SOUND KINKS:

Sadomasochistic Erotica in Audiovisual Music Performances

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Väitöskirjassa tutkitaan sadomasokistisen erotiikan musiikillisia ja äänellisiä esityksiä nykykulttuurissa, erityisesti populaarimusiikissa ja musiikkivideossa, elokuvassa ja oopperassa. Tutkimus koostuu johdannosta (luku 1), teoreettisista tarkasteluista (luku 2), musiikillisten ja audiovisuaalisten esitysten analyyseista (luvut 3–5) sekä keskustelu- ja tulosluvuista (luvut 6–7). Tutkimusaineistona ovat elokuvat *Secretary* (2003) ja *Duke of Burgundy* (2014), Leonard Cohenin laulu 'I'm Your Man' (1988), Elvis Costellon laulu 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' (2002), Rihannan laulu ja musiikki-video *S&M* (2011) sekä Zerlinan henkilöhahmo W. A. Mozartin oopperan *Don Giovanni* (1787) nykytuotannossa (ohj. Claus Guth, 2008). Luvussa 6 käytetään myös elokuvaa *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015) esimerkkinä nykypäivän sadomasokistista kuvastoa hyödyntävästä populaarikulttuurista neoliberaalina ja post-feministisenä ilmiönä.

Väitöskirjassa kehitetään uusi lähestymistapa erotiikan tarkasteluun musiikissa: kink-luku eli kink-kuuntelu. Tämä perustuu kulttuuriseen musiikintutkimuksen, queer-musiikintutkimukseen sekä audiovisuaaliseen lähilukuun. SM-kuvastoa lähestytään monipuolisella tavalla performatiivisen materialismin kautta, joka painottaa sekä elettyä mielihyvää että sosiaalisia valtarakenteita, joista SM koostuu.

Tutkimuksessa todetaan, että musiikissa SM-erotiikka kuvataan usein camp-huumorin kautta, johon on sekoitettu kumman (engl. Uncanny) tunnetta. Lisäksi SM:lla leikittelevät äänimaailmat laajentuvat moniaistillisiksi kokemuksiksi ja venyttävät ajan ja paikan käsitteitä. Vaikka SM voi heijastella kulttuurisia vallan epäsuhtia, sitä voidaan myös pitää queer-henkisenä kriittisenä konseptina, joka voimaannuttaa epänormatiivisia kehoja, sukupuolia ja seksuaalisuuksia tekemällä niistä aktiivisia seksuaalisia toimijoita uhriposition sijaan. Tämä voi laajentaa seksuaalisuuden ja seksuaalisen aktiviteetin käsittämistä sukupuolielinkeskeisestä ja lisääntymispäämääräisestä määrittelystä mielentilaksi, jossa aika ja paikka hämärtyvät ja jossa seksuaalinen mielihyvä ja kipu sekoittuvat nautinnollisesti.

AVAINSANAT: Kulttuurinen musiikintutkimus, sadomasokismi, musiikki, elokuvamusiikki, musiikkivideo, ooppera, queer-musiikintutkimus, feministinen tutkimus, queer-tutkimus, populaarikulttuuri, Secretary, Duke of Burgundy, Leonard Cohen, Elvis Costello, Rihanna, Mozart, Don Giovanni, esitystutkimus, seksuaalisuus

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In this dissertation I study musical, sonic and multimodal representations of sadomasochistic erotica in films, music videos, stage performances, and popular music. The study consists of an introductory chapter (1), a theoretical chapter on sadomasochism (2), three chapters discussing six case studies (3–5), as well as discussion and conclusion chapters (6 and 7). The examples investigated are the films *Secretary* (2003) and *Duke of Burgundy* (2014), Leonard Cohen's song 'I'm Your Man' (1988), Elvis Costello's song 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' (2002), Rihanna's song and music video *S&M* (2011), and a filmed operatic production of W. A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* focusing on the character Zerlina (1787; dir. Claus Guth, 2008). In the conclusion, I briefly discuss the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015) as an example of post-feminist, neoliberal sadomasochism occurring at the time of writing.

This study introduces a new conceptual tool for interpreting music with specific regard to eroticism: kink reading, or kink listening. My research is informed by three main areas of inquiry and methodologies: cultural musicology, queer musicology, and close reading. I theorise sadomasochism in a resolutely multifaceted and critical way using theory on performative materialism, which emphasizes both the lived experience of sadomasochism and the social power structures informing practices.

My findings indicate that there are certain strategies through which SM erotica has been depicted in music, which often include a mixture of humorous musical language and semiotic signifiers of the Uncanny, or the unsettling. This combination is distinctive of depictions of SM sex scenes. The music is often encoded as multisensory, and transforms perceptions of time and place. While sadomasochist representations can reflect cultural imbalances, SM can also be utilized as a queer, critical tool for empowering non-normative bodies, genders, and sexualities by making practitioners sexual agents rather than victims. SM can also broaden the concept of sex from a genital-oriented, procreation-directed activity to a state of mind combining suspended time and space and a mixture of sexual pleasure and sexualised pain.

KEYWORDS: cultural musicology, sadomasochism, music, film music, music videos, opera, queer musicology, feminist studies, queer studies, popular culture, Secretary, Duke of Burgundy, Leonard Cohen, Elvis Costello, Rihanna, Mozart, Don Giovanni, performance studies, sexuality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FULL LIST OF TABLES, CHARTS, FIGURES AND MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Full list of tables

Full list of charts

Full list of figures. (All figures are snapshots of films or music videos made by the author.)

Full list of examples. (All examples are transcribed and notated by the author.)

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'One good thing about music: when it hits you, you feel no pain.' –Bob Marley
'Well…' – This thesis

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♪ David Bowie: 'Life on Mars'

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♪ Ismo Alanko: Mikrokosmos

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♪ Beyoncé: 'Run the World'

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♪ Tori Amos: 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' (live cover)

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♪ Kolmas Nainen: Tästä asti aikaa

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♪ My Chemical Romance: 'Sing'

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♪ Lady Gaga: 'Yoü and I'

I dedicate this thesis to the artists who have ended up as the subjects of analysis in it through no volition of their own. My discussions of their work were undertaken with the greatest respect.

Turku, September 2016
Anna-Elena Pääkkölä

1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I look into questions of sex and sexuality in popular music through the phenomenon of sexual sadomasochism. Fast becoming ubiquitous in contemporary popular culture, I choose to focus on the musical depictions of sadomasochism that are salutary or which challenge normative sexualities. Sadomasochism (SM for short throughout the thesis)[1] thus serves as an example of an ecumenical, non-normative, queer sexual preference, notwithstanding a person's gender, age, or sexual orientation, based on erotic-performative power switching between two or more consenting adults (Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 6; Plante 2006, 61). More accurately, I look to the aesthetic codes of sadomasochism (see Byrne 2013, 4, 11) that originate from existing practices in SM cultures, but also from cultural and aesthetic codes found in SM literature, philosophy and psychology (to the extent that psychological theories steer clear of pathologising SM practices), and apply these to musical texts in order to illustrate how they create specifically SM-erotic experiences. I argue that performances of sadomasochism not only depict these SM aesthetic codes in terms of the representation of SM practices, but they also audiovisually depict other sexualities, queer and non-queer alike, in popular music and popular culture.

1.1 BACKGROUND

In recent decades, and particularly accelerating during the 2010s, sadomasochism has undergone a process of mainstreaming in the popular media. Sadomasochism entered popular culture through the 'sexual awakening' of the early 70s, through fashion, films (both independent and mainstream), pop music (underground and otherwise), and advertising. Sadomasochism was an especially prominent theme in alternative and underground

[1] Researchers of sadomasochism use many acronyms and, indeed, definitions of SM. I have chosen to use SM instead of the more specific BDSM (bondage/discipline, dominance/ submission, sadism/masochism). This is because I see sadomasochism, as a general umbrella term for a sexual preference that includes performative and eroticised power play, fetishism and erotic pain/pleasure play, without necessarily breaking these practices down into separate entities, as the acronym BDSM implies. Furthermore, as I will argue throughout my thesis, underground BDSM is still vastly unrepresented in the mainstream media. In this way, the underground cultural sphere of BDSM practitioners is not synonymous to broader SM aesthetics, the main topic of my research.

music scenes at the fringes of mainstream popular music.[2] In literature, however, themes of sadomasochism have had a much longer history: Marquis de Sade's *Justine* (2008b [1791]) and Pauline Reagé's *Story of O* (1994 [1954]) are two of the most notorious examples. With this in mind, to a connoisseur of erotica, the notion that popular culture rediscovered sadomasochism in the 2010s through E.L. James' sadomasochistic-erotic book series *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011, 2012, 2012b) seems more whimsical than factual. Indeed, Laura Antoniou, an erotic fiction author, comments in an interview (quoted in Anderson-Minshall 2013):

> I think the mainstream media 'discovers' kinky sex every ten years or so. […] Every single time the media clutched its collective pearls and wondered how feminists would respond, hastened to assure us all that it's OK to have fantasies of submission, and did cute little sidebar stories on an occasional SM club or leather bar or sex toy shop. And then they forgot about kinky until the next one rolled to the top of the media haystack.

Accompanying the current craze surrounding *Fifty Shades of Grey*[3] and the film of the same name (dir. Sam Taylor-Johnson, 2015; sequels planned in 2017 and 2018), sadomasochism has achieved considerable media attention. This mainstreaming is not, however, completely effortless or straightforward, nor does it directly imply the accepting or embracing of alternative kink sexualities in popular culture. It is debatable whether *Fifty Shades* can act as a benchmark for the overall acceptance of different sexual lifestyles. For example, we have yet to see a lesbian-sadomasochistic love story phenomenon in the mainstream media.[4] Eleanor Wilkinson (2009, 192) suspects that the mainstream media censorship of certain sexual images and prominence of others (notably those that are less kinky) are resulting in a picture of SM as merely 'an extension to vanilla[5] heterosex, rather than a radical and oppositional alternative'.

While *Fifty Shades* makes claims to represent (SM) erotica, quite often libraries will categorise it under 'romance' (Walker 2014), and with good reason. The books include abundant sadomasochistic-sexual encounters that seem to comply with most sadomasochistic

[2] Some examples would include Velvet Underground's 'Venus in Furs' (1967); Blue Öyster Cult's 'Dominance and Submission' (1974); Adam and the Ants' 'Whip in my Valice' (1978b); and Devo's 'Whip It' (1980). See appendix 1.

[3] E. L. James's *Fifty Shades*-trilogy has sold over 100 million copies worldwide, and has been translated into over 50 languages. The film adaptation of the first book was released on February 14th, 2015, and won the Razzie award for the worst picture of the year in 2015 (Razzies.com). What started out as a *Twilight* (Meyer 2005–2008) series fan fiction and a self-published online novel, *Fifty Shades* quickly became a popular culture phenomenon, spawning endless parodies, including the *50 Shades – Official Parody* musical (Lewis 2014; 50shadesthemusical.com) and *Fifty Shades of Black* (2016; dir. Michael Tiddes).

[4] There have been some mainstream TV series that feature sadomasochism in LGBT settings, but rarely in similar ways to *Fifty Shades*. *The L Word* (2004–2009) for example, features light bondage and pride galas that include SM-identified people. (My thanks to Mari Kurkimäki and Anna Luusua for this.) *Queer as Folk*, both the UK (1999–2000) and the US (2000–2005) versions, include gay leather characters and scenes in SM clubs.

[5] 'Vanilla' describes non-sadomasochistic sexualities. It is often seen as a derogatory word used by sadomasochists when referring to non-sadomasochists, implying that vanilla is the 'most boring' flavour of ice cream, and that non-sadomasochists opt for the most safe and unadventurous flavour available.

conventions and constraints (i.e. power shifts, dominance and submission, the use of safety words, eroticising the whole body instead of only sex organs, or not focusing solely on penetrative sex).[6] However, the plot of the series is extremely conventional and heteronormative, with a predictable romantic narrative of a poor girl falling for a wealthy but unattainable man (Radway 1991, 13–14, 148–150; see also Halberstam 2012, 116), just with added 'kinky fuckery'[7] (James 2012, 36). In this way, *Fifty Shades* pays but lip service to alternative sexualities, in a similar way that Janice A. Radway (1991, 16) noted about romantic novels of the 1980s incorporating some (select) feminist themes, mainly of sexual liberation:

> Many of the books […] contain explicit depictions of premarital sexual relationship between the hero and heroine and acknowledge that the heroine desires the hero as much as he does her and that she derives equal pleasure from the encounter. Yet in every case, these romances refuse finally to unravel the connection between female sexual desire and monogamous heterosexuality. […] [S]exually explicit romance […] continued to motivate sexual activity through love [… and] to prescribe patriarchal marriage as the ultimate route to the realisation of a mature female subjectivity.

While Radway's observations concern romance novels intended for female consumption, written some forty years before *Fifty Shades*, the genre of romantic fiction and its problematic relationship with feminist themes seem to have changed very little.[8] The overly jealous and controlling (some might say stalking) male protagonist of *Fifty Shades* is difficult to consider as a feminist, a kink-queer character or a polyamorist, each characteristic that could make the character sexually transgressive. Rather, the book is firmly situated within the norms of heteronormative sexuality by depicting strict monogamy (reinforced through the man's pathological jealousy), a relationship produced according to rituals of heterosexual courtship culminating in marriage with children, and Othering kinky sex (see Downing 2013). Keeping such an analysis in mind, should we then assume that erotica or pornography targeting women must always somehow be conservative at heart, catering to heterosexual women's 'acceptable' sexual fantasies? I challenge this notion through the examples offered in this thesis.

In everyday discourse, it is often said that popular music has never been more sexualised than in the age of music videos and audiovisual media. In this thesis, I contest this idea, insofar as the overall history of music is concerned. While it may be accurate to claim that visual presentation has offered more overt ways of representing sex and sexuality in music, composers and musicians have written music about love and sexual

[6] Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4, 8; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 20; Plante 2006, 61; Kleinplatz 2006, 339; Califia 1995, 139.

[7] Urban Dictionary (2014): 'Kinky fuckery is BDSM, Bondage, basically every fun version of non-vanilla sex. Hell yeah.'

[8] However, a distinct change might be identified when comparing *Fifty Shades* to romance books of the 19th century; Eva Illouz (2014, Kindle location 102) describes the change 'as dramatic … as electricity and indoor plumbing'.

concerns throughout history, in all music genres.[9] Romantic love, desire, dirty humour and/or more or less euphemistic depictions of sex acts have always been popular subjects in music and lyrics, in music videos, and other narrative musical forms (such as music theatre, opera, film). The names of entire music genres have strong associations with colloquialisms for sexual intercourse (jazz, rock'n'roll; see Gill 1995, 49). While this thesis addresses sadomasochism primarily in contemporary examples of popular music, themes of sex and sexuality can be found abundantly outside of the examples discussed within these pages.

In this study, I focus on audiovisual representations of sadomasochistic eroticism in many forms, including sadism (or Sadeism) and masochism (Masochianism),[10] but also polyamory, non-monogamy and pansexuality. I further demonstrate how music and media offer different pleasures through erotica while presenting probing questions regarding the status of power structures, gender, race, class, alternative sexualities, and their position in the fabric of cultural meanings prevalent in today's society. While Karmen MacKendrick (1999, 27) is cautious as to whether de Sade's and Sacher-Masoch's aesthetic codes are applicable to formats other than literature, here I claim that these same aesthetic principles may be applied to music, film, music videos and live onstage performances, and I do so by adapting literary theories to specifically musicological inquiry. I also offer readings of musical and audiovisual case studies that stray from the common patriarchal-moralistic forms of normative, in other words, acceptable sexualities. I focus, for example, on female/feminine empowerment through alternative sexualities, polygamist attitudes, expanded codes of masculinity, and guilt-free-yet-responsible forms of sexual pleasure. These representations of sadomasochism in mainstream audiovisual popular culture and especially popular music are at the core of my research.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of this thesis is to answer the question: what do specifically sadomasochistic forms of erotica in a range of popular and audiovisual musical performances sound like? More specifically, I ask: how do the music and sounds of selected musical and audiovisual performances (songs, films, music videos, stage performances) construct depictions of SM sexualities and eroticism? What constitutes a sadomasochistic mood or atmosphere in music? What elements constitute the soundtrack of SM erotica in contemporary culture? Often, sadomasochistic codes are encoded as either titillating or pathologising (Wilkinson 2009, 182–183; Weiss 2006, 116). In my work, I try to ascertain whether (and if so, how) the musical and audiovisual aspects of these representations make this dichotomy more ambiguous.

[9] Musicological research in this field is also abundant. See, for example, McClary 2002; Burns 1999; Cusick 2006; Hawkins 2016, 2009b; Maus 2004; Peraino 2006; Richardson 2012, 2007, 2004, 1999; Scott 2003. Many other examples are cited in this thesis.

[10] Thomas Moore (1994) differentiates the Sadeian as a distinct term from sadistic to emphasise non-pathological, aesthetic and cultural forms. See also Deleuze 2006.

My focus here is on examples of popular music and audiovisual culture that accentuate sadomasochistic-erotic experiences through the interplay of plot, lyrics, music, and/or visual means. The audiovisual research of music includes the presupposition that music has the inherent capacity to mediate visual elements by assigning them meaning (see Richardson & Hawkins 2007, 16; Chion 1994, 21–22). This relationship between vision and sound is open to scrutiny, whether the examples in question are 'videos, films, games, [or] live concerts' (Richardson & Hawkins 2007, 16.). Audiovisual interpretation leans on the basic premise that the auditive and the visual cannot be separated from each other, but are instead intricately bound together: the auditive can transform the visual, and the visual can recode the auditive (see, for example, Chion 1994, 32). There are compelling reasons to believe that, with regards to SM, audiovisual interplay is a key factor in encoding performances as sadomasochistic-erotic. This is because one media or modality reinforces the other, thereby anchoring music and other sounds to visual content, and vice versa. (See Machin 2010, 1–3, 7–10; Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran 2016, 3.)

Elaborating on the main research question outlined earlier, I ask questions about the usefulness of SM as a critical academic concept: Can sadomasochistic sex and erotica be used as the basis for constructing a critique of (relevant) cultural practices, or is it always/already too problematic in its approach to social power structures? If SM proves to be a useful critical tool, then what do representations of sadomasochism reveal about society's power structures and (sexual) culture at large? Most importantly, how is sadomasochism used to validate and/or to criticise the heteronormative matrix (or compulsory heterosexuality; Butler 2008, 24) in popular culture and especially popular music? With these questions in mind, I critique the employment of SM in fiction-based musical performances, and examine how they function to titillate audioviewers, but also if can they be understood as a broader critique of the prevailing power relations of society and culture.

All of the above questions guide my understanding and analysis of the audiovisual and musical performances of sadomasochistic erotica in the six examples discussed in this thesis: the films *Secretary* (2003) and *Duke of Burgundy* (2014), the Leonard Cohen song 'I'm Your Man' (1988), Elvis Costello's song 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' (2002), Rihanna's song and music video *S&M* (2011), and a performance of Zerlina's aria 'Batti, Batti' from Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787), from the year 2008 (dir. Claus Guth). I have chosen these examples because of they include relevant depictions of SM sexualities and erotica (*Secretary*, *Duke of Burgundy*, *S&M*), they reassign SM sexualities to a pre-existing text (*Don Giovanni*), or because the specific erotic mood of these examples refuses to fall under the template of normative, heterosexual monogamy, thus exhibiting queer potential ('I'm Your Man,' 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'). I refer to each of the case studies analysed as 'performances'. By this, I mean not only live performances, where the creators of music and its listeners occupy the same room, but the extended space of performative behaviours that are mediated through different means (film, music video, singles) and extend beyond physical spaces (Cook 2012, 185). All my examples are performances in the sense that they are all 'circulated in television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based on technologies of reproduction' (Auslander 1999, 5). While some of my examples

are older, historically, I read them in a contemporary context and through current performances.

I investigate these case studies using cultural musicological analysis, close reading, audiovisual performance analysis and queer musicological analysis (see section 1.4 for Methods and Approaches). Accordingly, the objectives of my research are to:

1. Explore how SM, non-normative (or kink) eroticism is created and represented through musical and audiovisual means, and consider how these representations affect and reflect the reading of the performance.
2. Develop new means for listening to erotic codes in music, and for analysing representations of non-normative sex and sexualities in music.
3. Advance and expand queer musicology from discussions of gender and LGBT sexualities to deliberations of non-gender specific kink sexualities, while bringing to queer musicology a broader academic deliberation on kink sexualities as a valid gateway to these perspectives.
4. Flesh out representations of alternative kink sexualities in the media and in popular culture, theorising the roles of music and audiovisuality in mediating (valorise, pathologise and/or productively complicate) representations of the aforementioned sexualities.
5. Expand discussions of sadomasochism to cultural and arts studies, especially cultural musicology. Furthermore, to expand such discussions of sex and sexuality from politics, sociology and aesthetics to include also art, film, and music.

Some work has already been done towards illuminating my research objectives; by no means would I claim to be the first to tackle the above list of tasks in academic research. However, the focus of this study on these specific interrelated themes is sufficient to extend and to some extent also challenge the findings of previous research. In what follows I will present a review of this body of research, as well as research on related subjects, and elaborate on how my research makes an original and necessary contribution to the field of study.

1.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous research on sadomasochism draws extensively on traditional psychoanalysis, sociology, and after the 'cultural turn' of humanist research, gradually appearing in the fields of cultural and arts studies. SM is often understood as a sexual set of behaviours that is based on power switching, role play and/or (eroticised) pain. (Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4, 8; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 20; Plante 2006, 61; Kleinplatz 2006, 339.) Whilst early studies of SM and colloquial understandings of SM claim the practice to be pathological, more recent research, including the research reported in this thesis, treats sadomasochism as an alternative form of human sexuality whose valence is neither exclusively beneficiary nor detrimental. As was the case with homosexuality, sadomasochism has been considered a criminal behaviour as well as a mental affliction. In Finland, it was removed from

the mental disease classification list as late as in 2011. (thl.fi, 2014.) In the context of this work, sadomasochism is understood as belonging to the erotic-sexual sphere of human behaviour.[11]

Quite often the distinction between full-time SM practitioners (SM as culture, a way of life; something you 'are') and 'weekend' SM practitioners (SM as sexual play, not necessarily an identity; something you 'do')[12] is unmade in public discourses. Full-time sadomasochists are often represented as somehow broken individuals with strange sexual desires that go beyond normative (heterosexual, cis-sexual, monogamous, non-kink) comprehension. Eleanor Wilkinson's article 'Perverting Visual Pleasure: Representing Sadomasochism' (2009) begins with questions about sexualised culture and asks whose interests are served by the images permitted in the mainstream media. Wilkinson is sceptical about automatically accepting the assumption that since SM is becoming more prevalent in the media, this automatically implies that SM is becoming a more accepted form of sexuality. While agreeing that sexual minorities need to be represented fairly in the mainstream media, Wilkinson (ibid. 181) argues that carefully studying these representations is important, as they formulate and mould popular attitudes towards alternative sexualities. This claim is also made with reference to all representations of sexuality by media researchers Richardson, Smith and Werndly in the book *Studying Sexualities* (2013, 1–2).

Sadomasochism rarely appears as a topic in music studies, which is not to say that is overlooked altogether. Often, SM terminology appears as metaphoric language to describe gender-based hierarchies and the possible pleasures arising within them, in feminist and/or queer musicological writing. For example, Susan McClary, Lawrence Kramer, Catherine Clément, and Suzanne G. Cusick, among others, discuss power relations between genders and sexualities through SM concepts like 'submissive', 'dominating', 'dominatrix', and 'masochist'. More direct examples of musicologists researching sadomasochism as sexuality (and as sexuality negotiated in music) are, for example, Mikkel Broch Ålvik's (2008) master thesis on male masochism and popular music, and Judith A. Peraino's (2006, 242–243) analysis of Marilyn Manson's performances as negotiating sadomasochistic erotic experience. Lori Burns (2005) has, furthermore, written on popular music songs incorporating dominance and submission and the masochistic enjoyment of these attitudes. Outside of musicological analysis, some academics have attempted to combine popular music with the seemingly rampant codes of SM in popular culture. For example, gender scholar Anne McClintock (1993) writes about Madonna's fetish-inspired attires as belonging to blatantly sadomasochistic eroticism. Queer theorist Nikki Sullivan

[11] This view is not however accepted by some SM-identified practitioners who see sadomasochism as a way of life and/or a form of meditation that has very little to do with sexual gratification or titillation per se (see Newmahr 2011, 67–69; Beckmann 2009, 175–227; 2007, 98). When SM is not experienced as sexual, it is usually considered something transcending normal life, a way of meditating and purifying the mind. This aspect of SM has not been studied extensively, as social sciences studies of SM usually align it specifically with *sexual* gratification, and consequently, the practitioners who do not deem their activities sexual are situated outside this study's target group.

[12] See also Newmahr (2011, 66) for 'high' and 'low' sadomasochism. According to Newmahr, practitioners of BDSM often differentiate between 'high' SM, or the underground culture of BDSM, and 'low', pornography-influenced SM that often includes penetrative sex and is more visible in popular culture.

(2009) discusses Prodigy's music video *Smack My Bitch Up* (1997, dir. Jonas Åkerlund) as ultimately sadomasochistic. However, the questions *what* specifically sadomasochistic (or masochistic, sadistic) pleasures and aesthetics ultimately are, and *how* music negotiates and depicts them, remain in these studies to a certain extent unanswered. In these areas, my study will open up some new points for discussion and analysis.

This research is inspired by the work of many musicologists in the field of cultural, feminist and queer musicology, such as Susan McClary (2002 [1991]), Suzanne G. Cusick (2003, 2006), John Richardson (1999, 2004, 2012, 2015, 2016), Lori Burns (1997, 1999, 2002 with Lafrance, 2010), Lawrence Kramer (1997, 2000), Sheila Whiteley (1999, 2000, 2006, 2007), Stan Hawkins (2004, 2009a, 2009b, 2013, 2015), Susanna Välimäki (2007, 2013, 2015), Freya Jarman (2009, 2011), and Derek Scott (2003, 2009). While grounding my readings in this body of work addressing issues of gender, sexuality and sex in music, I shall also expand on this and other earlier writing by considering how different forms of erotica can be expressed in musical performances and especially depictions of SM. Looking beyond musicology, I am mostly indebted to scholars who have examined gender and sexuality in relation to broader questions about philosophy and power relations, such as Michel Foucault (1990, 1998, 2000, 2001), Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1994, 2008), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003, 2008), J. Jack Halberstam (1998, 2006, 2011, 2012), Gayle Rubin (2011), and others. Against this scholarly backdrop, I situate my work firmly in the sphere of queer theory where a central concern is to look for different expressions of sexual identities in musical performances. I participate in discussions of gender, sexuality, and queerness in the context of musicological inquiry, suggesting new points of departure for these themes that are interconnected with erotica and SM.

Sadomasochism in arts and cultural studies has been more prevalent in literary criticism and film studies than in, say, study of art history and musicology. In my work, I utilise analyses from literature studies, such as Thomas Moore's (1994) analysis of Marquis de Sade's aesthetics, and Gilles Deleuze's (2004, 2006) reading of baron of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (2006 [1870]), and apply them in musicological reflection. In film studies, sadomasochism is discussed relatively often, especially when it occurs in connection to horror and gothic genres (see especially Allen 2013, Studlar 1988). In broader terms, I mostly utilise Vivian Sobchack's (2000) and Laura Marks's (1998, 2002) notion of haptic visuality when discussing eroticism in cinema, applying this discussion to musicology and film sound studies mainly through the works of Michel Chion (1994, 1999, 2009) and John Richardson (2012), demonstrating how multisensory cinema participates in creating SM erotica in films, but to some degree also in music more generally. The specific media studies field of porn studies also informs my readings, mainly through the writing of Linda Williams (1999, 2004), Jennifer Nash (2014) and Susanna Paasonen (2011). While my work does not focus on porn, I discuss my case studies also through questions of embodiment, pleasure, representation, and empowerment, which are central themes also in porn studies, and apply these concepts to audiovisual performances.

1.4 METHODS AND APPROACHES

In view of the research questions and disciplinary context stated above, I will now proceed to formulate a methodological and conceptual rubric appropriate to reflecting upon the six case studies presented in this thesis. This work belongs to the broad, poststructural,[13] hermeneutic-phenomenological sphere of inquiry, as it is mostly based on my personal cultural readings of the subject matter. More specifically, the main methodological tools I employ in this research derive from the spheres of cultural musicology, queer theory and especially queer musicology. My approaches include performative materialism, close reading, and what I will call 'kink reading'.

1.4.1 CULTURAL MUSICOLOGY

Drawing on poststructuralism and postmodernist philosophy, the field of cultural musicology is founded on a suspicion of traditional ideas about musical autonomy, whereby music is distinct and separate from the surrounding popular culture, media (including performance and listening), cultural discourses and ideas, and the historical-political situation in which music is created (Williams 2009, 1, 36; Middleton 2012, 5). Instead, music, like all aspects of culture, is presupposed to be 'always-already engaged … within the larger culture from which [it has] emerged' (Bal 2002, 9). Cultural musicologists[14] often insist that music, compared to other forms of art (art, architecture, photography, literature, film, and other expressive forms), has specific means of conveying meanings, and should be considered as both distinct from, and bound up, with other media (Middleton 2012, 13). Work in cultural musicology draws on interdisciplinary research that investigates different discourses and forms of mediation through which the researched music phenomenon can be understood. This implies both phenomenological and hermeneutical presuppositions, that is, an assumption that '*what* one hears is affected by *how* one hears' (Ferrara 1984, 356). In this way, the result of the cultural analysis is dependent on the relevant discourses. However, the point is not to reach broadly generalizable outcomes or indisputable findings, as these inevitably change by assuming the perspective of different disciplines and theoretical discourses. This insistence on employing multiple disciplines in cultural analysis is related to the concept of intertextuality, which is one of cultural musicology's main conceptual points of departure (Scott 2003, 4). In the present

[13] Poststructuralism is seen in my work as a background philosophy according to which notions of 'self' cannot exist independently of the surrounding society and culture. Human reality is seen as constructed through (usually unconscious) social strategies and cultural codes (Sarup 1993, 2).

[14] There are quite a number of different names for cultural musicology. Derek Scott (2003, 4) was in favour of 'critical musicology' with its emphasis on critical theory. 'New musicology' is nowadays considered somewhat derogatory, and Alistair Williams (2009, ix) recommends the term 'current musicology' to replace it. In between these two names lies a geographical distinction: critical musicology refers more to work done in the UK, while new musicology is associated with work done in the US (Moore 2003, 4). Cultural and critical musicologists often credit Joseph Kerman's (1985) seminal work on the subject as one of the main sources of inspiration. See also Williams 2009, 27–29, Scott 2009, 1–2.

study, intertextuality is seen as 'the circulation and interplay of meaning across numerous signifying practices' (Scott 2009, 10). A level of (academic) criticism[15] is also called for when doing cultural music research (Middleton 2012, 5; Richardson 2012, 11). To engage in this criticism, the adoption of a certain amount of interdisciplinary theory is required.

One specific niche of cultural musicology is musical hermeneutics, which I apply in formulating some of the basic premises of my work. As an approach, musical hermeneutics is largely premised on the antiformalist idea that music can and does have referential power (Kramer 1990, 5), that is able to convey moods, affective experiences, and even socially constructed codes (such as gender or social power; McClary 2002, 7–9, 36; Cusick 1999, 474; Shepherd 1993, 51; Moisala 1994, 247). The hermeneutic approach necessitates interpreting music from a certain point of view. Kramer (2011, 2) argues that hermeneutic interpretation, or 'open interpretation', does not concern itself with what music ontologically *is* but with what music does and what it produces in a given cultural matrix producing something new out of the premises of music (for example, notes, performances, or musical parlance). This idea of open interpretation considers every phenomenon as particular and of interest, instead of looking to subsume the particular within a larger, generalising theory. The actions of a human subject are always inherent in this process, and are a key topic of discussion in open interpretation. In a reflexive way, the researcher is always in dialogue, contact, and sometimes conflict with her/his research subjects. In this way, open interpretation is a subjective form of research.

In addition to music, cultural musicology looks to facets of social life that are in immediate contact with musical phenomena: for example, performance, historical and spatial aspects, identity (gender, race, social class, nationality, ableism), context of performance/composition, politics, psychology, biology and environment, aesthetics, and many others.[16] By nature, cultural musicology is intertwined with other disciplines, usually defined through specific research questions. Since my research concerns issues of gender and sexuality, one almost self-explanatory point of reference to ground this research, alongside cultural musicology, is queer studies; more specifically, queer musicology.[17] Other smaller

[15] I use the term 'academic criticism' as a specific niche of Max Horkheimer's classic critical theory. Horkheimer's (2002b) critical theory ('the dialectical critique of political economy'; ibid. 206) in classic Marxist thought is, at heart, apolitical insofar as specific ideologies are concerned, with the exception of a 'concern for the abolition of social injustice' (ibid. 242). Within this context, critical musicology is a political tool for informing the consumers of music how exactly music participates in, and/or challenges the political-social power structures that operate within society. Academic criticism, then, 'does not hesitate to relate musical sounds to surrounding discursive formations' (Richardson 2012b, 140), and caters to political aims, journalistic writing as well as academic ambitions; research, analysis, interpretation and reflection (see also Richardson 1999, xii).

[16] This is where my work is closest to ethnomusicology in its widest definition. While my work is not ethnographic, I consider the US-European culture from a position of both a participant and an outsider: as a non-Anglophone yet European observer. In this way, I consider mainstream music media a 'field' to examine. On cultural musicology's relationship to ethnomusicology, see Tomlinson 2012, 68–71; and Titon 2012, 76–79.

[17] I do not mean to suggest here that queer studies are the only studies discussing matters of gender and sexuality. More options could include feminist studies (radical, material, third-wave, intersectional), psychology, or sociology as the main points of departure. While all of the above are present in my thesis, queer studies

fields employed selectively in my research include but are not limited to: performance studies (including voice, dance, performance and musical performativity), psychology and sociology (especially related to sadomasochism), critical masculinities studies, audio-visual studies such as film and music video studies, and porn studies.

1.4.2 QUEER STUDIES, QUEER MUSICOLOGY

Perhaps because of its political emphasis, as well as the relatively short history of queer theory, there is little consensus as to what the word 'queer' stands for, what it includes, or what it epistemologically *is*. Therefore it is essential that every queer scholar define how they understand the word 'queer'. In my thesis, the term is understood as a 'taboo breaker' (Whiteley 2006, xiv), a subject position at odds with the dominant culture (Peraino 2006, 5), and 'an approach to sexuality that may be shared by homosexuals, bisexuals, transgenders, and even heterosexuals who feel a lack of fit within established sexual frameworks' (Oakes 2006, 48). Queer studies can also comment on hegemonic gender norms (Hawkins 2016, 4). Queer studies originated from LGBT studies and the political movements of the 1970s, and nowadays joins feminist criticism as two significant forces in cultural musicology. The umbrella term 'queer' is nowadays thought to include all LGBTIAPQ[18]-sexualities. In queer musicology, these sexualities, identities, meanings, and discourses are interpreted in a musical context, starting from the seminal anthology *Queering the Pitch* published in 1994 (ed. Brett, Wood & Thomas 2006).

Queer studies provide a solid basis for theorising SM, as they imply 'a constant state of opposing the norm, whatever the norm is' (Välimäki 2007, 179). SM is here understood in queer terms as 'featur[ing] singular definably queer subjects … involved in definably queer practices … which produce singular definably queer (oppositional) effects' (Sullivan 2009, 438). I do not, however, suggest, without at least some reservations, that SM is necessarily queer by default. Along with Nikki Sullivan (ibid. 445), I do not want to essentialise or universalise SM or queer theory, as both vary greatly according to how they are defined. In my work, I recognise a certain affinity between the two terms, but I do not intend for SM to take on the automatic connotation of 'queer in its norm-opposing nature'; the queerness of SM will be defined on a case-by-case basis, based on the extent to which the case studies 'break taboos' or offer outsider stances apropros heteronormative and/or non-kink sexuality.

In queer musicology, music is seen as a field of activities that negotiates gender, sexuality and identity in a sphere that is ontologically different from others, mainly because of its auditive nature.[19] Throughout history, music has been a space where gender and sexuality lose their rigid boundaries, as musicologist Judith Peraino (2006, 7–8) notes, in regard to

seem to have a unique viewpoint towards alternative sexualities that focus on the non-normative side of sexuality, which seems to fit together well with some SM practices I look into.

[18] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersexual, asexual, pansexual, queer. Other variants appear quite regularly, and the most usual form is LGBT.

[19] Not that visual aspects would somehow be, or ever were, excluded from music. See Richardson 2012, 13.

music and musicians and the anxiety and ambivalence that frequently surround them. In this sense, music is discursively 'double-tongued, participating in both the normalising and *ab*normalising of the subject' (Peraino ibid. 7). Queer musicology concerns itself with any kind of music, not limited to the identity of the performer or genre: all music includes gender and sexuality-specific themes. Queer musicology of course researches queer-identified musicians and their music, but is not limited to 'out' or publically LGBT topics or people. Queer musicology can analyse, criticise, and debate any kind of music from a new angle, as a queered sensibility where non-normative sexualities are either celebrated, hidden or denied.

Most criticism of queer musicology usually objects to a perceived over-analysis, understanding the approach as ahistorical or essentialising, and questioning queer musicology's problematisation of music's autonomy in relation to culture.[20] Queer musicologists respond with the claim that specific research traditions, research questions, and methodologies invariably produce equally specific readings of the phenomenon at hand. Then again, queer musicologists object to strict relativism, and claim that particular research positions reveal something crucial about the nature of music, sexuality, and society. Queer musicologists believe in the importance of envoicing queer minorities through music and their self-expression, but this is not the only motivation for a queer listening of music. Although in the early years of queer musicology, queer-identified musicians were one of the most popular research foci, nowadays any sort of music, musical occurrence, or social music-related situation can be seen and especially heard through a queer point of audition; or, 'queered'. I continue to flesh out the special queerness of music throughout my thesis, both in my case studies and also with consideration to how music negotiates queer sounds and spaces in broader terms.

1.4.3 CLOSE READING, FRAMING

Close reading, as I understand it here, is a method of criticism for researching cultural phenomena, where a cultural text (understood broadly as a written text, a musical text, a picture, a gesture, dance, a scene of a film) are described in detail and interpreted through certain cultural themes. Originating from (quite formalistic) literary criticism and expanding to musicology since the 'cultural turn' of the 1990s (Richardson 2016b, 112, 115), close reading, as I employ the concept here, includes interpretation that goes beyond, yet simultaneously does not exclude, technical and physical considerations and description (ibid. 117–119).

Close reading in its more traditional forms has been the subject of considerable, and justified, critique in cultural research, as a result of its overly restrictive focus on texts and formal description. The type of close reading I propose here instead requires mobility between different analytical levels or frames of reference to build up a complex and synergistically connected textual and cultural picture of the phenomenon in question. The level of close reading will depend upon the objects of study; readings can be microlevel or

[20] None of these claims is unfamiliar to queer theories in general See, for example, Edwards 2009, 81–82.

macrolevel, or fluctuate between both. While close reading varies greatly in accordance with the priorities and perspectives of the scholar who undertakes the reading, it should focus on contextualisation to avoid arriving at excessively idiosyncratic or 'narcissistic' conclusions, which are pitfalls of some forms of close reading and phenomenological analysis[21] (Torvinen 2008, 11). This is achieved through sufficiently detailed description, appropriate framing techniques, and convincing contextualisation (Richardson 2016b, 126–129, 133–134, 137). Close reading can further elaborate upon phenomenological research, grounding the experience to data and situation.

When discussing music and close reading, cultural musicologist John Richardson refers to this 'closer reading' (2016b, 112) as 'ecological close reading' (2016a, 157; 2016b, 112), in which music and sounds are analysed 'in their physical and discursive cultural settings' (Richardson 2016a, 157; see also Burns & Lafrance 2002, xiii–xiv). While the approach does not exclude traditional forms of music analysis, it reminds us to 'read music' also as a part of the cultural surroundings, not only as 'reading music' from the notated score. Richardson (2016a, 158) further claims that 'ecological close reading' is especially apt for analysing art (music, literature, visual arts) in terms of 'the sensory, material and embodied – almost invariably multimodal' experiences it affords.

Academic criticism is closely connected to close reading as well as cultural analysis (see Middleton 2012, 5). It provides a certain emphasis to the research, as it searches for the 'cultural and material conditions in which the production of the artwork happens, how they are experienced, what meanings they afford, and what uses audiences make of them' (Richardson 2012, 11). In musicology, academic criticism demands the attention of the analysis be not only on the music, but also on the surrounding culture, as viewed through a critical lens. This provides academic readings of music that, while remaining readings of specific phenomena, can also address culture at large.[22] Academic criticism requires conveying personal and cultural knowledge, but also the ability to question and criticise possibly taken-for-granted social norms and attitudes, and to suggest potential counter-readings. Usually, academic criticism includes such procedures as description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. (Ibid. 11–12.) In my research, I do this by describing case studies and analysing them from musicological and audiovisual points of view, and by interpreting these findings in reference to different contexts and themes, evaluating the roles these musical cases play in these different contexts, and how the audiovisual and musicological findings mediate different aspects of the contexts and themes that arise from the examples. This process is best understood by introducing the concept of 'frames'.

I use frames, or 'framing', as a (symbolic) tool for surrounding and focusing on the subject matter, through which it is then interpreted (Bal 2002, 8). The term in Mieke

[21] Phenomenology emphasises the description of phenomena and personal experience as a valid point of research (Moran 2000, 4–6). It is a decidedly 'antiscientistic stance' (Glendinning 2007, 6) that stresses humanist research as a valid academic discourse. The key method of phenomenology is description. An important principle is not to describe *what* is experienced, but *how* we experience it (Miettinen, Pulkkinen & Taipale 2010, 11). In music research, phenomenology suggests emphasising the (embodied) experience of music along with situating it within the surrounding world and culture (Ferrara & Behnke 1997, 469, 471; Torvinen 2008, 12).

[22] This is in accordance of Horkheimer's classic critical theory; 'The concerns of critical thought, too, are those of most men, but they are not recognised as such.' Horkheimer 2002b, 218.

Bal's usage originates from Gregory Bateson (1987 [1972], 192), who defined frames as, first and foremost, a psychological concept applied to differentiate play from reality. A frame suggests a metacommunicative premise whereupon the subject is viewed; outside of a specific frame, other premises apply (Bateson 1987, 193–194). In the context of play, frames are also social behavioural agreements between people. This is slightly different from Erving Goffman's (1986, 10–11, 13) notion of frame analysis, in which this theorist uses frames as a phenomenological (subjective) tool for interpreting experiences of any social encounter rather than a psychological (social agreement) tool. Frames, in Bal's (2009, 15) work, are applied to cultural close readings. While they *function as* thematic perspectives, they *are based on* cultural references and concepts. The process of framing an object of close reading, or surrounding it, is essential before the analysis can take place. Framing also insists on the organic state of the object: framing reveals the object as interactive with its surroundings, rather than it being viewed as an ontological monolith (Bal 2002, 137).

As methodological tools, frames are understood as *thematic perspectives that reveal appropriate themes within the subject that is researched*. Frames can be conceptualised more productively if we add to the metaphor the idea of 'zooming' (Richardson 2016a, 157–158); a frame, like a video camera, can 'zoom' in on, or out from the subject, and the perspective and interpretation changes as part of this process, since the process of zooming suggests alternative frames of reference. Using frames in this way, the close reading analyst can reveal different results by changing the framing 'space' of the subject. This, in turn, brings to light different possibilities for new interpretations: by changing frames, or 'zooming' from different angles, the interpretations change, and reveal dialogical differences that in turn produce a multifaceted and reflective argument.[23]

I use close reading and framing in various ways. I frequently frame my case studies with relevant cultural themes and examine three main musical modalities: music, voice, and sounds (noises), and all their intersections, including their audiovisual relations to visual texts when applicable. I then go on to discuss and situate these modalities within broader deliberations about specific themes in SM, culture, or SM in culture. In this way, the case studies influence the final analyses as much as the primary frames influence the case studies, keeping my readings dialogical between materials and theories (a mode of analysis I fully endorse and aspire to in academic discussions). As Mieke Bal (2009, 15) reminds us, 'in the tripartite relationship between student, frame, and object, the latter must still have the last word'.

1.4.4 FRAMING PERFORMATIVE MATERIALISM

Considering the conceptual frames I employ in this study, one particular way of reading SM as a part of culture and society seems especially useful: performative materialism.

[23] Framing also has an affinity to SM experience, where some SM practitioners report their sexual practices as being 'framed' outside their everyday lives; in this way, frames become an essential theoretical device in my work. (See section 2.1.2 for further deliberation on SM and framing.)

When reviewing the SM research, studies often reveal a bias between valorising and disapproving attitudes towards SM. Readings between these two positions are rare, and especially in what might justifiably be called feminist pro- and anti-SM writings, affective responses often guide the deliberations more than carefully argued observations or erudite theories. Margot Weiss (2011, 21) expresses her own dissatisfaction with such a situation through coining the term 'performative materialism', an approach that combines Judith Butler's (2008) concept of performative gender with socio-economic, Marxist materialism as a means to bring about a broader and more dialectic approach to SM research. Weiss calls performative materialism 'a broad reading of production, focusing on both relations of production (in the economic sense) and gender, race, and sexuality as productive performances' (ibid. 7–8); and 'a method of reading that pays careful attention to the dynamic ways subjects are produced in and through social power' (ibid. 25). Her research incorporates the main stances of SM interpretation, queer theory (performativity) and Marxist, socio-economic materialism, which in turn provide a multifaceted understanding of SM occurrences.[24] Weiss (2011, 7) accounts for this incorporation of opposing viewpoints by employing the concept of 'circuits' to connect the prevalent (oppressive) cultural conditions with the sometimes transgressive particularities of individual SM practices. In other words, it can be said that certain SM practices are transgressive and performative, but they *also* mirror power imbalances in society at large (ibid. 8, 23). While Weiss's research is based mostly on ethnological sociology, theories of performative materialism may be seen to be especially apt when researching mainstream media and expressive arts (popular music, music videos, films). While the performative approach can be applied to the meanings embedded in performances of music, the materialist side cannot overlook the historical, societal, even economical facts that are attached to expressive forms. In this way, performative materialism makes the readings I conduct in this research intersectional. I shall further theorise this intersectionality in thesis section 2.3.4.

Materialist research as research of ecology and material objects (instruments, scores, recordings, concert halls) has also recently emerged in musicology (Straw 2012, 227, 229). Materialist research, however, can also be viewed as research of embodiment and sound waves that comprise music and affect the human body, creating yet other windows (frames) for music-hermeneutical and phenomenological research. Materiality is, in fact, the very foundation upon which the erotic potential of music can be erected. Before the cultural turn in musicology in the 1990s, music was often abstracted to, for example, sublimity or 'ecstasy' (Asenjo 1968, 298–299). Since critics of traditional musicology, such as Susan McClary and Robert Walser (1990), reproached musicologists for shunning away from sexual matters in music, scholars have embraced matters of sex and sexuality alongside gender and queer theories among other relevant cultural theories. Lawrence Kramer (2016, 81) considers music's persuasive and immersive nature to depend precisely on its

[24] Amber Musser (2014, 20–21) would perhaps describe the same process as 'empathetic reading', although the critical-Marxist side of SM interpretation seems to be missing from her formulation: 'Empathetic reading is a reading practice, a critical hermeneutic, and the methodology. (…) As a reading practice, empathetic reading highlights corporeality and the flesh. … it calls attention to the nonidentitarian circuits of embodied knowledge production.' (Ibid. 21.)

physicality and materiality, which in turn opens up possibilities for sexual-sensual experience:

> Music is a Wagnerian love potion taken by ear rather than mouth. (…) Music, supposedly the most abstract of the arts, is in a certain sense the most physical and material. It coerces; it exerts pressure; and we cannot resist what we cannot see.

I agree with Kramer's assertion, and will here bring also the performative aspects to bear on the embodied (material) side of musical and erotic experience. This, in turn, can elicit physically erotic experiences, and permits readings of music that emphasise eroticism.[25] In my view, specifically SM-erotic experiences can be charted through the interpretative strategy I call kink reading.

1.4.5 KINK READING, KINK LISTENING

Extending the previously discussed theoretical and methodological ideas, I propose 'kink reading' or 'kink listening' as my primary framing strategy or device, this being a specific way of reading or listening to musical and audiovisual occurrences, of use when analysing the kink erotica embedded within my case studies. (See chart 1.) Kink reading is a combination of close reading and cultural/queer musicological analysis, to put it simply. When we talk of queering in musicology, it is often defined as borrowing a certain identity formation's ears, which is akin to some forms of phenomenological research. Music is then

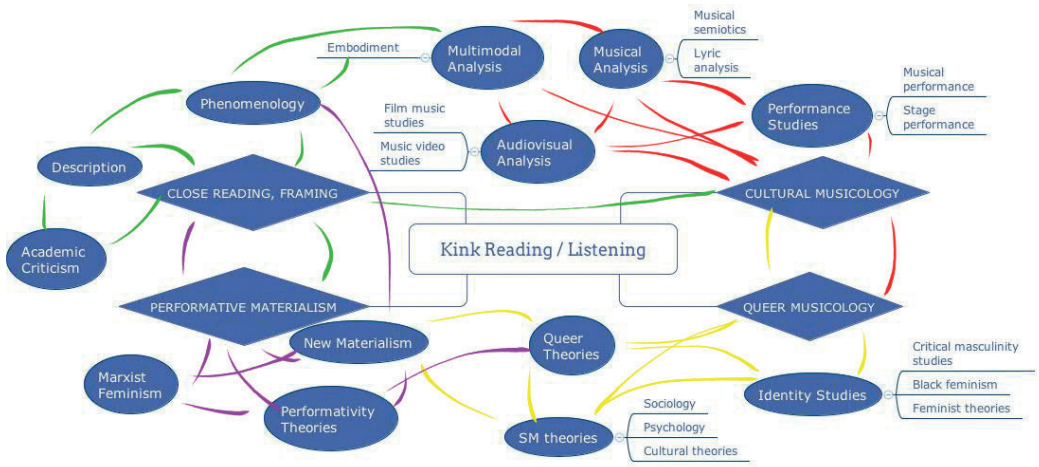


Chart 1. Approaches informing kink listening.

[25] My work is by no means the first in queer musicology to suggest an intricate relationship between music and eroticism, even sex. For one example among many, Suzanne G. Cusick (2006) suggests in her article 'On a Lesbian Relationship With Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight' that there is an intricate eroticism between music and listener, which is akin to lesbian experience of sex.

heard from a certain (subjective) perspective, and the result of newly encoded meaning is achieved. In queer musicology, the particular perspective adopted emphasises every occurrence outside the heteronormative matrix, such as same-sex desire or queer experiences, through a relationship to any kind of music. Kinking musical experience is by no means a complete alternative to queering it. In fact, the process is similar in many ways. Kink listening emphasises sexuality and sex as a healthy and joyous part of life. Listening to music as a queer subject produces queer readings and analyses of any music. In kink listening, the analyst searches for possible 'kink' erotica in music. The erotica in question can take the form of 'sex sounds' (auditive symbols of sexual courting or intercourse) if so wished, but much more can also be heard when discerning eroticised power imbalances and performativity: that is, deliberate and theatrical submission or dominance, or alternative sexuality identities, and, of course, the fetishisation of different noises and sounds in terms of what they add to the music.

Perhaps the most blatant difference between queering and kinking is the attitude towards sex and sexual pleasure. In kink, sex and sexual pleasure are the focal point. Consequently, in a way, kink is a narrower term than queer, which studies also the identities, desires, and political issues of LGBT people. However, kink listening investigates the darker hues of sex and sexuality, situating the listening/reading within larger, cultural and social structures, and mirroring them through representations of sex and sexuality in mainstream popular culture. In short, kink reading is about

1. listening to eroticism in music and multimodal art and expression;
2. conceptualising this eroticism through kink sexualities;
3. discussing the rendered representation through different cultural and social lenses that impinge on the eroticism in various ways.

In the context of 'kink reading/listening' or 'kinking' for short, the colloquial term of 'kink' refers to a non-specific form of intimate, direct or non-direct, sexual experience, including titillation. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013), a kink, as a noun and more prevalent in everyday use, can be a quirk in someone's sexual appetite, suggesting perhaps an oddity or unusualness. Indeed, here lies the queer potential of 'kink', if we define queerness as a taboo-breaker and outsider, emphasising anything beyond heteronormative relationships (see section 1.4.2). Margaret Nichols (2006, 282–283) sees the kink community as ultimately a sadomasochistic one, including SM, D/s, BDSM,[26] and fetishism. Kink sexuality can also be seen to entail SM, 'swinging' (having sexual encounters outside the primary relationship in a mutual agreement without implying a lasting relationship with visiting participants), polyamory (having multiple partners and/or participants in a relationship openly), open relationships (freedom to have sexual encounters outside a primary relationship), fetishism, transvestitism, and other non-normative forms of relationship and sexual preference. I use the term 'kinking' when it comes to listening to SM erotica within music, not in opposition to 'queering' but as a more descriptive term

[26] An acronym that includes B/d (bondage & discipline), D/s (dominance and submission), and S/M (sadism and masochism). See, for example, Langdridge & Barker 2007, 7.

of the same process with different political, philosophical and aesthetic aims.

In my research, I propose an approach to kink listening that seeks out non-traditional, non-heteronormative expressions of sexualities and desires in music. It is not limited to sexual(ity) preferences or genders, and celebrates human sexuality as a productive, positive source of pleasure (or pleasure as a reparative process instead of a depressive/paranoid one; see Sedgwick 2003, 128). Kink listening emphasises anything outside of (hetero)normative and hegemonic relationships, is critical of monogamy and genital-centred sexuality, and rejoices in erotic pleasures, sexual power play and flirtation, and/or fetish eroticism. Kink listening as it is applied here, utilises the principles of cultural musicology, phenomenology, close reading, and queer musicology, but adds to them the specific frames of (non-normative) sex, sexuality, and eroticism. When kink listening, I listen to musical representations of erotica and ascertain what exactly encodes the music as a) erotic, b) specifically kink erotic, and c) culturally and musically significant to other chosen frames used in tandem with kink listening. These specific cultural themes arise from the case studies themselves: a performance frames my analysis as much as I frame performances. While some of the case studies presented herein can be regarded as unproblematic and salutary depictions of SM, kink listening can also reflect on depictions of SM that are not easily regarded as transgressing the gender-, sexuality- or sex norms that are still rife in popular culture. I shall continue developing kink reading as a concrete method of reading music in section 2.4.

1.5 REFLECTION ON RESEARCH POSITION

Although my work is not explicitly political, it is conducted with the hope to influence public discourse to some extent. While I cannot speak for any practicing sadomasochists, as I do not identify as belonging to this social group without reservations, my academic-political goal is to change discussions of SM (and perhaps, in some contexts, all matters of gender and sexuality) from being overtly affective to being dialogical, critical and multifaceted, where no straightforward truths are to be found. Instead, in my research, many simultaneous and coinciding truths are present, which are in dialogue with one another.

One common feature of both queer studies and phenomenological methodologies is self-reflexivity. As Piia-Livia Hekanaho (2010, 149) states, an important part of queer studies is to continuously discuss and even debate terms, presuppositions, starting points, and the researcher's position throughout the research process. Hekanaho believes that it is important to keep the research as politically explanatory as possible. This is understandable when one thinks of, for example, the goal of trying to spread acceptance and understanding of LGBT sexualities through academic research to wider society. Many queer scholars make their sexual identities known either directly or in relation to the research subject.

Contrary to queer studies, in sadomasochism studies, a statement of the researcher's position is not as common. Whether it really makes a difference to the reader to know which side of the whip the researcher prefers, or whether this person even owns one, is a discussion in itself. Or, as a wider question, can one even discuss queer practices if one is

not a part of the queer culture as a social system? Calvin Thomas, editor of *Straight with a Twist* (2000), poses the question thus:

> The problem, however, for theory-savvy straights inured to the idea of constitutive otherness is probably less in being able to recognise their own identity in the scene of 'the other' or to acknowledge the other's constitutiveness and more in deciding how to articulate that recognition in a productive, nonappropriative manner – or, overly wary of the charge of appropriation, deciding whether or not to articulate their recognition at all. (Thomas 2000, 2.)

Thomas (2000, 2) reminds straight and queer scholars alike that, indeed, poststructuralism has already challenged dualities (straight–queer, sadomasochist–non-SM, for example). Furthermore, to conceive of queer theory as mainly a set of theories for LGBT researchers and having to do with only LGBT subjects is, in my view, putting queer theory into another normative box, which goes against the very value system of queer theory itself. Judith Butler (1994, 21) has already warned queer theorists of 'institutional domestication of queer thinking', and although Butler seems to be more concerned with queer becoming an overly self-absorbed theory disregarding race or class, safeguarding the term 'queer' as only encompassing LGBT matters can be viewed as just as domesticating in its effect. Fabio Cleto (1999, 15) states that 'queer' can be all-encompassing and at the same time not lose its identity as a critique of the normative. I fully agree with this statement.

As for my research position, this is a study conducted from a thirty-something, white woman's (queer) point of view. I come from Northern Finland and approach my topic of study from a Western cultural angle, albeit a relatively peripheral one. I consider this a benefit, since my position as both insider and outsider to Western mainstream culture gives me a standpoint from which I can both understand and criticise its core aspects. For example, the main pro- and anti-SM discussions (so-called 'sex wars', which have also had an impact in studies of pornography; Weiss 2011, 148; Paasonen 2011, 27, 52) of the US/UK feminist scene never took place in Finland (Paasonen 2011, 52). This is where I hope to make a contribution, by complicating existing theorisations within a queer and SM-inflected rubric. My aim is to strive for a balanced perspective by complicating and interrogating debates from all sides and in this way to derive a more nuanced perspective. I do not claim to be completely impartial when it comes to sadomasochistic aesthetics. Susanna Paasonen (2011, 16) uses the term 'resonance' (originally an auditory term) that seems to be accurate here, in describing the feeling conveyed by online pornography to its viewers as an affect of empathy, identification and association in addition to some degree of stimulation. It is an embodied feeling that comes about with visual incentives. (Ibid.) Although sounds and auditive reception are more important in my study rather than solely visual sensations, I can confirm the experience of resonance brought about by the audiovisual texts within me. After all, as Paasonen notes:

> a scholar studying porn who is never aroused by it is as anomalous and misplaced a creature as a researcher studying comedy who is never moved to laughter or a scholar working on horror who fails to jump or flinch. (Paasonen 2011, 23.)

For my own part, I cannot easily claim that any essentialising term of kink or non-kink sexuality perfectly captures my partialities. Or, to quote Sinéad O'Connor, 'I am not in any box of description' (quoted in Mayhew 2006); hence, I would undoubtedly call my research position as well as my personal gender and sexuality status 'queer'.

1.6 OUTLINE

The thesis consists of a theoretical chapter on sadomasochism as a sexual practice (chapter 2), three chapters discussing six case studies (3–5), as well as a conclusion (chapter 6). I have chosen to build the case study chapters from inductive readings of two, mutually supportive case studies, which I then discuss through shared themes. (See table 1.) The themes have arisen from cultural themes that often surround SM aesthetics, which are: Interplay between Extremes (chapter 3), Fantasy and Surrealism (chapter 4), and (In)Visibility (chapter 5). In my view, each of these themes reveals something integral to uses of SM in multimodal contents: interplay between extremes addresses SM as a multifaceted field of intermingling, pulsating and flowing states of eroticism; fantasy and surrealism depict the specifically masochistic sensibilities of SM that present sexuality as a state of daydreaming and sometimes frightening logic; and (in)visibility addresses the blatant visibility of sexuality while also addressing its hidden nature, blurring the lines between the outrageous and ordinary, private and public, possibly from a specifically sadistic point of view. I approach all my case studies from a SM-specific perspective, but not all of them are explicitly or straightforwardly sadomasochistic. While some of my case studies are not explicitly sadomasochistic, I frame them with different SM themes, and re-read, or 'kink listen' to them in an SM-specific way. In doing so, I make the claim that kink listening can be applied to any song that has any affinity to sex and sexuality. Furthermore, in accordance with my research questions, I observe how a general mood, affect, or conceptualisation can lead to SM-specific readings without the need for explicit SM codes or signposts to be attached.

All of the examples I have chosen can be regarded as salutary towards SM, but I have paired up the chapters' more straightforward examples (*Secretary,* Cohen, Rihanna) with more problematic and critical ones (*Duke of Burgundy,* Costello, Zerlina) where the darker hues of SM relationships are in focus.

In chapter 3, I will discuss perhaps the most fundamental aspect of sadomasochism, interplay between extremes, through two SM-erotic films, the romantic comedy *Secretary* (2002) and the more dramatic, artistic film *Duke of Burgundy* (2014). As an additional theme, I discuss SM erotica in specifically filmic renditions, and how eroticism is rendered by the audiovisual characteristics of both films. In chapter four, I approach questions of fantasy and surrealism through (heterosexual?) male masochism from different angles. Leonard Cohen's song 'I'm Your Man' (1988) describes the fantastical, masochistic pleasure aspect from the position of eroticised cuckoldry (in other words, a man who prefers a promiscuous female partner), and Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel no 2' (2002) the surreal, darker pleasure of masochism expressed in cynicism and the Lacanian death drive. Finally, in chapter 5, I address the theme of the visibility or invisibility of sadomasochism

in popular culture through seemingly different but ultimately very similar performances, Rihanna's music video *S&M* (2010) and one specific production (Claus Guth's from 2008) of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) and mainly the character Zerlina. Both case studies discuss feminine (sexual) empowerment in public forums, and highlight the possibility of sadistic pleasures in girliness and the spectacle of quasi-violence. All examples are more or less mainstream, but all of them can be considered as belonging to the category of popular music.[27]

With the help of these various examples, I illuminate the manifold nature of SM erotica as well as the many different sexualities that are produced, while considering SM's role in the seemingly heteronormative sphere of mainstream popular music.

Table 1. Case study chapters: headlines, case studies, additional themes

	Primary frame of chapter	Case studies	Special SM frames	Methods
Chapter 3	Interplay between extremes	*Secretary; Duke of Burgundy*	SM intersocial relationships	Film music as multisensory erotica
Chapter 4	Fantasy, surrealism	Leonard Cohen: 'I'm Your Man'; Elvis Costello: 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'	Male masochism, alternative heterosexual masculinities	Song analysis, intertextuality in music
Chapter 5	(In)Visibility	Rihanna: *S&M;* Claus Guth's *Don Giovanni* and Zerlina	Empowerment, sadism	Mediated performance, musical codes of eroticism

[27] There are various ways in which academics understand the terms 'popular' and 'popular music'. In my research, I define the term 'popular music' as widely as possible, as I believe that any music that is in the cultural memory and vernacular use of a social sphere can be considered 'popular'. I also define the term through mainstream media consumption and dissemination. Consequently, I read both Elvis Costello (sometimes considered as underground or indie music), and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (classical music) as representative of popular music, as they both are popular among large audiences worldwide, as well as participate in notable media dissemination. See Richardson 2012, 5, note 3; Machin 2010, 9.

2 PRISM: SADOMASOCHISTIC HISTORY, AESTHETICS, CODES

This chapter provides the theoretical background for the case study chapters, 3–5, and expands concepts from the introductory chapter that are central to the thesis. Here I present the basic theories, aesthetic principles and codes that frame discussions of sadomasochism in cultural studies, feminist and queer theory, and also musicology, which in turn illuminate the analytical work conducted in chapters 3–5. Throughout this chapter, I outline a theoretical prism that guides the close readings ('kink listenings') found in the case studies. I have additionally included a section on sadomasochism in the media, particularly as seen in popular music and film, and how these phenomena relate to the claim that media has become more sexualised in the last twenty to thirty years.

SM is nowadays considered as a sexual preference or play based on erotic power switching that is interpersonal and unbound to any particular gender. It has even been said to be 'ecumenical' (Plante 2006, 61), meaning that it is not bound to any particular sexuality, nor to the number of people involved.[1] While it is difficult to ascertain what exactly SM entails in any generalised sense, an elementary division within SM practices would be a 'balance between the physical (e.g. pleasure/pain) dimension and the psychological manifestations (e.g. dominance and submission [D/s]) of SM' (Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 6).[2] It is often agreed that SM consists of performative power switching between two or more practitioners within a fantastical-sexual situation, which can assume different forms, ultimately serving to generate or enhance sexual pleasure and/or some notion of psychological transcendence.[3] SM was first the subject of academic attention in the late nineteenth century, in the field of traditional psychoanalysis. The first scholars to discuss sadism and masochism as aspects of human sexuality were Richard

[1] Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 15; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4; Richardson, Smith and Werndly 2013, 141; Langdridge & Barker 2007, 6–7; Weiss 2011, vii–xii.

[2] Staci Newmahr (2011, 79) disagrees with this particular claim, as in her field studies some practitioners of SM see SM and D/s (dominance/submission) as different things entirely.

[3] Staci Newmahr (2011, 68) criticises the definition of SM as a sexual set of behaviours, as some of the SM practitioners in her study claim not to practice SM because of sexual reasons. See also Newmahr 2011, 67–69; Beckmann 2007, 98, 103–104; Califia 1995, 146–147.

Krafft-Ebing (2011 [1886], 1995 [1885]) and Sigmund Freud (2001 [1924], 1995 [1938], 1977 [1905]). Their theories concerning SM went unchallenged for decades, until the sexual liberation of 1960s produced more non-pathological knowledge about human sexuality, and new theories emerged in psychology and sociology. Theories of SM aesthetics in cultural studies are relatively new. In a way, Gilles Deleuze's (2006) theories of sadism and masochism, psychoanalytic though they were, formed the basis for cultural research of sadomasochism, as his readings were constructed with reference to the works of Marquis de Sade and Baron von Sacher-Masoch rather than patient case studies.[4] However, essentialising[5] and dated as the readings by Krafft-Ebing and Freud may seem (perhaps especially regarding gender and sexuality), cultural readings of SM are still, to a greater or lesser extent, informed by them. In my work, I utilise Deleuze's and others' theories (Bersani, Lacan, de Lauretis among others) that are based on psychoanalysis, but contest Krafft-Ebing's and Freud's most essentialist theories of SM sexualities. I am critical towards traditional psychoanalytical approaches to SM throughout my readings, but acknowledge that these cannot be fully negated. I mainly contest the essentialising aspects of these theories, one of the most central essentialisms being Krafft-Ebing's (1995, 26, 28) and Freud's (2001, 161) claim of women's inherent masochism and passivity, not only in their sexual lives but as their natural state of being. Other essentialist claims by Krafft-Ebing and Freud that I disagree with are, in short: SM (or sadism, or masochism) is non-sexual behaviour (Krafft-Ebing 1995, 2; Freud 2009, 70); sadism and masochism are inherently the same (Freud 1995, 3; an idea contested vehemently in Deleuze 2006); and sadism (sexual or otherwise) is a necessary social and sexual predisposition for men (Freud 1977, 71).

