore, I align with McClary in her portrayal of Madonna's persona and music as emerging from various social discursive practices and conventions of female representation. Her way of addressing cultural experiences and audience perceptions substantiates her credibility (2016, p. 215). Thus, I contemplate whether much of the discourse surrounding Madonna, depicting her as solely fixated on self-representation through images, is an attempt to undermine her political and cultural significance. As a woman of the same generation, I wonder whether male artists experimenting with their staged personas and performances have faced the same degree of attention and scrutiny; perhaps instead they have been praised for their style and courage, in challenging gender norms and religious and political issues.

In any case, Madonna's image, identity and motivations were subjects of discussion from the moment she entered the realm of popular music, and they continue to be so today. This reminds us that no matter how we interpret lyrics and voices, our everyday experiences with music go beyond perceiving it solely as a “meaningful” or “communicative” medium (DeNora, 2000, p. 17). Instead, it is “implicated in every dimension of social agency”, meaning it informs our behaviour, self-reflection and perceptions of the world. Moreover, as Nicola Dibben highlights, discourses surrounding artists often connect notions of authentic stage personas and performances to who they are in their personal lives

(2007, p. 173). Others, however, view the stage persona as an opportunity for the artist to project their true essence and self. It is thus interesting to explore where these various expressions are grounded. Is it genuine expressions of hidden identities, mere role-play, or rather not one or the other?

Stan Hawkins points out with reference to David Bowie, that he gave "credence to the idea that role-playing lies at the heart of pop aesthetics and that one's individual style can undergo constant remodelling and change" (2020, p. 247). In this manner, Bowie consistently redefined himself by embracing various personas. Furthermore, as emphasised in this thesis, the artist's survival relies on the dynamic interaction between personas – or characters – the audience and the artist's self-understanding. This serves as a reminder of how our perception of and relationship with artists, their music and ourselves are continually subject to change.

The ways interpretations differ between performances, situations and listeners have attracted researchers' attention in various ways. Examples of this are, for instance, found in close readings of different performers performing the same material, and thus comparisons between covers and originals.

4.2 Covers and originals

Differentiating between good or bad interpretations seems to be based on performance traditions, styles, conventions and norms established within specific genres. For example, in musical theatre, singers perform the thoughts and actions of a specific character. The author of the songs can be the same and sometimes unknown to the audience, and the connection between the performers and the songs is thus grounded in a script and dramaturgical choices. The issue, then, is to which degree should one consider the composer or lyricist's intention?

In his discourse on how the performer's voice connects with the internalised "voices" of a lyric or poem, Lars Eckstein draws attention to Edward T. Cone's study, *The Composer's Voice* (1974; 2010, p. 45), in which Cone introduces the idea of interpretations being categorised as either "legitimate" and "faithful" or "illegitimate". According to Cone, an "illegitimate" interpretation occurs when the singer imposes their own self-expression onto the composer's voice, essentially using it as a medium for their personal expression, thus deviating from the intended

interpretation (1974, p. 62). In this sense, this performance practice initially seems to fit Cone's criteria for a "legitimate" interpretation or "faithful" performance, which implies that a singer, like an actor, occupies the dual role of a dramatic character and an individual. In their capacity as a character, they thus must conform to the requirements of the "musico-dramatic situation" and stay "faithful to the text". However, as a "real" person, they should insist on their freedom, crafting their unique interpretation. Cone suggests that the tension between these two aspects of the singer's role intriguingly mirrors the tension observed within the dramatic character they depict, and thus the challenge of balancing between their inclinations towards personal freedom and the limitations imposed on them as an "artistic motif" (1974, pp. 60,61). According to Eckstein, then, Cone's definition of a "legitimate" interpretation implies that the singers are expected to become empty vessels, setting aside their own biographies, characters and media images to embody the voice of the speaker or persona in the lyrics and music, as intended by the composer or poet (2010, p. 45). Their goal is therefore to recreate the original composition, allowing the composer's voice to hold maximum authority.

However, in popular music and modern songmaking and production, we rarely rely on scores as primary source material. Therefore, analysing pop songs is also quite different from how I was taught to interpret music as a music student in the early 80s. To access the intention of composers and lyricists we therefore relate to a recording which means that the song's first recording tends to be viewed as the "original". Any later versions are labelled "covers", which have ignited similar debates as those brought forward by Cone, namely, which recording and artist embody the song's "true" meaning. Any later versions are labelled "covers", which have ignited similar debates as those brought forward by Cone, namely, which recording and artist embody the song's "true" meaning.

Over the years, televised song competitions like *Idol* and *The Voice* have featured talents who primarily sing cover songs instead of their own material. In these shows and other similar venues, including Higher Music Education, singers are expected and inspired to add something new and original to the song. Advice, which in itself is a way of inspiring the performer to trust their musicality and vocal skills and to exhibit their unique perspective. To merely copy another performance of the song is thus viewed as uncreative and less personal. Additionally, it is generally less musically and personally engaging from a performer's perspective.

To explore the tension between how a voice and a vocal performance is produced, perceived and experienced I will therefore address the relationship between two of the four approaches to lyrics and voices: *listening* and *singing/performing.*

4.2.1 Covers or new originals?

Covers exhibit differences across historical and cultural contexts. Another aspect cover songs draw attention to is the singer's ability to "make the song their own", in that the song is presented in a new and unique way, but still in a manner that is associated with the "original" version. Dai Griffiths suggests that covers "look two ways" by drawing attention to musical change and "identity in motion" (2002, pp. 51-52). This perspective thus prompts us to explore the impact of musical transformation and even question to what degree these terms themselves are influenced by our encounters with music. For the performer, the sensed distance and altered subject position between the original and the cover could, according to Griffiths, be approached in two operational categories, namely "rendition" and "transformation". While rendition implies staying close to the original version and thereby also genre performance practice, transformation is a more "determined claim on the original" that sometimes appears to be closer to an appropriation (2002, p. 52).

The act of appropriation thus involves both reflection and interpretation, which to Ricoeur means "to make one's own" what was initially "alien" (2016, p. xxx). This is relevant to the expectation that singers perform the song as if it were their own. The question is whether "appropriation" in this context then can be viewed as collapsing the distance – and therefore, the grounds for comparison – between the original and the cover. Cover songs, then, provide valuable insight regarding how different meanings coincide among various interpretations of the same musical content. Well-known examples are the comparisons made between the song "I Will Always Love You" by Dolly Parton from 1974 and the version recorded by Whitney Houston for the soundtrack of *The Bodyguard* in 1992. Another example is the ongoing discussion amongst music press, fans and scholars comparing performances of the song "Hurt" by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails in 1994 and the cover by Johnny Cash in 2002. Both are covers viewed as "new originals".

In Eirik Askerøi's close reading of Johnny Cash's cover, he writes that the song is given "new life" and questions to what extent Cash's "powerful performance is connected to the mythologies that constitute Johnny Cash's persona" (2013, p. 39). This reading is aligned with William Echard's concept of "the authorial persona", representing "the interesting conflation of textual identities and "real" identities" (2018, p. 179). The interesting point here, then, is how the authorial persona is "guaranteed survival", which, according to Eckard, requires that everything points back to itself centripetally and maintains its position. Doing so limits the interpretive horizon and the centrifugal potential of multivocality. Yet stylistic or genre traditions can challenge our perception of a song when it is performed by an artist associated with a different genre. Moreover, covers bring forth questions concerning whether the creator of a performance is the author of the performed song or merely an interpreter. In cases where songs are written by songmakers who are not performers, any version will be read as an interpretation of "something" – a musical idea, intent or meaning – existing prior to the performance. Issues related to perceptions of originals and covers also ignite questions of how intertextual relationships come into play regarding, for instance, which versions are "accepted" as originals and why. Covers thus exhibit many aspects of intertextual relationships, and at the same time, the multiplicity of songs. However, if originality is closely connected with authenticity and similar concepts, it might initially appear, as Moore points out, to be opposite or contradictory to intertextuality (2012, p. 49).

How then can we acknowledge that songs are intertextually related, and where should we draw the line between copying and creating a new original from existing material? Can concepts of authenticity and trustworthiness be addressed without indicating that this implies assessing someone, their songs or their voice as inauthentic or untrustworthy? Comparing versions of songs can also raise awareness of how our interpretations of vocal performances are informed by coded meanings in the voice indicating gender, age or race.

To attempt to answer these questions, I will start by drawing attention to Joni Mitchell's remarks regarding Bob Dylan's voice and musicality, which are only detectable through *listening*.

4.2.2 Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan is a songmaker and performer who is generally praised for his work. His songs, lyrics and voice are distinct markers of his style and authorial persona, and few question his originality or authenticity. One exception is found in an interview in which Joni Mitchell asserts that Bob Dylan's singing style was inauthentic and everything about him a deception.

Mitchell later claimed that the journalist misread her and clarified her statement in another interview:

> I like a lot of Bob's songs, though musically, he's not very gifted. He's borrowed his voice from old hillbillies. He's got a lot of borrowed things. He's not a great guitar player. He's invented a character to deliver his songs. Sometimes, I wish that I could have that character – because you can do things with that character. It's a mask of sorts (2013).

Another example related to how authenticity is determined is Moore's description of how Dylan, as a "hitherto darling of the Left, and writer of serious lyrics", created a controversy regarding his accepted and transgressive persona by performing with an electric guitar (2012, p. 262). In 1965-66, this switch was seen by many fans as a betrayal and a "sell-out" to "mass" culture. Similar prejudices are found in many musical practices and performance traditions, drawing from the idea that specific genres imply and promote ideological beliefs and values and provide a sense of belonging within a geographical or cultural community or group (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 73). These aspects thus pose a couple of questions. Firstly, which features in Dylan's vocal timbre and identifiable coded meanings in his voice indicate that Dylan has "borrowed" someone else's voice? Secondly, how can we recognise specific stylistic influences – such as the aforementioned notion of traces of Woody Guthrie's phrasing – in Dylan's singing style (Malawey, 2020, p. 91)? Lastly, as Moore asks, "To what extent does the sound that the musician makes belong to that musician?" (2012, p. 259).

I like to believe that everyone has the opportunity and "right" to play and sing whatever they like, how and whenever they want. However, in practice, artists often face pressures to legitimise their choices in repertoire and taste in music.

Additionally, assessments are based on whether they have transformed the song stylistically to align with a specific genre and cater to their fans. These pressures may come from industry gatekeepers, critics or audiences who expect certain types of music or performances from certain artists. This again raises the question of whether authenticity is ascribed and not inscribed, which in turn would suggest that it is "constructed in the listening act, rather than being discovered" (Moore, 2012, p. 266). Furthermore, artists and audiences' tastes in music may be perceived as a statement of belonging to a particular group of people or culture. In this case, recognisable traits identifying specific genres are employed to denote the presumed audience – and thus a category of people – for a category of music.

4.2.3 Categories of music and categories of people

According to Tagg, popular music is created for mass distribution to diverse listeners, stored and distributed in non-written forms, produced as a commodity in an industrial monetary economy, and subject to capitalist laws of supply and demand (1987, pp. 4-5). Moreover, as Brackett notes, "Capitalism channels desire into the production of categories of music and humans that continue to proliferate…" (1995, p. 32). However, the ways categories of music relate to categories of people can neither be imposed merely by the music industry nor created by fan's desires. Ultimately, the relationship between modern pop music and people is complex and dynamic, involving industry influence and individual interpretation and reception. Brackett furthermore observes how the use of genre labels to describe musical taste is common in various contexts, such as in TV shows like *Glee*, where characters use genre to explain why a romance would not work (2016a, p. 2). Exhibiting that the genres in popular music are closely tied to how people identify with different types of music. The question of genre is therefore not created top-down, imposed by the industry, nor bottom-up by consumers (2016a, p. 32).

Genre labels then exist for a reason and mainly as a reference to musical taste. They have thus sparked discussions about the relationship between identification and genre in public and scholarly discourse, which involves questions regarding whether the "effects" of a musical genre are directly connected to its style or traits. Moreover, it suggests that genres can exist in a *homological* and *performative* relation to a group of people (2016a, p. 20). These relationships provide

opportunities for people to experience themselves or their visions represented in a genre or the music of a particular artist. Genres can, on the other hand, contribute to excluding people from enjoying and performing particular pieces of music as they do not meet the criteria of these genre categories. For example, there are often specific features of vocal timbre connected to the "authentic" and therefore credible traits of a musical genre, which would indicate that one must exhibit these vocal features to be acknowledged as a trustworthy singer within the category. However, as mentioned, although one can adjust the aesthetic presentation of the voice and its timbre by adding voice qualities and effects, our voice bear the markings of a specific individual because it is produced by the vocal apparatus, and thus the body in which we are born.

Categorising our musical taste is therefore to essentially categorise ourselves. However, musical categories evolve and change, as do audiences and artists. For instance, as most of us learn, the music we identify with at a young age is not necessarily the genre we listen to later in life. Similarly, the artists we connect with may also change their style of music, as will genres. This indicates that the relationship between them is complex and unstable.

Although individual tastes are known to change or expand, some experience that their musical taste and genre choice require validation or justification. Occasionally, these issues are brought to the surface, as they did in an interview with Sade Adu in 1985. Before proceeding to the next part, I will share a personal story about my connection with Sade Adu and her song "Smooth Operator" (1984).

4.2.4 "Smooth Operator" in 1985 and today

As a student at Dick Grove School of Music in Los Angeles, California, in 1984-85, I took a course called "Producers Workshop" and proudly received an A on a paper on Sade's hit song "Smooth Operator". The song was released in the US in February of the same year, and, according to my paper dated May 25, 1985, it was one week after that the song peaked at nr. 5 on the Billboard Hot 100 list. This assignment later became the basis for my term paper at the University of Oslo the following year but had been hidden deep in my memory since then. The song "Smooth Operator" was the opening track of Sade's debut album, *Diamond Life*, 1985, and marked a new era of jazz-pop songs influenced by bossa and soul

emerging in the mid-80s. The charts had been dominated by what now is known as "the sound of the 80s", which felt energetic and, at the same time, overproduced and dense, packed with various textures of sound, overdubs and elaborate vocal and instrumental performances. According to my paper, I found "Smooth Operator" particularly interesting because "the overall sound; vocal performance, production, rhythm, harmony, and instrumentation" differed from other hits at the time. I was fortunate enough to have a car stereo in my VW Rabbit and a Sony Walkman as my main source of music, which enabled me to listen to the radio and cassette recordings of my favourite music whenever I had the chance. When "Smooth Operator" came on the radio, the song felt fresh and different. It had an intimate quality and made me feel like I was sitting in a nightclub listening to a live band. To this day, the song brings me back to LA, driving on the freeway, while the image of Sade singing in a nightclub, accompanied by a combo band, appears in my mind. However, thinking back, I have come to realise that my memory of Sade performing in a nightclub was probably from the video and thus created at a later date.

As mentioned, "Smooth Operator" was released in the mid-80s, and Sade became one of the pop icons of the MTV era, a period described by Stan Hawkins as "greatly impacted by the visual spectacle of the pop video" (2017, p. 2). The video of this song shows couples dancing in the background while a young man, seeming to be a lover boy while later turning out to be a professional criminal, is hunted by the police while navigating through the crowd. The official version illustrates the narrative of the lyrics portraying how this "smooth operator" operates. However, the extended version includes images of the police chasing the conman to his death, eventually falling off a rooftop. However, when I revisited the assignment while preparing for this project, I noticed that I had not answered the last question of the assignment: "Have you seen a video of this song? If so, did it make any difference in your overall opinion of this record?". I thus realised that I lacked a response because the only information I had at the time was just the sound itself. However, my memory has added layers of information gathered over the years and removed itself from my initial perception of the song. Hence, the challenge of listening to it now is remembering it as it was initially.

I now know the impact Sade, the song and the video have had on pop music since its release. This is another reminder of how perceptions of musical meaning can

change each day. Reading other studies and musical press dealing retrospectively with pop music from the 60s, 70s and early 80s, this phenomenon is relatively standard. It feels almost impossible to recall a time before music videos and social media provided the amount of information that we have today. This further contributes to the public's fascination with the personal lives of celebrities and their curiosity to discover the genuine individual behind their projected image.

Connecting the life of artists with their work can, however, create a sense of obligation for artists to justify their decisions regarding the type of music they produce and their musical preferences to industry gatekeepers, critics, and audiences. Additionally, associating categories of music and categories of people raises awareness of how coded meanings in the voice can be crucial to how we identify aspects including gender, age or race in vocal performances.

4.2.5 The Singer's "Right to Sing" – For Those Who Listen

"She grew up listening to Marvin Gaye, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin. Herein lies the problem with Sade. What is soul? And does she have it?" (SpinStaff, 2019)

As previously mentioned, I conducted a close reading of "Smooth Operator" coinciding with its release in 1985 by Sade Adu. During the course of writing this thesis, I revisited the song multiple times and explored publications about both the song and Sade Adu. Surprisingly, I discovered an interview in the May 1985 issue of the American music magazine *SPIN*, republished online in its original form (SpinStaff, 2019). Notably, the interview lacks an editorial disclaimer or commentary addressing what I interpret as subtle undertones of prejudice throughout. The interviewer discusses Sade Adu's debut album, "Diamond Life", describing her as "a coffee-coloured queen" in designer attire, with "a wide-angle forehead under which shining eyes dart like beetles". They further delve into Adu's background before discussing what she terms as the "mood and jazz-tinged nature" of Adu's music. Additionally, they note that others have compared Sade Adu's vocal performances to those of torch singers like Billie Holiday, a compliment from which Adu distances herself, arguing that she never intended to be a jazz singer.

Adu, however, identifies soul singers as her primary influences; according to the interview, these are artists who initially embodied “a subversive and heartfelt rebel yell” and are now in search of a new identity. In search of a new definition of soul, the interviewer asks whether specific qualifications must be met to qualify as a soul singer, suggesting that Sade's vocal delivery could be misconstrued as professional suffering due to her rising stardom as “a glamorous middle-class girl with a voice”. Confronted with these questions, Adu refers to her heritage as British and Nigerian and her mother's struggle as a white mother of “two brown children in the early 60’s”. Sade Adu is then asked whether she presents herself as a black or white artist, which the interviewer claims is a genre requirement made by the music industry. Adu answers by expressing her attitude towards issues of race related to music: “I don’t like segregation…Music is something which should be available to all people. When you go into a club, there is no colour bar on the dance floor, so why should it apply to radio stations? Unfortunately, it does” (2019).

For me, this interview places Sade Adu in a defensive position, requiring her to justify her ‘right to sing’ soul music based on her appearance, vocal quality and life experiences, highlighting how specific genres are regulated by conventions that serve as gatekeepers, authenticating the artist, the performance and the song. This raises the question: Who holds the authority to determine an artist's eligibility to perform in a particular genre? Is it a matter of birth right, a position attainable through practice or is it ultimately up to the audience's perception?

In *The Race of Sound,* (2019b), Nina Eidsheim observes an artificial division between the singer and the listener, stating that these positions are not mutually exclusive. Instead, any evaluation or decision concerning vocal practice is fundamentally rooted in the listener's perspective, even when the vocalisers themselves make the assessment. She continues, “…singers put [a] song into the world, offering up vocal sounds and themselves, both of which the listener subsequently objectifies” (2019b, p. 185). The question then is where genre conventions are grounded and whether they function as a stable reference to an individual “author” – as I have previously suggested, an “author function” derived from Foucault's concept – viewed as “static entities” with “stable boundaries”. Assessments of value, truth and trust can then be grounded in ideological beliefs and preconceived notions of authenticity and integrity. When performers challenge

or cross these abstract lines, they risk criticism and judgment projected onto their music and them as people and artists.

Another way of approaching genre is that these categories change, with every artist and audience bringing their own into the mix. As suggested by Brackett, there is no inherent genre identity that precedes expressions of genre. Instead, genre is performatively constituted through the actual expressions that are often considered to be its outcomes (2016b, p. 13). Hence, even though genres of music tend to be associated with categories of people, associations and tastes can change. Therefore, performers who invest themselves in their music also categorise themselves and their work, which places them in a vulnerable position. Here, Derek Scott makes an interesting reference to authenticity as one effect of listening inn that many listeners need to believe in the honesty expressed in music and the sincerity of particular genres, such as rock (2009, p. 4). Otherwise, he says, the artist's investment in their music will appear insincere, and any emotional engagement will be perceived as a technique rather than an honest expression of emotion. The artist’s vulnerability is therefore twofold: firstly, they expose themselves to potential rejection from their audience; secondly, they internalise the rules and conventions dictated by the genre, societal norms and the music industry. This internalisation can constrain their artistic autonomy as they become beholden to external frameworks that may limit their creative freedom. So, how can we allow for both artistic freedom and the integrity of music performance traditions?

If the answer is found in the performer's emotional intentions, then breaking the rules will be as authentic as the authenticity of the authenticator. Hence, acts of rebellion against established norms have, in the past, led to new genres and, thus, new sets of conventions.

To highlight the way some singers connect with their audience through their performance, lyrics and songs, I will now explore some aspects of the performance practice known as torch songs.

4.2.6 Torch songs

> "…and when it's my mistake and everything goes wrong, I would write what I feel in a song" (Miles, 1983).

At the turn of the century, before the First World War, New York firms had monopolised the sheet music industry, making it almost impossible for independent composers to publish elsewhere. In the following years, firms centred around Twenty-Eighth Avenue, nicknamed Tin Pan Alley, established their own monopoly by employing songwriters who wrote within a certain formula. According to Simon Frith, this particular style of writing developed by Tin Pan Alley dominated the popular music scene until the mid-60s. However, by that time, it was rejected for its "rhythm ´n´ blues-pop's vapidity" and "replaced by blues realism" (1989, p. 82). Lyrics of that era were treated as sentimental and unrealistic "clichés of the ordinary" with a central theme, love, as the "sentimental ideology of capitalistic society" that reflected the desires of society. Torch songs were a type of popular music ballad that originated in the early twentieth century and were popularised in the 1930s and 1940s. The songs had lyrics about unrequited or lost love that were primarily sung by jazz singers and nightclub performers.

The term allegedly originates from an idiom describing unreciprocated love, "to carry a torch for someone", as one who keeps the flame of love alive even when your beloved does not love you back. The songs were always sung by a woman and were based on a formula that contained lyrics describing her love for a man who treated her badly. The man was portrayed as a dominant figure, exploiting women sexually and emotionally, while the feminine character was mysterious and, at the same time, desperate and dependent. However, even though the torch singers reflected on men's behaviour and interpreted men's words, their feelings were expressed with a reflective distance (Frith, 1996, p. 200).