2.1 SADOMASOCHISM IN FEMINIST AND QUEER DEBATES

While the word 'sadomasochism' is a compound of the words 'sadism' and 'masochism', this does not, however, straightforwardly imply that SM is a fusion of the two. SM can be considered an umbrella term that includes sexual practices of erotic power switches, spanking, bondage, dominance and submission, role play, humiliation, and/or public sex. Nowadays, while SM still may bear the stigma of pathology and perversity in some communities, academic scholars see the behaviour mostly as a sexual preference or a lifestyle (Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 20; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4, 8), a form of sexuality (Califia 1995, 139); or a certain kind of sexual (fore)play (Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 21; Weinberg 2006, 33; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 9). SM is sometimes even considered 'serious leisure' (Newmahr 2010, 314), or a leisure activity pursued in earnest (Stebbins 1992, 3), comparable, for example, to mountain climbing. Many studies conducted in the last few years find that practitioners of BDSM testify 'a higher level of subjective well-being' (Wismeijer

[4] On sadism and masochism as narrative structures in literature, see especially MacKendrick 1999.

[5] Essentialising can be defined as making general observations about a given phenomenon and taking this as a status that affects all aspects of it; presenting something as monolithic and even ahistorical. Tate & Audette 2001, 496; Chao et. al. 2007, 341.

& van Assen 2013, 1951; see also Sagarin et. al. 2009), challenging the assumption that their preferences are based on psychopathology. Weinberg, William & Moser define SM using five components that usually characterise SM as a practice (quoted in Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4). Not all of these are found in specific SM situations, but usually all five are present. They are:

1. The appearance of dominance and submission; the appearance of rule by one partner over the other.
2. Role playing.
3. Consensuality, that is, voluntary agreement to enter into the interaction.
4. Mutual definition, i.e., a shared understanding that the activities constitute SM or some similar term.
5. A sexual context, though the concept that SM is always sexual is not shared by all participants. (See Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 4.)

The safe (or safety) word principle (Nichols 2006, 297; Weinberg 2006, 34) is also in accord with the 'safe, sane and consensual credo of SM' (Kleinplatz 2006, 339). According to this principle, the submissive has the power to stop a sadomasochism scene[6] through the use of a code word, agreed on in advance, after which (ideally) the dominant will cease all SM activity and reality is reinstated.[7] The safety word method even suggests that the ultimate decisive power over the SM scene lies with the sub, and not the dom (Love 2000, 88; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19).[8] This does not automatically imply, however, that the scene needs to be diligently pre-scripted: some sadomasochists enjoy the feeling of not knowing what to expect, a feeling that is perhaps experienced simultaneously with dread as well (Califia 2002, 386). Sadomasochism has been at the heart of some debates related to sex (as sexual activity) and sexuality (as a construction of psychosexual identity) in both feminist and queer politics. Some scholars contest whether SM is a part of human sexuality at all, whether it is or indeed needs to be an identity category of sexual minorities (and if so,

[6] An SM scene, or play, is the frame of space and time during which the SM sexual encounter happens. See, for example, Weiss 2011, 151.

[7] Not all sadomasochists use safety words, as it is considered by some practitioners as somehow spoiling the risk factor of a scene. However, most practitioners agree that the negotiation of a safety word helps both parties to communicate during a scene if something is going amiss. (Kleinplatz 2006, 339; Nichols 2006, 297; Weinberg 2006, 34; Weiss 2011, 81–85.)

[8] Of course, this claim of the submissive being in the ultimate power position is a contested one, as it depends entirely on the trustworthiness of the SM play partners. While Thomas Weinberg (2006, 34) suggests that a dom who does not honour the safety word or other non-safe participants 'have difficulty in obtaining partners' through the close-knit communities' information sharing, the potential of misunderstandings and violence in SM scenes is ever present. Another implication of the submissive's decisive power is that it is usually the submissive party's fantasy that is enacted within a scene (Love 2000, 88; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19). This, of course, sets limits to doms, who can sometimes experience frustration towards fulfilling other people's dreams and not their own. As Patrick Califia (2002, 377) writes: 'some bottoms can barely tolerate the knowledge that there is another person in the room with them and their precious fantasies. The pleasure they seek is a narcissistic one – assisted masturbation, egocentric ecstasy without the lonely bits. (…) Do bottoms not desire to be out of control? Then why spurn my authority?'

how it relates to queerness), or are dubious about its relationship towards gender roles in society. Since these questions are also at the heart of my readings, in what follows I offer a summary of the main points of these discussions.

2.1.1 SADOMASOCHISM AS A (QUEER?) SEXUALITY

In queer studies, SM is widely discussed as a sexual preference and a form of sexuality not structured along the lines of gender-specific partialities. A profound question, however, that has not been satisfactorily answered is whether or not SM as a sexuality defines one's identity to the same extent as (for example) homo-, bi- or heterosexuality. Some SM practitioners think of their preference as only being partial to a given sexual play,[9] while others consider SM an identity (see Califia 1995, 140). There are furthermore practitioners who do not think of SM roles as performative,[10] but as fixed identities that are difficult, or even impossible to change (Newmahr 2011, 48–49). In this case, SM roles would appear to be innate and not changeable according to whim.[11] Of course, the question remains whether sexuality is a fluid state of being rather than an essential, rigid part of the human psyche: both claims have their political and social power. J. Jack Halberstam (2012, 65–67, 69, 78) speculates that especially female sexuality could be a state of flow that changes through the years. Conversely, there are scholars who find it especially revealing of SM that the power statuses are performative: Michel Foucault (2000, 169) calls them 'roles, but everybody knows very well that those roles can be reversed'. If there is an identity category of SM it is, according to Foucault, a subcultural one where the discourse of pleasure is desexualised and reinvented through SM aesthetics (ibid. 169–170).

Some debates concern whether or not SM is viable as a queer sexuality. Some of these discussions revolve around difficulties in defining the word 'queer'. If we think of queerness as an academic term for non-normative sexualities,[12] then SM is not necessarily queer, as we cannot claim that SM is straightforwardly or automatically non-heteronormative. However, there has been criticism of defining one's sexuality exclusively with reference to your own gender and the gender of those you interact with (Sedgwick 2008, 8; Sullivan

[9] Anita Phillips (1998, 5) writes: 'I am not a masochist when I am doing the ironing or having lunch with a friend; it is not something that defines who I am, that gives me an identity. It is not that totalitarian.'

[10] I consider the concept of performativity in Judith Butler's (2008) terms of gender performativity: gender is produced and repeated through culturally gendered actions rather than being biologically determined. In SM, the cultural codes that are knowingly produced and repeated are those of powerful and powerless, dominant and submissive, which are not necessarily related to the participants' 'real life' power status, or social status. See especially chapter 2.1.3.

[11] Studies about SM identities prove that 'switches', or people who enjoy both positions of the power relationship equally, are much rarer than the people who identify primarily as either dom or sub (Sullivan 2007, 154–155).

[12] The meaning of 'queer', when initially used in connection to alternative sexualities, was a synonym for homosexual men, predating the word 'gay' and in this way, excluding lesbians. See Jagose 1996, 74. For queer as non-normative and transgressing categories, see for example Butler 1994, 21; Sullivan 2009, 438; Välimäki 2007, 179; Peraino 2006, 5–6; Hekanaho 2010, 148; Giffney 2009, 1.

2007, 38).[13] The critique from bisexual studies is highly relevant here. Christopher James (1996, 218) theorises bisexuality as 'understand[ing] compulsory monosexuality's role as an essential component of heterosexism'. This calls into question queer theory's possible implicit reproduction of heteronormativity through demanding monosexuality. Some SM-identified queer scholars contest monosexuality by disconnecting the sexual identification from terms of hetero-, bi- or homosexual and emphasising their SM-preferences and roles. Pat Califia (1995, 140), for example, identified at the time of writing more as a sadomasochist top (sadist) than a lesbian. In this way, SM does not seem to essentialise genders, and could hence have queer potential.

Michel Foucault's theories shed some useful light on SM theory. Foucault's deconstructive thoughts about sexuality as nonessential and nomadic spheres of cultural and temporal discourse are among the foundational principles that informed the development of queer studies. Foucault (2000, 169) discusses the SM scene as similar to broader social power relations, but doubts that it is a straightforward reproduction of them, let alone a symptom of pathologically sexualising power inequalities. (See chapter 2.2.2.) He sees SM as the eroticisation of strategic social power, but notes that it is difficult to invert social power statuses as they are embedded in and stabilised by institutions. The mobility of social power relations is rigid at best, while in SM relationships and underground scenes they are always fluid. They can be changed from scene to scene or even within a scene. Foucault ultimately regards the SM scene as sexual play, where the rules can be transgressed or agreed upon (using the safe word method, or other prefigured arrangements) in order to establish boundaries. Consequently, SM is not an outright reproduction of existing social power relations but a performance of power structures through strategic, sexual game/play/fantasy. (See also Musser 2014, 9–10.)

What Foucault (2000, 170) finds fascinating about SM is the use of strategic power relations as a source of pleasure. In heteronormative interactions the negotiating and acting out of strategic relationships always happens before sexual relations, during the courting stage. In SM, it happens inside the sexual relationship. In this way, the difference between a non-kink heteronormative power negotiation relationship and an SM one is that the former is centred on the social person, and the latter on the body. This definition agrees with the presumption of modern SM studies that social roles do not necessarily have to be involved in SM scenes, and SM roles are more theatrical and performative, aimed at sexual play. Furthermore Foucault (ibid. 168–169) believes that in lesbian SM; 'they can get rid of certain stereotypes of femininity which have been used in the lesbian movement – a strategy that the movement has erected from the past'. Based on this, it is safe to speculate that Foucault does entertain the possibility of employing SM as a political tool, subverting existing norms through parody and pleasure.

Foucault seems to think that SM can be framed outside of political discussions in the minds of practitioners, as well as having the potential to destabilise power structures. Foucault's overarching theories of sexuality as a sociotemporal construction formed the basis for academic discussions regarding human sexuality that later became queer studies.

[13] I do not suggest here that sexuality is 'simply' or only about genders and sex; it is always also about love and desire, identity, and subjectivity.

Similarly, building on Foucault's theories, Judith Butler's (2008) notion of (gender) performativity (another building block of queer studies), is a valuable point of departure for thinking about SM as a performative set of behaviours framed within the sexual sphere of life. Since Butler (2008) thought of performativity as a nonvoluntary set of behaviours, it is helpful to combine the idea(l) of SM as performativity with the more agentic, discretionary performativity theorised by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003; Parker & Sedgwick 1996). This gives rise to a theory of SM as a non-essential, voluntary set of (theatrical) behaviours that makes it possible to adopt a SM role, and frame it outside of one's public personality so that the two need not come into in contact with one another. This also informs Margot Weiss's (2011) critical readings of SM. Before presenting her concept of 'performative materialism' in section 2.1.3, I will first briefly outline feminist debates on SM in recent decades. These debates offer a framework for reading and interpreting SM sexualities regarding existing social power structures (and in my case, SM regarding mainstream popular music and popular culture at large).

2.1.2 SADOMASOCHISM IN FEMINIST DEBATES

Here I will provide a brief introduction to feminist (-queer) debates about SM. These debates are still ongoing, and can be described as an ardent discussion between different brands of SM-criticism, where different meanings are ascribed to concepts like public – private, normative – non-normative, replication – re-enactment and subversion – transgression (Weiss 2011, 146).

In the feminist scholarly literature, SM is viewed by some writers, such as Robin Ruth Linden and Melinda Vadas, as a violent means of repressing women's rights and justifying violence towards women (Wright 2006, 220–221).[14] Queer criticism focuses also on the representational force of SM, or its power to incite violence towards women in the popular imagination. Most of this criticism is based on the humanist ideal of equality (Duncan 1996, 106), where every person is understood as having equal rights with others. From this quite literal interpretative angle, which fails to take into account the notion of SM as performative play, it is seen as a perverted power imbalance that has been eroticised within an accepted patriarchial context. As queer theorist Patricia Duncan (ibid.) admits, SM both acknowledges and creates difference, but through parody, theatricality and exaggeration and only between the people included in the fantastical, constructed SM scene. SM has the ability to deconstruct power positions (through flexible power positions, parody, fantasy, and/or camp theatricality). In this way, SM can be seen as playing with or erotising difference, and the effect on its practitioners is regarded more as liberation than repression (ibid. 107). Some feminist critics such as Gayle Rubin, Lynda Hart, or Anita

[14] Feminist writer Pat Califia (1995, 166–167) vehemently disagrees with this claim, and while admitting that violence against women must be dismantled, Califia (ibid. 167) lists family violence, conventional sexuality and rigid gender roles as more important and valid starting points for dismantling this violence than SM sexuality.

Phillips regard SM as a component of women's sexual imagination and celebrate it as enriching, rather than oppressing (Phillips 1998, 53).

One criticism directed against SM is that practitioners accept and reproduce patriarchal power imbalances. The feminist critic Robin Ruth Linden (1982, 4) has argued that SM, even when it is performed in a lesbian context, is 'firmly rooted in patriarchal sexual ideology'. SM critics at the admonishing end of the spectrum often accuse women of upholding the patriarchy through practicing SM (Hart 1998, 17). Indeed, even one of the most influential queer feminist writers, Gayle Rubin (2011, 126), admits that considering the 'prevailing ideas of appropriate feminist sexual behaviour, SM appears to be the mirror opposite'. However, Rubin contests the very idea of appropriate feminism, or mainly, that the idea of appropriate (feminist) sexuality excludes SM or anything reminiscent of power imbalances that might reflect patriarchy, implying that 'anything pertaining to males is bad' (ibid. 127). Rubin (2011, 127) argues that an a priori dismissive feminist stance towards SM restricts women from seeking out sexual pleasures freely, precisely as patriarchy did/does, and that ultimately, 'there's nothing inherently feminist or non-feminist about S/M' (ibid. 126). Similarly, queer theorist Lynda Hart (1998, 18) argues that the very concept of sexual fantasy is, in fact, gendered as specifically masculine in the minds of SM critics.[15] The insistence on SM sexual fantasies being understood solely as a form of misogyny excludes women from sharing in this fantasy (let alone control it). This view portrays women who do practice SM as indoctrinated, brainwashed, or otherwise unstable or too masochistic to know any better (ibid. 55). Both Rubin (2011, 172) and Hart (1998, 26) adamantly resist the concept of sublimated (lesbian) sexuality as the 'proper' feminist sexuality; Rubin, because it appears as false doctrine; Hart, because it seems devoid of embodied sexuality, taking place in the mind rather than the body.

Disagreement often arises as a result of ambivalence between sexual play and reality. The claim that SM power relations reflect, utilise and repeat society's still highly gendered power positions cannot be completely dismissed. The debate revolves around the issue of whether or not the 'private' sphere of sexuality is, indeed, political or not when it comes to questions of eroticised power positions in any relationship.[16] Indeed, Melinda Vadas (1995, 160) seems to raise the question, would there be SM in the first place if the culture surrounding it was not based on power inequalities? Feminists who approach the subject in a balanced and critical way, do not deny this critique of power imbalance, but argue for *framing* it differently within SM scenes. What I refer to as 'framing' in this thesis,[17] queer philosopher Patrick Hopkins (1994, 123) calls simulation: 'Simulation implies that SM encounters merely reproduce patriarchal behaviours onto a different contextual field.

[15] See also Halberstam 2012, 12.

[16] In light of the recent popularity of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and other SM-themed books, we can speculate whether the stigma of submissiveness in women has been accepted as a form of sexual preference, or whether the patriarchal propaganda has finally achieved its goal. This, indeed, is one SM-sceptical feminists' claim: reproducing these power imbalances, even when the traditional sexes are not present in a sadomasochism scene (that is, in lesbian SM), is still an internalisation of the patriarchy and consequently, actively reproduces it. See Weiss 2011, 146.

[17] See sections 1.4.4 and 3.1.2.

That contextual field makes a profound difference.' Margot Weiss (2011, 151) explains this using Gregory Bateson's (1955) term 'play frame', according to which SM 'simultaneously incites and denies the *real*ness of these historical or socially meaningful scenes of power', perhaps allowing the participants to negotiate the realness inside a safe, intimate frame 'in ways that would be impossible outside the frame' (Weiss 2011, 151), that is, in other social relationships or in public.

When we consider all sides of the SM debate, Margot Weiss (2011) finds most existing stances unsatisfactory and unconvincing as all-encompassing theories to explain SM as a sexual/cultural phenomenon. In her book *Technologies of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality* (2011), Weiss brings different sides of the debates into dialogue with one another, recognising their strengths and weaknesses, and compiling a more critical viewpoint for reading SM as mirroring and/or criticising social power relations, depending on intersectional factors at work in specific SM scenes. Weiss (ibid. 25) calls this approach 'performative materialism', where SM practices as a part or a mirror of social structures can provide a critical, multifaceted reading of SM (or a 'circuit', as Weiss calls them; Weiss 2011, 7). This is especially relevant to popular culture's depictions of SM, as it has a close affinity with cultural close reading and its insistence on intersecting readings that suggest no one single truths.[18]

2.1.3 PERFORMATIVE MATERIALISM

Weiss's (2011) performative materialism is a dual strategy for close reading the relationships between SM practitioners and their socio-economic position that considers SM in a dialectic fashion. Weiss (2011, 19–20) doubts the validity of reducing SM experience to a simple repetition of the prevailing codes of society, but she also criticises the thought of SM as 'only' simulation or sexual play. In this regard, Weiss's performative materialism provides a balanced and critical understanding of cultural practices that are inherently multifaceted. In this way, the perspective is particularly appropriate to apply to readings of SM representations in popular media, as they often tend to favour either the playfulness of kinky sex or the assumed psychopathology inscribed in SM. Performative materialism in this thesis refers to an intersectional, multifaceted approach to cultural reading of SM that includes the sexually pleasurable experiences but also interprets them within larger sociocultural themes. It further addresses how one either reinforces or critiques the other: 'an approach that foregrounds BDSM sexuality as a social relation, a dynamic circuit between the subjective and the socioeconomic' (ibid. 24).

The two terms, performativity and materialism, require some elucidation. Judith Butler (2008, 34) defines (gender) performativity as 'constituting the identity [that] it is purported to be'. Behind this process are culturally constructed, repeated and gendered codes, which are copied down generationally. Over time, these constructions tend to change, and in this way performativity is also temporally marked, as actors have the opportunity to remake, re-invent and re-assign the terms of engagement. While performativity theory

[18] Weiss's original study is a fieldwork-based ethnographic study of SM communities.

is sometimes criticised for resembling theatricality and reducing the self to mere roles to be adopted or abandoned (see Moi 2002, 178; Nussbaum 1999, 44), Butler (1990, 36) emphasises that the core self is an illusion in the first place, kept in place for the regulation of sexuality within the heteromatrix.

It remains a matter for debate whether or not performative gender can be agentic, and thus, whether it is a possible arena for parodic actions. According to Butler (2008, 188), the only parody that can be accomplished is the very notion of an original gender, as in drag performance: 'parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalised or essentialist gender identities'.[19] There are, however, queer theorists who open up the possibility for self-aware performativity. The thought is based on the assumption that codes of performativity are not necessarily passively reiterated codes, but can be chosen freely and actively. Nikki Sullivan (2007, 87) calls this a 'voluntarist model of identity'. Although Sullivan admits that the voluntarist model does not easily align with Butler's performativity, agentic performativity, seen as voluntary or politically savvy, *can* be seen as creating a queer disjunction in the heteronormative matrix. In this way, performativity can be conscious or unconscious when constructing sets of behaviour that are adopted as markers of identity. In her writings on performativity as active production vs. passive reiteration, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003, 7) recalls Michael Friedl's notion that the difference between performance and performativity is that of 'extrovert' and 'introvert' expression. Theatrical or other artistic performance is aimed at an audience (who also experiences their position as such), and can be considered as extroverted. Personal performativity is in contrast absorption, introverted by nature, not necessarily aimed at an audience, but still seeking acceptance of one's preferred identity by the surrounding society. (See also Parker & Sedgwick 1996, 2.)

Where performativity in SM is concerned, similar themes of theatricality and authenticity, reflectivity and blind repetition arise. SM power play admittedly can reflect analogously the dominant imbalances between sexes and sexualities in society, but it can be seen as doing so in a performative way, implying a level of detachment from the usual consequences and social entanglements of relations between the sexes. SM might even be regarded as challenging these relations through the subversive force of performative play or empowering humour. As representations in popular culture, performative power imbalances are often open to decoding, which enforces as much as subverts conventional gender positions. Weiss (2011, 6), however, is sceptical of framing sexuality 'only' performative, or apart from political entanglements, as she considers all sexuality to be 'a social relation, linking subjects (…) to socioeconomics'. In this way, the performative model that claims that SM is politically neutral, with no relation to social imbalances or, at least, they are framed out of the sexual encounter, is not sufficient in Weiss's mind to explain SM's codes which have striking similarities to familiar socio-historical atrocities (for example, the slave market; see Weiss 2011, 1–4). Perhaps building on Melinda Vadas's (1995, 160) deliberation of whether or not SM would exist without 'real life' power imbalances between genders, races, ages, the abled and disabled, Weiss insists on considering

[19] However, in *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993, 24) explains that a conscious subject cannot display intent in its conscious expression, as the conscious subject is already a product of performativity.

the socioeconomic codes appearing in SM scenes and communities, and whether they repeat them unquestioningly or subvert them in a parodic way. Different interpretations can never be avoided. In the popular media, SM representations are sensationalised and stigmatised as obsession or mental disability. This can easily be seen as reinforcing an SM-sceptical reading of the subject, which in Margot Weiss's terms supposedly effaces the 'materialist' side of performative materialism that is critical of the 'framing' claim of performative SM interpretation.

While Weiss (2011) utilises mostly Marxist and socioeconomical theories in her book, in my work I focus more on the cultural dimensions of Marxist theory (which are nevertheless intertwined with economic considerations) as well as new materialist feminism when looking for a more critical approach to SM representations. In research on music, the Frankfurt School and especially philosophy of Theodor Adorno cannot be entirely avoided when cultural readings of any sort are concerned. Adorno's consideration of popular culture as a valid object of study[20] speaks to the influence he felt that it had over public opinion, a view I would not wish to contest. From a Horkheimerian and Adornian standpoint (2002, 98, 104, 110) regarding the position of SM in popular culture, *Fifty Shades* might be considered an obvious example of mass deception in the cultural industry. Seemingly individualist, democratic and diversified, popular representations of SM are still highly standardised forms of entertainment ('details become interchangeable'; ibid. 98), and they remain (blatantly) authoritarian and conformist at heart. (See also Barker 2008, 49–50.) The active (or nowadays, even passive; see Weiss 2006, 104–109) consumption of SM, in the context of its audiovisual representations, would be considered from the Frankfurt school's perspective as simplistic, non-critical, and unintelligent culture for the masses. Thus represented, SM becomes banal ideology, motivated by capital ideals, a pseudo-criticism (because representing a marketable 'alternative' subculture), and a ubiquitous marketing strategy reflecting an essentially patriarchal lifestyle that relishes on unequal power relations. Although SM may be seen to critique existing power relations, this is seen as a mere illusion, as these representations ultimately reproduce, sustain and propagate social inequality. (I shall expand on this point in chapter 6.)

Representations of SM as sexy titillation might also be interpreted as promoting the acceptance of the socio-sexual status quo, much as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 110, emphasis mine) elaborate in their critique of cartoons: 'Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate victim in real life *receive their beatings* so that the spectators can accustom themselves to theirs'. Reading these beatings as SM spanking, the quotation remains both literal and symbolic; the power exchange (or rather, yielding of power) becomes naturalised, but it also grants sadistic or masochistic enjoyment (voyeurism?) to the consumer when it is seen (or heard) in the products of mass culture. Furthermore Horkheimer and Adorno write of sexualised images in mass culture as both 'pornographic and prudish' (ibid. 111). Consequently, while blatant depictions of SM abound today, quite often sexual titillation, even in its seemingly radical forms, promotes heteronormativity, and 'reduc[es] love to romance' (ibid.). Thus, depictions of SM create expectations of daring sexualities but fail to deliver these as genuine representations of alternative (BDSM) sexualities or

[20] See, for example, Babich 2013, 46–47; Storey 2012, 67–68.

lifestyles. This is especially true of *Fifty Shades of Grey,* as I will argue throughout this thesis. Hence, 'the mass production of sexuality automatically brings about its repression' (ibid. 111–112).[21] What the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno do not address is the type of camp humour that is often found in depictions of SM in contemporary popular culture, especially music and films, and thus their formulation does not consider the possibility of overthrowing and subverting the power inequalities that SM is seen to uphold through strategies of humour and performativity.

Whereas Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 110) may be seen to regard sexual symbolism in popular culture as 'monotony' or a narrow, simplistic representation of sexualities, Margot Weiss (2011, 7) claims that 'sexuality is resolutely social, rather than private, or personal, or trivial'.[22] Weiss does not fully agree with the performative (accepting) stance on SM as 'only' play or fantasy and therefore not related to prevailing politics, but she also does not entirely dismiss the performative aspects of SM: 'the relationship between capitalism, social inequality, and sexuality are sometimes contested, sometimes contradictory, sometimes compensatory, and sometimes seamlessly enmeshed – but they are always productive' (ibid.). It is not easy, however, to establish a simple, straightforward theory of Marxist-materialist thought as it regards human sexuality.

Early Marxist scholarship on relationships and marriage ranges from condemnation as a bourgeois system to celebration (or even preferably, free love and polyamory) as the radical lifestyle leading away from capitalist oppression. For example, Max Horkheimer (2002a, 102, 105) discusses the role of the father in the family as similar to that of authority figures in social production, and hence regards the power dynamics of the 'traditional' family as comparable to those of capitalist society at large. (See also Adorno 2005, 74.) In this sense, replicating these codes in popular culture and even sexualising them as pleasurable would seem to be a ploy to re-establish the old patriarchal forms of domination by disguising it as sexual pleasure for women. (See Weiss 2011, 146; Linden 1982, 4.) Theodor Adorno (2005, 72–73) has theorised the sexualised mass media as 'fun morality' in which the apparent sexual liberation exemplified in the mass media reinforces sexual taboos rather than being critical of them, effectively desexualising sexuality; 'As long as sexuality is bridled, it is tolerated' (ibid.). Based on Adorno's writings, Mary Anne Franks (2006, 193–194) argues that images of sexual violence in the media and especially pornography (SM is not specifically mentioned, but one could assume it qualifies as a depiction of violent sex) is an 'an-aesthetic process' through which audiences are desensitised to the actual sexual violence still rampant throughout the world. While the lived, pleasurable experience of SM practitioners is not refuted in Weiss's (2011) work, the Marxist

[21] There has been considerable criticism of the classic Horkheimerian-Adornian critique of mass culture, particularly when it comes to gendered thinking of mass culture as feminine (passive, uncritical) and avant-garde as masculine (active, critical). Andreas Huyssen (1986, 47–49, 54), among others, has referred to this as modernism's 'fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass' (ibid. 52). Concerning sexuality, it is my understanding however that Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, 111–112) do not explicitly devalue sexuality, but are not impressed with its narrow representations in the mass media.

[22] This view is shared by the authors of the book *Studying Sexualities* as well, as they argue that 'the sexual is *cultural* and *social*'. Richardson, Smith & Werndly 2013, 5.

stance seems to emphasise that while SM may be constructed, 'the consequences of the construction are real' (Howie & Tauchert 2007, 54).

Although readings based on the classical Marxist thinking or Frankfurt school cultural theorists seem to produce mostly sceptical SM interpretations, in this thesis, I also employ aspects of 'new materialism(s)' (see Coole & Frost 2010, 4), a feminist movement critical of the poststructural-dialectical turn in feminist thinking. While new materialists do not deny the merits and achievements of the dialectic approach, they criticise the apparent overemphasis of the approach on discourse, which is seen to neglect the 'real' material side of the feminist debate;

> we need a way to talk about the materiality of the body as itself an active, sometimes recalcitrant, force. Women *have* bodies; these bodies have pain as well as pleasure. They also have diseases that are subject to medical interventions that may or may not cure those bodies. We need a way to talk about these bodies and the materiality they inhabit. (Alaimo & Hekman 2008, 4.)[23]

The new material approach opens up new possibilities for feminists to participate, in dialogue with other areas of feminist thinking, in debates about of medicine or science, environmental issues or globalisation (Alaimo & Hekman 2008, 6-7; Coole & Frost 2010, 2; Bolt 2012, 3).[24] In a way, the critique posed in the new materialism offers another option for SM discussions, where the lived experiences of SM practitioners inform the discourses surrounding their practices. Indeed, in my research, I address lived experiences through the inclusion of theories of embodiment, and phenomenology (including embodied pain and pleasure). This resembles Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003, 16–17) specifically tactile-affective brand of performativity which focuses on the materiality of things and bodily sensations in addition to, or rather, as a part of the discursive-performative realm of performativity. This codependency of the discursive and the embodied seems to be particularly useful in SM research; for example, Amber Musser (2014, 1) studies masochism[25] through the concept of sensation:

> I suggest that *sensation* is an important critical term because it undercuts the identitarian dimensions of experience. If we conceive of experience as the narrative that consciousness imposes on a collection of sensations, sensation provides a way for us to explore corporeality without reifying identity. […] Though sensation can be fully understood individually, we can think of it as occupying certain forms because of its externality. This externality allows us to think about sensation as inhabiting particular forms with a shared (and some might say learned) assumption of the boundaries of each particular category.

[23] See also Coole & Frost 2010, 1–2; Bolt 2012, 5.

[24] For new materialist theories in art studies, see Barrett & Bolt 2012.

[25] Amber Musser (2014, 21) studies masochism/sadomasochism (however, her employment of these two concepts almost interchangeably is problematic) also through a form of close reading (here, empathetic reading) and embodiment; 'As a reading practice, empathetic reading highlights corporeality and the flesh'.

This is where my work creates a productive approach to the understanding of these cultural forms. In this thesis, I study how complex *sensations* of intermingling pain and pleasure are negotiated in the multisensory contexts of audiovisual expression. I also incorporate theories from identity studies that accentuate the level of subjective experience (such as critical race theories, critical masculinity studies, and intersectional feminist studies), formulating them into a 'circuit' (Weiss 2011, 7) of existing embodied and discursive strands that coexist in close connections to each other. To make my scholarly intervention more specifically musicological, I look to music, voices, and sounds that participate in negotiating these circuits within the scope of the case studies analysed.

While the term 'performative materialism' synthesises the different stances of the feminist debates regarding SM, I do have some reservations about Weiss's claim that discussions of SM are so clearly defined by performativity (or queer studies) and materialism (Marxism, post-Marxist). The usefulness of 'performative materialism' as a term depends greatly on how the two approaches are defined and understood. I am furthermore sceptical of the often oppositional nature of 'performativity' and 'materialism' in Weiss's formulation; in my work, they are often complementary and mutually implicated, mainly through the concept of embodiment. Embodiment is the result of socially performed and constructed actions while also containing the physical and material sensations of (eroticised) pain and pleasure. While I am aware of the potential ambivalence of this compound term, I still have decided to use 'performative materialism' as it clearly unites many sides of the SM 'scene', or the circuits in motion within it.

2.2 SM IN POPULAR CULTURE AND MEDIA

My main objective in close reading my case studies is to analyse representations of SM in popular media and, especially, music performances. Therefore it is necessary to provide background as to how and where SM is visible/audible. Kathy Sisson (2007, 12–27) proposes a five stage historical timeline for SM cultural formations, which I paraphrase here in table 2. I have also added examples from culture/art. Sisson's formation begins with early SM pleasures recognised in culture through De Sade and Sacher-Masoch, which encouraged people with similar sexual appetites to contact one another. In the 1900s, SM expanded from brothels to homes, and entered erotica literature, fashion and art. The gay liberation movement of the 1970s saw the formation of new communities that embraced kink cultures. From there on, SM social movements and cultural visibility have transformed rather quickly: the 1980s and 1990s were times of SM activism and SM codes entering mainstream cultures, and from the 2000s onwards a certain form of (still questionable; see Wilkinson 2009, 187) mainstream acceptance towards kink societies and cultural codes has been established.

Table 2. Kathy Sisson's stages of SM's cultural formation.

Stage	Timeline	Issues	Examples in culture/art
1. Contacts	1600s–1900s	Recognising SM pleasures as sexual; creating social contacts around SM; SM brothels	De Sade, Sacher-Masoch; Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1748); Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782)
2. Networks	1900s–1970s	Privatisation of SM; SM erotic literature; SM fashion and art	Bettie Page's SM photography; *Story of O* (1954); *Bizarre* magazine
3. Communities	1970s–1980s	SM clubs, SM activism; divide between queer and hetero SM groups as a result of the HIV/AIDS crisis	Gay disco music, electropop and punk depicting SM; increase of SM-themed independent films (see appendix 2). Punk culture and fetish/ bondage fashion; Malcolm McClaren and SEX shop in Chelsea.
4. Social Movement	1980s–1990s	Increasing/mainstream cultural visibility; media presence; SM activism	Madonna's SM-themed songs; mainstream films including SM themes; mainstream fetish fashion (stemming from underground cultures).
5. Sexual Culture	2000–present (digital age)	Recognizable cultural codes for SM; SM leather clubs; mainstream cultural visibility; influence of internet	Television ads with SM themes; burlesque fashion in popular culture; *Fifty Shades* (2011–) phenomenon

According to feminist sociologist Eleanor Wilkinson (2009, 182–183), SM is usually represented through two primary strategies: either the SM-images are 'porn-normative' (as an element of kinky spice in otherwise normative sex depictions; see section 2.2.1) or pathologised [26] as a 'freak show' (Wilkinson 2009, 185; see also Rubin 2011, 166; Weiss 2006). While the 'porn-normative' representations reduce the underground cultural stance of SM to nothing more than a means of 'spicing up' regular heterosex, pathological representations of SM practitioners often portray them as disturbed, obsessive, nihilistic, hypersexual (and ultimately non-sexual since sex serves other purposes than embodied sexual pleasure; see Shimizu 2007, 16) and/or seedy. This of course repeats the earlier assumptions leading back to Krafft-Ebing and Freud that SM sexual preferences are perversions of childhood events, which have since been dismissed (see Nordling et. al. 2006, 53–54). The discourse representing sadomasochists is more likely to include questions concerning 'why' they exhibit these preferences (Wilkinson 2009, 186). On the other hand, the porn-normative stance places SM in the category of 'shocking sex', perhaps titillating in its kinkiness but rarely of any substance relevant to storylines.

While SM cultures, aesthetics and practitioners are no longer able or willing to remain invisible from mainstream society, Wilkinson (2009, 187) argues for taking into account the possibilities and risks of this visibility. For example, public visibility can lead to a normalisation effect, as happened with homosexuality (the so-called 'homo-normativity', where only certain kinds of homosexuals are accepted). Wilkinson (ibid.) notes that there is a danger of 'SM-normativity', where 'certain (capitalist and consumerised) conceptions of SM become the norm'. In some cases, it could be argued that this 'SM-normativity' is already taking place. This is a thought-provoking claim that will be reflected on throughout my thesis, mostly through the concepts of 'mainstreamed sex' and 'porn chic' or 'SM chic'.

2.2.1 THE MAINSTREAMING OF SEX AND PORN CHIC

I began this thesis with the claim that popular music has never been as sexualised as it is today. This claim does not only apply to popular music, but engulfs all popular media formats: film, television (scripted and 'reality'), marketing, journalism, and fashion, among other spheres. The phenomenon has been called the 'sexualisation' or 'mainstreaming of sex' (Attwood 2010, xiii). The mainstreaming of sex includes such phenomena as easy access to pornography, commercialising and capitalising sex (sex toys), and 'lifestyling' or

[26] Wilkinson (2009, 183) mentions that the 'porn-normative' representations quite often feature dominant women and submissive men, such as *Preaching to the Perverted* (1997) or *Venus in Fur* (2013). In contrast, the pathologising strategies feature a submissive woman and a dominant man (ibid. 185), an example being David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986). Perhaps there is a correlation between different power statuses between genders as reflecting either porn-normativity or pathologisation; for example, the Japanese-French film *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976, dir. Nagisa Oshima), the plot of which revolves around a dominant woman and a submissive man, but their story is highly pathologised, up to the point that the woman strangles the man during sexual asphyxiation or 'breath play' egged on by the man. Meanwhile, the film *Secretary* (2003, dir. Steven Shainberg) features a submissive woman and a dominant man, but is directed more towards eroticisation, even though it has its pathologising subtextual moments. See chapter 3.1.

the mainstreaming of some sexual processes and terminology (for example, pole dancing or striptease as exercise). (Ibid. xiii–xvi.) The sexualisation of contemporary culture can be partially explained by increasingly relaxed attitudes in film and media censorship, the rising popularity and consumption of pornography, and/or liberating women's sexuality, this resulting in women becoming a marketing target group for sexual paraphernalia. (Ehrenreich, Hess & Jacobs 1986, 111–118; Attwood 2005, 393, 400; see also Storr 2003.)

However 'liberated' popular culture may now appear, it remains ultimately heteronormative (Hardy 2010, 3; Wilkinson 2009, 184; Richardson, Smith & Werndly 2013, 2). Interracial relations are celebrated, but only if (at least) one party of the couple/group is white (Williams 2004, 272–273). Sexual objectification is seen as an uncomplicated, positive, and empowering site of self-expression (the neoliberal [post]feminism of SM; see Weiss 2011, 18–19; Storr 2003, 32; Gill & Scharff 2011, 9), but the more subtle hues of representation and objectification often remain overlooked. Women can be sexually empowered but only if they comply with the 'porn standard' that caters to the white male gaze; bodies other than what is presumed to be the female ideal – those who are older, fatter, non-white or disabled – are not subsumed into this principle of visibility and acceptance (Gill 2010, 104; see also Gill 2007, 150, 152). In addition, gender ambivalence is often not tolerated. What remains, is a celebration of sensual pleasures, based usually on visual titillation and 'naughtiness' of the hetero subject actors, where the transgression of gender and sexuality norms remain questionable at best.

Sadomasochism is quite often represented as a kinky counterpart to this sexualised media (Wilkinson 2009, 185; Rubin 2011, 166). Although never exactly radical, SM represents mainstream sexualisation in its 'riskiest' form,[27] never really challenging the boundaries between obscenity and blatant pornography. However, in matters of gender, sex, and sexuality, popular media not only reproduces, but also *produces* definitions of normativity and non-normativity (Railton & Watson 2011, 28; Wilkinson 2009, 184). This is also the case with pornography. Porn has become more accessible with the rise of the internet, where easily consumed videos can be viewed and then discarded. The term 'porn chic' has been applied by scholars such as Margaret Attwood and Rosalind Gill to instances where blatant sexual representations are normalised, taken for granted, and made ubiquitous (Gill 2010, 97; 2007, 151; Attwood 2010, xiv). This category includes 'SM chic' (see chapter 5.1.3), but is a wider term, including also non-normative and non-fetishistic representations.

Porn chic in music is best exemplified by music where 'porn sounds' have simply been added to music. The three main sound categories in porn (or indeed any)[28] films are music, spoken voice and sound effects (Härmä & Leppänen 2006, 8; see especially chapter 3 for film music and sound studies). According to Härmä & Leppänen (ibid. 9), music can function as a sign of quality in the porn genre, but nowadays it can also work as a tacky, comical effect with nostalgic connections to old lo-fi porn films. Spoken voice includes

[27] Although, sexuality constantly on display soon loses its risk factor; see Weiss 2006, 121–127. Also, in a recent study, it has been argued that images of sex and/or violence in advertising do not sell products better, contrary to common belief. See Lull & Bushman 2015.

[28] See especially Chion 1994, 5–6; Altman 2004, 5–6; Donnelly 2014, 12; Richardson 2012, 19.

dialogue similar to non-porn films, but also pornographic phrases and audible moans. Sound effects in porn usually focus on emphasising the embodied sensations in sex scenes with slaps (spanking and otherwise) and the enhanced sounds and words that accompany fellatio and penetration. Adding any of these sounds to music communicates not only the erotic but also the pornographic. This may contribute to the claim that some music (of certain genres or artists) continues the pornographisation of society and culture outside of the porn industry, especially if this music is combined with sexualised images. (See Hawkins 2016, 12.) The question remains whether music simply repeats cultural practices or whether it parodies and subverts them: while it may be true that music (especially perhaps mainstream pop music) is sexualised, there often is a level of ridicule or critique attached to it (ibid. 1). This, in turn, can function as cultural commentary on both the sexualisation and pornographisation of popular culture. The same applies to films, which I shall briefly discuss in the next section.

2.2.2 SM IN FILMS

In this section of the thesis, I discuss mainly scripted films that discuss SM sex and/or sexuality as a main plot theme. 'Reality-based' forms such as documentary films have been omitted from this listing.[29] SM has been discussed in independent films often, usually with reference to soft-core erotica. The trend of SM films became popular through 1970s soft-core erotica films, with perhaps the most famous example of these being *Story of O* (1975, dir. Justin Jaeckin). More recently, SM features in more mainstream (and sometimes less pornographic) films, with examples (pre-2000) including David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), Pedro Almodóvar's *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!* (1990), and in the Finnish context, *Akvaariorakkaus* (1993, dir. Claes Olsson). (See appendix 2 for a more concise table of SM in films.)[30] While either erotic titillation or the radical Othering of SM practices might have been the primary objectives of early (pre-2000s) SM films, nowadays SM can also be depicted with compassionate humour, or even as an acceptable sexual preference. The sensationalist and obsessive overtones of SM in pre-2000s films have not disappeared, but humour and the aestheticisation of pleasure have been added to these approaches. From the year 2000 onwards, SM has become a permanent fixture of mainstream Hollywood cinema, starting with *Quills* (2000, dir. Philip Kaufman), which established a new way of representing sadomasochistic sexual preferences through sympathetic humour mixed with dark hues, even when considering the contradictory character of the Marquis de Sade (Geoffrey Rush). US filmmakers began to treat the subject of SM with compassion and semi-kinky titillation in films such as *Secretary* (2003, dir. Steven Shainberg; see section 3.1), *The Notorious Bettie Page* (2005, dir. Mary Harron) and *Shortbus* (2006, dir. Josh Cameron Mitchell), perhaps following in the footsteps of accepting, non-stereotypic

[29] Of SM documentaries, I should mention *La Cérémonie* (2014), directed by Lina Mannheimer.

[30] The list of films containing SM is a compilation of films I have come across when researching for this thesis but which I have not the space to discuss at length. All films include BDSM, fetishism and/or erotic power switching that imply SM.

representations of LGBT characters.

Some of the films made in the 2010s discuss SM directly and attempt to aestheticise SM pleasures. In David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method* (2011), SM is discussed using the specific psychoanalytical vocabulary applied to SM in a plot including the characters of Carl Jung (Michael Fassbender), Sigmund Freud (Viggo Mortensen) and Sabina Spielrein (Keira Knightley), the last of which overcomes crippling guilt over being a submissive. Roman Polanski's *Venus in Fur* (2013) goes to the heart of the male masochistic experience by sexualising a powerful woman to the point of becoming beastly (see chapter 4). It can even be argued that Lars von Trier's *Nymphomania vol. II* (2013) represents SM sex as the ultimate form of sex therapy, as the character Joe finally manages to climax after a long period of frustration during an SM scene, although the treatment of SM in the film is not necessarily aestheticising. *Duke of Burgundy* (2014, dir. Peter Strickland; see section 3.2) addresses questions of fantasy and reality in the relationship of a lesbian couple, where one is a sadomasochist and the other is not. Here, SM works as a means to pinpoint the inequalities in their relationship, without pathologising either participant.

While I do not claim that this is a comprehensive account of SM in films, I would suggest a shift in the emphases of productions as follows: 1. underground SM (until 1990s), 2. mainstream Hollywood era curiosities (2000s), and 3. aesthetic(ised) SM films (2010s). When considering popular music, a more elaborate and complicated historical line can be traced.

2.2.3 SM AND MUSIC

Depictions of SM sex and sexuality in popular music became a topic in the twentieth century, starting from 1.) comic revues (1940s onwards); 2.) underground/indie queer music (especially related to punk and gay disco; 1970s); 3.) shocking the mainstream (Madonna, Queen; 1980s onwards); and 4.) the acceptance of kink (2000s onwards; Beyoncé, Rihanna, Adam Lambert). (See appendix 1.)[31] The genealogy of SM in music is intricately bound up with gay subcultures, and since the mainstreaming of queer musicians and music, SM has also slowly become an acceptable, kinky subject in songs. Furthermore, since the 1980s, there has been an emergence of fetish and burlesque attires in music videos, and broader popular culture.[32] No extensive study has been undertaken to present theories on how music can describe SM sex(uality) specifically. Below, I will briefly summarise what specific musical (classical, popular) codes that one might listen for to hear expressions of a sadomasochistic-erotic atmosphere. This list of codes will be expanded upon in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

[31] The appendix consists of songs that exhibit SM erotica. I compiled the list when writing this thesis, but it is not comprehensive. No specific attention has been paid to questions of genre beyond the epithet 'popular music'. All songs have either English, German, or Finnish lyrics.

[32] For example, in the punk scene, gay underground music, and Madonna's performances. This can also be seen in musical films such as *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975, dir. Jim Sharman), and later in *Chicago* (2002, dir. Rob Marshall) or *Moulin Rouge!* (2001, dir. Baz Lurhmann).

Starting with music and sadism, Reinhold Friedl (2002, 30) theorises the possibility of sadistic musical instances where the performer vents their sadism in concert situations where the audience is denied any positive pleasures. This is especially achieved in perfomances of avant-garde music. The term 'sadism' becomes, in this theory, cruel, even somewhat narcissistic and despotic. Friedl (ibid.) gives an example of the Japanese 'noise music' master Masami Akita, who sees all musical performance situations as sadomasochistic. Akita plays his music with noise levels exceeding the pain threshold (110dB and over), reflecting sadism through the inflicting of auditory pain upon the audience.

Masochism and music are often approached in tandem with theories of listening. According to Lawrence Kramer (1997, 110–111), the relationship between music and the listener corresponds to Jacques Lacan's theory of the Unconscious being the discourse of the Other, which positions the listener as receptive to the music and taking pleasure in submission. Even though the music is composed and performed by other people, it might feel like it's coming from the listener's innermost feelings (the Unconscious), when in reality, they are the feelings of others (or the Other). This illusion of subjectivity is seen to produce transcendental feelings, a sort of *jouissance* in itself.[33] Musicologist Fred Maus (2004, 23) agrees with Kramer when he reiterates a point initially made by Edward T. Cone, that 'a single persona... controls everything in composition'. By this, he refers to the composer, who dominates the whole musical communication chain from the performer to the listener, who in return 'seek[s] identification with the controlling persona' (ibid.).

Suzanne G. Cusick (2006, 71) depicts music as well as her own sexuality within 'the power/pleasure/intimacy triad', especially in reference to submissive listening as an erotic (lesbian) experience. This feeling of 'let[ting] the music "do it" to me' (ibid, 76) is not, however, bound to a specific sexuality; rather, it is bound to SM-sensitive power exchange. It is an intimate experience of music that can be seen as 'analogous to the way one can choose to accept "sexual" caresses or not' (ibid. 74). This mode of listening teaches, according to Cusick (ibid. 74–75), a way to identify pleasure as a thing of joy rather than guilt or danger. This feeling of immersion within music is, in Cusick's mind, similar to feelings of love and of making love, but without the (Lacanian) phallic economy, or, the 'economy of compulsory/genital/reproductive sexuality' (Cusick 2006, 79; 81, footnote 7). This resembles SM practices, which are usually regarded as less oriented towards genital actions and bodily pleasure, but eroticising the whole body (Weinberg 2006, 29), with sexual pleasure becoming a state of mind more than gratification experienced primarily through the body (see Deleuze 2006, 71). One can also dominate music by playing it, mastering it, composing it, which is another possible form of power exchange between music and musicians or listeners: 'power circulates freely across porous boundaries; the categories player and played, lover and beloved, dissolve' (Cusick 2006, 78). (See chapter 3.2.2 for more about the lesbian experience of submissive listening.)

This is, curiously enough, very similar to Theodor W. Adorno's (1994, 312) classification of popular music listeners into two categories; first, those who *masochistically* follow

[33] McClary (2002, 8–9) writes along similar lines: '[e]ven though such pieces [dealing with sexuality] may seem extraordinarily erotic – as though they have managed to bypass cultural mediation to resonate directly with one's own most private experiences – they are in fact constructions'.

the rhythm of the music as a group (the radio generation; the 'rhythmically obedient' who are susceptible to authoritarian collectivism); and the second, 'emotional type' (ibid. 313) who identify with the sentimental aspects of popular music (escaping the frustrations of real life into popular music and fantasising about the ideal world that the music represents, never achieving its level of bliss in real life). If we apply Deleuze's (2006, 72) idea that masochism turns real life into a fantasy ('[t]he masochist needs to believe he's dreaming even when he's not'), then both of Adorno's listener types are, indeed, masochistic, with the possible distinction between active (obeying) and passive (fantasising) submission.

2.3 TOWARDS KINK LISTENING

To conclude my discussion of the theoretical framework supporting my research, I would like to propose a distinct approach to listening conducive to research on SM musical expression. Cultural (or critical) musicology (for example, Scott 2009; Middleton 2003; Williams 2009) is the main approach applied to the subject of sadomasochistic imagery and erotica in music. I shall consider my examples from a cultural point of view, pinpointing not only the music's sounding details but connecting these to a larger cultural frame of reference. Queer musicology is crucial when analysing my examples and reading them from an SM-sensitive point of view. Queer reading, specifically of music, is based on the deliberate, wilful and unruly 'misreading' of a subject, emphasising the instability of normativity, and acknowledging the possibility of multiple sexualities. Often, this 'misreading' proves not to be a misreading at all, as long as the readings are intersubjective and defended through studies of relevant cultural texts and practices; indeed, a more appropriate concept would be 'reading against the grain'. In SM-sensitive readings, or what I here refer to as 'kink reading', I study non-hegemonic sexual appetites and interpret them in a cultural frame of reference. Kinking the subject of research is a listening/reading strategy that focuses on an alternative eroticism outside of heteronormativity, monogamy, monosexuality, and, indeed, the reproductive, organ-centred functionality of sex.

I have condensed my analytic-conceptual tools to a few, simple points of inquiry, which can be used as starting points in which kink listening to music, focusing on SM-sensitive imagery and erotica. Several of the questions posed through this listening tool are based partly on Weinberg, Williams and Moser's five components of SM (quoted in section 2.1). Not all of these points need to be addressed (apart perhaps from point 1, which is a premise of kink listening), and no particular hierarchy is implied. I have also added the brief theories of musical SM erotica listed above as brief examples of each category, but as these are discussed throughout the thesis, I have also signposted sections or complete chapters where particular attention is paid to each category.

1. **Erotic context** ('sexual context', Hopkins's 'simulation',[34] or 'framing')
   Can the music be heard in an erotic sense? What makes the music erotic: context,

[34] Hopkins 1994, 123.

auditory signals, or both? What kind of eroticism is depicted? (Example: Adorno's 'masochistic' listening, 1994; Kramer's submissive listening, 1997; discussed throughout the thesis.)

2. **Juxtaposition and eroticism** ('appearance of rule by one partner over the other', 'new materialisms', 'framing')
   Are there any discernible juxtaposed elements in the music, dialectical, sonic or otherwise? Do they relate to one another? Is there interaction that could be heard as sexually loaded interplay between extreme positions? (Example; Friedl's sadistic music, 2002; see section 3.1 of this thesis.)
3. **Dominance and submission** ('appearance of dominance and submission', 'performativity')
   Is there something in the music that seeks to overpower or dominate some other aspect of it? Does the other side comply? Can these aspects or their power positions be interchangeable (at least in interpretation)?[35] (Example: Cusick's theories of music and listening as power interplay, 2006; Friedl's sadistic music, 2002. See also section 3.2.)
4. **Roleplay** ('role playing', 'performativity')
   Are clearly discernible roles portrayed in the music? Do they have sexual context or articulate intentions? Do they challenge or transgress hegemonic sexual expressions in any way? Is camp reading a valid strategy here? (See sections 3.2 and 5.1.)
5. **Parody and/or exaggeration** ('performativity')
   Related to the fourth category, are hegemonic gender roles, sexualities, or expressions of desire parodied or exaggerated in some way? Is there excessive repetition? Does a certain word, note, rhythm or other musical code appear in an accentuated way, perhaps as a clear auditory hook, without which the music would not sound the same? Is it lifted to the status of an auditory fetish? (Example, Kramer's submissive listening has the potential of fetishizing music; 1997. See chapter 5 and section 3.1.)
6. **Multimodality** ('new materialisms', 'embodiment')
   What is the relationship of music and sound to other modalities, expressive acts and culture at large? Does the erotic situation encode the music, or disambiguate it? Does the music encode the erotic situation, or disambiguate it? (For encoding, see chapter 3; for disambiguation, see sections 2.2.3, 4.2 and 5.2.3 in this thesis.)

Listening to, and for, these themes and elements of expression in musical performances is, however, only the first step of interpreting SM aesthetics in music. In kink listening, discerning the non-normative gender, codes of sexuality and sex, begins a cultural discussion which permits further elucidation of the phenomena at hand. The themes discussed by means of the case studies analysed in this thesis vary from questions of SM theories (consensuality, violence, sadism, masochism) to audiovisual and musical ones (eroticism in music, kink identities in music). In addition, some musicological factors will further

[35] Lori Burns's (2005) article on Sarah McLachlan's song 'Possession' (1993) is a good example of reading themes of D/s in a popular music song and video.

illuminate the readings: historical, cultural, and even semiotic meanings in the music (such as listed above in section 2.2.3) are brought to the readings of the case study. In the following chapters, I discuss these questions through different strategies of SM aestheticism: the interplay between extremes, fantasy and surrealism, and (in)visibility. From these themes and examples, further complex themes arise, which in turn allows for a cultural-critical reading of SM in popular music. Throughout the thesis, my six themes of kink listening are applied to close readings of the sonic/audiovisual material. This, in turn, is closely connected to the cultural analysis of these case studies, leading to a multifaceted 'kink reading'.

3 INTERPLAY BETWEEN EXTREMES

The first thematical frame that is of considerable relevance to discussions of SM aesthetics and erotica in audiovisual popular music performances is interplay between extremes. The theme applies the SM concept of 'power switching', in the sense that di fferent positions are brought together in a mutually agreed upon, and negotiated, fantastical-performative mental and physical space, establishing SM-sexual 'play'.[1] This theme of power switching is particularly appropriate as a guide for kink listening, being at the heart of SM situations. The theatricality of performative power switching brings to the fore one pivotal aspect of SM: role play, which, it should be noted, is not bound exclusively to sexual fantasy (see Newmahr 2011, 60; Harviainen 2012, 1, 24, 33).[2] In SM situations, role play can manifest between two or more people, and the positions they occupy within it are usually identifiable as one of two opposing positions. This is why I prefer the term 'interplay' instead of 'play', as it implies also power position fluctuation between two or more participants. In the context of the present chapter, the power fluctuation occurs within the films, but also between sounds and music, the plot and the audiovisuals.

Perhaps the most obvious juxtaposed pairing discussed in this chapter is between 'dominant' and 'submissive', the two performative positions of an SM encounter in the context of which power exchange occurs (Weinberg 2006, 33; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 9–10).[3] The 'dom' and the 'sub' are constructed and performed roles, and fantastical status determinants, that are enacted within a sexual context. In this thesis, I shall use the terms 'dominant' and 'submissive' to represent a wide range of different performative positions/roles. By no means do I mean to suggest that they are the best or the most accepted terms among academics or participants. They do, however, seem to be the most frequently ones adopted in SM situations. Another conceptual dyad, often (erroneously) used

[1] The concept of 'play' in SM is somewhat synonymous with the SM-specific understanding of the word 'scene' and refers to an imaginary situation within which the SM fantasy is acted out. (Newmahr 2011, 8–9.) The connotations attached to both words hark from theatre and performance.

[2] While Harviainen (2012, 33) admits that SM is very much *akin* to fantasy live gaming, he does not acknowledge a directly synonymous relationship between the two.

[3] These positions do not imply, however, that a dominating person is necessarily a sadist, or a submissive person a masochist. Tendencies of either might be present. Rather that representing any preferences for pain within the SM scene, the terms 'dominating' and 'submissive' may be seen to describe the positions of the people involved and their patterns of performative behaviour within the SM scenario.

synonymously when discussing the dominant and submissive positions, are 'active' and 'passive' roles. It is often assumed that activity belongs more to the dominant stance while the submissive stays passive during SM-sexual play. However, the level of activity/passivity can fluctuate between dominant and submissive. Instead of these somewhat misleading terms, Nikki Sullivan (2007, 153) proposes 'being in control' of the action/interplay, and 'following the lead' of the partner. I would also suggest the positions of 'giving pleasure' vs. 'receiving pleasure', which can alternate freely between the participants. These different action-controlling or pleasure-giving positions can fluctuate between actors and are, in this way, more accurate in depicting what happens during a SM scene. The concept of agency becomes a key consideration here: whether or not the practitioners are seeking out sexual pleasure as a result of their SM play, and if they are gratified by it.

Further illustrative of the interplay between extremes is the feeling of flowing between the statuses of dominant and submissive. With 'sub' and 'dom' being only positions to occupy, rather than fixed statuses to assume, the performative positions can alternate between scenes or within a single scene. If we think about the difference between the overt (dom in power) and the covert (sub can indeed hold the ultimate position of power; see for example Kleinplatz 2006, 339) layers of SM power relations and sexual dynamics,[4] the fluctuation between these polarised positions becomes one of the main sources of pleasure within an SM scene and aesthetics. Or, as argued by Foucault (2000, 168–170), SM power positions are indeed more fluid than social power statuses. While these two levels, of social power and SM performative power, can reflect each other to a greater or lesser extent within the theatrical SM play space, power in SM scenes or play is ultimately a negotiation between the sub and dom, with no reference necessary to social power positions, nor fear of repercussions. The decisive power in a SM scene is considered by some commentators to be held by the submissive (through, for example, the safety word technique; see for example Kleinplatz 2006, 339).

In the case studies that follow, I identify a number of fluctuations between power positions, and pleasures derived from the ambivalence they create. I will conduct an audiovisual close reading of the films *Secretary* (2003) and *Duke of Burgundy* (2014), and discuss how power and eroticism are negotiated in the films' sounds (music, voices, sound effects), as a part of the audiovisual aesthetics, as well as related to the plotline of the films. Through these examples, I extrapolate the themes of eroticism at play and how they are represented auditively and audiovisually. I analyse these films also through the concept of 'cinesexuality' (McCormack 2008), where cinema is 'thought of as involuting self and image on a libidinal plateau, twisting textures of intensity including, but not limited to, vague descriptions of visceral, genital, and cerebral pleasure' (ibid. 1–2), through which the viewer can experience film as a sexually rewarding event. Cinesexuality is, in this way, a useful term in theorising the erotic event not only as belonging to the sphere of the film's diegesis, but as interplay between the film and the audience. I further theorise this point in relation to multisensory cinema including the audiovisual[5] but also with reference to

[4] See Foucault 1998, 94–96; Oksala 2007, 64–65; Kleinplatz 2006, 339; Nichols 2006, 297; Weinberg 2006, 34; Weiss 2011, 81–85; Love 2000, 88; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19.

[5] See Chion 2013, 325; Richardson 2012, 28; Richardson & Gorbman 2013, 7–8, 21.

Laura Marks's (2002) notion of 'haptic visuality' when considering the experience of pain and liminal experiences on film. In this chapter I argue how music and sounds enhance the feeling of eroticism in the films, both within the film's diegetic sphere and in the audience's experience.

3.1 SECRETARY: SONIC DISCIPLINE OF SM EROTICA

Secretary (2002, dir. Steven Shainberg) is an independently produced film that is mostly built around the narrative conventions and aesthetics of romantic comedy. The film is principally a portrayal of a woman, Lee Holloway (Maggie Gyllenhaal), who becomes infatuated with her employee, Mr. E. Edward Grey (James Spader), and how their relationship transforms from professional, to SM-erotic and romantic, ending up in marriage. This shift is depicted in Angelo Badalamenti's modern,[6] somewhat groovy music score, sound effects and integrated sound design,[7] which emphasise erotic arousal and sexual awakening, particularly that of the leading woman, Lee. (See appendix 3 for soundtrack album tracks.) Experiences of pain in this SM-romantic film always take place within a fantastical setting that attaches notions of pleasure to them, exploring the aesthetic and erotic nature of SM experience.

In this chapter, I theorise how SM eroticism is audiovisually depicted in the film. I consider SM erotica in the film from three different audiovisual perspectives: sound effects, voices, and music, and discuss their roles in themes such as sexual empowerment, agency and pleasure, auditive space, shifting frames, interpersonal pain experiences and queered, engendered power roles. I furthermore address erotic experiences using multisensory film theories, especially Laura Marks's (2002) concept of 'haptic visuality', and focus on how music and sound effects enhance this experience.

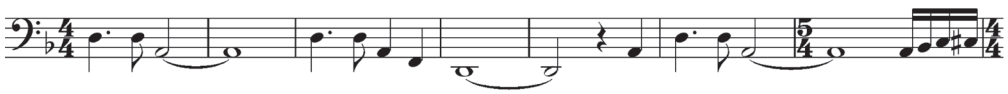
3.1.1 ENVOICED AGENCY: THE EMPOWERED SUB

Lee Holloway (Maggie Gyllenhaal), the protagonist of the film, is introduced tied up to a bondage pole in her work clothes, moving about sensually while displaying a coquettish attitude, yet still managing to perform her secretarial duties (see figure 1). Badalamenti's 'Main Title' accompanies her with a prominent electric bass line (see example 1), pristine percussion, *pizzicato* strings, and guitars, choreographing her movements almost into a dance. I refer to this theme as the 'SM bass theme'. The opening scene, not included in the screenplay of *Secretary*, serves as the audience's first exposure to Lee, her facial expressions clearly revealing that she is enjoying the performance of her submission. In this section, I discuss Lee's sonic space and sexual transformation, and how they are granted

[6] Modern, or non-classical Hollywood music that is discontinuous, not necessarily aiming for symphonic coherence, and utilises a wide palette of instrumentation. See Brown 1994, 63, 94.

[7] Integrated sound design refers to instances where music and sound effects converge in a way that is at times difficult to distinguish between the two. See Donnelly 2014, 129.

agency by toying with the traditional conventions of film music.



Example 1. SM bass theme in 'Main Titles'. Electric bass melody, beginning.

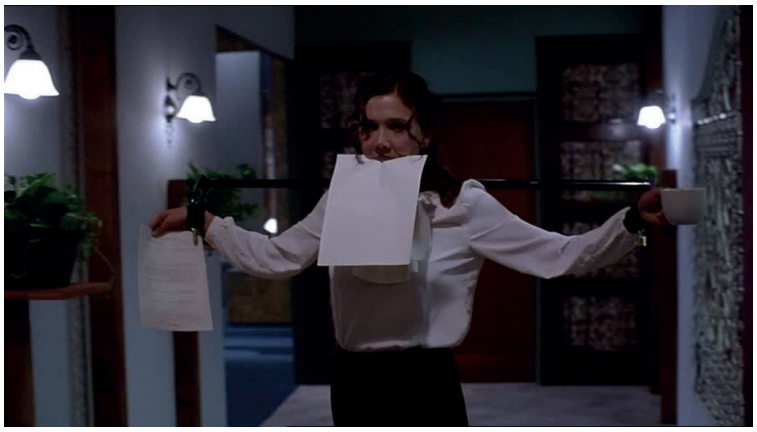


Figure 1. Lee retrieving papers and coffee in bondage gear in the opening scene of *Secretary*.

Lee's growing boldness and sexual agency is one of the pivotal themes of the film. Screenplay writer Erin Cressida Wilson (2014) wrote in an online article:

> [T]here was talk early on that the script was sexist because it ended with [Lee] making a bed and dropping a cockroach on it – so that her husband would find it and punish her. It was repeatedly suggested to me that – instead – she should 'find herself', and become a lawyer herself. She should be powerful in a way that appeared strong through a traditional feminist lens. There was also a vibe around the film that [Lee] should overcome her problem. Again, I didn't consider her to have a problem. And so I decided that this was a coming-out film for a masochist.[8]

According to Robynn J. Stilwell (2006, 153), most films discussing (adolescent) girls feature 'rituals of transformation, or becoming'. In this way, *Secretary* can be seen as a quirky 'coming of age' story, as Lee transforms from a virtually adolescent, juvenile character to a grown-up woman with sexual demands. At the beginning of the story, Lee is a timid, self-harming[9] young girl who has just been released from a psychological ward. By

[8] Indeed, the film makes frequent implicit slurs of (unidentified) feminist critiques of women's issues relating to eroticised power play. In a scene where Lee sits at Mr. Grey's desk, one of her friends brings along a compilation of feminist literature, urging her to 'read about women's struggle first'. See also Belmont 2012, 317; Cossman 2004, 850.

[9] Self-mutilation is stereotypically seen as something pre-adolescent girls do to cope with their emotional

studying to be a typist and finding work at Edward's law firm, she slowly starts to build an independent life. With the help of Edward's gradual coaching, Lee finds herself awakening into adulthood and her sexuality, up to the point that she opts out of a relationship with her passive boyfriend Peter (see also McPhee 2014, 89). In contrast, the final scene of the film depicts Lee holding a long, steady gaze straight towards the camera lens, with only a slight tilt of her head as if to dare the audience to question her choices in the film.[10] The story of Lee's self-discovery is rendered through the soundtrack of the film in a distinct way. The sounds of the film are almost fully orientated towards Lee's experiences of sexual awakening, affording her a privileged audiovisual space. Her voice occupies most of the sonic space, subjecting her point of view also to the audience, while simultaneously accentuating her agency in the story.

The narrator voice-over conveys intimacy between Lee's subjective motivation and the audience. Female voice-overs are somewhat rare in film narration, and used to be exclusively a feature of avant-garde and independent films, with the exception of the film noir genre (McHugh, 2001; Butkus 2010, 72–73). As Clarice Butkus (2010, 73) notes in her analysis of the soft-core SM-film *Story of O* (1975), the use of a female voice-over creates a 'privileged view into [the protagonist's] psyche', which in itself works as a depiction of female experience of eroticism and sexuality in a non-judgemental, non-patriarchal way. This is also achieved in *Secretary*, further accentuated by the fact that the narrator's voice-over belongs to Lee herself. Lee's voice as the embodied narrative voice-over explains her emotional responses directly to the audience, but it also clarifies that she is in the SM situation willingly and fully aware of the state of affairs, and most importantly, that she chooses to continue seeking out (sexual) self-discovery (see also McHugh 2001, 196). Arguably, her sexual self-realisation envoiced in the voice-over can also be heard as exposure, and her quest for maturity implies a level of vulnerability as well as agency; Lee's somewhat infantilised position at the beginning of the film leaves an open a space where the maturing of this 'virginal' voice can be heard also from the point of view of Edward, as the making of a sexual agent, but also in terms of a process of 'defiling innocence' in the Sadeian sense. (I shall return to this theme in section 5.2.2.)

Another pivotal sound symbol in the film for Lee is that of the typewriter, heard

problems. Suyemoto and Macdonald (1995) have made a summary of the many reasons why girls cut themselves. While the reasons can include sexual motivation, Lee's reasons are identified in the film mainly as expressive ones (ibid. 164): 'The expression model views self-mutilation as stemming from the need to express or internalise excessive anger, anxiety, or pain caused by perceived abandonment'. Prompted by Edward, Lee admits to this; she is escaping the painful feelings surrounding her alcoholic father. However, a case could be made for Lee's sexual motivation for self-cutting. The possible relationship between female sexual masochism and self-cutting is also discussed in the film *The Piano Teacher* (2001); McPhee 2014, 72, 85–90, 134–136.

[10] Tommi Römpötti (2012, 337, 382) points out in his study of Finnish road movies including a personal growth story that often, the final scene includes the protagonist giving a long look at the camera/audience. This he sees as a sign of deliberate disruption of the diegesis of the film, to symbolise awareness of the choices made in the film both in the diegesis as well as the film's construction. By returning the audience's gaze in such an unabashed way, Lee shows both self-assuredness as well as a sense of control for not only herself but also the audience. By extension, her challenging look can also be read as the challenging look of all SM practitioners to non-kink audiences, daring them to reconsider their ways of life. For further writings on the gaze, see Mulvey 1999, 837–840; Kaplan 1983, 29; in music videos, see Richardson 2007, 423.

immediately in the opening scene of the film as one of the first auditory signs. The connotations of key strikes on a typewriter usually imply sustained effort, systematic haptic work, thinking, endeavouring, and even discipline (more specifically, self-discipline, hand coordination, haptic feedback of the bouncing keys, or a statuesque working position). This is further accentuated by the gendered use of the word 'typewriter', referring to both the machine itself and the female typist using the machine (Kittler 1999, 183, 216). It is striking that Lee finds both her sexually submissive side and her independent, self-actualised side by learning to type.[11] In the post-wars period and afterwards, women were able to become financially independent and secure through secretarial work, and the trade quickly became a highly gendered one, so much so that nowadays the word 'secretary' is sometimes considered a politically incorrect or old-fashioned term. (Ibid.) It is noteworthy, therefore, that Lee is not cast as a 'personal assistant' in Edward's office, but a secretary. While the film seems to be set in early 2000s, Edward despises computers, and values the nostalgic value of the typewriter (both the machine and the woman using it). Slowly, Lee becomes the quintessential image of the secretary wearing high heels and short skirts, flirting with her employer. In other words, she moulds herself to the role she is assigned, taking pleasure in it and emphasising it to the point of camp humour. [12] Of course, we could see this as a candid depiction of gender power imbalance at work and deem Lee a non- or post-feminist figure (see Gill 2007, 160 for nostalgia as retrosexism), but the journey of Lee's self-discovery is so much accentuated in the film, it is difficult to think of the entire film as straightforwardly sexist (even though the character of Edward might be).

For Lee, in addition to being a source of pride and independence, the sound of the typewriter becomes an eroticised one, even a fetish object.[13] In a way, the typewriter sound together with Badalamenti's laid back pulsating music[14] effectively technologises Lee's sexual existence, giving her pleasure in becoming part of something greater than herself, and aestheticising her existence as both machine and human, inanimate and animate forming

[11] In a way, this relationship between Lee and the typewriter is similar to the Jane Campion film *The Piano* (1993), where the protagonist expresses herself only through sign language and, ultimately, the music that she produces with her piano (McHugh 2001). While *The Piano*'s protagonist's hands are brought to the fore by these two signaling techniques, Lee signifies herself using her whole body. Similarly to *The Piano* and voicing the protagonist's thoughts and subjectivity by playing the piano, Lee finds her independence and self-expression through learning to type and developing her skills through an employment that focuses primarily on typewriting work. In a way, without the typing skill, she would never have found herself, independently, sexually, or otherwise.

[12] Camp is broadly understood as a 'certain mode of aestheticism' (Sontag 1999, 54) that does not take cultural norms seriously. Camp is a very queer term closely associated with queer theory. Camp has become an all-encompassing term for a certain set of aesthetic principles, and hence need not be solely associated with queer cultures anymore, as it includes any kind of exaggerated performativity (Välimäki 2007, 184). See also Flinn 2004, 173–177.

[13] A fetish object is an object 'that replaces another human as the primary love object' (Love 2000, 109). It can be a partial fetish (hair, legs, breasts, obesity, voice) or it can be an inanimate object, like objects or clothing of leather or latex, hats, shoes, lace, glasses, or fur (ibid.; Steele 1996, 12–13).

[14] The distinct sound of a cabasa, a percussive instrument that creates sounds from little metal balls scraping the metal inside the instrument, is also heard in the 'Main Title,' making a musical connection to the typing sound.

a posthuman, prosthetically extended existence.[15] Although Lee's intimate relationship is formed through the mediation of a retro typewriter and not a more modern computer or laptop,[16] cyborgian symbiosis is nevertheless indicated. Lee's pleasure in her work consists of becoming part of something greater than her experienced body as well as achieving a means of self-expression, something we are led to believe she finds highly erotic.

Lee's posthuman status becomes relevant also when we think of her agency in the film's narrative. It is notable that Lee never questions her feelings and pleasure, no matter how inappropriate they might seem to others. As Elaine Graham (2001, 241) argues,

> cyborgs do not share in human hang-ups about mixed identities, exclusive communities or absolute truths: they are a paradoxical mixture of innocence and complicity which calls us to look again at the terms on which we gain our security and identity.

Similarly, Lee never has any doubts or suspicions about her newfound technologically organised sexual pleasure, she embraces it and demands more of it. Indeed, her auditive presence embraces this cyborgian/sexual ambivalence instead of making it an Uncanny[17] space for her. Similarly, Badalamenti's music and the whole soundscape of the film embrace both technological and acoustic sounds, resulting in a natural audio state in which the story unfolds, and for Lee to experience her technological-natural sexuality with ease. A privileged view into a character's private world in films is usually achieved through dream or fantasy sequences. In a fantasy scene, Lee asserts her sexual urges powerfully in the privacy of her own bedroom, masturbating to the thought of Mr. Grey, as she obediently refers to her employer. (See figures 2–4.) A prominent, raunchy, bass ostinato-based music cue is introduced here ('Bathing Blossoms;' see example 2) along with a specifically 'spanky' drumbeat.[18] An abrupt, acoustic guitar melody with tritone slides and sudden melodic surges is heard as Lee fantasises about Edward, who enters her imaginary, surreal garden and embraces her tenderly. Synchronised to coincide with the embrace, glittery synthesiser sounds appear in the music, and a large flower opens up in the background, symbolising Lee's sexual awakening and blossoming. As the riff modulates spontaneously (one tone up), Lee tries to fantasise about her boyfriend instead, but even in the fantasy he appears awkward and clumsy. Lee turns around in the bed, abandoning the unsatisfying fantasy, and imagines being on her hands and knees in a velvet-draped office, vulnerable to Edward's spanking, while Edward sits behind her, immobile, merely observing her.

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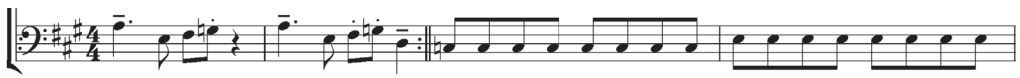
[15] This implies immersion and complicity with her prosthetic typewriter, similarly to any prosthetic posthuman device; see Graham 2001, 241.

[16] Hayles (1999, 3): 'most importantly, […] the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines'. While I would not claim a typewriter to be an intelligent machine, Lee's relationship with it seems to be seamless. It is also noteworthy that when there is a glitch in this relationship with Lee misspelling words, this is sexualised by Edward's actions in Lee's mind.

[17] I use the word here with a specific Freudian hue. The Uncanny is a feeling where the familiar is mixed with unfamiliar, creating a peculiar, somehow troubling space. See Freud 2003; section 3.2.1.

[18] The snare drum is supposedly played with a wooden drumstick and struck with special force, making the sound accentuated. Kink listening to the sound, it is reminiscent of a spank sound; hence, 'spanky'. See chapter 5.1.3.

Lee exclaims out loud, 'I'm your *sss*-secretary', accentuating the last word performatively. (*Secretary*, 0:55:30–0:56:58.)



Example 2. Bass ostinato riff from 'Bathing Blossoms'. First bars are repeated 2–6 times.

The instruments of the musical piece are juxtaposed between low and high frequencies, between the raunchy electric bass, guitar, percussions and drum set, and the glittery, high register synthesisers. The music is circular, based on an AAB structure that is repeated over and over again. The rhythmic bass is reminiscent of R'n'B bass lines. The acoustic guitar employs bluesy slides to the tritone, rife with sexual connotations (see chapter 3.1.2), and dives down in a flurry of flamenco-picking arpeggiation. The synthesiser also adds to the fantastical mood of the scene, where Lee's imagination is depicted with surreal animations of gardens and dark velvety rooms reminiscent of *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991), which is one of Badalamenti's most known works.[19]

The highly tactile playing technique of the electric bass in the scene's music is particularly telling where eroticism is concerned. The bass player's touch on the strings is rendered through a playing technique that places heavy weight on his fingers while plucking the strings very close to the bridge. The recording of the bass has been produced with a very low reverb level, creating a sense of proximity. The ostinato comprises sustained and *staccato* notes, with both techniques exaggerated. In this way, the haptic touch creates an auditive bridge between the plucking technique of the bass player and Lee's pleasuring fingers. John Richardson (2012, 78–82) has read the tango scene in Richard Linklater's film *Waking Life* (2001) as conveying not only hapticity in playing technique, but also as implying Chion's 'materialising sound indices' (MSIs; Chion 1994, 114). While Chion's MSIs concern mostly sound effects, Richardson (2012, 78–82) reads the MSIs in the haptic performance technique of the double bass player, tight close-ups of the players' hands, and synchronised close-miked sounds as conveying specific embodied sensations in the otherwise animated or non-realistic film, bringing human bodies to the 2D images. Similarly, the haptic electric bass and flamenco-like guitar in *Secretary* bring about a haptic feel in the music as well as the image, sounding out Lee's fingers that are otherwise, coyly, out of frame.

Furthermore, the relevance of the electronic bass as the chosen lead instrument to this scene is striking when remembering that certain retro pornographic films with 'Blaxploitation'-inspired musical soundtrack are significantly bass-oriented. In this way, the colloquial term 'porn bass' comes to mind. Kathryn Kalinak (1995, 89) has written about how Badalamenti likes to work *against* cultural expectation in the musical track. Kink listening to the track of *Secretary* in this way, hearing the undoubtedly pornographic bass purely as such would seem too straightforward. While the bass certainly adds an element of

[19] The dream scene of season, 1, episode 2 in *Twin Peaks* springs to mind in particular.

Figures 2–4. Lee's masturbation scene. Lee on the bed, Mr. Grey embracing Lee, Lee posing for Mr. Grey.

humour and sexual connotations to the scene, we can also assume that choosing the bass to represent female sexuality is working against normative cultural codes, creating a queer existence for Lee, empowering and affording her agency in the audiovisual sphere of the film. After all, the electric bass is commonly thought to represent masculinity, agency, movement and speed, power and control (especially when the bass leans towards syncopated funk aesthetics, as it often does in *Secretary*; see Tagg 1979, 155–156).[20] Lee's sexuality is granted (queer) agency, as it is validated through traditionally masculine values of demanding sexual gratification, searching for it actively, and gaining it in the end.[21] Stereotypically, the female protagonists of romantic comedy or submissive women in general are thought to be passive, sexually and otherwise. Badalamenti's remarkable stylisation of Lee's agency, in her quest for a better (sexual) lifestyle, through the bass and fantastical synthesiser, underlines her choices as her own, not mere quirky adventures or the result of Edward's coercion.

While the film presents Lee almost as the complete antithesis of Edward (they are at extreme ends of their performative gender roles, but also social status and financial independence), Lee's bravery in confronting Edward in the final stages of the story presents her as an empowered woman who knows what she wants and able to demand it. Her agency is not in question in the film; what could remain in question is whether her empowerment is feminist, or post-feminist. If we take into account Merl Storr's (2003, 30–34) definition of post-feminism as promoting fragile 'inner strength' for women without challenging their collective socio-economic inequalities and ultimately trying to please their useless-yet-loved men, we could argue that Lee's quest for sexual pleasures are desires to please Edward, desires that are not exactly socially progressive. Indeed, as Storr (ibid. 31) notes, '*feeling* empowered is not the same as *being* powerful'. On the other hand, there is something deliciously subversive about Lee's sexualisation of her transformation, or rather, her self-discipline. According to cultural theorist Rosalind Gill (2007, 155–156), post-feminist popular culture often asserts pressure on women to self-regulate and police their behaviour, their appearances, and their bodies. Prompted by Edward, Lee changes her appearance and succumbs to his behaviour control, but sexualises this policing efficiently. At the same time, she refuses to be dictated to by anyone else but Edward concerning her life decisions, thus revealing outside policing as a mere normative set of behaviours directed towards 'proper' femininity. This, in turn can be seen as empowering for Lee. It reveals her stance as a post-feminist icon in the more modern sense of the word, where post-feminism does not stand for anti-feminism, but rather a complex circuit between embracing and disenfranchising feminist ideals (Gill 2007, 161; McRobbie 2009, 12; Hollows & Moseley 2006, 15; Gill & Scharff 2011, 4). At the same time, Linda Williams's (1999, 44) claim that SM-inclined women must choose between being a 'bad girl' or a 'good girl' would seem to make the choice self-evident in Lee's case. She prefers a fulfilling sexual life as opposed to a virtually adolescent, asexual and neurotic existence under the

[20] For more on power hierarchies and bass lines in the context of traditional voice leading, see Lewin 1992, 475; McClary 2002, 105–106.

[21] Tellingly, some indie rock bands that vie for non-masculine, or rather, non-macho musical performances, disavow heavy bass sounds and grooves in their music. See Warwick 2009, 357–358.

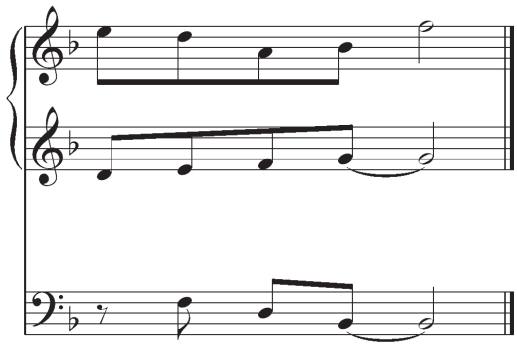
watchful eyes of her parents, or the overly cautious, non-SM sexuality her relationship with her boyfriend Peter would seem to offer. Her insistence on her own personal choices, rather than what others expect, speaks to Lee's empowerment. Her agency and validation is a circuit between pro-kink and anti-sexism, exhibited in her camp performance of the nostalgic 'secretary', prompted by Edward but, most significantly, embraced by her. (See also Cossman 2004, 850, 868.)

One of the most captivating facets of *Secretary* is the interplay between Lee, who finds her emergent SM interests, and Edward, who soon notices her craving for a different lifestyle. The slow slide from a neutral working relationship to an SM-erotic one is closely attached to Lee's inner journey from a mousy and repressed neurotic good girl', to paraphrase Linda Williams (1999, 44), to an empowered, sexually assertive woman. In the following section 3.1.2, I will consider their relationship using the concept of 'framing', which will assist me in pinpointing how this change occurs.

3.1.2 SHIFTING FRAMES

It is challenging to ascertain exactly at which point the interaction between Lee and Edward becomes sadomasochistic: the slow shift in framing between the two, leading up to the spanking scene (see chapter 3.1.3), appears as an almost natural progression. Based on my personal experiences as well as observations of other people's reactions to the film, at some point the seemingly innocent office flirting crosses a line, but that point is difficult to identify. Music contributes to this shift in perception considerably. In this section of the thesis, I focus on the discursive codes that are re-framed through music: fascination, fetishisation and sexual titillation that finally emerge as an SM-romantic relationship. Here, I find particularly useful a term from close reading methodology: framing (Bateson 1987; Bal 2002, 8; Richardson 2016a, 2016b). Framing is closely related to SM sexualities separating their social and/or everyday selves from sexual (inter)play during an SM scene (see chapter 2.1.2 especially), which makes it possible for the participants to enter any roles they prefer within the scene. The role need not be related to a person's social status outside of the SM scene. Here I examine how music and sounds in the film reframe the relationship between Lee and Edward from a seemingly neutral professional relationship to an intimate, erotic one.

The shift in the frame of reference occurs within the first forty-five minutes of the film. In the initial scenes of Lee working, Badalamenti uses energetic, brisk-tempo work music ('Feelin' Free'). Here, Edward's compliments towards Lee still sound like an employer merely encouraging a new employee. However, Badalamenti's music slowly changes the atmosphere. From Lee's point of view, her fascination for Edward is encoded musically when she sees his small collection of orchids, and most importantly, his taking care of the flowers with avid attention (0:21:38 onwards). As she speaks to him, a melodic gesture is presented on the synthesiser, comprising a glittery, almost whistling sound, and a contrapuntal descending bass line accompaniment. I call this Lee's fascination theme (see example 3).



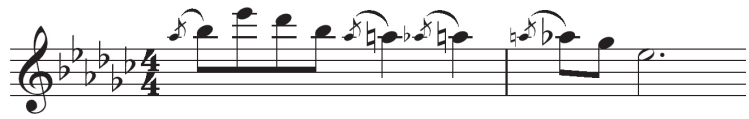
Example 3. Lee's fascination theme. Piano, bass.

The downward swoop and the sudden leap upwards in the main melody, with the F suspended in the air (or, sometimes, falling on E in even crotchets) with very little accompanying movement, or indeed, anything between the synthesiser sounds and the descending bass line (not notated in the figure above), render the melody pensive, but also hesitant. The upward leap of the melody depicts awakening hope and interest, perhaps even sexual titillation for Lee, who is aroused by Edward's nurturing side but also his domineering nature. The theme is also used to denote suspense and unfolding prior to SM scenes, as I shall discuss in section 3.1.3.[22]

In the same scene, Edward's arousal is also assigned a melodic sign, which is first heard on the guitar in reaction to Lee's readiness to jump into the garbage bin to look for a missing file (0:22:17; see example 4). Tellingly, this melodic sign is repeated in a later scene when Lee is on her knees setting up a mouse trap, and Edward receives an accidental upskirt glance (0:25:20).[23] The theme is a cheeky, bluesy melodic snippet with upward glissandos from the natural fourth to the sharp fourth or tritone, often referred to in music as 'the devil's interval' (see Scott 2003, 128–137) with strong connotations of sexual arousal and excitement (as used in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*; see Nattiez 1993, 292–297). The glissando here is produced by the guitarist pulling on the string so that the pitch changes, which can be also interpreted as symbolic of Lee's presence manipulating Edward's sexual urges. In a way, Lee is seen to pull his strings. By extension, the guitar motif together with Edward's slight raising of eyebrows and intense looks accompanying the gesture, infer that something inappropriate is taking place.

[22] Another notable use of the fascination theme comes at Lee's first self-cutting scene, at the moment when she decides not to cut herself and puts the self-harming equipment away. This encodes the theme also as depicting Lee's longing for other solutions in her life, perhaps even her releasing sexual tension through cutting. The theme could also symbolise Lee's desire for understanding and attention, both of which she finally receives from Edward.

[23] This is where Edward also sees band-aids on Lee's leg, a sign of her self-harming habits. While his sexual fascination is clear, it also becomes evident that he is interested in Lee also as a person, not only as a fetish object.



Example 4. Mr. Grey's sexual arousal motif on the solo guitar.

In addition to music, the actors' voices play an important role in the shifting frames of reference. In a scene after mutual fascination has been established, Edward's domination begins by telling Lee that she dresses appallingly (0:34:21 onwards; see figure 5). After this brief exchange, Lee turns away, but Edward's voice stops her in her tracks: 'And another thing. Do you realise you sniffle?' At this point, the focus is on Lee's face, with Edward's sitting pose blurred, rendered almost invisible. She protests a little, and Edward's line 'Well, you do', spoken languidly, is heard with emphasised closeness despite his physical distance onscreen. Edward's deep voice is here recorded using close-micing and panned exactly to the middle, creating a feeling of intimacy. It becomes acousmatic, which in Michel Chion's (1994, 72; 1999, 21–29, 169) writing represents a voice with special 'powers' Such voices are all seeing and hearing, and somehow omnipotent. The only difference here is that in films, the acousmatic voice is usually heard first, after which the speaker is revealed. In *Secretary*, this process is reversed. The scene's sound design aestheticises and fetishises Edward's voice by making it acousmatic, superego-like, to which Lee is more than willing to submit.[24]

Figure 5. Lee, listening to Mr. Grey's acousmatic voice.

This is where the inherent vococentrism (Chion 1999, 5) of cinema easily turns into deliberate vocophilia, or voice fetishising with a potential to achieve aestheticised as well

[24] Also, the scene features Badalamenti's seemingly natural office music cue that was introduced some time ago already. The most prominent feature of the music is the even rhythm of the cabasa, again representing Lee's sexuality being rediscovered through typing and secretarial work and the posthuman relationship with the typewriter, here symbolised in the cabasa sound.

as eroticised voice production. Close-up recording of Mr. Grey's voice further enhances the psychological feeling of heightened presence in Lee's mind, which philosopher Mladen Dolar (1996, 11) suggests is the bridge between phonological operations and the voice. Here, Lee's SM-hued fascination is revealed auditively: she does not enjoy being told off and humiliated,[25] but still finds the experience erotically titillating.

While the frame of reference shifts to an SM-erotic between the two protagonists, the music continues to reframe their relationship by shifting the powerful, decisive power from Edward to Lee. This happens quite audibly in the montage sequence (see figures 6–7) where Lee and Edward play out their SM-sexual escapades: for example, loud spanks emanate from Edward's office with Lee's grunts accompanying them, Edward stipulates on the phone the strict diet Lee is to adhere to at a family dinner, and Lee is made to wear a horse's saddle[26] at the office and is fed a carrot. During the visual montage, we hear the Leonard Cohen's song 'I'm Your Man' (1988, from the album *I'm Your Man*). The synth-pop sounds of the easy-going song, somewhat slow and relaxed in tempo, and Cohen's famous low-timbre vocals create a curious atmosphere that both eroticises and normalises the montage sequence's events.

In the lyrics, Cohen depicts a relationship where the male singer informs the 'you' that whichever role she wishes to ascribe to the 'I', he is willing to deliver.[27] (See appendix 4 for lyrics.) It is worth mentioning that in the song the relationship between the two parties is decided by the recipient of the song (heteronormatively assuming, a woman), and not the singing man (Cohen). Looking at the song from the film's point of view, it is notable how the song's narrative fits both Lee and Edward. Although they have already established their submissive and dominant roles, the song would seem to depict both in different ways that complicate the power statuses of both roles effectively.

While the relationship between Lee and Edward is clearly an SM one, the montage sequence presents shifting frames of reference between the two characters, producing a slippery gender-queer space for both. On the one hand, the song is 'about' Lee, who submits to Edward's wishes, but the hook phrase 'I'm your man' also assigns to her the submissive's power of control and consent over the SM play as a powerful, or symbolically masculine, phallic position. Progressing to a gender-queer reading, to represent Lee through Leonard Cohen's ultramasculine low voice and submissive lyrics creates a complex gender identity for Lee, who is now a performative man, or a performative submissive woman, or neither. The slippery gender performatives in the scene prove to be nothing more than roles assumed, supporting Judith Butler's (2008, 34) claim that all genders are cultural performatives and not biologically assigned positions, but also revealing the possibility of play and parody within roles, which is corroborated in the obviously ironic visual text.

On the other hand, Edward's role as dominant shifts significantly when re-reading the lyrics of the song. From being a demanding boss, blatantly abusing his position of power, he becomes a man who has recognised the need for a strong person in Lee's life,

[25] See chapter 4.3.2 for humiliation.

[26] The horse saddle is a direct visual allusion to Helmut Newton's photograph, *Saddle I, Paris* (1976), according to Steven Shainberg (audio commentary on DVD). Only the carrot has been added.

[27] See chapter 4.1 for a separate analysis of the song as a depiction of male masochism.

Figures 6–7. Montage sequence with Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man'. Lee on the phone with Edward; Edward fitting a saddle to Lee.

and provides such a presence willingly, performatively. This makes Edward's position as a dominant an intriguing one. His dominant stance tranforms almost into that of a passive dominant, providing pleasure for Lee but not demanding it for himself. He becomes a 'subdom', a submissive dominant, pliant and agreeable rather than tyrannical and kinky. Of course, analysing the song from this angle could be contested, as it is quite clear that Edward is sexually an active dominant by character. But, by the final stages of the plotline, it is Lee's determination and not Edward's that finally establishes their relationship as not only SM-erotic, but romantic. In this way, Cohen's song awards Lee the self-assuredness she needs, and slowly reframes Edward as the weak, insecure man he essentially is. I shall return to this in section 3.3.2.

It is quite clear that music plays a significant role in reassigning Lee and Edward their new, personal-sexual identities as well as rewriting the interplay between them into an SM-erotic relationship. This interpersonal experience is one of the most pivotal concepts of SM play, and also takes place in the film without music, but through other sounds.

Next, I shall focus on the multifaceted, interpersonal sexual pleasure that is thought to reside at the heart of SM enjoyment, as depicted in the film's 'spanking scene'.

3.1.3 INTERPLAY OF PAIN, PLEASURE AND MULTISENSORY CINESEXUALITY

Secretary does not shun away from depictions of physical pain, encoded as erotic through the storyline of the film as well as Lee's reactions to them. These encodings serve as explanations of Lee's sadomasochistic enjoyment, but also demonstrate the interpersonal experiences that characterise SM scenes. Fear and force, in the sense of actual coercive violence, rarely have anything to do with SM, which can rely on the illusion of violence (Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19).[28] This is exemplified also through audiovisual means in the spanking scene, which is the primary focus of this section of the thesis.

The question of pain is, understandably, the most critiqued and misunderstood aspect of SM, which may be seen to be related to the highly phenomenological nature of painful experiences (Langdridge 2007, 88), as they cannot be adequately expressed within the confines of language. Consequently, efforts to articulate the experience of pain as an uncomfortable or pleasurable experience to another will inevitably remain insufficient (Lascaratou 2007, 19). Furthermore, physical pain is not something external from the self, but is felt on the body. Hence, it is not a shared experience or an intersubjective one, which again goes to the heart of phenomenology. In contrast to experimental scientific research, where the validity of research is based on its repetition, the validity of research concerning phenomenonological experiences, such as pain, cannot be measured or ensured through such experimental methodological designs[29]

Furthermore, the experience of pain is always uncertain or unknowable if the body in question is not your own. Pain is 'true' only when it is experienced in one's own body (Scarry 1985, 4), and therefore is perhaps easy to ignore when inflicted on someone else. By extension, another person's pleasurable responses to pain are similarly impossible to understand. Elaine Scarry (1985, 12) has studied this in regard to (non-sexual, involuntary) torture, particularly how the torturer can separate his feelings of empathy from seeing the tortured body in pain, as there is always the possibility that the pain is somehow inauthentic when it does not involve his own body. As such, to explain the possible pleasurable aspects of sexualised pain on one's body to someone who does not find pain erotic is, ultimately, a fool's errand.

In contrast, psychotherapist and phenomenologist Darren Langdridge (2007, 91) argues that pain in SM scenes is often 'experienced at once as internal *and* external'. With the interpersonal dynamics of pain giving/receiving in SM, Langdridge theorises the possibility of a 'double experience of agency' where both parties experience the receiving and the

[28] Some SM relationships exist with little or no infliction of physical pain upon the submissive party (Weinberg 2006, 33).

[29] In turn, one could also argue that similarly to pain, pleasure is also a highly phenomenological experience, not easily explainable to others.

giving of sexualised pain, and, by extension, 'the dissolution of a clear distinction between inside and outside, private and public'. (Ibid.) This feeling of double subjectivity can enhance the feeling of togetherness between the dominant and the submissive:

> In S/M, bodies speak to each other, merging through the medium of pain, through the transfer of flesh and fluid, power and emotion: speaking outside language and offering that rare thing, a tender moment of togetherness. (…) S/M offers up a highly refined version of such *moments of intersubjectivity*, where the particularity of such experiences is raised to a fine art. (Langdridge 2007, 95; emphasis mine.)

The spanking scene is here understood to portray intersubjectivity in the act of spanking, as well as the pain produced by it, and how the audiovisual contributes to this experience. I also theorise how the scene extends this multisensory experience to the audience.

The spanking scene (0:45:32 onwards) begins with Edward scolding Lee for making yet another typing error. After a heated discussion, Edward storms off, leaving Lee behind, sniffling. In the corridor, Edward stops abruptly, as a violin suspense sound shifts the frame of reference from a relatively banal office scene to a sexually laden one. Edward leans against a wall, in an attempt to suppress his erotic arousal, as Lee's fascination theme is heard in the background. He then turns and calls for Lee, 'come into the office and bring that letter'. The audiovisual phrasing from a quick pace to the temporally linear placement of auditive elements (Lee's sniffle, music, Edward's footsteps, Edward's voice, music) portrays Edward's changing mood while also transforming the temporality of the scene (see Chion 1994, 13). A frustrated Edward has in a previous scene forbidden Lee from sniffling, and here she seen to disobey him. Edward's anger changes to sexual arousal through mostly auditive means and linear sound editing. Most notably in the music, Lee's fascination theme (see example 2 in section 3.1.2) is played first on the piano, then answered with the guitar (here perhaps signalling Edward), and both are left suspended. Without reaching a conclusion thereby the theme creates a space for Edward and Lee's reactions. As Edward's anger transforms from anger to arousal, Lee shifts from shame to (sexualised) dread. This audiovisual phrasing is continued and given even more emphasis as the two enter Edward's office, the door closes behind Lee with a loud sound effect, and the music stops. Barely audible, Edward tells Lee to bend over his desk and read the letter aloud. She complies, but stops as Edward first spanks her bottom. The sound effect of the actual spanking, the hand landing on the fabric of Lee's skirt, are accentuated to the point of being inauthentic. In this way, the sound effect depicts more Lee's experience of (erotic) pain rather than the actual noise spanking would make. Her voice tries to stay stable but is interrupted and quivering due to the physical impact of spanking. The tremble of her voice suggests, in contrast to the volume of the sound effect, that the shock of the blow reverberates through her whole body, but not in a painful way. In this way, the inauthentic spanking sound effect does not necessarily depict only pain but also the (bodily and emotional) shock, the surprise, and the sexual pleasure that Lee is experiencing.[30] The sound

[30] Indeed, after the scene, we see Lee in the bathroom looking at her rump which has turned purple, and a close-up of Lee's face smiling and sighing with pleasure, during which the picture dissolves in a white-out,

effect renders what the sound *feels* like, creating a multisensory recollection of a painful, embodied feeling, also in the audience. (See Chion 2009, 237.)

After the first spank, prompted by Edward, Lee continues to read the letter, her voice trembling as Edward continues spanking her. She finishes, and Edward orders her to read it again. She does her best, but as the spanks increase in number and speed, her speech melts into silence and grunts of pain/pleasure. This is reminiscent of Elaine Scarry's (1985) description of pain as 'destroying language, our primary source of objectification and self-extension' (Langdridge 2007, 92). In a sense, by making Lee read the letter, Edward dominates her speech patterns, as well as her pitch by changing her voice with his spanking actions. This, according to Darren Langdridge (ibid.), can be seen as

> the top [controlling] the slow and steady destruction of language, turning speech and non-linguistic verbalisations on and off at will. The subject of these acts 'gains' the loss of agency, complexly experienced as both inside and outside and the consequent dissolution of the boundary of private and public, finding moments of intense exposure.

This, in Lee's mind as well as in the submissive stance of the pain game in general, is felt as pleasurable through enhanced feelings of corporeality (pain becomes so intensely felt so that it becomes 'the single omnipresent fact of existence'; Langdridge 2007, 92), a merging of self and other (inside and outside, private and public, self and world, Lee and Edward) and thrill of exposure. Lee experiences not only her own body in pleasure, but also develops a sense of belonging with (or rather, to) Edward, exemplified later in Cohen's song ('I'm *your* man') and in her masturbatory fantasies, 'I'm *your* sss-secretary'. As Amber Musser (2014, 3) describes the masochistic experience, through this experience Lee also explores 'the space between agency and subjectlessness'.

Although thus far I have focused primarily on Lee's experiences of spanking, the scene revolves also around Edward, intently focused on the action of spanking. An overhead shot of both depicts Edward swinging his hand from different angles, deliberately leaving his hand on Lee's behind for slight caressing touches. (See figure 8.) During the first six spanks, his pace is slow, meditative, and each spank sounds different. All in all, he spanks Lee 22 times, ordering her to continue whenever she finishes the letter. His last order is, however, whispered and strained, revealing his aroused state. He picks up the pace and Lee stops reading, giving way to exclamations of pleasure. Finally, in an orgasmic gesture, he falls forwards and leans on the desk, where his fingers curl with Lee's (figure 10). Together, panting, they remain in position.

The sound of each spank is a little different: some are louder, some softer. By the end of the spanking sequence, though, Edward picks up his pace, and the spanks become an auditive symbol of thrusting (McClary's 'phallic backbeat' has rarely been manifested in such a literal way; see McClary 2002, 154), causing Edward to experience pleasure through Lee. Darren Langdridge (2007, 92) explains:

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fading white instead of the more usual black-out. The sum effect of these audiovisual techniques accentuates liberation, orgasm, sexual pleasure and play.

Figures 8–10. Edward spanking Lee with rendered sound effects. Edward and Lee shot from above; Lee's reactions; their fingers entwining afterwards.

> The world of the torturer inhabits this space between their still bounded self and the other, feeling the full force of the power and control that this entails, holding the other's consciousness – their world – in their hands. This is likely to be part of the appeal of this role for the torturer, who may come to enjoy the sense of power (and responsibility) that results from living out the world of two people as one.[31]

Edward's pleasure in the scene is, then, constructed out of the interpersonal experience of seeing Lee in pleasure, and being in control of it. He also provides (renders) the loudest sounds in the scene, but takes pleasure also in Lee's grunts, experiencing the erotic excitement as both his own and Lee's.

In addition to this, the scene demonstrates effectively how SM sex can be pleasurable also to onlookers. According to Patricia McCormack (2008; 2002), the pleasures of viewing films can be explained as 'cinesexuality', or

> the launch upon a line of desire where the outcome cannot be known – desire for a shadow, an inflection of light, quality of frame or contrast. The layers of expectation, pleasure and satisfaction are redistributed in the act of watching and so our desire must also redistribute. (McCormack 2002.)

McCormack's urge to *see*, to *watch* a film intensely is not sufficiently theorised in her text where audiovisuality is concerned. I would extend her argument and maintain that the urge to *hear* a film and garner affective, titillating responses as a result is integral to cinesexuality. The urge to see 'a shadow, an inflection of light'. could easily be the desire to hear a sigh, a spank, a gasp or a musical cue that inspires fetishistic listening. Indeed, the auditive aspect missing from McCormack's cinesexuality seems to be very much present in films, as argued by many musicologists, and exemplified in *Secretary*.

While the spanking sound is, according to my observations, somewhat unsettling to audiences, it is almost always observed with (stunned/fascinated) silence. Usually, silence ensues during the scene when I show it in presentations. The silence between the spanks extends also to the audience, and hence, the sound effect is rendered multisensorally to the audience. Michel Chion (2013, 325) argues that a better term for audiovisuality would be 'audio-visiogenic', which, inbuilt with rendering aspects of the film, suggests that cinema 'consists of sensations created by combinations of sounds and images, greater than the sum of the parts', Chion suggests that superimposed on one another, sound and vision reach beyond hearing and seeing, and enable other sensory responses among audiences. Similarly, extending audiovisuality to haptic perception in film theories provides a more multifaceted reading of this phenomenon. Tactility and hapticity are relatively new terms through which film music and sound effects can be analysed, but writing on film they have been discussed since cinema itself was born (see Sobchack 2000). Haptic experiences of film have much to do with phenomenology, as experiences of it are always

[31] I must emphasise here that Langdridge uses the word 'torturer' in both actual and symbolic sense. As Langdridge's readings are based on Scarry's study of pain and torture situations, the word 'torturer' can be seen as a homage to Scarry's work, but the intended meaning is equal to the SM 'top, or 'dominant'.

instant and affective, automatic through the senses. The tactile film experience 'opens up the possibility of cinema as an *intimate* experience and of our relationship with cinema as a *close* connection, rather than as a distant experience of observation' (Barker 2009, 2). Such theory addresses how the image onscreen can affect the whole body, be it on the skin or at deeper, visceral levels. Because of this, it seems that theorising SM-erotic films through multisensoral theories would provide some understanding as to how cinema can represent different erotic experiences. Film theorist Laura Marks (1998) has theorised hapticity and its erotic potential in film visuals.

'Haptic visuality' operates with the eyes working similarly to organs of touch. Seeing a tender touch on film creates not only a visual image in the spectator's mind, but the kinaesthetic memory of touching and being touched as well.[32] As far as erotic experience is concerned, Marks (1998, 341) suggests that all haptic visuals are erotic because of the intersubjective relationship between an image and its beholder: 'Haptic visuality implies making oneself vulnerable to the image, reversing the relation of mastery that characterises optical viewing.' Similarily to McCormack's (2008, 2002) cinesexuality, the audiovisual side of haptic visuality remains unaddressed. Researchers of audiovisual theories such as Michel Chion (2013) and John Richardson (2012, 28) have already discussed the multisensory potential of audiovisuality in their work, including hapticity. (See also Richardson & Gorbman 2013, 7–8, 21.)

Similarly to the intersubjectivity of Lee and Edward, then, another intersubjective experience is created within the spanking scene between the audience and the film. As the sound effects of the spanking, inauthentic and accentuated as they may be, create a multisensory, 'audio-visiogenic' experience for audiences, the silence engulfing the audiences during examples of the scene in my presentations is explained.[33] Not only the spanking, but also Lee's gasps and trembling body, the sound of the creaking table under her, and Edward's strained whispers make, or render, the experience intimate for viewers. In this way, *Secretary* could be seen as promoting awareness of SM cultures at large: by encoding the scene as titillation and eroticism, an audio-visiogenic experience is provided for the audience, giving them second-hand knowledge of the possible bridge between pain and pleasure. In other words, like all SM pornographic/erotic representations, it 'seeks to arouse the viewer with non-normative activities' (Khan 2014, 13). This, of course, can be either embraced or rebutted as a reaction, but the affect happens nevertheless.

By all accounts, this interpersonal experience between Lee and Edward is depicted throughout the film as mutually enjoyable. However, in my next case study, *Duke of Burgundy* (2014), I shall focus on a relationship that is divided by the couple's differing sexual

[32] While Marks (1998, 337) is wary of calling haptic perception a feminine modality (which would be justified if theorised through Irigaray's claims of tactility as a feminine mode of experience; ibid; Irigaray 1985, 26), she prefers to think of it as a non-essentialising feminist strategy of perception.

[33] The silence could be explained with the socially awkward combination of a relatively formal academic situation, and the presentation of sexually laden examples. In fact, I observed similar deadpan silence in a cinema audience during the sex scenes of the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* on February 14th, 2015. While the rest of the film was mostly jeered and laughed at, the only scenes without a sound from the audience were the SM-sex ones. This reaction is again partly explainable by the sociocultural norms that deem sexual depictions awkward or inappropriate in a public space, but also tells of possible titillation.

appetites between kink and non-kink sexualities, and the miscommunications that occur if negotiations do not take place on an equal playing field.

3.2 DUKE OF BURGUNDY: TWOFOLD LISTENING OF SM

Duke of Burgundy (2014, dir. Peter Strickland) is an independent film about two women in a SM-romantic relationship, a remarkable rarity in SM films, where the relationships depicted are usually between heterosexual or male homosexual couples.[34] Cynthia (Sidse Babette Knudsen) is the dominant, and Evelyn (Chiara D'Anna) is the submissive, and their role-play fantasies usually include them enacting scenes between an inexperienced maid and her demanding mistress. In their daily lives, they are both lepidopterists: Evelyn is still studying, and Cynthia is a scholar in the field.[35] The film discusses both women's experiences of the SM-romantic relationship: while Evelyn's submissive fantasies are indulged, Cynthia's experience is that of worry and anxiety. The relationship ultimately slips into Evelyn wandering outside of the relationship, but with Cynthia's anger and distress, Evelyn disavows SM for a while and continues to have a relationship with Cynthia, before finally returning to her sexual whims. The negotiation between kink and non-kink sexuality is at the centre of the film: the same occurrences are frequently depicted from either point of view, Evelyn's kink side or Cynthia's non-kink side.

The film includes no traditionally SM-related paraphernalia (for example. whips or leather), but sexualises feminine attire and accessories (including lacy underwear, stockings, silk skirts, hair buns, earrings, and eyelash extensions).[36] No pain games, like spankings, occur in the film. The relationship is based on a performative power imbalance, enacted in highly theatrical, pre-scripted scenes[37] involving punishment, humiliation games and watersports (erotic urination). The film is narratively rather obscure, nonlinear in its order of events, and frequently obscures the boundaries between fantasy and reality in a way that exemplifies the relationship between SM interplay and the realities of a

[34] It is noteworthy that most feminist criticism of SM stems from lesbian feminism. See especially section 2.2.2 for issues concerning lesbian feminist SM debates.

[35] The difference in age and social status between the two women illustrate the eroticised power inequalities often present in SM fiction. While the writer/director Peter Strickland confessed to writing the story deliberately around two women instead of a heterosexual couple in order to avoid presumed gendered socio-economic codes, they are still present, even though less explicit.

[36] This could be seen as a stylistic reference to one of the classic SM films, Luis Buñuel's *Belle du Jour* (1967), where similar 1950s housewife femininity aesthetics are fetishised. Here, of course, the effect is more of same-sex desire rather than celebrating women's domestication.

[37] SM scenes are often highly ritualised and scripted beforehand (Gebhard 1995, 42–43; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 20; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 6) and often called 'theatrical' by nature. Therefore the spontaneity within most SM scenes is largely illusionary (Weinberg 2006, 34). This is dependent on complete trust between the sub and the dom (Weinberg 2006, 26), and therefore invites a deeper level of communication and intimacy between SM partners (Nichols 2006, 285). As Peggy J. Kleinplatz (2006, 339) learns from her SM couples in sex therapy, '[t]his means a willingness to go beyond truthfulness or even honesty to authenticity and transparency'. Without trust between partners, the SM relationship is unlikely to be a successful one, and can even result in an experience of abuse.

non-communicative relationship. Indeed, as the film unfolds, the power positions occupied by Cynthia and Evelyn are reversed in comparison to their performative roles (Evelyn is the one actually in control), illustrating the popular conviction in SM cultures that the submissive holds the ultimate power in the SM situation (Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19; Foucault 1998, 94–96; Oksala 2007, 69; see section 2.1.1).

In this section of the thesis, I continue my audiovisual analysis of teasing out how SM eroticism is represented in the sounds of the film. With *Duke of Burgundy,* I theorise what could be heard as specifically lesbian (SM) pleasure in film music. I also discuss the interplays of juxtapositions such as reality/fantasy, communication/non-communication, ritual/spontaneity, presence/distance, pleasure/non-pleasure and control/non-control; how they affect the SM-erotic experience; and how they are depicted in the soundtrack of the film. More than anywhere else, I discuss here the *twofold experience of listening to SM erotica,* or perhaps, twofold kink listening. By this I mean close listening to the music and sound effects of the film through two different frames of reference and interpretation. In this reading, the sounds of the film represent both the (Evelyn's) SM, lesbian kink eroticism of the scenes as well as (Cynthia's) non-kink, emotional longing for a different relationship. The result is two alternative, subjective, narratives or points of audition, depicted in repeated, ritualistic scenes, which then converge. This mode of twofold listening is closely related to Margot Weiss's (2011) 'performative materialism', as I read and re-read the scenes from both kink and non-kink points of view/audition. The music as well as the film itself becomes a circuit of sexuality where the negotiation between two different sexual urges is stylised both as a source of desire and melancholia.

3.2.1 QUEER FILM MUSIC AND 'TECH-NEO-BAROQUE' AS EROTICISM

Duke of Burgundy (from now on, *DoB*) features an original modern film score by the music composition team Cat's Eyes, Faris Badwan and Rachel Zeffira. (See appendix 5 for soundtrack track listing.) Badwan's musical background is mainly rooted in rock and popular music, while Zeffira's is in the classical tradition. (Fitzmaurice 2011, Petridis 2011.) Their collaboration on the film score of *DoB* features compositions from both, with Zeffira singing and playing most of the instruments performed on the soundtrack. Most of the music draws on neo-Baroque aesthetics, imparting to the film a feeling of temporal flow and historicity, but also discipline and theatricality. However, most of the instruments are altered with effects more frequently used in popular music, creating a different, surreal atmosphere in the music. Some musical cues are almost post-minimalistic, with additive forms and repetitive structures, fitting the aesthetics and the intellectual nature of the film. Often the music is used for mood setting in the film, leaving the dialogue-based scenes accompanied mostly by the ambient sounds of nature, which traditionally establish the scene aurally rather than visually, and also create continuity in the otherwise obscure storyline (see Buhler, Neumeyer & Deemer 2010, 381). In this section, I suggest that the musical canvas in the film mostly depicts the (specifically) kink-queer[38] erotic interplay

[38] In a way, the film exhibits two varieties of queerness: female lesbianism and female lesbian sadomasochism.

of the film's narrative, containing both the pleasure but also the problems of the SM role play between the two women.

There is no fixed theory of what 'queer film music' entails. Indeed, combining music and queerness in any essential(ising) way 'remains a vexed undertaking, and it is important to recognise that these claims require culturally and historically specific contexts to work at all' (Flinn 2004, 225). Some readings exist about films with queer themes in them, and how the audiovisual side of the films work within this context. Film music theorist Caryl Flinn (2004, 178) approaches queer films from the stance that '[q]ueerness is a relation rather than a position'. As queerness disputes any oppositions between mainstream and alternative, it cannot be said that queer film (music) is such only because its themes happen to address queer matters, or because its makers happen to be queer. Flinn (ibid.) quotes filmmaker Werner Schroeter, who 'asserts that he doesn't tell different stories, he just tells them differently'. From this, we can surmise that queer film (music) addresses subjects from different angles to the traditional, at times stereotypical approach. Often, as Flinn (2004, 173–177, 238–240) argues, this happens through the use of camp and kitsch aesthetics. Musicologist Susanna Välimäki (2007, 2013, 2015) has written about manifold queer issues in film and film music, and seeks 'queer strategies' (2007, 179) in music rather than essentialisms that would somehow automatically present the music as queer. Välimäki (ibid.) writes, 'a queer strategy can be conceived of as a self-reflexive refusal of sexually defined identity and as denoting a series of self-conscious, improvised performances' that actively defy any fixed articulations of social identities in the performances. In film music, then, a queer strategy would reinscribe new meanings to film music truisms and even clichés: adding rigidly heteronormative music, such as country or gospel, to queer subject matter in a way that produces a re-interpretation 'from a queer point of audition' (ibid. 181; see also Välimäki 2013, 375–377).

The monstrosity of a verbal blend in the chapter's title, 'tech-neo-Baroque', is my characterisation of Cat's Eyes' aesthetics in their soundtrack music. First, the music distinctly paraphrases late Baroque/Galant era music, as many of the tracks adhere to Baroque dance rhythms and structures. Also, some instruments from the specific eras are used (for example, hautbois and harpsichord). Usually, Baroque music implies 'extravagance, impetuousness, and virtuosity' (Ndalianis 2004, 7), constructed through different strict, even mathematical patterns of composition. Secondly, by borrowing from Baroque but expanding to other genres of classical music, such as minimalism (which, of course, is already based on Baroque forms) and experimentalism, the music becomes neo-Baroque.[39] And thirdly, the technological manipulation and expansion of the sound material creates a distinctly dream-like character in the music, which cannot be ignored in a close reading

Hence, it is pivotal to differentiate the kink-queer from the non-kink-queer experience.

[39] Angela Ndalianis (2004, 5) argues that neo-Baroque aesthetics are rising again in cinema and other audiovisual artforms as a result of 'technological, industrial, and economic transformations'. By Baroque, Ndalianis refers to both a historical style but also a 'transhistorical state' that partakes in pleasures of spectacle and sensory experiences; 'The neo-baroque combines the visual, the auditory, and the textual in ways that parallel the dynamism of seventeenth-century baroque form, but that dynamism is expressed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in technologically and culturally different ways' (ibid.).

of the music and the film. Hence, their music is technologically flavoured neo-Baroque, or 'tech-neo-Baroque'.

Adding classical music to erotically laden films is by no means novel in film music.[40] Focusing especially on Baroque era dance forms[41] is a particular choice on Cat's Eyes' part, as it aestheticises the film's sexual play scenes into art, but also creates a repetitive pulse, which demonstrates a certain strictness in the dance forms. Musicologists Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne (2001, 7, emphasis mine) write of the Baroque era court dances aptly: 'For the ceremonial balls, dancing masters were in charge of seeing that everyone *observed the rituals*, and at the proper time.' On the other hand, Susan McClary (1998, 90) writes that through this strict rule obeying, 'the participants [enacted…] a world in which everyone operated of one accord, following a schema seemingly as inevitable as the *harmonia* of the Pythagorean spheres', but with rebellion expressed through the private lives of the dancer/socialites (ibid. 91). The ritualistic side of Baroque era dances becomes, in this way, a metaphor for Evelyn's and Cynthia's SM rituals, choreographed carefully with scripts and props arranged for Cynthia by Evelyn in the film. It also makes Cynthia's emotional rebellion palpable. McClary (ibid.) calls the Baroque dance music 'propaganda' for the political powers; here it can also be heard as Evelyn's doctrine to force Cynthia into a sexual relationship, and give her no choice but to obey.

In search of a specifically lesbian experience in music, musicologist Suzanne G. Cusick (2006, 76) writes:

> The chain of events in *my* 'lesbian aesthetic' response, if it can be said to exist, leads to a preference for musics which invite extremely heightened, sensual, cognitive attention, musics which *invite* and allow me to participate or not as *I* choose, musics with which I experience a continuous circulation of power even when I let the music be 'on top'.

Cusick (ibid.) mentions particularly some forms of musics[42] that do not invite her lesbian aesthetic enjoyment, mainly those that have 'insistent rhythms, their possible representation of male sexual thrusting, and […] diffused "climaxes" of some musics'. For example, Baroque music seldom seeks out a climactic moment, but is rather based on cyclical forms and fluidity, which are traditional musical conventions for depicting femininity and female sexualities. Here we can see a comparison also to female-lesbian sexuality, which is less dependent on orgasmic thrusting and releasing (see, for example, Irigaray 1985, 25–26; Peraino 2006, 175–176). In this way, the selection of Baroque forms to represent lesbian sexuality and fantasy seems to be an apt choice.[43]

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[40] One thinks of, for example, Michael Nyman's neo-Baroque scores for Peter Greenaway's films, Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) or, in the SM film world, Michael Haneke's *The Piano Teacher* (2001).

[41] Cat's Eyes utilise at least the menuet and rigaudon dance forms in their music ('Door No. 2', 'Reflection'), but other, less easily identifiable rhythmic passages are used as well, clearly suggesting a danceable pattern.

[42] Cusick mentions especially Beethoven here, and bases her argument on Susan McClary's reading of his Ninth Symphony. Cusick 2006, 76; see also Fink 2004, 121–122.

[43] Baroque music often has also camp value, as it is theatrical by nature. For the use of Baroque music in other queer film contexts, see Välimäki 2007, 182.

The technologically altered instrumental sounds in this film can be heard as 'queering' (in the sense of 'upsetting, making strange, unsettling'; Jarman-Ivens 2011, 15)[44] the music, from familiar to less recognisable sounds. For example, in the first sex scene after the women's first SM play, the slow syncopated, dance-like music played on strings ('Lamplight'; 0:14:53 onwards) pulsates throughout the women's discussion of the SM scene and their move to bed. As the camera focuses on drawings of moths, the sound of the violins is altered through synthesiser technology, distorted and heavily echoed. The syncopated pulse gives way to longer, sustained chords, and as Evelyn continues her study of the moths and as the camera zooms in on Cynthia, two intertwining female voices join the synthetic fabric of the music. Cut to Evelyn and Cynthia lying on the bed, touching each other sensually. The image is splintered in two, perhaps a visual echo of the two female voices intertwining in the music, and the two women onscreen. (See figure 11.)

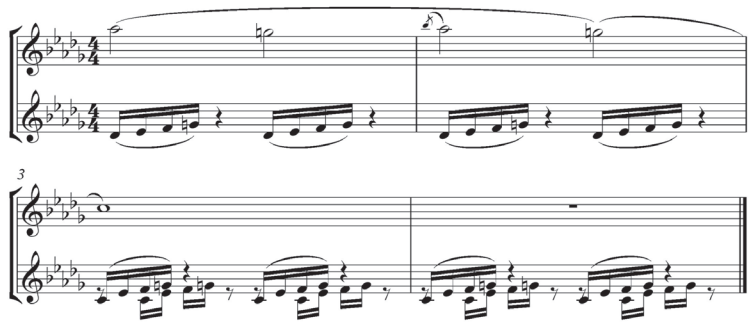
Figure 11. Splintered image of the screen during the sex scene.

This scene is one of the few moments where both women feature together onscreen during a music cue. The loud chords rolling on top of one another and the intertwining female vocals are a musical depiction of the lesbian lovemaking. McClary (2002, 37; Scott 2003, 19–22) has analysed Monteverdi's music as a construction of gender. In Monteverdi's music, high male (castrati) voices enable depictions of 'stimulating "friction to heat"' (Scott 2003, 21) in love duets with their women (or sometimes other castrati) colleagues, implying eroticism through prolonged minor second intervals 'rubbing' against each other. In this way, the high voice duets have long standing, historical auditive connotations connected to queer genders and sexualities. This also happens in the 'Lamplight' theme momentarily, but mostly the singing voices move in accordance with the chords, sometimes in parallel, sometimes contrapuntal. While the castrati voices' friction to heat may or may not be heard as the implication of heterosexual or homosexual eroticism, the presence of two female voices moving in and out of the textural fabric of the music seems like an apt depiction of lesbian eroticism. Furthermore, the two voices are echoed with heavy reverb in a similar way to the strings; while the reverb effect can imply distance, it also creates a flowing, watery mood in the music, which in turn can be heard as a sonic symbol for lesbian/feminine eroticism (see Irigaray 1985, 109–111).

[44] See also Välimäki 2015, 16–18.

On the other hand, the queering of the string sound can be heard as making the music slightly disturbing in its progression, and attaching to it an ambivalent feeling. The scene can also be interpreted as Cynthia's non-kink daydream of lovemaking with her partner. The fractured images depicting the women's sexual act can also be seen to represent Cynthia's slightly fractured sense of self, between her own sense of self and the character Evelyn has assigned to her. In this reading, the scene would depict Cynthia's longing for a less kinky sexual life. Furthermore, the overly romantic strings are queered to represent longing and loss, not sexual pleasure or understanding between the two women. In this way, the strings may be understood to function as a kind of distancing effect.

Another example of technologically queered music can be heard at the beginning of the film during Evelyn's first SM play (framed as such for the audience only later), as she cleans Cynthia's study ('Moth'; 0:05:20 onwards). Two instruments are heard: the oboe in the main melody line, and the flute on the accompanying *arpeggio* line. The melody runs in Phrygian mode. Both instruments are treated with heavy reverb, and the second accompanying chord of the flute is added with a delay effect, making the *arpeggio* line of the second chord play almost in a canon with itself (see example 5). This high level of reverb and delay creates a dreamlike atmosphere in the music (see Donnelly 2005, 8), but also an unrealistic space between the oboe and the flute: while the oboe melody stays pristine and clear despite its reverb, the flute, seemingly accompanying the oboe, takes on a greater role auditively as well as spatially. The reverb becomes an echo, a full entity in its own right.[45] The flute and the oboe become auditory symbols of Evelyn and Cynthia: the submissive Evelyn (flute) creates a space of her own, echoing her pleasure and fantasy, while Cynthia's more clear-cut melody (oboe) intertwines with this space, through remains peripheral to the fantasy.



Example 5: 'Moth' opening. Oboe melody, flute accompaniment, delay notated in the second row.

[45] The fluttering flute line also creates an auditive depiction of the butterfly wings visible in the scene, or rather, the sound they would make had they not been pinned down by the scholars. The later combination of flute and harp are often used when representing water with music, which could be heard as representing feminine/lesbian sexualities through fluidity (see for example Halberstam 2012, 85). The instruments have also been traditionally and historically gendered as feminine, and in this way, are apt selections in depicting female-lesbian characters as well as their sexual play.

The high reverb level of the flute can also be read as a Brechtian distancing effect in music. Theatre entrepreneur and theorist Bertolt Brecht (2014 [1961]) wrote about distancing, or alienation, effects in Chinese theatre as having a remarkably different level of aestheticism when compared to European theatre. The audience is not led to believe that what they see onstage is 'reality', but a representation of it. An easy identification with the characters onstage is not the goal of this type of representation (ibid. 130–134). In a way, Cat's Eyes could be heard as maintaining this distancing awareness through heavy use of sound technology. By creating unrealistic spaces and sounds to the otherwise neo-Baroque music, already a relatively non-emotional genre of music, Cat's Eyes' music maintains a distance to emotional depth that would otherwise be registered within the music, and encode it as erotic and fantastical rather than empathetic to the characters' emotional journeys. Similarly, the music creates a space for Evelyn to enjoy the fantastical space of her sexual endeavours, but simultaneously keep these situations at arm's length for the audience. The music expresses her immersion of the SM-erotic situation, but makes them also strange and unapproachable through the unrealistic spatial dimensions articulated through the music. Symbolically, the echoing effect could also represent the discrepancies in the women's relationship, the distance created by Evelyn's fantasy that keeps the couple from communicating their sexual urges freely to one another. I shall return to this in section 3.2.2.

While the Brechtian distancing effect relies on making the mechanisms of theatrical production visible to the audience by, for example, producing sound effects onstage or breaching the fourth wall (see, for example, Heinonen 2014, 40–43; Richardson 1999, 43–50), in *DoB* this distancing happens through auditory means, and challenges the barriers between film and audience (as I will argue more extensively in section 3.2.3). Furthermore, both women take their time in the non-dialogue scenes observing themselves in mirrors,[46] and gazing through the camera directly at the audience. In this way, their performance is always distanced, breaking out of the film canvas/screen by returning the audience's gaze. What is especially queer about the music here, is that it establishes a space between the conventions of film music depicting romantic love and the Uncanny (Freud 2003), signifying both at the same time. By the Uncanny, Freud (ibid. 620) refers to the unsettling, uncertain feeling of finding something frightening or distressing in something familiar. Here, the Uncanny arises from taking the seemingly familiar-sounding structures and sounds of Baroque music and making them unfamiliar through technological mediation. In this way, the queer film music of *DoB* manages to critique both the traditional (heterosexual) concept of romantic love as well as sexual fantasies, not siding with either the fantasy-prone Evelyn or romance-hungry Cynthia. Both positions are equally right and wrong, and the chasm between the two outlooks is reproduced in a fantastical musical space, accentuated by audiovisual means (for instance the splintered images and characters returning the gaze of the camera). In this way, the music truly constructs a queer space between extremes, or rather, it dismantles the juxtaposition of kink and

[46] The mirror, of course, is a familiar symbol of homosexual desire, transforming narcissism into observing the same-sex body as sexually intriguing. The use of mirrors throughout the film can also be seen as a homage to Jean Cocteau's films, especially *Orphée* (1949).

non-kink experience: both are auditively present. Indeed, the presence of twofold readings of single scenes reinforces the distancing strategy of the film.

Evelyn's perspective becomes prominent when the music expresses the characters and their sexual urges and feelings. Indeed, it is more often she and not Cynthia who is in frame when musical cues are heard in the film. The soundtrack also employs the echoed female singing voice prominently to depict specifically Evelyn's fantasy, which I shall discuss in the next section.

3.2.2 THE JOYS OF SINGING: FEMALE VOICE AS EROTIC EXPRESSION

Evelyn is sitting in the middle of a meadow after an argument with Cynthia (see figure 12; 1:14:30 onwards). She is singing softly to herself ('Cynthia's Birthday'). Her voice is not, however, her own, but Rachel Zeffira's, which is heavily echoed and delivered in a soft, languid type of voice production employing long legatos. The same singing voice is heard throughout the film. The heavy reverb effect creates a distance to the voice, making it ghostly, strikingly resembling Angelo Badalamenti's music in the classic television noir series *Twin Peaks*. In this section I will discuss the female voice and how it represents feminine sexuality in different and fluid power positions. I will also discuss female fetishism and how they further elaborate the power positions at play in the film's narrative.

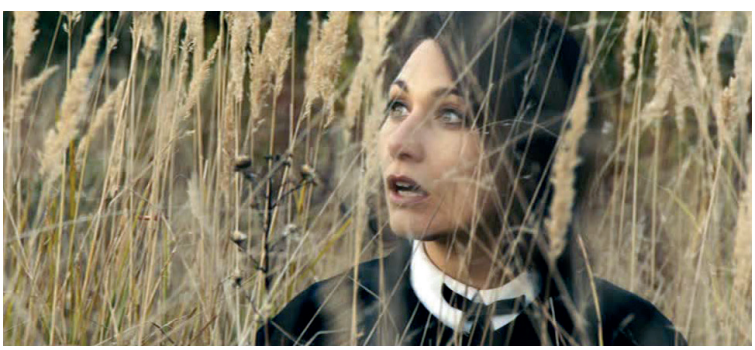


Figure 12. Evelyn in a field, singing.

The link between voices and (queer) female sexual pleasure has been abundantly theorised in musicology, but also elsewhere. Porn researcher Linda Williams (1999, 123) has theorised that since female sexual pleasure and climax cannot be expressed visually in porn films (as opposed to male excitement and climax), the sonic rendering of moans and gasps is the only strategy for 'authenticating' them. Considering the queer potential of the voice in general, musicologist Freya Jarman-Ivens (2011, 18–19) argues that ultimately, it can be highly difficult to assign a gender to a voice.[47] As much as genders are culturally rather than biologically assigned (and adopted), so are voices. Therefore, we can assume that the floating echoic quality of the singing voice in the songs of *DoB* is, in fact,

[47] See also Hawkins 2009a, 122.

a queer substance, genderless and denaturalised. However, the relationship between the (perceived) female voice and its connotations of sonic eroticism and fetishisation deserves some attention here.

The use of the female singing voice to represent sexual pleasure has been frequently discussed in musicology, in- and outside of film music studies. Often, it is paired up with the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*,[48] the sexual gratification that is commonly aligned with feminine pleasure, as it is not dependent on the phallic psychosexual order of arousal – act – release. The idea of the acoustic mirror in the Lacanian sense explains the erotic potential of the female voice as an infant's Othered voice. Being mainly that of the mother, this Othered voice must be disavowed in order to gain independence, but still remains as a siren-like entity (Silverman 1988, 72–75). In films, this acoustic mirror can often be expressed through music (Välimäki 2015, 137). However, it is notable that quite often this relationship between mother and infant is depicted as that of mother and *son*, not mother and daughter. In *DoB*, this relationship between the powerful mother and the escaping son is supposedly not present: there are no men visible anywhere in the film. In this way, the female eroticised voice is not a disavowed one, but an embraced one. In fact, the disavowed aspect of eroticism in *DoB* is the masculine one. Hence the sonic presence of only female voices and desires becomes an escape to a lesbian fantasy stipulated in Judith Butler's (1993, 63; Peraino 2006, 132) concept of the 'lesbian phallus'; or, Lacan's power symbol of the phallus perverted by the space of exempt men,[49] and, especially, the heteronormative sexual order.[50] Indeed, the lesbian phallus represents 'the unthinkable' sexuality (Peraino 2006, 132) as it disavows the heterosexual matrix of sex and sexuality. The voice of the Mother thus resides both in the Other as well as the subject, the lesbian, and in this way, the Otherness of the self is embraced at the same time as it is fetishised. Teresa de Lauretis (1994, xvii) theorises this by re-reading Freud's theories from a lesbian point of view, and speculates that the fetishised Lady in lesbian fetishism is 'an idealised or fantasmatic construct in which the mother, Oedipal or pre-Oedipal, stands for what all women have in common as women, socially and sexually'. Here, de Lauretis argues also for the feminist potential of lesbian fetishism.[51] While this holds true of Evelyn, as she clearly fantasises of Cynthia as the older, strong, independent and sexually assertive woman, she indulges in her sexual fantasies alone. In this way, Cynthia is positioned as

[48] A movement beyond the pleasure principle. See chapter 4.2.1; Edelman 2004, 25; Bersani 1986, 41.