Torch singers were presented visually as sophisticated, urban women who, according to John Moore, portrayed a female figure who seemingly enjoyed her emotional pain of desperately loving a man who no longer wanted her (2000, p. 265). Additionally, the performers were regarded as exotic due to their ethnic origin or features, which in many cases were "enhanced by cosmetics and costuming" (2000, p. 270). The responses to torch songs, torch singers and the

feelings they evoked were in many ways conflicting and complex. When the style evolved, most female singers performed upbeat songs using a cute, bright voice quality, making the low-keyed, husky and raw-sounding torch singer appear emotionally expressive and exotic. Torch singers created an intimate connection with the individual listener. They were storytellers who emerged in a musical atmosphere, creating a space for the audience to feel whatever they were feeling. Which indicates the lyrics as depicting a lament sung by a woman deeply in love with an ordinary or even uncaring man who mistreats her, abandons her or no longer has affection for her (2000, p. 264). According to Frith, this implied that these expressions were simply signs of emotions the singer was intended to explore (1996, p. 200). A similar description can be found in Stacy Holman Jones' notes on how Billie Holiday *is* her material and at the same time separated from it: "Holiday could write her own story and sing about transformation and freedom, but she couldn't live it, on her own terms, in her own life" (2010, pp. 284-285).

While Holiday seemed to have a unique ability to connect emotionally with the music and her audience, other singers like Sarah Vaughan were known for their wide vocal range and rich timbre. Vaughan was a skilled piano player who drew much of her vocal inspiration from instrumentalists like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, mimicking the sound of their horns and how they improvised. Her version of "Body and Soul" from 1952 became one of my greatest inspirations as an aspiring 19-year-old vocalist studying with the renowned Norwegian jazz singer Karin Krogh. I found Vaughan's singing style effortless and musically playful as she moved her voice through complex harmonic structures and melodic intervals. To me, Sarah Vaughan seemed to reach inwards into the music and let the mood and musical structure of the song guide her phrasing and performance presence. I thus find that her vocal performance in "Body and Soul" has a sensuous timbre and a sob quality, projecting precision and feeling, while Billie Holiday's recording of the same song in 1940 seems like an unveiled musical expression of "raw emotion".

4.2.7 The voice of torch singers

Although Sade Adu's vocals in "Smooth Operator" are not as emotionally expressive, there is a line to be drawn between her and Billie Holliday's singing styles. They do not use elaborate phrasings or melismas or express powerful vocal

sounds. Although exhibiting different emotional engagement, they both seem committed to telling a story that is both in keeping with the voice of the lyrics and with a musical style and performance tradition. In an interview from 1985, Sade Adu refers to her understated singing approach as a reflection of her approach to life. In her words, “I don’t necessarily think that you have to scream and shout to move somebody” (Murray, 1985). In “Smooth Operator”, this is exemplified by her vocal timbre indicating the focalisation, which suggests a similar observing third-person position as the perspective taken in the lyrics: “His eyes are like angels, but his heart is cold. No need to ask, He's a smooth operator…” (Adu & St. John, 1984:58- 3:03).

The vocal performance thus seems to be all about the song and Sade telling a story in a particular nightclub on a particular night, drawing from a fusion of musical inspirations. Much in the same way that Susan McClary describes how blues singer Bessie Smith fused blues with “the popular songs of vaudeville and with a newly emerging idiom known as jazz” (2016a, p. 249), Sade's jazz and torch-singer-flavoured pop vocals accompanied by a lonely saxophone and combo-band set the context all by themselves.

So how can we identify the traits of this genre and the way its performers could make their songs appear seductive and create intimate communication between them and the audience? Moreover, how can we describe the ways in which emotions are expressed and heard in the voice of torch singers?

Professor Stacy Holman Jones, who is known for leading the development of performance studies, explains how “the confessional of torch” builds on a humanistic belief that singers like Billie Holiday offer a testimony. They are telling the truth about themselves, which arguably indicates that there is an “essential and stable “Billie” to be narrated and preserved in the music” (2010, p. 284). Furthermore, in portraying torch singers as actors – distanced from the material – both Holman Jones and Frith set them up as playing a character. However, as Holman Jones observes, they project vocal signs that indicate their awareness and intentions. She writes, “And then, one day, I hear myself singing along. He beats me too. What can I do? No, not me. Not my man. And yet, every time, I sing right through those awful lines” (2010, p. 283). This illustrates how listeners build a

relationship between their own lives and the singer's life; sometimes, solely based on the sound of their voice singing.

Nicola Dibben expands these notions by pointing out that one of the main ways vocal performances are understood in popular music is through the star's communication of authentic emotion. This communication is, however, not just found in the performance itself but, as Dibben further notes, is revealed through journalism, social media and other sites. She writes, "Belief in a singer's authenticity reflects one of the most prevalent ideologies of music creation and reception and of the person in contemporary society – the idea that people have an inner, private core" (2009, p. 317). Again, this raises the question of whether the singer should be authenticated by their intentions, style or ability to stay true to a genre or tradition. In the aforementioned *SPIN* interview, the journalist asks Sade Adu:

> What qualifies anyone nowadays to be a soul singer? A religious background? Coloured skin? A deprived childhood? A voice which cracks with torment and struggle? A spandex suit? What began as a subversive and heartfelt rebel yell was ripped off by the white musicians of the '60s and diluted by disco. Now, the term is so vague that it cries out for a new definition and identity. One can only react subjectively (SpinStaff, 2019).

Questions like these, as to whether an artist or performance is authentic and, as such, has earned the "right" or has the required qualifications to perform within a particular genre or sing a particular song, seem to be an effective way of reducing the song, the audience and the performer to a stable, and thus manageable, entity. Discussions concerning a singer's trustworthiness also echo concerns about how some exhibit a skilled approach rather than an emotional commitment to their performance. Furthermore, it is connected to how singers, and maybe women in particular, are expected to express emotions and lyrical content rather than their skills or style. Again, this reminds us of the ideological rules of performance practices and how "different genres can imply distinct beliefs, values and ideological positions" (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 73). In this context, one can also draw a line back to earlier views about the female artist being restricted to the "girl vocalist" role and occasional pianist. So, to return to the question of *who* has "the right to sing" *what,* if we accept that songs can be performed more or less

authentically, we accept that there are “inauthentic” songs, performances and performers. And subsequently, if the vocal performance is merely a form of delivery, who should determine *what* can be interpreted by *whom* and *how*? Because what is music if not its materiality?

To address some of these issues, I will draw attention to Allan F. Moore’s concepts of *authenticity* and *authentication* and how these can be employed to project notions of who has “the right” to sing certain songs.

4.2.8 Authenticity and The Right to Sing

Moore’s account of aspects related to perceptions of authenticity and how notions of personal integrity affect our listening experience supports, as I argue in this thesis, what seems to be a need to establish a stable artistic persona. He exemplifies this by referring to “the intimacy of a late period Johnny Cash, combined with the era of his own history”. Moore then places this “authenticity of expression” or “first person authenticity” as the *first category* within a self-constructed grid of authenticities he has labelled the “tri-partite scheme”. Moore’s *second category* authenticates the listener's experience, which is an authenticity he calls the “authenticity of experience” or “second-person authenticity”. The *third category*, “authenticity of execution” or “third person authenticity”, authenticates the “absent others” (2012, p. 269). According to him, the main argument for his categories is based on his opposition to the notion of authenticity as an inherent “essence” rather than something that is ascribed. In asking what the performance authenticates instead of what appears authentic, Moore then explores how perceptions of authenticity are connected to the act of listening, hence interpretation. Moreover, he asks *who* is being authenticated rather than *what*. As Derek Scott reminds us, post-structural semiotics relied on authenticity as an assembly of signs which constructed, represented and valorised authenticity (2009, p. 3). In other words, signs projecting authenticity were governed by conventions such as moods and emotions rather than expressions or representations of “authentic” selves. Scott's assertion further underscores the idea that there isn't a singular notion of authenticity. Instead, the most prevalent usage of the term “authentic” in the context of music pertains to preserving the traditions and origins of a particular style of performance practice (Moore, 2012, p. 263).

The issue, then, is the necessity and possible implications of identifying features that indicate honest and authentic expressions of selves, emotions and moods, of communities and cultures, and styles and genres. Consequent to this, there is the need to determine which characteristics imply dishonesty and inauthenticity – because, can there be one without the other?

If an artist's performance is perceived as trustworthy and authentic, assessments tend to rely on both musical elements and the performers engagement. It thus points to Derek Scott's observation of how many people need to believe in the sincerity of genres of music and music making. A way to define authentic music may therefore be related to its effect of making its audience believe in its truthfulness (2009, p. 4). This indicates that regardless of style or genre, singers are somewhat expected to exhibit their emotional and aesthetic investment in the performance. Moreover, it suggests that their appearance, choices and vocal timbre meet the often unspoken requirements of a particular genre. It is thus important to acknowledge the transformative and ever-changing nature of music performance perception and understanding. This is highlighted by Stan Hawkins' reference to "the irony of rock performances", where authenticity can change rapidly, challenging us to determine to which degree we believe in an artist's persona as presented through various representations. He asks, "…if this is just about role-playing, how do we know or, moreover, how do *they* know *we* know?" (2020, p. 250).

The question is furthermore whether one views authenticity as a quality situated within a musical agency or if music is a medium and not an agent and is thus not active in "expressing or representing" (Moore, 2012, p. 270). Approaching songs primarily as expressing "something", separate from its materiality, then evokes discussions about how to determine authentic and trustworthy performances. In turn, we must consider how to identify qualities indicating integrity and originality, or the lack of such. As listeners, then, any assessments we make on whether the artist has succeeded or not have to rely on our ability to recognise which voices and songs are authentic and thus authenticated. Therefore, we must ask where the premises for authenticity and authenticators are grounded and if they are mainly formed in the mind of the beholder. If this is the case, any definition of authenticity and authenticators inevitably brings forth complex quagmires one must address and approach cautiously. Additionally, if it is a matter of rituals, traditions and

conventions, then history has shown – for better or worse – that these premises are neither universal nor fixed. More importantly, as this passage has exhibited, sometimes these categories and assumptions can be based merely on preconceived notions of *who* has "the right" to sing *what* and thus bring undesired implications into the field of music performance.

Ultimately, it appears that someone labelled as an authentic artist or songmaker may be accused of stealing by others. With that in mind, I will conclude this chapter with a quote attributed to Igor Stravinsky: "Good composers borrow, great composers steal".

The next section will delve into intertextual relationships between songs, exploring how songmakers "borrow" recognisable elements from specific styles, music or lyrics and integrate them into new songs. Furthermore, I will investigate how the voice and vocal performances shape the perception of distinct concepts and attitudes, illustrating how employing both the listening and reading approaches to lyrics can reveal different and mutually supportive interpretations.

4.3 Lyrics, Voices and Their Intertextual Relations

Allan F. Moore argues that intertextuality is about borrowing, which challenges notions of original creations and utterances as "an authentic expression of the self, unmediated by other factors" (2012, p. 271). There is, however, no music that exists entirely independently of all other music. The songs we listen to and the lyrics we write are influenced by previous works and connected through shared codes, words, units of sound and meaning. Studying the connections between different songs can thus help us understand their place within a particular context, field or discourse. While the idea of intertextuality comes from the study of literature, it can also include elements beyond just written works if they are perceived as having a connection. In this way, the term "text" is not limited to just written material.

Literary theorists such as Julie Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin and Roland Barthes explored intertextuality to explain how texts are both culturally and individually connected (Zagorski-Thomas, 2018, p. 287). Barthes writes:

> The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the

> text: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read: they are quotations without inverted commas (1977, p. 160).

In a musical context, this implies recognisable elements of one song, style or practice in another. Gérard Genette, on the other hand, defines intertextuality in a more restrictive sense as "a relationship of copresence" and thus "eidetically and typically the actual presence of one text within another" (1997, pp. 1-2). Genette's intertextuality is thus one of several subcategories of what he called *transtextuality* (Lacasse, 2000a, p. 36). According to Lacasse, *hypertextuality* should be defined as a subcategory of Kristeva's definition of *intertextuality*. Genette, however, uses *transtextuality* instead of intertextuality to reference any relation linking texts. *Transtextual* relationships, then, are represented as abstract musical elements such as form, style and lyrics, or concrete aspects such as sound and performance that link the songs together (Lacasse, 2000a, p. 58). The following categories are *metatextuality*, defined as commentarial relations linking one text with the other, and *architextuality,* a silent relationship "articulated at most as a *paratexual* mention" (Genette, 1997, p. 4). Genette's definition of the last category of transtextual relations is *hypertextuality,* which includes any relationship uniting one text to the other that is not commentary. *Hypertextuality* is thus how one text, *hypertext*, is united to an existing text, *hypotext* (Genette, 1997, p. 5; Lacasse, 2000a, p. 37).

To illustrate how some of these categories come into play in pop songs, I will explore intertextual relationships between "We Are the World" (Jackson & Richie, 1985), "With God on Our Side" (Dylan, 1964), "God" (Lennon, 1970) and "God Part II"(U2 & Bono, 1988). I will also describe intertextual and transtextual relationships in my lyrics to the song "Dilelol – Sleep my child" (Iveland et al., 2002). These relationships will be studied using the second approach in "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices", *reading*, as an entryway and thus to explore lyrics as written text. Furthermore, I will look into how this approach relates to *listening*, and additionally, to the fourth approach, *songmaking* and *writing*.

To begin with, I will investigate how the concepts of a unified voice and of God are employed in "We Are the World" by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie (1985) and Bob Dylan's song "With God on Our Side" (1964).

4.3.1 "God's great big family" in "We Are the World"

The song "We Are the World" was written in response to a famine in Africa and performed by a group of American artists, known collectively as "USA for Africa", raising over $60 million. The song was famously performed at the "Live Aid" benefit concert, organised by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure. This event was ground-breaking, with several concerts arranged on the same day worldwide. Songs performed at this event were thus associated with the concert as a music-based global fundraiser just as much as the actual cause, a devastating famine in Africa. Following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the song was re-recorded in the same studio as the original version to help those affected by that disaster. Ten years later, in 2020, Lionel Richie emphasised the song's message concerning the coronavirus pandemic. In an interview with *People Magazine*, Richie shared that he had thought about writing a new song, but, as he said, "Every time I try and write another message, I write those same words" (2020). He also pointed out that the crisis made him think about how the effects of the pandemic spread throughout the world, implying that we are all in this together. This easily associates with the hook line of the chorus, and the song's title, "We Are the World", as a metaphor suggesting that there is a shared understanding of the concept of "we" and its connection to the "world". The question is where this metaphor is grounded and who gets to be included in the unified "we". Moreover, does this imply that some are not?

It is furthermore interesting to see that although the famine in Africa is never mentioned in the lyrics, the context of the first performance of the song contributes to how the lyrics are read. With that in mind, the first interesting aspect is therefore the suggested connection between "us", and the starving children of Africa unified as children of the world, which induces a sense of solidarity as humankind. The lines, "there's a choice we're making, we're saving our own lives" (1:31-1:39), also suggests that each of us contributes to "saving ourselves" by saving the world. Furthermore, does the use of the parent-child metaphor, "we're all a part of God's great big family", (1:06-1:11), indicate that we are all children of the same God,

which is emphasised further with the reference to the Christian God in the second verse: “As God has shown us by turning stones to bread” (2:01-2:08).

While *reading* the lyrics has revealed that the first-person position in the lyrics, “we”, represents a collective voice, this is further underlined through *listening* to the sound of multiple familiar voices singing together. By employing this additional approach other layers of meaning emerge, for instance, in the way the song is structured vocally. Additionally, the sense of “coming together” is emphasised by how one voice follows another in the verses before they all join in together in the chorus. This is illustrated in the first lines, “There comes a time, When we heed a certain call”, (0:26-0:31), performed by a single voice, before being joined by another, harmonising voice in the second line, “When the world must come together as one” (0:32-0:38), which is then added to by vocal textures created by dubbing the lead voice in the first chorus. The voices alternate similarly throughout the song, allowing for each artist to add their own signature through ad-libs and changing the phrasing of the melody. In the chorus after the C-part, all of the voices then come together in what seems to be a large group of voices before the chorus is repeated a number of times alternating between the choir and the individual voices similar to the earlier part of the song.

This demonstrates that, in addition to the lyrics and voices, the message of the song is further emphasised by repeating the chorus, lending credence to Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that the basis for a definition of music is not the distinction between noise and sound but rather “the labour of the refrain”. They continue by asking, “Does it remain territorial and territorialising, or is it carried away in a moving block that draws a transversal across all coordinates – and all of the intermediaries between the two?” (1987a, p. 302). Starting with the form of the song, it seems that “We Are the World” fits into a common pop song structure – A, A, B, A, B, C, B, B, B, B – where each of the verses, A, have different lyrics while the chorus, B, is repeated. Deploying the persuasive power of repetition, the chorus then generally offers elements that are easy to remember and therefore function as a convincing method of repeating a message or “a truth”. The repetition of the chorus thus emphasises the importance of the words and underlines the meaning communicated in the first chorus: “We are the world, We are the children. We are the ones who’ll make a brighter day so let’s start giving” (1:18-1:31).

Another way of interpreting the world metaphor is to read it as a way of describing its ability to connect people across borders, cultures and time. Thus, in keeping with Stevie Wonder's lines in "Sir Duke" (1976), "Music is a world within itself, With a language we all understand, With an equal opportunity, For all to sing, dance and clap our hands" (0:18-0:36). This also indicates that we can enjoy the same music no matter where we come from.

However, while musicians from around the world join orchestras and communicate musically across language barriers, and their audiences join in, one musical element requires the use and knowledge of verbal language, namely the lyrics. Moreover, musical idioms like form and harmony can contribute to creating concepts of belonging and otherness. For instance, determining familiar music styles within one culture as "us" and music from other cultures as "them" creates a sense of "solidarity and shared understanding" among "us" (Munkittrick, 2010, p. 670).

The concept of "the world" and the general structure of the song then contribute to grounding the chorus within its context and musical form, supporting its semantic meaning. Additionally, somatic layers are added in how the lyrics and melody are performed individually in various ways by different artists and timbres of voices. Together, these aspects create a sense of unity where all are included regardless of the colour of our skin, gender, cultural belonging and musical genres, in keeping with a sense of being unified as "God's great big family", represented by the voices of the artists within the context of this song.

Another interesting aspect of what the song is communicating through listening is how the timbre of the collective and separate voices are perceived. In particular, this involves how intent and emotions are perceived in the song, indicating a shared understanding of vocalised emotional communication.

However, while studies on cross-cultural recognition of basic emotions confirm that people can communicate across language barriers, they also indicate that negative and positive emotions are received differently. A study where Western participants were compared to individuals from culturally isolated Namibian villages indicated that "a number of primarily negative emotions have vocalisations that can be recognised across cultures, while most positive emotions

are communicated with culture-specific signals" (Sauter et al., 2010, p. 1). These findings thus suggest that while prosodic features of vocal sound may share commonalities across cultures, there seems to be a bias towards avoiding conflict on the affective spectrum (Cross, 2015, p. 83). Universal use and similar features of music – beat, tonality and voice – do then not necessarily imply that the same piece of music is understood in the same way around the world.

Nonmusical elements also situate a song geographically within a culture or a tradition. The name of a band or an artist and the way they dress and act are all visual and nominative aspects, including beliefs, ideology and notions of belonging and authenticity related to genres (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 72). In articulating these beliefs and behaviours, the artists and audience are linked together in a broader community or as a group, sharing musical and ideological beliefs and preferences. The artists' gestures, posture and appearance communicate something not required by the music but by conventions associated with a genre, culture or position.

In summary, although the lyrics to "We Are the World" seem written as a message of inclusivity, humanity and empathy, they exhibit how concepts are inscribed with cultural and social discourse and personal beliefs. In addition, it also contributes to the discourse of "otherness", which in summary illustrates how our sense of belonging informs how we see ourselves in the world and use and construct language and identities. Songs can, as such, promote political issues and beliefs and as a social and cultural activity, as a universal phenomenon integrated into every society. Similar to spoken language, musical idioms like form and harmony can contribute to a concept of otherness, determining familiar music styles within our own culture as "us" and music from other cultures as "them". It creates a sense of "solidarity and shared understanding" that also comes into play within the same culture when a group of listeners unites around one genre or artist, thus separating themselves from other fan groups (Munkittrick, 2010, p. 670). Despite the good intentions motivating songmaking, this reminds us that neither songs, lyrics nor voices are secured in a stable understanding. It also reveals the connection between words and the timbre of a voice, and therefore, how the understanding of lyrics as song differs from interpretation of lyrics as written text. No matter how well-intended the message is then, even if it opposes the rules that govern the discourse,

songmakers must also be mindful of how their position in life and the world is written and read into the songs.

4.3.2 Concepts of God

Some songs also draw attention to the consequences of how people use their beliefs and relationship with God to legitimise who they are and what they believe in, as illustrated by Bob Dylan's lyrics, "With God on Our Side", (1964), originally performed in 1963 and released on the album "The Times They Are a-Changin'" in 1964. They start as follows:

> Oh, my name, it is nothin'. My age, it means less. The country I come from. Is called the Midwest. I's taught and brought up there. The laws to abide. And that the land that I live in. Has God on its side (Dylan, 1964, 0:11- 0:49).

The following phrases, "Oh, the history book tell it, they tell it so well. The cavalries charged, The Indians fell, The cavalries charged, The Indians died" (0:53- 1:21), clearly reference historical events in his own country. While the next line point to how actions towards the Native Americans were rhetorically justified, by singing, "Oh the country was young, With God on its side" (1:22- 1:30). Dylan additionally illustrates the effect of these persuasive arguments in another context, namely the first world war, when he sings, "The reason for fighting, I never did get, But I learned to accept it, accept it with pride" (2:33- 2.50).

Towards the end of the song, the lyrics conclude his contemplation of the ambiguous notion of God with the following lines: "So now as I'm leavin', I'm weary as Hell, The confusion I'm feelin', Ain't no tongue can tell, The words fill my head, And they fall to the floor, That if God's on our side, He'll stop the next war" 6:09- 6:48). Apparently, Dylan referenced the Vietnam War in an added verse in the 80s, yet on *MTV Unplugged* in 1995, he left it out. Dylan later also omitted verses about the Second World War and references to the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union.

Dylan's speech-like singing is often received by listeners as connoting a sincere and authentic expression due to its untrained nature, reflecting the dichotomy scholars and commentators often draw between trained voices and untrained

voices in popular music (Malawey, 2020, p. 34; Moore, 2001, p. 45). His lyrics and voice are thus interpreted to indicate a sincere and genuine concern with the matters raised in the lyrics. “With God on Our Side” and “We Are the World” are therefore examples of how songs can advance political issues and beliefs and thus create a sense of belonging and contribute to forming individual and group identity. These communicative features of music have formed reflections on musical meaning among philosophers and musical theorists who read music as a form of language and, therefore, contend it should be treated as such. Although similarities between language and music developed through exposure and function as cultural markers, there are thus imperative distinctions between them (Munkittrick, 2010, p. 670). While language is used primarily for communication and reflection, musical engagement is associated with all aspects of life as an activity in itself. We sing to feel the sensations of singing and listen to songs repeatedly to connect with emotions, to remember and to forget. We also communicate through music. We write songs to express ourselves and our beliefs and confide secrets. To do so, we use musical elements and words that situate our songs within a genre, style and performance tradition.