[49] Of course, this lesbian fantasy world devoid of men has to be taken with a pinch of salt, as the film was penned and directed by a man, and the first drafts of the film were indeed of a heterosexual couple. Nevertheless, there is no reason to assume that *Duke of Burgundy* was made merely for male consumption; a queer-gender-political message is accomplished by the very casting choice that no men are seen in the film.

[50] SM is a highly criticised sexuality also among lesbian feminists, as it is thought to repeat the heteronormative sexual coding rather than escaping it. The assumption here is that any power relationship is built on the oppressor and the oppressed, which are undoubtedly gendered positions, and some lesbian feminists are of the opinion that repeating such power imbalances, even when sexually titillating, is not in accordance with feminist principles. See Duncan 1996, 106; Phillips 1998, 53; Linden 1982; Hart 1998, 17; see also chapter 2.2.2.

[51] On lesbian fetishism, see also Grosz 1991.

the radical Other and not an equal partner. This is clearly depicted in the meadow scene, as Evelyn visibly sings herself into a sexual state, alone.

Concerning the singing voice and the (lesbian) erotic potential of it, we can look to multiple sources for guidelines in analysing them. The independent, powerful and virtuosic female voice in opera has been often discussed as escaping from the patriarchal order to a subjective sphere where feminine pleasures outrank male logic and bourgeois morals. In addition, the powerful woman is often depicted as sexually active and assertive, and/or musically virtuosic. (See McClary 2002, 81; Abbate 1993, 229–230, 237.) Musicologist Elizabeth Wood (2006, 28) writes of the specific voice type that may be attached to sapphonic/lesbian eroticism:

> I call this voice Sapphonic for its resonance in sonic space as lesbian difference and desire. Its sound is characteristically powerful and problematic, defiant and defective. Its flexible negotiation and integration of an exceptional range of registers crosses boundaries among different voice types and their representations to challenge polarities of both gender and sexuality as these are socially – and vocally – constructed.

Furthermore, writing about specifically lesbian pleasure in the singing voice, Susanna Välimäki (2005b, 2003) mentions k.d. lang,[52] who is well known for her subversive voice production and approach to performance. Her genre of choice, country/pop music, serves a field of extremely heteronormative lyrics and representations of desire, but lang frequently queers these assumed positions. lang achieves such queering through theatrical, overstated (camp) performances employing a variety of glissandos and vibratos to convey musical flow (Välimäki 2005b, 372), but also through mixing up other singing styles with the highly heteronormative country singing style (for example, a thick, nigh operatic tone sung in a lower register; Välimäki 2003, 6). Often sapphonic voices seem, then, to either transgress the norms of singing, or to overstate them through camp performance. Certainly, the latter is true of the songs in *DoB*.

The songs in *DoB* ('The Duke of Burgundy', 'Evelyn's Birthday', 'Coat of Arms') closely resemble those of Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks* ('Nightingale,' 'Into the Night', and especially 'Falling') in their musical and instrumental composition, as well as their general mood. Zeffira's singing voice is quiet, breathy, and almost hoarse. Yet it is eroticised, in a very different way from the country and operatic singing voices I have described above. A breathy, whispered, low-volume voice recorded very close to the singer's mouth usually depicts intimacy (Whiteley 1997, 264), while whispers, moans and sighs hint to the erotic. Still, this eroticisation is not as straightforward, as a result of the heavy use of reverb. John Richardson (2004, 85–91) discusses the *Twin Peaks* song 'Falling', sung with a similar voice type to *DoB*, as representative of Laura Palmer, the murdered character of the thriller. The song, heavy in reverb, is used in the series' narrative as a 'surrogate voice of Laura Palmer' (ibid. 88), defamiliarised and even acousmaticised (made ubiquitous; Chion 1994, 73; 1999, 18–19; see section 3.1.2) through heavy technological manipulation. The obsessive fascination of detective Cooper towards Laura Palmer is, in this case, represented through

[52] On musicological writings about k.d. lang, see also Burns 1999, 1997; Whiteley 2000.

a siren-like song, supposedly sung by Laura who is calling her investigators to solve the mystery, and, by extension, beckoning them towards death.

In *DoB*, the siren-like voice is defamiliarised as well as sexualised, but the fetishisation is left without the inbuilt patriarchal paranoia of female sexuality (Richardson 2004, 90; Kaplan 1998, 142). Indeed, the ghostly female voice is later revealed to be Evelyn's supradiegetic (in between diegetic and non-diegetic; see Altman 1987, 69) singing voice, which expresses her desires but also works as a symbol for the allure of SM sexuality and pleasure. The interplay of pleasure enacted here is between Evelyn and her sexuality, or indeed, her ideal sexual world. The heavy echoing reverb could also be read as a Brechtian distancing effect (with the echo effect literally distancing the voice), much like that discussed in section 3.2.1 with the echoed flute in 'Moth' (see example 6). The delay effect can furthermore represent the Uncanny side of the relationship, suggesting that there is some discomfort between the women, appearing in a ghostly, fleeting way.

With Evelyn singing by herself in a lipsynching scene, almost like a musical scene amidst the otherwise austerely arranged silences in the dialogue scenes, we can also see her position in the fantasy as one that she, and only she, enjoys. Her lipsynching scene with Racher Zeffira's voice creates a slippery, liminal (see section 3.2.3) space between diegetic and non-diegetic music that suggests the music's articulation of Evelyn's subjectivity; Robynn Stilwell (2007, 187) would call this the 'fantastical gap' between strict diegetic and non-diegetic space in film music. (See also Stilwell 2013, 126.) Claudia Gorbman (1987, 22) would here call the role of the music 'metadiegetic', where music is envoicing the character's inner world rather than being 'only' empathetic to it (Stilwell 2007, 194). While Evelyn is singing to herself, simultaneously vocalising herself and eroticising and even fetishising the Othered voice that resides outside of her body, she appears to convince herself to continue exploring her erotic fantasies. As the camera cuts away from Evelyn, we see shots of the forest, the space where she can indulge her sexual fantasies in private. However, markedly, the music cue in this scene does not necessarily continue to articulate Evelyn's subjectivity, but shifts to Cynthia, and with its dual narrative focus, becomes anempathetic (see Chion 1994, 221) to her non-kink subjectivity. The camera cuts to an image of pinned moths, and Cynthia at the window, staring angrily at a neighbour, Lorna, a symbol of society's disapproval. Another moth under many pins is shown, and (supposedly) Evelyn's magnifying glass hovering over it. The scene might be understood as representing Evelyn's selfishness in her insistence of living a kink eroticised life with a partner who does not share this conviction. Actress Chiara D'Anna reveals in an interview at the London Film Festival in 2014[53] that she sees Evelyn 'pinning down' the world much like she does the insects, and by extension, pinning her partner into wearing constricting clothes for her own (sadistic?) viewing pleasure. Consequently, the scene reveals Evelyn's self-manipulation into an excited state, whereas Cynthia has to deal with the realities of the world around her.

The scene also works to exhibit Evelyn's fetishistic nature and sexuality. Appreciation of material fetishes is usually held to be more common among men than women (Steele 1996, 12). There are some similarities to the enjoyment of fetishes in both sexes, but

[53] Q&A for Peter Strickland's The Duke of Burgundy. Youtube. (Last visited 30.9.2015.)

women 'do not seem to "lust" after [fetishes] in the same way men do' (ibid.). It cannot be claimed, however, that all women are free of fetishism, For example, Anita Phillips (1998, 57–58) notes that women with masochistic tendencies focus their attention on specific, immaterial traits of their lovers, such as voice, mannerisms, and/or talk patterns. These masochistic relationships tend to reside more 'in the person of the other, but not all that much in the other as a person' (ibid. 58), a common feature also in many love song lyrics (Burns 1999, 305).[54] In addition to this, Evelyn also exhibits very material fetishistic behaviour, requesting that Cynthia wear corsets, stockings, high heels (also an auditive fetish for Evelyn, as she enjoys the sound of Cynthia walking around in heels), and other sexualised feminine attire during their SM play scenes. It is also noteworthy that Evelyn controls Cynthia's voice usage, insisting on a low, authoritative, and cold voice during SM play, and admonishing her partner afterwards if the voice is not entirely convincing.

At the heart of fetishisation is not only Othering the fetish object, but keeping it distant (the courtly love principle; see, for example, Žižek 1993, 95–96).[55] In this way, Evelyn's fetishisation of Cynthia produces an essential gap between the women, where Evelyn detaches herself from Cynthia emotionally and empathically, but not sexually, which leads to problems in communication and even a SM-hued affair between Evelyn and a professor at their university. Evelyn's insistence on maintaining her sexual fantasy, represented in her echoed singing voice, suggests that the object of her adoration is interchangeable. Cynthia is then cast as a mere fetish object, who could be changed at will for the mysterious carpenter figure[56] or the professor that Evelyn becomes masochistically involved with. By this, it becomes apparent that the two women are not on a level playing field in their relationship. There is a telling scene where this chasm in their relationship is depicted through highly stylised audiovisual means, quite unlike anything found elsewhere in the film. I shall discuss this scene next, focusing on liminal spaces where both women reside, and how video art aesthetics depicts them.

[54] This point is also emphasised in Evelyn's off-camera, narrator's voice-over monologues where she professes her fascination for Cynthia and their lifestyle: 'Cynthia. This is all I ever dreamed about, to be owned by you. To be used by you. I can't tell you how happy I am. I never thought I could find someone like you. I never thought it would be possible. I won't let you down, Cynthia. Never. I won't let you down.' The monologue almost reads as a love song lyric, emphasising the submissive pleasures of surrender.

[55] The fetishisation of people and material objects is at the heart of male masochism especially, which I discuss at length in chapter 4.

[56] The carpenter, a tall, blonde woman, appears in the film in a scene where Cynthia and Evelyn want to order a custom-made bed in which Cynthia could lock Evelyn and sleep on top of her. Evelyn's fascination with the carpenter is evident in a scene where, perhaps filtered through Evelyn's fetishising imagination, the carpenter comes in and takes Evelyn's measures, moving about sensually and deliberately slowly, while keeping intense eye contact with Evelyn. The music of the scene, 'Carpenter Arrival', features again Zeffira's voice singing an eerie melody on top of cembalo chords and long, sustained synthesiser sounds, representing again Evelyn's fascination.

3.2.3 LIMINAL SOUNDS AS KINK AND NON-KINK

The writer and director of *DoB,* Peter Strickland, describes the film in an interview extra included as part of the DVD as 'not realistic at all'. In fact, his vision of the film is that of a fairy tale.[57] This is very much present in quite a few of the scenes in the film, none more so than the one I refer to as, in want of a better term, 'the dream sequence.' What is striking about this lengthy sequence is that it is difficult to tell exactly where the 'dream' begins and where it ends. The actions of the characters and the use of audiovisual means are initially quite consistent. However, the film goes into an experimental phase, resembling video art[58] more than a feature film. And, just as organically as it slipped into this experimental place, the film returns to traditional film narrative, insofar as it is utilised in the first place.

In my view, this transition in and out of video art aesthetics is a narrative tool, representing a symbolic, liminal space for both characters and their experiences of the sexual SM power play that only one of them demands. Musicologist Holly Rogers (2013a, 528–529) discusses liminality in video art as two different, interconnected forms: firstly, as a spatial metaphor, and secondly, as a temporal process. Liminality[59] is usually understood as a mental process, where a person 'hovers [between] different social and existential spaces, and it is here that the person becomes acutely aware of his or her social and cultural positioning' (ibid. 528). In a sense, both characters are undergoing a rite of passage towards new existences. However, Cynthia, fails to go through the entire process, and continues within her liminal space even beyond the scope of the film. Evelyn, at least briefly, manages to surpass her insistence on the sexual-fantastical and meets Cynthia on a non-kink level as a result of this liminal process.

Rogers (2013a, 528) theorises that video art often negotiates liminal spaces in spatial and temporal ways, which are different (but not necessarily radically) from each other in their expressive means. I suggest here that both spatial and temporal negotiations of liminal spaces are used in this fantasy sequence to portray two different experiences. In the dream sequence scene, it becomes apparent that Evelyn is in awe of the liminal space between her sexual fantasy and her relationship with Cynthia. She insists on maintaining the fantastical space and not breaking out of it for as long as possible. Her liminality is presented as a spatial and a mental state, but also one of suspended time. Cynthia's liminal

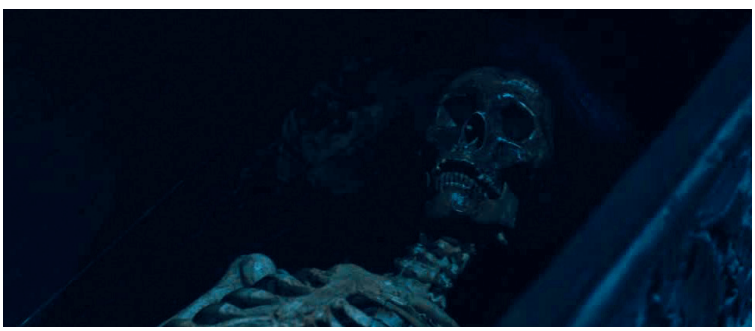
[57] It could be argued here that the visual references to Jean Cocteau's film *La belle et la bête* (1949) both adds to this fairy tale atmosphere in *DoB*, but also serves as an homage to queer film history in general. For other uses of Cocteau's film in popular culture and music, see for example Richardson 2012, 173–189; Välimäki 2015, 62–64.

[58] Mixing video art with narrative film is not specific to this film only. Narrative-based film and context-based video art meet quite often in both genres. See Rogers 2013a, 535; 2013b, 152–155; Turim & Walsh 2013, 543. For video art and music research, see Kassabian 2007, 62–63, and Rogers 2013a; 2013b.

[59] Liminality is a concept often used in ethnography, as first theorised by Arnold van Gennep (2004 [1960]), and Victor W. Turner (1970 [1964]). It is the second stage of rites of passage, where members of a society go through a ritual after which they are transformed in the eyes of the society. The full three stages of this rite are separation, liminality and reassimilation (Rogers 2013, 628). While the origins of the concept include the idea of a rite, Bjørn Thomassen (2014, 90) points out that the *experience* of liminality need not include a rite of any sort. This, in my view, is what is depicted in the dream sequence of *Duke of Burgundy*. For more on liminal spaces between diegetic and non-diegetic music, see Stilwell 2007, 186.

space in the dream is, in a sense, positioned in opposition to Evelyn's, with her liminality consisting of cross-temporal transference between her social-fantastical role towards Evelyn (her dominant role), and the genuine fear and worry that, at some point, either or both of the women will end up suffering physically and/or mentally as a result of the fantasy game. Her liminality is temporally more mobile, as it fluctuates between past, present, and imagined (feared) future. (See also chapter 4.2.1.)

First, I will discuss Cynthia and her temporally liminal nightmare. (1:18:07 onwards.) As Evelyn enters the room, the audience see Cynthia sitting down, rigid and statuesque, and the camera zooms to her crotch area. The screen fades to black, and we see a flying moth.[60] Cynthia then awakens to the sound of Evelyn's disembodied voice whispering 'Pinastri', her safety word, and finds her skeleton in the casket where Evelyn has slept in a previous scene. Cynthia hears a scream and goes to the balcony, seeing Evelyn disappear into the woods. Cynthia follows, finding another casket in the garden, and finds Evelyn there, tied up. Cynthia embraces her, and Evelyn pulls Cynthia into the casket, the lid closing heavily. The camera zooms out from Cynthia's immobile crotch area. (Images 13–16.)

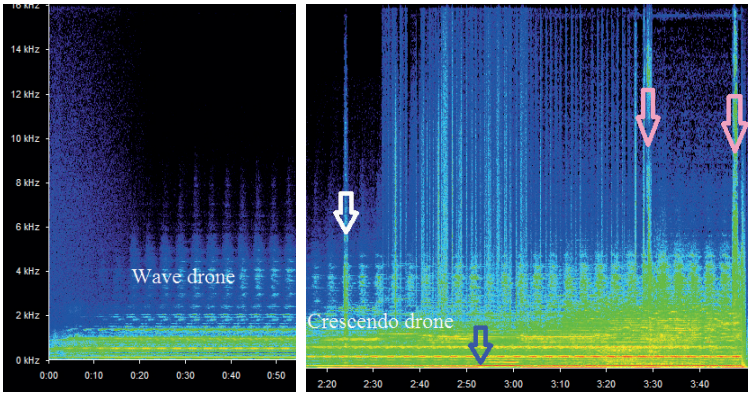


[60] Moths and butterflies work throughout the film as symbols for transformation, and therefore also the liminal spaces depicted in the dream sequences. As a queer symbol, butterflies are seen as 'emerging' from the chrysalis (closet), or caterpillar stage as their 'true' queer selves. I shall return to the butterfly symbols later.

Figures 13–15. Cynthia's nightmare. Zooming camera to Cynthia's crotch, skeleton Evelyn, Cynthia lifting Evelyn from the casket.

Throughout the nightmare scene, the hues of the images are dark, intimating the nocturnal hours. A throbbing, low-timbre drone (see figure 16) is heard continuously, interrupted only by the sounds of Cynthia's footsteps, keys jangling, Evelyn's voice, the casket's lock opening and lid creaking, and the rustle of Cynthia's clothing. With a slow *crescendo*, the electric waving drone sound intensifies throughout the scene, creating both a fantastical (because markedly different from previous sound cues) and fluent sound to establish the dream-like mood of the scene, and an intensification of the angst portrayed in the dream sequence. Another low drone, less fantastical, steady and more insistent than the first, enters the soundscape as Cynthia sees Evelyn disappearing in the garden (see figure 16–17; for a full spectrum analysis image, see appendix 6). The second drone creates a strongly suspenseful *crescendo* as Cynthia again approaches Evelyn's casket, now more coffin-like than ever, reminiscent of the sense of anxiety that is often found in horror film soundtracks (see, for example, Donnelly 2005, 91; Halfyard 2010, 21). The closing of the casket lid cuts off the noise dramatically, as Evelyn pulls Cynthia into the casket and both women are caught inside. Evelyn's whispered safety word repeats as the camera zooms out of Cynthia's crotch area. While the voice is Evelyn's, the pleading word could represent Cynthia and her wish to end the nightmare as one would end an SM scene through a safety word.[61]

[61] The safety word method allows the sub the power to stop a sadomasochism scenario at any given moment by uttering the mutually agreed upon word, and the dom should always respect this by stopping the activity. In this scene, Evelyn's whispered safety word could indeed represent Cynthia's subconscious, pleading either the dream to stop, or Evelyn to stop insisting on the SM play.



Figures 16–17. Spectrum analysis images of throbbing wave drone (fig. 16) and crescendo drone (fig. 17). For the full image, see appendix 6.

In contrast, Cynthia's dream sequence is mobile, dreamlike in its visual storytelling technique rather than strictly video art, and toys with temporality in fluid ways. Cynthia could be said to inhabit simultaneously three different time spheres within her liminal space: the past, the present, and the future. Bjørn Thomassen (2014, 89) depicts temporal liminality as capable of happening during moments, periods (e.g. weeks, months) or even epochs (e.g. decades, generations). Keeping this in mind, it becomes unclear how long Cynthia has resided in her sexual-temporal liminal space. Thomassen (ibid. 90) lists critical life changes as belonging to periodical liminality in an individual's life, which seems to be represented in the dream sequence. The past endeavours and personal/sexual sacrifices that Cynthia has gone through are represented in her submerging with Evelyn into the casket, while the worries of the future are represented by the skeleton.

Margot D. Weiss (2011, 169) attests that anxious feelings are common among dominants, but usually they can transcend this through (Foucaultian) self-mastery and introspection:

> These subjects are forged and remake themselves through the embodiment of various social norms, not through their internalisation […] or their subversion […]. This kind of embodiment requires self-cultivation, but – especially for those whose SM roles match social norms of gender – navigating these norms produces anxiety.

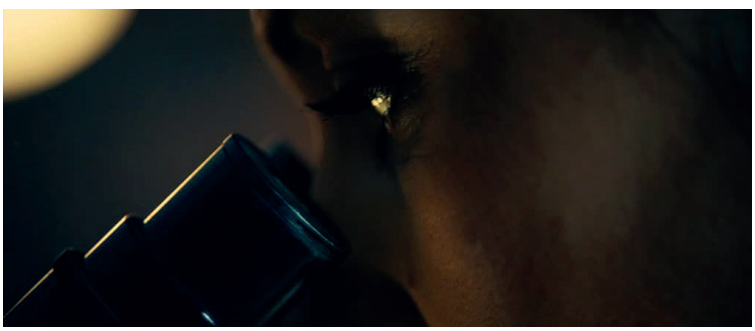
Cynthia never manages to make this transition, as the rigidly scripted and controlled SM play between Cynthia and Evelyn never allows for such 'self-cultivation', requiring subjects to 'monitor, test, improve and transform' (Foucault 1990, 28) themselves in their relationships. Cynthia is aware of her position as an older colleague and as a non-SM subject, and in this way may be thought to suffer more emotional turmoil and anxiety than someone with SM preferences.

Sonically, temporal liminality is represented in the technological wave drone (figure 16), which has no beat or rhythm, just a slow pulse ending nowhere. It could represent the past of the relationship, submerging and emerging in Cynthia's mind, or steadily pulsating onwards as a sequence of SM sex scenes and the spaces in between. The present is

conveyed through sound effects, which are closely synched to the images, but feel disjointed and empty compared to the background drones. Indeed, the immediacy of the scene depends on the sound effects' audiovisual illusion, or 'added value' (Chion 1994, 5; 2009, 466–467), where the tight synchronicity of the sound effects and screen create a naturalising effect. We experience Cynthia's movements in the room as realistic because they are highlighted sonically, moving in the 'now', but the drone dislocates them from the present, making them seem clumsy. Finally, the second *crescendo* drone (figure 17), emerging later in the scene and constantly growing in volume, represents Cynthia's fears of the future, her fear of embracing SM sexuality, and losing Evelyn. Furthermore, as becomes evident from the spectrum analysis image, the two drones coalesce into each other, building upon each other's overtones (see figure 17, spreading green colour). In this way, the past and the future, the steady ongoing relationship and the feared future meet auditively, as Cynthia is drawn into the casket by Evelyn. Mainly, Cynthia is concerned with losing herself and her own sexuality as a consequence of her compliance with Evelyn's desires. In other words, the sound represents her fear of 'destruction of identity', which is a part of liminality (Thomassen 2014, 92).

Where Cynthia suffers from a temporally liminal nightmare, Evelyn's experience is more that of spatial liminality (see Thomassen 2014, 91; Rogers 2013a, 528). As the camera moves away from Cynthia's immobile figure, Evelyn walks slowly and rhythmically out the door. The floor creaks under her feet. As the shot changes to Evelyn at the door, we see that she is blindfolded. As Evelyn continues to walk, a flurry of butterflies start to whirl around her. Unflinching, she moves on. The butterflies' wings are heard fluttering, and the butterflies multiply and converge until there is no trace of Evelyn, and the image melts into a messy, restless butterfly swarm, approaching the camera/audience and finally dissolving into extreme close-ups of the butterfly wings. The close-ups slow in tempo, as do the wing sound effects. The sequence ends with Evelyn studying the images through a microscope (1:22:35 onwards; see images 17–20.) The butterfly is an important symbol throughout the film as it represents both women's professions, but also Evelyn's desires, delicate beauty and perhaps even lesbian sexuality (the butterfly or moth wing shape does resemble the form of the female pelvis).[62] By showing Evelyn's image literally drowning under the wings of the butterflies, and letting the soundtrack become engulfed in the fluttery sounds of the wings, the spatial/auditive liminality of the film becomes a mixture of landscape and detail, a crowd of butterflies and single wing shots/sounds. A single Evelyn is contrasted by hundreds of insects. Finally, the camera cuts to Evelyn's eye, observing through a microscope, the fluttery noises suddenly gone. This, in a sense, symbolises her completing the liminal transformation process, by observing the butterflies she became lost in. As a result of this transformation, Evelyn is able to suggest living without SM sex with Cynthia, although her resolve later proves to be only momentary.

[62] The butterfly/moth symbolism could also be an extension of the mirror symbol, as their wings are symmetrical mirror images by themselves. Another film that utilises insects as symbols for the characters in the film is Philip Haas's *Angels and Insects* (1995), although the intent is to reveal traits of the decadence of the British upper class through insects. This is similar also to David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), where suburbian secrets (the metaphor often used for SM inclinations) are symbolised using insects in the opening scene.



Figures 18–20. Evelyn's fantasy. Evelyn walking into butterflies, extreme close-up of wings, Evelyn studying butterflies.

Of course, the image and the sounds engulfing Evelyn also depict the submissive experience. Blindfolded (an image commonly used in SM scenes), Evelyn steps into a space that consumes her entire body and overwhelms her senses. Without her vision, she can only hear and feel the fluttery wings. Similarly, the audience loses their visual cues for Evelyn as she disappears into a cloud of butterfly wings. The sounds and the images engulf her, and she loses the sense of subjectivity, a common experience with submissives (see Jacobson 2015). Yet, at the same time the cut to her eye observing the butterfly wings through a microscope depicts her control over her experience and pleasure. The scene again suggests that the decisive power in an SM relationship is with the submissive. In comparison to Cynthia's nightmare scenes with the overlapping drone sounds akin to horror film music,

the difference between both women's experiences is highlighted using audiovisual means. While Evelyn retains control, Cynthia loses it.

Evelyn's dream scene further establishes another liminal space between Evelyn and the audience. As Holly Rogers (2013a, 540) observes in her analysis of Eija-Liisa Ahtila's multiscreen video art installations, the experience for the audience is both that of immersion as well as standing outside of the film. While *DoB* is certainly not a multiscreen video art work, the effect seems to be the same. By combining traditional narrative cinema and video art, there are at least two different 'screens' through which the audience sees and experiences the story. In this way, we can agree with Rogers's observation about distinctions between the artwork and audience, inside and outside of the narrative, or the self of the audience and the represented figure of the Other (Evelyn), that 'do not dissolve, but rather coexist. […] [W]e are able temporarily to look into both worlds.' (Ibid.) Evelyn's liminal space between her sexual fantasy and her relationship with Cynthia is, in this way, almost a tactile experience for the audience, as the fluttering sound of the wings also 'zooms in' on the butterflies together with the camera; or, the audio track 'zooms in' on the sound through panning, increasing volume and ultimately separating the sounds into individual flutters. The audience delves into her fantasy, her fascination, while standing outside of it; understanding it, yet not completely. Furthermore, the effect of focusing the video art from Evelyn to the audience creates a feeling of both fascination and dread. The butterflies converge and hit *our* eyes, and not Evelyn's; hers are covered. The boundaries between the film, the canvas or screen, the camera, and our eyes become blurred. It is the space of an Uncanny fantasy that feels familiar (because of the multisensory fluttering sound), yet it is somehow strange and scary. The scene both invites the audience in, whilst simultaneously producing Brechtian distance.

Duke of Burgundy is a multifaceted film, which depicts the double-sidedness of SM erotic relationships in a direct way. Indeed, at its heart, the film is about the negotiations within a relationship and the different romantic/sexual needs of those involved. Through this audiovisual reading of the eroticism and also the more ambiguous, even dreadful, side of SM erotica in film music and sounds, in the next section of this thesis I frame the two films together, discussing their similarities thematically as well as in audiovisual depictions of SM erotica.

3.3 THRILL OF EXTREMES

So far, I have separately discussed the films *Secretary* and *Duke of Burgundy* to explore how sound and music are used to represent SM erotica in film, and how differently juxtaposed elements and their combination can affect the sadomasochistic experience. While *Secretary* negotiates SM erotica through comedy, *Duke of Burgundy* is a drama with fantastical and surreal artistic elements. In these two examples, common themes regarding the audiovisual techniques of SM films arise, and warrant further discussion. This section of the thesis offers a discussion of both films, the similarities in their music and sound design, the primary means through which audiovisual feelings of eroticism are established and how these analyses may be applied to other SM films.

3.3.1 SUBSPACES, SUBSOUNDS

Lee and Evelyn, the women presented as sexually submissive in my case study films, have much in common, audiovisually and otherwise. Here, I discuss their pleasures through the concept of subspace (in bondage, 'rope space'; Jacobson 2015; Rozen 2010), an altered state of mind that the submissive sometimes achieves during an SM scene, akin to meditation or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs: 'It's presence. It feels like an opportunity to completely let go and to be completely present at the same time.' (BDSM practitioner quoted in Jacobson 2015.)

In both films, Lee and Evelyn have a more extensive sonic space than those of the (supposed) dominants, Edward and Cynthia. Their subsounds are represented by different musical means, but the overall effects are similar. While Lee goes through a process of discovery in pleasure, Evelyn already knows exactly what kind of pleasure she seeks.

Figures 21–22. Lee and Evelyn in their subspaces. Lee after her first spanking, Evelyn daydreaming.

Much of the time, the submissive's reactions are depicted in tight close-ups, and we see them frequently throughout both films. (See figures 21–22.) This, combined with their sonic spaces, allows viewers an insight into their psyches as well as their pleasures, which

could easily represent subspace, the mental state of arousal mixed with psychological states of flow,[63] pleasure, and compliance. Omitting these close up shots and the dreamy/sexual music from either of the films would result in very different readings. The music frames the films audiovisually around the subjective experiences of both submissives, leaving little room for doubt concerning the validity of their pleasure; 'the nondiegetic music places us inside a character's head, within that character's subjectivity' (Stilwell 2007, 194; see also Gorbman 1987, 22). By making the submissives the audiovisually agentic subjects of the films, the effect is conveyed that the characters are a long way from being mere passive recipients of patriarchal coercion and brainwashing. (See chapter 2.2.2.)

Audiovisually, Lee's and Evelyn's subspaces are represented in similar ways. Their fantasies usually follow danceable rhythmic patterns (Baroque dances in *DoB*, a pseudo-funk bass figure in *Secretary*) mixed with heavily echoed instruments. Both submissives also use vocal masks (see Hawkins 2009a, 170–173)[64] in their subspace plays, but in different ways. While Evelyn's vocal mask is that of a juvenile, with slow and quiet speech, Lee adopts a lower voice with camp hues and double codings, separating this voice from her usual, high vocal pitch. The double entendre in both voices encodes the SM sex scenes as playful and coquettish instead of being representations of forced violence, endearing the submissives to the audience as well as empowering them in their sexual escapades.

Still, some concerns as to the ethical responsibilities that obtain when representing SM characters might be expressed with regard to both films. *Secretary* has received its fair share of criticism. A feminist view of Lee's mental health issues is likely to find their transformation into SM sexuality problematic. (Cossman 2004, 871; see also Weiss 2006, 115–116.) While some might focus on how sexually abusing a mentally fragile person is highly questionable, others would criticise the aligning of mental illness with SM preferences, thinking it misleading and disrespectful to SM practitioners at large. This is where the analysis of music and sound effects arrive at a critical point. In *Secretary*, the paranoid reading of Lee as the victim of Edward's monstrous appetites becomes a ludicrous point when listening to the sound world of the film. Most of the sounds, music and sound effects alike, describe Lee's experiences and her inner transformation. Audiovisually, the case for her agency is strong: she is represented not only in the music, but the narrator's voice as well. The audience is afforded a privileged view of her psyche, and can trace the steps of her journey of self-discovery easily, while understanding her appreciation and demands for sexual pleasure. On the other hand, Edward's fetishised existence in the auditive track becomes almost an inverted example of the courtly love scenario (see Žižek 1993, and chapter 4.1.2), whereby Lee is the persuer, and Edward the pursued. It may thus be seen that the power statuses of these characters are inverted in the storyline, auditively and otherwise.

[63] See chapter 4.1.1; Csikszentmihalyi 2013.

[64] Hawkins (2009a) uses the term 'vocal mask' especially in musical performances and singing, which includes also a certain way of pronouncing words (often, the so-called 'Mockney' accent). In a way, we could theorise Lee and Evelyn as using these as well: Lee's emphasised '*sss*-secretary' and Evelyn's Italian accent, more prominent in the SM scenes and making passing commentary on the status of immigrant workers, both stylise the submission as a vocal mask, but also differentiate their 'real' voices to the audience, highlighting their performativity and agency in the SM scenes.

What makes *Secretary* a benchmark in SM films and representations of SM erotica and even romantic comedies, is that Lee, who in all aspects would be considered powerless, is given such space and freedom to express her will and pleasure. In musicological words, she is envoicing herself through the prevalence of her auditive space. Musicologist Carolyn Abbate (1993, 229, 237) writes about the envoicement of women in opera, disputing the argument that women are an endangered species on the operatic stage, only there to be erased.[65] According to Abbate, this claim does not take into account that often the dying women are empowered by their envoicement or their musical presence, if not by the plotlines of the operas. In this way, they are awarded power through transgressing their assigned roles as victims by granting them musical space and brilliance. While Lee is not, perhaps fortuitously, an operatic woman destined for a musically transcendental downfall, she is similarly envoiced through her presence in the sounds of the film. This can even be seen in the ways that Lee uses her own voice: starting out as mousy and timid, transforming to assertive and decisive during the course of the film.[66]

Similarly in *DoB*, it soon becomes apparent who is in control of the relationship. In fact, Evelyn's demand for pleasure becomes a strain in the couple's relationship, to the point that the supposedly dominant Cynthia suffers pangs of guilt and doubt during, and in between, SM play scenarios. Audiovisually, Evelyn's arousal is, however, very much present: quite often, music represents her subspace, where she wants to reside. It is even suggested that Evelyn can get a little unpleasant if she is denied her sexual play. For example, she chastises Cynthia for wearing comfortable clothes instead of sexy ones, or simply seeks pleasure outside of the primary relationship without consulting her partner. Such actions would be frowned upon by the SM community, as communication and trust are key factors in a successful SM relationship (Nichols 2006, 285; Kleinplatz 2006, 339).

In a sense, discussing agency in both films becomes a discussion of a largely unrecognised phenomenon: that of 'the demanding submissive'. Both women claim their agency by demanding sexual pleasure through the 'active and wilful construction of masochistic sexuality' (McPhee 2014, 89). Traditionally, women were not encouraged to take active roles in their sexual lives, but masochism was highly encouraged. Mixing agency with masochism becomes a new, queer circuit for the women portrayed in the films. In this way, their agency is heightened, made masculine in the traditional sense, which effectively queers the notions of agency and sexual assertiveness as belonging 'only' to the realm of men or masculinity in general. By extension, the concept of sexual pleasure (SM, masochistic, or otherwise) as an active right, recognised as not only acceptable but a biological need, becomes feminised as well. Ruth McPhee (2014, 89) writes of *Secretary*, and in parts, could be writing of *DoB* as well:

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[65] See Clément 1988.

[66] Then again, Lee's vocal transformation is instigated and coached by Edward. There is a telling scene where he teaches her how to answer the phone and to use her voice more assertively. However, her envoicement becomes clear when in a later scene, she uses this tone of voice to address her now-jilted boyfriend Peter, ordering him to go away. Limited as her power strategies towards Edward may be, Lee is empowered through her voice.

> …submission is by no means parallel to powerlessness, […and] masochistic desire can be an actively persuasive (even, perhaps, manipulative) form of sexual desire rather than a purely passive and receptive state. […] Hart's assertion that seeming and being must not be considered equivalent in the movements of sadomasochistic pleasure is played out in the film and in fact their relationship is shown to be based in a reciprocal movement that has a positive effect upon both their subjectivities.[67]

McPhee's 'reciprocal movement' towards a more intact subjectivity does not occur in the relationship depicted in *DoB*, but the film leaves the narrative open-ended.

Another point made in both films is that the submissives retreat to natural environments during their introspective moments: Lee is often shown near or immersed in water,[68] and Evelyn always starts her 'panties fantasy' with a bicycle trip to a forest with a stream in it. In *Secretary*, director Steven Shainberg creates a natural space for Lee to enter in Mr. Grey's office, which is the only space in the film where organic materials are used (wooden walls, orchids). In *DoB*, Evelyn's and Cynthia's house, and by extension their whole world, is in a temporally displaced, non-technologised space with vintage furniture and clothes. Auditively, nature is assigned an accentuated place in the sound design: the prominent sound effect of babbling brooks and butterfly wings in *DoB* (and giving both auditive space also in the soundtrack). The lack of synthesised materials in both films' spaces where the sexual activities occur makes a prominent point about sex and sexuality being a *natural* space for human beings. By extension, surrounding these sub women with nature also makes a subtle point for the viewers that in fact, their sadomasochistic form of sexuality is a natural one, not a by-product of mental illness, depression or coercion. The presence of nature also juxtaposes culture and nature, presenting sexual submission as a disavowal of cultural encodings and succumbing to nature, the biological and even animalistic side of human life. Still, blatant bestiality is avoided: both nature spaces are stylised, aestheticised and all in all, put forward in an uncomplicated way.

While the submissive women are depicted sonically and otherwise in an empowered way, the dominants in both films occupy ambivalent positions. Indeed, the control and non-control of situations is often renegotiated in the films, also sonically, which I discuss in the following section.

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[67] McPhee (2014, 16) alludes here to Lynda Hart's (1998) writing about the difference between what seems to be the case and what is the case. For example, 'one who watches, […] cannot distinguish between the fantasy and the event; only the participant can make that distinction. She alone knows that her fantasy is not the real thing, both inside and outside the fantasy.' (Hart 1998, 201.) See also section 5.2.

[68] Ruth McPhee (2014, 89) reads scenes of Lee half immersed in water, among other visual cues, as representing her fragmentary self before meeting Edward. While this is a fascinating reading, it is also valid to think of the water's natural, pre-natal state as a comforting, womb-like surrounding for Lee, as well as emphasising the naturalness of her sexuality. The water makes her sexuality natural, and her sexuality makes the water also representative of her sexuality literally 'emerging', Steven Shainberg mentions in the commentary track of the DVD.

3.3.2 CONTROL ISSUES

Cynthia dresses up in a corset, preparing for yet another play scene with Evelyn. She's struggling to get into the corset comfortably, perhaps paining over her hurt back a little. Frustratedly, she rips a stocking off her right leg. (*Duke of Burgundy,* 0:46:53–0:47:45.) Edward, confused by the newly unfolding relationship between him and Lee, writes a message for her on a typewriter: 'Dear Lee, this is disgusting. I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm like this.' Before giving it to her, he has second thoughts, and feeds the letter through a shredder before firing her. (*Secretary,* 01:18:15–01:20:47.)

In both films, the (assumed) dominants are portrayed as somehow enduring an inner struggle. Edward experiences pangs of guilt over his sexual urges, and Cynthia worries for her lover's well-being while not really understanding her sexual appetites, becoming frustrated by her own cold, theatrical performances. Feelings of guilt experienced by the dominant party in SM relationships are fairly commonly reported. While SM scenes are performative and not necessarily based on the real powers at play in a relationship, we cannot escape the fact that eroticising existing power relations lies at the heart of SM experience. Occupying the dominant role, and furthermore preferring it to the submissive side, can cause a person a great deal of introspection, doubt and even guilt. This 'dominant guilt' is, however, very much gendered and racially positioned, and perhaps in a different way than one might at first assume: dominant heterosexual men are reported to hold more feelings of guilt than dominant women. (See Weiss 2011, 145–147.) As Patrick Califia (2002, 403) asks, 'Is it ok for me to be that heterosexual? To be a dominant male?' This functions, however, as an example of interplay between the SM position persona and the everyday character, as the frame between performance and performativity, fantastical and 'real'.

Such insecurity of both dominants in the films is created by challenging the traditional romantic (comedy) genre clichés of the desired man and the fetishised sexual dominatrix. Director Steven Shainberg (About.com, 2002) comments on Edward:

> [H]e's never scary but he is scared, he's scared of love and I think a lot of men are. His character has a tremendous amount of self-hate for what he wants and what he needs and he's really the one in the movie, ironically, who thinks there's something wrong with him.

Often, Edward is depicted as insecure, hiding from confrontational situations (see figure 23) and doing excessive amounts of exercise, especially when he becomes aroused. In a way, this is notably different from the fetishised entity of the powerful male often present in the 'women's' romance genre. (See also McPhee 2014, 90.) There is a distinct difference between Mr. Grey of *Secretary* and, for example, Mr. Grey of *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015). While Mr. Grey of *Fifty Shades* (Jamie Dornan) exhibits power and control in every situation in his life, only falling momentarily to a vulnerable state, Mr. Grey of *Secretary* is more often seen in his insecure state than in his dominant persona. Indeed, Edward uses Lee's typewriter when writing her the aforementioned letter expressing his feelings of shame, subverting their power positions in the plot. Their places of self-assuredness and timidity are reversed through the act of typewriting, as are their gendered roles of

the workplace (see chapter 3.1.1; Kittler 1999, 183, 216). This subversion between power positions or indeed genders never happens in *Fifty Shades.* Furthermore, Edward's voice quality reveals his character's insecurity through the use of higher pitch and shaky voice production, whereas both Mr. Greys' dominant voices are alike in lower pitch, chest register and slow, pristine pronunciation.

Similarly to Edward, Cynthia stares at herself in the mirror on many occasions while preparing for her role as a dominatrix. These fleeting moments give spectator-auditors much to consider. In the carpenter scene, we see Cynthia donning a bonnet, much like Little Red Riding Hood, or the heroine of a film adapted from a Jane Austen book. (0:46:20 onwards; see figure 24.) This could be seen as representative of her more romantic sexual tastes, for the lack of a better word, more innocent than the sexual performances she is agreeing to. This sense is enhanced by Cat's Eyes music ('Reflections').[69] The music here is rife with musical semiotic signs of grief and loss. The solo cello mixed with backing celesta chords, oboe and clarinet (again, altered digitally) form a musical representation of Cynthia's worries about losing her relationship, and her sense of self. Cynthia has trouble vocalising her worries and fears to Evelyn, who seems unreceptive and deeply involved in her own fantasy. Cynthia continues to perform her assigned role, until the scene where during SM play (the panties fantasy) Cynthia's voice breaks as she asks, as scripted: 'How could you not see it? I left it there, on the pile.' Her voice breaking down as a plea, rather than reprimand, reveals Cynthia's question to Evelyn: how did she miss Cynthia's efforts and discomfort during the SM scenes? Cynthia's voice, mature and rich in hue, becomes here emotionally moved, rising in pitch while she swallows and finally breaks down in tears (1:30:15 onwards.)

Whether or not both dominants achieve their happy ending is debatable. With Edward, it is not entirely clear whether his personal issues are resolved simply by finding someone who accepts his sexual curiosities. In the final scene of *DoB,* Cynthia is yet again preparing for another SM play scene, and with Evelyn ringing the doorbell, seems to look at her reflection in the mirror all the more sadly in light of the situation. A level of manipulation is present in both storylines, especially through the coercion of dominants by submissives. Control of not only sexual play but, in essence, the relationship itself, seems to still be with the submissive characters of Lee and Evelyn, leaving Edward and Cynthia as trophy partners, the Othered Lady/Master in the courtly love scenario, where their fetish value is preserved only as long as their radical Otherness is maintained. Edward seems happy after marrying Lee, but can we assume that a normative relationship (in outward appearances, at least) is enough to satisfy his risk taking, kinky sexuality? Cynthia, on the other hand, seems again to give into Evelyn's fantasies without regard for her own sexual wellbeing. Both dominants must stay slightly broken in order for them to fulfil their roles in the stories, as the ever-beautiful and sexy Others. With this debate suspended, I will next return to the music and sounds of both films, and try to pinpoint the exact strategies

[69] 'Reflections' is a version of the later music track 'Requiem for Duke of Burgundy', which depicts the end of Evelyn's fantastical escapades later on in the film. A sense of sanctifying the tragedy is certainly present throughout the film.

that are used to portray SM-erotic atmospheres and sensations within the films. (The discussion of agency in the fetishised role of the Other is continued in section 4.3.2.)

Figures 23–24. Edward hiding in a corridor, peeping at Lee; Cynthia in her Jane Austen bonnet.

3.3.3 MUSICALLY SPEAKING: A TOUCH OF EXTREMES

Analysing the role of music and film sounds in SM-erotic films quite often means looking for polarised elements that create a new, sensual atmosphere. This is not a new phenomenon, nor is it solely bound to SM-erotica. The same musical techniques would create different moods in different contexts, and therefore not all musical extremes that work together should be considered sadomasochistic. However, some musical and auditive techniques are used frequently when describing specifically SM-erotic experiences, where the intention is to depict sexual pleasure. Quite a number of SM films encode the SM experience as nonsexual or grotesque with anempathetic soundspaces (for example, Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* [2009] or *Nymphomania vol. II* [2013], Michael Rowe's *Leap Year* [2010], and Bigas Luna's *The Ages of Lulu* [1990]). Focusing explicitly on the pleasurable, erotic aspects of SM representations in film and sound, I here identify six distinct musical techniques that convey sadomasochistic erotica musically.

1. **The multisensory nature of the sound production** (see especially section 3.1.3). Adding a strike or a heightened plucking *pizzicato* technique to the instruments makes the body, or more accurately, the hands and fingers of the instrumentalists heard. In *Secretary* and Badalamenti's soundtrack this is especially striking. Although no musicians playing the score are identified, their embodied presence is still clearly heard. Adding an embodied layer to the music humanises its production, and brings the bodies of the invisible musicians to the music, creating an effect of intimacy. In *DoB*, the strong presence of the composers is heard throughout the music, as Cat's Eyes perform the music themselves. Especially Rachel Zeffira's musical/embodied presence extends the auditive spaces of both characters of the film, but she also adds her breathing to the music through the use of wind instruments, and her singing voice. The interplay between onscreen women and off-screen musicians becomes prominent and intimate. (See also Richardson 2012, 78–82.) This multisensory experience can also be achieved with sound effects (see, for example, Chion 2009, 237).

2. **The juxtaposition of technological patterns with more freely structured patterns in the rhythms, beat, and/or pulse of the music.** Badalamenti's 'Bathing Blossom', discussed in section 3.1.3, is an example of this: while the bass, guitar and drum set create a very rhythmic (dare I say, disciplined) danceable pattern, these are juxtaposed with a rhythmically and pitch-wise indistinct synthesiser sound, adding a touch of the fantastical to the sexualised bass figure and tactile guitar melody. In *DoB,* the strict patterns of Baroque dances are technologically 'queered' with heavy reverb to the point that their pulse is also rendered ambiguous, as in 'Moth' (see example 6 in section 3.2.1), where a classical flute is enhanced with a heavy delay effect so that the melody becomes a canon of sorts, making the oboe melody more dreamlike. This serves as a sonic metaphor for disciplined forms being equal to physical discipline and self-regulation, but also for bondage through restricting music (and player) to a strict technological pattern. The less structured, freer patterns are needed, then, to accentuate the strictness of the technological pattern in juxtaposition.

3. **The juxtaposition of synthesised or technologically mediated instruments with acoustic instruments** creates a delicate relationship between synthetic and acoustic sounds. It is noteworthy that Badalamenti uses both electric bass and acoustic guitar, adding synthesisers and piano in the masturbation scene to create a surreal depiction of Lee's sexual escape. The interplay between embodied and fantastical is made auditive with haptic instruments interacting with more ethereal ones. In *Duke of Burgundy*, this effect is produced a little differently, through the heavy manipulation of acoustic instruments with effects, where the concepts of acoustic and enhanced overtone sounds work together in new ways. The idea of technology juxtaposed with 'natural' sounds is taken to the extreme by adding sounds of nature to the mix as well, such as babbling brooks, birdsong, cat's purring, wind blowing, and the sound of fluttering butterfly wings.

4. **The inventive use of silence and sound** in films can create an impression of an erotic experience. As Michel Chion (1994, 57) has stated, 'silence is never a neutral emptiness. It is the negative of sound we've heard beforehand or imagined; it is the product of a contrast.' With careful placing of the sounds and distancing them from one another through the use of silence, can result in a heightened sense of presence in the scene. This can make the experience of watching the film a more sensual one for the viewer. It can also represent the lack of, or suspension of speech (Chion 1999, 168). The use of silence also constitutes an audiovisual symbol of emptiness and death, which affords feelings of the Uncanny. (See Chion 2009, 147–151; 1994, 56–58; Richardson 2012, 276–281, 287–288.)[70] While the careful placing of silence is not a novel audiovisual technique, these cases illustrate the use of silence to heighten eroticism, and especially SM eroticism in a scene, as the tension between silences and sounds can represent the titillating sense of anticipation that is a core sensation in SM play. (See, for example, Deleuze 2006, 71.)

5. **A fantastical level of representation in music and sound effects**. According to Robynn Stilwell (2007), the gaps left between diegetic and non-diegetic, or rather, the uncanny transgressions between them, create a 'fantastical gap' (ibid. 187) between the diegesis and non-diegetic sound, that 'always *mean*' (ibid. 186). In contrast, film sound theorist K. Donnelly (2005, 2) argues that the divide between diegetic and non-diegetic has become increasingly irrelevant in film music analysis, because 'the music now often occupies a distinct space of its own anyway'. Donnelly (ibid.) speaks of 'musicalisation', where the sounds and music of a film soundtrack vie more for aesthetic value than realism.[71] While Stilwell and Donnelly refer to the same phenomenon, their approaches to the distinction between diegietic and non-diegetic are different. However, a fantastical gap that signifies something more than 'mere' diegesis, or 'mere' moods, times or spaces in the context of the film's narrative, is born when music and sound effects cross the boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic. This certainly seems to be true in the cases of both films: unrealistic sound effects used to render an experience rather than depict a natural sound are most often employed. The same applies to music, which claims its own space both as a metaphor for the characters' sexual imagination, and as an aesthetic value of the film itself. Furthermore, the soundtrack aims to aestheticise sex and sexuality as qualities in their own right, and consequently aligns both films as distinct from (softcore) pornography, which frames the subject as art, an important social/political point in itself.

6. **A sense of the Uncanny** (*Unheimlich*; see Freud 2003; Weiss 2011, 206; see also Donnelly 2005, 8–9). This element might be one of the most central aspects of audiovisual SM eroticism. While Stilwell's (2007, 187) 'fantastical gap' between diegetic and

[70] For silence in music, see for example Losseff & Doctor 2007.

[71] For a similarly strong view to that of Donnelly on the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic and its relevance in the digital age, see also Kassabian 2013, 91–95.

non-diegetic music can represent fantasy, it also has the potential to create an Uncanny feeling, 'of making strange in order to make sense' (ibid. 186). Badalamenti's music encodes many scenes of *Secretary* as slightly disturbing, borrowing conventions from horror, mystery and/or thriller film music.[72] In *Duke of Burgundy*, Cat's Eyes utilise low-pitched instruments (for example, the bassoon) from the *film noir* genre, and the requiem trope from the classical tradition,[73] bringing a sense of unease and dread to the auditive space of the film. The music of SM scenes tends not to be simply erotic or romantic, but a sense of darkness or something slightly unsettling is present.

Some pleasure in SM, for practitioners, lies in the simulated feeling of dread and risk[74] (Weiss 2011, 150; Ortmann & Sprott 2013, 97–99; Weinberg & Kamel 1995, 19; Nichols 2006, 284). Anne McClintock (1993, 109) calls this 'the *sexual* organisation of *social* risk'. When no real danger is experienced, the safely staged, theatrical performance of threat and violence combined with sexual titillation and gratification are reported to be very much present in the SM erotic experience, and are often one of the main motivations for pursuing such experiences. Margot D. Weiss (2011, 62–63) sees this also as an escape from the risk-versus-safety regulated society of the US in the post-9-11 era. The trope works in other ways as well: sexualising the feeling of fear has long been a tradition of interpreting horror (and other fantastical-surrealist genre) films by the means of psychoanalysis (see, for example, Coombs 2008, 36). Combining horror film conventions with a highly sexualised scene in a sadomasochistic film creates a juxtaposition that can both titillate and unnerve the audience. It is, however, a simulated dread that is exhibited, and often the sense of the Uncanny is left unresolved, with the film encoding it as erotic through the expressions and reactions of the characters, or later contextualising it. Or, the audiovisual tropes of film music start to frame a scene as a horror scene, but later reframe it as sexual play.

In this chapter, I have discussed the sadomasochistic-erotic experiences that are particularly found in film music through *Secretary* and *DoB*. Audiovisually, there are many ways in which alternative, kink-sensitive erotica is expressed through music and audiovisual design. However, these two case studies do not address all aspects of representing SM eroticism through film music and sound: each film containing SM erotic scenes depicts the experiences differently, understanding them from different perspectives, and in different contexts. For example, the use of pre-existing popular music during SM sex

[72] Quite often, when I have shown scenes of *Secretary* in presentations, people have reported to me experiencing a sense of inexplicable dread, which is explained by a lack of context given for the film. Some researchers familiar with audiovisual analysis have said that they interpret, for example, the spanking scene completely through horror film aesthetics. Indeed, without seeing the film in its entirety and familiarising themselves with Badalamenti's musical style in the film, the scenes may seem more risky than sexy.

[73] See, for example, Gorbman (2006, 17) for how Mozart's *Requiem* in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) is used to create a feeling of foreshadowing death.

[74] As a distinction, there is a specific fetish of 'edge play' in SM sexuality, where the sexual 'play […] is either physically risky and/or intensely socially taboo' (Ortmann & Sprott 2013, 98). However, the presence of actual, or as Ortmann and Sprott (ibid. 97) call it, 'antisocial' violence still has no place in SM play. On some level, SM sex includes this feeling of simulated risk, even if SM play itself includes no physical violence.

scenes is often a standard choice (for example, in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 2015; see section 6.1), whereas others choose to use very little music in general (one thinks of Lars von Trier's films, or films from Japan, Finland and other countries where the use of film music is usually different from classical Hollywood-style film scores). In my next chapter, I apply the discussion of SM experience and eroticism to popular music more broadly, where I discuss how music is able to express different erotic pleasures in the absence of any visual SM markers.

4 FANTASY AND SURREALISM

Fantasy and surrealism are additional thematic frames of use when discussing the aesthetics of sadomasochistic erotica in the popular imagination. They have an especially close affinity to masochism, which is why I focus here on masochistic aesthetics in SM experiences. In this chapter, I discuss two examples that are similar in their content, but aesthetically different. First, I will revisit the Leonard Cohen song 'I'm Your Man' (1988) mentioned in section 3.1.2 of this thesis, as it is presented in the film *Secretary*. Here I will analyse the song in greater detail, focusing on an element of fantasy as presented through both music and lyrics. Second, I turn to the Elvis Costello song 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' (2002), as a darker, more surreal contrast to Cohen's song. In my analysis, I combine the approaches of the cultural analysis of popular music and close reading. In this chapter of the thesis, I propose that while both songs do not explicitly depict male masochism, they can be interpreted to reference certain aspects of it. I use these examples to illuminate the two sides of the pre-eminent author of masochistic erotica, Sacher-Masoch's, aesthetics, as clearly defined by philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2006) and others. I have identified four themes of Masochianism that inform my readings: romanticism, fetishisation, the sublime, and courtly love (see Pääkkölä 2013, 34, 37, 42). In this chapter, I discuss male, mostly heterosexual (and yet sometimes queer) masochistic/Masochian[1] fantasy, which could be regarded as not belonging to pure SM as we understand it today. I, however, feel that it is instructive to look into the historical aesthetics of masochism (and compare it to Sadeian aesthetics where necessary) as they may be seen to lie at the heart of modern SM- and kink aesthetics as well. I shall also discuss other kink sexualities within the heterosexual sphere, including polyamory and cuckoldry, and approach the case studies through critical masculinity theory, and the concepts of sublimity, queer temporality, nostalgia, and melancholy.

[1] Masochism and Masochianism carry different shades of meaning. While the word 'masochism' is difficult to separate from the historical burden of paraphilia and perversion, Masochianism relates especially to the aesthetics and eroticism found in Sacher-Masoch's novels (principally, *Venus in Furs*, 2006 [1870]; also the anthology of short stories *The Master Masochist*, 1968). I use both terms but not necessarily interchangeably. The word pair 'male masochist' usually implicates a 'male, heterosexual Masochianist', but as the concept of masochism is the most common in both psychology and art studies, I shall use this term, which I see as less elaborate. Furthermore, as will become apparent, there is something masochistic about male (heterosexual) masculinity in itself, so the choice of concept becomes apt, even though it is also multihued.

Here, the word 'fantasy' denotes mostly sexual fantasy, and not the literary genre of fantasy.[2] Sexual fantasies are universal: they are found in every culture and are common to every gender, sexuality and age, and they are cultivated with reference to experiences, personal history and the surrounding culture. While it was previously thought that sexual fantasies were in compensation for a dissatisfactory sexual life, nowadays researchers of sexuality see them as an inscribed aspect of human sexuality. Sexual fantasies, while sometimes pernicious, can be a playground of the imagination without interference or concern for normative social, legal, or moral codes and responsibilities. In some cases, they are conspicuously unrealistic. Sexual fantasies are experienced inside as well as outside of sexual situations. They need not, however, be acted out. (Leitenberg & Henning 1995, 469–470, 490.)

Usually, a certain fantasy level is achieved in SM 'scenes' or 'play'. This often includes allusions to reality, particularly through the invocation of social taboos or personal restrictions. The fantastical SM scene reframes these social realities into something different. In this way, SM scenes are also reminiscent of surreal aesthetics. By surrealism, in this thesis I refer to the historical art movement that arose in the interwar years of the twentieth century, as introduced by the writer André Breton, especially in its later iterations. More specifically, I attend to the convergence between neosurrealism and SM aesthetics in popular music and film. Musicologist John Richardson (2012, 28, 35) has studied neosurrealism in contemporary audiovisual contexts, and defines it as 'altered perceptions of the world' that create images of parallel worlds or realities and which thereby challenge our concept of experience. In audiovisual settings this is usually gained through technologies of dislocation and fragmentation (ibid. 22). Reality is altered to a dream-like state where everyday representations are augmented or reflected upon.

Richardson (2012, 35) distinguishes the surreal from fantasy, depicting the latter as a particular mode of fiction with its own internal logic, resulting in an alternate reality, in which the participants can lose themselves, whereas in surrealism, the escapist factor is not as evident. Surrealism often involves altered perceptions of reality, in connection to the subconscious and dreamlike imagery, but it does not exclude fantasy and the imagination. In the context of the present thesis, fantasy usually indicates a terrain of sexual imagination existing within a person's mind, a scenario that may be visited privately and even enacted. The domain of sexual fantasies is where surrealism meets SM, especially in popular culture. The examples presented here lend support to the argument that in most audiovisual representations of SM sexuality, the domain of sexual fantasy is actualised through surreal aesthetics; namely, strategies of dislocation and fragmentation; the juxtaposition of different elements within the same realm; and a dream-like state achieved through the aforementioned strategies. In their most polarised forms, these different elements can also involve the juxtaposition of everyday reality and (sexual) fantasy, which become enmeshed in an erotic interplay in which perceived reality transforms into 'queered space' (see Halberstam 2005, 5–6), a domain of pure surrealist fantasy. However, the presence of surrealist aesthetics is also what makes some representations of SM somewhat disturbing and seemingly ominous. In music, both surreal and fantastical ways of discussing SM

2 Of course, these two can overlap, but this is not the focus of this thesis.

sex are possible: depicted as either a harmless sexual pastime or a more dystopic manifestation of obsessive sexuality. (See appendix 1, for a brief list of songs with SM lyrics.) Leonard Cohen and Elvis Costello's songs are good examples of this, as Cohen creates a fantastical construction of courtship, while Costello offers a more dystopic, melancholic story of a surreal erotic relationship.

4.1 LEONARD COHEN'S 'I'M YOUR MAN': FANTASTICAL SUBMISSION

I have discussed Leonard Cohen's song 'I'm Your Man' (1988) in section 3.1.2 of this thesis, in the context of the film *Secretary*, where the song features in a montage sequence depicting Lee and Edward's SM play. This section focuses particularly on the music of the song, independent of its use in the film. It is because of Cohen's image as a (hyper)masculine poet and a particular favourite of women, that the song 'I'm Your Man' has piqued my interest. Compared to other songs in Cohen's repertoire, 'I'm Your Man' paints a different picture of masculinity, where the man is willing to place himself completely under the woman's control. My reading of the song is done through the lens of male masochism, or to put it more precisely, the romantic-sublime form of male Masochianism, as proposed in the work of Sacher-Masoch (2006, 1968).

Masochianism is based on four distinct aesthetic principles: the sublime, the romantic, the unattainable, and fetishism. All of these are interrelated, as the sublime experience is about the realisation of something greater than oneself (see Shaw 2006, 1–3), and elevating one's romantic interest to the state of the unreachable creates a fetishistic, desired goal that is never reached but always pursued (Žižek 1993). In this way, we can argue that Masochianism has very much to do with fantasy and imagination. Indeed, Deleuze (2006, 33) notes a certain form of disavowal of reality in the Masochian hero: the Masochian subject is aware of reality but is determined not to enter it. Conversely, he clings to his imaginary world by disavowing reality, which is made into theatrical, dreamlike fantasy (a claim made also by Thanem and Wallenberg 2010, 3.) Deleuze (2006, 72) depicts this as the masochist's insistence on his dreaming (fantasising, daydreaming) even when he is not asleep. Reality is, in this way, made into a dreamlike, suspended reality; as Karmen MacKendrick (1999, 63) suggests, the Masochian 'consciousness is not ripped apart but slowly *stopped*'. This also extends to sexual gratification, as the pleasure is disavowed by postponing pleasure to the extreme. A 'masochistic art of fantasy' (Deleuze 2006, 72) is born: the masochist makes reality a fantasy, as opposed to the sadist, who makes fantasy a reality. In Cohen's song, I shall discuss Masochian fantasy aesthetics at play, as well as incorporating a broader discussion of male heterosexual sexuality and the particular fantasies it sometimes harbours; principally, masochism, polyamory, and cuckoldry (or the fetish of seeing your partner having sexual relations with others).

4.1.1 I'M YOUR WHAT? FLOW OF MASCULINITIES IN MASOCHIANISM

'I'm Your Man' makes a claim for manhood and masculinity that is still quite rare in popular music. Leonard Cohen's music in general could be regarded as an example of hypermasculinity in popular music, although not in the sense of youthful arrogance or physical strength. This is not only because of his trademark low, husky voice which implies masculine authority and control, or his age and experience in the music field, but also his lyrics, which tend to exhibit his admiration but also ambiguity towards women, which because of Cohen's failure to adequately address the nuances of female subjectivity and agency could imply a degree of sexism. This is not exceptional in pop music, nor is it in Sacher-Masoch's works: sexualising powerful women by men can be read in fetishising as well as exalting terms. Furthermore, Cohen has a personal history of polyamory (see Babich 2014, 20), which could be seen to support his hypermasculine image through flaunting sexual prowess. Then again, Cohen's merits as a poet and musician intellectualise his image making him appear less of a mere philanderer and more a connoisseur of life's pleasures, while also making his depictions of masculinity seem knowingly performative. 'I'm Your Man', a relaxed song featuring a slow shuffle rhythm and the fourth track on the album *I'm Your Man* (1988), differs from the hypermasculine image remarkably by depicting a man who informs a woman in the lyrics of all the possibilities that their relationship could include. Erik Steinskog (2010, 147; emphasis mine) writes about the song aptly:

> Cohen's lyrics are clearly directed towards a woman, but the singing 'I' is still not your average tough-guy. The man singing will do anything the 'you' asks… […] And even if, in the bridge, the 'I' singing claims that 'a man never got a woman back/not by begging on his knees', this is pretty much what the singer is doing. And so, *this male is close to begging, and is a passive position towards the woman's agency.* It is she who decides what will happen next; the man will do anything he is asked to. All this is delivered in Cohen's regular quite flat voice, and there are passages where the voice is close to breaking. The 'please' in the bridge almost breaks, before he pulls himself together assuring that 'I'm Your Man'.

Steinskog's reading of 'I'm Your Man' depicts an alternative masculinity in the song that is all too happy to relinquish mastery and control to the feminine presence of the song. (See table 3 for an outline of the song, and appendix 4 for full lyrics.)

The terms 'maleness', 'manhood' and 'masculinity' should not be thought of as easily interchangeable. Critical masculinity studies emerged out of feminist studies with the claim that maleness and masculinity can be critical (and criticised) positions in society, and often these positions escape scrutiny. The male sex and the socio-culturally defined gender 'man' are often seen to be 'invisible', considered to be the universal state of 'normality', innate with social privilege (Halberstam 1998, 2). The terms 'man', 'manhood' and 'masculinity' are also narrowly defined in terms of behavioural, social and sexual norms which, when breached, are quickly stigmatised by peers and society (Weiss 2011, 181).

Masculinity is, however, as much a construction as femininity (Halberstam 1998, 13), and in the truest Butlerian sense, it does not belong solely to any biological sex.

Table 3. Structure, chords and lyric extracts in 'I'm Your Man' (1988).

Structure **Time**	**Main musical cues**	**Chords**	**Lyrics: beginning** **…** **end**
Intro 00:00	shuffle drum, solo synth melody	Em, Bm, G, F#7, Bm	
A 00:24		Em, D, Em, D, Bm, Em, F#7, Bm	If you want a lover, I'll do anything you ask me to … Here I stand I'm your man
A 01:05	Staccato brass accompaniment	Em, D, Em, D, Bm, Em, F#7, Bm	If you want a boxer, I will step into the ring for you, … You know you can I'm your man
B 01:46	female chorus chords, male voice echoing 'please'	D, G, A, D, F#7, Bm, F#7, Bm, G, F#7, G, F#7, G, E7, A, Bm	Ah, the moon's too bright The chain's too tight … I'd say please, (please) I'm your man
Interlude 02:36	solo synth	Bm, Em, Bm, Em, D, Bm, G, F#7, Bm	
A 03:22	female chorus chords from 'father for your child'	Em, D, Em, D, Bm, Em, F#7, Bm	And if you've got to sleep A moment on the road, I will steer for you … Across the sand I'm your man
Outro 04:00 – 04:26	synth solo, Cohen continuing, fade out	Em, D, Em, D…	If you want a lover, I'll do anything you ask me to

Critical masculinity studies in musicology have provided readings of how different masculinities are established, enforced and/or critiqued in musical performances.[3] For example, Jason Lee Oakes (2009) reads three different songs through three different strategies of masculinity: unchallenged (Bo Diddley's 'I'm a Man', 1955), critical (Pulp's 'I'm a Man', 1998) and female masculinity (PJ Harvey's 'Man-Size', 1993). Kink reading Cohen's 'I'm Your Man', I suggest that the song depicts a different masculinity from the hegemonic normative masculinities. If Bo Diddley's 'I'm a Man' (1955) is based on a hegemonic masculinity that is construed through 'heterosexuality, sexual potency, mastery and control' (Oakes 2009, 223), Cohen's song agrees only with the heterosexual aspect (and even that can be contested in a queer reading). Sexual potency is left open, and mastery and control are (ostensibly) afforded to the feminine presence in the song. While the song does not seem to be overturning any social realities of gender politics inside or outside the frame of the song, it seems to illustrate a more fluid form of masculinity than the normative form of masculinity would allow.