These factors also come into play within the same culture when a group of listeners unite around one genre or artist, thus separating themselves from other fan groups. Songs and lyrics, particularly within specific genres, are, therefore, intertextually connected. However, some of these relations may be more apparent than others, as in the case of “God” by John Lennon (1970) and U2’s “God Part II”(1988).

4.3.3 “God” – “God Part II”

Some years after Dylan’s song, John Lennon wrote “God”, released on the album *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* (1970). As I started to investigate the lyrics using the second approach, *reading*, I heard Lennon’s voice singing the words as I read. The timbre of his voice and his phrasing, together with the melody, and the overall sound therefore guides the pace and flow of the reading. This is in contrast to the way I read poetry, for example, the one-line poem by Alejandra Pizarnik, “I forced myself kicking and screaming into language” (Rothenberg, 2014).

The form allows me to reflect, to stop at one word, then go back and read the whole sentence. When I extract the first line from Lennon’s song, “God is a concept by

which we measure our pain" (1970, 0:15- 0:26), I initially get the same sensation as with Pizarnik's poem but when I listen or follow the internal voice, it feels unnatural to pause because I don't want to disrupt the form, hence, the song. However, when Lennon pauses after the first phrase, "God is a concept", he creates a space for reflection. It is almost like he wants the words to sink in before starting the next, "by which we measure our pain". This metaphorical expression "to measure our pain" seems relatable on many levels, but when connected to "God as a concept", it takes on a specific meaning, indicating that "we" are measuring our pain against a belief or a particular God figure. For me, Lennon's words are therefore connected to music, following a pace and rhythm I must follow to not interrupt the song.

In *Lennon Remembers,* Lennon explains how he started singing the phrase on the first melodic tune that came into his head. As the next lines followed, he realised he was singing about things he didn't believe in. Lennon recalls, "I could have gone on, it was like a Christmas card list – here do I end?" (2000, p. 10). The song then does exactly what he says: it is a list of names and concepts, "I don't believe in magic, I don't believe in I-Ching" (1: 02- 0:13), and he continues by listing the Bible, Tarot, Hitler, Jesus, Kennedy, Buddha, Mantra, Gita, Yoga, Kings, Elvis, Zimmerman and Beatles.

According to Lennon, he refers to Bob Dylan by his original name, (Robert) Zimmerman, because it is his name "and *Dylan* is bullshit" (2000, p. 11). In the same way, his own name is John Lennon and not John Beatle. When asked about the line "I don't believe in Beatles", Lennon expresses how he similarly had stopped believing in the Beatles. It had become a myth, and he didn't believe in myths. Neither did he believe in what he refers to as the dream of his generation. Therefore, Lennon had to get down to "so-called reality". As the lyrics say, "The dream is over, Yesterday I was the Dreamweaver, But now I'm reborn, I was the walrus, But now I'm John" (3:04- 3: 40).

The song "God", then, seems to be a clear statement of how Lennon had come to think about the Beatles and what they had become. So, while Dylan refers to the concept of a religious God in "With God on Our Side", Lennon aligns his own iconic image with the concept of God and thus challenges notions of an almighty and distanced God figure.

Another song that explores beliefs and abstract religious concepts is “God Part II” (U2 & Bono, 1988), released on U2’s album *Rattle and Hum*, 1988. The intertextual relationship between “God” and “God II” is obviously apparent. More specifically, the connection between the songs is an example of what Gérard Genette defined as paratextuality, referring to accompanying features like the title and cover of the album. As Lacasse points out, Genette’s intertextuality is thus one of several subcategories of what he coined as *transtextuality* (2000a, p. 36). Another subcategory that immediately comes to mind regarding “God” and “God Part II” is *hypertextuality*. That is, when one text, *hypertext*, is united to an existing text, *hypotext,* “upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (Genette, 1997, p. 5; Lacasse, 2000a, p. 37).

As with Lennon’s lyrics, Bono’s song lists a number of things he doesn’t believe in: “Don't believe the devil, I don't believe his book, But the truth is not the same, Without the lies he made up” (1988, 0:08- 1:16). Similar to Lennon’s line concerning how we measure our pain to the concept of God, Bono begins by setting up the Devil as a concept of someone making up lies by which we measure truth. However, Bono turns the focus towards himself differently than Lennon when commenting on how he, the lyrical subject, does not live his life according to his beliefs. Bono sings, “Don't believe in excess, Success is to give. Don't believe in riches, But you should see where I live” (0:17- 0:25). All of the verses in U2’s song are then summed up in this one line, “I…I believe in love” (2:41- 2:47), which indicates a reference to Lennon’s lines, “I just believe in me, Yoko and me, and that's reality” (1970, 2:36- 2:45)

The intertextual relationship between the two songs appears relatively easy to detect when I read the lyrics. This is, of course, assuming one is aware of Lennon's “God” when studying “God Part II”. However, if not, the title of U2's song still implies something or someone coming before the song.

4.3.4 On a personal note

As a fan of John Lennon, I know his repertoire and as mentioned, I therefore hear Lennon’s voice and music in my inner ear when I read the lyrics to “God”. I actually can’t imagine one without the other. However, as a pedagogue and parent,

I am constantly reminded of how we relate to musical and historical references and concepts differently. Therefore, I will share an anecdote from my teaching as an example of how a song like "God" can not only reveal a generation gap but also demonstrate how reading lyrics without prior knowledge of the song or the lyricist can set expectations. These expectations may be met through listening, or listening can lead to disappointment or surprise.

In a lecture for a group of bachelor music students, I presented Lennon's lyrics to "God" as an anonymous written text. None recognised or knew the song, but some identified Lennon as the author, mainly because of his reference to Yoko. However, none of them responded to the name Zimmerman as a reference to Bob Dylan. I, therefore, saw an opportunity to address how we relate to icons and concepts and their connotations, which brought forth an interesting discussion on whether lyrical meaning is embedded or socioculturally and discursively constructed. Moreover, it provided a chance to talk about how the ways in which concepts are employed in songmaking contribute to how people communicate and relate to their surroundings.

After reflecting on the lyrics to "God" and John Lennon's work, I decided to play the song, and I have to say that their reaction surprised me. Most of them didn't think the music acknowledged the content of the lyrics and suggested different ways Lennon could have treated them better. According to the students, their response was not because of the quality of the sound and the production as a whole but rather because they found the melody and harmonic structure overpowering and distracting.

In summary, these examples illustrate how understandings of the world are reflected in songs and communicated across generations, although the discursive understanding of concepts and metaphors, may change. Additionally, we can use lyrics to communicate beliefs and messages, and as mentioned earlier, lullabies serve not only to lull a baby to sleep but can also provide an opportunity to impart cultural and social codes, teaching children how to behave and act accordingly. Singing lullabies can, therefore, serve as a means of preparing children for the challenges and realities of life, all while reassuring them. I gained a deeper appreciation of this aspect during a project I worked on as a lyricist in 2002.

4.3.5 Intertextual and transtextual relationships between lyrics and a lullaby

In my practice as a songmaker, I sometimes take inspiration from an idea or topic, while at other times, the material makes itself known within the process. Working as a lyricist, then, is to work with various starting points and entryways. Translating songs, writing for a particular artist or composer, or creating new material for myself can, therefore, require different strategies. This includes starting with a concept, as I did when I was asked to write lyrics for a project on lullabies originating from different parts of the world. One of them consisted of these few lines from an Iraqi lullaby that had been translated for me; “Sleep, my boy, sleep, my son, Your enemy is sick, Living in the wilderness”, which resulted in the song, “Dilelol – Sleep my child” (2002).

Working with this project, I realised how concepts of danger, animosity and political agendas can be introduced to a child before it has any understanding of what the words are saying. Pathak and Mishra explain, “Lullabies carry coded social messages, musical knowledge and also linguistic patterns that are fed into the mind of the infant by constant repetition” (2017, p. 679). The totality of this practice is therefore paramount to the child due to the sensory experience of being rocked and patted while hearing the same person's voice singing. Moreover, they suggest that holding a child while listening to a recorded lullaby may somewhat simulate the same embodied experience. In this context then, the repetition of bedtime stories, fairy tales and children's books serves not merely as entertainment but as a formative influence that prepares us for life and establishes a sense of home. This can be understood as functioning as a “refrain” with territorial implications, as conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987b, p. 327). Such a refrain serves a dual purpose: it territorialises the child's sleep environment and it also acts as a territorial refrain in the broader sense, marking and assembling a territory while establishing a point of departure into the world. With these lyrics, however, I struggled to establish a “home” and find a poetic way of describing the enemy “living in the wilderness”. This territorial function was one of the key messages in this particular lullaby, but the concept itself felt unfamiliar to me, my language and my writing style. My extension and interpretation of “Your enemy is sick” then became: “See the restless soul in the enemy’s eyes. Blinded by lies”.

Furthermore, the line “Living in the wilderness” became “Left to feel the cold. With no place to hide. Beneath the moonlit sky”.

The lyrics then took on a new meaning in the performance. Listening back, I am reminded of how Eva Dahlgren’s vocals on the new song, followed by Halla Bassam singing the lines in the original lullaby also illustrate distinct differences in timbre that, although contrasting vocal expressions, still provide a sense of safety and protection. I can, however, detect an underlying concern, a worry, especially in Bassam’s voice, supporting the content of the lullaby, which is further created by the musical arrangement. Dahlgren sings:

> Sleep, my son – Sweet child of mine
> Soft as summer breeze calling your name
> Don’t be afraid
> Sleep, my son – Sweet child of mine
> Safe as rivers of tears are melting away
> Into the breaking waves (2002, 1:22-2:23)

My task in this project was to build on the original lullaby while creating an extended and partly new song in collaboration with the Norwegian artist, guitarist and composer, Knut Reiersrud. On the album, the lullabies were integrated into the new song and performed as they were, while the new lyrics were written in English, which created a dialogic, intertextual relationship between them. Even though only those who understood the original language would be able to compare the two, my task was still to secure a link between the original lines and the song as a whole. Extending Genette’s theory to the relationships between the original lullaby and the new lyrics within the same song and to the other songs on the album therefore exhibits several subcategories of transtextuality, including *paratextuality,* which refers to a text and its accompanying features, e.g., title and cover (1997, p. 3; Lacasse, 2000a, p. 36). In this case, the lullaby category is mentioned in the CD title. However, it is silent in this song, creating a paratextual relationship between the songs on the album that is not articulated in each title. Another apparent subcategory is hypertextuality in that the new lyrics, *hypertext*, are derived from the original lullaby, *hypotext* (Genette, 1997, p. 5).

Writing lyrics for this project highlighted challenges with ensuring *intertextual* links to the original lullaby, and also to the language, style, form and mode of lyrics

within popular music and to my previous work. Given that I also had to write several songs for the album revolving around the same topic, it involved exploring phrases, narratives and metaphors that were unique to each song and, at the same time, ensuring a connection between them. Additionally, it was important to me that they were connected to my personal style of writing and my previous work.

These aspects are equally essential when I write lyrics intended for myself and my albums, which also come into play in performing and songmaking, and therefore to the ways my voice and music inform how they are perceived as part of my work as an artist.

4.3.6 Intertextual relationships between the poem "Unending Love" and "Spellbound Heart"

A poet, composer and philosopher that has followed me from childhood is Rabindranath Tagore. I grew up surrounded by his songs and have since learned to appreciate his literary works, for which he was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. In 2018, I used some of his poems as entryways into my album, "Ingenting" ("Nothingness"). His writings sparked an inner, imaginative dialogue between Tagore's poetic voice and mine, which I transformed into Norwegian words and music. However, the only song that found its form in English was inspired by Tagore's poem, "Unending Love", which allegedly was Audrey Hepburn's favourite.

On this album, I was fortunate to work with the British jazz pianist Jason Rebello[9]. He listened through a rough sketch I had recorded on my phone and transformed it into an unexpected and, for me, magical version of what became the song "Spellbound Heart" (2018). Tagore's "Unending Love" starts with these lines: "I seem to have loved you in numberless forms, numberless times…In life after life, in age after age, forever" [10]. These phrases set up the theme of the first verse of my song: "From the first hour of time. To where my distant future lies ahead of me. From the first taste of life. Until it's through, I know that I've been loving you" (2018, 0:01- 0:33).

[9] http://jasonrebello.co.uk/site/about/

[10] https://allpoetry.com/Unending-Love

Subsequently, the song title and my last verse were inspired by Tagore's third line: "My spellbound heart has made and remade the necklace of songs, That you take as a gift, wear round your neck in your many forms. In life after life, in age after age, forever". In "Spellbound Heart" I wrote:

My spellbound heart is still until
The moment you are here
Don't be afraid, my longing heart,
There's nothing left to fear

Ancient love in countless forms
All memories melt into one, defining me
It's like a necklace made of songs.
Wear it always, so you'll know I love you (1:10- 2:00)

The intertextual relations between Tagore's poem and my lyrics seem apparent in style, metaphors and phrases. I, however, experienced the process as somewhat frustrating as I found myself exploring a way of writing that felt unfamiliar. The process also brought on questions about the relationship between these lyrics, my previous work and the other songs on the album. I tried to solve this issue by translating the lyrics into Norwegian, but the sound of the song, the vocal phrasing and its singability seemed to rely on the English lyrics. For me, they also blended with Rebello's arrangement as a cohesive musical work. Adding to this, I experienced that *singing* the song in its original form brought on a sensation and musicality in my voice that I was unable to recreate in Norwegian. So, I decided to include the song as the odd one out on the album.

The experiences from these projects are examples of how all approaches, *listening, reading, performing/singing* and *songmaking/writing*, come into play in a creative process. This also highlights how each approach reveals new understandings of intended meaning, metaphorical expressions and form when lyrics are performed by various voices.

The project, therefore, illustrates how songmaking and some tasks in particular demand extensive attention to detail.

4.4 Songmaking…God is in the Details

A different reference to God is given in a quotation from Stephen Sondheim: "Less Is More, Content Dictates Form, God Is in the Details, all in the service of Clarity, without which nothing else matters" (2011, p. xv). My experience from creative processes, however, indicate that just as much as content dictates form, form often dictates content—or as with the lullaby project, they both equally inform each other. Sondheim's quotation nevertheless underscores the necessity of meticulous attention to detail in songmaking, compelling us to decide what to include and omit.

The process of songmaking can feel like an intuitive movement, similar to how it feels to go hiking. One usually starts with an idea of where to go and how to get there, but one seldom pays attention to the *aesthetics* of walking or what each step means. It is only a matter of the experience itself, whether it is a risky path or not. Sometimes, it leads to a different track, revealing landscapes that motivate changing the initial destination. Other times, the path ends at a crossroads or a dead end. Nevertheless, whether it develops intuitively or consciously, all the steps matter. Every detail matters. Whenever one stops to breathe and reflect, one's attention is drawn to how the details work together, like exploring harmonies sounding in the mind while singing and words emerging within the shape of a melody. In changing one detail, the form might collapse or evolve. When one detail is replaced by another, it can thus create an entirely different meaning. For a pop song to succeed as a commercial product, its details must then comply with an aesthetic ideal or standard, and form. It is therefore also a matter of how its form is "expanded" or "dissolved" before it becomes something else. Sondheim's invocation of the idiom "God is in the details" furthermore provokes inquiries into whether details can be isolated from the work itself as fragments of content, shape and form.

Song and lyric analysis then relies on *how* signs are read, elements are detangled and codes are deciphered. Moreover, it involves how similarities and differences illustrate its connection to other songs. In lyric analysis, one is therefore faced with two main entryways: treat each detail as a separate unit of a greater whole – which can be deciphered and decoded – or explore the song as a complete form of musical details that can be detangled into units. Either way, the vital question is how these details intersect and constitute each other in the song.

As mentioned, I find similarities between songmaking and hiking, which is not an attempt to explain the creative process itself but rather the experience of movement and intuitive decision-making when adjusting to the surroundings. To further explore how we can experience being in a creative state of mind, it is helpful to study concepts describing levels of attention, such as *play, flow* and *stream-of-consciousness,* which can function both as a writing technique and a lyrical form.

4.4.1 Songmaking and levels of attention

Due to the structural and temporal organisation of songs, many perceive them as linear events that are further underlined by the way we experience them as a continuous movement and stories. Similarly, the thought that meaning can be extracted from songs privileges perceptions of songmaking as musical realisations of ideas or content rather than recognising creativity as a cyclical or rhizomatic process where content can emerge through the process itself. These explanations thus support Jeffrey Wainwright's views on the persistency of the notion "that poems have a mysterious source outside the purview of the mind" (2015, p. 193). This is similar to the way Bob Dylan explains it: "The song was there before me before I came along. I just sorta came down, and I sorta took it down with a pencil that it was all there before I came around. That's how I feel about it" (Pete Seeger, 1962, Mosbron, 2021).

Dylan's statement suggests that for a songmaker or lyricist the construction of a song is not always planned and thought out beforehand but is instead an intuitive process of communicating emotions, thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, the writing is grounded in an intertextual relationship between previous work – lyrical language, metaphors and style – and the lyricist's projection of their own "voice" in the text. For example, lyrics to songs in a musical drama not only refer back to the character and the play but also to the author, and they establish intertextual and discursive relationships between the songs and the performance context. Creating songs from "out of nowhere", as Dylan refers to it, therefore indicates something, e.g., materials, rules, style or structure, motivating and governing the process. As one of Sondheim's lyrics articulates, "Bit by bit, putting it together, piece by piece, the only way to make a work of art, Every moment makes a contribution; every little detail plays a part" (2011, p. 39).

Songmaking and performing do not require formal training but rather an ability to develop and transform musical ideas and material into sound and form, which can feel intuitive and, thus, hard to pin down. Hence, there is a tendency to romanticise or ascribe metaphysical concepts. It also demands an ability to be attentive, a state of mind that feels intuitive and thus hard to identify. People have to pay attention to survive. The creative state of mind has, therefore, been of interest to researchers and thinkers throughout history, inspiring them to investigate how our consciousness works, especially in situations where people seem to be caught up in an activity, making them "forget" the concerns of everyday life, such as during play and creative practices. Additionally, as exemplified so far, songs can be experienced as an entity or force of sound with its own agency.

As noted earlier, engaging with music in songmaking can also dissolve the separation between the creator and the work, which is a level of consciousness described by Eric Clarke as a state of highly focused attention necessary for playing music demanding a specific skill. He argues that "autonomy links up with subjectivity and consciousness: at those times when a performer's own consciousness/subjectivity seems to be absorbed into the virtual consciousness/subjectivity of 'the music', the sense of musical autonomy is strongest" (2005, p. 151). This is similar to Gadamer's description of a player's state of mind when engaged in *play,* which is not something to be approached as an "object" but as "the mode of being of the art itself" (2004, p. 102). A related description of consciousness is Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow: "It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part"(2013, pp. 137, 138). Csikszentmihalyi claims that reaching a state of flow is only possible when the rules are clarified, understandable, definable and manageable, as seen in rituals, games and artistic performances. According to him, this condition does not imply a loss of touch with physical reality but rather a way to become more aware of the internal process (2013, p. 141). It creates a sense of self-forgetfulness or loss of ego, allowing the body and mind to feel free from day-to-day concerns.

Richard Schechner's explanation of this concept of flow is that it encompasses a way of merging with an activity and losing oneself in the act. He writes, "Players in flow may be aware of their actions, but not of the awareness itself" (2013, p.

79). As a songmaker then, this condition allows musical ideas to develop without interference, aligning with central theories within Eastern thinking, suggesting that it is crucial to enter a mindset with no purpose or intent to reach a meditative state. Although, it might be argued that meditation is a planned activity entered to reach a certain state of mind, searching for *something* in the form of *nothingness.* Nevertheless, in surrounding oneself to the process, or as Eric Clarke noted, letting oneself be *absorbed* into the music, the experiencing self seems to have little or no memory of the exact time spent. It is therefore not necessarily planned or experienced as a linear process, contradicting theories on creativity within social psychology, which tend to view creativity through a linear model. This leads to the outcome of phases, including "preparation, incubation, insight, verification, evaluation, and elaboration"(Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 3). One can, however, trace thoughts, emotions and sensations, and thus recall stages in the creative process in retrospect and refer to the experience metaphorically, for instance, as a journey from one destination to another.

Another metaphorical way of experiencing creativity can be that it feels like stepping in and out of separate spaces, which allows for entering and re-entering each experience and state of mind with new knowledge. Even though it can present itself as being absorbed in a train of thoughts and ideas, described as a stream-of-consciousness, used as a creative tool and also to portray a character or a state of mind, this also implies taking the risk of encountering the unexpected and exposing oneself to failure.

4.4.2 "Finishing the hat" and "trancing out"

A poetic transformation of delving into a state of stream-of-consciousness is offered in Stephen Sondheim's "Finishing the Hat", which is an example of lyrics resembling how it *feels* to be totally immersed in a creative zone (2011, p. 27). It also displays how inner conversations between *me* and *I,* or an imagined *other,* manifest as acousmatic voices in lyrics.

The song, "Finishing the Hat", is from Sondheim's Pulitzer Prize-winning musical stage production *Sunday in the Park with George,* which opened on Broadway in 1984. It tells the story of the character George, based on the French painter George Seurat (1859-1891). As Sondheim explains, this particular song portrays the artist

"trancing out" while creating a piece of art. More precisely, it describes how it feels to be in a state of *flow*. This sensation is thus articulated in the first part of the lyrics, "How you *have to* finish the hat", and nothing else seems to matter: "What you feel like, planning a sky. What you feel when voices come – Through the window – Go" (2011, p. 27). It is also interesting to note Sondheim's fondness for the word "hat". Examples are songs such as "Hats Off" in *Follies* and "It's Called a Bowler Hat" in *Pacific Overtures*. Reflecting on "Finishing the Hat", Sondheim speculates that a future graduate student may write about "The Use of Headgear in Sondheim's Lyrics", but he believes he can save them the trouble because he attributes his attraction to the word to its jaunty tone and ease in rhyming – "two sound reasons" (2011, p. 30).

To illustrate the way thoughts are present in a stream-of-consciousness, then, Sondheim sets up short phrases, listing the artist's condition in short sentences before completing the image. He explains, "As befits the creative act, 'Finishing the Hat' is a stream-of-consciousness lyric. There is no complete sentence" (2011, p. 30). Another section of the lyrics describes how the painter takes a step back from the canvas to study and reflect, and thus, goes from creating to reflecting in an oscillation between the pre-reflective and reflective state. George sings[11]: "Studying a face, Stepping back to look at a face, Leaves a little space in the way like a window, But to see – It's the only way to see"(1985, 2:17-2:34).

During the song, we also learn that, for the character George, it is, however, not all about painting. His mind is also contemplating his personal life and the possible consequences of his behaviour – thoughts that are not merely the result of his painting activity. Sondheim carefully hints at this in the lyrics, "And how you're always turning back too late – From the grass or the stick, or the dog or the light" (1:42- 1:48). The content of the song thus shifts from merely focusing on how it feels to be in a creative zone to how he takes the risk of being left by the woman waiting at home. As the last stanza states:

> And when the woman that you wanted goes, you can say to yourself: "Well, I give what I give". But the woman who won't wait for you

[11] I am here referencing Mandy Patinkin as George Surat in the Broadway production of *Sunday in the Park With George*, 1985. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QB40CmWjwOA

> knows that however you live, there's a part of you always standing by. Mapping out the sky, Finishing a hat (1985, 2:35-2:59 ; 2011, p. 27).

According to Sondheim, he intended the lyrical form to illustrate the artist's conflicting thoughts regarding integrating his personal and professional life. In doing so, he exemplified how a state of mind can be embedded in and projected through the lyrical and musical structure. Similar to how we experience music listening and reading, songmaking and performing can be seen as entering a defined mental space. As the character George sings, “Entering the world of the hat. Reaching through the world of the hat like a window. Back to this one from that” (1985, 2:08-2:16). This highlights how a creative state of flow or stream-of-consciousness can be both an experience and a technique, which is a necessary condition for creativity for many songmakers.

It also shows how sensations can motivate the process forward and moreover, how acousmatic, internal voices can create an inner dialogue driving the process that all take place in a secluded space within us.

4.4.3 The creative process as a secluded space to enter

As I have noted, to fully describe the various stages of any creative process can be challenging because it involves the body and mind in ways that often bypass the conscious mind's awareness. It can emerge as a secluded space, removed from everyday concerns and obligations. Siri Hustvedt suggests that what artists convey about their own work is captivating because it provides insight into their perception of what they are doing (2016, p. 18). Their statements reveal intentions or concepts that are incomplete, which indicates that artists, regardless of their medium, only have partial awareness of their own creative process. Investigating the process itself may therefore feel reductive and a way of distancing oneself from the actual experience. Artists and songmakers can consequently be reluctant to analyse their own process and unveil what can seem like a mysterious and mythical activity, which has led many to search for metaphysical explanations. On the other hand, to avoid enquiries tends to wrap creative processes in a metaphysical veil as something unexplainable. In this sense, one can approach songmaking as a process located within the oscillation between intuitive embodied movement and intended action.

Alternatively, between paying attention- or Csikszentmihalyi's definition of attention as a form of psychic energy controlling the stream-of-consciousness and as such a vehicle for *flow* – and attentiveness (being attentive) and responsibility in doing and becoming.

4.4.4 Stream-of-consciousness as experience, technique and lyrics

Although lyrics and songs are not representations of living bodies and feelings, when songmakers discuss their relationship with their work, they tend to describe how it feels to create. Additionally, their lyrical themes and metaphors are often closely connected to feelings. When we listen to songs or read lyrics, we can sense these emotions and movement *in* our own bodies. It can almost be like they are inscribed in their voices and embedded in their words and actions, contained in the realm of the song. Sensations, temperament, thoughts and emotions evoked in us from listening can then be experienced metaphorically as if we are "containers" with an interior and an exterior, holding ourselves and our feelings (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, p. 30). Emotions can therefore be understood as a liquid "filling someone up", making them "burst with happiness" or "spilling out" sadness and love (Dibben, 2007, p. 171). This also shows how the metaphors describing the target domain – a feeling or mood – can be abstract, while the source domain – in this case, container or fluid – tends to be concrete. Likewise, as mentioned, creativity can be metaphorically understood as a linear process starting with an idea, as a tree growing from a seed or as a rhizomatic process. Moreover, any of these activities – performing or creating – can be driven by a physical force. Similarly, a creative state of mind can feel like a space and the process can feel like one is stepping in and out of an actual place and thus oscillating between two different worlds or conscious states. All of this is, as Dibben explains, "congruent with the construction of the subject as a unique and bounded individual (…) possessed of an interior life known only to itself" ((Hellas 1996) 2007, p. 171). The body and mind are then not merely experienced as vessels for emotions, self, consciousness and creativity but also the lens through which we read the world and ourselves.

The way we experience and make sense of creative processes also serves as source material for lyrics. In working with "Finishing the Hat", Sondheim used his own

experience of inventing a murder-detective game intended for a social gathering as inspiration. He wanted to recreate what he looked back at as a treasured feeling from working to meet a deadline, completely absorbed in the activity for 11 hours. Sondheim writes, “I've never had a better time making a hat. No matter how trivial the goal may have been, the intensity of the concentration was the same as that of writing a song, and just as difficult and exhilarating” (2011, p. 30). In afterthought, he described it as a sensation of leaving the planet and having no memory or account of the time that had passed. Stream-of-consciousness can therefore be both a writing technique and a poetic transformation, or a way to gestalt a character and their state of mind, like in Sondheim’s character George. Hence, this aligns with Genette’s point that the *supposed* narrating situation can be different from the *actual act* of narrating, which refers to it (1983, pp. 213, 214). Writing without pause or time for reflection is, for instance, also an established writing technique used as inspiration or a recommendation to unblock “writer’s block”.

Porter Abbott notes how a stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue or free indirect style are terms used interchangeably to describe a specific technique. According to him, the concept “stream-of-consciousness” was first used by William James in 1892 to describe how we experience consciousness as a stream of associated thoughts. “Interior monologue” was coined by novelist Édouard Dujardin in 1887 to explain a character's consciousness (2008, p. 71). Since then, many novelists have experimented with “stream-of-consciousness” novels, where interior monologue – or dialogue – is used to present the focus of particular characters. Points of view or focalisation can shift from one voice to another as acousmatic internal voices take on different positions. The transcribed result from using it merely as a writing technique will, however, rarely function in an unedited form as lyrics or as a method for an entire songmaking process. As Stephen Sondheim reminds us, “stream-of-consciousness doesn’t think in sentences” (2011, p. 30). Librettists and authors can then imitate this state of mind when constructing a dialogue by interrupting a sentence's natural pace. Sondheim continues:

> …strings of images are always effective, if often meaningless strings of images are always effective, if often meaningless. But a little incoherence seemed appropriate in the case of an artist struggling to reconcile his personal life with his professional one (2011, p. 30).

While the actual experience appears incoherent by introducing unexpected elements as Sondheim explains, or adding a drop, sudden rhythm or chord changes songmakers project similar moods and temperaments that contribute to gestalting a person or character's state of mind.

4.4.5 Mac Miller's "Good News" as a listening exercise

Before moving on to another topic related to songmaking and writing, I will give another example of stream-of-consciousness lyrics. More specifically, how the words appeared to me the first time I listened to Mac Miller's "Good News" (McCormick & Brion, 2020). It is worth adding that I did not know which artist I was listening to, nor his music. I will start by sharing my immediate responses during listening:

> Voice Identity: Male, not too young – but still young adult – between 28-32? Like he is worn out or has a hangover…He seems careless and vulnerable at the same time. Sounds like he just got up. It is almost like he can't bother to sing. It is intimate, yet not inviting in a way. It is more like he is trying to convince himself of the message in the song by talking to himself or defending his position. Reassuring himself.

After listening, I also wrote down my reflections and found that my first impression of the lyrics was that they sounded self-comforting and self-defensive:

> He sings, "It ain't that bad", but it does not sound like he means it. It is like he is trying to convince himself to get out of bed to face the day, but he is reluctant. Life is not easy, and he is tired of everything. There is no point…

This listening exercise reminded me of how *listening* to an unknown artist draws my attention to someone's voice and phrasing. Moreover, I noticed how I create an image of the person singing while listening to the sound of a voice. This exercise thus confirmed my initial hypothesis that our embodied relationship with voice informs our understanding of lyrics and, thus, a song. It also demonstrates how different approaches reveal different layers. Additionally, I suspect that if I had combined two approaches – reading and listening – simultaneously, I might have focused more on the content of the lyrics than the musicality in the words and the singing, and additionally how Mac Miller controls the narrative by focusing on the

words he wants me to hear. The way these stream-of-consciousness lyrics are structured and performed creates an impression of him expressing his thoughts as they appear.

Reading lyrics can, however, be a search for a deeper connection with the content or simply because words can disappear in the performance. Due to the mediality and intermediality of the lyrical form affording the potential for "text fade out", inquiries have suggested that 78% of listeners tend to ignore or struggle to identify words in a song (Moser, 2007b, p. 288). Lyrics, thus, tend to "hide themselves" in the listening experience. As Susanne Langer writes, "When words and music come together in song, music swallows words; not only mere words and literal sentences but even literary word structures, poetry" (1953, p. 152). How we hear lyrics and voices concerns, then, how the overall sonic information is distributed and how the voice is acoustically and technologically mediated.

As in Mac Miller's performance, an additional aspect comes into play regarding how performers let certain words fade out for stylistic or communicative reasons. By under-pronouncing specific words, the singer draws attention to particular elements in the song or projects a state of mind.

4.5 Confessional and personal narratives

Mac Miller's "Good News" is also written as a confessional narrative exhibiting traces of melancholy and hopelessness: "Good news, good news, good news. That's all they wanna hear. No, they don't like it when I'm down" (McCormick & Brion, 2020, 1:43-1:52). Mac Miller also expresses inner thoughts in a similar way in G-Wagon[12]:

> I'm makin' music from a soul that's full of aches and bruises. I don't feel safe, I just feel numb, I don't feel shit. I don't wanna die here, please don't leave me like this…Long as I'm breathin', no quittin', I will not cease to exist (1:09- 1:16, 1: 18-1: 21).

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[12] The music is published on Soundcloud: https://soundcloud.com/jpaine/wagon-mac-miller, and the lyrics are only available at genious.com: https://genius.com/Mac-miller-g-wagon-lyrics. Neither website provided information about when, by whom, or where the song was written and released.

These lyrics by Mac Miller align with artists whose personal narratives have been articulated performatively, expressing inner conflicts and dark thoughts. Another example is Kurt Cobain, the frontman of Nirvana known for his raw and emotive songwriting. As Stan Hawkins observes, "his personal narrative, one of self-loathing and suicidal tendency in songs, such as 'I Hate Myself and Want to Die', encapsulated the wry affirmation of Cobain's own eventual self-annihilation – his only escape route from the hopelessness of everyday life" (2020, p. 242). The interesting point here, then, is whether narrating one's life into lyrics helps or hurts.

While personal narratives and confessional lyrics can be grounded in lived experiences, we still have to live them. Therefore, although writing about life and emotional pain and how one sees and treats oneself may be cleansing or therapeutic, living can be just as painful. The gap between the artist persona and the real person and the experience of living can thus seem impossible to bridge. Suffering doesn't always go away, although manifesting thoughts and feelings may feel like the only sane thing to do. However, confessional lyrics exhibit connections between the artist or lyricist's personal life and the stories they tell. Similar to poetry, the author persona of confessional lyrics is expected to tell "the truth" about themselves and the world we live in and thus provide their listeners with relatable "truths".

There is, however, a difference between using lived experiences as source material and reliving emotions connected to these experiences in a performance. Even if emotions are expressed and performed, the performer is *not* the actual emotion, nor do they not necessarily relive the experience in the moment. Doing so may, on the contrary, be exhausting and can hurt more than heal.

To explore these topics further, I will draw on questions raised by Michel Foucault in "Technologies of the Self" (1988), and use them as an entryway into the fourth approach, *songmaking* and *writing*. More specifically, I will explore the relationship between confessional narratives and self-narratives in lyrics, and how they are understood and employed as both a songmaking and coping strategy.

4.5.1 Stories of life, confessional practices and songmaking

In studying confessional songwriting, I am inspired by Michel Foucault's observations on the 'techniques' people use to take care of and renounce oneself. He asks, "How have certain kinds of interdictions required the price of certain kinds of knowledge about oneself? What must one know about oneself to be willing to renounce anything?" (1988, p. 17).

Foucault used the term *technology* to describe the "way in which people organise their lives and the 'techniques' they apply to themselves, to their attitudes, their bodies and their psyche" (Rehmann, 2013, p. 302). His questions thus point to how a person can feel forced to take care of and renounce themselves through internalised structures of power. These techniques, then, are both related to how one conducts oneself and the ways one is conducted or governed by others. Moreover, are these practices or techniques "directed towards the self and may also be initiated by it" as ways of transforming oneself into a particular being and thus changing one's life (Friesen, 2017, p. 2). To find answers, Foucault turned to the study of self-technologies in pagan and early Christian practices. His project began by examining the historical connection between truth-telling obligations and restrictions on sexuality. Ultimately, he explored the relationship between truth and asceticism in the context of deciphering oneself in relation to forbidden matters (1988, p. 17). According to some religious norms, such as those found within Christianity, self-renunciation is thus viewed as a required condition for "salvation" or eternal life. To uphold the notion of an essence of the soul representing the true self that can only be reached through purification, one must then accept other layers of self to be "un-pure". Moreover, ask for forgiveness for desires and thoughts that are not acceptable or forbidden according to a given set of rules.

In order to know what to renounce, if we are to address Foucault's question, the importance of knowing oneself was implemented in all aspects of life. A person's inner life was to be examined, and, as for Pythagoreans, this examination of one's conscience was a cleansing act in itself. There is thus a line to be drawn to how voluntary confessions of guilt are recognised as signs of remorse and self-analysis and are, as such, rewarded on many levels of society, from the strategies applied in raising children to religious norms and legal systems. The Christian tradition of

examining one's consciousness before going to sleep and praying for God's forgiveness is thus similar to the Pythagorean ritual of purifying oneself, as sleep was viewed as a state related to death and as an encounter with the Gods (Foucault, 1988, p. 33). However, although sleep is not related to death quite in the same way in Christianity, passages in the *New Testament* tell us to always stay prepared for death or doomsday. As it says in Revelation 16:15, "See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame" [13]. A similar example is found in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13[14]. These stories remind us to prepare for the return of Christ and also for death, as that is when a person is either rejected from or welcomed to heaven by God.

The lyrics that always come to mind when dealing with this topic are Larry Norman's, "I Wish We'd All Been Ready" (1969). I used to listen to this song as a child, but the words terrified me. In particular when he sings, "There's no time to change your mind. The son has come, and you've been left behind" (0:56-1:05). These lines made me stay awake at night, worrying that Jesus would return and that I would be left behind. I especially remember how the third verse had a particular impact on me: "A man and wife asleep in bed. She hears a noise and turns her head, he's gone. I wish we'd all been ready" (1:10-1:20). I simply couldn't let go of thinking about the woman waking up in her bed, realising that it was too late. Furthermore, to me, it seemed obvious that if Jesus could separate two people who loved one another, he could easily leave someone like me behind. The way I understood it then was that to reach salvation, I had to make sure that I, at all times, was forgiven and cleansed of all sins. For me and many who comply with the same "rules of conduct", it thus implies living in a state of constant self-observation, watching over ourselves for potential faults.

As said, Foucault's interest is in techniques, and the rules of conduct one employs when constituting and transforming oneself, thus turning oneself into a subject. His thoughts on self-disclosure and self-renunciation are thus relevant as driving motivations in writing. How does this then relate to confessional songwriting?

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[13] https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+16%3A15&version=NRSVUE

[14] https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25%3A1-13&version=NRSVUE

In "Technologies of the Self" (1988), Foucault draws attention to how, throughout the history of Christianity, there has been "a correlation between disclosure of the self – dramatic or verbalised – and the renunciation of self" (1988, pp. 48-49). In looking at these two techniques, he found that verbalisation has been the most important as an imperative to self-analysis. During the eighteenth century, confessions became integrated as a form of therapeutic liberation within human science and thus within "scientific discourse and medical practice". This marked a break with earlier traditions, indicating that the promotion of a positive intention of constituting a new self without renouncing oneself could exhibit signals of self-knowledge and acknowledgement. In the case of the lyrics, which is the interest of this project, thoughts prompted by the text convey knowledge of the self. A person's thoughts and mental powers are, as such, "confirmed as a source of knowledge in and of themselves, as capable of formulating or constructing knowledge that is in a sense 'new'" (Friesen, 2017, p. 2). Moreover, someone can experience a cleansing effect from "confessing" inner thoughts and feelings and get a sense of closure from transforming painful life experiences into a song.

The answers found to questions raised by oneself are thus grounded in one's own knowledge, which, when articulated or written down, constructs a self as it appears in the text as self-authored (Friesen, 2017, p. 13). The creative process of writing can, as such, be transformative both as a realisation and expression of subjectivity or as a way to confess, and thus change and renounce oneself and emerge as a subject through creating and reading. Hence, there is a line to be drawn between one's private life, artistic practice and artist persona, and between whom one thinks one has to be in order to be accepted and the experienced self. To be connected with the content or message of the song as an artist can therefore be challenging over time because both your beliefs and ways of expression change. However, fans may be reluctant to accept the need for adjusting one's repertoire accordingly or letting go of a career altogether like in the case of Cat Stevens in 1975. While swimming in the Pacific Ocean near Malibu, Stevens faced a life-changing moment as he found himself being carried out to sea. He prayed to God for salvation, promising that if he were saved, he would devote his life to God. Miraculously, a wave brought him back to safety. This experience led to his conversion to Islam in 1977, whereby he adopted the name Yusuf Islam. He subsequently surprised the world by leaving his music career to focus on family and charitable work (2023).

Events like these then illustrate how the content of songs not only tends to be associated with their creator but also how personal change can alter someone's relationship with their own material and their musical career. To explore how connections between the creator and their work emerge, I will therefore explore some creation theories about how the world was brought into existence.

4.5.2 The creator and their songs

Regardless of belief or ideology, people are inclined to search for the origins of actions, phenomena and events as a matter of cause and effect. While some theories promote the idea of a monotheistic God-figure who created everything out of nothing, others suggest that the universe as we know it emerged from the "Big Bang". If I continue to look for explanations in Christianity as I did in the previous section, the creation narrative of the Bible situates God as the one with an idea or a master plan. He put "everything" in motion – which for many includes the Big Bang – by calling the barren earth and darkness into light and life. On his word, the world took on a life of its own and, as it says in Genesis 2:5-6, on the seventh day, herbs in the fields grew. This did not occur because God had caused the rain to fall but because mist came up from the earth and watered the ground.[15] Other theories, within and alongside biblical texts, view this as an example of how it is instead a matter of transformation in which one element is creating the other. Moreover, some believe that as God created humankind, God was also brought into existence.

Extending these concepts of creation to songmaking is to view the creative act as a process of bringing the song and its maker into existence. Regardless of intent and point of departure, this creative act thus brings forth possibilities, risks and limitations. The creator and their creation can bring chaos and disruption, joy and destruction. The motivating factor then might not always be to communicate or express something *through* lyrics but rather to discover whatever emerges in the creative activity itself. In these situations, success is thus not dependent on whether a song *comes into existence* but the process itself as a transformative experience.

[15] https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%202&version=KJ21

Although experiencing that creative engagement materialises as a song might add motivation, it is not always what inspires the most.

In the realm of social psychology, creativity is often seen through a linear model involving various phases, emphasising the idea that creativity emerges from a sudden cognitive insight and follows a predetermined pattern in the cognitive handling of ideas (Leschziner & Brett, 2019, p. 3). However, music performances, songmaking and interpretation should also be recognised as creative processes providing possibilities for embodiment, self-experience and transformation – becoming a voice, becoming as a researcher-artist and becoming as an artwork. For instance, applying the rhizome can provide an extended view of how self-narratives, songmaking and performance are connected. Deleuze and Guattari write, "Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating or identifying with something…" (1987a, p. 239). To see selfhood as a rhizomatic story, then, is to accept that it has no "correct" point of entry leading to "the truth". In rhizomatic thinking, no actual "truth" or "reality" exists. Nor is there any clear "hierarchy, structure or order" but merely a principle of *multiplicity.* This suggests that in a rhizome, any point can link to any other point ("the principle of connection"), and even if a rhizome is disrupted or damaged, it will continue to grow along different paths or connections ("the principle of a meaningful disruption") (Sermijn et al., 2008, pp. 637-638).

While narrative practices traditionally emphasise organising elements of a story into a coherent, linear structure, the main characteristic of the rhizome, then, is its multiple and sometimes unforeseeable paths and entryways. The construction of self-narratives can thus be in the form of alternative story structures that are related to postmodern ideas of the self as "multiple, multivoiced, discontinuous and fragmented" with no stable core (Sermijn et al., 2008, p. 636). The stories we tell about ourselves and how we relate to others and the world can therefore vary depending on how we tell them, when, and to whom.

Likewise, lyrics can be written from different entry points and in various ways, structures and forms. Some perspectives are consciously chosen, while others emerge in the moment. As such, narratives are "real and rich accounts of how they have used and been used by diverse discourses in a particular local situation" (Saukko, 2008, p. 303; Sermijn et al., 2008, p. 641). Therefore, although the

individual stories we tell about ourselves and the lyrics we write may involve various degrees of imagination, they are not necessarily untrue or inauthentic. Instead, they are genuine stories about the here and now.

The songs I create and perform can in this sense transform my life story and sense of self as much as my lived experiences inform my songmaking, not as *one* transformation but as an ongoing process. Another connection between the work and its creator is made because of the relationship between lyrics and voices. Because the voice is the only musical instrument that can transmit words, the way we understand them relies partly on the person singing – their timbre, identity and style – and the receiver. Listeners are, however, different, and their listening conditions change, as do the artists and their music. Performances and the artist's identity are interpreted more or less differently among listeners, as are the same songs performed differently by different artists. For instance, cover versions can reveal distinct vocal variations in recordings that otherwise have comparable musical elements. Victoria Malawey writes, "…aspects of identity [are] projected by the artists (often times intentionally) and ascribed to artists by listeners (often subconsciously)" (2020, p. 8). So, while lyrics can have a predominant aesthetic function in songs, they nevertheless express "something" through the voice. They can, as such, provide means for musical, personal and artistic expression, and have the ability to convey aesthetic, conceptual and emotional content. Furthermore, when we engage with music, images, dreams, memories, sensations, meaning and reflections are evoked and created in us. Some we experience as inscribed in the song, and others we ascribe.

Additionally, lyricists project their authorial voice into the text, which is exhibited in discursive and intertextual relationships between and within songs. Conditions determined by each songmaker are then not only grounded in a musical idea but also where they and the performer(s) situate themselves artistically. There are, as Negus points out, "equally complex narrative meanings that are emergent in and articulated to songs" that are mediated, interpreted and contested through their social and cultural context (2012, p. 370). So, although listeners and musicians express and find themselves in songs, music is in itself neither expressive, intentional, nor active, but rather a medium (Moore, 2012, p. 270). Depending on cultural and personal circumstances, the ways we are affected by song may, therefore, not be purely musically related. Whether a recording or performed live,

music represents the *product* of a creative process and the *result* of practice and intent. It is not an entity with its own agency. If we approach lyrics and songs as a product of intent, it thus follows that performers and creators have something they want to communicate through musical and semiotic codes. How it is received thus relies on the receiver's ability to decipher the codes transmitted through the music. As Nicholas Cook concludes, it is not the physical or auditive manifestation of music that is interesting, but its potential meaning (2000, p. 270). It is thus what songs mean to us that determines their chance of survival. Any form of reflection, theory and philosophy on art speaks only of what I believe to be true *about* art without capturing what it *is* or how it *works.*

This means that my musical understanding and signature can only be developed and communicated through musical behaviour or – as Christopher Small describes it – through "musicking" (1999). Musical material thus affords performative and interpretive activity, meaning every song has a specific signature, and every performance is different. Music resides not merely in its sound nor its media but in its context and the encounter between the song and groups of audiences and the individual listener. An individual understanding of a song can therefore never be exclusive because it is realised through "personal listening" and inter-contextual and intersubjective dynamics informing shared understandings. In Keith Negus' words, "…my understanding can never be unique but always realised in relation to the actions, values, and views of other people" (2012, p. 381). In this sense, there is no either/or, which means that interpretations emerge within the shared field between the artists, the song, the listener and the context of the performance.