This is, in some respects, similar to Sacher-Masoch's world of masochistic fantasies. I understand masculinity in male Masochianism best through Sacher-Masoch's use of the word 'supersensuality' (orig. German *übersinnlich*, having also the meaning of 'supercarnal'; Deleuze 2006, 21).[4] It is defined by a certain urgency: being sensual and then some, both emotionally as well as physically. The Masochian man insists on pleasure, but also on its deferral, prolonging the experience. Similarly, he insists on the persuasion and education[5] of his Lady, where the space outside his fantasy is used only to convince the woman that albeit an unconventional way of being in a romantic relationship, entering this fantasy will be pleasurable for both parties. His fantasy is an escapist one: it flees both social structures that demand his self-restraint and sacrifice. This feeling is inscribed on the body by the punishing Lady, made even more pleasurable by the fact that his discursive, cultural body, so powerful in the society, becomes aching, material flesh made so by someone who is socially conditioned to be submissive to him.[6] Yet he is not a proto-feminist, strictly speaking: the Lady serves as a vessel for his self-exploration. This is very much a masculine fantasy world, which revolves around a strong feminine figure and embraces strong feminine traits, but ultimately gendered differences and imbalances remain in tact.

There are not many songs or depictions of submissive heterosexual men in the popular

[3] For more readings of masculinity in musical performances, see especially Stan Hawkins's *The British Pop Dandy* (2009a), Freya Jarman's edited anthology *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music* (2007) and John Richardson's *Singing Archaeology. Philip Glass's Akhnaten* (1999).

[4] Originally, the term 'supersensual' comes from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* poem: 'Thou sensual, supersensual libertine, a little girl can lead thee by the nose'. Deleuze 2006, 21.

[5] Persuasion and education are also Sadeian strategies to coax non-Sadeian people into the pleasures of sin-making (Moore 1994, 36–37, 51, 105), but pleading is not a part of Sadeian persuasion, as it is based on a parody of scientific logic, not emotionality. The hues of both are different in Masochianism, but it is worth mentioning that Sadeism overlaps with Masochianism as well, and the two may not be as strictly juxtaposed as, for example, Deleuze (2006, 39–67) argues so persuasively.

[6] For more on the distinction between cultural or discursive body and material flesh, see Hart 1998, 10, 53, 149; chapter 6 of this thesis.

media or music. This is perhaps unsurprising, as notions of maleness, masculinity, and manhood often stand in contrast with being submissive, powerless and humiliated. Margot Weiss (2011, 178) notes that in her fieldwork '[s]ubmissive men – unlike dominant women – are not celebrated as transgressing gender norms'. They cannot easily escape their social encodings of 'proper masculinity' in SM society, even if they are proudly submissive and enjoy the performance sexually. Blatant depictions of male masochism are then lost in poetry, euphemisms, and vague depictions of powerful people mistreating others. Heterosexual male courting is portrayed in popular music usually by active statements where the man promises the woman a secure, romantic and sexually satisfying space, physically and emotionally, to enter and reside.

Upon closer inspection, male submission can be seen in some songs. Many depictions of male masochism can be found in the underground scene (including performance art),[7] such as in the scenes of heavy metal, or punk rock. Genres that accentuate sex and sexuality (see, for example, Hughes 1994, or Hawkins 2009b), for example funk and disco, also allow for depictions of male masochism and sex more readily than less explicitly sexualised music scenes. However, most of these do not challenge the overall image of masculinity through the performance, and by extension that of the performer. Even underground or overtly sexual genres tend to remain within the heteronormative matrix.[8] To depict masochism or sexual submission without challenging the narrow norms of masculinity is still possible. For example, Judith Halberstam (1998, 275) has noted that masochism or sexual submission can be presented within this matrix, providing the example of the highly macho sport of boxing. Halberstam here argues that the point of boxing is not about knocking the opponent down immediately, but taking as many punches as one can throughout the match, yet still ending triumphant. (See also Musser 2014, 122.) The striking resemblance to mock-masochistic love songs where the man can take the beatings of a woman without risking his masculinity becomes quite apparent here.[9]

The appearance of the male masochist who sexualises these dynamics of female dominance and male submission, then endures pain in relation to concepts of masculinity, is walking a thin line between propriety and perversion, toughness and submissiveness. In this way, proper masculinity is transformed into 'masoch-ulinity' (Noyes 1997, 124). Masochian masculinity transgresses the imported, inscribed masochism of normative

[7] Of the Finnish underground, bands like Terveet Kädet, Faff-Bey, Impaled Nazarine, Bizarre Uproar and Grunt all reference SM themes, femdoms, and submissive men in their performances. My thanks to Atte Häkkinen for this information.

[8] Ray Parker Jr.'s 'Bad Boy' (1982) and Jimmy Bo Horne's 'Spank' (1979) portray the masochistic experience as either a return to domesticated masculinity after crazy youth (without really challenging the normative masculinity discourse), or simply an erotic experience without deeper political or social meaning in the prevailing gender order.

[9] For example, the Finnish punk band Apulanta, known for their aggressive and hypermasculine music, have a song called 'Anna mulle piiskaa' (1997; 'Spank me', or, a more direct translation, 'give me that whip'). Here the overall genre and the image of the band do not really create a queer masculinity, but instead they formulate a test for normative masculinity: a real man can take, and perhaps enjoy, the whippings of a woman. This enjoyment is regardless of whether society's rules for masculinity dictate otherwise. However, the overall imagery of the song depicts an obsessive, disillusioned, even violent relationship, which seems to be quite far from Sacher-Masoch's lush fantasy world.

masculinity. For the Masochian hero, it is not a game of pain and retaliation, or a proof of strength. Instead, weakness and vulnerability are embraced and accepted through their sexualisation. This new Masochian masculinity is dependent on the presence of a powerful woman, beautiful and emotionally distant, admired from afar. Masculinity is thus manifest as sublimation, powerlessness, and the desire to please, while still remaining in control of the fantasy.

Through this disjoining of masculinity with exhibiting power we can discern a flow[10] in the masculinities presented in the Masochian world, between proper masculinity and disavowal of it, being in control and losing it. The Masochian man

> demonstrates how easy it is to step outside the fixed boundaries of masculinity with its well-cast identities and its well-maintained systems of reward and punishment … [he] presents his quest for an alternative masculinity as a social statement of dissent aimed at doctrines of cultural supremacy. (Noyes 1997, 109.)

In a way, this control-releasing masculinity works both as a form of political disavowal as well as a rhetorical exercise: with the Masochian man positioning himself outside of societal power structures, he both criticises the system as well as pleads his innocence of it: '[w]ithin the masochistic universe, male subjectivity was articulated as always already wounded' (Stewart 1998, 40; see also Noyes 1997, 4, 56). His marginal stance defines him, but also excuses him without really challenging his position of privilege. Yet, one might still argue that this state of alternative masculinities can be read as a queer fantastical space, because it escapes the normative gendered rules of the outside society.

This new queer space of masculinity in Masochianism can be depicted musically in different ways. For example, Depeche Mode's 'Master and Servant' (1984) depicts the SM relationship as 'a game with added reality'. The song celebrates the inequalities of life by claiming that SM is 'a lot like life'. While the enjoyment of masochistic sex is not explicit, it is one of the few songs with a man singing about being on his knees on a leash, accusing the 'you' (non-gendered dominant) of treating him like a dog. The song starts with the repeated lyric, 'it's a lot', alternating between two singers in falsetto and chest voice an octave apart, already envoicing the flow of masculine roles within the masochistic dream.[11] The high male voice illustrates how masculinity is constructed not only socio-culturally, but historically as well; the male head voice (falsetto) is often described as androgynous, hermaphroditic, or sexually ambiguous (Dame 2006, 142; Richardson 1999, 138–140;

[10] Flow is a wide interdisciplinary concept used especially in musicology and psychology. Flow, as a concept, involves a feeling of movement without pause, which makes it an apposite concept for queer studies in particular. What I mean by 'flow of masculinity' is a mindset, a frame, where normative rules of masculinity are questioned and shuffled around so that their constructedness is revealed, and in this way, they can be escaped. This shuffle and escape creates a movement 'between' or 'inside' the frame rather than 'towards' any desired goal. On flow in music, see, for example, Richardson 2012, 126–130; Hughes 2003; Rose 1994, 38–39; Hytönen-Ng 2013, 2–3; and Butler 2014, 225–228. On flow in psychology, see especially Csikszentmihalyi 2013.

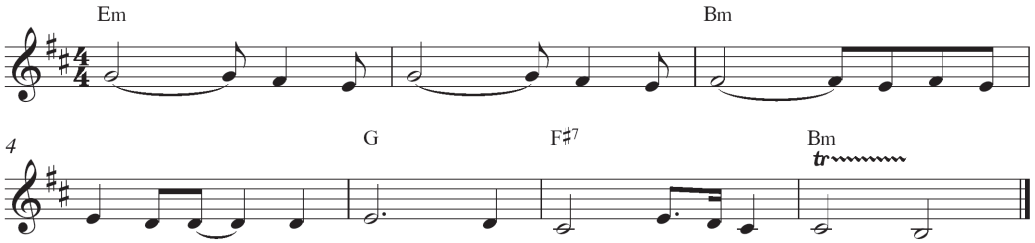
[11] The same expressive technique is used in Adam and the Ants' song 'Beat My Guest' (1978), where the chorus utilises yodel singing techniques, alternating quickly between head and chest voice, and Jeff Buckley's 'Mojo Pin' (1994; see Goldin-Perschbacher 2007, 217).

Whiteley 2007, 31–32; see also André 2006). In line with such interpretations, recent readings of the male falsetto have claimed the voice to be transgressive of traditional roles of masculinity, and hence capable of illustrating the flow of masculinity in the masochistic experience. With Cohen, of course, known for his exceptional *basso profundo* voice quality, queer codes of masculinity are expressed elsewhere. The very subject matter of the song reveals a lax, playful attitude towards masculinity, revealing it as much a performative as feminine: 'I'll do anything you ask me to' (0:27–0:31), meaning 'I'll *be* anything you ask me to'.[12]

Musically, in the introduction of 'I'm Your Man', we hear a few bars of simple shuffle rhythm on the ride cymbal, and accompanying soft beats on the snare drum, then a solo melody played on a synthesised saxophone.[13] In 1988 when the song was released, the synthesised saxophone represented a new, futuristic sound for Cohen, and has nowadays perhaps camp associations. The solo melody begins in E minor, creating expectations of the home key, but soon lowers to the actual key of the song, B minor. (See example 6.) The beginning is harmonically deceptive, moving from the subtonic (*sub*-tonic) to the tonic instead of starting from the tonic and moving to dominant (*dom*-inant), and demonstrates the slippery nature of the song, even though the key is not challenged after this. The tonality is firmly set in B minor and the related D major after the intro. In this way, we could read the very beginning of the song as claiming something (E minor as tonic) but immediately disavowing it (E minor as subtonic), or perhaps, creating false illusions of what this song is telling us. Momentarily, the harmony could take a turn to any key, much as the masculinity depicted in the song could take on any guise. Furthermore, the title 'I'm Your Man' similarly creates the expectation that Cohen is yet again demonstrating his abilities to woo women. Unexpectedly, the chords instantly drop down a fourth, only establishing the main key after the next cadenza of G major and F sharp major seventh, the regular vi–V7–i -cadenza. Correspondingly, the expectation of this song as proof of sexual power and prowess is immediately transformed with the first lyrics, albeit sung in a hypermasculine low register, with a husky, voice recorded very close to the microphone implying eroticism and intimacy: 'If you want a lover, I'll do anything you ask me to'.

[12] Cohen's song is also used in an episode (season 1, episode 14) of *The L Word*, where a trans man lip synchs the song to a cis woman, wooing her and dancing around her. This double or triple coding of masculinity and maleness becomes apparent also in this version of the song.

[13] Using a saxophone sound as a solo instrument comes across almost as an inside joke, a clichéd representation of a usually sexually laden instrument.



Example 6. Electronic saxophone solo in the beginning of 'I'm Your Man', and the deceptive tonality. (Abstraction; notation does not include shuffle articulation.)

The song's introduction establishes it as different from Cohen's main corpus, with small yet elaborate musical means. Kink/close reading the song from the B section (01:46–02:36), we hear that the melody is considerably higher than in the verse parts with rising, rather than lowering, melodic lines. It is also the first part of the song where a female chorus is heard in the background. Cohen's voice becomes somewhat frail here, rising from the booming, sexualised and performative, lower phrase of 'I'm your man' to an octave higher. It sounds like he's almost struggling with the highest notes ('the beast won't go to sleep'). In this way, we could read the B section as the fantastical queer space of the song, where 'I' reveals his pleasure and his confusion at his offer in the verses, and the new, malleable, even passive masculinity that the song creates. The lyrics of the B section are:

Ah, the moon's too bright the chain's too tight
The beast won't go to sleep
I've been running through these promises to you
That I made and I could not keep
But a man never got a woman back,
Not by begging on his knees
Or I'd crawl to you baby and I'd fall at your feet
And I'd howl at your beauty like a dog in heat
And I'd claw at your heart and I'd tear at your sheet
I'd say please, please, I'm your man
(Leonard Cohen: 'I'm Your Man' [1988], B section.)

It is striking that the second 'please' is, in fact, not Cohen's voice, but a higher male voice, uncredited in the album, and strongly echoed to the distance. This phantasmatic echo of Cohen's 'please' could represent the voice of The New Man, who becomes '*your* man', the man who passively, yet happily, lets the woman decide the terms of their relationship and what this entails. As stated before, the feminine presence is audible for the first time in the B section, perhaps marking it as somehow angelic, fantastical, or simply a place for alternative masculinity where passivity is acceptable or even preferred. Also the (Freudian) connection between passivity and effeminacy is embraced instead of stigmatised. The shift to a new masculinity in the bridge is not simple, nor is it definite. The 'I' realises that his passive begging creates a rift between traditional, active masculinity and his actions, which in the heteronormative sense would brand him as 'a sissy', but the

affirmation 'please, I'm your man', melodically returning to the lower register of Cohen's voice, reassures both the 'I' and the 'you' that indeed, the masculinity, the construct of Your Man, is still present, only different to the traditional understandings of them through the heteronormative matrix.[14]

However, as in Masochian masculinity, the phantasmatic new masculinity in the song echoed both in the siren-like female choir and the uncredited man singing 'please' do not pose any threat to Cohen's masculine image, or the 'I' of the song. It is his free will to *choose not to choose,* as long as there is some connection with the woman, and he will be satisfied with whatever fantasy she presents him, although he does try to suggest quite a few fantasies of his own. While the stance of the woman in the song is, luckily, freer to choose between her social and sexual options than in Sacher-Masoch's time, Cohen attempts to seduce her to his own fantastical world of the 'I'. It remains to the imagination whether or not she will comply, or present a fantasy of her own, and if indeed, 'I' would be her man at all.

4.1.2 COURTLY LOVE AND THE SUBLIME

While Cohen addresses the woman directly as 'you' in 'I'm Your Man', she is never heard, remaining the distant Other throughout the song. While the female chorus has some harmonic lines in the bridge section and in the last verse, these voices provide more of a siren-like presence, beckoning the singer closer to his newly found submissive masculinity, instead of envoicing the woman in question. There is still a gap between the idealised feminine and the subjectivity of the singer's position, no matter how much he implores the woman to take action in this fantastical scenario. It is very much his fantasy, and not necessarily hers, that is created here.

This is reminiscent of philosopher Slavoj Žižek's (1993) theorisation of courtly love, which throughout history has been seen as the epitome of romance, where the woman is put on a pedestal. A concrete example would be the story of Rapunzel, locked in a high tower waiting for a prince to rescue her. The lady here, is sublimated as the ultimate prize of adventure. Žižek (1993, 95–96) argues, however, that the Lady of the courtly love paradigm is not a sublimated goal to be rescued. Rather, she is the abstract, even radical Other who is aspired to, but never gained. In this way, the positions of the Lady and her admirer are always ontologically unequal. She is seen as sovereign, devoid of substance and even humanity, muttering illogical demands for the admirer to fulfil (ibid. 96). Humiliation is the Masochian subject's goal; to perform mindless tasks and never reach the high pedestal, all accentuating the Lady's beauty, coldness, cruelty, and fickle attention. Then again, the Lady is always the courter's own narcissistic projection (ibid.; Stewart 1998, 5), where

[14] One could interpret this song as a purely queer song, and read the ambiguity of 'you' as another man. Choosing to read this song as mainly portraying a heterosexual relationship is a conscious choice on my part, as it highlights the ambiguity between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which is very much present in Sacher-Masoch's world (and this song), as I shall discuss in section 4.1.3.

he really does not want to gain his prize, as anything human in the Lady would ultimately disappoint him, and ruin the illusion.

While this is very much true of Sacher-Masoch's world and is at the heart of the Masochian fantasy, Cohen's song presents this dynamic a little differently. In courtly love, the man is actively not only creating the fantasy of the Lady, but also – again, actively – he is seeking her out, aspiring to reach her. It is equally significant to passively submit to her as it is to actively serve her; indeed, these are the very moments of intense pleasure for the male masochist. One could even name it sublimity (Shaw 2006, 1–3), the feeling of rising above one's embodied existence to a purely spiritual one, while recognising the embodied existence and feeling sublime pain in this difference. In Cohen's case, the Lady is an abstraction, not present in the song but the recipient of it. Yet she is vital for the song to make sense. Cohen's song is that of courtship and wooing, one of the most popular song themes throughout history: he is the troubadour, she is the highborn Lady.

On the other hand, the song informs us that there is history between 'I' and the woman, and it has come to an impasse because of his 'promises I could not keep'. Cohen is not wooing, but proposing change. 'I' has been in the wrong, now he is trying to set things right by any means necessary. In this way, his courtship also expresses regret, which is then sublimated to the will of the woman. Philip Shaw (2006, 3) theorises the sublime as 'the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated'. The sublime can be used as an adjective, but it is also a state of mind (ibid. 1). When depicting the romantic sublime, Shaw (ibid.) notes its proximity to transcendence but notes that although the sublime may be similar to the feeling of transcending oneself through art, the sublime experience is slightly different because of its ambivalent nature. As the transcendent experience through art, music, or nature elevates the subject beyond humanity and even corporeality to be a part of the harmonic universe, the sublime experience produces emotional pleasure but without the feeling of release from the physical, which appears as emotional pain. The pleasure of the sublime feeling comes from reaching a place within oneself that is greater than nature (and therefore similar to transcendence), but it also includes the realisation of the fact that the experience removes one from nature (ibid. 91). Therefore the sublime is about realising the potential for belonging to something greater, but understanding the subject's separateness from this. Consequently, nature is experienced as both frightening and attractive. And, perhaps, so also are women in Masochian aesthetics (and in Cohen's song): womanhood and femininity, and perhaps feminine sexual pleasure itself, are all both wonderful and impossible, both glamorised and debased (Kramer 1997, 187), both fetishised and feared in the Masochian mind.

This image of the sublime is familiar to the broader field of Romantic art, appearing as a recurring motif in the latter part of the 19th century. The idealisation of art beyond life is, in reality, a masochistic process 'by which an impossible object, the Real or the Lady, is transformed into a prohibition … via a process of unending postponement' (Stewart 1998, 5–6). In this way, the unattainable subject of art is sublimated, becoming a process of symbolic castration, denying agency for the gain, and loss, of pleasure. The relevant aspect of this theorisation is that masochism as a motivation for artistic productivity. Suzanne R.

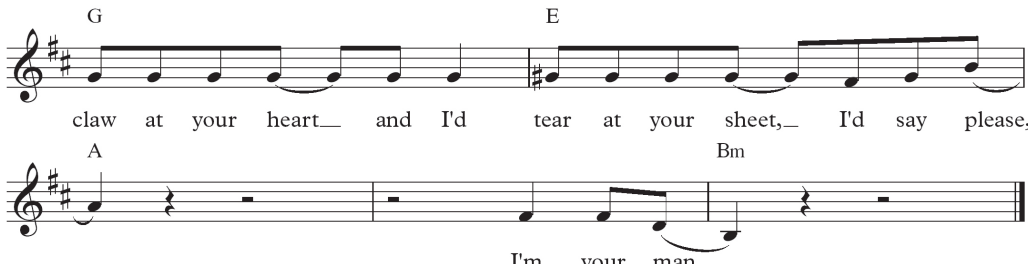
Stewart (1998, 73) writes of Wagner's[15] music that there is a yearning for something metaphysical but also a serious effort to manipulate audiences that is 'founded in Wagner's ability to command and to submit' (ibid. 73). This requires considerable self-discipline to accomplish.

Through these theories of Romanticism in art, we can trace the sublimity that appears in Cohen's music. Stewart (1998, 99) notes how '[m]usic heals the fractured ego and yet is the very source of its fracturing, its undoing'. The sublime feeling of being broken and mended simultaneously is produced through art. This also happens in Cohen's song. Kink listening to the song, I hear courtship and persuasion, but also a relinquishing of decisive power. I also hear emotional pain, especially in the bridge section of the song. While Cohen's song holds on to the activity of the male courter, he is denied agency: it is not in his power to decide what kind of relationship he is entering into. In this way, control of the situation is in the hands of the wooed feminine target. The woman is granted agency, rendering the active masculine position ostensibly powerless.

Cohen expresses this contradiction in the bridge section (01:46–02:36), where the female choir enters in transcendental voices, and Cohen starts a movement towards introspection: 'Ah, the moon's too bright, the chain's too tight, the beast won't go to sleep'. Here he creates a true supersensual state: the moon is *too* bright, the chain (factual SM-hued prop or symbolic) *too* tight. 'I' falls into desperation and misery, and finally surrenders to the sublime moment of 'please'. Words defeat him, and he returns to repetition: 'I'm your man'. This feeling of sublimity is accompanied by the relaxed shuffle of the band, creating a laid-back atmosphere in general, but the intensity of the feeling is simultaneously supported by it. The only moment, where a cadenza of sorts is created within the whole song, is in the lyrics, 'I'd claw at your heart, I'd tear at your sheet, I'd say please'. (See example 7.) The chords switch from a lengthy fluctuation of G major and F# minor to a cadenza of G major – E major – A major, creating a secondary dominant to the flat seventh chord (A major) of the home key, B minor. The melody follows this by rising semitonally from G to G# and A, then falling to F# and the familiar signature passage of 'I'm your man'.[16] This could be interpreted as the moment of emotional friction, where the regret and desperation of the 'I' is at its most honest point. While the otherwise charming suggestions of the alternative relationships reveal themselves to be an exercise in rhetorics, it is here that we get to the bottom of the relationship: 'I' shows his desperation and regret, wanting the woman to again revisit, or reenter, the relationship.

[15] Of course, Wagner's music can be understood androgynously, or 'purely human' (Nattiez 1993, 41) and therefore without a previously assigned gender, as the statuses of active masculinity and passive femininity in the plotline and music are constantly turned on each other (see also Richardson 1999).

[16] Often, slippery harmonies and chromatic melodies are used in the music of Romanticism and Late Romanticism to represent a sexual, alluring atmosphere. See, for example, McClary 2002, 57–59.



Example 7. The secondary dominant cadenza in the bridge section (E major – A major) creates suspension before falling to the home key, B minor. (The second 'please' is not notated.)

The figure of a pleading, pained man in front of a cold and/or scorned woman is fairly common in fiction (especially in Sacher-Masoch's world). The song's lyrics imply an earlier break up, resulting from the man's broken promises. It is noteworthy here that there is a small niche of heterosexual men who find angry women arousing.[17] Research on how and why anger can be a trigger for sexual titillation seems quite scant.[18] Physiologically, anger, fear, stress, anxiety, and arousal are practically indistinguishable (Dutton & Aron 1974, 510–511; see also Russell 1980). This does not fully explain, however, the arousal caused by an angry partner. It may have to do with purely visual triggers of the woman's body reacting to anger similarly to arousal (rapid breath, blushing). It might be another subtle form of sexism and demeaning the woman's anger by sexualising it. It might also have something to do with the cultural assumption of temper being strongly interrelated with passion, or a man appreciating a woman who knows her own mind and is not afraid to express it. A Masochian explanation would be that angry women are assertively taking control of the situation and leaving the man helpless. Coldness and anger are both negative affects, and could in this way be seen as traits of the 'cruel Lady'.

Cohen both recognises the woman's anger and validates it: 'If you want to strike me down in anger, / Here I stand, I'm Your Man' (0:49–1:02). 'I' also avoids pleading in the song, and resorts to sexualised wooing, perhaps sexualising the woman's anger as well: 'if you want a doctor, I'll examine every inch of you' (1:14–1:22). He seemingly suggests a sexual role play of sorts; he is asking her to assign him a role, not only in her life in general, but also in sexual play. He can be the masked stranger, the submissive lover, the boxer (a modern-day knight fighting for his Lady), the perverted attentive doctor, or the non-suspecting husband, as long as the woman allows him a(ny) role and enters their relationship, even if it means granting her more sexual freedom. This does not seem to be an aberration in 'I's' mind. In fact, he exemplifies a distinct taste for it, which I shall discuss in the next chapter.

[17] As with all fetishes, the anger/arousal fetish is not merely a male trait, nor is it bound to heterosexuality.

[18] Ne-Yo's (2006) song 'When You're Mad' depicts this very phenomenon: 'Every time you scream at me/I wanna kiss you/Baby when you put your hands on me/I wanna touch you/And when we get to arguing/Just gotta kiss you/Baby, I don't know why it's like that/But you're just so damn sexy/When you're mad.'

4.1.3 EROTIC CUCKOLD FANTASIES

The term 'cuckold', in its simplest form, refers to a man whose wife sleeps around with other men. The term comes from the cuckoo bird (Ley 2011, 3), which lays its eggs in the nests of other species, which end up raising a cuckoo bird instead of their own progeny. In the fetish world, the term includes the pleasure gained by a man seeing or knowing that his wife/partner is having sexual relationships with other men, with or without them participating. The women in this kind of relationship are called 'cuckoldresses', 'hotwives' or 'hot wives'. Cuckolding is a very specific fetish that, like all fetishes, involves individuals of all genders and sexualities. It is, however, more common in men than women.

Enjoyment in male cuckolding is very similar to Sacher-Masochian male masochism. Indeed, in one of the scenes in *Venus in Furs*, the protagonist Severin is cuckolded by his mistress and her new Greek lover. She mocks him ruthlessly, and then he is abused by her new lover. Severin is left alone, confused, but also aroused by the situation:

> The Greek eyed me fiercely, like a tiger; his muscles swelled as he drew back his arm and the whip whistled through the air. Like Marsyas I was bound hand to foot and condemned to be flayed by Apollo. […] Meanwhile Wanda lay on the ottoman, her head in her hand, watching the scene with a fiendish curiosity and amusement. The sensation of being whipped before the eyes of a woman one adores by a successful rival is quite indescribable; I was dying of shame and despair. What was most humiliating was that I felt a wild and supersensual pleasure in my pitiful situation, lashed by Apollo's whip and mocked by the cruel laughter of my Venus. (Sacher-Masoch 2006, 268.)

What becomes clear from Sacher-Masoch's text is that the figure of the Greek is equally as sexualised as the Lady. His appearance and physical traits are described with similar detail and admiration as Wanda, and mockingly, he even dons Wanda's fur while whipping Severin. Here we arrive at the unrecognised side of Sacher-Masoch's text, which is the homoerotic/queer drive that makes it possible for the cuckold to gain pleasure in viewing his wife possessed by the physically Ideal Man, a reflection of his own superego perhaps. On the other hand, the Greek represents racial Otherness, perhaps the unleashed, bestial sexual desire so depressed in the cultural, European high-class white masculinity of Sacher-Masoch's time. This supersensual pleasure is twofold: observing the successful rival is recognising his sexual allure, and appreciating it in a homoerotic way, but it also serves as a narcissistic extension of the cuckold himself, as the symbol of the Ideal or Unleashed Man, his superego or his Other, comes into sexual contact with his partner. Therefore the cuckold is both in the position of the beater and the beaten, enjoying the intricate circuit of male masochism and narcissism, submission and total control of the interpersonal experience. This, of course, is much akin to Freud's (2013) findings concerning the beating fantasy in his essay, 'A Child is Being Beaten', where both genders with beating fantasies envision the beater as a masculine entity: 'In both cases the beating-phantasy has its origin in an incestuous attachment to the father' (Freud 2013, 22; see also MacKendrick 1999, 53). This, in Freud's mind, was evidence of male masochism's effeminate/homosexual drive; in this reading, it explains the pleasures of cuckolding as beyond heterosexual

desire without essentialising it purely hetero- or homosexual. Lawrence Kramer (1997) would possibly call this state as 'heterosexless' (ibid. 185) or 'homoerogenous' (ibid. 197). I shall return to this in section 4.3.3.

It is debatable whether cuckolding is an intrinsically masochistic trait: Justin Lehmiller (2014) argues that often the fantasy does not include other traits of masochism or sexual submission, i. e. whips or shackles, role play (if we don't think of cuckold – hot wife positions as roles) or humiliation. Cuckolding also serves to shatter the masochistic fantasy in Sacher-Masoch's book: although Severin wants Wanda to venture outside their relationship for sexual encounters, the realisation and enactment of this fantasy is a bitter disappointment and turns Severin's sexual urges from masochistic to dominant ones.

Returning to Leonard Cohen's work, he has written songs about wanton wives betraying him with a male friend: mainly, 'Famous Blue Raincoat' (1970; 'when she came back she was nobody's wife'). While the song produces feelings of betrayal towards the wife and the friend as well as confessional intimacy (the song ends with lyrics, 'sincerely, L. Cohen'), the chorus depicting the betrayal is light, positive, even hopeful in its major chord tones and floating melodic line. The similarity to Severin's situation is quite clear. In 'I'm Your Man', then, there is analogous affinity to the cuckold fantasy, as the woman of the song is granted every possible liberty she can think of taking. The third verse (3:22–4:00) goes deeply into the fantasies of 'I', possibly encouraged by the sensual saxophone solo and similarly escaping the confessional bridge section.

> *And if you've got to sleep a moment on the road, I will steer for you*
> *And if you want to work the street alone, I'll disappear for you*
> *If you want a father for your child, or only want to walk with me a while*
> *Across the sand, I'm your man*
> (Leonard Cohen, 'I'm Your Man' (1988), last verse.)

Especially the line 'if you want to work the street alone / I'll disappear for you' (3:31–3:40) is particularly revealing. Working the street may allude to prostitution, or for the woman to go on sexual adventures of her own; the man promises to 'disappear', to leave her be. Here Cohen's pronunciation becomes markedly lax: 'want to' becomes 'wanna', perhaps suggesting street parlance. The verse demonstrates a level of obsession and fascination that also suggest that the man would reappear afterwards and get queer cuckold pleasures in the woman's tales of sexual wantonness. His devotion is not altered by the possibility of a sexually wandering partner, as the next line claims his readiness to become also a father to her child, possibly even as the non-biological, 'honorary, cuckolded father (hence, *her* child, not *our*). Cuckold fantasies can thus be read in Cohen's song, and could be seen also as an alternative interpretation of the echoing 'please' by the unidentified man in the background. Could this voice be that of the new suitor? The voice's presence is therefore both narcissistic and masochistic: the phantasmatic male 'guest star' voice is both an extension of Cohen's voice (quite literally, as it is in a higher range than Cohen can presumably manage), and the idealised (and sexualised) masculine presence, or the image of the superego, so important in the cuckold-Masochian fantasy.

I have read Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man' as a depiction of a different experience

of masculinity and eroticism that is much akin to Sacher-Masoch's male masochism. I have suggested that the song both begs for a relationship but also actively creates sexual fantasies. There is however a darker side to Masochianism that is not audible in Cohen's song. This darker side is that of neosurrealist aesthetics, to which I shall now turn in my discussion of Elvis Costello's song, 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'.

4.2 ELVIS COSTELLO'S 'WHEN I WAS CRUEL NO. 2': The discipline of neosurrealism

'When I Was Cruel No. 2', released in 2002 as the fourth track of the album *When I Was Cruel*, is an indie rock, 'punk techno' (Smith 2004, 145) song by Elvis Costello. The song has been constructed through the compositional technique of sampling. The most noticeable aspect of the song's backing track is a female voice uttering the syllable 'un'. The original loop of this 'un' vocal is sampled from the Italian singer Mina's song, 'Un Bacio É Troppo Poco' (1965, composed by Bruno Canfora and Antonio Amurri). The loop makes the song into a seven-minute, swaying, quasi-Latin song on top of which Costello adds guitars, electric bass, and various other instruments. The song also includes brief quotations of other songs and classical works: ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' (1976), Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1,* Wagner's wedding march from the opera *Lohengrin,* and Costello's own song, 'When I Was Cruel' (2002b). The song's narrative is quite oblique ('narrative impressionism'; Smith 2004, 229) and requires active interpreting from the listener. However, there is a story of sorts, as a neosurreal portrayal of a high-society wedding, depicted as a dystopic, plastic society where money and status count more than affection (see appendix 7 for full lyrics and a table of the song structure). The singer position 'I' is attending a wedding and paying close attention to the bride, who seems to have a personal relationship with the song's 'I', but the nature of the relationship is left unclear. In this reading, I lean on the concept of 'character *as* style' (Frith 1998, 171), where the singer-songwriter performs the song through characters, who in turn represent a particular style, feeling, or in my readings, ideals from the SM relationship, more specifically those of the cruel lady (bride) and the male masochist ('I').[19]

Although the song can be heard as cynical, Costello himself has noted that it includes a glimmer of hope:

> It's a true song, a true telling of the tension between your disdain for people who wield and abuse power, and your instinct to forgive people. (…) When you're young, you tend to distance yourself from the responsibility to consider the humanity in people you despise. Just making them demons is too easy, is what I'm saying. (Costello quoted in Christensen, 2002.)

Kink reading the song, 'making them demons is too easy' is not only about forgiving, but also about sexualising. Indeed, on closer examination, the cynicism of the song seems to

[19] On Elvis Costello's songs and characters in them, see Brackett 1995, 162. See also Costello 2015, 573, 580–581 for Costello's own (albeit enigmatic) thoughts on the song.

coexist with a distinct feeling of eroticism and cruelty encoded in the lyrics as well as the instruments accompanying it. Here, I look to Deleuze (2006, 1994), Leo Bersani (2010, 1986) and Sacher-Masoch (2006) to establish the darker side of male masochism. Compared to Leonard Cohen's song discussed above, Costello's song presents similar erotic preferences but in a different mood, and with different aesthetics at play. Together these two songs represent the different pleasures of the Masochian experience. In this section of the thesis, I map out what can be construed as 'cruel' in Elvis Costello's song by focusing on the neosurreal elements of the song, suggesting a fantastical, dream-like, and even sexually encoded, masochistic atmosphere. Furthermore, I discuss the woman's position in this Masochian dream/dystopia.

Composing a song about a divorce, an event still seen in wider society as failure, can be viewed as a personal narrative of Costello's 2002 divorce from his ex-wife, Cait O'Riordan. While I do believe that the song might carry strong connotations of that experience to those who are aware of the songwriter's personal life, I will not make further speculations about this subject.[20] Instead, I shall proceed with my kink reading, which in Costello's case includes the darker hues of Masochian aesthetics, mainly neosurrealism, the queer death drive, nostalgia, temporality, and manipulation.

4.2.1 MASOCHIAN TEMPORALITY AND QUEER DEATH DRIVE IN REPETITIVE MUSIC

The repetitive pattern of the 'Un Bacio É Troppo Poco' (1965) loop in Costello's song creates a specific temporality which suggests, as I will argue, a specifically Masochian erotic atmosphere to the song. Repetition in music has been widely discussed in musicology throughout its history. It has been argued, for example, that repetitive music (whichever kind) is a sign of redundancy and lack of imagination (Garcia 2005, 1.1), revealing perhaps a Western classical-traditional attitude towards music. On the other hand, repetition in music has been deemed pleasurable when it comes to listening to music and creating it, especially when the looping technique is concerned (ibid. 3.1, 6.1). The constant repetition of the looped Mina song snippet can be discussed through subjective temporality, for example. While Deleuze (1994) has written extensively about repetition as a phenomenon, he pays special attention to repetition in Sacher-Masoch's work. This creates a window of possibility to look at a new form of subjective/surreal temporality in Costello's song, and relate it to Masochian aesthetics and eroticism.

Deleuze's (2006, 70–72) observations about the specific temporality in Sacher-Masoch's texts are apt here. Fantasy, surrender, and service are at the heart of this sexual gratification in the Masochian view, even (or perhaps, especially) if it is delayed beyond one's control. When de Sade demands instant fulfilment, Sacher-Masoch depicts the sweet

[20] Costello himself has on many occasions professed his disdain for writing songs about personal experiences. While he can use personal experiences as one narrative tool in songs, reading his songs as 'merely' confessionals seems beside the point. See Smith 2004, 157–159; Frith 1998, 171. On Costello's comments of the divorce from Cait O'Riordan and putting them in songs, see Smith 2004, 197.

torture of waiting. (Ibid.; see also MacKendrick 1999, 63.) Indeed, Sacher-Masoch's texts have very little sexual intercourse.[21] Deleuze (2006, 25) refers to his writing as displaying 'unusual decency', compared to de Sade and erotic literature in general. The plotline of *Venus in Furs* (2006) consists of conversations and persuasion between the lovers, fantastical owner/slave situations including those of punishment, and the protagonist's musings about his situation as a slave and fond thoughts of the mistress. Deleuze (ibid. 71) depicts this appositely as 'a state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its pure form'. Elements of time and waiting add to the (sublime/painful) pleasure of the masochistic experience, and the uncertainty of when the waiting will end also heightens the experience.

In this way, the suspension and active manipulation of subjective time becomes the climactic 'moment', in the word's widest possible sense, of the Masochian text. This happens with the suspension of the tortured body (bondage), but also the suspension of body of the dominating party as an idea, a picture or a statue, then fetishised by the Masochian character in his imagination. This happens quite similarly in the song's first chorus: 'Look at her now / she's started to yawn / she looks like she was born to it' (1:30–1:49). She is suspended in her yawning state, implying either tiredness or boredom, but slowness in either case. We return to her yawning gesture throughout the song: Costello both suspends and repeats the bride's presence (also extended to Mina's voice in the loop, perhaps suggesting the small noise yawning makes). Suspension of small moments becomes the pleasure of repetition, sublimated in both their unreachable status as well as their temporal manipulation.

When the object of the Masochian fantasy, the dominant cruel woman, is suspended, in time (as a work of art) or as a fantasy image (imagined or absent; see MacKendrick 1999, 63), we begin to see both the fetish value of the masochistic dream as well as the gender-specific fantasies which Sacher-Masoch presents us. The sampled repetition of Mina's song would suggest, in the Deleuzian sense, not simply a sadistic will to control, manipulate, and dominate the feminine essence in Costello's song, but a Masochian repetition used to create suspense. In many musical forms (minimalism or house music, for example), the repetition of small distinct musical gestures can construct a sense of flow, which slowly starts to mould the perception of subjective time. (Hughes 1994, 153; Hawkins 2009b, 101; Richardson 1999, 54–57; see also section 5.1.3.) This can create a sense of losing grasp of actual, mathematical time. Perhaps especially in house music, where dancing to the music is as important as listening to it, producing a feeling of 'losing yourself' as well as losing a sense of time in the music. In this way, repetitive music could be seen akin to Bersani's (2010, 174) concept of sexual masochism as a *spatial* concept: the mind creates an alternate space where repetitive music creates an alternative temporality and dominates the mind and body to move, and accordingly, the music can be experienced as libidinally, sublimely satisfying.

Deleuze (1994, 1) has also written about repetition as 'universality of the singular';

[21] This is not to say that Sacher-Masoch detested or feared intercourse as a mode of intimacy. (Sato 2010, 345.) There are 'sex scenes' in *Venus*; they are just not depicted in detail. The decency which Deleuze points to can be seen as referring to this very thing: sexual intercourse is left as the blanks in between chapters, and to the imagination of the reader. Sacher-Masoch's deliberate avoidance of depictions of intercourse can nevertheless be seen as eluding genital-centred sexuality.

every repetition always includes the first occurrence, and the first occurrence always includes the repetitions. Consequently, in music, we could argue that repeating a 4-second loop (like the one from Mina's song) includes all of seven minutes and six seconds of the sampled repetitions of the new song (the duration of 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'), and every other sampled versions of it.[22] In this way, we arrive at the idea of repetition as suspension as well as extension of subjective time. And further, Costello's repetition of Mina's song becomes fetishistic queer temporality,[23] where the omnipresence of Mina's voice is made into a work of art outside linear time, suspended. It surpasses the perception of mathematical time as well as historicity, and becomes a dream-like state of masochistic waiting (Deleuze 2006, 71). The stillness of temporality is noted also by Larry David Smith (2004, 229, emphasis mine):

> Here a wedding provides a storytelling context for various forms of snobbery as characters utter snider remarks about the bride and groom, feign different stances, and comment on former wives and acquaintances in a mean-spirited fashion. Still, *the song never achieves story status*: it (…) deploys Costello's 'snapshot' songwriting strategy in which the various fragments (…) are held together by some scenario (the wedding scene…) – *nothing ever happens*, just more and more insults.

The historicity of Masochian temporality is relevant when considering Costello's song. It is built on existing songs and works: Mina's song, Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1*, a textual quote from Wagner's wedding march from *Lohengrin*, ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' (1976), and Costello's song, 'When I Was Cruel' (2002b). The historically varied references are mashed up into a new work, where they create a sense of the past echoing in the present of the song. According to Deleuze (2006, 115), however, the nostalgia created here is not enough for Masochian aesthetics: the repetition apparent in the death drive is

> a synthesis of time – a 'transcendental' synthesis. It is at once repetition of before, during and after, that is to say it is a constitution in time of the past, the present and even the future.

If we treat the sampled quotations of songs and classical works as echoes from the past, and Costello's 'Cruel No. 2' as the present, the future tense of this song is in the sampling itself. Every 8th beat, as we hear Mina's voice, we start to anticipate it, we enjoy knowing it will be there throughout the song (we start to fetishize it; see the next section), and we are reassured by every repetition. In short, the coexistent past, present and future represent the new, queer temporality, which can be heard also as a sign of male Masochianism, suspending all three time categories in a single song. In this queer temporality, Costello still maintains a feeling of failure and melancholia. This is not, therefore, exactly a joyous

[22] 'Bacio' has been sampled also by alternative jazz band Herbalizer in their song, 'A Song for Mary' (2005), and the Italian hiphop artist Mondo Marcio in his song, 'Un Bacio? (Troppo Poco)' (2014). Whosampled.com. (Last visited 2.5.2015.)

[23] 'Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification.' Halberstam 2005, 1.

depiction of a high-society wedding or a simple sexualised, sensual fantasy of a self-actualised, successful woman moving up in society through marriage. The bitterness of the song refuses to give into the Masochian joys of subjective temporality, but also contributes to it, creating a traumatic Freudian death drive repetition in the song. Indeed, there are some musicologists (Richardson 1999, Garcia 2005) who compare repetitive music to the death drive.

When Sigmund Freud was researching (in his mind,) deviant sexualities, he was especially troubled by masochism. In previous works, he was convinced that the human psyche functioned according to the pleasure principle, which reacted to unwanted tension by releasing it, avoiding pain and/or opting for pleasure. (Freud 2009, 1.) Masochistic pleasures seemed to go against this principle, as it sought pain and gained pleasure within it. Leading from this apparent contradiction, Freud developed the concept of the death instinct,[24] 'the vitalising of inanimate matter, and […] the reinstatement of lifelessness' (ibid. 54; see also ibid. 59). The pleasure principle (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos) are both presumably present in every human's psyche and are in constant struggle with each other. Jacques Lacan (1977a, 301) employed Freud's concept of the death drive in similar ways. Lacan, however, disagreed with Freud that the death instinct was oppositional to the life, or sex, instinct, and claimed that, in fact, the death drive was innate in all human drives (Lacan 1977b, 275).

Building upon these theories, queer theorist Lee Edelman (2004, 25) has suggested a theory of the 'queer death drive'. As the queer[25] lifestyle is not biologically capable of fulfilling society's mandate for reproduction, the queer lifestyle could be seen, in essence, to be more in accordance with the death drive rather than the life instinct. It does not aim to 'preserve' biological lines, but alternatively denounces the nuclear family concept altogether,[26] or queers it by extending it beyond normative biological borders. Queerness, therefore, inhabits the margins and the outsiders of the 'productive' society. Lacan calls this marginal '*jouissance*', 'a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law' (Edelman 2004, 25). Whereas neither Lacan nor Edelman discuss the death drive in reference to sexual sadism or masochism, Leo Bersani (1986, 39) sees masochism and the death drive as integrated to the very core of sexuality. In this way, we can look for the death drive in music and read it also within the sexualised/eroticised pleasure.

As mentioned above, the death drive has been discussed in musicology through, for example, the concept of repetitive music.[27] What is, however, apparent in repetitive music,

[24] Of course, Freud came to formulate the death instinct through other case studies in addition to masochism, mainly studies of 'traumatic neurosis' (Freud 2009, 8) such as war trauma.

[25] In Edelman's writing, the word 'queer' emphasises male homosexual queerness.

[26] Sometimes called the 'antisocial turn' in queer theories; see Sullivan 2007, 47–48; Välimäki 2015, 31–32.

[27] Death and music have, of course, always had a close relationship, from funeral rite music and Requiems to depictions of operatic deaths, laments, and popular music's critical depictions of genocide and violence. Sometimes the death drive in music can be interpreted as the ambiguous relationship between death and sexual orgasm ('the small orgasm'; Gritzner 2010, 2; Bataille 1986, 100; Margolis 2004, 72). Carolyn Abbate (1993, 253–254) argues that operatic death moments depict also vocally the sexual (usually feminine)

is that unlike in the death drive (and life instinct, according to Freud), where the purpose is not to create tension through repetition but to release it, repetitive music does not need to seek release. Indeed, repetitive music can be a depiction of the *experience* of increasing tension, or by extension, sexual titillation. Stan Hawkins (2009b, 101) analyses house music, another groove- and beat based music form, as pleasurable because of its escapist nature and its potential for ritualising social interaction, submitting to the experience of community in a certain type of mysticism. Losing yourself in the beat creates an ecstatic, masochistic enjoyment where the sense of self, as well as your moving, dancing body, becoming a part of some larger entity. This sonic experience 'offers the dancer/listener access to a polymorphous experience of the body whose pleasure is not confined in simple gender terms' (Gilbert & Pearson 1999, 101).

John Richardson (1998, 164–167) theorises repetition in music as having three distinct roles: creating suspense, creating groove,[28] and creating a distancing effect. These effects work in different ways, but should not be understood as mutually exclusive. In Costello's song, suspense is created through subjective temporality, discussed at length above. Groove and distancing effects are also discernible in the song. The repetitive loop of 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' creates the general groove in the song. (See example 8 for an abstraction.) The rhythm created with the drum set is a stable 4/4 beat with the first beat emphasised with the bass drum, then the snare drum and hi-hat accentuate the 2nd beat, and another accent falling between third and fourth beat. The bass alternates between the tonic and octave-tonic falling to the dominant, creating the juxtaposing rhythm of a dotted quarter note, three eight notes and a quarter tone, accentuating the first, third and fourth beat. In this way, the general groove is syncopated, but there are two syncopated rhythmic patterns running against each other: that of the bass and guitar (3:3:2/8), and that of the snare drum and hi-hat (2:3:3/8). Together, they both destabilise and reaffirm the general 4/4 beat creating a flowing, quasi-Latin (tango-like)[29] polyrhythm, driven forward by the pull of the suspended guitar's 'sigh motive' (suspended 9th note descending to tonic, mixed first to the background, then foregrounded). Costello adds to the feeling of sway by adding guitar chords on top of the F minor loop, mainly the fluctuation between E flat major and F minor (seventh and tonic of the Aeolian minor) during the verses of the song. The overall effect is of stability and sway, making the groove danceable and rocking. Combined with Mina's robotic repetition of the last eighth note of the two-bar loop (discussed in more detail in the next section), the atmosphere is sensualised, the repeated is transformed into flow, and the mechanical is turned into a dance.

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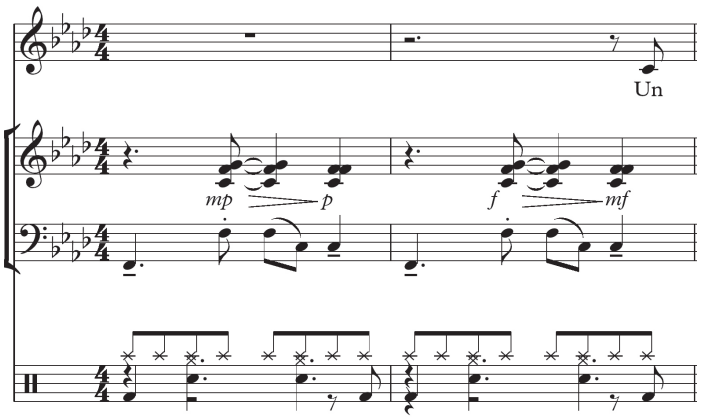
jouissance.

[28] Groove is usually understood as a distinct harmonic or rhythmic backdrop that pushes the music forward. A song may have one or many grooves in its different parts. See, for example, Hughes 2003, 14–15.

[29] While not exactly an Argentinian tango, the 'Bacio' song has a tango-like atmosphere, which carries connotations of eroticism and also implies dom/sub dynamics. The syncopated rhythm is reminiscent of the habanera, a traditional tango pattern. The presence of a dance rhythm with such close connections to (heterosexual) flirtation and erotica not only creates a specific atmosphere, it also makes a musical bridge to possible embodied experience, furthering the song's erotic potential. See Savigliano 1995, 84, 86–88; see also Richardson 2012, 84.



Example 8. Sampled rhythm and groove abstraction from Mina's 'Un Bacio É Troppo Poco', creating 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' loop. Mina's voice, guitar and the 'sigh motive', bass, drums.

This repeated loop, illustrated in example 8 above, creates a groove that is negotiated in Costello's added guitars and bass. The forward movement of the loop is accentuated especially around the second verse, where the stable bass rhythm starts to rush during the third beat, becoming a sixteenth note and a dotted eighth note rather than two stable eighth notes, and gaining more staccato than legato (and still not disrupting the syncopate). In this way, the loop, while remaining seemingly the same, is simultaneously changing, albeit ever so slightly. While Costello adds chord changes to the loop (especially to the choruses with the vibraphone), it serves also as a constant pedal point, keeping the song firmly rooted in F minor. While the stationary groove and the fixed tonality of the song remain reassuringly the same, some suspense is also created by the guitar motif.

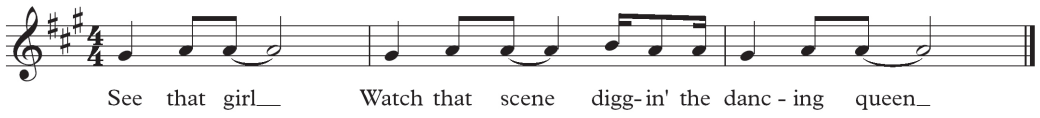
The constant repetition of the loop also creates a distancing effect, suggesting a somewhat cynical hue. The original, clear-cut loop becomes distorted by adding Costello's grimy, sustained, heavily reverbed guitars. These are in turn juxtaposed with the pristine yet echoed vibraphone. Laden with sounds that rewrite the mood of the song from a clear wedding ballad to a more gritty, dystopic one, and Costello's melancholic rendering of dry vocals, Costello's overall nihilistic depiction of musical death drive-like pleasure opts for repetition and suspension rather than developing the song or the loop further, or fulfilling a release of tension.

What makes this particular sample queer masochism, then, can be seen in several ways. Firstly, it does not (unlike Cohen's song) promote a relaxed atmosphere, but a strained one, still sexually laden. Secondly, the interplay between the loop and the added instruments creates both tension and continuity, grimy cynicism as well as appreciation of the repeated loop, but the tension never reaches a climax or release. Thirdly, Mina's omnipresent voice creates sensuality, both vocal and embodied, through the groove in the loop. This sensuality is both resented and sexualised in a queerly masochistic way. This third factor will be discussed at length in the next section. What is queered here, then, is the very notion of male heterosexuality into masochism, and the following romantic feelings into melancholy, a notion which I will revisit in section 4.2.3.

4.2.2 THE OMNIPRESENT LADY AND NEOSURREALISM

'When I Was Cruel No. 2' depicts a wedding where the first person narrator of the song is keeping a keen eye, or rather, a keen ear, on the bride. The woman, always referred to as 'she', not 'you', is described through multisensory means: her perfume smell, the fabrics of her dress, and her dancing body in movement. Often, in the choruses, she is narrated as sitting down and yawning amidst the celebration. It is implied that she may also be somewhat under the influence of alcohol.[30] Often, trademark 'sneering' quality of Costello's voice narrates a certain disdain towards the lady of the song. Musically, Costello has employed Mina's song to vocally represent the depicted feminine entity. It is easy to understand why 'Bacio', the source of the loops, would add to Costello's ambivalent depiction of the bride: the original lyrics depict a coquettish woman pondering if one kiss is enough to know if she loves 'him', and they should perhaps try kissing again, in case it helps clarify the matter. (See appendix 8 for full lyrics and translation.) This is not however the extent to which the feminine is portrayed in the song: Costello presents her through instrumentation and musical quotations. In this section, I look to the relationship between the song's 'I' and the woman, and how it differs from Cohen's 'I'm Your Man' in aesthetics, gender politics and musical presence.

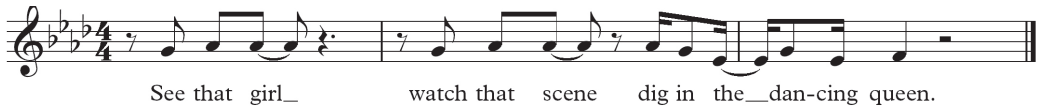
Mina's 'Bacio' is not the only quoted song[31] in 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' that includes or depicts a feminine presence. In the lyrics, the 'ghostly first wife' at the wedding implies that the bride of the song is a social climber by calling her 'dancing queen', a direct quote of ABBA's song of the same name. The ABBA quotation is more than a mere textual one: the form of the original melody is hidden in the song as well (see examples 9–10). While the original ABBA song melody goes from the seventh to tonic, and visits the second as well (in A major, G#, A and B), Costello takes the same formation but disjoins it from the original major tonic and uses the shape on the second and minor third, lowering the final note to the minor tonic (in F minor, G, A flat and descending to F), and altering the original rhythmically as well (4:00–4:08). In this way, Costello takes the optimism of 'Dancing Queen' and intertextually transforms it into a contemptuous insult towards the bride, as well as a musical mark of pessimism. ABBA's upbeat party song has been queered to mark cynicism and wantonness.



Example 9. Detail from ABBA's 'Dancing Queen' chorus.

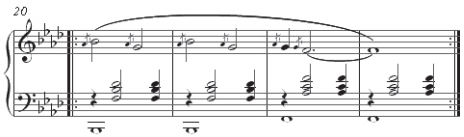
[30] 'She straightens the tipsy head-dress of her spouse/ While her recalls a honey house/ There'll be no sorrows left to drown/ Early in the morning in your evening gown'. Costello, 'When I was Cruel no. 2', second verse and chorus.

[31] It is not an unusual choice for Costello to borrow song snippets and appropriate them to his songs. As Larry David Smith (2004, 152) writes: 'he cruises "the world of music", borrowing, revising, extending what he discovers in service of his song ideas'.

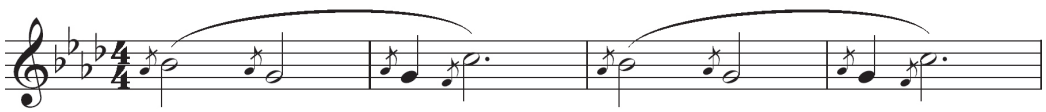


Example 10. Detail from 'When I Was Cruel No. 2': the Dancing Queen quotation and melody figure.

Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1* can also be heard, paraphrased, in Costello's song. (4:22–4:33 and 6:00–6:12; see examples 11–12.) Common features in Satie's music include a certain disillusionment with the high art status of classical music and satirical comments on German (especially Wagnerian) art music. His music reveals a sense of parody, irony and frivolity, while avoiding emotional depth, fantastical subjects, or nostalgia. (Taruskin 2010a, 65, 566, 569–570.) Bryan R. Simms (1996, 175) notes that the *Gnossienne No. 1* contains 'witty marginalia', commenting on the frequent embellishments of the song. John Richardson (2012, 132–133) discusses the piece in his analysis of the Sally Potter film *Yes* (2004), noting that it evokes such connotative meanings as exoticism, effeminacy and even camp aesthetics. Costello quotes bars 20–24 of the *Gnossienne No. 1*:



Example 11. Bars 20–24 from Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1.*



Example 12. Elvis Costello's paraphrasing of Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1* piano melody in 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'.

There are other interesting juxtapositions in the instrumentation that have a strong connection to gender roles in the song. The dream-like vibraphone and the paraphrased Satie piano melody seem to compliment Mina's looped voice. The vibraphone is heard in every chorus section, where the lyrics invariably discuss the bride;[32] it is also the only part of the song where the harmonies shift from the steady flow of F minor, E flat major and B flat

[32] Apart from the verse at the end of the song where Costello describes discussing with a reporter at the wedding, remarking sarcastically, 'Things haven't really changed that much / One of us is still getting paid too much'. At this point, however, the vibraphone is already so connected with the feminine entity, we can argue that the bride still bothers the 'I' even when he is talking to other guests at the wedding. Also, the nihilism of the situation with the unkind reporter supports the overall pessimist tone of the song.

minor floating around the verses.[33] Satie's *Gnossienne No. 1* is not an accidental choice; it brings to the song a sense of orientalist exoticism, 'faux naïveté' and effeminacy (Richardson 2012, 132), which can be seen as a continuation of Mina's sampled voice on the track. It even suggests surrealism[34] by decorating the simple piano melody used during intermissions and verses with the same 'witty marginalia' from the *Gnossienne No. 1*, creating a dream-like atmosphere, and also collage by using Satie's piano piece in a new context. The piano can be heard as a continuation of Mina's sampled voice on the track as well as the similarly echoed vibraphone. When the paraphrased *Gnossienne* plays during lyrics, they discuss the bride of the song: 'So she can dance her husband out on the floor/The captains of industry just lie there where they fall' (2:03–2:15). Otherwise the paraphrase is heard in the instrumental solo parts, as a *Leitmotif* of sorts for the dancing bride. Therefore we can identify a trifold musical representation to the feminine existence: Mina's voice – vibraphone – Satie piano.

Contrasting with these instruments are the electric guitar and bass, both played by Costello, in addition to the original bass and guitar in Mina's song. Both added instrument sounds are manipulated with heavy effects. The bass, a Fender Six, in the beginning of the song employs a sidechain compression effect that creates a 'diving' feeling to the bass sound (frequently used in house music and dubstep). While the effect was not recorded on the album version of 'When I Was Cruel No. 2', Costello uses it in live gigs, running alongside Mina's loop. The added guitar sounds, played with a Ferrington Barytone and a Silvertone Electric, are wrought with heavy distortion and long reverb. Both instruments are also mixed to have very little high-end sound, and heavy low and middle ends, creating a murky, mucky sound, which responds as a juxtaposition to the very clear and precise sounds of the piano and vibraphone. This produces erotic friction between the trifold feminine presence (Mina's voice – piano – vibraphone,) and the masculine presence of the sampler/ instrumentalist Costello, reflected in the grimy instruments.[35]

The connection between the song's bride and Mina's voice is uncanny; Costello depicts the yawning bride as sexually inviting, and indeed, we hear the 'un' syllable return rhythmically, perhaps suggesting the small noise that yawning makes. It is noteworthy that the 'un' appears on the last eighth note of the two-bar loop. The place is musically a little void, the breath before the next repetition implying space. Therefore her occupying this specific space can be heard as accentuating her presence in the song, up to the point

[33] The vibraphone chords in the chorus are: C minor, D flat major, A flat major, D diminished, D flat major with diminished fifth, E flat major, and F (thirdless). Some tension is created here between the unresolved D and D flat chords, but Costello treads an unconventional path in bringing them back to tonic via the flat seventh chord of E flat major. Indeed, the chords keep avoiding the traditional dominant chord (C major), making the atmosphere laid back while at the same time employing different means to depict musical tension. A quick analogy to traditional harmony and traditional masculinity or phallocentric sexuality can be drawn here: it is as if Costello is harmonising himself outside the traditional stress-and-release patterns of dominant-tonic harmony, finding other (male masochistic) pleasures in the ebb and flow of the song. See McClary 2002, 63, on the opera *Carmen* and its harmonic symbolism; on escaping heteronormative cadenzas, see Burns 1999.

[34] Satie is sometimes called a 'surreal' composer, although surrealism is not strictly speaking a musical genre. Satie was in close contact with the surrealist movement. See Richardson 2012, 132.

[35] This relationship is reinforced by Costello's own words, describing *When I Was Cruel* album as 'a return to the guitar' to *Guitar World.* See Smith 2004, 228.

of turning her into the idealised object of a male masochistic dream, in which the voice is perceived not purely as a sexual object but rather an adored one, a fetishised one. Indeed, it might be the Cruel Lady's throne, her pedestal upon which Costello left (elevated) her (see Žižek 1993, 95–96). The contribution of Satie's melody to this, as the extension of the feminine entity, is perhaps that of camp aesthetics and performativity, implying not a factual state of affairs, but a certain play between the woman and the man of the song.

Gender roles have been problematised by scholars when looping technique is concerned, especially during the genesis and growing popularity of the technique. Ethical concerns arose when the original voice on the track was left uncredited, but was instead viewed as arising from the artistic vision of the (usually male) sampler, making the voice (usually female) merely a creative resource for the sampler. (Bradby 1993, 161, 169.) Costello does credit the original sample to Mina, but still we are invited to consider her position in the song; is she being dominated by Costello, or is she a dominatrix? Based on Barbara Bradby's (1993) writings, we could consider Costello's sample as an effort to make the female presence into the male author's Other, something that can be moulded into any form or role that the male producer sees fit.[36]

Understanding this particular example in line with Bradby's text, we could also see it as an effort to suppress the powerful Italian singer by reducing her song's lyrics to the simple particle 'un' ('a', or 'one'). The result of this would be subjugating a singer who was a symbol of women's rights in a highly patriarchal Italian society, where she became one of the first independent female artists in Italy. Mina's personal life was also the source of considerable scandal, as the singer, who went through a divorce in a Catholic country, unabashedly sang about feminine sexual topics. This elevated her as a symbol for the sexual liberation of Italian women (Prato 2014, 166, 169). Furthermore, her powerful rendering of songs and belting technique earned her the nickname '*la urlatore*' (ibid. 162), the screamer or the howler, setting her voice apart from those of other, more traditional, classic *bel canto* female singers of the time.[37] The reduction of her elaborate vocal performance to a mere syllable sounded every 2 bars could be heard as resulting in a loss of meaning when compared to the original, leaving her muted by technology and entrapped within a repetitious cage.[38]

There is, however, another side to Costello's use of Mina's voice that ought to be taken into account. Rather than trying to silence or constrict Mina's voice, it is notable that her voice was included in the loop by Costello in the first place, untampered. In this way, he aestheticises it, even instrumentalises it. Furthermore, Costello does not sing over Mina's 'un' syllable during the song, apart from a few instances. It feels like Costello has paid

[36] The idea of the female sex as something to be moulded is not new to patriarchal society; we can see this also in poetry where women and the newly found continent of America are depicted with the same words, as something wondrous and exotic, to be researched, invaded and ultimately controlled by the European man (see Austern 1998, 30–31).

[37] This was, of course, not only Mina's credit: in the 1960s, more voice types than ones based on *bel canto* were becoming popular in the Italian music industry. Also the topics of popular songs became more modernised and urban. Prato 2014, 162.

[38] Of course, the agency of her original performance is also debatable as the original song was written by two men.

painstaking attention to fitting his melody and lyric lines so that they do not interfere with Mina's rhythmic sound. In a few instances he even hurries or delays his lines, in interaction with Mina, audibly foregrounding her voice, rather than obscuring it by his own vocals. Her presence in the song is thus reconsidered from a sampled, dominated posthuman automaton to the driving force of the song; a dominatrix disciplining the beat. This interpretation is supported by the writing of Susana Loza (2001), who criticises Bradby's (1993) theorisation of sampled women as invariably dominated and repressed. According to Donna Haraway's (1991, 163)[39] and Katharine Hayle's (1999, 7, 13)[40] idea of cyborgian aesthetics, such robotic women can also be perceived as agentic and empowered. Loza (2001, 350–351) writes:

> A cyborg diva melts binaries, crosses genders, slips into other species and genres, samples multiple sexualities, and destabilises dance music with her stammered replies. This cyborg's sexuality is a liquid loop, liberated yet situated by the circuit of its libidinal motions.

The purpose of using the sampling technique in Costello's case may not, then, (only) be to repress or objectify, but to eroticise and fantasise, thereby making the effects of the original voice in the song more powerful.