4.5.3 Lyrics and voices – misread and misused

As I have outlined so far, the musical stories we hear as listeners are not derived merely from the lyrical material as a transmitter of content but can be equally perceived as sound and rhythm. The symbolic function of a phrase, a performance or an artistic image can thus surpass the content of lyrics and, therefore, songmakers' intentions or general perceptions. Likewise, generic conventions inform listeners' perceptions. Occasionally, these factors make people misread lyrics but other times the "misuse" of a song is a strategic move to promote commercial or political issues or to mark historical, cultural and social events. Especially do problematic cases become apparent regarding the unauthorised use

of songs orchestrated by a political campaign in ways that can challenge the songmaker's intentions, and in some cases, make it necessary for the artist to take action to protect their songs.

One example is Bruce Springsteen's reaction to a small group of Donald Trump supporters playing "Born in the USA" outside a military hospital (where the then-president was receiving medical care) to show their dedication and patriotism. The song is generally viewed as a critical comment on the USA's treatment of Vietnam veterans. Although Springsteen himself says that he has learned to live with misconceptions by the Trump-supporters, he admits that as much as it is his job as a writer to write well, the listener's job is to "listen well". In his words: "…to understand that piece of music, you need to do what adults are capable of doing, which is to hold two contradictory ideas of one thing in your mind at one time" (Zoladz, 2020). Another example of a song that, according to the songwriter, has been similarly misused and misunderstood is Phil Collins' hit from 1981, "In the Air Tonight". When the song was played at Trump's election rally in October 2020, Collins sent a cease-and-desist letter in which his lawyers stated that "the use of the song was not only 'wholly unauthorised', but 'inappropriate' because it was played as a satirical reference to COVID-19" (Lenthang, 2020).

These are only a few examples of how lyrics can be – deliberately or not – misread and misused in ways that the songmaker, artist, critic or analyst could not anticipate, as different factors change the initial understanding of lyrics.

Lyrics and music performances can also be motivated by political and cultural issues, and therefore, be viewed as provocative, both because of the stories they tell and also due to the way they are told.

4.5.4 Provocative lyrics and rebellious artists

In 1968, *Hair* (MacDermot et al., 1967) became the first rock musical to open on Broadway. It was viewed as highly controversial for several reasons, but mostly because of its anti-war message at a time when Americans had contradicting opinions about the Vietnam War. The musical also challenged the traditional form of music theatre by utilising a racially diverse cast to tell the story of a long-haired, politically active group of hippies in New York. After being met with mixed

reviews, it later became a tremendous success – as did the film *Hair,* 1979 – and in many ways, this first rock musical changed the musical scene forever. The rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Lloyd Webber & Rice, 1971) was another musical theatre production that premiered on Broadway and was considered controversial, especially for telling a story of the life of Jesus Christ that ends with his death. Excluding his resurrection made many Christians accuse the musical of being blasphemous and anti-religious. Nevertheless, the musical theatre production, the album and the film achieved great success, and like *Hair*, it is still produced on stages across the world.

Singing songs and expressing personal views about religious and political issues can also be dangerous and, in some cases, life-threatening for artists. For example, in 2012, two Vietnamese singers were jailed for spreading propaganda and faced possible sentences of 20 years (Press, 2012). In 2012, the world also learned about Pussy Riot when three of their members were sentenced to two years in prison for their performance, "A Punk Prayer", near the altar of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Another artist who provoked political leadership with his music and political activism was the Chilean singer, songwriter and activist Victor Jara. In Norway, many of us came to know his story through the Norwegian singer and songwriter Lillebjørn Nilsen. In the early 70s, Victor Jara and Nilsen were planning to meet at "Der 3te Festival Der Politischen Lieder" in GDR Berlin. However, according to Nilsen, the Stasi demanded that he cut his hair, which he refused to do. As a result, Victor Jara turned down the invitation to the festival.

Tragically, a few years later, in 1973, Jara was brutally killed by Pinochet's soldiers. He was shot with 44 bullets after being tortured the day after the military coup. It took 45 years for justice to be served when nine retired officers were finally convicted of his murder. In 1975, Lillebjørn Nilsen released a song called "Victor Jara" (1975), which has since been translated into Spanish and is now sung in Chile. Today, Jara is remembered as a hero of the Chilean people and a symbol of the struggle for social justice and human rights, and his music and activism continue to inspire people around the world. For the context of this thesis, I have translated the content of the second verse and the two last phrases of Lillebjørn Nilsen's song:

> In a stadium in Santiago,
> six thousand people sing together to the silent soldiers:

> "Come with us! Sing with us, brother!"
> Their answer is gunfire. The fight is uneven, my friend
> When the song has faded with the wind, the singer, Jara, remains
>
> …we promise to never forget! Chilean songbird, farewell (1975 1:20-1:55, 2:42- 2:50)

These are only a few examples of how artists and their songs are discursively understood as political messages that may be threatening or supporting ideologies and regimes. For songmakers, whether stories emerge through writing or are there from the beginning is not determinative of their outcome. There neither seems to be nor should be any guarantee for how they are understood, as well as how stories *about* songs are created. Despite opening themselves to possibilities of failure and misunderstanding, imprisonment and even death, writing their truth about how they see and experience the world and the lives of people has been a need and a driving motivation for songmakers across genres and time. For audiences, then, songs can inspire, provoke and offer comfort. They can recognise themselves and their lives in the lyrics and establish a connection to the artist and their message. Songs can also find us in lonely and vulnerable situations that make us forget the artist and rather engage in the experience itself. The stage persona then becomes less important. It is all about the story emerging within and between the song and the listener. In this sense, it is not about the song telling *the* truth but rather conveying *a* truth about the moment and us.

The example of Nilsen's song about Victor Jara thus illustrates how lyrics can help us remember historical events and important political figures, not merely as a documented account for specific happenings, but as a testimony to its impact on society and the human experience. Lyrics therefore matter to our stories about songs and our encounters with them, and consequently become interwoven in our life narratives.

As I have illustrated, many lyrics are also written as stories; however, according to Keith Negus, the most pervasive narrative form people encounter in their daily lives is the pop song, which has notably been for the most part ignored in the literature on narrative (2012, p. 367). This also implies that narrative theories are rarely applied in pop song analysis. Despite the narrative's recognised importance

in our understanding of the world, it is therefore interesting to explore some of the ways lyrics are structured and understood as narratives.

4.5.5 The persuasive lyrical narrative

Lyrics have been written and performed with the intention to deliver political messages, promote beliefs and ideologies, and motivate, unite and worship. Songs are, however, just as much of a means of storytelling – through the use of self-narratives and testimonials, self-expression or structure – as lyric poems, which are dominated not by a storyline but rather a feeling or a mood. The main characterisation of narratives is that they represent an event, an action or a series of events. Lyric poems, on the other hand, can take the form of a description, an argument, an exposition, a combination of these or "something else altogether" (Abbott, 2008, p. 12). Unless something "happens", it is not a narrative.

For instance, Bonnie Raitt's song, "I Can't Make You Love Me" (1991), starts with these lines, "Turn down the lights, Turn down the bed, Turn down these voices inside my head" (0:32- 0:47). These phrases immediately "set up the scene" as a narrative starting to unfold. In the first lines of her song "Shadows and Light" (1975), however, it is as if Joni Mitchell paints an image with her words, "Every picture has its shadows, And it has some source of light, Blindness, blindness, and sight" (0:00- 0:17). Both songs immediately create a mood in which the lyrics operate, preparing the ground for interpretation. Although each individual will read their life and self-narratives into the lyrics, Mitchell and Raitt's songs, as Simon Frith puts it, partly determine "the nature of our engagement" (1996, p. 184). Even so, regardless of whether the lyrics are written as a narrative or non-narrative, the song can still be perceived as a narrative. This can be caused by how the song's temporality creates a temporal and spatial entity of sound perceived as a linear musical narrative with a beginning, middle and end and by the ways the lyrical poem itself can contain narrative situations (Abbott, 2008, p. 2). While seasonal cycles, moon phases and hours help us organise events in a time structure, narrative time relates to the significance of events and experiences rather than a linear timeline, which creates a sense of fluidity. They thus allow "the events themselves to create the order of time" (Abbott, 2008, pp. 3-4). Contrary to reading then, which allows for pause and reflection without disrupting the form, listening to songs and

performing creates continuous movement, resistance and release, adding a sense of narration.

According to Barthes, narratives can be carried by language, gestures and images. They are embedded in myths, fables, dramas and paintings and are present in every age, place and society. In his words:

> …under this almost infinite diversity of forms, the narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind, and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, the narrative is international, transhistorical, and transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (1977, p. 79).

In other words, the ways we encounter narratives in the world are numberless. It is the way we create the story of our lives and structure events. I will therefore now explore some notions of how these stories are created.

4.6 Stories – how we recall and create them

Stories and descriptions of human experiences can significantly impact how people see and deal with the challenges and dreariness of life. Musical engagement can then have the potential to be a coping mechanism and a space to grow. Even if we struggle to articulate the sensations and emotions that emerge when we listen, create and perform songs, these experiences help us navigate life and understand ourselves. Our investigative mind thus tends to continue the self-communicative act – the internal dialogue – derived from embodied life experience and feelings to connect and make sense of the world. Our internal representational world is in every sentence we pronounce, loaded with affective experience (Susan McClary, 2016a, pp. 133-134). Songmaking and listening can provide opportunities to create a structure through narrating life experiences. The writer and listener can feel safe knowing it is a story with a beginning and an end, yet also reconnect with pain in their own life. Reading a book, seeing a play, viewing a painting and listening to music thus allow performers, songmakers and audiences to “revisit” lived experiences, events and emotions in a *non-threatening* environment and “bring

them back" in a new context. However, it seems evident that we do not remember everything, meaning that we mark some things as significant and leave others out. How, then, do experiences transfer into memories?

Daniel Kahneman offers an explanation in his talk about humans' two different entities: the *experiencing* self and the *remembering* self (2010). The experiencing self is present in the moment, or experiencing, while the other self narrates the memory. The remembering self then "composes stories and keeps them for further reference" (Kahneman, 2011, pp. 386-390). What happened at a particular moment is thus given a future. The challenge is, however, that every memory is composed by the remembering self, making it difficult to separate actual events from the workings of one's mind. For instance, memories can be adjusted in retrospect and false memories can be created. Additionally, in recalling memories, one can experience a sense of *presence* in this *present* time. It is therefore not only mentalised but felt and relived.

As I have illustrated so far, then, lyrics matter as they provide spaces for identification, expression and storytelling. There thus seem to be more similarities between writing, performing, reading and listening than what separates them. All of these activities involve levels of choice as to which parts of one's self and life story one includes and what is left out. Reading lyrics or listening to recordings can create a new understanding of ourselves and our lives. Receivers revisit feelings and relive pain through performances *as if* it is happening in the now, each time building on memories of previous experiences and circumstances. As Daniel Kahneman reminds us, stories are about the events and moments we remember because they are significant to us (2011, p. 387). What we remember, how we understand ourselves and create our self-narrative, then becomes our story. Moreover, as the song "Victor Jara" illustrated, historical and cultural references can help us to not forget significant people and events, plus induce sociocultural identification and evoke memories. In a musical context, it is thus interesting to explore how the remembering self connects with the present through narratives and consider how our memory seems to depend on a capacity for narratives.

Without an exhaustive discussion of the cognitive research field, regarding the construction of memory, it is therefore worth noting the research of Taisuke Akimoto, who draws upon Genette's narrative discourse theory. Akimoto suggests

that our memories take the form of narrative representations, organised temporally and linguistically, rather than being purely episodic. According to him, memories presented as stories encompass various elements such as episodic memory, the current situation, prospective memory, planned or imagined future and elements of fiction (2019, p. 343). These memories are not static replicas of past events but dynamic stories that evolve through a cyclic relationship between the narrative and discourse. Consequently, the content of these narratives can vary as they are constructed and reconstructed. While this framework offers a broad understanding of the structure of mental stories, it does not delve into the cognitive processes and knowledge involved in creating and manipulating these narratives. Nonetheless, Akimoto's perspective serves as a valuable starting point for exploring how complex experiences are transformed into songs. In my artistic work, I drew inspiration from my diaries, which illustrates how literature and written texts can serve as empirical data crucial in narrative studies. This encompasses a range of written materials, such as literary works, diaries, notes and more (Blix & Sorly, 2017, p. 25). The stories we tell about ourselves, and how we find ourselves to be, are constructed from memories, how we experience ourselves in the moment and not the least, who we become in telling and doing. Some things are included, some things are left out. As Stan Hawkins and John Richardson explain, "Personal narratives, then, are performative: they pertain not only to what we tell but, above all, how we tell and act. Moreover, they are subject to the same forces and constraints that inform all interpretive acts" (2017, p. 2).

Self-narratives are, as such, one of the ways we make sense of ourselves by creating stories to give meaning and coherence to what we do and what we experience as happening to us. However, although the narrative form is, in this sense, more suitable for understanding than the non-narrative form, self-narratives cannot be the only account for personal identity. Philosopher Lynne Rudder Baker writes: "they presuppose the existence of persons, who essentially have first-person perspectives" (2016, pp. 2, 15). Lyrics, then, in a narrative or non-narrative form, can provide opportunities to express ourselves and transform emotions, joy and pain into words and music. Thus, stories we create to make sense of ourselves, to give meaning and coherence to what we do and what we experience as happening to us. However, although the narrative form is, in this sense, more suitable for understanding than the non-narrative form, self-narratives are not the only account for personal identity. Self-understanding involves negotiating and

renegotiating the meaning of our experiences by applying appropriate metaphors and developing new life stories (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, pp. 232, 233). In planning the future, we extend the past and future into the present.

In this sense, our self-narratives and lived experiences are written into the songs we listen to and create as much as they are written into our life narratives as listeners, singers and songmakers. Moreover, the way lyrics are narrated play a role in how they are perceived and felt. Nevertheless, no matter how we remember or construct our memories, recalling them can evoke complex emotions connected to events in the past. Furthermore, they can make us remember and reconnect with events, life experiences, emotions and thoughts we hide from ourselves and our society. They can thus remind us of what the pronounced and the silent discourse can do to us and to fellow humans, moreover, how we narrate stories about ourselves, others and life.

Despite songmaking and music listening providing spaces to express and recognise complex emotions and memories, repeated performances can equally bring on and reinforce them. Our understanding of life events, experiences of loss and painful memories can therefore change over time but also be brought back into our lives in an overwhelming way through songs.

4.6.1 The "wisdom" of grief

How the general rules of society impose ways people should deal with and understand their emotions have likewise changed through history. If we turn our attention to the Greek philosophers, we learn that Plato introduced theories on emotionality as "something that needed to be regulated and subjected to reason" (Holte Kofod, 2017, pp. 5-6). The Aristotelian view was more complex, offering a perspective on intentional and relational aspects when applied to grief responses. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle emphasised the intentional aspects of emotions. Grieving should thus not be viewed as merely an involuntary and adverse reaction. In reacting intellectually to loss and without emotional pain, one would then lack what Aristotle termed "moral virtue". Ester Hole Kofod suggests that "rather than conceiving grief as a matter of authentic expression of emotional reactions, grieving must be seen as a moral practice involving a reflective mediation of emotional responses in accordance with moral values" (2017, p. 7). The driving

motivation for Aristotle was thus to clarify what it *means* for humans to function at their best and to realise one's potential. In order to do so and to develop virtue, one had to find the balance between passion and reason.

In medieval Europe, death was treated as an expected and non-dramatic event concerning the dead, precisely the individual's destiny in the afterlife rather than the survivors. Towards the Romantic era – seemingly preoccupied with subjective matters such as emotions and imagination – grieving over a loved one, however, was seen as an expression of spiritual depth and the quality of one's relationships. This view is illustrated by Lord Byron's words from *Manfred* (Act 1 Scene 1):

> To look within, and yet I live, and bear
> The aspect and the form of breathing men.
> But grief should be the instructor of the wise;
> Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
> Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
> The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life

Byron's poem then refers to sorrow not as something one needs to overcome but as a source of "knowledge and wisdom" ((Byron, 1819, p. 5) Holte Kofod, 2017, p. 10). Modern psychology has taken the concepts of "the wisdom of grief" further, focusing on how grief can be resolved and detached from the lost relationship and reinvested in the future. Most of us experience the loss of someone and thus also exhibit acceptable grief responses. People expect those grieving to eventually recover from their intense feelings of sorrow, in alignment with the Freudian ideal of recovery, detachment and autonomy. However, there are no general standards concerning the intensity or length of culturally approved grief, yet the norms are conditioned by one's society, tradition or culture. Depending on the circumstances and the relationship between the deceased and the survivor, the appropriateness of grief responses is evaluated according to cultural, personal and religious norms. According to Ester Hole Kofoed then, this implies that "the contemporary inclination to separate individual experiences of grief from cultural norms of mourning is problematic for several reasons" (2017, p. 21). She argues that grief is inseparably linked to socio-cultural and material repertoires available for mediation and interpretation.

Moreover, rather than viewing grief as "a causal effect of loss" or as emotions that strike us and overwhelm us, it is a response that is regulating and imbued with meaning and normativity. Losing someone can therefore bring forth various spectres of emotions and stages of grief that make people respond and act differently and also think and talk about death differently. These differences are also reflected in the ways we respond to, value and engage with art. For example, treating music as a form of therapy shows how it can draw our attention to something other than itself. However, while reconnecting with, and writing about, emotional turmoil and loss can feel therapeutic, it also reminds us of painful life events. Nevertheless, poets and songmakers have told their stories and expressed their feelings through music and words. It is then maybe rather a matter of how music and words engage and become meaningful in the making and performing, rather than seeing it as a way of restoring something – or someone – broken.

To explore the tension between the therapeutic value of the writing process and the possible effects of repetitive performances, I will first draw attention to Eric Clapton's thoughts on songmaking after his son's death.

4.6.2 Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven"

As previously discussed, the song "God" by John Lennon illustrates how myths can surpass reality and survive even beyond the artist's attempt at de-mythification. Another example is the mythicised rock legend Eric Clapton, who at times has been given the status of "God". The words "Clapton is God" were allegedly sprayed on a wall in an underground station in the 60s and later spread around various areas in London. However, life as a rock icon and touring musician has proven challenging to navigate. Studies suggest that substances like alcohol are used as a pervasive way to deal with problems related to performance anxiety, social expectations and the economy (Gross & Musgrave, 2020, p. 48). Sally Anne Gross and George Musgrave note how the music and entertainment industries, in which musicians are active participants, are often portrayed as a "pleasure dome" in the sense that it is a place of hedonistic pursuits and enjoyment, marked by creativity and self-expression. However, paradoxically, these industries are also full of struggling individuals tackling economic and psychological issues, in addition to addiction problems (2020, pp. 1,2).

These insights are supported by Clapton's testimonials of how his long-time battle with alcohol addiction led him to a point where he, for the second time, felt he neither could live without a drink nor with one. According to him, he was a mess; "…and so far as my playing was concerned, I was just about scraping by" (2007, p. 163). In 1982, Clapton was admitted to Hazelden treatment centre, but at the time of his son Conor's birth in 1986, his drinking had become "full blown again" and increasingly harder to control. Clapton describes it as follows:

> I really loved this little boy, and yet, when I went to visit him in Milan, I would sit and play with him in the daytime, and every second of that time, all I could think about was how much longer it would be before Lori would arrive to feed him and take him away to bed so that I could have another drink. I never drank in his presence. I would stay white-knuckle sober all the time he was awake, but as soon as she had put him in his cot, I would get back to my normal consumption, drinking until I passed out (2007, p. 163).

The following year, Clapton returned to treatment, motivated by hopes for his future as a father for Conor. After Conor's tragic death in 1991, Clapton found that the best way to honour his son and turn the dreadful tragedy into something positive was to get through it sober. Over the following months, he went to meetings, played the guitar and new songs started to take shape.

The first song he wrote was "Circus", which described the last night Conor and Clapton spent with each other at the circus. Clapton recalls: "It was a great night out. Conor never stopped talking and was particularly excited at seeing the elephants. It made me realise for the first time what it meant to have a child and be a father" (2007, pp. 170, 174). The following morning, Conor fell out of the window at the hotel where he was staying with his mother. At the time, Clapton had been working on a score for a movie called *Rush*, and according to his co-writer Will Jennings, Clapton came to him wanting to write about his boy. He already had the first verse but wanted Jennings to write the rest. Clapton had played the song for the film producer who had insisted on including it. However, Clapton recalls being very reluctant: "After all, I was still unsure about whether or not it should ever be made public, but her argument was that it might in some way help somebody, and that got my vote" (2007, p. 175).

The film was not very successful, but the song, "Tears in Heaven", was released as a single and became a massive hit and the most powerful song Clapton wrote in the aftermath of his son's death. According to Clapton, it was also his only "self-penned number one". He explains the process and motivations for writing the lyrics as follows:

> Musically, I had always been haunted by Jimmy Cliff's song 'Many Rivers to Cross' and wanted to borrow from that chord progression, but essentially, I wrote this one to ask the question I had been asking myself ever since my grandfather had died. Will we really meet again? (2007, p. 174)

"Tears in Heaven" reached an even broader audience through Eric Clapton's ground-breaking performance on "MTV Unplugged" (1992). In his close reading of this concert, Bjarne Markussen describes how Clapton, famously known as the rock legend with the "weeping guitar", presents himself as an "old blues man" with a nylon-stringed Martin: "The songs come one by one, low-keyed and moving. The voice has a new, sensitive quality" (2018, p. 295). Because of the song's personal focus and references to "this family tragedy", Markussen then suggests that they are a part of Clapton's Freudian "grief work" and thus "a painful recalling of memories and expectations". Looking closer into the term "grief work", it seems to be generally understood as ways of coping with loss by putting personal grief into perspective, and, as such, it can offer ways of coming to terms with pain and acknowledging the reality of what has happened.

In Freudian theory, recalling and reliving pain was seen as a way of mourning for the purpose of dealing with feelings of loss that eventually should lead to a sense of detachment. This notion was based "on the assumptions that expressing affect is helpful and that it is important to relinquish bonds to the deceased" (Middleton et al., 1993, p. 47). The purpose was to prevent forms of grief that lasted longer than what was considered the "normal" grieving period and could interfere with, e.g., social functioning and affect the mourner's health. As exemplified by Clapton's songs, creating and engaging with songs can provide sites for accommodating complex emotions and loss by offering opportunities for new insight into various forms of relationships. Music has thus proven helpful in expressing and tolerating emotions and recognising, identifying and differentiating

among them as they emerge when listening (Ruud, 2013, p. 176). However, returning to a previous question, is musical engagement always helpful?

4.6.3 Listening, making and performing songs – does it heal or hurt?

The value of music's restorative function in dealing with physical pain and mental health issues is regarded as evident and practised as a means of distraction and healing or pain-relieving effect since the seventh century. Findings suggest that music therapy treatments like Grief Songwriting processes can offer people "supportive and creative ways" to deal with loss and to move forward (Dalton & Krout, 2006, p. 101). Painful, complex experiences, thoughts and feelings are often deemed informative; thus, exploring and understanding them through songmaking can offer new insights. However, I observe an ongoing discussion concerning the justifications for the impact of music and songmaking on health and education, which includes music's therapeutic and developmental potential. These justifications often advance claims about the effects of engaging with art on language and brain development, as well as on qualities such as critical thinking and emotional competence.

I find Gert Biesta's thoughts on art education are helpful here as they challenge these justifications by saying they do not care about art. However, as he points out, the counterpoint to such claims would be non-instrumental justifications, and thus to accept "the idea of art for art's sake", which is to say that art in education is "useless" (2018, p. 2). Moreover, it will be to claim that art in therapy has no effect beyond itself. The question then concerns the motivation for introducing music-making as a useful *means* to reach particular *ends*, such as whether the purpose is to "get well" or get higher grades in mathematics. One could thus extend Biesta's suggestion regarding education to music, and thus instead of asking what it *produces* or *makes*, one should ask what it *means* or *makes possible* (2018, p. 3). The challenge is to accept and promote musical engagement as a valuable activity without measurable outcomes. This is an approach that, on the one hand, would allow for individual differences and uncategorisable experiences and, on the other hand, challenge quality requirements and notions of right or wrong ways of doing things. In this sense, music can evoke and mirror our inner state, singing allows us to connect with our voices as a valuable activity in itself, and lyrics can help us

recognise and articulate emotions by providing appropriate metaphors and language.

Songmaking, listening and performing are, however, not always a remedy. As noted earlier, through its ability to make us connect with our emotions, music can also make us more vulnerable. Even Ruud observes how any intellectually constructed defence “breaks down and disappears into this potential musical void” (2013, p. 167). Instead of resolving pain – which might be a driving motivation in a creative process – audience response and repeated performances can also be a way of constantly reliving memories and loss.

According to Clapton, the songs he wrote after his son’s death were never intended for publication. For him, it was all about playing them to himself, adjusting and changing them until they became a part of his being. While the repetitive process of playing and refining these songs for himself could have had a therapeutic effect on Clapton, performing them on stage might have created an unwanted detachment from the pain or enforced its intensity. He explains why he excluded “Tears in Heaven” from his concert repertoire in 2004 as follows:

> I didn’t feel the loss anymore, which is so much a part of performing those songs. I really have to connect with the feelings that were there when I wrote them. They’re kind of gone, and I really don’t want them to come back, particularly. My life is different now. They probably just need a rest, and maybe I’ll introduce them from a much more detached point of view (Hopper, 2022).

In other words, Clapton’s recollection of how he played the songs repeatedly for himself until they became a part of his being may not correspond to how he experienced the repeated performances of the same songs in front of an audience. The healing effect of writing songs and the place they hold in the songmaker’s life can also be vulnerable to how they are received by the audience and to possible meanings ascribed to the songs. It can thus lead songmakers to stop playing them to protect themselves and their relationship with their music, which I did for a period after releasing my first album.

4.6.4 “Weighed and found too light”

During my Ph.D. research fellowship, I was encouraged to speak and write about my thoughts on female anorexic artists and myths and beliefs connected to anorexia nervosa (AN). This implied that I had to reconnect with my experience with AN as a young music student in 1982.

During my midterm exams, just after celebrating my twentieth birthday, I was admitted to the hospital with AN, and I stayed there for most of the following two years. On the first day in the hospital, I started a diary with the following question: “Who am I? One who respects myself and my free will and my ability to be in control. Although, at the same time, one who can’t bring myself to eat…”. One year later, in 1983, Karen Carpenter died from AN. Her death caused speculations and theories about how she became anorexic, placing much of the blame on the music industry, her family and the pressure of being a female pop star. In the context of this thesis, my interest is the ways experiences with AN are expressed and understood in pop music and society in general. While Karen Carpenter never spoke of her struggles with AN, it took me 20 years to express my experiences in a song. Now, 40 years later, I have translated the lyrics to the song “Veiet og funnet for lett” (“Weighed and found too light”) (2002). The first lines are as follows:

> The fall of a feather
> Grazed the stone-paved street
> Veiled in silence
> Life is resting at my feet
>
> Days disappearing
> Forget to bring me along
> As the night drifts
> Deeper below and far beyond
> I have been weighed and found too light (0:18-0:57)

My lyrics metaphorically express how I remember being anorexic as waiting in transit between life and death. I still had a chance at life; I just didn't know how and what to choose. However, even though narrating lived experiences through poetic language and metaphors can help come to terms with and articulate complex

emotions and challenging circumstances such as illness, AN is not a metaphor, despite its frequent association with metaphorical thinking.

To shed some light on where and how metaphorical and discursive readings are grounded, I will start by outlining some theories on how metaphors are formed and what they mean.

4.7 Metaphors, voices and the body

In studying how metaphors are formed, it is helpful to acknowledge how we make sense of experiences not by relying on objective accounts for the truth based on disembodied, literal or mechanical reasoning but rather on embodied perception and imaginative thought. There is therefore no definitive, authentic, original or valid interpretation against which we can measure our experiences. Although individually constructed, we still find that our experiences bear resemblance to the impressions and understandings of others. The question then arises: what are the origins of our shared metaphors and concepts?

In their passage on “Fear of metaphor”, Lakoff and Johnsen describe how Aristotle held poetry and making “proper use of the poetic forms” at a high value but regarded being “a master of metaphor” as the greatest thing ((Poetics 1459a) 1980, p. 190). While Aristotle claimed that the best way of gaining new insight was through metaphor because “ordinary words” only spoke of what is already known, his regard for metaphor did, however, not continue into modern philosophy. On the contrary, the empiricist tradition regarded the use of metaphor and rhetoric as an improper use of words that could trigger imagination and emotion and lead away from the objective or the truth. It was not until the Romantic era in Europe in the late eighteenth century that subjectivity and emotion were considered valuable sources for self-understanding, illustrated by how emotions were understood and assigned appropriate names.

People employ terms and the language at their disposal to express thoughts, experiences and ideas. Therefore, in situations where their experiences cannot be conveyed using metaphors or abstract concepts, individuals resort to the language they are familiar with despite their awareness that language can never be entirely accurate. As a result, a writer's life experiences find expression in their words, just as a lyricist's reflections are conveyed through lyrics. Readers and audiences

therefore look for information about the author or songmaker in their work and, as such, connect their understandings with the artist's biography.

Metaphors are, however, not limited to verbal language. Musicians use their non-verbal gestures, timbre and vocalisation metaphorically to express effort, emotions and beliefs. Nevertheless, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, people are rarely aware of patterns guiding thoughts and actions. However, since the same conceptual system forms communication, they suggest that language is the essential source for understanding the nature and workings of the system (1980, p. 190). Verbal metaphors then enable us to *communicate* and *reflect* on perceived sound, musical knowledge and experiences to ourselves and others. Hence, we transfer the embodied experience of sound and its associated affective responses into mental representations of abstract concepts. In Don Idhe's words, "concepts…give themselves out within experience" that – as in the case of colours – should then be "investigated in the way that they are given" (2007, p. 26). As noted, to articulate these experiences, we use available language; where there is a lack of terms, we turn to the ones we know.

In their article "Metaphor and Music Emotion: Ancient Views and Future Directions" (2016), A. Pannese, M.A. Rappaz and D. Grandjean suggest that metaphors and CM (Conceptual Metaphor) contribute bi-directionally to the transition between music perception and emotional experience. On the one hand, they provide songmakers with metaphoric and stylistic devices to reflect emotions, and on the other hand, affecting the listeners' perceptions of expressed emotions in the music. In both cases, CM serves as a foundation for a collective understanding of the emotional impact of music. They furthermore claim that there is a close connection between metaphor and emotion. It is, however, not a cause-and-effect relationship but rather a complex interaction influenced by various factors like the listener's knowledge and contextual information (2016, p. 68). People's ability to conceptualise and articulate their experiences thus enables communication and compartmentalisation, stabilising impressions. Therefore, although language is considered a significant source for understanding the nature and workings of the conceptual system and how metaphors are formed, it is limited in terms of conveying musical and embodied knowledge and experiences. This includes the musical intentions, aesthetics and expressions that can only be experienced and communicated through musical activity and the body itself.

4.7.1 Illness a metaphor and discursive understandings of anorexia nervosa

To gain a deeper understanding of metaphorical and discursive readings of AN and how they are linked to popular music and anorexic artists and their songs, it is helpful to explore how perceptions of AN have developed over time.

The historical perspective on AN dates back to the 1870s when it was identified as a habit that required enforced weight gain. Later, psychoanalysis shifted the focus from physical transformation to the psychological meaning of the behaviour that went against natural instincts. Furthermore, academic traditions of analysing discourses have dealt with important issues regarding how popular culture contributes to establishing templates for corporeality. AN has, however, always been perceived as a phenomenon “scarcely understood and difficult to treat” (Giordano, 2021, p. 546). Explanations and treatments have thus proved to be one of the significant challenges within mental health services. The literature concerning AN is generally divided between psychologists who treat it as a disorder originating in the individual and those who see it as a response to cultural constructions of gender (Sewell, 2006, p. 51). Hereunder is Butler’s theory of what is understood as an “internal essence of gender” being “manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body” (1999, p. xv). It has been explained psychologically and from a cultural and sociological perspective.

AN is also viewed as an addiction, and war metaphors contribute to the perception of AN as an entity holding the anorexic hostage. Recovered anorexics are thus often perceived as victorious warriors or recovered addicts. Moreover, it has been treated as a religious and ascetic act, as a relational problem, and as a metaphorical “acting out” in response to the unreasonable expectations women are supposed to satisfy (Wilson, 2016, p. 215). Some discursive interpretations have then suggested AN as a response to social anticipations on the female body[16]. These interpretations have linked the disorder to feminist corporal and social theories and thus viewed it as a “conventional female practice” combined with “a sense of willpower coded

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[16] Anorexia Nervosa is around “ten times more likely to be diagnosed in women than in men, and the cultural metaphors invoked to explain the disorder relate exclusively to the female experience (Wilson, 2016, p. 218).

as masculine", which explains anorexics as androgynous (Brain, 2006, p. 138). Hence, it is seen as extreme compliance to expectations in the "patriarchal society", the fashion and music industries, and, paradoxically, simultaneously as a rebellion against those expectations (Wilson, 2016, p. 219). Dysfunctional family dynamics were also believed to contribute to AN, along with the mentioned patriarchal oppression and media pressure.

Readings such as these tend to reduce the embodied experience of AN to matters of cultural expression, cultural inscription and, as Brain points out, "a vehicle for the expression of the subject's own ideas, thoughts, or feelings" (2006, p. 126). Moreover, as many of these cases illustrate, the visual appearance of the *anorexic* body is seen as a response to social anticipations on the *female* body and, thereby, drawing attention to the body's "visualised surface" rather than the *lived* body. The anorexic body, then, is viewed as a tool for metaphorical expression of a concept, or an emotional or mental state of being.

4.7.2 Anorexia and its metaphors

Susan Sontag stated, "Illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness – and the healthiest way of being ill – is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking" (2001, p. 7). AN is, however, surrounded with metaphorical thinking and often read as "a metaphor of its time" and a "medium of culture" (Brain, 2006, p. 124), and some suggest that the anorexic body in itself is used metaphorically or as a symbolic tool by the anorexic. It then becomes a matter of viewing the body as "a speaker of truth" on behalf of the anorexic women unable to express themselves with words. The problem then is how psychiatric theories become "popular common sense" used to support personal and social agendas (Saukko, 2008, p. 76). Not only do they affect social discourse, but also the way anorexics see themselves, which again points to how "controversial and contradictory" pro-ana sites and playlists can provide spaces for anorexics to defend their choice and right to starve. Nevertheless, to deal with the phenomenon – without ignoring the seriousness and deadliness of AN – one still has to acknowledge their importance as a place where anorexics can connect with each other. And as such, this is a space "in which they attempt to construct 'choice biographies'" (Harris, 2001, p. 130; Markula et al., 2008, p. 85).

By attacking patronising theories of anorexics as distorted or as victims of patriarchy, these sites use voluntarist language about AN as a choice. This, in turn, challenges notions of anorexics as linguistically incompetent and, therefore, having to express themselves through their bodies (Saukko, 2008, p. 60). Even so, we all express ourselves and impress ourselves on others through our bodies. From a phenomenological standpoint, this means that our body serves as a fundamental physical connection to the world around us. Additionally, we perceive ourselves through various "bodies of meaning" that can be both concrete and symbolic: meaning is embedded in our actions and experiences, while our body is understood and interpreted within the context of these frameworks of meaning (Waskul & Vannini, 2012, p. 9). This perspective thus underscores the intricate interplay between our physical presence and the layers of significance we attach to it.

The body can also act as a channel for unprocessed mental states, which are "unable to achieve representation as ideas or feelings" and therefore represented in "the bodily domain". Psychiatric theories emphasise how puberty-related changes in the body can bring on early-onset AN. The changes can thus represent an undesired change in identity as "a psychic equivalence between the experience of body shape and its concrete parameters" (Fonagy et al., 2002, p. 405). It thus seems like anorexics express themselves in many ways, as we all do. However, perhaps because the visuality of the anorexic body is impossible to ignore and because most people see AN as a mental health problem, they are often expected to write, sing, and talk about it, as some readings indicate. For some, what might be a matter of self-protection is therefore read as denial. One example is George McKay's observation:

> In the 1970s, Karen, the pop ground breaker, did not even like to say the words 'anorexia nervosa', not even (or especially) after a full year's therapy in New York to try to deal with it. No 'waif warrior' (Katzman 2009, p. xvii), seemingly, our Karen (2017, p. 17).

McKay later commented on how her "self-denial" was in "stark contrast to the evidence of her body before the camera" (2017, p. 9).

To offer an alternative interpretation of Carpenter's refusal to talk about AN, I will share a personal experience of how my relationship with singing was affected when I struggled with AN. At the time of my hospitalisation, I found that singing

and listening to music offered a break from myself and my surroundings. I wrote about my day-to-day experiences in a diary. To write songs or to sing about AN was not an option. I needed music to be about something else. I loved to sing. Just the mere sensation of singing. And I loved listening to music. It was pure. It felt real. And it made me forget the pain. At least for a little while. However, 20 years later, I felt ready, and I shared my experiences in a documentary, *Vektløs* (*Weightless*), (Endresen 2002). The documentary followed me for almost two years while recording my first album with the same title, *Vektløs*, (2002), which also became the soundtrack to the film and looked back at when I was anorexic.

For me, it took those 20 years to get enough distance because at the time music and singing were my escape from AN. This experience suggests that there could be alternative interpretations of Karen Carpenter's silence.

4.7.3 The scale – metaphor in "Weightless"

On the cover of the diary I started the day I was hospitalised, is a drawing of my tombstone with the inscription, "Weighed and found too light". The phrase referred to the word "tekel", meaning, "you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting" from the fifth chapter in the Book of Daniel. Twenty years later, I used the same metaphor in the only lyrics I have written that are directly connected to my experience with AN. On one hand, the scale metaphor functioned as a description of my indecisiveness and sense of split self and, as such, the internal incoherence between self and the generalised other (Aboulafia & Taylor, 2008). On the other hand, it represented the scale held by Lady Justice and, thus, judgement from others and from God. It also represented the accurate scale for measuring my weight and deciding on further treatment. These lines therefore illustrate how the source domain provides grounds for metaphorical expressions. In this case, the *target* domain – the sensation of being weightless and rejected – is connected to concrete metaphors and thus drawn from the *source* domain – a physical scale. Additionally, it illustrates how the image-schema structure of a source domain is employed in understanding the target domain (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, p. 254). The way I use the image and experience of a scale, and interpretations of the concepts of a scale, is thus grounded in my personal experience with being anorexic and my knowledge of various references to scale as a concrete object and concept. A similar metaphorical expression employing the

scale as something defining self-value is also found in Maria Mena's words in "Eyesore" (2008, 1:20- 1: 33), "My worth is measured solely; according to the scale, I am heavy, I feel frail". These songs then exhibit that it is in connecting the two domains our lyrics and their metaphorical expressions become meaningful.

Another persistent belief and metaphorical term used about AN is that it is an epidemic. Despite being rare in epidemiological terms, some suggest that we are witnessing an epidemic of AN among young women in Western societies (Makino et al., 2004; Pike et al., 2015). Studies do show that it has increased in the last 20 years, particularly during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Lin et al., 2021; Zipfel et al., 2022). Given the high mortality rate for AN, these numbers are highly concerning. A recent study revealed that only 21 per cent of patients with AN fully recover (Leigh, 2019). I am grateful to be among this alarmingly small group. However, even if I cannot connect with the anorexic mindset anymore, I remember the physical and emotional pain and despair. Forty years later, as I translated the song, I could still sense the feeling of being "weighed and found too light". It was all so obvious to me. Others belonged. I didn't. I was the alien. At the time, AN was the only way I could stay alive. The only way I could die. The last lines of my song say it like this:

Rose gardens wither
Nobody needs to know
In death's whisper
There's still a place for me to go
Turn down the shadows
Forget me, forget me not
Hushed companions
Lead me the way where angels trot (2002, 1:30- 2:04)

As noted, AN is surrounded by metaphoric thinking, and as these lyrics illustrate, the experience of AN is also metaphorically expressed in lyrics. The way we express ourselves with words can thus be investigated as one of our conceptual systems, explaining how the system works (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980, p. 4). For instance, if we look at some lyrics written by anorexic songmakers, AN is ascribed a female agency that is both an ally and an enemy. "Ana" is the protagonist, representing one internal, dominant voice with no identity outside the song (Moore, 2012, p. 181). The song "Waiting to Be Weightless" by Elysian Soul puts

it as follows, "Oh, Darling, can't you see the way we merge and intertwine?" and, "You'll be my friend until the end. Together, we are cursed" (2013, 0:29- 0:33, 1:53- 1:56).

Another reference to AN as an internalised entity with its uncontrollable agency is described by Maria Mena in Eyesore: "I swear it's not by choice. But Ana has this voice, and it calms me down. It gives me purpose" (2008, 0:22- 0:35). Moreover, as Mena sings in "Self-fulfilling prophecy", "This hunger grows inside me like a tumour. The dizziness just compliments this failure of a girl" (2008, 1:02- 1:12), Additionally, Anna Livi sings in "Anorexia", "I lost more than I ever thought I'd lose. I never asked for a place in anorexia's shoes" (2020, 1:09- 1:23). Hence, these lyrics challenge one of the other most persistent beliefs about AN is that it is about control. This notion is further supported by the idea of anorexics being controlling and manipulative (Giordano, 2021, p. 546).

However, as conveyed by these songs, despite seemingly controlling their bodies and environment, anorexics generally feel divided and thus "absolutely not in control" (Sewell, 2006, p. 52; Wilson, 2016). As expressed by Maria Mena: "I'm settled now, This show of mine consumes me. But every pound I shed speaks volumes of my lack of self-control" (2008, 1:13- 1:23). And by Ana Livi, "It was pounds and pounds ago that I lost my self-control" (2020, 1: 37- 1: 43). It might be, then, that it is the image of the anorexic body and its seemingly controlled dieting that leads to people's understanding of someone in control and moreover, someone obsessed by how they look. Additionally, they are interpreted as unwilling or unable to articulate their motivations and how they feel about themselves, and thus silence. This perceived silence then seems to draw more attention to AN than other conditions related to mental health issues. It therefore worth looking into how this understanding is similarly based on myths and beliefs about AN, anorexics and their bodies.

4.7.4 Anorexic bodies and the stories they tell

A quick search on the internet and music streaming apps reveals a vast number of AN and pro-ana playlists and forums, and these songs tell us that anorexic artists are not always silent. Why, then, does feminist theologist Lisa Isherwood ask; "What is it that women cannot speak that they have to speak through very extreme

manifestations of their bodies?" – "What's that body screaming, because it's a big scream, isn't it, if you're prepared to die for what you need to say" (Fukui, 2014). Is she indicating that being anorexic is simply a way of manipulating the world with screaming silence? Or are there other reasons for not speaking about one's inner struggles or personal physical and mental health issues in public?

Although many chose to be silent about their experience with AN, many express their thoughts in poems, songs, pro-ana sites and media. However, while revealing stories and confessional narratives can provide income and fame, they can also be read as serving commercialised "spectacles within celebrity culture" (Holmes, 2015, p. 3). The question, then, is whether the visuality of AN places the anorexic in a particularly vulnerable position. As already mentioned, it is difficult to ignore the anorexic body, both for the anorexic living within it and for spectators. Despite new research and others like me trying to provide new perspectives on the disorder, myths and beliefs still seem to prevail. For example, the myth most are familiar with, namely the image of the anorexic looking at her body in the mirror, perceiving it as fat rather than underweight. The main issue, however, for many anorexics is not their visual appearance. Instead of seeing themselves as fat in the mirror, the anorexic can experience unacceptable sides of their inner self that have to be controlled or manipulated by changing their body shape (Fonagy et al., 2002, p. 405). It is thus more about how it feels to exist and live in one's body, both physically and mentally, than what they look like aesthetically. Marya Hornbacher writes, "I could see that I was thin. Pretty thin, I thought, smiling a proud smile at myself in the mirror, good girl! It did not occur to me that I was too thin. After all, what is too thin?" (2006, p. 244). As such, thinness can be a confirmation. Starving is extremely painful at times, so the numbers on the scale and the mirror image can prove that all the suffering is not in vain.

Personifying either AN or expressing metaphorically how it feels to be anorexic can provide a way of understanding and explaining the inexplicable and, thus, the disorder to ourself and others. To investigate the ways discursive and metaphorical understandings of AN are formed also exhibits how linguistic metaphors shape social and personal discourse. While pro-ana sites, lyrics and testimonials can be problematic because they can inspire and encourage anorexic behaviour, popular beliefs, myths and sociocultural theories can similarly contribute to their understanding of themselves as outsiders, increasing this search for purpose and

belonging. Additionally, because people's intentions are good, it is almost impossible to find good reasons for arguing against them.