Loza (2001, 351) does not deny that the manipulated voice of the woman singer in the looping technique can also be a masculine attempt to control the objectively unmeasurable feminine sexual pleasure and orgasm, and basing this on repetitive audio formations reveals a compulsion for a heterosexuality based entirely on repetition (precisely as in Butler's performativity theories; see Butler 2008, xv, 152). However, the very fact that the female voice is looped, repeated, sexualised and fetishised reveals the constructed nature of gender and sexuality and how they fail to discuss the embodied feelings of sexual pleasure. No matter how sampled and repeated Mina's 'un' is, Costello is only playing out a fantasy in making her repeat the syllable. In this way, we can always hear Mina's ironical laughter and agency from behind the song, exemplified also lyrically in the figure of the cold, sexualised bride.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Costello does not tamper with the instrumentations of the original song, not only Mina's voice. They are both left in their original auditive form.[41] Indeed, we hear Mina's voice at its natural and original state, as it has an audible glottal beginning with the vowel 'u'. A glottal stop is the brief closing movement in the vocal cords before letting the singing voice through them. It is a singing effect that can begin a phrase with a vowel as the opening letter, and the release of the glottal stop just before situates the voice more within the throat by making the vocal cords audible. Mina's body is made audible in the song, creating another physical connection to the

[39] 'The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code.' Haraway 1991, 163.

[40] 'The clear implication is that if we can become the information we have constructed, we can achieve effective immortality.' Hayles 1999, 13.

[41] Herbalizer's jazz version reinstrumentalises the song, and Marcio's hiphop rendition adds a beat to it. Mina's vocals in the chorus are left in place in the latter.

music, complementing the danceable habanera/tango feel of the beat. Thus Costello clearly makes a choice to use the technological looping technique in the electro-acoustic sense, not in the sampled, technologically altered one.

This faithfulness to the original loop and especially Mina's voice becomes a valid point when we think of surreal aesthetics and its tendency to fetishise isolated body parts. In this view, Mina's isolated vocal syllable becomes a fetish (audio) object that is repeated every eight beats. Dividing Mina's voice to mere snippets is reminiscent of surrealist (visual, male) artists exploring 'the release of violence and sexuality' (Turim 2005, 73) in their works. While the surreal tendency to dislocate women's body parts, placing them in another setting has been seen as a violent act towards women and femininity, it also serves as a fetishisation technique, where the desired part of a woman is detached from the person. In this way, we can argue that Mina's voice in Costello's song is an effort at both fetishising and controlling the feminine presence in the song, but he does credit Mina as the original artist as well, allowing her agency as a singing subject. Perhaps out of respect, or for nostalgic reasons, Costello nevertheless affords Mina her natural, untampered vocal space, and at the same time he sexualises her vocal presence as belonging to his own neosurreal sonic space, as a splintered, yet adored, detail.

'When I Was Cruel No. 2' presents the relationship between the bride and 'I' quite vaguely. While the sexual power roles are ambiguous between the two, a historicity of sorts is implied. Costello reflects upon the situation with both fascination and scorn, creating a remarkable, obscure, even slightly neosurreal mixture of emotional states that run throughout the music. In the next section of the thesis, I turn more closely to the feeling of melancholia that pervades both Costello's song as well as Sacher-Masoch's writings.

4.2.3 SURREAL MELANCHOLIA, OR, THE QUEER ART OF FAILURE

Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No 2' is perhaps not an obvious choice for a Masochian reading. It does, however, manifest aspects of Masochianism that often go unnoticed in Sacher-Masoch's writings. While I cannot claim that Sacher-Masoch's texts are surreal, historically or otherwise, there is a tension between fantasy and reality that includes a bitter side, a disillusionment that is constantly disavowed and escaped. Through dreams, the (neo)surreal aspects of Masochianism are brought to the fore. Costello's song also depicts a state of melancholy that, in my mind, is similar to Sacher-Masoch's world. Melancholy,[42] as an artistic/cultural term referring to a contradictive feeling, where emotional pain is turned into a pleasurable experience. It need not be only attached to human feelings; it can also apply to the appreciation of the surrounding world or art. (Bowring 2008, 13–14.) It is attached to such terms as sadness, ennui, Weltschmertz, and depression, but also beauty, joy, sublime, and enjoyment.

This highly complex feeling is present in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (2006), where

[42] Melancholy as a term is a popular subject of art philosophy, psychology, and many other disciplines, and it is impossible to address them all in this thesis. For further reading on melancholy, see, for example, Kristeva 1989; Žižek 2000. For melancholia in music, see Välimäki 2005a, especially 220–228.

the protagonist Severin has been 'cured' from his supersensual state, and bitterly states: '"Be the anvil or be the hammer" are never more true than when applied to the relations between man and woman'. (Ibid. 150.) The older Severin has decided to be the hammer, or the tyrant, but still recounts his story of Wanda with meticulous detail, revealing the manifold nature of melancholy: it is both suffering and pleasure, both poetic and psychological. Reveling in her phantasmatic presence becomes a source of both bitterness and pleasure. Indeed, Leo Bersani & Adam Phillips (2008, 94) regard this pleasure as a masochistic one:

> What masochism makes possible is the pleasure in pain; or rather what masochism reveals is the capacity to bear, the capacity to desire the ultimately overwhelming intensities of feeling that we are subject to. In this sense the masochistic is the sexual, the only way we can sustain the intensity, the restlessness, the ranging of desire.

Kink listening to 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' from this angle, the relationship between 'I' and the bride is both bitter and eroticised. The looped voice of Mina follows the song as a commanding, ubiquitous force, while the 'I' position suggests some level of enjoyment of the obsessive attentiveness he pays to the bride. The pleasure is a Masochian one, both enjoying the fetish value of the bride and the female voice in the song, while similarly enduring some disillusionment towards the relationship. Comparing this to Costello's own voice, recorded very dry and compressed, and his un-gimmicky performance with very little variation, apart from the rhythmic flow of the lyrics, reinforces not only the image of the bitter man of the song, but of Severin as well. Indeed, Costello uses little variation in his voice production of chest voice and exaggerated pronunciation. Throughout most of the song, his voice sounds either disinterested and tart, or belted out and bitter. The exception to this is the very last verse (6:12–6:32).[43] Here Costello switches his voice to a softer mode of production, lingering in the rhythm of the words, and adding legatos to almost every melodic line. During most of the song, 'I' is assuming the role of the tyrant, the cruel one, but the last line reveals the singer subject's return to a tenderer, submissive state in relation to the woman and their relationship. In this way, Costello's statement of the song being about the 'instinct to forgive' becomes clear here (see Christensen 2002).

In a sense, Costello's song depicts the same indifference and disillusionment as Sacher-Masoch's opening of *Venus in Furs*. But, as with Severin, Costello's song is still filled with unattainable sensuality, longing and eroticism, ever present in the voice of Mina (or, indeed, Wanda). These cruel ladies still linger in the imagination of the men, who in turn, try to cruelly convince themselves that the fascination with these women is indeed over. But, according to Deleuze (2006, 116–118), this is all in vain: in fact, the process of disillusionment and cruelty is at the heart of the Masochian experience. Treating an object cruelly desexualises it, but it does not de-fetishise it. The fetish value, still apparent in the desexualised object of desire, in fact re-sexualises it, making it possible for the masochistic hero to both hate and desire the object: 'the desexualised has become in itself the object

[43] 'Look at me now / She's starting to yawn / She looks like she was born to it / Ah, but it was so much easier / When I was cruel.' Costello, 'When I Was Cruel No. 2', chorus.

for sexualisation' (Deleuze 2006, 117). This is accentuated also in the tango-like rhythm of the song; reading the song as a traditional tango, where the lyrics often depict a man betrayed by a sexually wanton woman who uses her sexuality to climb societal ladders (very comparable to the high-society wedding Costello depicts), Marta E. Savigliano (1993, 94–95) asserts that the tango is deeply enmeshed in themes of male impotence, cuckoldry, jealousy, and, to some extent, violence towards women. Similarly to Deleuze's assertion, these men are bitter yet still fascinated; so it seems to be with Costello's song as well.

Costello does not straightforwardly explain who occupies the 'I' position in the song. We cannot know for sure if he is the groom at the wedding, or perhaps a previous lover or husband of the bride, or just a general onlooker. All positions offer interesting interpretative windows to the song, and of course there is no one right answer to the question – perhaps it is left deliberately unresolved. We can however hypothesise that there is some history between the 'I' and the bride. The gossiping guests paraphrase the bride's past, and the very name of the song, 'when I *was* cruel', implies previous history. Costello's previous version of 'When I Was Cruel' (2002b), which perhaps could be referred to as the 'No. 1' version for the purposes of this analysis, is distinctly different to the 'No. 2' in its atmosphere, music, arrangement and lyrics. Costello published 'Cruel No. 1' with The Imposters on the album *Cruel Smile* (2002), which contains B-sides, live recordings and leftover material from the album *When I Was Cruel*. Reading the lyrics (see appendix 9 for full lyrics of 'No. 1'), we find another relationship depicted: the 'you' of the relationship has apparently been running away, and perhaps philandering while running (note the euphemism, 'did someone flip your switch?') from the 'I' of the song. The mocking 'I' depicts their relationship:

> *You talk your way out of this, did someone flip your switch?*
> *Now there is only right or wrong, can you tell which is which?*
> *But it was so much easier, when I was cruel*
> (Costello: 'When I Was Cruel', 2002b.)

The first lyrics appear after an 'introduction' of a noisy crescendo cluster from a Hammond organ, spontaneously switching to the opening of the song. This creates an element of surprise, Costello's voice leaping out of the incoherent shadows, almost as if he were stalking the 'you'. There is an air of condescension in the lyrics, with the 'I' mocking and pleading for an explanation for the behaviour of 'you'. The major key of the song and the simple melody seem to make the lyrics sound almost juvenile, or perhaps more accurately, patronising. However, there is a feeling of SM-erotica masquerading as jealousy in the lyrics:

> *Oh when I was cruel and I could make you very sorry*
> *Lonely cowards followed me like ghouls*
> *And you liked me too, When I was cruel*
> *Oh you know you did, When I was cruel*
> (Costello: 'When I Was Cruel', 2002b.)

It seems that the relationship was built around performative cruelty, which was also suggested to be enjoyed by 'you'. There is an air of coercion about these lyrics, a Sadeian[44] pleasure in debauchery and degradation. One could even argue that the 'you' had sexual adventures outside the primary relationship, as is often the case also in the tango tradition (Savigliano 1993, 87, 93–94), or serving a cuckold-like pleasure for both of them (see section 4.1.3) and resulting in these cruel mock-punishments ('Oh you liked me too/when I was cruel'). The distinction between 'Cruel No. 1' and 'Cruel No. 2' is thus marked. While the 'I' of the first 'Cruel' seems to be, indeed, enjoying the performative cruelty coming from both sides of the relationship, in the second 'Cruel' this apparent pleasure is not as straightforward. It seems that some disillusionment has taken place between the songs: 'I' spends a lot of time observing the bride, depicting her body and scent, finding it a bitter pleasure. His desires and attention are focused on the begrudged yet sexualised bride, even while he resents her presence and becomes side-tracked by other guests at the party.

Through disillusionment we also arrive at the theme of failure. Queer theorist Judith Halberstam (2011, 3) argues in *The Queer Art of Failure* that while the world seems to be riddled with optimism, often the cruel flipside of optimism is left unnoticed: when optimism is seen as the main measure of success in life, marriage and even health, the opposite of these, divorce, sickness, or death, are seen as the deficiency or failure of an individual. Halberstam sees failure as a queer form of being, precisely because of the normativity inscribed in optimism and success: '[f]ailing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well. […] If success requires so much effort, then maybe failure is easier in the long run and offers different rewards' (ibid.).[45]

Costello's song describes failure in the context of perhaps the most culturally optimistic situation possible, at a wedding. By evoking a more nihilistic perspective at the event and envoicing this statement through surreal and even somehow grotesque instrumentation, the listener finds themselves a long way away from Wagner's wedding march so ironically referenced in the first verse lyrics ('Here comes the bride'; 1:01–1:05). Instead of celebrating this union, it is pointed out that at least three divorces have preceded it,[46] and even these previous wives linger as guests at the wedding, one of them openly mocking the bride. Costello creates a wedding dystopia, where optimism only thinly, if at all, veils failure and bitterness. Instead of being rewarded for success in this marriage, interpreting events through the ideas of Halberstam (2011, 23) suggests childishness, loss, and a mode of unbecoming as the alternative rewards of failure, but also masochism and passivity. While Halberstam's readings of masochism are related to femininity and feminism, in Costello's case, we can argue that male masochism, Masochianism, is at the root of the pleasure taken in failure. Leo Bersani (1986, 41, 60–64) theorises masochism as self-shattering, a slight differentiation from the Freudian death drive discussed earlier. While the

[44] See chapter 5.

[45] This is, again, reminiscent of Lee Edelman's (2004) thoughts on queer lives as deliberately seeking alternative, non-heteronormative solutions in order to maintain their oppositional force. An antisocial direction in queer theory can be found in Halberstam's many writings.

[46] 'Not quite aside they snide, "she's number four/there's number three just outside the door"'.

death drive is understood as directly related to the pleasure principle, Bersani (ibid. 60) argues that sexuality constitutes

> a kind of psychic shattering, […] a threat to the stability and integrity of the self – a threat which perhaps only the masochistic nature of sexual pleasure allows us to survive.

This shattering, Bersani (1986, 41) thinks is at the heart of sexuality itself, calling it the 'masochistic *jouissance*' where pleasure is found in dissolving of the boundaries of ego, and 'rediscovering the self outside the self' (Bersani 2010, 175; see also Musser 2014, 15). All power, and by extension, all responsibility, has been taken away from the self, and so the self takes pleasure in adopting the role of a victim of circumstance in order to survive, rather than suffering victimhood as a personal failure. The experience is thus also that of narcissism, of escaping responsibility. (Bersani 2010, 175; McCallum 2014, 213.) Considering this, the queer art of failure here is to realise, through masochism, that failure is not a personal fault. If there is no self, then the self has no blame in not finding success. Instead, the shattered self finds pleasure in pain, makes sense out of nonsense, pleasure in displeasure, and eroticism in cynicism.

We could therefore argue that this multihued experience is, in essence, a neosurrealist one: we find coexisting realities and fantasies, opposed yet simultaneously strong feelings within the same frame, and the concepts of success and failure are mixed together to form new, neosurreal, thought-provoking meanings. Perhaps, in Costello's song, the very pleasure of failure comes by means of prolonging the song through subjective temporality (see section 4.2.1) and revelling in this melancholic feeling, where the social 'success' of marriage is already recognised as a failure at the wedding. The very moment of this realisation is then extended throughout the song, with Mina's suspended mocking repeatedly heard in the background, and the Masochian enjoyment is to lose yourself in the music, in the affectivity of the song, which still manages to be a beautiful song despite its subject and Costello's dystopic handling of it.

Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' is in my kink reading a multifaceted expression of male Masochianism, mixed with darker hues of disillusionment, bitterness and failure. While the sampled song is a depiction of a high-society wedding, it also creates a specific kind of eroticism based on negative feelings of melancholy and nostalgia. I have read this as the neosurreal flip side of Sacher-Masoch's specific form of eroticism, male Masochianism. Coupled with Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man', in the next section I theorise more generally the main pleasures of modern male Masochianism, and how they are expressed in popular media and music.

4.3 MALE MASOCHIANISM IN FOCUS

The fantastical world of Sacher-Masoch has not been extracted from the contemporary world, even when (or, perhaps, especially because) it contradicts many tropes of acceptable masculinity. While the sadomasochistic idea of submitting yourself sexually to a woman is often discouraged, even seen as an aberration in the strictest heteronormative society, the social unacceptability makes the phenomenon also a strong fetish subject. There are still problematic issues at play within male Masochianism. These include the position of the (faux?-)empowered woman, and whether or not the codes of socially acceptable masculinity are really subverted. In Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man', I have earlier claimed that the fantasy of the woman is erotic enough for the masculine subject to offer her ultimate control of their relationship, its duration, and even people not directly involved. In Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2', I've argued that the sexual fantasy stems from negative affect, creating a surreal, disjointed, yet powerful mode of sexual titillation, with unpromised and uncertain resolution.

I have paired up Cohen's and Costello's songs to explore how Masochianism can produce specific sexual fantasies, but also new experiences of eroticism, sexual role play, and masculinity. Together they demonstrate the specific traits of Masochianism that seem to resonate within society as a different, non-normative masculine romance, sexuality, and devotion, without going as far as to denote an overtly sexual or submissive position. In this way, the songs offer alternative possibilities for sexual courting than those based on masculine aggression, dominance, or visual titillation.

4.3.1 VOCALISING THE CRUEL LADY

The figure of the towering, all-powerful figure of the goddess is positioned at the center of the Masochian fantasy. Her disdain is felt as a sublime, sexual experience, and seeing her worshiped by others is just as exciting as gaining her punitive attention. Still, her role in this fantasy remains obscure. She may be a projected vision of the absent and/or punishing Mother, a princess to be rescued and worshiped, or an agentic woman truly in control of the Masochian dream. Furthermore, the motivation for fetishising women remains ambivalent; whether it is misogynistic at heart, or an escape from the forced norms of traditional masculinity. In this section, I discuss the position of the women in Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man' and Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' and their sexual(ised) fantasy figures, and the non-heteronormative sexual imagination behind them. I question the motivation behind their objectification of women, as male masochism implies ambivalence towards them by its nature to the extent that it dehumanises female agents; as Amber Musser (2014, 3) reminds us, masochism is 'always politically charged', but nevertheless cautions against 'always reading it as subversive practice'.

Masochism, or Masochianism, has been theorised by Deleuze (2006, 33) as turning reality into fantasy: the Masochian subject is aware of reality but is determined not to enter it, and simultaneously, he clings to his fantasy world by disavowing reality. There are, however, different readings of masochism that contradict Deleuze's readings, particularly

regarding the agency of the Masochian fantasy object. While Deleuze admits that the masochist is ultimately in control of the fantasy, in his mind, it entails a disavowal of the Lacanian Law of the Father and 'attempts to recreate the pre-Oedipal maternal world' (Musser 2006, 3). On the other hand, Slavoj Žižek (1994, 91; Biddle & Jarman-Ivens 2007, 8) sees the fascination in masochism as an attempt to reconstruct the same law, to 'rethrone the absent father' (Biddle & Jarman-Ivens 2007, 8). This is based on the idea that the male masochist is indeed the one initiating the submission, placing the Lady in the place of the Father: 'it is the victim (the servant in the masochistic relationship) who initiates a contract with the Master (woman) […] he stages his own servitude' (Žižek 1994, 91–92). Deleuze (2006, 60, 62, 68) would disagree with the logic in Žižek's (or perhaps, Biddle & Jarman-Ivens's reading of Žižek's) text: in Deleuze's writing, the masochistic treaty clearly is a pact between the Mother and the Son, as opposed to the sadistic contract, which is done between the Father and the Daughter. Therefore Deleuze sees the disavowal of the Father as more essential than his rethroning. The question of the Lady's agency in this fantasy remains obscure; she may still be the fantasy of a radical Other, or the controlled, surreal Sublime who cannot step outside of this construction without making herself 'too human' for the male Masochian admirer.

It is possible to discern the Deleuzean reading of masochism as a 'performative' one and the Žižekian as a 'materialist' one. While Deleuze's stance towards masochism is that the experience is an escape to pre-Oedipal powerlessness, Žižek (1994, 92) maintains that it is the masochist who controls the situation. In my first queer reading of 'I'm Your Man,' the male masochist hands over his power to the all-powerful Lady, in the second, more materialist reading of 'When I Was Cruel No. 2', the male masochist has all agency and control, and the Lady is seemingly there only to fulfil his fantasy. In a pure SM sense, the Žižekian claim makes perfect sense. Almost all sources discussing SM relationships claim that the sub is the one with the ultimate control; even Foucault (1998, 94–96) argues, albeit in a more general sense, that power comes from below. What makes this specific situation 'materialist', then, is the thought of male over female power. If the male heterosexual masochist fantasy is only thinly veiled male power exerted over the female, the subversive potential of the scenario is questionable. Seemingly, the man would use the woman only for his entertainment, and again, the woman would be controlled, not the one in control. Indeed, if we see the woman in this power dynamic as the ultimate fetish object (as Žižek 1994, 89 often suggests), the woman's agency is debatable. After all, '[a] fetish can be held, seen, smelled, even heard if it is shaken, and most importantly it can be *manipulated at the will of the fetishist*'. (Kaplan 2006, 5, emphasis mine.) In this case, the Masochian man's relinquishing of power becomes an 'elaborate reversal of gender *agency*, but not of gender *identity*' (McClintock 1993, 97).

In the case of Leonard Cohen's song 'I'm Your Man', the Deleuzian reading becomes more convincing. Deleuze (2006, 68) sees the feminine presence in the Masochian dream as 'posited as lacking in nothing and placed alongside a virility suspended in disavowal'. What is considered manipulation in Cohen's song turns to powerless persuasion, with the song's narrator granting the woman the power to make all the choices in their relationship, and the man going along with these choices. The man's submission is not dependent on his own whims, but hers. The woman remains autonomous, free to choose either the

man of the song or anyone else, making the claim 'I'm your man' a rhetorical trick to endear the courter to the woman, begging for her good will. Here, her fetish value remains both non-objectifying as well as objectifying, she is both respected, and idolised. Attempts at manipulation remain futile, even somewhat performative; the rules of the courtship are clearly hers to define. Comparing this to Costello's song, the presence of Mina's voice is also both fetishised and appreciated. Indeed, in the truest Žižekian sense of masochism, Costello does manipulate the feminine presence in the song, quite literally with technology and music sampling. It is not, however, a straightforwardly narcissistic and/or fetishistic endeavour: Costello grants Mina audible space (albeit, the space *he* chooses), allowing her sampled 'un' syllable to drive the song onwards and not obscuring it with his own whenever possible. Similarly, she becomes ubiquitous in the song, and creates a queer temporality through the repetition of her voice, implying the past, present and the future simultaneously. This is, again, at the heart of the Masochian experience, where losing yourself, making reality into fantasy (Deleuze 2006, 72), or shattering the boundaries of the ego (Bersani 1986, 60), create a strong fantastical pleasure.

Then again, looking at the feminine presence in both songs, it cannot be denied that on some level, they are marginalised. Musicologist Ian Biddle's (2007) reading of male singer-songwriters and their 'new masculinity' formed around questions of vulnerability and intimacy, states that while this 'new' masculinity toys with the 'danger' or awareness of potential hurt, it still does not challenge gender normativity or traditional tropes of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, Biddle (2007, 141) suggests that one of the ways to test this new masculinity is to weigh it against the represented femininity in these songs. Biddle (ibid.) writes:

> She is addressed, but is all but silenced; zombielike backing vocals, over-spectacularised ('artificial' overtrained) voice or crude anonymous cipher of a 'vulnerability' (one's 'feminine' side), she is always disciplined into the margins, always held in a tight discursive grip at the service of masculine authenticity.

Costello and Cohen thus may be seen to create a controlled, marginal presence for the female vocals in their songs: we hear a female chorus in Cohen, and the sampled voice of Mina in Costello. While we could argue, like Biddle, that both examples include a disciplined feminine presence auditively, it is also true that the (sexual) fantasy rotates around the woman as well. Without the Lady (or the adored dominant), there is no Masochian dream, nor is there an alternative masculinity. Framing the songs in terms of Masochian aesthetics reveals the importance of the woman, not as abject, but rather idolised Other. It is, however, a matter of debate whether the Othered Lady still is a human entity, equal with other wielders of power, or an empty fetish symbol for Masochian men to utilise as they please.

As in all power relationships, the submissive man gives the Lady's power to her from below. Cohen's 'I' in 'I'm Your Man' chooses to relinquish power to the wooed woman, who is the one making all of the decisions in the depicted situation. Mina's omnipresent voice, looped by Costello, maintains a centre of attention throughout 'When I Was Cruel No. 2', also existing outside of the song. Therefore, removing the submissive man from

the picture does not automatically mean that there is no sexually empowered woman; the only image disappearing is the symbol of the Lady in the Masochian imagination. The 'you' in Cohen and Mina ('she') in Costello still remain empowered, strong entities (albeit, the first as a symbol more than an actual existing artist). Whether we can claim such treatment of these women to be sexist remains to be debated. Lynda Hart claims that '[a]ll our sexualities are constructed in a classist, racist, heterosexist, and gendered culture, and suppressing or repressing these fantasy scenarios is not going to accomplish changing that social reality' (Hart 1998, 33). While this may be true, so apparently is the opposite of such a statement: that embracing and celebrating these fantasy scenarios based on these classist, racist, heterosexist and gendered culture, will neither change the social reality that spawned these fantasies, parodied or not.

Of course, these readings may be questioned as to whether or not they serve feminist goals. Since masochism is historically regarded as a feminine state of being (Freud's essentialism; 2001, 161), my readings thus far could easily be interpreted as reinforcing this claim, rather than subverting it. After all, I claim here that in these two songs by these two men, they embrace a 'feminine' position without relinquishing their roles in society, the music business, or in fact, in their personal lives (as I cannot claim anything about Cohen's or Costello's sexual preferences with respect to sadomasochistic power dynamics). In this, I'd like to turn to Judith Halberstam's readings of female artists' works that exhibit them in a highly vulnerable, almost masochistic state. Halberstam (2011, 139) writes: 'Obviously none of these performances immediately suggests a 'feminist' act, but they instead make feminism into an ongoing commentary on fragmentariness, submission, and sacrifice.' Such is the case with my readings, combined not only with womanhood, but also manhood, and how the gendered concepts of fragmentariness, submission, and sacrifice can create interesting, intersectional commentary on masculinity and femininity.

4.3.2 HUMILIATION AS MALE SEXUAL FANTASY

Both the songs by Cohen and Costello present a level of (sexually tinged) humiliation, although not straightforwardly. With Cohen, the cuckolding position may or may not include humiliation of the primary male partner,[47] but the feeling of humiliation is turned into a sublime, sexual experience that concerns allowing the female partner to enjoy sexual pleasure with others. This is the antithesis of the traditional masculine concept of 'owning' your wife, and embracing the feminisation of masculinity imposed as a taboo by (masculine) society. In Costello, the humiliation experienced is slightly more bitter, but still becomes one of sexual titillation and fascination. This is perhaps enhanced by the social situation where overt sexual contact with the bride would be frowned upon, even if the contact is made by the newly married groom. Humiliation is a fairly common fetish in kink communities. It is thought to originate from the historical[48] form of punishment of

[47] I adopt the phrase 'primary partner' from polyamorous culture, where some couples date outside their relationship while maintaining a relationship with a 'primary' one. Although there are differences between the polyamorous way of life and cuckolding sex, they are similar enough to allow this term to be borrowed here.

[48] Private schools, monasteries, and some forms of governmental and religious orders have also been

public humiliation. Stocks and pillories, donning a fool's hat, or parading naked through a city are among the religiously and institutionally sanctioned forms of public humiliation intended as punishment. (Love 2000, 135.) While these more overt forms of punishment are no longer practiced in Western societies, some might claim that the press and the Internet have become new forms of public humiliation, often utilised to achieve personal vengeance. Humiliation in itself is not a gendered practice, but the means of causing shame differ slightly in some gendered discourses.

There is no single definition of 'proper' masculinity. This does not, however, prevent the policing of properness by society, peers, and cultural codes alike (Boso 2014, 102; Halberstam 1998, 25).[49] Men are often socially humiliated, ostracised and exposed to verbal and even physical violence if they fail to live up to the phantasmagorial norms of being 'real men'. In this 'realness' of manhood, gestures, words, and semiotic codes (clothes, hair, gestures.) are judged as 'right' or 'wrong' proportionally to their value as symbols of manhood, and failing in this can call the target's masculinity into question. (Boso 2015, 1–4.) While this social policing remains in real life, escaping it in sexual-fantastical situations is a way to turn humiliation on its head, to embrace it with eroticisation and hence to experience its lack of relevance to one's own masculinity. Psychologist Roy Baumeister (1988, 61) theorised that masochism is an escape from the Self, or a doorway through which one can momentarily escape their everyday social self and create a new, fantastical 'reality'. Queer theorist Lynda Hart (1998, 61) critiques Baumeister's theory as presenting a picture of masochism that creates an alternative, fantastical self in place of the 'real', much like switching personalities. Hart does, however, agree with Baumeister that the experience of masochism

> is a leap into a corporeality that can facilitate a process of coming to realise that the 'self' is not only a construct, a prosthetic device, but often a burdensome one. (Hart 1998, 61.)

The feeling of having one's masculinity undermined through humiliation shifts in this context from becoming a threat or a challenge into something fictional and pleasurable. In Cohen's song, this wish for sexual humiliation is expressed through 'I' allowing 'you' sexual freedom and still remaining loyal to her. In Costello, the humiliation is perhaps depicted in the past. Through the course of the song this humiliation is more socially visible, where the pleasure of it remains ambivalent yet stubbornly sexualised.

The submissive position is often thought to be feminine, mostly due to Freud's early theories about sadism and masochism. Adopting the position of the submissive is, already, a form of humiliation if we are to think in terms of masculinity (Hart 1998, 30). Indeed, Margot Weiss's (2011, 176) observations of the kink community suggest that male

reported to practice humiliation as a form of punishment throughout history and in many cultures. Other forms of humiliation would include infantilisation, animalisation, shameful exposure, and some sexualised forms of defecating while being watched (coprophilia). Love 2000, 135.

[49] In this context, I talk mostly of male masculinity, but it should be pointed out that masculinity is not attached to any sex or gender, but can exist in any biological body, and the policing of this masculinity through humiliation works on similar premises no matter which body it is attached to.

submissives 'disavow [their] very masculinity'. They are perceived as weak and unmanly, inside and outside the SM scene and fantasy. Weiss (ibid. 177) notes that this is particularly equated with, not only to a feminine position, but homosexuality, both of which are actively disavowed (and feared) in the dominant forms of masculinity (both within society and as a sadomasochistic position). Deleuze, however, finds the pleasure within this paradox through Lacanian psychoanalysis, in a lengthy passage worth citing here:

> What are the masochistic defences against both the reality and the hallucination of the father's aggressive return? The masochistic hero must evolve a complex strategy to protect his world of fantasy and symbols, and to ward off the hallucinatory inroads of reality (or to put it differently, the real attacks of hallucination). […] By this means the masochist tries to exorcise the danger of the father and to ensure that the temporal order of reality and experience will be in conformity with the symbolic order, in which the father has been abolished for all time. […] Finally, he ensures that he will be beaten; we have seen that what is beaten, humiliated and ridiculed in him is the image and the likeness of the father, and the possibility of the father's aggressive return. *It is not a child but a father that is being beaten.* The masochist thus liberates himself in preparation for a rebirth in which the father will have no part. (Deleuze 2006, 65–66, emphasis in the original.)

What Deleuze claims here, is that the pleasure in being humiliated and dominated is, in a sense, a disavowal of the masculine, symbolic image of the Father, who is present both as an image and as an embodied social role. In this view, the humiliation is not strictly speaking personal, but social. The guilt of being a man, or more accurately, the powerful, privileged social entity, is acted out in the Masochian dream; the dominatrix punishes the masculinity, the man-ness, and not the person himself. Consequently, Deleuze overthrows Freud's (in)famous claim from his article 'A Child Is Being Beaten' (2013 [1919]), and turns it on its head; it is not that the child has inner feelings of guilt, asking to be punished, but the child wants to punish the social roles imposed upon him. This appears to be especially true in Cohen's song: the free submission to the feminine presence is not only a simple means of atoning for past misdemeanours, but also works as the renegotiation of humiliation, masculinity, of man-ness, and by extension, of Cohen's own image as a revered male musician and poet. In Costello's song, the process of sublimating the humiliation imposed on the 'I' at the wedding is one still in progress; it is still felt as a painful failure of masculinity, yet simultaneously an erotic experience. In this way, the possibility of engaging in a feminist reading of these two songs is very much present: a submissive man can transgress his social encoding into a new (queer) masculinity where (suggested) feminine positions are not shameful but embraced with pride and sexual pleasure alike. I shall discuss this further in the next section of the thesis.

4.3.3 THE NEW MASCULINITY

Psychotherapist Roger Horrocks (1994, 25) has written of patriarchal masculinity and how it creates a crisis for men vying to fulfil its demands:

> Manhood as we know it in our society requires such a self-destructive identity, a deeply masochistic self-denial, a shrinkage of the self, a turning away from whole areas of life, that the man who obeys the demands of masculinity has become only half human.

Two world wars, economic crises, the shift from industry to consumption, and the empowerment of women in the economic system have left traditional masculinity in a narrow and paranoid place. In this place, any breach of normativity is seen as illicit, a sign of weakness, and/or false masculinity. Through the rise of queer theory and performativity, where maleness and manhood are not definitively attached to masculinity, the slow renegotiation of 'proper' masculinity and manhood has resulted in a more relaxed attitude towards manifold means of self-representation without excessive fear of questioning one's 'proper' gender identity. Masculinity is redefining itself, with men either welcoming the change or clinging to conservative values. (Kimmel 1987, 9; Williams 2007, 146–148; Faludi 1999, 38–39.)

One of these new masculine strategies is to negotiate vulnerability as a non-feminising subjective position. This is especially visible in the music business, and particularly in boy bands as well as singer-songwriter practice, where the (here, male) musician both creates and performs his music. Sarah F. Williams (2007, 145) writes of emo rock (emotionally oriented rock) as trying to 'reconcile the long-established codes of masculinity – musical representations of aggression, pomp, stoicism, misogyny, and determination – with more multifaceted human expressions of heartache, weakness, longing, and loss'. Emo accomplished this with more lush instrumentation, complex harmonic arrangements and lyrical contents, where the collective fears and anxieties of the (especially teenage) audiences are negotiated. (Ibid. 153). Shana Goldin-Perschbacher (2007, 213) on the other hand theorises Jeff Buckley's performances as communicating 'unbearable intimacy', where his 'vulnerable-sounding voice and penchant for singing women's songs in a female vocal range' are considered as Buckley's 'transgendered vocality'. Buckley's voice and emotional delivery of the songs effectively queers his artistic persona into a new vocal existence, where his embodied masculinity is in discourse with his delivery akin to female artists' voices and emotionality. In both these articles, the crisis of masculinity negotiated in music concerns the questions of artistry, poetry, and emotional vulnerability.

Vulnerability is negotiated in Masochian aesthetics in multiple ways. Even Sacher-Masoch's word 'supersensual' encourages the submissive man to express his feelings, needs and desires more willingly than society would allow. Indeed, Romantic era masculinity was much dependent on this (Stewart 1998, 1, 5–6). While Masochian masculinity is historically very distant from the predominant masculinities of today, deliberating on Masochian supersensual codes is one way to renegotiate the softer, more pliant masculinity codes that respond to the criticism of normative masculinity without losing its foundation. A queer temporality of sorts is created, embedded in a fantastical sphere where

masculinity is framed in a timeless, ahistorical space, where it can be reformed, renegotiated, and still stay in control while it subjects itself to emotionality, vulnerability, and pain. The Masochian masculinity has nothing to do with the stoic mentality of current normative masculinity, yet it does not entirely escape duty and responsibility. It is simply supersensual, not effeminising vulnerability but embracing it as a sublime experience.

Cohen's and Costello's songs negotiate this vulnerability in different ways. While Cohen's 'I'm Your Man' submits freely and openly to the woman's decision and, by extension, places himself in a possibly vulnerable situation, Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' explores vulnerability in a more complex way. The song may be a depiction of disillusionment and bitterness, but the Masochian mindset still remains vulnerable to the power of the fetishised woman. Indeed, the bitterness and disavowal expressed by the singer towards the woman reveal the vulnerability still apparent in the erotic experience, tainted as it may be by melancholia. There is also a difference between emo rock artists and Cohen and Costello; mainly, age. Emo usually references juvenile feelings, and vulnerability is always a part of growing from boy to man: 'Boys are volatile, unpredictable and vulnerable. […] His vulnerability is made more acute by his own recklessness and spontaneity.' (Greer 2006, 21.) In contrast, Costello and Cohen were 47 and 53 years old respectably when they released the albums that case studies have been drawn from. Their vulnerability is perhaps not as obvious as the emo rockers, or other younger man/boy artists.

While boys are quite often feminised as opposed to grown men and are in constant negotiation with the 'threat' of masculinity (Biddle & Jarman-Ivens 2007, 5–6), bringing their vulnerability to adult manhood effectively queers both positions temporally. Mature men are allowed to show vulnerability, but they must shun away from the volatility and unpredictability of boys. Men are both in touch with their emotions as well as in control of them. This also opens up a new supersexuality for older men, who ultimately face the biological facts of their bodies changing and how they function sexually with age. The urgency of penetrative sex that was all-important in their teens gains more subtle hues of appreciation,[50] experience and, a new (mental and/or chemical) temporality where postponing coitus in the truest Masochian sense is both a sign of vulnerability as well as a mode of controlling their bodies. The New Masculinity creates a new temporality between 'boys' and 'men', where both can coexist regardless of biological age. While I do not claim to have any knowledge of Cohen's or Costello's private sexual lives, their songs do suggest that alternative erotic pleasures are indeed finding their way into their work, and by extension, to the attention of wider audiences as well, furthering and expanding the otherwise narrow expectations of traditional male sexuality.

In both songs discussed in this chapter, the New Supersensual Masculinity does not limit itself only to the institution of heterosexuality, but can venture into a queer place of enjoyment also in regards to polyamory and bisexual urges.[51] The feeling of jealousy is

[50] 'For most aging males, sex gradually declines in its importance in their daily lives. While sexual behaviour may decrease in frequency, the quality of sexual relations and interpersonal relationships remains important to the general wellbeing of most seniors.' Segraves & Segraves 1995, 88.

[51] I use the word 'bisexual' with great ambiguity here or anywhere, as I disagree with the word's implication that there are only two genders to which a person can be attracted. Then again, the cuckold homoerotic

sublimated to enjoyment in seeing the woman enjoy herself sexually with other men, and still the main partner's masculinity (and ownership over her) is safe. Masculinity is thus not determined by sexual domination, but is rather based on devotion and acceptance, tinged with the sexual allure of breaching normative masculine boundaries. This is much akin to nineteenth-century artists vying for a state of masculinity which is beyond the binary categories of heterosexual and homosexual. Lawrence Kramer (1997, 198) calls this

> a 'middle zone' of masculine affection, in which behaviour normally sanctioned only between men and women was allowable as long as it clearly stopped short – how short was highly variable – of genital (which is to say genital-oral or genital-anal) consummation.

This space Kramer (1997, 197–199) calls 'homoerogenous', which enables not just interaction between man and woman, but also man and man. It also promotes the enjoyment of tactile interaction as well as emotional attachment between the men, without directly challenging heteromasculinity. This is not exactly removing the erotic aspect from the interaction(s). On the contrary this view separates erotic, pleasurable feelings from strict heteronormativity and normative masculinity. In this way, the 'New' masculinity becomes also 'old', romantic, 19th century masculinity, so disavowed in modern society. Perhaps, the most apt depiction would be 'the rediscovered new masculinity'.

Similarly, both Cohen's and Costello's songs renegotiate the limits of hetero- and homosexuality beyond their narrowly delimited definitions. Both represent queer pleasures in affording their romantic interest some sexual liberties (albeit, in Costello's song, the pleasure is mixed with cynicism and jealousy, which are yet to turn into cuckold fantasies, or are possibly in a dense relationship with them). Although neither song is explicitly sadomasochistic, they both produce an alternative kink eroticism that goes outside of the heteronormative matrix of acceptable sex, sexuality, or gender roles. They both also represent modern day versions of Sacher-Masoch's specific erotic fantasies, or male Masochianism, by celebrating both the fantastical elements and the darker hues of disillusionment in these fantasies, revealing their neosurreal side as well. While the main auditive signals of masculinity are indeed present (Cohen's deep voice, Costello's performative nihilism), the feminine characters are empowered to the extent that they start to represent the soft, previously disregarded and now embraced, side of Supersensual masculinity. A new form of masculinity is thus born, which is not defined by control, but by shared intimacy and sexual-sensual experiences. Furthermore, the New Masculinity is not defined by youth and arrogance, but cultivates a new temporality, both fantastical and biological, where sexual pleasures are redefined as sublime experiences instead of banal carnality. This is why neither of the songs is overtly sadomasochistic, yet they exhibit similar traits of eroticism that are valued in much the same way as they are in sadomasochistic fantasies.

With this discussion of Masochian men coming into focus and discerning their

undercurrent is not exactly homosexual either, nor does it exclude the all-important presence of the woman. Previously, I have suggested that this eroticism is linked to narcissism, but is also explained by seeing the same sex as sexually alluring, opening a door to non-heterosexual sexuality, yet not strictly homo- or bisexual either. Sacher-Masoch's term 'supersensual' or the more vague term 'queer' could be applied here as well.

musical codes for SM erotics, I shall now proceed to reading the audiovisual depictions of strong SM-inclined women onstage, Rihanna and Zerlina. While both these artists possess the traits of male masochism discussed above, presenting themselves as dominating characters, I am mostly concerned with the female performers' agentic gestures. I left this aspect of interpreting dominating women as agentic perhaps somewhat unresolved in my analyses of Costello's and Cohen's songs, and this is why it is justified to continue the discussion in the next chapter. I shall focus especially on audiovisual renderings of SM erotica through the theme of '(in)visibility'.

5 (IN)VISIBILITY

The concepts of visibility and invisibility are apparently contradictory frames of reference through which sadomasochistic erotica can be elaborated in reference to visual and also wider semantic senses. This becomes particularly important when considering the position of SM aesthetics in popular culture, which are both seemingly ubiquitous, but also invisible, cloaked in the aura of the secret and forbidden. Almost anything can be encoded in terms of SM aesthetics. Building on legacy of 70s gay disco, 1980s synthpop, heavy and punk, Madonna and burlesque fashion, many contemporary musicians have included SM eroticism in their music and music videos, particularly after the hype surrounding the *Fifty Shades* books and film adaptation. References to spanking are often found in today's pop music lyrics (Plante 2006, 73). Still, the mainstream aesthetics of SM are often expressed within the narrow limits of conventional heterosexuality and heteronormativity, particularly concerning the eroticisation of feminine submission. Furthermore, widely accessible SM images and aesthetics do not mean that the level of recognition, understanding or acceptance have increased correspondingly (Weinberg & Magill 1995, 223; Weiss 2006, 105). According to Margot Weiss (2006, 104), SM still has some capacity to shock, but in some contexts it has paradoxically lost its risk factor, becoming 'more mainstream and less exotic'.[1] In this way, SM starts to refer to something other than a radical (or alternative and non-heteronormative) sexuality; in short, it becomes banal in its ubiquity, losing any oppositional or underground connotations it might have possessed, and therefore is rendered invisible, unrecognizable from other sexual kinks and marketing phenomena.

In this chapter, I discuss two examples: Rihanna's music video *S&M* (2010), and a filmed production of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (2010; 1787) concentrating on the character of Zerlina, who is sometimes attributed with sadomasochistic tendencies or desires. Both examples are (or can be read as) explicitly sadomasochistic with regards to lyrics and libretto, and both emphasise the visual recognition of SM aesthetics while similarly recoding them as something else. In these two case studies, I discuss SM through related themes of public and private spaces, feminine agency, reality and fantasy, and SM and violence. From a cultural musicological standpoint, I analyse the case examples

[1] One could even speak of 'SM normativity', to make an alignment with homo/queer normativity (Wilkinson 2009, 192): SM sexuality is acceptable only if it is light, non-radical and including only a bit of naughty play between two monogamous (hetero) partners.

mostly through the concepts of voice production, camp humour, performance strategies, and audiovisual SM erotic codes in pop music and opera. A second theme that emerges in this chapter is that of Sadeian aesthetics. The term 'Sadeian' is a conscious alteration of the word 'sadist', which tends to have the synonymous meaning of inhuman or violent. Sadeian aesthetics lean on Marquis de Sade's writings and its discursive strategies as discussed mainly in the writings of Thomas Moore (1994), Deleuze (2006), and Simone de Beauvoir (1953). I have distilled these writings into four themes, through which Sadeian aesthetics can be analysed: anarchy, parody (including Bakhtinian carnival), scopophilia, and curiosity (see Pääkkölä 2013, 20–21). I shall elaborate on these themes in my analyses of the two cases.

Usually, SM is depicted through two main strategies. As Judith Halberstam (2006, 9) states, signs and symbols of a subculture often function as 'complete otherness or complete spectacle' in the mainstream media. Here I will discuss two examples that utilise both of the aforementioned strategies in various ways. In both Rihanna's and Zerlina's performances, SM serves also as a symbol of personal growth and (female) sexual empowerment, which I argue resembles the celebration of sexuality and dark humour of Marquis de Sade's novels. Musically, I discuss the musical encodings of SM-inflected eroticism, focusing on instrumentation, performance, voice production and the audiovisual codes employed in the music video and the recorded performance of the opera.

5.1 RIHANNA'S *S&M:* Pop Venus in Fake Fur

Rihanna released her fourth studio album, *Loud,* in 2010. The fourth single of the album was 'S&M', released on January 25th, 2011. The music video *S&M*, directed by Melina Matsoukas and depicting soft-core SM and fetish practices, was banned in eleven countries. I analyse both the song and the music video using Lori Burns's and Marc Lafrance's (2014, 118) 'thematic network' model, originally applied in their analysis of Lady Gaga's music videos. Their thematic network is based on two interrelated assumptions:

> First, that the themes we identify and interpret are made meaningful in and through their relationship to one another; and second, that these themes are only fully understood when we consider how they are bound up with the mutually constitutive and reinforcing categories of sexuality, race and ability.

In the following sections, I analyse Rihanna's song and music video especially through a thematic network of my own making, including a sadomasochistic-Sadeian frame of reference, and discuss how it is seen through the prism of black feminism and Rihanna's relationship with the press through themes of ecstasy, agency, camp and carnival, SM chic, public and private, and flaunted and parodied sexual codes.

'S&M' (written by songwriter Ester Dean [Esther Renay Dean] and producers StarGate [Tor Erik Hermansen & Mikkel Storleer Eriksen] and Sandy Vee [Sandy Julien Wilhelm]), is an upbeat dance pop tune in E flat minor that plays with SM-celebratory lyrics (see appendix 10 for a full outline, and table 4 for a shorter overview of the music video), and clear-cut instrumental choices (keyboards, guitars, electronic and acoustic drum beat)

Table 4. A brief overview of Rihanna's song 'S&M': Structure, lyrical content, and main visual cues in the music video.

Section	Lyrics (main content)	Main visual cues in music video
Refrain	Na, na, na, come on *(singer mocking and urging the song onwards)*	Rihanna in a crown and fur at 90s psychedelic party; Rihanna in a white dress dragged to a press conference
Verse	Feels so good being bad… *(singer depicts the pleasures of SM-erotic sex)*	Press conference with Rihanna behind cellophane; Rihanna's house party
Pre-chorus, Chorus	'Cause I may be bad but I'm perfectly good at it… *(singer claims to enjoy SM-sex)*	Rihanna in a suburb walking Perez Hilton on a leash
Refrain	Na, na, na, come on *(repetition of refrain)*	Rihanna's house party
Verse	Love is great, love is fine… *(singer describes affective yearnings for emotional and physical contact)*	Rihanna in white latex in a dungeon, disciplining press members
Pre-chorus, Chorus	'Cause I may be bad… *(singer claims to enjoy SM-sex)*	Rihanna in dungeon
Extended refrain	Na, na, na, come on *(singer urges the song onward and names the letters S and M out loud)*	Rihanna in dungeon; Rihanna in shibari bondage
Bridge	Oh, I love the feeling you bring to me… *(singer compliments her partner and expresses desire for further sexual contact)*	Rihanna in bunny ears in front of a projected wall filled with headlines; Rihanna in shibari
Pre-Chorus, Chorus	'Cause I may be bad… *(singer claims to enjoy SM-sex)*	Rihanna in a pink-hued office surrounded by doting surreal press
Extended refrain	Na, na, na, come on *(singer urges the song onward and names the letters S and M out loud)*	Rihanna enjoying fruits and treats in suggestive ways; collage of previous visual cues

that create a riff-based accompanying texture to the song. The synthesiser keyboard, rife with distortion and often mixed prominently in the song, builds a half-regular, half-syncopated loop that is used in the refrains and choruses of the song. This is juxtaposed against the regular 4/4 drum machine beat. (See Butler 2012, 26–27.) Chords from the synthesiser keyboard accompany the beat during choruses. The sound of the synthesiser is played in the lower register, as a back up for Rihanna's vocals, functioning as a bass line of sorts. Rihanna's vocal production is assured and strong throughout the song, always mixed to the front-centre of the track.

The music video utilises lushly colourful, SM-, roleplay-, and fetish-inspired scenes, but not in a traditional way. Music videos are often thought to participate in music marketing,[2] the performer's public personality or image construction, and also the negotiation of gender, sex and sexuality in the media (Railton & Watson 2011, 1, 18; Hawkins & Richardson 2007, 606). Rihanna's music video, and the song itself, may be seen to break down the boundaries between private and public by exposing Rihanna, singing about what has traditionally been considered to be private matters and spaces (sex, sexual play, boudoir) in mostly public settings (the stage, press conference, and the music video mediated through security camera shots).

Some complex themes arise when we consider Rihanna's position as a woman of colour in the mainstream music media. Black feminism often raises heated debates about the representation of black women in the public eye, and how they are frequently portrayed as hypersexual (and therefore devoid of any real sexuality) or sleazy,[3] promiscuous and sexually alluring, even more than is the case with their white counterparts. These interpretations have been recently challenged in many black feminist writings (Davis 1999; Lee 2010; Ko 2014; Nash 2014). I interpret these questions through the concepts of hypersexuality and ecstasy in order to arrive at a modern (black) feminist interpretation of Rihanna's song and music video.

5.1.1 BLACK HYPERSEXUALITY AND SM AS ECSTASY

The sexual power and prowess of women in public spaces has historically been a challenging proposition to moralising societies, but when racial issues are added to the mix, the matter becomes even more complex. According to porn researcher Jennifer Nash (2014, 11), it seems like 'the presence of black women's bodies in pornography makes pornography *more* sexist'. The same could perhaps describe the majority of depictions of black women's sexuality in mainstream popular culture. For instance, Rihanna's first breakthrough single and music video *Umbrella* (2007) depicted her naked body painted silver, sexualising her public image ever since. (See Hawkins 2013, 469.) Questions of agency and empowerment in, or through, such representations remain a matter for debate, as

[2] Carol Vernallis (2013a, 438–439), among others, disagrees with the definition of music video as existing solely for marketing. Instead, she notes how, especially after the development of YouTube, editing softwares and amateur production, music video is turning into an ever more slippery genre.

[3] For a discussion of sexual sleaze in general, but especially on Anne Summers lingerie, see Storr 2003, 201.

they are often disregarded or forgotten, eclipsed by the fervent discussion of black women's Othered role in the white imagination.

Looked at from another perspective, it may be seen that traditionally, black female musicians have embraced music as an expressive outlet where they could discuss their sexuality openly, and in agentic ways, through their craft. Early blues serves as an excellent example. Feminist activist and historian Angela Y. Davis (1999, xvii) remarks on the rich potential for feminist research in the blues of the 1920s and 1930s: 'Considering the stringent taboos on representations of sexuality that characterised most dominant discourses at the time, the blues constitute a privileged discursive site'. Analysing blues singers' songs, some written by the performers themselves, Davis concludes that black women were free not only to explore their own (often bi- or otherwise non-hetero-) sexualities through music, but also to create a culture where it was safe for black women to discuss their sexual needs and urges outwardly and with one another.[4] (Davis 1999, 4, 11.) Sometimes the blues songs featured sexually explicit themes through thinly veiled allusions in the lyrics, which could also be interpreted as a call for more extensive socio-economical recognition. Breaking the taboos of black sexuality, constituted mostly by white, patriarchal and heteronormative society, became possible, as black female blues musicians were able to address these issues through strategies that were of their own making (ibid. 14–15). Sexual freedom in blues also became a symbol for post-slavery freedom, challenging the concept of women's role as residing only in the domestic domain (ibid. 8–11, 20). In this way, music (blues) traditionally provided a space for black women to explore and work towards their own emancipation, sexually, socially, professionally, and musically. (See also Lee 2010, 10–12, 22.)

Black female sexuality remains, however, a complex and controversial issue in the music industry. Media scholar Dafna Lemish (2003, 27) voices her concerns regarding the role provided for, or occupied by Melanie Brown ('scary spice') in the Spice Girls, for whom the only option available to a non-white girl appeared to have been to present her sexuality as animalistic. More recently, in 2014, the black feminist activist and writer bell hooks referred to Beyoncé's sexualised public persona as anti-feminist and 'terrorist', critiquing her self-portrayal as an emancipated woman of colour as little more than financial motivation.[5] Rap artist Nicki Minaj's album *Anaconda,* and particularly its sexualised cover art featuring the performer wearing g-string underwear, caused controversy in the same year. [6] The debate surrounding the sexuality of black females rages on, especial-

[4] Of course, this claim supports also a similar argument for male sexuality as well. Davis 1999, 4, 11.

[5] hooks continued to criticise the wealth-oriented media that glorifies money, success and beauty. While the criticism of the music world and its philosophy of capitalism is perhaps justified, younger feminists posted heated blogs criticising the choice of words and direction of hook's criticism. (For a full account, see Crosley 2014.) hooks (2016a) continued her criticism of Beyoncé regarding the album *Lemonade* (2016), but reminded her critics that 'one can critique yet still admire' (hooks 2016b).This discussion is not a new one in the field of pop music criticism: for example, Madonna's performances were subject to similar scrutiny, whether her performances were reinforcing patriarchy or parodying it. See McClary 2002, 148–149: Robertson 1996, 118, 131–133.

[6] Minaj participated in this discussion by posting pictures of white women in *Sports Illustrated* covers wearing similar clothing in her Twitter feed, headed 'Angelic. Acceptable. LOL' and followed by her own cover art,

ly evident in the exasperation of third-wave black feminists towards the (second-wave feminist?) assumption that black women are blindly regurgitating and reinforcing racist imagery, initially conceived by white people, implying that 'there is no imagination outside of the white imagination [… and] that black women can't envision themselves beyond the constructions that white people created' (Ko 2014). Feminist sociologist Shayne Lee (2010, xi) even reproaches black feminism,

> which has yet to generate a discursive attack against middle-class systems of sexual regulation that monitor black female sexuality. Academic works on black sexual politics have yet to produce a discourse on sex and sexuality that celebrates the erotic theatricality of the sexual female body.

Indeed, Lee (2010, xii) insists on looking beyond existing academic arguments to find black female sexual empowerment in its different manifestations; mainly, according to Lee (ibid.), in the domain of popular culture. Lee refers to her research subjects (Janet Jackson, Beyoncé, and Jill Scott, among others) as 'feminists who create new scripts and carve out new space for female sexual subjectivity by exerting distinctive brands of sexual empowerment' (ibid. 8).

While racialised representations of women do intersect with the sexual representations of women more broadly, specific questions pertain to the depiction of black women as sexual agents and/or objects. The most common stereotypes of black women include, for example, the Mammy or the Jezebel (Jordan-Zachery 2010, 28). These stereotypes carry weight even in the modern times, as they are often considered to be 'controlling images' (ibid. 13) that work to restrict the public visibility of black women. The Jezebel stereotype is highly relevant here, as it depicts a sexually aggressive, hypersexual black woman who seduces men, unable to control her own sexual urges. (Ibid. 39–40.) What makes Rihanna's 'S&M' different from being only an image of a sexualised black female singer singing about kinky sex, is the clear parodying effect apparent throughout the music video. Through such a reading, Rihanna's performance could be a parody of the Jezebel trope. Most notably, the suggestion of parody arises from the music video as well as Rihanna's voice production, which both emphasise emotional and sexual self-control, which are traits that contradict the Jezebel stereotype. Furthermore, she may flaunt her sexuality, but her seduction is not aggressively carnal, convulsive or spontaneous. Indeed, Rihanna's song's and video's character is confident with her sexual subjectivity, agency and pleasure, without making sex and sexuality a pathological urge. This resonates with Jennifer C. Nash's (2014) call for a novel way to read images of black sexualised women. Nash (ibid. 6–7), similarly to Lee (2010), critiques the traditional branch of black feminism's approach towards the 'bind of representation'[7] as always/already negative and

headed 'UNACCEPTABLE'. Minaj 2015; Toomey 2014.

[7] The term 'bind of representation' is borrowed by Nash from Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2007, 16) who uses the term to depict 'the experience of viewing, performing, and criticising hypersexuality as both punitive and pleasurable, as well as political, for Asian/American women'. Interestingly, the word 'bind' is used in full knowledge of the bondage symbol attached to it: Shimizu claims that the 'bind' is both pleasurable and painful, just as bondage experience. Nash expands the term to include all racially Othered women and their relationship to sex and representations of sexuality.

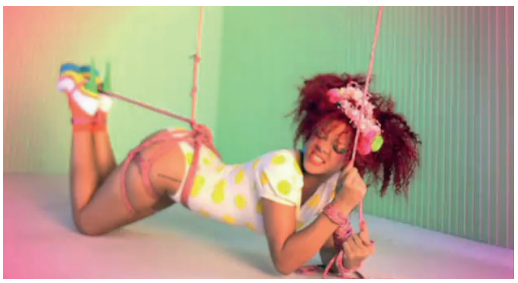
racist. Instead of thinking in terms of injury and wound, Nash interprets black women in pornography through queer theorist José Muñoz's (2009, 186) term 'ecstasy', thinking in terms of possibilities and pleasure, stepping outside of self and temporality simultaneously. Building a bridge between black feminism and queer theory, Nash (2014, 2–3) claims that ecstasy, with its connotations of Lacanian *jouissance*, provides an alternative way to interpret racial-sexual imagery.

Nash's reconsideration of sexuality in terms of ecstasy is akin to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concepts of paranoid and reparative reading. Sedgwick (2003, 128–149) refers to traditional queer theory strategies of critical and deconstructive reading as 'paranoid reading', to the extent that such strategies presuppose hegemony. Paranoia, according to Sedgwick (2003, 126), has had a close connection with queer studies, as the 'paranoid imperative' reveals 'how homophobia and heterosexism work'. Thus paranoid reading is closely related to affect theories, in particular, negative affects such as hatred, envy, and anxiety (ibid. 128), and phenomenological immediacy. Paranoid reading questions existing knowledge while discrediting the notion of one, single truth; in fact, this very critique of an empirical reality enables paranoid reading. Applying this approach to sexualised images of race, paranoid reading would perhaps come to the conclusion that racist stereotypical images are built on the white imagination of abject racial Others. A counterpoint to such an approach is the technique of reparative reading, which is built upon more probable analyses of phenomena, and weighs the paranoid version against them. Sedgwick (ibid.) points out that reparative reading is related to paranoid reading, but stems from a different, more constructive affect (Sedgwick calls this unashamedly, 'love'). This positive affect looks for unities rather than contrasts. Considering depictions of race in sexualised representations as both stereotypical and reparatively conditioned, as Nash (2014) attempts with reading black sexuality as ecstasy, can result in pleasure to the non-white performers even if, or, perhaps especially because, they are socially and culturally taboos. This is similar to Bataille's (1986, 37) understanding of sexuality and taboo: 'Unless the taboo is observed with fear it lacks the counterpoise of desire which gives it its deepest significance'. Breaking taboos is also, thus, breaking fears surrounding them. In other words, Nash's (2014) claim for reading black sexuality, reparatively, as ecstasy, provides black performers (in porn as well as other public forums) with queer empowerment and agency instead of assuming, perhaps paranoidly, that they have neither.[8]

Rihanna's *S&M* negotiates (and gleefully criticises) questions of black, but also other racialised, stereotypes in different ways. Most notably, Rihanna is portrayed as a parody of a Stepford suburban wife, a Playboy bunny girl and a Cinderella-like princess (all of which are predominantly white stereotypes); as a Japanese (or at least inspired by Japanese popular culture's *anime* aesthetics and cuteness, or *kawaii*) *shibari* bondage girl; and a black

[8] English literature scholar Biman Basu (2012, especially 1–7) suggests that the fantastical space of SM scenes in fiction (written by African Americans especially) is a reparative way of addressing historical traumas of slavery in the black consciousness and sexuality because of SM literature's fluid understandings of the past, present and future. This is based on the fundamental notion that race is illusory (ibid. 3), similarly as SM's perversity is illusory (ibid. 2): as both claims are ultimately fiction, they can be combined and addressed in a more reparative way.

dominatrix wearing white latex to accentuate her skin colour[9] (see figures 25–27). In this way, Rihanna presents herself as the polymorphous woman, who still maintains her status of control and sexual subjectivity: in each scenario, she is seen as 'holding the ropes', or leash or whip, quite literally. In this way, her racial position enjoys a state of play, parody, and performativity, all entangled with circuits of sexual empowerment. Rihanna seems to be building up a world of panraciality: her image, her music video, or her music is neither simply 'white' nor 'non-white'.


Figures 25–27. Panracial Rihanna and props.

In addition, Rihanna presents herself as an African Queen, with a red afro hairdo complete with a crown and fake fur wrapped around her shoulders. (See figure 28.) This image of an African Queen is one often adopted by popular music performers, for example, by the aforementioned 'scary spice' Melanie B, or Queen Latifah in her Mama Africa attire. Furthermore, the fake fur combined with the SM lyrics presents Rihanna as embodying another iconic feminine role, that of the Masochian Venus in Fur (see chapter 4.3.1). Combining the roles as African Queen with the image of Venus in Fur is a poignant statement: Rihanna invokes and combines two iconic images that carry rich cultural meanings. Both roles symbolise empowered women in control of their life and sexuality. Thus it seems that the colourful world of *S&M* is able to embrace men, women, straights and queers, all body types, as well as whites and non-whites. This can be seen as an ecstatic

[9] This is especially visible in Rihanna's live performance of 'S&M' at the Billboard Music Awards (2011), featuring Britney Spears as a duet partner. While Rihanna wears a white corset and boots, Spears wears a black corset, shoes and mask. See YouTube, Rihanna ft. Britney Spears - S & M (Remix) Live on Billboard Music Awards 2011. (Last visited 30.9.2015.)

celebration of queer sexualities (including queer SM), but also as recoding racial positions as queer positions, precisely as Nash (2014) does by combining black feminism and queer theories.

Figure 28. Rihanna as an African Queen/Venus in Furs.

In some ways, Rihanna's panracial play can be viewed as the violation of a taboo: in the lush world of *S&M*, she is able to escape normative racial codings, or rather, she plays with them in a fantastical (ecstatic) space. Rihanna's polymorphous performance illuminates the evasive status not only of racial coding, but whiteness as a discursive state. SM scenes involving 'race play' similarly reveal whiteness as a racial position, and a privileged racial position at that. While the current 'colour-blind' ideal of society ignores racism even while it is enacted in front of our eyes, an SM scene involving race play exhibits both the social structures that are still in play, and the erotic undercurrents embedded in these social structures of power. (Weiss 2011, 229.) Rihanna exhibits this with *S&M*, encoding the panracial play not only sexually, but paying special attention to vulnerability in relation to racial codes. Two of her 'white' roles, the princess and the bunny girl, are encoded as victims of overzealous media attention on the part of the journalists (who are more differentiated by race, age, and body type than we might expect), while most of the non-white roles fervently depict control and empowerment (the press members 'submitting' to her). This could be seen as an agentic claim for women of colour and their sexual demands.

It remains necessary to ascertain to what extent Rihanna's song can be understood as expressing agency and authority, given the artist's personal history of domestic abuse as well as her assumed disadvantageous position as a woman of colour in the mainstream media (let alone her music genre of choice, mainstream electronic pop, the commercial basis of which is often regarded as 'ruining genuine musical expressiveness or authenticity'; Morris 2013, 19). The song 'S&M' itself consists of many musical strategies that emphasise Rihanna's agency. Lori Burns (2010) formulates female authority in music performances through 'strategies of narrative voice and vocal musical expression' (ibid. 156), focusing on vocal quality, vocal space, vocal articulation, texture, and recording techniques (ibid. 166). Here, I employ Burns's model to discuss Rihanna's vocal authority and agency exhibited through uses of authority in 'S&M'. Burns (ibid. 160) discerns four discursive-musical strategies through which the authoritative voice can be analysed critically: narrative agency, narrative voice, modes of contact between artist and audience,

and engagement of listener. While Burns analyses musical elements as a separate category in her song analyses, I incorporate the musical elements within the discussion of Burns's four categories. Musical elements extend also to audiovisual elements of the music video.

Narrative agency. Rihanna is not the writer of the song, but the performer. This is where the concepts of 'author' and 'implied author' (Burns 2010, 160–161)[10] from narrativity theories become useful: while the author(s) of the song may write a song where feminine SM-sexual desire is expressed in the lyrics, the implied author (Rihanna, or song's 'I') may make a claim and/or a demand for female sexual liberation or pleasure. Burns (ibid. 161) lists three variants through which narrative agency of the implied author can be analysed: sensibility, values, and ideologies.[11] By having Rihanna perform the song, a new circuit of black female sexuality, agency and empowerment is added to the message of the song through inference to Rihanna's previous work, as well as her constructed public persona. Furthermore, Nash's (2014, 6–7) demand for black female sexuality as ecstasy, and not as a wound, is indirectly brought to the fore with Rihanna's own personal history of domestic abuse, so publically documented in the media coverage of 2009. Nash's petition for ecstatic black sexuality becomes critical when a victim of domestic abuse, Rihanna, reclaims her sexual agency, dominance and control through a song that celebrates female rights for whichever sexuality she enjoys. Such a depiction of agency in relation to the performance persona can be reassuring and empowering to fans. Indeed, the music video and the song both construct a reformed Rihanna, as a performance persona (Auslander 2009, 305) who has left behind her tragic past and reclaims her sexual space in the public eye, after her private life tragedy of violence was drawn to the headlines without her agency. However, this is done within the highly constructed space of a pop music video, mediated by the various characters (ibid.) portrayed in the song and music video. Hence, while Rihanna did not write the song, it still can function in Hawkins and Richardson's (2007, 606–607) conception of music video analysis as a 'personal narrative' which articulates a public narrative enacted through the performance persona. (I shall return to this in section 5.1.2 of the thesis.) Rihanna's discursive authority is mostly achieved through aesthetic codes of popular R'n'B/pop/dance music, where simple (but not simplistic) forms and lyrics are celebrated, and flamboyant visual and musical (perhaps especially vocal) spectacles define the performance.