4.7.5 The risk of being misinterpreted

Through the years following the release of the documentary and album, *Vektløs* (*Weightless*) (Endresen 2002; Kari Iveland, 2002), I have come to accept and appreciate the different interpretations of the songs in the documentary. Much to my surprise, both were overwhelmingly well-received by critics and audiences. However, I realised that I was faced with an intriguing predicament. Through my attempt to address some of the myths surrounding the disorder, my songs and the process of writing them were perceived quite differently. *Firstly*, I found that most listeners heard the lyrics describing life from an anorexic state of mind. Songs about love lost and lived experiences were interpreted as "confessional testimonies". *Secondly*, it seemed to me that the general perception was that writing and performing had a therapeutic, cleansing effect and, thus, were instrumental in my recovery. This, to me, suggested that rather than works of art, my songs were understood according to their functional and *therapeutic* value, despite the fact that I wrote and released the songs 20 years later. So, it might not have helped me cope with AN at the time, but telling my story provided a chance to create coherence and structure in retrospect and thus contributed to how I now look back on my past and former self.

However, to be confronted with some metaphorical interpretations of AN still feels provocative and painful. In this sense, lyrics and songs can display and, in many ways, also act as a bridge between society's perception and one's own experience of self and thus provide opportunities for acceptance *of* and *by* ourselves. Writing can make us feel alive and confirm that we have lived. Who we find ourselves to be in the moment emerges from a continuous dialogue between memories and presence and "past and present selves" (Hawkins & Richardson, 2017). Reconnecting with complex emotions and memories and writing them into songs also gives them a future and brings new meaning to past experiences. How, then, can I – and should I – bring my lived experiences into my research work without being affected and be brave enough to risk being misinterpreted or not understood correctly?

Anorexic testimonials are as varied as they are plentiful. I thus believe that many explanations reduce these stories into the same narrative category to prevent further investigation and possibly limit the chances of reaching a deeper understanding of AN. Another aspect to consider when dealing with AN is that despite to the apparent visuality of the anorexic body, which to others may appear as a result of self-destructive or self-constituting behaviour, this does not necessarily represent an anorexic's motivation for or experience of *being* anorexic. As comments on discursive readings of AN demonstrate, it seems to be a case of *how* we listen instead of what and who we listen to.

As a summary, I will close this section with lines from one of my latest songs, "Girls Like Her", which is still a work in progress:

> They say they've found the perfect way
> To explain her
> With clever terms
> To prove they're in the know
> Cause girls like her
> Deserve
> To be understood
>
> Words are thrown
> Like sticks and stones
> At her soul
> Strike a pose
> As we claim the throne
> Of understanding

I refuse to accept that anorexic female artists are silent. The issue is rather how we listen. Moreover, my experience has taught me that living is being free to create one's own narrative while simultaneously realising that it is probably not possible.

4.7.6 Authentication of anorexic artistic voices

I will now return to Nicola Dibben's point on how vocal performances are understood primarily "in terms of the communication of authentic emotion"

through a star, one of the predominant elements of pop music culture (2009, p. 317). How, then, are emotions communicated? And how can we tell whether they are authentic or not? Moreover, to put it bluntly, who gets to decide?

It seems that to be considered trustworthy, there has to be a connection between the *real* person, their emotions and real-life experiences, and what is communicated through the stage persona or star. Another element contributing to how vocal performances are understood is the connection between the pop singer and the content and style of their songs. As this section has shown, all of these factors can come into play when the visual appearance of the singer leads to speculations about their personal struggles and subsequently to analytic comments on whether the star lives up to these expectations – expectations that, paradoxically, are rarely addressed or contradicted. To illustrate how these elements can be connected, I will draw attention to how "a star" and their music can be understood based on the relationship between associations to their body, their private life and stage persona, and their songs. More precisely, I will focus on the associations of the life, music and visual appearance of Karen Carpenter. I will start with another quote from George McKay's article, "Skinny blues: Karen Carpenter, anorexia nervosa and popular music":

> She never sang directly of it (AN), of course, and yet it seems everywhere in the Carpenters' music, from the technologised perfection of the sound on record to her gasp-inducing body unhidden by drums for concert audiences, from her wide – or empty-eyed, smiling denial to the often banal pop lyrics that somehow always suggested more and worse – 'In my own time nobody knew the pain I was going through' (Carpenters 1975) – to the void voice that was so full (2017, p. 17)

McKay's description of Karen Carpenter's "gasp-inducing body unhidden by drums", "her wide – or empty-eyed, smiling denial", "banal pop lyrics", and "the void voice that was so full" reflects a search for a connection between the real person and the star. His use of adjectives also indicates what he sees as a disconnection, and thus a form of inauthenticity, which is further illustrated by his comments on Richey Edwards, who wrote the lyrics to the song "4st 7lbs", 1994, by Manic Street Preachers. McKay notes, "Yet Edwards is the guitarist, not the singer of the band. While he stands thin on stage or screen authenticating his own lyrics" (2017, p. 17).

Richey Edwards disappeared in 1991 and was presumed dead by absentia in November 2008. At the time of his disappearance, Edwards struggled with AN, self-harm and alcohol abuse (Oxley, 2021). This, then, is an example of an authentication of the lyricist, where the connection is made between the content of the lyrics and the anorexic body. His body thus authenticates the songmaker, the rock star, and the song. Returning to Moore's point that "authenticity is ascribed to, rather than inscribed in, a performance" (2012, p. 271) it is then helpful to ask *who* is being authenticated, but also *what*. Is it the performer, the performer's audience or an (absent) other? Or a myth, a metaphor or a preconception? I would say that McKay's remarks about Richey Edwards and his song lyrics demonstrate how the idea of authenticity is formed based on the observer's perspective.

According to Moore, positioning authenticity within the act of attribution suggests that any piece of music or performance can be deemed authentic by a specific group of observers. What matters most is how effectively a performance conveys its intended impression, which is influenced by the deliberate musical choices made by the performers. This success can be assessed collectively by all listeners and, ultimately, on an individual basis (2012, p. 271). Recognising that McKay's interpretation is rooted in sociocultural discourse and that some individuals may agree with his perspective, the idea of authenticity, as discussed here, appears to support the notion of being subjective and ultimately determined on an individual level. Hence confirming that, to a large extent, authenticity is in the mind of the beholder in that audiences rely on songmakers to be trustworthy, and to create music that resonates with their taste and supports their perception of the artist and their work. It is thus vital for fans to have faith in their sincerity and their music. Moreover, for pop songs and stars, one of the predominant sources of information is found in the singer's voice, especially in recorded music. This brings me to another point that I am interested in regarding the anorexic performer, namely Nicola Dibben's notes on how the voice is produced and what it does. She writes, "The production norm for amplification and recording of pop singers has two important effects: it creates intimacy between listener and singer and communicates "inner" thoughts of the song character and/or performer" (2009, p. 320).

Although Dibben is most likely talking about the processed voice, not a live performance, I nevertheless find her thoughts about the pop singer's voice relevant for pop vocals in general. Even though the recorded and miked voice projects signs of the singer's inner state and negotiations with levels of intimacy, it seems safe to say that one can also feel an intimate connection with an acoustic voice performing with an orchestra.

4.7.7 The relationship between the stage persona and the real person

In a live concert, it might seem that experiences of distance mainly rely on the singer's proximity to the audience. However, the timbre of a voice in an acoustic space can exhibit a closeness and connection that can feel just as intimate regardless of your proximity to the stage. Although processing and technical mediations allow for manipulations of physical space, I would argue that the primary source of information about emotional intent or levels of intimacy is mainly produced and mediated by the body. A rock singer belting at the top of their lungs leaves an impression of distance or temperament. No matter how the voice is produced, the sound of the belting voice itself indicates the location and relationship between the singer and the listener. As such, amplifications and recordings of singers do not create intimacy or indicate communication of inner thoughts, but they can enhance the singer and producer's musical intentions. The microphone and production can amplify illusions of physical space and thus the connection between listener and performer.

However, to create a vocal sound in a recording, whether dubbed, sampled, copied or compiled by a number of tracks, there must be a vocal sound source. As Stan Hawkins reminds us, "Because vocal closeness is mediated through the recording, any critique of it needs to involve considering vocal expression alongside the performative inscriptions of the body" (2009, p. 123). Hence, the primary source of a perceived intimacy between a voice and a listener does not rely primarily on technology but instead on the vocal timbre and chosen voice quality and effects. While the vocal sound can be processed and mixed, the emotional and embodied expression, as we are familiar with hearing in recordings, is initially produced by the singer. Thus, it is the singer's "grain of voice" that communicates inner thoughts and not the technology. Vocal processing and recordings can, however,

amplify and add layers of sound and effects to adjust and expand the texture of the voice and create a sense of space.

So, I now return to the point of interest, namely the relationship between what is heard communicated through the pop singer and the relationship between the stage persona and the *real* person. Karen Carpenter's struggle with AN has evoked discussion about a potential dissociation between the star image and her private person. What many heard in her voice and music did not match what they expected to hear. George McKay writes:

> Karen collapsed in Las Vegas in 1975 while singing 'Top of the World', an event which began to open up to public consciousness the condition of anorexia nervosa. An upbeat country-tinged love song co-written by brother Richard Carpenter (music) and regular Carpenter's lyricist John Bettis, 'Top of the World' had been a number 1 single in the United States in 1973 and was a highlight of the Carpenters' live show. The opening line is 'Such a feeling coming over me' (Carpenters 1972) – if not dissociated, is this what you sing before your body collapses on stage? (2017, p. 7).

This quote illustrates that even though Karen Carpenter conveyed the voice of the lyrics, which represented the 'inner' thoughts of the song character, some still contemplate the enigma of Carpenter and what they perceive as a disconnect between her personal life and the themes of her songs. Extending on McKay's earlier comment on how Richey Edwards' thin body authenticated his lyrics (2017, p. 17), I am therefore concerned about the assessments of an artist's authenticity or genuine expression. While artefacts, architecture and various traditions within crafts and performance practices can indeed embody authenticity, I find it problematic when these categories are extended to assessments of people, their lives and self-expressions, and their art.

4.7.8 On a personal note

To maintain transparency, I need to mention that I read a specific tone in many writings about Karen Carpenter – including some of the quotes and analytical comments in McKay's article – that makes me uncomfortable. However, I am aware that my experience with AN may be causing me to interpret the text with a

bias. I nevertheless have to ask whether it is the other way around. Maybe it is *because of* my experience that I can pick up subtle nuances in people's speech and writings. And maybe I recognise these nuances easily because I have encountered similar tones before.

I don't have any answers to these questions, but I am convinced that people's attempts to explain the disorder and its impact on individuals and their loved ones are motivated by a genuine desire to increase understanding. To be understood, however, just as often means one is misunderstood. In this sense, individuals are free to misunderstand and interpret information or communication in their own way and have the right to their individual perspectives and interpretations. As Moore writes in continuation to the previous quote on authenticity within the act of attribution; "Whether such perceivers are necessarily fooled by doing so is beside the point, since we may learn as much from creative misunderstanding as from understanding" (2012, p. 271).

Considering Sontag's claim – namely that diseases that are not understood become threatening and are, therefore, more likely to attract metaphorical explanations – it is thus important to continue exploring and discussing these topics to better understand and support those affected by AN. I therefore agree with Sontag's observation that much of "the well-intentioned public discourse in our time expresses a desire to be candid about one or another of the various dangers which might be leading to all-out catastrophe" (2001, p. 178). Moreover, misunderstandings about conditions like AN can lead to negative consequences in the sense that they contribute to the discourse and can be used as a tool of power. Therefore, as Richard Middleton argues with reference to Michel Foucault, to disrupt discursive structures of power and knowledge, it is crucial to investigate the "discursive formations through which knowledge is organised" (1990, p. 7). While discourse arising from silence can have nothing to say, silence can also speak of what is forbidden or not said. It can be personal concerns, such as things we do not want to know about ourselves, but it can also be what society is unwilling to discuss. My sense of who I am, and my internal discourse, can go against the norms of society. It can therefore be an entirely different life experience to be an "outsider" versus being accepted by the world, both in conflict and in peace.

The way we perceive and interact with the world around us therefore has a significant impact on our sense of self and belonging that can cause us to change who we allow ourselves to be and who we become.

4.7.9 The power of well-intended misunderstandings

Returning to Moore's statement, about whether anything – or what – can be understood from misunderstandings, is that really true? Moreover, why is it so painful to be misunderstood? As Nina Simone sings, "Oh, I'm just a soul whose intentions are good. Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood" (Benjamin et al., 1964).

In response to the last question, I will again point to Foucault and others' concerns regarding how discourse is used as a power tool. For example, I consider Jacques Derrida, whose work on deconstruction focuses on how language is used to construct meaning and power relations, and Judith Butler, who has written extensively about the relationship between power, gender, and sexuality. The latter argues that gender is not a fixed or essential category but rather something that is produced through discourse and performance. These philosophers believe discourse is not simply a neutral means of communication but is intimately tied to power relations and can be used to maintain or challenge existing social hierarchies. In this sense, power is held by individuals or institutions and distributed throughout society, which implies that it is not just exercised from the top down but is also present in everyday interactions and practices.

To understand how writing can be empowering but also enact power, it can be helpful to explore Derrida's definition of "text" further, as it refers to all of human culture and thus to "writing" as more than an inscription. He also included the system of "inscribed" power – laws, rituals, traditions, arts – as ways in which privileges are performed through established authorities, which therefore can be read as "those who author"(Schechner, 2013, p. 145). While laws may govern our society, they are merely available to us as language and discourse implying that writing enacts agendas of power. It does not serve power, but the "writer" performs authority by writing. Writing then does not come to power; it is there in advance. It shares and is composed of it: "Hence, struggles for powers set various writings up against one another" (Derrida & Wolfreys, 1998, p. 50). Following these

thoughts on how writing is understood and executed, any discourse therefore exists prior to living speech and any form of writing. As Foucault explains it, understanding is based on an “already-said”, which is not merely a spoken phrase or an inscribed text, “but a “never-said”, an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark”. The “not-said” or “already-said” is thus already articulated in what precedes it like a silent undercurrent that persists beneath it but remains concealed and silenced by it (2002, pp. 28- 29).

As I pointed out at the top of this passage, the other question is if there is anything to learn from misunderstandings and if we can actually create opportunities for clarification. For example, many metaphorical explanations of AN describe it as an epidemic and, therefore, contagious, suggesting that people need to be warned. However, as many of us have experienced and attempted to clarify, this assumption is incorrect. Additionally, many believe the cause of AN is vanity, probably because most thinking about AN is also connected to its visibility, which is evident and noticeable to others.

The anorexic body, however, is, I have suggested, not always merely a result of a desire to be thin for aesthetic reasons. Additionally, it can be a consequence of not eating, leading to specific behaviour patterns. Similarly, many of the symptoms of AN can be caused by starvation (Staff, 2023). While these and other misconceptions have given me the opportunity to clarify some issues, as I have tried to demonstrate herein, myths and beliefs tend to prevail over science and personal testimonies. I am, therefore, still worried about the possible consequences of misunderstandings.

4.8 Reflective thoughts on the stories they tell

Writing lyrics using life experiences as source material can make us relive these experiences as well as the added emotions from coping afterwards, imparting a sense of purpose and direction. Likewise, listening to songs can bring us back to the pain that occurred in the moment while also providing spaces for healing in the sense that we can reconnect with events and emotions in a different context, and thus in a “safe” environment. However, as I have drawn attention to, disturbing memories may also be triggered in ways that call for cautious awareness, especially when dealing with songmaking as a therapeutic strategy.

As this discussion has shown, then, understanding the stories told by lyrics and voices goes beyond mere sense-making. Reading and listening are not passive activities; they are akin to singing, performing and creating, involving active engagement as part of their representation. This engagement encompasses bodily reactions (real-time interaction and sensory experiences), cognitive mediation and embodied responses. Therefore, a lyricist's and performer's unique voice resonates with us in various ways, forging stronger connections to some songs and creators over others. However, while we often share preferences, our approaches to lyrics and voices and our experiences as listeners, readers, singers/performers and lyricists/songmakers remain individual, versatile, dynamic and ever-changing. For instance, on the one hand, the acts of listening, reading, singing and songmaking can be regarded as ends in themselves. On the other hand, some interpret these activities as tools for conveying an idea, essence or sense of self. In such cases, lyrics and voices become mere means for expressing something beyond their materiality.

Even though songs are created and, in a sense, employed by humans, I thus find that songmaking and songs are not tools in the conventional sense. As Øyvind Varkøy and Inger Anne Westby note, artworks resist being used (2014, p. 184). According to them, Martin Heidegger noted that even though humans create works of art, they are distinct from ordinary objects and resist consumption. They are not useful objects or things intended for everyday life. Music should, therefore, be experienced and appreciated as a work of art. Contrary to tools that tend to fade from our consciousness as we use them when we engage with music, it does not fade; it comes forward. Music also brings forth the world to which it belongs and to which we belong. Varkøy and Westby writes, “A work of art offers us its own existence” (2014, p. 184). The existential musical experience thus refers to a unique encounter marked by profound and wholehearted surrender. This aligns with what Norwegian author Erik Fosnes Hansen describes as music’s “immediacy in the now” (2012), which refers to music’s tangible, acoustic presence, a quality that is equally applicable to life itself.

As I have made a case for so far, then, investigating how lyrics, voices and the stories they tell brings forward existential questions while also highlighting how engaging with lyrics and voices as listeners, readers, singers, performers,

songmakers and writers exhibits aspects of personal identity and embodiment as well as the differences and commonalities between us. It is thus worth remembering Laurence Kramer's claim, that although musical meaning is closely connected to general meaning, this concept may seem surprising because we often overlook this connection. He writes, "...since we make sense of life only amid a dense network of social, cultural, and historical forces, musical meaning inevitably bears the traces, and sometimes the blazons, of those forces" (2011, p. 163). Kramer thus confirms that the choices we make, our sense of responsibility and how we perceive, comprehend and link music and life, all contribute to the meaning *within* life and the *meaning* of life.

Without delving into Kierkegaard's theories, it is thus relevant to reflect on his thoughts about "life's way", which he divided into three different potential stages of life. The first is the *aesthetic* stage, "the domain of immediacy"; the second is the *ethical* stage – "the field of demand and duty"; and the third is the *religious* stage – "the stage of fulfilment". Each person must choose the stage they want to achieve – stages and choices that can present differently in each of us. Kierkegaard, however, challenges us to choose. His philosophy places absolute value on the individual's choice and how the self may only realise itself through choice. For him, there could be no self-realisation without self-transcendence. What matters is not one's achievements or physical and social well-being but rather the choices people make. One can look back at a successful life but risk losing it in living it. It is thus essential to take responsibility for oneself and to be conscious about one's choices (de Lange, 2007, pp. 284, 285). However, to choose consciously and to be responsible, one must be aware of life's possibilities and dare to make decisions. Differences should then not erase one another and create a state of "either-or". On the contrary, if broken down dualistically, "the one" compared to the opposite, "the other", is equally necessary in order to identify and come in contact with the "otherness" of the opposite (Varkøy & Westby, 2014). Differences should thus not be dualistically broken down and erase one another. Instead, "the one" must be counted as necessary to uphold "the other". As de Lange puts it, "The essence of human life, according to Kierkegaard, is ex-istere – being open to what is not me, the Other" (2007, p. 287). Hence, differences and dichotomies are essential for understanding and creating meaning and comprehending how they contribute to our interpretation of meaning.

Living is, in this sense, similar to songmaking in that it entails making choices even when the consequences of these choices are impossible to predict. This chapter, therefore, is best summed up by Joni Mitchell's introduction to "Both Sides Now" on the album *Walkabout (Live 1983)*, (2023), followed by the last lines of her song (0:02- 0:18, 3:33- 4:12):

> "This is a song that…of all of the tunes that I've written I guess it's probably the most…has the most stamps on its passport. It's been some places that…as its mother, I would have told it to avoid but…
>
> …Well, something's lost, but something's gained in living every day
> I've looked at life from both sides now
> From up and down, from give and take,
> From win and lose and still somehow,
> It's life's illusions that I recall
> I really don't know life – I don't know at all"

Joni Mitchell's performance in this recording illustrates how songmakers use concrete metaphors and the timbre of their voices to convey their sense of life and emotions, and their relationship with their work. Her song thus resonates with my experiences in life and with songs. It may therefore be that there is no other way than to accept that even after confronting the many shades of light and darkness, we might never understand the enigma of the relationship between lyrics and voices, or really know life at all.

5 Conclusion

The overall focus of this project has been on how various aspects inform our understanding of lyrics, with a particular emphasis on voices, and how lyrics can change meaning depending on context and intrapersonal factors.

It has aimed to answer my *first* hypothesis, that the performativity and coded meaning in the voice matter to how we understand lyrics, and consequently, that the relationship between lyrics and voices matter in constructing the meaning of songs. Additionally, it has made a case for my *second* hypothesis, that lyrics matter, and that the way we understand lyrics and voices is never fixed.

To explore these issues, I have used the following research questions:

- How and to what extent do lyrics play a role in constructing meaning in a song?
- How can coded meanings in the voice be identified, and in what ways do they inform how lyrics are understood?

5.1 Findings

A significant finding of this thesis is that people's lifelong relationship with voice contributes to developing a "Voice Recognition, Use, and Listening Competence", which allows us to identify coded meanings in the voice.

I have extended the theories of David Brackett (2023) and Stan Hawkins (2017) by proposing that the voice is encoded with various identifiable elements and made a case that this competence is grounded in peoples' embodied relationship with voice and performance traditions within popular music categories. Based on the subject matters raised, I have suggested that identifiable elements such as vocal timbre, voice qualities and effects, and vocal prosody and rhythmic phrasing operate as musical codes that, aesthetically and somatically, inform the way lyrics are created, read, performed and interpreted. They therefore play a significant role in constructing lyric and song meaning.

These claims are furthermore grounded in the theory that sensory and physical aspects are fundamental to supporting the mental processes involved in creativity

and thus in interpretation and song, lyric and voice analysis. It therefore makes a case for acknowledging the significance of the aesthetic, emotional and communicative aspects of the voice in lyric and song interpretation. Moreover, that because most are voice users and familiar with the sound and functioning of voices, activating one's own voice when analysing lyrics will add to the experience.

Another significant discovery lies in "Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices", suggested as a framework for lyric analysis that can encompass various methods and thus highlight how the assorted approaches mutually enrich and inform each other.

The motivation behind highlighting the coded meanings of the voice and in introducing the framework is, as outlined in the introduction, is firstly that popular song analysis often direct their focus towards the artist, reading the song through their knowledge of the songmaker or performer. Secondly, that the primary focus of lyric interpretation tends to be on the content and the intentions of the lyricist. I have however not intended to advocate for avoiding these approaches, but rather highlight the experience of the song itself, and therefore, as Sontag argues, emphasise its form and sensory richness (1966, p. 9).

The four approaches are therefore suggested as an alternative framework to explore what lyrics and voices do in experience, rather than focusing on the "aboutness" of lyrics.