Narrative voice. Burns (2010, 162) describes the narrative voice as the one with which listeners engage in the song. Burns lists three themes for analysis: story, narrator,

[10] Burns's definition of 'implied author' and 'implied audience' is based on the writings of H. Porter Abbott, Mieke Bal, and others. (Burns 2010, 190, note 6.) These differ slightly from Simon Frith's (1998) and Philip Auslander's (2009, 305) formulations of a musician's three-fold personas (real person, performance persona, character; Auslander 2009, 305). While the implied author here would be equable to the construction of a star performer, or performance persona, in Rihanna's case, the author of the song does not equal Rihanna's private, real person.

[11] 'The reader understands or infers the implied author's values and ideologies through the function and content of the narrative and consequently develops a better understanding of the meaning of the text.' (Burns 2010, 160–161.)

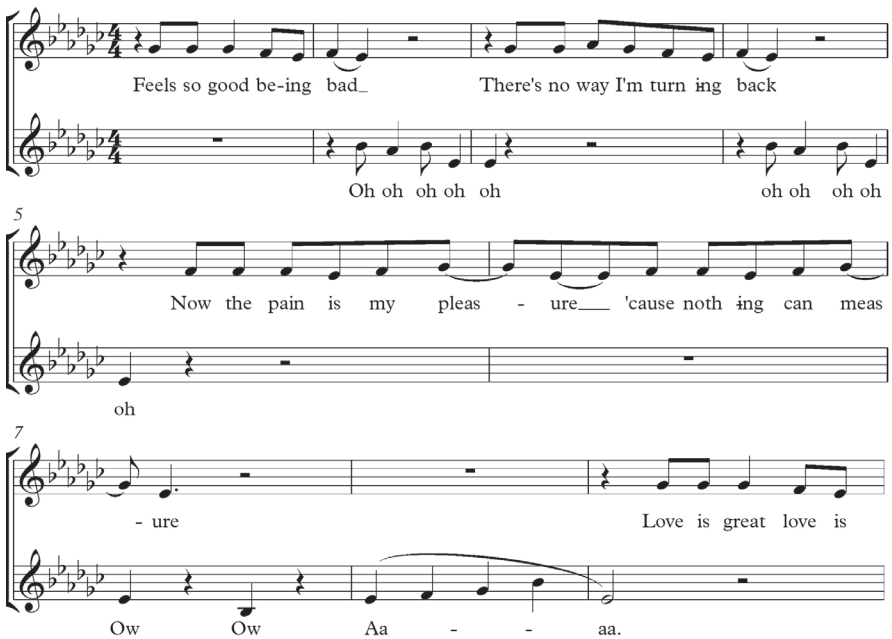
and voice (ibid. 161–163). The entire song is written in the first person ('I') depicting the pleasures of the SM practices she likes to engage in. The story of the song thus functions as a celebration of the joys of SM sex and pleasure. The song rarely depicts romantic love, only using the word to describe the narrator's relationship towards sexual pleasures, not between roles of 'I' and 'you'. The closest the lyrics get to proclaiming any sort of romance is the claim: 'I love the feeling you bring to me' (2:40–2:44). Love is here channelled into being a sexualised feeling, rather than attachment to 'you'. This makes the narrative voice highly personalised and hedonistic, even to the point of appearing narcissistic, demanding sexual contact. This further accentuates the plea for sexual pleasure in the song. What is especially striking about the song is that Rihanna uses her voice in a variety of ways, but avoids the stereotypically feminine tactic of soft, almost whispering voice production that has connotations of intimacy (Whiteley 1997, 264) and sexual pleasure. Instead, Rihanna fluctuates between a strong and assertive, straightforward and often raspy belting chest voice mixed high and in the centre of the mix, and a softer, 'girly' mode of voice production paired with ripples of *vibrato*. These voice production techniques alternate most notably between verses and choruses (verses are softer, choruses are belted, both vocal techniques are found in the bridge). Rihanna's voice production thus avoids the stereotypical 'moaning' voice production of a women begging for sexual attention, and further asserts her demands by a strong delivery. Instead of gasping for air as a means of expressing masculine sexual power, Rihanna is in control of her voice, and by extension her body, her pleasure, and the music. Furthermore, her voice is mixed to the fore and emphasised with reverb. In the music video, especially during the verses, the camera's frame focuses often on Rihanna's mouth, emphasising that hers is the narrative voice as well as her subjectivity and agency audiovisually.

Modes of contact. Burns (2010, 161, 164–165) offers three themes through which modes of contact can be discussed: address, communication, and expression. The relationship between the artist and (implied) audience in the genre of mainstream pop music often depends upon a highly constructed and illusionary sense of intimacy. Strikingly, in the music video, Rihanna seems to be performing more to the camera than the characters around her. She looks and gestures at the camera/audience and suddenly diverts back, making statements of her own and paying no attention to surrounding people. In this way, she engages with the audience directly, along with the invitation 'come on' in the refrains. Her voice is, in this way, a public voice, but not necessarily a sincere one:

> Sincerity and irony are sometimes judged by the content of the expression, especially if the content is intensely personal and private. In a musical expression, irony can be conveyed using a number of strategies, including tone of voice, style of delivery, and musical support. (Burns 2010, 164.)

By expressing sexual desires in her song, towards the audience, the viewer can only entertain the thought of sexual invitation in their imagination: no actual sexual encounter is expected, and Rihanna's performance, rife with oppositional messages, makes this clear. Indeed, Rihanna's 'sexy face' often unfolds into smiles and laughter, making

her demand into a humorous rather than a sexual performance. Another musical indication of this irony is the striking difference between lead vocals and backing vocals in the verses. The lead vocals are produced with a chest voice and profess SM-inflected sexual pleasure, whereas the backing vocals are softer, heavily compressed, sung with a head voice, sounding almost melancholic, yet overstated with a melisma rising from tonic to dominant and back again between each of the lead vocal phrases. (See example 13.)



Example 13. Lead vocal and backing vocals in first verse of 'S&M'.

Contrasting the sexually jubilant exclamation with answering expressions of musical melancholia calls into question the sincerity of the lead vocal lyrics. Then again, the overstated musical phrase, which, if taken separately would sound melancholic, is sung in a slightly overstated way, making the effect one of camp humour rather than sadness, again rendering the message of the song ironic. A third way in which the sexual invitation in the music video is deconstructed is through the quick repetitive editing of Rihanna's sexual gestures (eating a banana at the end of the video; 3:30–3:36) until they become nonsensical and ridiculous. This is also a nod to pop art, where one prominent way to strip meanings from cultural objects is through repetition.[12]

Listener engagement. Burns (2010, 161, 164–166) outlines three themes through which listener engagement can be discussed: proximity, sincerity (discussed briefly above already), and temporality. At the video's beginning, the audience is immediately pulled in with a fish-eye (or wide-angled) lens close-up of Rihanna in the house

[12] Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) seems an especially relevant point of reference here.

party scene, abruptly starting with 'na, na, na, come on', with vocals doubled, and nasal voice production expanded through the use of heavy reverb. Indeed, the 'come on' is often spread in the mix more than other lyrics, making the invitation more prominent. While Rihanna addresses the camera directly, directly engaging the audience, her mode of audience engagement in the video is distorted through the use of the wide-angled lens, establishing a rhetorical barrier between addresser and addressee rather than an open invitation. The 3D effect of the fish-eye lens can also suggest a sense of intrusion, Rihanna reaching out of the screen, heightening the confrontational beginning. Furthermore, the audience is riddled by the contradictory nature of the song lyrics: the nasal 'na, na, na' hook of the refrains sounds almost like 'nah', or a thickly pronounced 'no', which makes the opening phrase of the song already an apparent contradiction between denial and invitation: no, no, no, come on, come on. The same fickle narrative comes with 'sticks and stones may break my bones', establishing expectation for the continuing lyrics ('but words will never hurt me'), but then diverting to 'chains and whips excite me' (1:00–1:30, 2:00–2:15, 3:00–3:30), sometimes with an added, camp growl to the word 'whips'. Rihanna is, by means of the lyrics, dodging questions, changing the subject wilfully, controlling how and what the audience hears, sometimes leaving them at a loss. This, of course, can be exciting in the world of male masochism, where the irrational demands of the Lady lie at the heart of courtly love (see Žižek 1993, 96). On the other hand, Sadeian pleasures are gained by the conscious performance of vice posing as goodness. Establishing expectations and breaking with them is also Rihanna's song's meaning: 'Fooling people is even more delicious than shocking them' (de Beauvoir 1953, 52). In this way, the lyrics further accentuate the SM aestheticism of the song.

As such, Rihanna's gleeful play on racial stereotypes and vocal agency becomes a manifestation of Nash's (2014, 6–7) claim that black female sexuality equates to ecstasy in the public eye, and not victimisation. *S&M* also emphasises playfulness more than explicit or obsessive sexiness. Nash's claim that black feminism is always/already a wound is thus negated in the song: *S&M* creates a fluid, racially inflected, and sexualised queer space for various identities to enter, where stepping outside of normative social codes (with regards to bodies, skin colour, sexualities and ages, perhaps even ableism to some extent) is made possible. It presents a space for ex-stasis, standing outside of the self (Muñoz 2009, 186), but also standing outside stereotypes.

Rihanna and director Melinda Matsoukas have a slightly different view of the function of the *S&M* music video. In the next section, I discuss the music video's profoundly critical stance towards the gossip press and their policy of public shaming celebrities, including Rihanna, even when (or perhaps especially when?) they are experiencing a personal crisis. I will do this through a kink reading of the implied message of the video as expressing perceived intentions, or 'personal narrative' (Hawkins & Richardson 2007, 606–607), through theories of Sadeanism and especially Bakhtinian carnival.

5.1.2 BAD PRESS! DISCIPLINE, PUNISHMENT, CARNIVAL

While the lyrics of 'S&M' (see appendix 10) undoubtedly address sadomasochistic themes, Rihanna herself has claimed:

> It's a metaphorical song, you know, it's really not, about sex. You know, it's not anything S&M, but we play off of that, and… in a metaphorical sense. You'll see in the video. The video will have a better explanation. (Rihanna, MTV.com, 2013.)

The music video's director Melina Matsoukas explains further:

> I guess the first major image is the Cox News thing. It's a bite off of Fox News and trying to bring in the S&M theme and build on *her* [Rihanna's] *sado-masochistic relationship with the press* … So that's what the video is about, and it starts off strong with that message. (Matsoukas quoted in Vena, 2011, emphasis mine.)

Rihanna has been the subject of considerable attention by the tabloid press since the onset of her career. What is particularly telling in Matsoukas' description of the *S&M* video, is that she does not envision SM in the song as necessarily depicting sex or sexuality, but rather as a symbol for the relationship between the media and Rihanna.[13] Indeed, encoding the relationship between Rihanna and the press as D/s[14] with Rihanna's role shifting from a status of powerlessness to a dominatrix, and with the press positioned as intrusive power shifting to submissive lap dogs (final pre-chorus and chorus in the music video), is a dynamic narrative and prominent statement in the music video.

Hawkins & Richardson (2007, 606–607) argue for readings of music videos which depict and construct 'personal narratives', or performative, scripted portraits of the popular music performer *and* her performance through the artistic means of the pop music video. This builds upon the artist's 'performance persona' (Auslander 2009, 305), or the construction of a star persona (Rihanna) that is separate from the artist's private person (Robyn Rihanna Fenty). The personal narratives of each song or music video constitute symbolic representations of the pop auteurs in question, and are interpreted through 'the perceived trajectory' of the artist's career as well as the interconnected 'parallel narrative trajectories of audience members' (Hawkins & Richardson 2007, 607). Lori Burns (2010, 155) has critiqued naïve approaches to personal narrative when it comes to female performers as understating their achievements:

> It is all too easy – and often vastly oversimplifying – to approach music as merely a reflection of the artist's personal experience, an interpretive move that has a tendency not only to pass over crucial but perhaps subtle aspects of the song's aesthetic effect but also to reduce the impact of the artist's

[13] Of course, the claim of SM not being 'about sex' can be feigned naiveté, or an attempt to validate Rihanna's sexualised discourse as critical and not scandalous or superficial.

[14] Dominance and submission.

expression and ultimately to dismiss the power of her narrative authorship.

However, reading music videos or songs as personal narrative does not aim to reduce artists performances to naïve versions of their personal histories but rather implies the complex construction of their performance personality through discursive means. Personal narratives in this context do not make claims to accurately represent the real person or their life events. Rather, the aim is to construct narratives based on the performer persona's accounts of their life as deliberately represented through their (already heavily mediated) products, such as songs or music videos. Such narratives also take into account the public reception of these mediated products (Hawkins & Richardson 2007, 621). Such a perspective on Rihanna's music video as a symbolic and highly constructed narrative of her performance persona, presents her as reclaiming her agency in relation to the abusive press through the use of multiple characters (Auslander 2009, 305) introduced in the song and music video (similarly to Hawkins and Richardson's [2007] reading of Britney Spears). I read Rihanna's music video as articulating her desire (and undoubtedly also the desires of her artistic collaborators) to critique the press's treatment of (female, black) artists through a highly stylised narrative of her own experiences and encounters with the yellow press.

Rihanna's 'sadomasochistic relationship' with the press in the music video could be read through Bakhtin's concept of 'carnival space'. In a sense, this carnival is comparable to the ecstatic state described in the previous section (5.1.1), with the distinction that carnival is a social construction as opposed to the personal state of ecstasy. Bakhtin (1999, 107) theorised carnival as a temporally bound term, specifically connected to the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The carnival was envisioned as an escape from the rigid social hierarchies of Feudalism. The carnival festivities created an atmosphere of utopian acceptance, equality, humour and criticism of the status quo (Bakhtin 1984, 4). This was enacted, according to Bakhtin (1984, 5), through three different strategies of humour: ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, and various genres of billingsgate ('market-place abuse'; Dentith 2005, 67). The inversion of cultural norms was intended as social critique, but also as affirmation. The ridicule is always directed towards a higher social order, compelling that order to renew itself (Bakhtin 1999, 127), yet, at the same time this ridicule reconstructs power structures within and outside the carnival time/space. In this way, carnival's renewing abilities are always/already limited.

Rihanna's music video utilises this carnivalesque space as a challenge to the seeming authority of the tabloids. This is accomplished in several ways. For example, the lyrics of the song leave little room for interpretation. The lyrics describe a person enjoying SM, even if other people disagree with her pleasures. While being a clear example of billingsgate, this explicit depiction of female sexual drives is also reminiscent of Marquis de Sade's works. De Sade often describes 'cries of pain' and coarse language as an exquisite source of pleasure for the libertine (Moore 1994, 101; Bakhtin 1984, 16–17; de Beauvoir 1953, 35). Indeed, many of the libertines in his books express their pleasure through sound, through belting out profane and blasphemous words. Consequently, auditive exclamations of profanity have been fetishised just as much as the visual aspects of sexual Sadeianism. Lyrics play a part in the music video narrative, but according to Carol Vernallis (2004, 7), they

often do so 'in a partial, incomplete manner'. Rihanna's song becomes a jubilant exclamation of Sadeian, carnivalesque billingsgate, where she describes her pleasure in a detailed, auditive way. She claims an auditive space of sexual domination through the use of powerful chest voice production, double-tracked vocals, and firm, repetitive statements, with little fluctuation in the melody: 'I like it, like it, S-S-S and M-M-M' (1:32–1:45). However, the lyrics eschew any literal, explicit critique of the tabloid press, maintaining instead a symbolic relationship of D/s between Rihanna's characters and the media. The video reinterprets the lyrics of eroticised power games into actual power games between Rihanna and the press, adding a new element to the SM-erotic lyrics, and dragging them out of the performative SM-sex world and recontextualising them.

Some scenes of the music video represent this carnivalesque space directly, while elaborating on the critical commentary more indirectly. For example, the house party scene, where Rihanna is adorned in 'African Venus' attire, accelerated images cut to images of the slow-motion images of the Cox news press conference from the beginning of the video. This is where the first juxtaposition between a carnivalesque (house party) and a non-carnivalesque space (Cox news) is found. However, the carnivalesque space of the African Venus can be seen to dominate the non-carnivalesque space, challenging its validity. In the 90s-themed[15] house party that intersects the press conference scenes, Rihanna wears a crown and fake fur, symbolising her power and sexual dominance. Rihanna's double-tracked, mocking and challenging 'Na, na, na, come on' is heard in the scene depicting Rihanna, dressed in a princess-like gown made of paper featuring a print of newspaper headlines (see figure 29). In the scene, Rihanna is dragged in slow motion to a press conference and taped under cellophane for the press to ogle (0:02–1:00).[16] Rihanna makes her sexual confessions in a tender, sensual *legato* voice ('now the pain is my pleasure, 'cause nothing can measure'), while close-ups of the journalists' note pads reveal that the reporters write sensationalist lies, rather than a truthful rendition of what is said or performed. This already becomes a poignant, albeit parodic, metaphor for popular music stardom: the pop princess is constrained, helpless and doll-like, and the press report her every gesture. Pinned to the wall like a butterfly, her figure is subjectless while being publically defiled. However, she is not completely powerless. The camera attention is on Rihanna's mouth, emphasising agency. This represents Rihanna as an agentic victim. In contrast, the reporters wear ball gags as a sign of submission and perform a nodding choreography synchronised with the beat of the song. The atmosphere created here suggests perhaps that neither the star nor the press have any choice about the power dynamics they

[15] There is a certain affinity between Rihanna's house party scene and, for example, the Spice Girls' first hit song and music video, *Wannabe* (1996). Arguably the first girl band to spread the third-wave feminist slogan 'girl power!' As post-feminist, commercial and constructed as Spice Girls were (see, for example, Whiteley 2000, 214–229), the case for Rihanna's feminine power is further accentuated as well as problematised by this stylistic choice. Other 1990s music videos with similar aesthetics would include Deee Lite's *Groove Is In The Heart* (1990), Aqua's *Barbie Girl* (1997), Vengaboy's *Boom Boom* (1999), and Los del Rio's *Macarena* (1994).

[16] Writing on women's skin is a common porn trope signifying defilement, perhaps especially in porn where the woman is depicted as submissive and is performatively humiliated. In this way, the Cox news scenario makes a direct link between press abuse and shaming the celebrity.

are entangled in; they are both required to obey the rules of the music industry in order to succeed in their respective roles.

Figure 29. Rihanna taped to the wall, wearing a white dress made of news headlines.

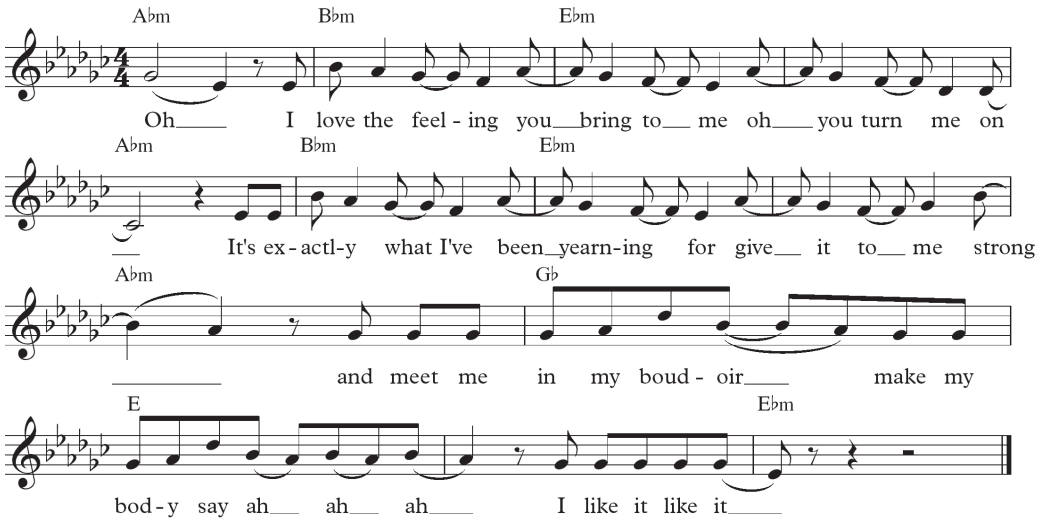
The video's second verse focuses on the concepts of realness and fantasy in the dungeon scene (1:45–2:38). Comparing this to Rihanna's party scene of the first verse, where she is more focused on dancing and enjoying the company of her guests in a drunken state of celebration/carnival, the dungeon scene in which the performer disciplines reporters is lit by cold blue lights, reminiscent of a lo-fi security camera. Thus the levels of realness and fantasy are turned on their head. The dungeon SM scene is seen as mediated and hyperreal,[17] not fantastical; the party scene depicts a drunken state of nostalgic girly empowerment, a constructed fantastical world without the press. While both spaces are carnivalesque, it is in the dungeon scene where the hyperreal nature of the images emphasises Rihanna's sexy disciplining of the press as the main message of the music video. In these meditated surroundings, reporters are tied to walls and bound by tape, one male reporter hops helplessly in time with the beat of the song, hands tied to his sides. Rihanna's gestures are accentuated by sound effects to create an illusion of cinematic presence (sound effects provide 'added value', naturalising the presence of the character through tight synchronisation of gestures and sound effects; Chion 1994, 5; 2009, 466–467). While brandishing her whip at the reporters, the diegetic snap of the whip sound with emphasised reverb accompanies the visuals. In this way, the soundscape of the video explores a space between the song and the diegesis of the dungeon (see Vernallis 2004, 25). Rihanna's whip sound opens up the possibility of stepping outside of the video and the song, perhaps even building a bridge between the dungeon and the video's audience. The press (or audience) need not worry too much, though; Rihanna makes it clear that her punishment is not particularly harsh by winking at the camera and kissing one of the female reporters on the lips.

The fantastical, carnivalesque space is extended in the final choruses where we see Rihanna lying on an office table, while the surreally camp reporters fawn over her (3:00–4:03). She is finally seen here to dominate the assembled press, perhaps as an editor, and make them write whatever she wants. Indeed, what Melinda Matsoukas (Vena 2011) calls

[17] The use of a surveillance camera is also suggestive of voyeurism, in both an Orwellian sense, and the sense of the fans observing the sexy punishment taking place. I return to this in section 5.3.2.

a 'post-it death', Rihanna's last image of the video shows her lying on the press office desk, covered in post-it notes, while a slightly pornographic moan ends the song. It is unclear if the moan is Rihanna's voice; it may even be a sample from porn films. Nevertheless, Rihanna's 'death' (read here as a euphemism for orgasm, a 'little death'; see Bataille 1986, 100; Margolis 2004, 72) depicts her sensual, sexual release as a state of bliss. It might be also a sign of being drugged or otherwise dishevelled after an SM play scene. Her power play has paid off in a most satisfying way.

To further critique the tabloid press's treatment of Rihanna, the music video employs the concept of parody throughout.[18] Parody is 'a form of imitation, but imitation characterised by ironic inversion' (Hutcheon 1985, 6); a parodying strategy repeats familiar codes but attaches an ironic twist, which works as deconstruction and critique of the original codes. Parodying SM aesthetics throughout the music video becomes a means to communicate critical distance with respect to the media image of Rihanna as an always-already sexualised pop artist (and nothing more). The parody extends to the musical delivery of the message as well. For example, in the bridge of the song Rihanna is portrayed as a pornonormative bunny girl standing in front of news headlines, a victim of the press and an object of the male gaze (2:39–2:53). However, she sings the lyrics, 'I love the feeling you bring to me, oh, you turn me on', with the melody emphasising the word 'love' and Rihanna's voice swooping upwards and descending (melo?)dramatically by almost an octave, to rich chest voice production on the words 'turn me on'. The slightly exaggerated phrase, supported by different harmonies than elsewhere in the song, is rendered as a camp parody of the words themselves: love becomes 'love'; turn on becomes 'turn on'. (See example 14.)



Example 14. Bridge section of Rihanna's 'S&M'. Beginning of the last chorus is not notated.

[18] Parody is also, according to Simone de Beauvoir (1959, 51–52) de Sade's favourite strategy of constructing his stories.

Rihanna ups the stakes with a mock-girly falsetto voice as she sings 'and meet me in my boudoir', as the melody rises higher than it has thus far (2:53–3:00). The melody is performed in the video with Rihanna in the *shibari* scene, pleading with child-like intonation, 'make my body say ah, ah, ah' while striking the floor with her hands rhythmically, thus 'telling us how to feel the weight and quality of the percussion' (Vernallis 2004, 169). Here, the harmony also takes a new turn by descending from A flat minor to G flat major and to E natural, suggesting a Neapolitan chord, finally falling on E flat minor as the chorus begins. The Neapolitan is a tritone away from dominant, continuing the descendent bass line, but also suggesting chromaticism as erotic frisson (see McClary 2002, 57–59, 62). This progression could also be interpreted as Phrygian II, suggesting an escape from the traditional diatonic (patriarchal/ normative) scales. Indeed, Rihanna's childish delivery becomes a camp pop performance of submissiveness as cute and girly, an image rife with parody: while invoking the problematic trope of the childish woman (or the innocent, clueless pop star), visually as well as vocally, Rihanna makes a clear sexual invitation and emphasises the beat with her embodied gesture of striking the floor with her rope-tied hands. This evokes de Sade's aesthetic of defiling innocence: the innocent pop star enacts both girliness and the music's sexy quality. (I shall return to this theory in sections 5.2.2 and 5.3.1.) However, Rihanna's childish voice production coupled with her smug smiles and assertive glances towards the camera reveal this stance as another parodied state. In a sense, the bridge section pretends to conform to the image painted by the gossip press, but similarly reveals it as a knowing state of (sexualised) play.

The concepts of fantasy (carnival) and reality (hyperreality) and the freely flowing states between them in the music video, contribute also to the critique of the press. One of the audiovisual means by which *S&M* delivers this confused state of reality and fantasy is achieved through editing. The music video is breathtakingly fast in its jump-cut edits, which accentuates the song's beat effectively, but also creates a singular sense of time for the video (see Vernallis 2004, xi, 133, 168). Rotating camera shots, the use of a wide-angled lens, and the manipulation of the film's speed are employed almost throughout the video. In fact, in most scenes the filmed footage is manipulated in some way, to the extent that the few moments of the music video stand out dramatically as the only scenes where the camera is left steady and the film without speed manipulation. Slow-motion is paired up with fast-motion, almost like catching up with the steady beat of the rhythm, getting lost in an idea or an image, and then rushing through several more before settling on something else again. This contributes to the 'drunken' or 'intoxicated' feel of the video, where the viewer is invited to participate in Rihanna's party and is visually led to feel like time either rushes by or stands still. Through this, the overall mood of the video serves more to promote fantastical spaces than hyperreal ones: the carnivalesque feeling of the video heightened by the manipulation of time. The drunken feeling of the visuals is particularly descriptive of the 90s party scene. Paired up with the fish-eye lens, which is often used to portray intoxication or nostalgia for 1960s psychedelia,[19] the audience is invited to a state of tipsiness where time is subjective, regulated (and dominated) by Rihanna's

[19] The fish-eye lens, or wide-angle lens, can also portray altered consciousness. For example, director Terry Gilliam uses the fish-eye lens in films like *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

performance. (See figure 30.) Rihanna is telling us a story of SM debauchery in her 90s themed party, and we become complicit in her queer altered temporality where no logical progression is indicated. Girly, non-sensical and playful pleasure, fun, and even visual/sexual titillation are present in this flux of manipulated temporal procession in the editing of the video, as well as the private and public spaces depicted in the video's different settings. Rihanna establishes a space for herself as well as her fans where they can sexily punish untoward reports and at the same time celebrate the construction of her star persona, empowered in this world of her own construction.

Figure 30. Rihanna shot through a wide-angled lens.

Contrary to the fast editing pace of the verses and chorus, the bridge includes images of the mock-submissive Rihanna as a bunny girl or a tied up *shibari* maiden flowing between each other in organic dissolve cuts (2:39–3:00). This accentuates the bridge as a separate, different space from the rest of the video (Vernallis 2004, 49). Rihanna is seen as a dream-like fetish object, but still she remains in control of the actions, her voice, and music. In fact, her submissiveness is portrayed as an escapist strategy, almost an afterthought, a parody of how the song could have been interpreted; as disempowering and fetishising. Musically, the scene serves as a double coded Othered space (Phrygian scale).[20] Rihanna's sexual empowerment also subverts the obvious interpretation of her as the victim of the press, the male gaze, and/or the music industry. The bridge fades (musically as well as audiovisually) quickly to another pre-chorus section, to the office where Rihanna controls a group of reporters. Again, she is directing this fantastical situation, unperturbed by the bridge's submissive flirtations, hence revealing its phantasmic, performative nature. Indeed, in her first *shibari* scene in the refrain after the second verse (see appendix 10), she literally pulls her own strings, portraying agency in her position of submission (see figure 26 in chapter 5.1.1). This scene additionally works as a staged enactment of agency for the benefit of fans, persuading them that Rihanna is in control of her artistic decisions despite the press's and critics' disparaging comments about her career. By association, moreover,

[20] See Jencks 1986, 14; Scott 2003, 32; Richardson 2007, 406–408.

fans that identify with Rihanna will relate to these symbols and messages as empowerment that is achievable also in their own lives.

S&M's criticism of the tabloids occurs within the confined space and time of the music video itself. Live performances of 'S&M' do not feature the characters of the disciplined press, but draw mostly on repeating SM themes of disciplined, confined dancers and Rihanna dominating them in choreography and performance of the song. What is notable here is Rihanna's (and her production team's) Bakhtinian strategy of the carnival as critical of the press, ultimately re-establishes the 'sadomasochistic relationship', reaffirming the power structures at play. As Foucault (1998, 95) argues, where there is power, there is resistance, but the resistance does not reside outside the power structure but is an innate particle of it. By extension, Rihanna's fame and career are seen to be necessarily bound to press criticism, be it scandalous and even fraudulent, or valid musical/artistic (or, perhaps in this case, academic) criticism. Indeed, through this perspective, the lyrics of the chorus 'sticks and stones may break my bones but chains and whips excite me' suggest that whatever the media may write about Rihanna, she will not be hindered by it, as they both work for the same system that constructs stardom. As such, the question remains whether this music video makes any statement in particular that will last beyond the headlines of its immediate reception.

Be that as it may, there is still much to be discussed about Rihanna's specifically sadomasochistic imagery and auditive messages. This is at the heart of the (in)visibility claim in this chapter's title: SM is quite regularly presented in the (music) media, undoubtedly as a marketing tool, but just as often, it is encoded as something else (such as the relationship between Rihanna and press) and played with in an ironic way, dancing on, and between, the boundaries of titillation and the ridiculous.

5.1.3 MUSICAL AND AUDIOVISUAL SM CHIC

'SM chic' (Wilkinson 2009, 182; Sisson 2007, 29) is a colloquial term for SM-related paraphernalia used in public, non-SM situations, as is seen often in fashion, films and music videos. In this section I theorise what exactly I consider to be SM chic in Rihanna's music video *S&M*, but more importantly, what specifically encodes the music as employing SM aesthetics. Rihanna's 'S&M' functions mainly on three different strategies through which SM chic is achieved musically: 1. Multisensory sounds, 2. Nostalgic sounds, and 3. Blurring the lines between acoustic and synthetic sounds.

The song's three most powerful auditive agents are Rihanna's voice, the distorted synth riff, and a drum machine creating the four-to-the-floor beat. The latter two are synthesised sounds and have a retro, lo-fi analogue sound quality. In fact, the synthesised drum machine utilises a hand clap backbeat that resembles that of the Roland TR-808 Rhythm Composer drum machine, a quintessential sound of the early 1980s, when drum machines were first introduced. The hand clap alternates with the thudding, dry bass drum sound to create strong auditive and discursive links to dance music and electronica of the

1980s, where erotica and marginalised sexualities, including SM themes and images,[21] were frequently explored in countercultural contexts that began as marginal and later became mainstream. Historically, the emphatic backbeat that accompanied four-to-the-floor disco music, originating in the 1970s, served to keep the embodied motion of the music audible, while also suggesting erotic participation on the part of dancers in an auditory and subjective atmosphere of non-differentiation where the dancer's bodily responses and the ecstatic music are one and the same. This carried through to dance music of 1980s (see Hawkins 2009b, 97–101).

Rhythm and beat have already been discussed as importing domination in popular music studies and cultural musicology. Walter Hughes (1994, 148; see also Peraino 2006, 176–179) suggests the repetitive beat in disco music is bound to urban gay male culture, and by extension, physically identified cultures such as bodybuilding, fashion, SM, and safe sex. According to Hughes (1994, 149), the beat in disco music (and dance music) dominates every other aspect in the song, including performance (with the exception of DJs), performer, lyrics, language, and of course, the dancing audience, which is compelled to dance to the relentless, mechanical, viscerally effective four-to-the-floor beat. (See also section 4.2.1 for masochistic experiences in repetitive music.) The backbeat can also be accentuated with sound effects, synthetic drum sounds and handclaps, all of which surged in popularity during the 1980s (see Goodwin 1990, 265–266). In rock music, McClary (2002, 154) calls the powerful backbeat that keeps the piece going the 'phallic backbeat'. In 'S&M', these backbeats are emphasised both with additional percussion and the Roland TR-808 handclap sound, creating not only a feeling of eroticism and discipline, but also the potential for SM-related interpretations situated within the aesthetic context of dance styles rather than rock. The handclap sound by itself creates an auditive bridge to a hand striking skin, perhaps implying spanking – effectively turning the backbeat into a kind of 'spank beat'.

The synthesised beat in 'S&M' could be a nostalgic return to lo-fi sounds, but it also builds SM aesthetics through becoming an auditive homage to gay underground culture, where SM songs and fashion were common before gaining ground in the mainstream. 'S&M' also features an acoustic drum set that alternates with the synthetic beat, and at times accompanies it, but with notably lower volume. The acoustic drum set does not, however, play a four-to-the-floor beat, but a 'two-to-the-floor', more rock influenced beat, incorporating a slightly open hi-hat sound. The sound of the acoustic snare drum changes throughout the song, but is often a dry, tautly tuned thud when the snares are not attached. This alternating between the acoustic drum set and the synthesised drum machine could audibly symbolise a fluctuation between notions of the authentic and the constructed, the acoustic and the digital, reality and hyperreality. It also influences the intensity of the actions, relating also to the speed and volume of the song in the context of the music video. The different beat sounds could perhaps be compared to the pacing of SM scenes, spanning low and high intensities. Indeed, the pre-choruses and choruses, as the most intense sections of the song, build by means of the beat dropping out ('I may be

[21] For example, many Boney M's songs, Jimmy Bo Horne's 'Spank' from 1979, and Miquel Brown's 'So Many Men, So Little Time' from 1983 feature a strong, emphasised backbeat.

bad'), and by the addition of the acoustic drum beat later, in the pre-chorus ('sticks and stones'). In the second chorus the drum machine beat is added to the mix, and in the same place as before ('sticks and stones'), the acoustic drum set is heard, creating more of a 'live' or 'human' sound when layered over the drum machine. A few bars before the extended refrains, an audible rising swirl sound joins the chorus ('chains and whips excite me'), panned in the mix to the extremes and accentuating the first beat of the extended refrain in an orgasmic build-up and release. The refrains then become an expression of sexual *jouissance* where the beat and the distorted synth riff dominate the soundscape even to the point where Rihanna's voice becomes secondary. This multifaceted beat creates a rhythmic cage encapsulating listeners within a multisensory, eroticised zone. Indeed, the music itself frames the situation as SM, regarding artists, musicians, and audience alike.

The distorted synth riff heard in the refrain, pre-choruses and choruses of 'S&M' is also made with nostalgic reference to gay disco music and the subsequent electronic dance styles it inspired. It serves as a bass line to a song that features no electric bass. Most notably, it is closely connected to Rihanna's vocal line, whether it alternates with her refrain 'na, na, na, come on' or sounds in opposition to the melody line of the pre-chorus:

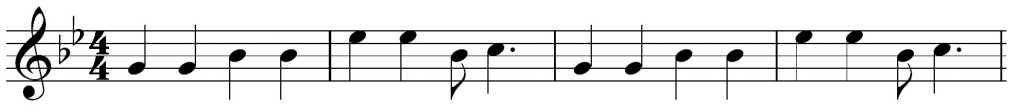
'Cause I may be bad but I'm perfectly good at it
Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it
Sticks and stones may break my bones
But chains and whips excite me
(Rihanna, 'S&M' (2009), pre-chorus.)

Rihanna's heavily reverb-treated voice is supported by the distorted synth riff in an almost duet-like drop out, leading to the chorus where the synthesised drum machine enters. Indeed, the 'dirty' quality of the lo-fi synth sound makes it possible to interpret the bridge in a multisensory way, emphasising the 'smell of sex' mentioned in the lyrics and enjoyed by 'I'. Making sex and sexuality this explicitly audible (and multisensory) could be understood as depicting de Sade's, and by extension, modern liberals' demand for 'socialis[ing] eroticism' (de Beauvoir 1953, 18). De Sade exemplifies making one's sexuality a social experience, not a biological one (ibid. 45). Making SM sexuality also audible in the music of 'S&M' it is interpreted as 'more obscene than the organs and gestures which they represent because the intention to defile is asserted in all its purity' (ibid. 49). The blatant presence of sex and sexuality in the music, emphasised both auditively and narratively, is a jubilant (Sadeian) declaration of individuality and sexual freedom. Such strategies, however, are easily adopted as conventional, normative, and even unrecognizable as promoting its sexual-liberal message, when songs depicting SM become more common in mainstream arenas.

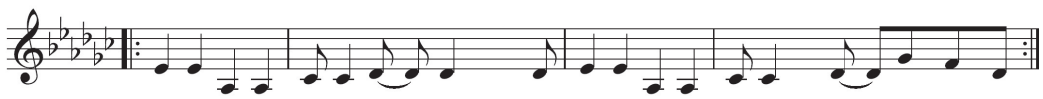
The synth riff played an octave higher during the extended refrains of 'S-S-S and M-M-M' also has a musical link to British (gay-encoded) synth pop, especially Soft Cell's 'Tainted Love' (1981).[22] Indeed there are striking similarities between the 'Tainted Love'

[22] Rihanna has previously sampled Soft Cell's 'Tainted Love' in her single 'SOS' (2006). The original version of 'Tainted Love' was recorded by Gloria Jones in 1965.

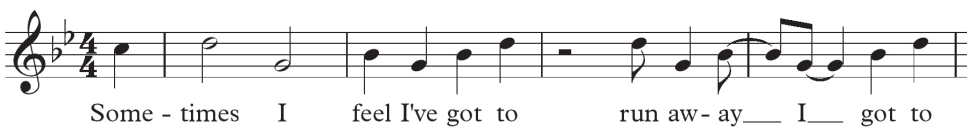
synth-bass line and the main 'S&M' synth riff (see examples 15–16). They both begin by establishing a steady beat of four quarter notes and then syncopate in the second phrase, remaining more or less in the area of the tonic, without suggesting harmonic progress or cadence. Furthermore, the melody of the first verse of 'Tainted Love' (example 17) greatly resembles the second synth riff of 'S&M' (example 18), played during the extended refrains. By playing with the minor key's fundamental tones (tonic, minor third, dominant) and the synth sound's similarity to synth riffs in 'Tainted Love', the second synth riff of 'S&M' creates a strong auditive bridge to the erotic synth pop classic, creating a certain sort of camp nostalgia but also a sense of melancholy in 'S&M'.



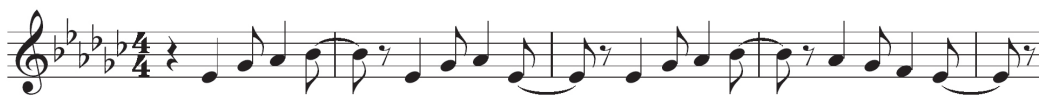
Example 15. Soft Cell's 'Tainted Love', main synth and bass riff.



Example 16. Main synthesiser riff in 'S&M'.



Example 17. Melody line of 'Tainted Love', first bars of first verse.



Example 18. Second synth riff in 'S&M', played during choruses.

Looking more closely at the relationship between Rihanna's vocal line and the synthesiser riff, particularly in the refrain that introduces the song and features after choruses (extended with 'S-S-S and M-M-M' after the second verse), the two seem to be in dialogue with one another. The song begins abruptly with Rihanna's 'na, na, na, come on', which is emphasised in the music video with a wide-angled lens shot of Rihanna's figure, the lens distorting her features. The synth follows immediately after with a steady riff, entering into a quasi-duet with Rihanna's vocal line that lasts for 16 seconds before the drum machine

joins in. Rihanna's voice is doubled and spread across the mix, while the synth sound is panned to the centre. In this way, the seemingly contradictory invitation of 'nah, nah, nah, come on' loses its would-be rhetorical power, the synth becoming the main driving force of the song. Richard Middleton (2000, 29–30) describes voices and lyrics which function not as not a narrative tool, but similarly to instruments: 'words are absorbed into the musical flow, working as *sound* or *gesture*; the voice becomes an instrument'. Thus Rihanna's voice becomes akin to an instrument, a riff in its own right, even an extension of the synthesiser. Erasing subjectivity from the mechanical (cyborgian? See sections 3.1.1 and 4.2.2) voice facilitates in this way the concept of 'losing yourself' in the music, just as happens when experiencing disco music on the dance floor, but it also opens up possibilities for agentic participation beyond the star persona of Rihanna, extending also to her audiences, fans and listeners. The chanting nature of the riff becomes an invitation to join in the song's escapist, queerly panracial and sexual- utopian space.

Rihanna utilises various SM fetish objects in the *S&M* music video: she dons leather and is tied in *shibari* rope bondage. It is however quite striking how different the colour scheme of the video is, when compared to other music videos portraying SM.[23] The colour palette of SM-themed music videos usually emphasise darkness, with tones such as blacks, greys and whites, often with a bluish tint.[24] Rihanna's music video utilises this aesthetic scheme only in the dungeon setting of the second verse (which I read in the previous section as a symbol of lo-fi, mediated hyperreal; see also appendix 10). All of the other settings employ lush colours ranging from pastel hues to vibrant colours of red, pink, green and yellow, perhaps to suggest playfulness and early teenage experience, but also to fetishise the feminine pleasures of sexiness and SM. On one hand, Rihanna's encoding of beauty is traditional, almost nostalgic. On the other, there is an aspect of distance in the experience achieved through the deliberate inauthenticity and artificiality of pop art (just as the synthetically produced music is artificial, malleable, cyborgian): Rihanna does not wear a traditional fur, but purple, fake fur; white latex instead of black. Inverting the 'usual' SM depictions from fetish fashion to pop art resembles de Sade's anarchic upending of expectations, usually critically directed towards concepts of beauty; as Simone de Beauvoir (1953, 39) reads de Sade, '[b]eauty is too simple', and by extension, uninteresting. Similarly, the 'too simple' depiction (which is still beautiful instead of grotesque) of SM in Rihanna's video can be seen as anarchically undermining cultural expectations concerning the depiction of SM in popular culture. It is not SM, but a pop art version of SM. This is especially true when Rihanna laughingly fetishises cherries and bananas at the end of the video.

Furthermore, Rihanna is often depicted in the music video as ultra-feminine, with impeccably coiffured long hair, and stereotypically (sexualised) feminine clothes. Instead

[23] For colour schemes in music videos, see Vernallis 2013b, 215–216. According to Vernallis, the 80s and 90s were times when colour experimentation was prevalent in music videos; Rihanna's lush colour scheme could also be interpreted as a nostalgic nod to this.

[24] See, for example, Queen's *Body Language* (1982) or Adam Lambert's *For Your Entertainment* (2009). Monochrome colour schemes can be a choice to emphasise also arty aesthetics in an addition to SM aesthetics. Another notable exception to this colour scheme is Christina Aguilera's SM music video *Not Myself Tonight* (2010), emphasising white and red.

of being straightforwardly hypersexual dominatrix in black leather and dangerously spiky high heels, Rihanna is cute, young, and powerful, but her agency and dominance remain unquestioned. (I shall discuss cuteness as a strategy for empowerment further in section 5.2.1.) As appoint of comparison, Stan Hawkins (2013, 480) has claimed that Rihanna's music video *Umbrella* (2007) utilises traditional SM-chic codes; Hawkins interprets Rihanna's use of an umbrella as 'a dominatrix's stick', heavily fetishised and phallic by nature. *S&M*, in contrast, presents Rihanna as markedly feminine and girly, non-phallic yet authoritative. Her SM chic is different from the traditional black leathers and handcuffs, but is still recognizable. The gleeful flaunting of sexual content with borderline banal phrases and the unashamedly embodied beat serves here, as well as in blatantly sexual music in general, as both eroticised content and as a means to 'build new emotional, erotic and political bridges between diverse groups of people' (Hawkins 2009b, 102). Or, from a Sadeian point of view, such blatant sleaze with a comic twist functions as anarchic opposition of a seemingly prudish society.

Rihanna's *S&M* is exemplary of audiovisual SM in popular culture. It is both explicit and invisible, due to the music video's somewhat mixed messages. SM stands as a symbol for Rihanna's personal critique or punishment of the untameable tabloid press. It serves to illustrate power play between Rihanna's sexual and racial positions in the public eye, claiming both areas as sites of pleasure and ecstasy, and not victimisation. In the next section, I discuss a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, in which the character of Zerlina has been reinterpreted as somewhat sadomasochistic; I read her role from a Sadeian point of view in order to discern the different ways that SM has been rendered (in)visible in mainstream media.

5.2 ZERLINA IN DON GIOVANNI: La Innocente revisited

Don Giovanni (premiered in Prague, 1787) is sometimes said to be Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's most multifaceted opera, musically as well as dramatically. Much can be said about the plot of the opera, Lorenzo da Ponte libretto, and the particularities of the music. My interest, however, lies in the comedic soprano character Zerlina. Her aria, 'Batti, batti' ('Beat me, beat me') is often referred to as an example of sadomasochistic invitation, a claim I will elaborate upon in this analysis. It is because of the aria's sexually ambivalent nature that I chose Zerlina as a case study for 'kink listening', in addition to the historical contextualisation of the theatrical stage as a public forum for women to express themselves, both musically and sexually. In what follows, I pay particular attention to operatic depictions of (sexually powerful) women and how their power is performed on stage and articulated musically. I further discuss Zerlina and her power strategies as they are presented in a contemporary live performance from 2008. Through this performance, I scrutinise her supposed SM/Sadeian urges through a kink reading of the music and dramatic action.

The performance I investigate in this thesis, was staged at the Salzburger Festspiele in 2008 (Wiener Philharmoniker, conducted by Bertrand de Billy), with Ekaterina Siurina as Zerlina. The opera itself is set in unspecified (pre-digital?) modern times, in a wooded

area, with no scenes set indoors. I base my reading on a DVD recording of the performance. While certain aspects of mediatised performance can give rise to audiovisually distinctive experiences of live performances (see Auslander 1999, 3–4), I will concentrate on the performance itself, only briefly commenting on matters of audiovisual mediation. I am aware, however, that the nature of mediatised performance directs the viewer's gaze in particular ways, with music and moving image reflecting upon one another. I also discuss the Sadeian potential of the opera, as depicted in this particular performance.

5.2.1 THE CUTE DOMINATRIX? Zerlina's power strategies and 'Batti, batti'

Don Giovanni, and perhaps especially Zerlina's character, have spawned divergent interpretations in musicological discussions. Sometimes contemporary audiences, arguably more aware of feminist issues, are baffled by Zerlina's request to her husband to beat her (Allanbrook, Hunter & Wheelock 2000, 47). Claus Guth's Salzburger Festspiele 2008 version of *Don Giovanni* presents Zerlina as a sexually active, modern woman, who plays with sadomasochistic gestures made towards her two suitors, thus framing her 'plea' for a beating as sexual invitation. The 'Batti, batti' scene takes place in a garden where the *buffa* couple, Zerlina and Masetto, have a disagreement. During her aria, Zerlina ties Masetto (Alex Esposito) to a tree, blindfolds him and throws him to the ground, providing an experience of sexual submission while making peace with him.

Compared to the other two female characters of the opera, Zerlina certainly is the most active in her sexuality. This is more likely to do with of her positioning as lower in the social hierarchy than other characters, than any animalistic sexual urges she may have. Mozart and da Ponte were at greater liberty to express 'her "forwardness" and openness about sexuality […] because Zerlina is a peasant' (Allanbrook, Hunter & Wheelock 2000, 61). Theodor Adorno at least was convinced that the 'innocent girl' ('*La innocente*' from the libretto) is more accurately seen as a nymph-like creature. In his 'Homage to Zerlina' (quoted in full in Hoechner 2005) Adorno praises Zerlina as a fleeting thing, whose actions fall somewhere between rococo and revolution, 'no longer a shepherdess, but not yet a *citoyenne*' (see Hoechner 2005, 510). Adorno, nevertheless, does not challenge the innocence of Zerlina, seen as too lovely and sweet to be guided by carnal thoughts. Similarly, András Batta (1999, 383) depicts Zerlina as 'confused by Don Giovanni's eroticism', again claiming that Zerlina is unknowing of sexual matters. Berthold Hoechner (2005, 513) concludes that she is '[n]aive at first, [but] she learns quickly'. Hoechner clearly tries to find common ground between the innocent girl and the seductress. This debate seems to focus on whether or not Zerlina is truly in control of her actions during and after Don Giovanni's wooing. The position of women in opera has been widely discussed since the dawn of feminist musicology.[25] Musico-semiotic depictions of male and female power differ significantly. Representations of women onstage were 'shaped by attitudes prevalent in the societies in which the composer[s] lived' (McClary 2002, 37). Therefore, as in society,

[25] See McClary 2002; Clément 1988; 2000; Kramer 1997; 2000.

where power is distributed 'along many lines, including those of class, ethnicity, age, and gender' (Shepherd 1993, 47), high forms of rhetoric were denied to female characters, whereas men were allowed access to rational thought processes onstage as a sign of a gendered involvement with (political) power (Cusick 1993, 283).

Feminine power strategies were mostly aligned with three different roles: the seductress, the witch, and/or the insane. Firstly, Bizet's operatic character Carmen[26] (*Carmen*, 1875) is often mentioned as an example of a sexually powerful seductress who threatens to usurp the powers of patriarchal culture, reason and duty (Abbate 1993, 225). Musically, her seduction is based on 'slippery chromaticism', non-European musical rhythms and codes, and rhetorically created musical expectations which she then grants or withholds as she pleases (McClary 2002, 57–58). Secondly, Francesca Caccini's *La Liberazione di Ruggiero dall' Isola d'Alcina* (1625), gives us Alcina, who is a witch[27] but not a seductress as such. Alcina's status as a witch puts her in a dominant position: she is expected to 'dominate[…] Ruggiero because of her ability to deceive his senses' and she 'dominates men by unnatural means' (Cusick 1993, 290). Notably, Caccini's Alcina does not however use chromaticism or sensual invitations to dominate Ruggiero, but coerces him with melodic strategies and rhetoric directed at an equal (Cusick 1993, 290–291). Thirdly, the insane woman, a particular favourite in the Romantic-era opera repertoire, does not care about male rationality but gets lost in her own world of chromatic excess and (coloratura) embellishing *jouissance*. According to McClary (2002, 81), 'her moments of excess are [the opera's] very *raison d'être*'. Examples of female insanity on the operatic stage are Donizetti's Lucia from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Strauss's Salome from *Salome* (McClary 2002, 86).

Considering Zerlina's power position as is set in the opera, it is true that her social status may not be that of a powerful or independent woman, but she occupies at least two of the powerful woman positions of the three mentioned; the seductress and, more vaguely, the witch.[28] While the reference to witchcraft is merely a symbolic one here, it still indicates Zerlina's position of power and agency over Masetto. Musically speaking, Zerlina's music is not acrobatic, chromatically slippery or virtuosic by any standards; on the contrary, Mozart wrote her music to be simple and cutely adorned. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Zerlina's character is considered to be innocent, harmless and easily dismissible. Despite this, it would be a mistake to suggest that her music implies that Zerlina's character is merely simple, non-sexy and cute. McClary (2000, 21) claims that compared to Baroque music, the music of the Enlightenment 'sought to banish virtuosic women from the stage, thereby minimising traces of female erotic transport', mentioning only Mozart's Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute* (1791) as 'a distant echo' of the past. I find this claim problematic especially when considering Mozart's operatic women. First, I would not claim that virtuosic women were 'banished' in any way; they did have a repertoire in

[26] Susan McClary (2002, 59) calls Carmen 'a dominatrix', who dominates the will and sexual urges of Don José.

[27] For witches, see also Oakes 2006, 52.

[28] This is professed as Masetto sighs after 'Batti, batti' scene (*'Guarda un po' come seppe questa strega sedurmi!'*; 'Look how this witch knew to seduce me!').

Mozart's operas.[29] Second, I do not equate only virtuosic music with feminine eroticism; simpler music can also be considered erotic.

The question of 'cuteness' comes into play here, especially regarding Zerlina's musical strategies. It is difficult to read Zerlina's frequent embellishments in 'Batti, batti' as anything but depicting her supposed sweetness, girliness, and cuteness, especially when comparing her music to that written for the other women onstage, where these embellishments are not as frequent or lush. Sianne Ngai (2012) writes about the role of cuteness which becomes significant when reading them specifically in the context of SM:

> The epitome of cute would be an undifferentiated blob of soft doughy matter. Since cuteness is an aestheticisation of powerlessness ('what we love *because it submits to us*'), and since soft contours suggest pliancy or responsiveness to the will of others, the less formally articulated the commodity, the cuter. (Ngai 2012, 65, emphasis mine.)

In Ngai's theory, cuteness equates to passivity, which in turn evokes sadism in its beholder just as much as their will to embrace it. (Ngai 2012, 64). This formulation closely resembles Thomas Moore's (1994, 42) theories about innocence, which evidently calls out to be 'ravished' in de Sade's world:

> …both innocence and cruelty are elements in the Sadeian pattern. […] When such a pattern is not split into a schizoid polarity, one side influences and has an impact upon the other. In a tight configuration, innocence is ever exposed, examined, and penetrated – initiated – and the aggressive, spoiling, processing capacities are also tempered and qualified by purity of heart.

Through Guth's perspective, Zerlina's performance strategy parodies the cuteness presented in Mozart's music. This cute Zerlina is not passive at all; she will not be 'exposed, examined, and penetrated'. Siurina's performance is one of cuteness and girliness without submission, be it sadomasochistic or otherwise. This parody could be seen in the context of Sadeian sensibility as a wish to deconstruct and, indeed, dismantle the prevailing myths of innocence. Our society tends to value innocence over its perceived alternatives (corruption, perversion, or cynicism). Innocence suggests naivety, unwavering faith in the good, and inexperience, all of which provoke de Sade's imagination, but only as something potentially corruptable Moore (1994, 45) calls this 'blind innocence'. Innocence cannot survive alone in the world, despite society's attempts to preserve it. In de Sade's world, there is joy to be found in the corruption and loss of innocence. In fact, to de Sade, whereas vice is an authentic characteristic, innocence is illusory, and ultimately childish, haughty and oblivious. Similarly, Mozart's 'cuteness' is characterised in Zerlina's music through frequent embellishments, 'rapid patter' (Taruskin 2010b, 477) of both her character's lyrical lines as well as the cello obbligato following her melody line, and the innocent connotations of strings, flutes and other woodwinds (another link to her pastoral background). Guth's stage direction reframes this as a direct commentary on Zerlina's seeming

[29] Constanze in *Die Entführung aus Serailj*, and indeed, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, come to mind, in addition to the Queen of the Night.

innocence, and critiques it through Siurina's empowered performance, where she literally throws about the symbol of masculine aggression, Masetto. Zerlina and Masetto are a thoroughly *buffa* couple who have limited emotional ranges (for the most part, Zerlina is flirtatious and Masetto is angry) and limited onstage presence. However, Guth expands both roles through presenting their relationship as sadomasochistic-romantic.

Reading Guth's adaptation, it becomes apparent that when either Zerlina or Masetto profess sexual urges, Zerlina is cast in the dominant role, and Masetto the submissive.[30] Following Zerlina's abscondence with Don Giovanni, Masetto lapses into a jealous fury, later receiving a sexually encoded reproach for his reaction during Zerlina's 'Batti, batti' aria. During the *recitativo* preceding the aria, as Masetto sits down exhausted by their quarrel, it is Zerlina who slaps him, her slaps accentuated by indistinct, random improvised chords from the cembalo (reminiscent of stinger chords in film music; see Lerner 2010, x), while begging him to kill her.[31] She, however, changes her tone and pacing quite noticeably from quick and angry to slow and sweet, even seductive, when sitting down on a swing, hanging from a nearby tree, and asking if they could make peace.[32] As the 'Batti, batti' lyric starts, she starts to swing sweetly, eyes closed, her arm caressing the ropes of the swing sensually. I have compiled a simple depiction of the actions during Zerlina's 'Batti, batti' aria in table 5. Through this analysis, it may be seen that Zerlina performs a SM-hued punishment for Masetto while imploring him to forgive her trespasses.

[30] Masetto's submissiveness is not only professed in his relationship to Zerlina, but also elsewhere. For example, in the finale, where, despite claiming he does not wish to dance, Masetto still dances along the crowd according to Leporello's orders.

[31] '*Sfogati, ammazzami fa' tutto di me quel che ci piace*!'; 'Let it out, kill me, do whatever you please with me!'

[32] '*Ma poi, Masetto mio, ma poi fa' pace*'; 'But then, my Masetto, but then make peace'.

Table 5. Guth's 'Batti, batti' based on sections, lyrics, Siurina's vocals and stage manoeuvres.

Lyrics	Translation	Siurina's vocals	Stage manoeuvres
Batti batti o bel Masetto la tua povera Zerlina. Starò qui come agnellina le tue botte ad aspettar.	Beat me, oh lovely Masetto, beat your poor Zerlina. I'll stay here as meek as a lamb, waiting for your blows.	Vibrato on '*bel*'. The word '*povera*' is a little over-emphasised with an upward glissando.	Zerlina on a swing; Masetto on the ground. Zerlina's eyes are closed. Her right hand caresses the rope and moves to her chest.
Batti batti, la tua Zerlina, staró qui, staró qui, le tue botte ad aspettar.		More quiet '*batti, batti*' and second '*staró qui*'	Masetto picks up Zerlina's shoe and brings it to her. Zerlina's hand wanders on her chest and her leg
(instrumental interlude A)			Masetto grabs Zerlina's wrist, she opens her eyes. She hops off the swing, as they wrestle over the shoe, it ends up with Zerlina
Lascierò straziarmi il crine,	I'll let you tear out my hair,		Zerlina addresses Masetto, he turns away
(instrumental interlude A)			Zerlina guides Masetto from his shoulders to a nearby tree and throws her wedding veil over his shoulder.
lascierò cavarmi gli occhi, e le care tue manine lieta poi saprò baciar,	I'll let you gouge out my eyes, and next your dear hands I'll be glad to kiss.		Zerlina ties Masetto up with the veil to the tree.
sapró baciar, baciar, sapró sapró baciar.		*Baciar*-words emphasised apart from the last one, which is quieter than the phrase in general	Zerlina turns in front of Masetto, leaning her head to his chest, caressing her cheek.

Lyrics	Translation	Siurina's vocals	Stage manoeuvres
(instrumental interlude B)			Zerlina kneels down with a long downward touch on Masetto's body. The veil loosens, he stands rigid.
Batti batti o bel Masetto la tua povera Zerlina. ***Starò qui come agnellina le tue botte ad aspettar.***		Throughout over-emphasised pronounciation; child-talk	Zerlina picks up a fern leaf and teases Masetto's feet. Zerlina's fern caressing Masetto's face.
O bel Masetto, batti batti. Staró qui, staró qui, le tue botte ad aspettar.		Strong, affirmed vocals. Second '*staró qui*' quieter.	Masetto's ties are loosened and he kisses Zerlina, who turns her neck for his kisses. She wraps his hands around her.
Ah, lo vedo, non hai core! Ah non hai core! Ah lo vedo, non hai core!	Ah, I see you don't have the heart!	Fermata on the last '*core*' with a vibrato on the first note and descending on scale notes to the fifth.	Masetto lets her go frustratedly, Zerlina hops to the swing and addresses Masetto, who eyes her suspiciously.
Pace, pace, o vita mia! Pace, pace, o vita mia! In contenti ed allegria notte e dì vogliam passar. Notte e dí vogliam passar, notte e dí vogliam passar, notte e dí vogliam passar.	Let's make peace, my love! In contentment and joy we'll pass our nights and days.		Zerlina skips to Masetto, steals his tie and blindfolds him She throws him to the ground. She climbs on the swing and sways.
Pace, pace, o vita mia! Pace, pace, o vita mia! In contenti ed allegria notte e dì vogliam passar.		Whispered first '*pace*'. '*In contenti*' forwards, child-talk singing.	Zerlina descends on Masetto and rips his shirt open

Sì, sì, sì, notte e dì vogliam passar. Sì, sì, sì, notte e dì vogliam passar.	Yes, we'll pass our nights and days.	Emphasising S on '*sí*' words: "'*ss*-í *ss*-í *ss*-í'. Second repeat less so.	She throws her arms outwards, closing her eyes at '*sí*' words, facing the audience.
Vogliam, vogliam passar. Vogliam, vogliam passar.			Masetto bites Zerlina's arm as she tries to undress him. She throws her upper body at him, they kiss and laugh out loud.

The aria starts with Zerlina on the swing, singing more to herself than Masetto. In this opening of the scene, Zerlina seems to get lost in a masturbatory state of either reminiscing about the previous scene with Don Giovanni (see the next section) or daydreaming of the ropes, sensually caressed under her fingers. The rope appears to remind her of a bondage game, suggested in the second A section where she dismisses the discursive meaning of the 'beat me' lyrics by tying Masetto up with her wedding veil. The gesture is also reassuring: she is literally 'tying the knot' around him, symbolising marital devotion and fidelity. Finally, she throws Masetto on the ground, blindfolded, and swings on top of him (precisely as in the previous 'Là ci darem la mano' scene with Don Giovanni), finally dropping down and straddling him, still caressing him lovingly but also throwing out her arms at her affirmative '*sí, sí, sí*' exclamations, perhaps daydreaming of '*notte e di vogliam' passar*',' spending days and nights in hearty SM play. She and Masetto are reduced to laughter and kisses at this.

Siurina's light and girly *soprano lirica* voice fits this scenario of self-empowerment. Her phrasing is very free in the *recitativo* parts, and in the aria her phrase endings are simple, almost jokingly so. Siurina uses very little vibrato. Only her highest notes are afforded a natural vibrato, but they sound unforced and ornamental as well as playful and suggestive of laughter. Her pastoral ('*pace, pace, amica mia*') becomes almost breathy, perhaps suggesting (sexual) excitement and laughter through singing. Musically, it is perhaps not possible to claim that Mozart had whips and chains in mind while composing the aria. However, through contemporary interpretations and the adding of kinky suggestions and gestures casts the scene in a different light: the fluidity of the *legatos* becomes embodied in Zerlina's caresses with the fern leaf, and her melodic passage on '*passar*' is reinterpreted through a humorous emphasis on Masetto's fall to the ground. The accompanying cello *obbligato*, moving in fast sixteenth-part notes, accompanying Siurina's *soprano lirica* voice supports and mirrors the high voice with a lower, lush flow of notes. Listening to it with a kink ear would suggest that the cello is an extension of Zerlina's voice, performance, and girliness, even revealing her playful performativity and acting as a sonorous representation of her inner laughter and joy. Complementing the cello with instrumentation that connotes traditional 'girly' sounds (woodwinds, in particular, flutes, oboes, and strings) and presenting such music in combination with a performance of empowerment conveys a powerful message of girliness and cuteness as an effective power strategy. Such an approach stands in opposition to essentialising claims about Zerlina's role. In this

production, Zerlina is not girly, cute or innocent, but rather reveals the three stances as queer performatives. Mozart's music supports the performance as much as the performance supports the music.

While the character of Masetto looks both surprised and sometimes a little horror-stricken, it seems that he becomes enthralled, even seduced, rather quickly. His anger at Zerlina's escapades prompts a sexual SM play scene, subtextually suggesting that Zerlina's flirtation with Don Giovanni has also been confined to the realms of sexual play, not to be taken seriously or cause for jealousy. The scene serves as erotic invitation in addition to reconciliation, challenging Allanbrook, Hunter & Wheelock's (2000, 65) claim, '[a] slide into real erotic closeness here would compromise her separateness; it would make legal tender out of a currency she never means to offer'. A kink reading of Zerlina's aria avoids her offering sexual favours as prostituted compensation, but recasts Zerlina as educating her submissive husband, giving him a sexy punishment for his jealous outbursts. Zerlina's plea for beating could be seen as a very clever strategy of reverse psychology, a sign of wit and irony (Allanbrook, Hunter & Wheelock2000, 65), and also a sign of a strong, sexually empowered woman who dismantles violence by mentioning it aloud (ibid. 64). It seems that Zerlina is a skilled rhetorician, and is the governing force in the 'Batti, batti' scene.

Reading Zerlina as a sadomasochist effectively changes also the power dynamics between her and Don Giovanni, who woos her in an earlier scene. Reading her as a Sadeian character, this dynamic is even further reassigned. Through the combination of Don Giovanni, a libertine at best, and Zerlina, the seemingly innocent girl but that takes pleasure in Sadeian aesthetics, Guth's adaptation of the opera reveals how the original text already includes a darker side to romantic love, so often ignored in the stage performances of *Don Giovanni.* In the following section of the thesis I read the Sadeian inversions of romantic love through the 'love' duet of Zerlina and Don Giovanni in act 1.

5.2.2 SADEIAN LIBERTINES AND INVERTED LOVE IN 'Là ci darem la mano'

The selection of *Don Giovanni* as a case study for kink reading was particularly appealing, because of Zerlina's presence, and because of the sexual over (and under) tones of the opera overall. Framing the story as depicting alterative sexual preferences, as Guth has done in his version, the original text is recontextualised to comment both on the historical text of the opera as well as the modern sphere that determines the legitimate ways to profess romantic love. Here, I look more closely at the relationship between Zerlina and Don Giovanni, especially throughout their duet, 'Là ci darem la mano,' and observe how their mutual Sadeian desires create an inverted space where concepts of love are inverted, constructing an important comment on the contemporary discourse surrounding romantic love.