The overall objective of the approaches are therefore to offer it as a versatile tool to explore the relationship between how lyrics are created, performed and experienced and the ways we understand them. Mindful of the fact that listeners, readers and scholars are not necessarily performers, songmakers or lyricists, this project posits that knowledge of the different experiences and their subsequent interaction with each other can offer new insight into interpretation and the creation of lyrical meaning. The findings have furthermore supported the notion that cognition is deeply intertwined with the body and senses, which implies that in constructing lyric and song meaning we activate emotions, memories and bodily states that are integral to the experience.

The first approach, *listening*, reveals that there are multiple modes of listening to lyrics, each involving different representations of voice, including the artist's voice, one's personal or inner voice, and an acousmatic voice. As the thesis has shown, it also provides ways of exploring performative and aesthetic elements related to vocal timbre and voice qualities, including the “grain” of the voice emerging in in the space between the inner voice, the external voice, and the lyrics.

The second approach, *reading*, emphasises lyrics as written text and particularly highlights connections made between the words, the reader and the lyricist and moreover, draws attention to representations of the authorial voice and the acousmatic inner voice. It also reveals how lyrics are intertextually connected and allows for deeper analysis of lyrical content, structure and prosodic elements informing songmaking and vocal performances.

It highlights how being aware of sensations, and bodily and emotional states in ourselves, we can acquire a deeper understanding of how the song works. For example, we can achieve this by activation of our voice, listening to our inner voice and paying attention to how our body and senses engage when reading. These insights can add new perspectives to how it feels to perform and create songs.

The third approach, *preforming/singing*, raises awareness to how our lifelong experience with voice use and our ability to recognise its coded meanings is informing lyrical meaning. It draws attention to singing as a dual activity that on one hand is an engagement that people undertake purely for the sake of the activity itself and on the other hand as an activity connected to communication and performance. Consequently, it illustrates how paying attention to or consciously activating one’s own voice when analysing lyrics can unveil layers of information. Hence, providing opportunities to investigate the interplay between the somatic (physical) and semantic (meaningful) aspects of lyrics and voices, and how the dynamic between the body, the voice, and the words is understood and felt during a performance and within the act of singing.

The fourth approach, *songmaking/writing* draws attention to the lyricist's creative choices, authorship, and the content itself and thus the relationship between the lyricist's personal voice and the voice conveyed through the lyrics. It exhibits various creative processes and how we understand them which can serve as both

source material and coping strategies. Additionally, it shows how songmaking and writing is not limited to storytelling but also exhibit how artists experience themselves and the world around them. It therefore underscores the creative practise as avenues for personal change and transformation.

In conclusion, "Four approaches to Lyrics and Voices" are intended to show how the separate entryways and the connection between them inform lyrical meaning. Moreover, to highlight how our understanding relies on both individual and shared information, which includes how we perceive coded meanings in voices.

In substantiating these findings further, this thesis has explored the following paths of enquiry:

1. Identify coded elements situating the voice as a carrier of meaning.

This first point is exemplified in the passages on vocal timbre, the "grain" of the voice and falsetto. Furthermore, the analysis showed how, when the voice aligns with timbre, it assumes a diverse and ever-changing character, permitting continuous variation.

For example, the reading of "Fool on the Hill" demonstrates how changes in vocal focalisation, by altering the characteristics of the voice during a song performance, become apparent exclusively through attentive *listening*.

Additionally, have readings of "We Are the World" highlighted how the sound of multiple voices singing at the same time can project a collective message that evokes feelings of inclusion in the listener, which subsequently sets up a risk of creating a sense of otherness. Moreover, I explored how associations connected to the sound of individual and collective voices are perceived as signs of a particular person or category of people. Furthermore, the findings drew the line between how these identified elements can contribute to perceived connections between categories of music and categories of people. Drawing on theories presented by Brackett (2016a), this line of enquiry addressed possible implications of making these connections, as highlighted in particular with reference to Sade Adu and her "right" to sing.

In summary, this line of enquiry has focused on the connection between the relationship with voice and the experience of the singing voice within the body- *singing/performing*- and on how we recognise the identity of someone or a category of people in the sound of the voice through *listening.*

1. Explore the tension between semantic content and somatic meaning within lyrics, particularly to words and voices as carriers of both *sense* and *sound*.

The project has made a case for how lyrics and voices function similarly as holders of both content and sound, which is brought forward through activating the voice. Even though words sometimes primarily serve as conveyors of sound and rhythm, they consistently guide, inspire and inform songmaking, providing layers of aesthetic, somatic and semantic significance to the vocal performance.

Some of these aspects were illustrated in particular in the section about "Chuck. E's In Love" and "Smooth Operator", with reference to vocal prosody. Additionally, the ways forms of writing can form a basis for lyrical structure were illustrated in the discourse around "Finishing the Hat" and "Good News".

This line of enquiry has concentrated on the first and second approach, *reading* and *listening*, and thus how the internal voice is activated in reading and songmaking. It has moreover focused on various elements informing the fourth approach with a particular focus on writing lyrics.

2. Study the influence of discursive understandings of artists, their lyrics, voices and performances, and possible consequences.

This path of enquiry has explored to what extent lyrics and voices are seen as representations of an artist's authentic self or constructed stage personas, and some possible consequences of discursive understandings. Subsequently, it examined how concepts of authenticity – and therefore, inauthenticity – come into play, and the challenges that arise, when assessing an artist's and thus people's authentic expression in the context of popular music. Particularly, it has highlighted how metaphors and discursive readings of AN, anorexic artists, their bodies and their songs contribute to myths and beliefs surrounding many anorexic artists. It has also

explored David Bowie's connection with “Ziggy Stardust” to highlight the connection between staged personas, the audience, and the artist's self-understanding and perception.

This line of enquiry has notably demonstrated how all four approaches- *listening, reading, performing/singing* and *songmaking/writing*- separately and combined offer diverse layers of understanding. Furthermore, it emphasises that a strong focus on deciphering what the artist communicates *through* lyrics, the song, and the performance can sometimes lead to speculations and misconceptions about the artist’s “real” life and personality. Moreover, it has presented the argument that while items like artefacts, architectural designs and various traditions associated with crafts and performance can efficiently represent authenticity, challenges arise when applying these criteria to individuals, their bodies, visual appearance and artistic voice.

3. Examine intertextual relationships and concepts of the lyrical and authorial voice**.**

This path of enquiry was exemplified by “God” and “God Part II” and the ways the voice of the lyrics, the author, the artist and their work are intertextually related. It also explores intertextual relationships in my own work as a lyricist. Additionally, reflections around transtextuality in lullabies were employed to show how lullabies serve not only to comfort a child but also to impart values and include territorial aspects.

This aspect addressed the concept of ‘voice’ as a metaphor and how it connects to theories about authorial voice, author function and author figure in relation to the voice as expressed in lyrics and through vocal performance. Moreover, it demonstrated the connection between the voice of the lyrics, the voice of the author and the voice of the artist, and how the relationship between these concepts of ‘voice’ informs the overall understanding of lyrics.

This enquiry has focused on the second approach*, reading*, and how it is connected to the fourth approach, *songmaking/writing*. It has also illustrated that reading experiences activate a virtual voice and an inner, acousmatic voice, which therefore implies the first approach, inner *listening*.

4. Consider the relationship between lyrical and song narratives and personal narratives.

In following this path of enquiry, this thesis has made a case for how the fourth approach, *songmaking/writing*, can be therapeutic while also drawing attention to problematic issues concerning how verbal conceptualisations of emotional pain and repeated performances may enhance the feeling of loss. It has draws attention to how we use lived experience as source material for lyrics and the ways we read ourselves and connect with our personal narratives through songs. These issues are explored throughout the thesis but in particular with reference to the circumstances surrounding Eric Clapton's song "Tears in Heaven" and my own experience of sharing my personal story in a diary, documentary and lyrics.

It has exhibited how experiences, dreams and emotions are transformed into musical representations and stories, which allow the artists and the audience to find themselves in the songs. Hence, they become both the stories we experience and create as listeners, the lyrics we write, the songs we sing and the performances we create.

Examples given have furthermore illustrated that although lyrics can portray pain and loss, have political messages, be humorous or have project-specific beliefs and ideologies, they are still represented in form. This, in essence, illustrates the interconnectedness between the first, third and fourth approaches, *listening, performing/singing* and *songmaking/writing*.

In summary, this thesis underscores that people identify coded meanings in the voice primarily due to their lifelong relationship with the voice. It suggests that the significance of applying "Four Approaches to Lyrics" lies in how these distinct approaches offer clarity and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between lyrics and voices and what they do in experience. It has demonstrated how the construction of lyrical meaning is observed as a cyclical process across all four approaches, highlighting the significance of embodied movement, experiential understanding, artistic craftsmanship and stylistic nuances. It has also exhibited how new insights are added through

individual or combined approaches, repeated encounters and within other contexts and listening conditions.

The findings and the answers to the research questions have furthermore drawn attention the importance of employing a research design that addresses the experiential aspects of lyrics in connection with structural and content analysis. It has also demonstrated that the two research questions, paths of enquiry and findings are connected in providing a broader perspective of how lyrical meaning is constructed through a relationship between somatic and semantic meaning.

Furthermore, the thesis has demonstrated that sensory and physical aspects play a pivotal role in how people relate to and understand lyrics and voices.
Additionally, it shows that, in doing so, they connect with both semantic and somatic aspects, thereby constructing the meaning of lyrics.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that the relationship between lyrics, voices and the stories they tell, encompassing how they are created and told and how we understand them, serves as a common ground that unites and separates us as listeners, scholars and fans.

It has made the case that lyrics matter in constructing the meaning of songs and, further, that the coded meanings in the voice matter to how we understand lyrics.

5.1.1 Avenues for future research

In recent years, a notable phenomenon within the realm of popular music has been the emergence of AI-generated lyrics and voices, prompting us to re-evaluate traditional notions of authorship and human expression. Moreover, this has caused us to study the implications of this development on the aesthetics, cultural significance and socio-political dimensions of music. In light of the topic of this thesis, I therefore find myself concerned with how we will relate to songs as artistic expressions in the emergence of AI-generated lyrics and voices in pop songs. It is thus important to note that the ways vocal sounds are perceived as a sign of a particular, "real" person or categories of people are subject to change in accordance with the development of AI-generated voices. While this project has focused on vocal sounds produced by a human sound source, future research could benefit

from investigating how humans relate to various forms of computer-generated voices as entities representing themselves. Furthermore, we must explore the possible consequences of this practice in relation to how the sounds project illusions of a body singing, and thus how songs come to mean. The questions posed in this project may then be just as relevant and bring forth other topics related to how people engage with generated vocal sounds and how they affect and inform lyrical meaning. Moreover, how we read lyrics and songs as works of art bearing traces of the lyricist's artistic expressions, intentions, sentiments and signature can also be explored in this new context.

Building on the insights from this project, I also believe that the field of Popular Musicology needs to have a balance between the academic and practice-oriented perspectives in order to stay relevant. Therefore, more artists, musicians and songmakers should be encouraged to take on research so that new knowledge can emerge from the dialogue between academics and practitioners, and subsequently, consider the gaps between lyrics and voices as objects of study and as experience.

I will close this project with a few final reflections.

5.2 Summary thoughts on lyrics, voices and the stories they tell

When lyrics and voices come together in a song, they tell stories. They are, however, just sound. Nevertheless, as I have aimed to illustrate in this thesis, the way lyrics and voices tell stories, and the stories we tell about them, encompass so much more. They reach beyond sound into the core of our being, into our lives and the world. Our experience and relationship with songs will thus inform how we perceive the meaning expressed *in* the song, communicated *through* the song and experienced in engaging *with* the song. The question, then, is whether or not this thesis has contributed knowledge to our understanding of how we can describe our personal connections with lyrics and voices in ways that make sense to others.

At the beginning of this thesis, I referred to how Susan Sontag's essay, "Against interpretation" (1966), and her reference to art's sensuous quality "as a counter-expression to abstract content", called for increased attention to form rather than merely what art means or says. I have therefore extended the concepts of lyrical meaning to not merely focus on lyrical content but also to encompass how lyrics

and voices work in experience, with an emphasis on the semantic and somatic aspects of lyrical meaning. This again leads to another question, namely whether the suggested framework works as intended and thus manages to encompass the significance and pleasures of musical engagement in lyric analysis.

As a starting point, the framework answers to Sontag's claim that the aim of any commentary on art should be to make art real to us, and its function should be not only what it means but rather should "show *how it is what it is,* even *that it is what it is*" (1966, p. 9). To do so, Sontag suggests that the vocabulary used needs to be expanded from being mainly prescriptive to descriptive. For this to happen, the way one talks about music must be challenged, and other paths that can lead to new ways of understanding must be explored.

Firstly, this thesis has demonstrated that the four approaches contribute to Sontag's sentiment in that they provide opportunities to observe one's physical and internal voice, senses, emotions and body when listening, reading, performing/singing and in songmaking/writing. This makes it real to us and shows what it is and what it is not in experience, which contributes to the way we talk, think and write about lyrical meaning. *Secondly*, it has illustrated that in order to suggest new approaches, it is necessary to explore and build on existing theories and methods. This project has therefore involved studying a vast amount of literature on voices, lyrics and songs within the same or overlapping discourse but often with different approaches. Moreover, it has exhibited how frameworks and methods employed within popular and critical musicology also tend to draw on disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and literary and voice studies.

Drawing from these insights, then, has not been a process of disentangling or deciphering coded signs and symbols related to effects and meanings connected to musical engagement. Instead, it has developed as a study of the tension between perceptions and the experiences of how lyrics and voices, identities and personas are socially and personally negotiated through lyrics and voices. Thus, it has explored the connection between the stories we tell about ourselves and who we become in telling and doing. Moreover, it has focused on the relationship between song narratives and personal narratives in the sense that we give meaning to our lives by autonomously shaping the narrative of our life story (de Lange, 2007, p. 273). Building on these thoughts, this thesis has suggested that grounded in

individual understandings of self and the world, people form similar and unique interpretations according to how, why and where they encounter music. Investigations into the affordance of lyrics and how they work furthermore illustrate how and why interpretations vary, and thus bring forth how discourses *of* and *about* lyrics, and their discursive meanings, are constructed.

5.3 Afterword; Voices, Lyrics, as Something More

The project has also challenged perceptions on voices and lyrics as tools to project performative expressions of stable personal or artist identities, and fixed interpretations of lyrics and voices. Instead, it has displayed how, when the present changes, the ways we construct our song and life narratives change accordingly. Therefore, it has shown that although lyrics are structured, they have multiple possibilities for interpretation inscribed in the material. The stories emerge depending on the context and where, how and by whom they are performed and received. The literary, the song and the performance are thus embodied and cannot be separated from the social (Davies et al., 2004, p. 365). How listeners perceive it and ascribe meaning will rely on the same premise: negotiating and re-negotiating meaning, constructing their life narratives, personal and collective identities, and understandings of self. Lyrics and voices thus provide possibilities for stories to emerge in listening, reading, singing and songmaking – in songs, in the performance and in us. With reference to Kierkegaard's work, Frits de Lange writes: "As long as I live, my self is not completed. Until my last sigh I will stay a possibility. I never coincide with myself. I am not what I am; I am becoming what I am" (2007, p. 287).

In other words, I identify with who I become, and I become who I am as I write, as I perform and as I interpret. In every instance, my experience of who I am is transformed. The stories about me, the songs I create and the ones I engage with are constantly evolving. Each performance, even those of the same song, will thus be approached and performed differently. Likewise, the lyrics I write will be open for multiple interpretations and meanings. This reminds me of Roland Barthes's description of how the subject that he is – or I am – is not recognisable as unified but instead relatable to figures created in writing. Therefore, the self does not need to be fixed as a stable, describable entity, existing free from the text, but rather we should recognise ourselves as intimately connected to our writing, as if we are giving birth to ourselves through the process (Davies et al., 2004, p. 365). By

forming this deep connection between self-discovery and writing, our multiplicity is revealed in the multiple writings.

In this sense, any form of storytelling, including interpretations and song analysis, can be understood as possibilities revealing the multiplicity and complexity of ourselves and our emerging stories. The stories we tell will then change the ways we see ourselves in relation to the world, as will we and our taste and relationship with lyrics and voices. In exploring how meanings and narratives are formed, it has thus been helpful to draw on theories of how people understand life experiences and language, specifically, notions of the metaphorical nature of our conceptual system and how it is exhibited in language, thought and action. As Stan Hawkins notes, personal narratives, then, are "part and parcel of subject-positioning" and thus about how the artist negotiates strategies to convey intentions and how effectively these intentions are communicated. He writes, "Mediated by attendant pleasures, induced by powerful physiological and cerebral response, personal narratives establish *who t*he persona is for *us,* the listener" (2020, p. 242). Moreover, personal narratives establish who I, as a lyricist and singer, become to myself. As such, we, our self-narratives and song narratives are interwoven in the tapestry of our lives. The becoming of songs, like the becoming of self, is all there is.

Thus, I conclude that there will never be a fixed understanding of the subject or the song. Personae, lyrics and voices could, therefore, serve as potential entryways into an actively and dynamically constituted story. Lyrics and voices are therefore intertwined. They are all a part of the voices of the world, the voices within and the stories we tell. Because lyrics and voices tell stories, not only through the words and the coded meanings in the voice, but in the way they evoke stories about me – about the song, the artists and songmakers; about you and me, our surroundings, our society and the world. The stories told by lyrics and voices, then, hold unique forms of meaning that are distinct from certain aspects of language. However, it is part of a broader context of conveying meaning through symbols and expressions, gestures, body language, rituals, spoken language, visual communication and more (Johnson & Larson, 2003, p. 81). Music can, as such, hold experiences that language cannot, which might be why people can be hesitant to describe their relationship with music because they fear that reducing it into words may make it

less meaningful and unrecognisable. As Eric Clapton says, “It’s difficult to talk about these songs in depth, that’s why they’re songs” (2007, p. 174).

Clapton’s statement indicates that the stories we tell and recognise in lyrics and voices therefore exist merely as a potential. This way, they are invariably connected. Consequently, as this thesis has proposed, one should be mindful of conducting and accepting analysis that ascribes trustworthiness, originality or authenticity to the relationship between the creator, performer and the song. Instead, one could explore levels of transparency in any scholarly work, as lyric interpretation – as with any form of human understanding – is a creative process that is constantly changing and transformative, as well as personally and culturally constructed.

Drawing on the title, “The Voice as Something More” (Feldman & Zeitlin, 2019b), an alternative title for this thesis could, therefore, have been “Voices, Lyrics, as Something More”. It is the “something more” this study has been primarily interested in, delving into the often indescribable and immeasurable aspects of “Lyrics, Voices and the stories they tell”.

The core of this thesis, can be most effectively summarised by the opening lines of Carole King's song "Tapestry” (1971):

> My life has been a tapestry
> Of rich and royal hue
> An everlasting vision
> Of the ever-changing view
> A wondrous woven magic
> In bits of blue and gold
> A tapestry to feel and see
> Impossible to hold

This, in essence, constitutes the overarching objective and contribution of this project.

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With reference to Regulations for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) at the University of Agder, dated 20 June 2012 *Section 15.4 Correction of formal errors in the thesis,* I apply for permission to correct the following formal errors listed below.

Date 13.03.2024

I have corrected differences in entries named “Four Approaches to Lyrics and Voices”, “The Grain of the Voice”, and the “grain” of the voice throughout the thesis for consistency
I have corrected minor typos and updated references (Default/Name/Page)
4.2.7. The voice of torch singers, starts on p. 169 instead of p. 170
4.3.4. On a personal note, starts on p. 183 instead of p. 184
4.7.4. Anorexic bodies and the stories they tell, starts on p. 229 instead of p.230

Errata list for formal errors the thesis by Kari Laura Iveland, 2024

Page	**Line**	**Current text**	**New text**
15	28/28	Even those	Additionally can poems
39	15-20	Thus, it points to how rhymes and sonic content are rarely discussed by referring to Joni Mitchell’s thoughts on how verbal sounds can carry intrinsic connotations that can modify but not control semantic content. Moore summarises Mitchell’s views – “freely adapted and embodied” – in a table, “Mitchell’s consonantal qualities”, that provides an interesting take on coded meanings in words (2012, pp. 114, 115).	He points to how rhymes and sonic content are rarely discussed and suggests developing John Michell’s thoughts on how verbal sounds can carry intrinsic connotations that can modify but not control semantic content. Moore summarises Michell’s views – “freely adapted and embodied” – in a table, “Michell’s consonantal qualities”, that provides an interesting take on coded meanings in words ((Michell, John (1988), 2012, pp. 114- 115)
66	28/31	However, while Barthes and postmodern theory rejected notions of authorial agency within the text, discourses in popular music insist on a perceived presence of the songwriter, a genre or an original element	Edit: repetition of text removed

		in performance, especially in the context of covered songs.	
84	13/ 16	In “Approaching the Voice” (Waltham-.Smith, 2021, pp. 3-36), Martha Feldman	In “The Clamor of Voices”(2019a), Martha Feldman
85	21/ 24	*Q magazine*, dated 29 May 1994	*Q Magazine* dated 29 May 1994 (1994)
85	Foo tnot e	Sergio Del Amo’s article from May 26, 2023, ‘Hips,	The article “Hips, https://english.elpais.com/culture/2023-05-26/hips-lips-tits-power-the-controversial-misogynistic-cover-that-angered-tori-amos-pj-harvey-and-bjork.html
92	1/2	Roland Barthes’ concept of “the grain of the voice” (2009).	Roland Barthes’s concept of “The Grain of the Voice” (1977, pp. 179-189).
158/ 157	2/ 31	Lars Eckstein draws attention to Edward T. Cone’s study, *The Composer’s Voice* (1974)	Lars Eckstein draws attention to Edward T. Cone’s study, *The Composer’s Voice* (1974; 2010, p. 45),
204	19/ 11	applying the rhizome metaphor can	applying the rhizome can
204	33/ 24	characteristic of the *rhizome* metaphor, then	characteristic of the rhizome, then
214/ 213	7/ 32	It thus the stories we create	Thus, stories we create
214	21/ 10	they can remember	they can make us remember
150	Foo tnot e	For example, Aristotle notes, “Above all, we value sight . . . because sight is the principal source of knowledge and reveals many differences between one object and another” Dylan, B. (1964). With God on Our Side. On *The Times They Are a-Changin’*. CBS Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group. https://open.spotify.com/track/5hBOEqqkcQaUgkRhh6EyX4?si=1182eb37dfc94298 .	For example, Aristotle notes, “Above all, we value sight . . . because sight is the principal source of knowledge and reveals many differences between one object and another”. Ihde, D. (2007). *Listening and Voice – Phenomenologies of Sound* (Second Edition ed.). New York: State University of New York Press.
253	23	In the words of Fritz de Lange:	With reference to Kierkegaard’s work, Frits de Lange writes
255	14	Drawing on Mladen Dolar’s afterword “The Voice as Something More” (Waltham-Smith, 2021, pp. 339-356),	Drawing on the title, “The Voice as Something More” (Feldman & Zeitlin, 2019b),