In the scene in question, Zerlina and Masetto are celebrating their wedding, but soon Zerlina walks away with Don Giovanni for a sexual tryst. Assuredly, it would be a baffling notion that any other man would escort a bride from her wedding than her husband,

if the adventure does not take place within the prescribed events of a wedding ritual.[33] The fact that Zerlina happily walks away from her groom to explore a relationship of sorts with Don Giovanni suggests that she is either 'an innocent' in the form of de Sade's Justine, blindly putting faith in everyone she meets (and is consequently punished for her innocence time and time again), or a savvy coquette who knows precisely what Don Giovanni is offering. In either case, Zerlina is one of the few women onstage that Don Giovanni actively pursues. Thomas Moore (1994, 36) writes that in the Sadeian world, the innocent virgin and the libertine cannot exist without each other. Indeed, in the truest Hegelian spirit, the one shapes the other. In the libretto, Zerlina is often mentioned as the innocent one, '*la innocente*', and Don Giovanni is referred to as a libertine. Deeming Zerlina as 'the innocent' seems to contradict the agreement among many musicologists with regards to Zerlina's worldliness. In relation to her positive response to Giovanni's wooing, Richard Taruskin (2010b, 495) has referred to Zerlina as 'a virtual mirror reflection of the Don [Giovanni] himself – a cruelly manipulative creature ruled by her animal appetites'. Kink reading this scene as two Sadeian libertines' encounter, their attempted tryst then becomes a celebration of carnal desire that heavily parodies the sensibilities of romantic love. Indeed, the 'Là ci darem la mano' scene may be understood as a Sadeian inversion of the concept of romantic love.

A good portion of de Sade's strongest criticism is aimed towards traditional conceptions of so-called 'romantic' love. The institution of marriage based on love was a fantasy of people living in a historical time of arranged or forced marriages. De Sade thought this ridiculous, not because he was an advocate of arranged marriages, but because he thought the whole institution of marriage was a non-functional, impersonal and sexless travesty for all parties involved. He found the concepts of love, devotion and loyalty he found ludicrous and childish. De Sade's libertines argue actively argue against love, and engaging in brief sexual encounters based rather on 'hate' rather than any sort of devotion. Thomas Moore (1994, 20) calls refers to this as 'light love', or 'the Sadeian shadow to any insistence that love must always be profound and lasting'. In *Don Giovanni,* the word 'love' is used abundantly, but rarely does it mean is it used to denote romantic or devoted love, particularly when it is used by Don Giovanni himself. Indeed, within the 'Là ci darem' duet, the words 'love', 'heart', and 'marriage' are used primarily with reference to sex. Zerlina acknowledges this with hesitation ('*puó burlarmi ancor*"; 'he/my heart may fool me yet'); Guth's Zerlina is fully aware of what is being suggested. Indeed, she is favourable to his wooing, and resistance is coquettish play, rather than serious. Reading Zerlina as a Sadeian woman, she is in favour of 'light love', the polyamorous affair that may or may not last longer than a single afternoon.

This inversion of love could also be read in Mozart's music, where musical similarities can be seen in the duet and 'Batti, batti', following the same opening in a 2/4 time signature and ending in 6/8 pastoral (Hoechner 2005, 513; see table 6). This switch to pastoral time is, according to Hoechner (2005, 514), a symbol of 'Zerlina's maturity', which first appears in 'Là ci darem' and then in the aria, 'Batti, batti'. It is also noticeable that whereas

[33] One thinks of the Finnish 'stealing the bride' tradition here, where the groomsmen 'steal' the bride, playfully demanding a ransom for her return, often in the form of a performance or game.

'Batti, batti' and 'Là ci darem' are similar in their form, the aria 'Vedrai, carino', sung by Zerlina to Masetto, inverts this template, beginning in pastoral time and later switching to 2/4. This sets the song apart from the Sadeian sensibilities and seduction, as a romantic love song between Zerlina and Masetto.

Table 6. Zerlina's main musical numbers and their form.

	1st part	Fermata	2nd part
Là ci darem la mano	Là ci darem la mano… 2/4	An-*diam'!*	Andiam', andiam', mio bene... 6/8 (pastoral)
Batti, batti	Batti, batti, o bel Masetto… 2/4	Non hai *core*	Pace, pace, o mio tesoro... 6/8 (pastoral)
Vedrai, carino	Vedrai, carino, se sei buonino… 6/8 (pastoral)	Dove mi *sta*	Sentilo battere, toccami qua… 2/4

Guth's production of the opera mirrors these similarities in the music scores of the two arias, in the stage setting and direction (see table 7 with figures 31–36). The 'Là ci darem' scene opens with Zerlina and Don Giovanni arriving at the wooded area with a swing, which she willingly climbs onto, and Don Giovanni pushing her into motion. As Zerlina expresses her doubts towards the Don, he places himself under the swing and her feet. He removes her shoes and caresses her feet softly while pointing out his castle and suggesting they spend their lives there.[34] Zerlina smirks knowing that these are perhaps empty promises, intended more as a lure than an expression of romantic love, and accepts the invitation by descending onto Don Giovanni, straddling him ('*vorrei, e non vorrei*'). This gesture is repeated in the 'Batti, batti' scene, with the blindfolded Masetto in the place of Don Giovanni. Furthermore, Don Giovanni picks up a fern leaf to tease Zerlina; she does the same with Masetto. Zerlina's placement on a swing is deliberate. At first glance, the swing may seem like an innocent plaything for children. However, looking closer, as a verb, 'swinging' (*swingen* in German) is also used to imply sexual promiscuity within a relationship (also in German; i.e. group sex and/or wife swapping; Love 2000, 127, 277, 296–297). Don Giovanni is, then, quite literally placing Zerlina into a 'swinging position'. Of course, the swing also works as a recoding of Zerlina's girly innocence as sexual, as I argued in the previous section.

Furthermore, Jean-Honoré Fragonard's famous rococo painting *The Swing* (or, *The Happy Accidents of the Swing; Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette*) from 1767 is clearly referenced here (see figure 37). In the painting, an elderly gentleman pushes a lady in a rococo outfit forward on the swing, and a young man observes this from the shrubbery. The swaying movement raises the lady's skirt hem, giving the young man a clear view of her legs and an upskirt image (a common fetish even today). This image could be seen to

[34] *'Quel casinetto è mio: soli saremo, e là, gioiello mio, ci sposeremo.'*

Table 7. Figures 31–36. Zerlina's and Don Giovanni's scene compared to Zerlina's and Masetto's.

Swinging	
	
Fig. 31.	Fig. 32.
Rolling on the ground	
	
Fig. 33.	Fig. 34.
Fern leaf	
	
Fig. 35.	Fig. 36.

Figure 37. Jean-Honoré Fragonard: *L'Escarpolette (The Swing)*, ca. 1767.

present a scene of accidental, unknowing cuckoldry. There is also light sexual play between the woman and the young man, who share eye contact. Similarly, Don Giovanni places himself at the feet of Zerlina, giving him an upskirt viewpoint, suggesting that Masetto is the one cuckolded here. Later on, Zerlina replicates the setting by placing Masetto in the position of the young lover, perhaps cuckolding Don Giovanni in her imagination. The concept of cuckolding women and cuckolded men also constructs Zerlina's (and Masetto's) *buffa* status in the opera, suggesting that sexual wantonness in women was a radical concept that could be discussed only through comedic characters. As McClary (2002, 51) points out, 'critiques are safer, after all, when displaced onto marginalised Others', meaning women, servants and/or comic characters.

Musically, 'Là ci darem' is one of the most famous musical numbers of the opera. Reframing it as Sadeian courtship seems downright blasphemous, which in turn is a Sadeian gesture in itself (see de Beauvoir 1953, 60). One key aspect here is to separate the romanticism suggested in the music from any real indications of love, and re-listening to the musical gestures as sexual courtship as well as the inversion of romanticism. Don Giovanni's flamboyant promise of '*io cangeró tua sorte*' ('I'll change your life') with its flowing melody line, through such a reading, sounds excessive, even a camp declaration of male potency; Zerlina's '*presto, non so piú forte*' ('soon I cannot resist') repeated three times becomes a case of performative resistance. The effect is not persuasion here; it is foreplay. The duet changing to a pastoral after Zerlina's agreement reveals their true intentions, especially through the word choice '*pene*' in '*a ristorar le pene d'un innocente amor*' ('to soothe the pains of innocent love'). There is nothing innocent or romantic about this love; the operative word is 'pains', evoking the Sadeian view of negative affects being more truthful than positive ones, as well as being a SM commentary on eroticised pain. Love is rendered invisible, only sexual courtship remains. Although no ropes or spanks feature here, based on Zerlina's SM actions in 'Batti, batti,' they certainly seem to be on her mind. Mozart's seemingly innocent and sweet music is here reframed as too lush to be taken seriously; also the fluctuation between volume levels (usually, Don Giovanni's lines are louder than Zerlina's) could suggest another 'thrust' toward friction to heat from an assertive alpha male.

Reading Zerlina not only as an SM character, but more specifically as a Sadeian one, reveals some poignant aspects of her character. In the next section, I will examine a rarely staged duet between Zerlina and Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant, and how Guth's stage production teases out some ambiguities between SM and violence with special attention paid to Sadeian sensibilities as well as the concept of 'realness'.

5.2.3 SPECTACLES OF PAIN AND THE QUEER REAL IN 'Per queste tue manine'

Thus far, I have discussed Zerlina's two most famous musical numbers in the opera, 'Là ci darem la mano' and 'Batti, batti'. In what follows, I focus on the darker second act, where Zerlina's character exemplifies the fine lines often drawn between sexual play and 'realness'. I explore these contradictions through the duet between her and Leporello, 'Per queste tue manine' ('By these small hands'). In this duet, Zerlina pursues Leporello (Erwin Schott) through the woods at gunpoint. Guth includes the rarely staged duet between the captured Leporello and Zerlina, and portrays Zerlina tying up Leporello, viciously spitting the lyrics '*cosí cogli uomini, così si fa*' ('this is what you do with men'). Zerlina's fury stems from the assumption that it was Leporello who assaulted Masetto in an earlier scene, alongside her witnessing Leporello's betrayal of Donna Elvira. Zerlina's punishment is thus not only as revenge for his treatment of Masetto, but on behalf of other women in the opera as well. Comparing her punishment of Masetto and Leporello, the difference is striking: while Masetto receives a soft, girly treatment, Leporello is almost hanged and shot.

Kink reading this, I argue that Zerlina's performance of violence through SM codes blurs the lines between represented violence and represented SM, creating a space of 'the queer real' (Hart 1998, 5, 128–129). In this space of queer SM performance, the concepts of the real and the phantasmatic are blurred. Lynda Hart (ibid.) discusses this blurring through performance artists who perform SM actions on themselves or others, which often audiences find disturbing. These artists perform spectacles[35] of SM that are often (mis)construed as spectacles of violence. I would suggest that Guth's direction creates a spectacle of pain, which falls here in the grey area of SM representations between consensual SM sex and violence. It becomes unclear whether Zerlina's punishment is partly motivated by (Sadeian) sexual urges, or whether she is motivated purely by revenge. Certainly, Leporello does not invite her actions, which negates the all-important aspect of consensuality in SM practices, especially if we distinguish violence from SM practices as a breach of intimacy (Newmahr 2011, 175–176). If intimacy is understood as allowing another to enter your personal sphere, be it physical or mental, then breaching this personal sphere without permission is an act of violence. In this context, Zerlina is indeed acting violently towards Leporello. However, reading the scene as an example of 'the queer real', questions of the limits of SM and representations of 'acceptable' kink on a public stage come into play.

Depicting violent women onstage is a traditional comic trope. Like sexuality, violence (with the actors not actually being harmed) has been a theme of comedy throughout history. Depicting '"spectacles" of violence' or choreographed depictions of violence, is not uncommon in slapstick humour (Glenn 2002, 41–42). Zerlina is the only woman who acts

[35] By 'spectacle', I mean a special visual form of representation which that actively goes against 'real life' and emphasises the illusionary surface without depth and demands acceptance: anything made visual is by default 'good' and 'worth seeing', See Debord 2010 [1967], 561–563; Kärki 2014, 44–45. Questions of violence, queer sexualities and performativity make the concept of spectacle a fruitful one for analysing performances where these aspects are foregrounded.

out violently in the opera, again marking her character as a *buffa* one.[36] Zerlina's revenge towards Leporello remains the only judgement of him; the divine justice depicted at the end of the opera is directed only at Don Giovanni. Perhaps Guth wants to make a point in not letting Leporello's quiet acceptance go unpunished; perhaps Zerlina's actions express feminist fury against all men. Indeed, she straddles him, carving her initial Z onto his chest with a knife. The gesture is familiar from the pulp action figure Zorro in Johnston McCulley's novels (and a televised series by Disney in 1957–9), granting Zerlina some intertextual moral high ground in the context of modern fiction. Zorro is often seen as a moral champion similar to Robin Hood or Batman, going beyond the legal means available, to punish corrupt politicians as well as common criminals. While the intertextual nod in Zorro's direction grants Zerlina some traits of masculine heroism, it also reveals that Guth positions her as a crusader for justice. If Zerlina is indeed seen as an action figure vigilante,[37] then Lisa Purse's (2011, 45) claim that action films depict spectacles of physical mastery and fantasies of empowerment could recontextualise the entire scene as Zerlina's half-sexual fantasy of domination and agency.

Zerlina's punishment blurs the lines between SM and violence through the seemingly justifying her actions, but also justifying her almost sexual treatment of Leporello. First, she stops Leporello at gunpoint, then she straddles him on the ground in a suggestive way while carving him with a knife (a wound that seems to disappear as soon as Zerlina does). Another noteworthy gesture is seen when Zerlina pulls at the ropes binding Leporello, almost hanging him, spinning in front of him and pulls at his headband in a gesture of blindfolding him, similarly to the 'Batti' scene. This could be a symbol of Sadeian anarchy in the opera. Thomas Moore (1994, 12, 63, 76) writes of the Sadeian philosophy as anarchy within the highly regulated and moral atmosphere of the Enlightenment era, where reason, hygiene, humanist values and general helpfulness became new norms for the upper and middle classes. Sadeianism is the antithesis of this assumed repression. It feasts on selfish assertions of sexuality, shuns and perverts family values, fetishises bondage equipment and delights in ravishing the innocent, takes pleasure in (bodily) excrement, rewards vices, and celebrates the libertine sexuality as the most sublime of experiences. Similarly, Zerlina's attack on Leporello could be seen as a sexually motivated inversion of gender roles, punishing the wickedness and immorality of men through Zerlina's own wickedness and immorality. Indeed, in the spirit of true Sadeian inversion, her vices are rewarded by their moral justification, and in this way she can escape her violent-sexual outburst without fear of punishment. While Bill Thompson (1994, 66) asserts that the public can usually differentiate between real violence and sexual SM play scenes, the same does not necessarily apply to non-SM scenes that employ SM imagery or symbolism. While SM may, and indeed often does, borrow codes from violent acts, rewriting them as sexual acts, violence borrowing codes from SM blurs the lines between the two, making both readings (SM/performative, violent/material) viable. In this way, the lines between

[36] The same could be said of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Susanna, boxing her husband's ears in many scenes.

[37] On vigilantes and their justified heroic violence, see Lichtenfeld 2004, 23; Purse 2011, 35.

SM and violence become invisible, indistinguishable. The scene works as a circuit of both SM and violence.

While it is not possible to see the reactions of the audience watching the performance on the DVD recording, I, at least, am confused by the scene: Zerlina in this scene is so radically different from other parts of the opera, that the motivation for the almost violent punishment without any trace of comic cuteness must be to either rewrite her comic character as a tragic one, or to evoke alternate readings of her sexuality. Kink reading her actions, the confusion between SM erotica and violence is particularly evident just before the duet, during the recitative. In this moment, Zerlina fires the gun in her hand, which is followed by an immediate silence. The silence is a laden one, even though it is short: it makes Leporello stop in his tracks, but it is also meant to alarm the audience, to mark Zerlina's evolution from *la innocente*, to *la furia*, the furious, monstrous one.

Although the scene is an adaptation of a fictive comedy scene, and as such, talking about the 'real' seems beside the point, if we consider the 'real' that is queered here as belonging to the diegesis of the opera, and 'fantasy' as Zerlina's diegetic SM pleasure, the scene is framed as 'non-SM', therefore 'non-fantasy', or 'real'. The scene becomes a confused state of semi-SM violence, and also blurs 'acceptable' SM depictions. As Lynda Hart's (1998, 109) writes:

> Despite the fact that s/m appears to have become commodified and therefore a spectacle of consumption for the masses who do not participate in this particular form of consciousness-raising, we still must make a distinction between the ones who are watching and the ones who are participating and watching themselves. Of course, the latter are also watching themselves being watched, and this affects the internal dynamics of the s/m subculture, but that does not mean that the subculture has become what its spectators see when they look at it from the outside.

In the case of Zerlina's professed SM preferences, it could be seen that Zerlina is performing a nightmare of a dominatrix to (seemingly) non-SM Leporello, and by extension, the audience. This is, in Hart's terms, a person 'watching herself being watched' and, through anarchy and parody, expressing their worst nightmares about SM practitioners: behold, I am dangerous, I am violent, I am a sadomasochist. Zerlina's semiviolent performance queers the concept of the real, performing a postmodern magic trick regarding what Leporello and the audience experience. Hart (1998, 128) draws a line between realism, or the illusion of referentiality, and the real, which 'have often been conflated in perception'. In this way the audience exist effectively outside of the scene, but through mimesis experience the scene as 'real', especially if the performance is of sexuality or embodied experiences. Indeed, the audience needs to be reassured that the scene is staged rather than 'real' (ibid. 129). This resembles the work of the performance artist Bob Flanagan, who in his performances nails his scrotum to a board and finds pleasure (Hart 1998, 143 suggests the word sadistic; I would suggest the word Sadeian) in the audience's recoiling reactions; apparently the procedure is not nearly as painful as the audience assumes. His pleasure is in both the masochistic pain and in the act of creating a phantasmagorial spectacle of it. In Sadeian terms, the performance opens up the possibility of violence *as*

pleasure: 'it may be violent to inflict *pleasure* as well, as also happens to the characters in Sade's texts' (MacKendrick 1999, 37).

In perhaps a similar way, Zerlina carving Leporello's skin (or, rather, creating the illusion of doing so) and holding him at gunpoint creates a postmodern spectacle where the signifiers and signified are disjointed: it is not violence but SM, it is not SM but violence. The audience is left confused: Zerlina may as well be performing a masturbatory illusion of a violent dominatrix as a vigilante. The carving gesture is perhaps not 'real' enough to disgust the audience, but the gesture itself brings about a corporeality that leaves the spectators wondering if it is meant to depict violence, and why such violence is needed. Indeed, Zerlina's lashing out in an active, corporeal way creates a rift between the tender SM atmosphere of earlier encounters and this revenge that is purely based on negative affect: it is acceptable to present (kink) sexuality when the affect is positive and mutual, but when the affect is not generally accepted as positive, it is assumed to be pathology, violence or both. This, of course, is another Sadeian point: in de Sade's world, sentimentality and sexuality are actively dissociated from each other, and physical pleasure is motivation enough, in its own right, regardless of societal approval (Moore 1994, 15, 17–19, 27). Indeed, the line between pain and pleasure in the Sadeian world is ambivalent; 'Sadeian violence aims to produce pain as intense and various as possible – that is, correspondingly, pleasure as intense and prolonged as possible' (MacKendrick 1999, 37). It is also a comment on 'acceptable' femininity, where the erstwhile cute Zerlina is now seen as a monstrous siren gorging in her sexual-violent jubilation. Furthermore, blood, excrement, and physical pain seem to be at the very edges of acceptable kinky eroticism in the mainstream media (see Wilkinson 2009, 187–188, 192), but they are central in the Sadeian imagination. Thomas Moore (1994, 61–66) dedicates a full chapter to the pleasures of excrement and bodily fluids, and how they are crucial in Sadeian imagery. Similarly, drawing blood from Leporello's chest could be seen as celebrating blood as a sexual fetish (in stark comparison to Don Giovanni's blood, which symbolises his demise in the opera). Zerlina may also be seen to perform erotic asphyxiation by hanging Leporello, further pushing the kink boundaries from mainstream acceptability to more extreme, specific fetishes.

Comparing Zerlina's semi-SM performance to SM performance art is tenuous. After all, the performers onstage are opera singers, not (to my knowledge) queer SM artists. Erwin Schott is not in any 'real' danger here; even Leporello's wounds seem to disappear soon after the scene concludes, unlike Don Giovanni's gunshot wound in the very first scene that ails him throughout the opera. What is sought here is not realism, or the illusion of reality, but a spectacle-like performance of both Zerlina's domination as well as Leporello's suffering. As Eric Lichtenfeld (2004, 78) puts it, '[t]he body is spectacle, and so is the violence that is done to it'. Indeed, as in the action films Lichtenfeld discusses, Leporello seems to suffer because of the wounds inflicted by Zerlina, but magically heal within minutes. This is also reminiscent of Karmen MacKendrick's (1999, 49) reading of violence in de Sade's books:

> The final Sadean violence is not against the other, the body of the victim, but against consciousness itself, using its own methods – its own iterative, discursive, and free rationality – to bring into it the potent force of destruction, the infinite intensity of repetition. When everything has been said again, all sense is shattered.

MacKendrick's 'free rationality' here is particularly revealing when we think of it as spectacle. The pain as well as the violence are without depth, catering only to the audience's voyeurism while making them uncomfortable by it. The performance toys with the boundaries of sensual and visceral: the reaction to Zerlina's performance has the potential to both revolt and titillate.

Musically, the opera has many violent scenes, however the music of the duet is markedly different from Mozart's depictions of violence elsewhere in the opera. While the violent scenes (Don Giovanni shooting Il Commendatore, or Il Commendatore taking Don Giovanni to hell) are dramatic, dark and loud, the duet of Zerlina and Leporello emphasises both characters' *buffa* natures with major modes, staccato melodies and quick tempo. This already ambiguates the violence of the scene into a humorous commentary on women disciplining men. Guth ups the stakes with Zerlina's SM-violent punishment: contrasting the fairly light mood of the music with blurred SM and violence, Mozart's score becomes an anempathetic surrounding (see Chion 1994, 221) for the action, contributing to the spectacle of pain against a comical music backdrop devoid of emotional perspectives. Mozart's music is reconsidered as promoting Sadistic pleasures. Similarly, Siurina's voice reaches some dramatic moments, but otherwise, her rapid repetition of '*cosí, cosí, cosí, cosí, cosí*' with emphasised s-consonants, supported by violins, creates a performatively aggressive 'spitting' effect, or perhaps an auditive depiction of the knife being brandished about in the air.

'Per queste tue manine' serves as one of the most ambivalent examples of SM in this thesis, as it blurs the lines of SM and violence to the point that they become indistinguishable. It remains moot, however, whether the existence of a clear distinction is necessary here. Not only because of its spectacle-like nature, the scene depicts Zerlina in such a radically different way, that one could interpret her character in this scene as purely symbolic. From this perspective, perhaps it is not Zerlina but Leporello's own guilt personified that attacks him, and the scene becomes a depiction of his imagination and sexualised (masochistic) fantasy.

Guth's adaptation of Zerlina presents a complex character, who, when framed sadomasochistically, moves swiftly between emotional extremes (and men) in the opera. I will now move on from these debates about her supposed innocence, the possibility of perceiving her actions as performative strategies for self-empowerment, and how she is discursively caught up in acts of sexual manipulation and eventual domination. I do this by broadening the discussion to examine the relationship between Zerlina's and Rihanna's Sadeian pleasures, which I discuss through the concepts of girliness, scopophilia and voyeurism as reflected in these two performances.

5.3 SEXUALITY IN PUBLIC VIEW

The purpose of presenting the cases of Rihanna and Zerlina alongside one another has been to show how matters of visibility and invisibility work within SM aesthetics and erotica. Both characters depict a woman in a public space presenting her sexuality in a complex way. This may or may not be directly sadomasochistic, but through the examples,

I discuss the theme of visibility and invisibility concerning SM, feminine sexuality and appropriate femininity. I also highlight the specifically Sadeian nature of both performances. Sadeianism and questions of visibility and invisibility complement each other well, as Sadeian aesthetics is very prone to measure the world as well as the sexual fantasies attached to it through visuals and experience. Indeed, as Deleuze (2006, 72) suggests, 'Sade needs to believe that he is not dreaming even when he is', making the Sadeian fantasy inverted, when compared to the Masochian fantasy (ibid.; see chapter 4). Fantasies are then turned into visual reality, or in the case of these performances, a depiction of them. Furthermore, the examples demonstrate how personal space and public image can create a complex 'circuit' when representing feminine sexuality onstage and in the public eye. They additionally introduce another form of kink sexualities, exhibitionism and voyeurism, so prevalent in our mediated, and media saturated society of social networking and reality television. Finally, in the next section, I review both examples to discern how a performance can be encoded as specifically sadomasochistic in a public forum.

5.3.1 SADEIAN GIRLINESS

Witnessing an empowered woman express her sexuality onstage is not a historical anomaly. Sexually assertive and strong women have performed on the stage for centuries, as Zerlina evidences. Yet, the traditional depiction of power, as it is embodies by women, puts forth an argument that to be powerful is to be masculine, and to be without power is to be feminine, regardless of the gender of the character. To invert this power dynamic is not only possible but also highly popular in popular music practices. However, as queer theorist Nikki Sullivan (2007, 92) states, 'all performances and all attempts at subversion will be ambiguous and open to multiple meanings'. Therefore musicologist Jodie Taylor (2012, 34) asserts that context of performances ought to be carefully taken into account.

Questions of performativity and performance are at the centre of Rihanna's and Guth's Zerlina's girliness. Performativity as a word is derived from performance, and is often confused with theatricality or theatre performance. However, performativity, in the Butlerian sense, has little to do with theatricality as such. In theatre, performance is often assumed to be a representation (repeated codes), but performativity is presentation and representation at the same time (repeated as well as created codes; Sedgwick 2003, 7). The terms are blurred when performativity is extended to performances that parody gendered traits, or where the traits are knowingly repeated instead of blindly reproduced. Butler (1990, 272–273) noted this duality in her earlier work by pointing out that the word '"performative" itself carries the double-meaning of "dramatic" and "nonreferential"'.[38] While the difference between theatrical performance and performativity seems quite clear, musical performance in its widest sense poses other questions. Unlike in theatre or opera, Rihanna is performing as a star construction of herself. Simon Frith (1998, 212) defines this character as separate from the private persona, calling it 'the performance persona'. Lori

[38] Butler later changed her mind about this theatricality, claiming that agency in performatives is an illusion, as the subject is constructed in similar ways as performatives. See Sullivan 2007, 91.

Burns (2010, 160) uses the concept of 'implied author' from narrative theories to refer to this same distinction. In this way, the musician's performance of herself becomes a product for consumption, not Rihanna's private personality per se (see Frith 1998, 211–212; Auslander 2006, 4). In a sense, the musician-performer is both performing the musical piece, the performance of the musical piece, and characters inside the song simultaneously.

Performing music essentially means producing a rendering of the song through the live, projected or imagined body of the performer. The performative performance would perhaps be that in which this delicate interrelationship between the song and its performer is both acknowledged and toyed with. In this way, the performer can interpret songs about subjects that are not personally relevant to them. This becomes all the more clear when introducing elements of theatricality and deliberate inauthenticity to the performance. Stan Hawkins theorised in *The British Pop Dandy* (2009a, 155–156) that the performer can use, for example, vocal techniques, dialect and pitch to form a vocal mask, hiding his true face or identity from the audience. It is possible to argue that Rihanna's mock-childish voice (a vocal mask) asking 'meet me in my boudoir, make my body say ah-ah-ah', beating the ground with her tied hands, depicts in fact a grown-up woman in control of the fantasy, without catering to the sexual objectification that the scene presents at first glance. Her *shibari* rope play is a performative depiction of a submissive woman, yet it is clear that Rihanna is in control of these same ropes. Her struggle is thus a parodic performance, a comment on how the performer pretends to submit to the male fetishising gaze. Rihanna also challenges and returns this gaze, visibly through her direct looks at the camera and claiming to 'like it, like it', hereby directing the gaze toward her own pleasure of being looked at. I shall return to this in the next section.

Using 'girly power tactics' is fairly common in the sphere of pop music, where the stereotypical femininity is portrayed as a masquerade, not as something natural. This 'feminine masquerade' is often designed to 'provok[e] and confound[…] the male gaze' (Reynolds & Press 1995, 298). Rachel Devitt (2006, 29) calls this "'bio-queen' drag, or a drag performance by a biological female who performs femininity in an exaggerated way: 'She is at once campy and earnest, parodistic and ecdysiast, all girl and then some'. Pamela Robertson (1996, 6) suggests that camp has been employed as a feminist technique for both accentuating and critiquing culturally produced, stereotypical femininity, irrespective of sexual orientation. Or as Stan Hawkins (2004, 13) argues, the camp performance of femininity becomes 'a fantasy where sex and gender roles are made so superficial that they become, in the end, only a matter of style'. This strategy is not, however, completely bound to the twentieth century feminist era: Catherine Craft-Fairchild (1993) writes about women in the eighteenth century as adopting 'feminine masquerade' as either a forced subjugated role, or as a means of challenging male voyeurism (as I argue Zerlina does here, transhistorically). Craft-Fairchild understands Joan Rivière's (1986) and Mary Ann Doane's (1982) concept of feminine masquerade as an empowering tactic of overturning the male gaze when it is done knowingly. Rivière (1986, 38) calls womanliness a mask that can be worn at will, in order to 'both […] hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it'. In other words, women in positions of power often adopt an ultra-feminine 'mask' to make amends for their

'threat' to the masculine-normative doctrine. Doane and Craft-Fairchild, however, see this strategy as a possible means of self-representation and challenging the male gaze. As Doane (1982, 81–82) argues:

> The masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance. Womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed. The masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely, imagistic. […] By destabilising the image, the masquerade confounds this masculine structure of the look.

The image of the 'girly girl', or the ultrafeminine 'babe' in a position of (sexualised) power can be, then, a clever way of critiquing gendered power structures where girliness and femininity are seen as powerless. Indeed, many films and TV series use this technique (for example, action films) with regards to physical strength, combining stereotypical femininity with the regular tropes of heroism. On the other hand, debates about the success of such strategies wage on, questioning the relevance or potentials of girliness and post-feminism. As Rachel Fudge (1999) asserts, regarding the powerful-yet-girly *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,

> Buffy's unreconstructed, over-the-top girliness in the end compromises her feminist potential. Though this excessive femininity veers toward the cartoonish, in the end it's too earnest—too necessary—to be self-parody. We're never allowed to forget that Buffy is a girl—indeed, the show's hook relies on the 'joke' of a petite cheerleader being chosen to save the world from evil.

Similarly, Lisa Purse (2011, 85) writes of action film heroines:

> In a contemporary Western culture frequently characterised as postfeminist then, these women seem to represent the 'acceptable face' of female empowerment: predominantly white, heterosexual, sexualised, affluent, normatively feminine and usually contained if not initially then by the narrative closure within a heterosexual union or family unit. And they also present sanitised versions of female physicality, the biological and psychological realities of physical exertion, stress and violence elided.

With both Rihanna and Zerlina dependent on girly power strategies, the feminine masquerade, is it still possible to argue that their performances are feminist, or empowered? After all, the highly critiqued 'girl power' from the 1990s relies on feminine/girly empowerment's potential for consumption and commodification, becoming a mere slogan rather than subversive strategy. Both Fudge and Purse seem to subscribe to the definition of post-feminism according to which popular culture picks and chooses its feminist ideals (usually individualism; Hollows & Moseley 2006, 14), but conveniently forgets many important intersections that go with them (class, race, homosocial behaviour among women; see Hollows & Moseley 2006, 6, 11; Storr 2003, 30–34). Based on this, it could be said that the motivation for coupling both Rihanna's and Zerlina's girliness and femininity with sexual domination is to make another 'joke' out of seeming impossibilities.

Then again, as Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (2011, 2) note, somehow *femininity,* as a critical tool for interpreting feminist or post-feminist sensibilities in society and popular culture, is conspicuously undertheorised; "we noticed a tendency to study *girls and women,* but *masculinities.*" The key aspect of empowerment in Rihanna and Zerlina's performances lies not only in parodying girliness and femininity, but *hegemonic* girliness and femininity, whatever these may be (ibid.). This also extends to sexual domination, perhaps traditionally unavailable to normative (which I here understand as hegemonic) femininity and certainly girliness. Revealing all above stances as masquerade, as strategies for self-empowerment as well as sexual play, the aspects are reconstructed in a way that both grants agency and sexual prowess to girliness and femininity, but also opens up new possibilities for girly dominatrixes. Furthermore, both examples can be regarded as feminist SM performances, as the empowerment is not only 'about' strong womanhood/girlhood/femininity as a means to please or titillate men, but it is also used to empower (and perhaps attract and titillate) women and girls. In the house party scenes of *S&M,* Rihanna is seen dancing and having fun with actors representing all body types and gender variations, who in turn perform SM-hued choreographies. Zerlina's SM punishment towards Leporello is motivated by her witnessing other women of the opera suffering as a result of his and Don Giovanni's actions. Both exemplify peer-group solidarity, even fluid sexual interests towards other women and queers.

Keeping this in mind, we could argue for both Rihanna's and Zerlina's playfulness but also the darker sides of their sexualised performances as conforming with Sadeian pleasures. Both performances parody girly innocence as something phantasmic. Rihanna achieves this by dressing in girly clothes while singing of explicit SM pleasures, and Zerlina by agreeing to Don Giovanni's request of '*innocente amor*'[39] and her girly performance of submission while dominating Masetto in the highly stylised, girly musical gestures of 'Batti, Batti.' Both examples reveal a darker side in the wish to dominate the power that regulates their sexualities (Rihanna and the press, Zerlina and the Sadeian sexual urges). They disarm the male gaze by performing innocence, but through this, gain control of the scenes, including even mild violence and bondage in their pleasures. De Sade might welcome the two to his group of libertines, alongside Juliette (de Sade 2008a) and others.[40] While the performances of Rihanna and Zerlina are highly stylised, performative and camp, they also utilise their public stage (operatic, music video) to reinforce their messages. This, in turn, can be regarded as a strategy for the titillation of both audience and performer, that lies at the heart of the (in)visibility of SM in the media.

[39] As discussed in chapter 5.2, both the words 'innocent' and 'love' mean very different things both in the opera libretto and in the Sadeian world. There are very few moments during which the word 'love' should be read as romantic love in *Don Giovanni*; it is mostly used as a euphemism for sex.

[40] Of course, we can always speculate whether de Sade's female characters were really liberated or agentic in his writings, or just fetishistic imagination. Then again, de Sade made no distinction between libertines and their victims based on gender, sexuality, or even class; anyone could be trained to be a libertine and enjoy sex in their way. In this way, he could be seen as promoting also women's sexual freedom. See Carter 2001, 36.

5.3.2 EXHIBITIONISM AND VOYEURISM

Regarding representations of SM sexualities in the media, we cannot escape the particular fetishes surrounding looking and being looked at. Exhibitionism, in the sexual sense, is the pleasure and arousal derived from shocking others through the exposure of sexualised body parts (legs, arms, cleavage), and ultimately, the genitals. It has a long tradition in fertility rites, comedy, art history, and courting rituals. Partial body exposure (for example, wearing short skirts but no underwear, revealing underwear, or low cleavages) is also sometimes considered to be a form of exhibitionism. It is generally more acceptable for women to wear revealing clothes than men.[41] The thrill of full exhibitionism is based on planning the event, shock effect, and pride in breaking taboos. (Love 2000, 98–100.) Exhibitionism is not criminalised in nudist colonies, group sex houses, public mixed-sex saunas, or most SM play parties. Criminalised exhibitionism, or 'indecent exposure', is usually defined as the public display of genitals situated in non-sexualised, public spaces ('flashing'). It is accompanied by the strong will to be seen by the non-consenting stranger, victim, but usually no further sexual encounter is sought. (Långström 2009, 317–319.) Non-sexualised, the same desire to be seen is prevalent in contemporary society, from social networks and 'selfies' to hidden cameras and surveillance to the paparazzi, celebrity culture and tabloid press.

Voyeurism or scopophilia, on the other hand, is defined as the act of observing other people for sexual arousal (Love 2000, 293). This act is criminalised when it includes a breach of the other's private sphere, i.e. 'peeping Tom' activity (Bronfen 1996, 59–60). Exhibitionism and voyeurism often go hand in hand, especially when we consider the contemporary media and its most prevalent form of entertainment, 'reality TV' (see, for example, Bagdasarov et. al. 2010). In fact, reality TV voyeurism is often called 'mediated voyeurism' (Calvert 2000, 23):

> the consumption of revealing images of and information about others' apparently real and unguarded lives, often yet not always for purposes of entertainment but frequently at the expense of privacy and discourse, through the means of the mass media and Internet.

Exhibitionism and voyeurism also share the eroticisation of the gaze, the eyes, and the object of looking. They are both closely attached to fetishisation: 'For the scopophile or the exhibitionist, the eye corresponds to an erogenous zone, emerging as a surrogate for the genitals' (Bronfen 1996, 60). According to Rosi Braidotti (1994, 67), the scopic drive, or the human drive to dismember a thing in order to see how it is built or how it functions, 'can be seen as the most primitive form of sadism'. Braidotti agrees with the infantilising aspect of sadism that Krafft-Ebing (2011, 57) and Freud (1977, 70) thought to be innate in it. This form of sadism, that is, breaking apart, observing, and figuring out the technicalities of the object, is based on the ability and urge to see, to know, and ultimately,

[41] Then again, the male upper body is not as sexualised as the female one. In this way, ironically, partial exhibitionism is more easily accessible for men.

to control.[42] This claim, linking sadism and scopophilia is most probably influenced by Freud's (2003) essay 'The Uncanny' (written in 1919; see also Moi 2002, 133), where he aligns the loss of sight to fear of castration (Freud 2003, 139).[43] In this way, to see is to control, or in the Lacanian sense, to possess the powerful symbolic phallus.

However, curiosity, scopophilia and the pleasure of looking are not the only categories of sexualised gazing that involve power play. Exhibitionism is also about control and power. While it is true that the object of the gaze cannot always control when s/he is observed, through mediatised performances, an artist can decide *what* is see-able, how many times, and how. Some agency is therefore retained in the mediatised format of the music video, a safe space in which to 'work the gaze'. Whether or not we can refer to Rihanna's self-exposure as 'exhibitionism', or fans enjoying her body on display as 'voyeuristic', remains unclear, but to regard both of these as 'mediated' exhibitionism or voyeurism makes the debate slightly more focused. We do not see any more of Rihanna's body than she allows. Her exhibitionism is thus mediated, through self-representation but also through the medium (music video, concert venue, live performance filming). Furthermore, in a tangible sense, Rihanna illuminates E. Ann Kaplan's (1997, xvi) distinction between the one-way process of 'the gaze' and the interactive, relational process of the 'the look', Rihanna will not submit to the subjective workings of the gaze, but returns the gaze by looking at us; in her music video, she looks directly towards the camera and her voyeurs, her audience. As in Maija Vilkkumaa's music video *Kesä* (2005), in which John Richardson (2007, 423) notes that '[t]he assuredness with which the singer works and returns the gaze speaks […] to an element of control over audiences'. While Rihanna (unlike Vilkkumaa) does not establish closeness or a level of intimacy level in the way the music video is edited, she frequently and mockingly dodges the audience by laughingly and abruptly turning away from the camera. This control and agency of challenging the gaze can be interpreted as a sign of Rihanna's empowerment over the antagonising press. She is challenging them to see only what she wishes them to see, knowing that she is being observed. She thus performs an exhibitionist show at the same time as mocking the press's desire to see her in sexualised positions. In this way, she represents herself as both visible (look at me) and invisible (look at only what I want you to see). In a similar way, Zerlina works the gaze and performs her girly seduction during the 'Batti, batti' scene, but perverts sexualising gazes in such a way that what Leporello and the audience perceive is a monstrous version of Zerlina, the process motivated by her Sadeian pleasure.

It is remarkable that very little attention has been given to the role of sound and to voice in the voyeuristic dynamic. One could assume that on the pathological level of voyeurism, adding human sound to the object of scrutiny may indeed diminish the pleasure of making someone an object, as the human voice effectively personalises its bearer (see, for example, Jarman-Ivens 2011, 29), reassigning her from an objects to a subject, and hence

[42] This can be supported by Laura Mulvey's (1999, 840) writings that consider the scopophilic drive as an ultimately sadistic form of patriarchal control. Mulvey's theories of the male gaze have been discussed in cultural studies over recent decades in such detail that it feels redundant to regurgitate them here.

[43] Freud's study of dreams, fantasies and myths have taught us also that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often a substitute for the fear of castration. Freud 2003, 139.

diminishing the pleasure of voyeurism. On the other hand, voices are also a fetish object (see especially chapter 3.2.2). Attaching a fetishised voice to voyeurism would only enhance the pleasures of both seeing and hearing, especially when musical and audiovisual voyeurism is concerned. Rihanna's music video shows such a combination through her performance of both dominance and submission, her voice affirming the dominant role with an assertive chest voice and emphasising submissiveness (and its camp levels) through a girly falsetto voice. There are also moments in the song where Rihanna's singing becomes an onomatopoeic bridge to sexual exclamations ('make my body say *ah, ah, ah*', or the last gasp of pleasure at the end of the song).

Zerlina's operatic performance of sexual escapades is narrated through music. Lawrence Kramer (2000, 190) has theorised that especially in Italian opera, the audience's masochistic identification 'with someone in anguish' (pain, love, or both) has some additional ties to voyeuristic fascination. Here, the relationship of the listener to an anguished aria or its performer is a circuit between identification with the masochistic lyrics and voyeuristic sadism at seeing someone in anguish. Consequently, presenting Zerlina as an agentic and strong-minded dominatrix, even in her darker incarnation, would perhaps make it possible to be fascinated or titillated by her sexual, even semi-violent scenes onstage, while simultaneously being repulsed by them. In this view, the Sadeian interest in performed cruelty suggests titillation, while tightly constrained sexual and gendered morals dictated by the society judge her actions as unbecoming and repulsive. Fascination and voyeurism are, still, present in both reactions.

In this chapter, I have discussed the theme of (in)visibility in SM aesthetics. Both Rihanna and Zerlina employ spectacle as their main strategy of sexual empowerment. As for the two primary strategies of presenting SM, 1.) normalisation through making the actions seem banal or even sanitary and 2.) mainstreaming through an emphasis on spectacle (Weiss 2006, 122–123; see also Halberstam 2006, 9), Rihanna and Zerlina certainly play a part in mainstreaming SM through their exploitation of spectacular aesthetics (and consequently they also participate in making SM banal), but the whether or not this results in normalisation is unclear, particularly if normalised SM is defined as the sanitised, non-radical brand of SM sexuality. Both of these performances rather depict SM as a radical, queer, and blatant expression of sexual freedom and agency, which could be seen to relate to women's rights, as well as a strategy for other, perhaps less explicit, ends. Rihanna uses SM expressive means to critique perceptions of black female sexuality, while Zerlina employs it as a sexual strategy both to reaffirm and then to critique the narrow limits of what is considered 'normal' when it comes to feminine sexual urges.

5.3.3 THE SM SPECTACLE

Rihanna's and Zerlina's historical contexts may be distant from one another, but Guth's direction of *Don Giovanni* makes it possible to theorise what recodes Zerlina's performance as SM in a modern context. In the text below, I will make reference to both examples in discerning what can be gained through reading them as sadomasochistically provoking.

1. **Recoding ordinary props as sadomasochistic.**
   Both performances depict the leading lady (Rihanna, Zerlina) toying with usually non-sexual (or at least, subtextually sexual) props, in a way that presents these props as sexual to the recipient (the audience, Masetto, the press) of female attention. This strategy recodes ordinary objects as sexual by ascribing new meanings to them. Sometimes these objects replace SM props: for example, it is not rope Zerlina ties Masetto up with, but a wedding veil. Rihanna is not shackled to the wall with chains, but with cling wrap and tape. Recoding ordinary objects as sexual can be seen as extending the sexual(ised) space from sexual acts, to include flirtation, courting and sexual invitation. Ordinary objects are thus reframed inside of the sexual sphere, blurring the boundaries between sex and 'everyday life'.

2. **Camp musical performance.**
   Both performances employ camp aesthetics. Originally camp was associated with male homosexuality, and denoted a particular set of behaviours, speech and/or aesthetics that served to encode the homosexual subculture in order to facilitate recognition and a sense of community among likeminded individuals and to dupe unsuspecting heterosexuals. In a way, camp speech worked as a closet strategy, with seemingly harmless words understood only when familiar with the double-coding. (Cohan 2005, 1.) This camp speech becomes essential when re-coding language as sexual invitation: it is not beating, but 'beating' that Zerlina requests. Notions and words such as 'bad' and 'good' are blurred at best in Rihanna's music video. The words have slippery connotations, and their vocal performance flaunts this disjunction meaningfully. Of course, the intended audience needs to be savvy as to their implied contexts, since otherwise the message can be lost, even when their delivery is explicit. Similarly, musical codes of camp humour need to be accentuated if they are to be identified and understood by audiences: the (almost too) frequent embellishments in Zerlina's music are Mozart's way of adding both feminine sweetness and humour and laughter, while Rihanna's melodramatic section C and the emphasised, strong voice that alters between assertive and camp are highlighted by the lush colour settings and out of the ordinary fetish objects that the effect is more of parody and laughter rather than sexual titillation.

3. **Blurring the lines between private and public address**
   Traditionally, women's spaces have been private, encoding public spaces as masculine (Citron 1993, 104). However, the two modern women presented here, bring their sexualities, another traditionally private sphere of human behaviour, to the public stages. Rihanna performs her sexuality in house parties, and Zerlina in the woods. By extension, these public spaces are also the operatic stage and music video format. While both examples allude to private spaces in the lyrics as well as with visual codes (bedrooms, bodily sensations, lingerie, sexual invitations), they reaffirm the public domain through assertive vocal deliveries (belting with Rihanna, sweet yet assured delivery with a small amount of vibrato in Siurina's performance of Zerlina).

4. **Sexual connotations**

   While some SM practitioners argue that these practices are not sexual (see Newmahr 2011, 67–69; Beckmann 2007, 98), representing SM audiovisually through music without encoding the performance as outright violence is challenging at best. Both performances are contextualised within some reference of violence, with Rihanna's incident of domestic abuse made public, and Zerlina blurring the lines between SM and violence in her actions towards Leporello. Both performances, *S&M* and 'Batti, batti', differentiate the explicitly (intertextually, lyrically or otherwise) violent aspects from the sexualised SM space by creating an accentuated feeling of SM play. In this way, both performances can be understood as erotic rather than violent: in Rihanna's elaborate choreography in the dungeon scene, the helpless reporters either observe or they are used as SM props, and Zerlina's relationship with Masetto is encoded as playful, negotiating a reconciliation between the two lovers.

5. **Blurred lines between SM and violence**

   In SM literature, there is an adamant insistence on the non-violence of SM. However, performances of SM can blur this distinction. Similarly to the feeling of Uncanny (see chapter 3.3.3), blurring the lines between violence and consensual SM, the presence of violence challenges our conceptions of acceptable sex, sexuality, and personal freedom when exploring physical pleasures or sexual fantasies. This is exemplified in Zerlina's punishment of Leporello, or Rihanna's personal history of domestic violence that colours her singing about SM pleasures. Here we encounter a pivotal issue, what Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2007, 16) calls the 'bind' of representation that it is always-already literal as well as symbolic. The violent codes used in SM can also be reassigned to represent violence again, which in turn reassigns the particularities of consensual SM sexualities and critiques the limits of 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' depictions of fictional SM. It remains to be questioned whose fantasies are depicted? How do the blurred lines between SM and violence comment upon each other within the performance? In the cases of Rihanna and Zerlina, the effect of vague lines between SM and violence are used as symbolic moral justification and retribution as well as sexual empowerment with a gender-specific emphasis. The intended presence of strong women acting violently remains ambiguous, however, to the extent that they could be considered either purely as dominatrixes or also vigilantes, working outside of social norms.

With the discussion of my final theme of the (in)visibility of SM in place, in the next chapter of this thesis I discuss my findings in each of the case studies while also allowing some space for pivotal themes that have arisen over the course of the investigation as a whole.

6 DISCUSSION: *FIFTY SHADES OF GREY* AND NEOLIBERAL SEXUALITY

This chapter serves as a springboard for a more general deliberation on SM aesthetics in music, culture and society. During the years of writing this thesis, SM has risen to a new level of visibility in audiovisual media. Debates on SM sexualities, gender power imbalances and contemporary justifications for their representation in popular culture are proliferating at such a breathtakingly fast pace that reporting them here in any sort of comprehensive detail would be impossible. However, it would be negligent of me to conclude my work without on some level addressing these new developments. In this chapter, I discuss mainly the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015), and sadomasochism's relationship to neoliberal society in the 2010s.

6.1 VOICES: Mainstreaming SM

February 12, 2015. With only two days to go before the worldwide Valentine's day premier of the film adaptation of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, social media is buzzing. Several feminist Facebook groups and Twitter accounts implore followers not to go to the cinema to see the film with campaigns such as the hashtag #50DollarsNot50Shades (implying an opposition to the commodification of the franchise), or sharing a photo with an arrow pointing to your Facebook profile picture, demonstrating refusal to watch the film (see figure 38 for a screenshot). The hostility of these groups towards the film was not, however, targeted at kink sexualities as such (in fact, the Facebook group Being Feminist clearly stated that the campaign was not about 'kink-shaming'), but the valorisation of emotional and physical abuse in the film disguised as sexy play between consensual adults. Lengthy discussions ensued about whether or not mainstream audiences would understand that the film does not represent all SM practitioners, and whether a single fictional narrative could have power to change opinions about SM in the first place. It is at this juncture that my work joins the discussion. While this thesis explores how fictional works construct eroticism through combinations of sound, music, and visual images, I have extended my arguments to address how political and cultural factors may more broadly valorise, normalise or pathologise SM sexualities as well as the represented sexual acts.

Figure 38. Screen capture of an image, circulating in social media, taken from the Facebook group 'Geek Women Unite! Finland' on February 12, 2015.

Criticism concerning *Fifty Shades* can be divided into four distinct yet interrelated themes: the false representations of SM (as rape culture, physical and/or mental violence), eroticising the power tensions between sexes (anti- or post-feminism), questions of authenticity (normative, mediated SM vs. authentic BDSM culture), and commercialising SM to serve capitalist ends instead of being a realistic and fair representation of BDSM practitioners.[1] While the criticism of *Fifty Shades* seems reminiscent of sexuality policing in public discourse, it does not, however, straightforwardly comply with any of Gayle Rubin's five systems of sex oppression in critical discourse (2011, 148): sex essentialism, sex negativity, fallacy of a misplaced scale, hierarchical valuation of sex acts, domino effect of sexual peril. I have compiled table 6 to demonstrate what Rubin (ibid.) means by systems of sex oppression, and include examples of rhetorical statements to illustrate concretely how these systems operate (particularly in relation to SM themes rather than their usual application to sex in general).

In Rubin's (2011, 148–154) view, of course, all of these systems of sex oppression distil down to the lack of a concept of benign sexual variation. However, the principal worry expressed in criticism of *Fifty Shades* is that the franchise confuses stalking, rape culture and mental abuse with SM (or worse, that it eroticises and by extension validates and legitimises such actions). This, of course, sounds like the domino effect of sexual peril; therefore a case could be made for the 'fallacy of a misplaced scale' here. And yet SM is not seen as the main culprit. Rubin (ibid. 148), in all previous discourses, argues that '[s]ex is presumed guilty until proven innocent'. Meanwhile, criticism of *Fifty Shades* loudly proclaims that it is not about 'kink shaming', and SM is not penalised as an exemplar of moral decline. This suggests that something new is happening in feminist discourse, which could be seen as a sign of growing tolerance and acceptance towards sexual minorities, sexualisation, the overall spreading of intersectional pro-sex feminist values. Has Rubin's claim been repudiated in feminist discourses, the assumption now being 'sex is presumed innocent until proven guilty'?

It remains unspecified which kind of SM is criticised and which is accepted in discussions of *Fifty Shades*. No hardcore kink is represented in the books, even less in the film. SM is reduced to light bondage, slaps with riding crops and blindfolding, and 'the worst it gets' scene consists of six spanks, rendered more emotionally fraught with Danny

[1] This, of course, concerns only feminist critics; *Fifty Shades* has also spawned some borderline accusatory research results with hazy links between young women consuming the series and being more likely to be sexually abused. See Bonomi et. al. 2014.

Table 6. Rubin's systems of sex oppression with example rhetorical statements

Systems of sex oppression	Explanation	Rhetoric
Sex essentialism	Sex is seen in a narrow, hierarchical, normative way (Rubin 2011, 149; 152–153).	SM is not a sexual act but a violent one
Sex negativity	Sex is seen as destructive and dangerous. (Rubin 2011, 148–149.)	Having SM sex is immoral and demonstrates pathological psychology.
Fallacy of a misplaced scale	Sex is thought to have (too) high an impact on social status quo; deeply rooted in moralism (Rubin 2011, 149).	Depictions of SM sex will corrupt our children
Hierarchical valuation of sex acts	Some sex acts are seen as more acceptable than others (Rubin 2011, 151–153).	Fellatio is more acceptable if the person performing it is a woman, not a man; a wife, and not a mistress
Domino effect of sexual peril	Assumption of accepting one non-normative sex acts will lead to more (Rubin 2011, 151.)	If gay marriage is accepted, soon interspecies marriages will be accepted

Elfman's score of suspended, heavy, plangent violin chords that emphasise each slap, rather than the sounds (any rendered sounds) of actual spanks ('Counting to Six'). Compared to *Secretary,* this is a considerably different representation of SM (see section 3.1.3 of the thesis): while *Secretary* establishes the relationship as sadomasochistic-erotic in the spanking scene, *Fifty Shades* uses hard spanking as a sign of pathology, not eroticism. The question remains, what kinds of SM, and whose SM is represented here?

Often, where SM in fiction is concerned, we come across the problematic insinuation that SM-identified characters are somehow lacking in personal development and/or that they are obsessive about their sexuality. Non-SM sexual preferences are conversely represented as normal, normative, and acceptable (albeit, sometimes boring) form of sexuality. There seems to be virtually no forms of sexuality between these two poles, forms that are represented as balanced, neither comical nor tragic, practiced by an individual who likes occasional kinky sex. Media representations of acceptable sex are still policed in a strict way: kinky sex scenes are acceptable, as long as they are not 'too kinky' (or, innocent until proven guilty of too much kink value; see Weiss 2006, 115). SM is additionally usually

depicted to take place between monogamous partners, but rarely between two SM-identified strangers joined in a scene. If this does happen, however, the implication seems to be that the protagonist is living with serious mental illness (often beyond treatment), homosexual,[2] and/or a prostitute. Meanwhile, few representations of 'weekend' or occasional SM practitioners exist, where SM is regarded as an acceptable form of leisure and sex, and not symptomatic of problems within the relationship, a person involved, or of culture at large. This could be another motivation for sexual conservatives criticising alternative sexualities in the media, similar to audiences objecting to sexual representations (see Richardson, Smith & Werndly 2013, 2.) Alternatively, this could be a signal of the birth of 'kink normativity', where only certain kinds of SM kinks are acceptable. Either way, the representations of BDSM in mainstream media are decidedly narrow.

Then again, the 'bind of representation'[3] (Shimizu 2007, 16) of the sadomasochist as always-already obsessive and devoid of all 'real' sexual drive is not as clear-cut in SM fiction. I will not argue that representations of SM should in any way stay true to the reality of actual SM practices, firstly because this can easily lead to false perceptions of 'appropriate' SM, and by extension, also to 'inappropriate' forms of SM.[4] Secondly, my focus here is on fiction. Fiction, much like sexual fantasies, is a place where every aspect of sexual psychology may be explored, be it socially acceptable or not. I have investigated representations of the aforementioned fantasies, how they are created, and how they fluctuate in their cultural surroundings. Whether they are somehow 'right' or 'wrong', or even repressive or empowering representations veers away from the point: as Gayle Rubin (2011, 173) notes, '[t]he sex industry is hardly a feminist utopia'.[5] I am concerned with what kinds of sexualities the fictive representations depict and promote, and how eroticism works (performatively) within them. In addition to this, I posit a critical (materialist?) argument, that the questions discussed in the case studies can be considered as symptomatic, or depictive, of society's norms at large.

A central concern throughout this thesis has been to investigate how SM is used to both validate and (perhaps more importantly) critique the heteronormative matrix (or

[2] To be more precise, male homosexuals are depicted as radical Others to traditional, heteronormative masculinity, monogamy and non-kink sexuality. For an example, see William Friedkin's film *Cruising* (1980), which gay activists protested against already while it was being filmed.

[3] This is easy to translate into SM representations, where the 'bind' is between hypersexuality and pathology. See chapter 5.1.1. While there is a bondage-like urgency to the word 'bind', it is possible to think of the 'bind of representation' also as liberation, as Jennifer Nash (2014) has suggested. Rejoicing in the dual bind of SM representation, it is possible to keep it reparative (see Sedgwick 2003, 128), while maintaining the radical sexual Other stance, but also not to oversimplify SM into an exclusively heterosexual kink. *Fifty Shades* has not achieved this, but remains firmly heteronormative, and problematic in its gender politics (see, for example, chapters 1.1 and 3.3.2).

[4] It is always a matter of definition, how SM is understood in the first place. Staci Newmahr (2011, 68), for example, critiques most scholars' tendency to define SM as a solely sexual behaviour. Furthermore, Moser & Kleinplatz (2006, 2) question the academic, non-practitioner scholar's 'right' to define SM over practitioners; similarly, we might criticise non-SM directors, actors and producers for recycling unimaginative, mostly stereotypic representations of SM.

[5] Which does not mean that it needs to be inherently and ultimately antifeminist either.

compulsory heterosexuality; Butler 2008, 24) in popular culture. In the case of *Fifty Shades*, it is true that the almost stalking nature of Grey's control over Anastasia is something most critics, myself included, find hard to accept. However, there is a popular SM fetish of behavioural control, also portrayed in *Secretary* (see section 3.1), where the dominant controls the submissive's life decisions down to the smallest detail. The intention could be to depict this lifestyle in *Fifty Shades*, but the fact that the submissive never agrees to this control variant of SM practices and is seemingly innocent[6] taints the plot of *Fifty Shades*, casting it as abusive and an example of stalking. While it seems that *Fifty Shades* reinforces the heteromatrix rather than challenges it, I have to conclude that it would be a mistake to dismiss it altogether, either because it is an example of 'bad' SM practices or because it somehow demonizes SM, especially if we read the film on a closer level.

Audiovisually, the film features clever moments, especially where the compiled soundtrack of pre-existing music represents eroticism and sexual interplay quite effectively. As an example of a contemporary soundtrack featuring audiovisual means of SM, I will now offer a brief analysis of *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015) concentrating on two levels, source music (compiled music or pre-existing music) and score music (composed music). Danny Elfman's score for *Fifty Shades* starts out with familiar musical codes from romantic comedies (tracks 'Going for Coffee', 'Art of War' on the soundtrack), but turns to introspection ('Show Me') and, at times, kink-sexual titillation by adding electric guitars to the soundtrack's otherwise classical orchestration ('The Red Room', 'Ana and Christian'). It is in pre-existing music, however, that the most blatantly sexual auditive representations reside in the film. For example, the first scene starts out with Annie Lennox's cover version of 'I Put a Spell On You' (2014), which, when added to the plotline of *Fifty Shades* gains another layer of obsession and sexual connotation to the lyrics ('I put a spell on you/ because you're mine'). On the one hand, the lyrics certainly depict Christian's obsessive nature, but on the other, they might be read as portraying Anastasia's alleged charm, thus allowing her some agency and endearing femininity in the plot, not completely without feminist empowerment (comparable to, say, Bridget Jones in *Bridget Jones's Diary* from 2001, dir. Sharon Maguire; see McRobbie 2009, 20–22). By suggesting that Anastacia's quirky character lures Christian in, just as Christian's overbearing sexuality lures Anastacia, the song choice also denotes her through a traditional feminine power strategy by casting her as a rhetorical witch (as does Frank Sinatra's 'Witchcraft' [1957] in a later scene; see also chapter 5.2.1).

During lovemaking scenes, Beyoncé's 'Haunted' (2013) and 'Crazy in Love' remix version (2015) are heard. The two songs are similar in production and emphasise Beyoncé's voice as a chesty voice, enhanced with sound processing and production techniques (echoing, double-tracking). The music juxtaposes the hard, technologically modified sounds of the percussion and Beyoncé's sensual, embodied voice into a rhythmic cage, similarily as in Rihanna's 'S&M'. Together, these musical elements create a sadomasochistic-auditive aesthetics familiar from discussions in earlier sections of this thesis (*Secretary,* Rihanna,

[6] Anastacia's innocence and growing sexuality is one essential theme of the books, but could also be re-read as a rehash of de Sade's *Justine* (2008b). This intertextual reference would suggest a level of criticism towards female sexual prudishness and innocence in sexual matters.

Costello) which toy with extreme polarisation (*Secretary*), neosurrealism (Costello) and (female artists') sexual, perhaps even camp delivery (Rihanna). Both Beyoncé's songs depict sexual encounters with a level of obsession and being transported by desire without controlling them, which makes the song choices accentuate embracing sexual urges (as submissive pleasure) when considered within the context of the *Fifty Shades* plot.

It is remarkable that Beyoncé features so prominently in the soundtrack of *Fifty Shades*. After her MTV Music Video Awards performance of 2014 where the word FEMINISM was emblazoned on the stage, Beyoncé's inclusion in the film soundtrack seems to be an effort to legitimise the franchise as a viable, modern (post-feminist?)[7] sexual fantasy of a strong, self-realised woman of the 2010s. What bothers me in Beyoncé's song is her invoking a discourse of 'self-control' in opposition to 'out of control' in sexual matters. Can she not be in control of her sexual desires and enjoy them as such, and to *choose* to participate in them, without needing to escape to the idea of 'out of control' when enjoying sex? (See Steele 1996, 44.) Additionally, Beyoncé's endorsement of the *Fifty Shades* franchise may give feminist critics such as bell hooks[8] further justification to regard her, or any other female pop artist's, feminism as quasi-feminism.[9]

Then again, both characters (Anastasia, Beyoncé's 'me' in the songs) seem to occupy a delicate middleground between traditional feminist values and what Angela McRobbie (2009, 12) calls 'post-feminism', not as a backlash to feminism but as a value system that believes it has achieved equality and is now pushing for new possibilities of being in a world of new possibilities: 'Post-feminism […] seems to mean gently chiding feminist past, while also retrieving and reinstating some palatable elements […] '. While both characters, Anastasia and her sonic extension in Beyoncé's song, enjoy the rights and liberties available to the modern woman (freedom of choice, or in Anastasia's case, being a highly educated, middle class, white single woman seemingly independent and financially secure, if not well off), the plotline of *Fifty Shades* invokes some traditional traits: a strong, dominant man to yield to, and a doe-eyed, virginal girl astounded by her own sexual explorations. It is however remarkable that Anastasia abhors Christian's dominant and

[7] Post-feminism and sexuality are in an intricate circuit with one another and concern the question of empowerment. In post-feminist empowerment, women are not empowered as a social group, but as individuals, and there is also a feeling of a right to openly demand for sexual pleasures. However, the relationship with other women remains ultimately competitive and homophobic, and the relationship with men remains subservient through a will to please them. (See Storr 2003, 30–34.) According to Angela McRobbie (2009, 12), post-feminism depends on both employing feminist ideals as well as undoing them: in other words, women can be sexually empowered, while at the same time they can cater to patriarchal notions of acceptable feminine sexuality. The key word here is personal choice (ibid. 21–22): even somewhat non-feminist choices are acceptable if they are made by the woman herself. (See also Gill & Sharff 2011, 4.)

[8] See Crosley 2014; chapter 5.1.1.

[9] Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley (2006, 2–3) have discussed the difference between feminism and popular culture, and feminism *in* popular culture, and how confusion between the two often leads to confrontations and oversimplifications by feminist critics of popular culture, similarly to bell hooks criticising Beyoncé here. They argue, however, that popular culture has always been a forum for articulating feminist ideas, particularly from the 1970s onwards, and dismissing its current forms as anti-feminist (often referred to as post-feminist) is to miss out on an opportunity to study current forms of feminism (post-feminism as a sensibility or an object of study, or third-wave feminism; see also Gill & Scharff 2011, 4).

overbearing character outside the erotic frame; in this sense, she enjoys the perks that modern, post-feminist popular culture endows her with, emphasising her individuality and freedom of choice everywhere, except, performatively, the erotic context.

All this is reflective of the status of the sadomasochist in the popular imagination. The sadomasochist often assumes the role of the sexual monster, the psychologically and socially unstable Other who is sexually insatiable, always looking for a greater thrill, a greater experience, a greater orgasm (for example, Christian Grey). The sadomasochist is supposedly obsessed with their own body and pleasure, and will search for fulfilment without considering the needs of others involved. The sadomasochist is also the ideal capitalist. On one hand, the sadomasochist is the ultimate Other of sophistication, reason, and even civilisation; of culture itself. On the other, and where *Fifty Shades* fails, the sadomasochist is a smart adversary, taking up the codes and power relations of society at large and perverting them in such a way that they become sexual games, revealing these sacred codes to be nothing but social constructions, which can be easily replaced or dismantled. Yet these codes are not directly challenged. They are only recycled, toyed with, criticised in a carnivalistic[10] space but not challenged.

The reasons why the sadomasochist is so beyond comprehension in the normative public eye are manifold. I will suggest four distinct, yet interrelated, themes to explain the fascination/abjection circuit that occurs between the (represented) sadomasochist and the surrounding society and culture. These themes are the first set of results from my research on SM in popular culture today. The sadomasochist is a rebel in contemporary society because:

1. ***The sadomasochist's positive and uncomplicated relationship with their body and pleasure.*** In a society that teaches us to shame and regulate our bodies, in which ideas about sex as something necessary but also private (and socially shameful), extending to phenomena such as slut shaming, age discrimination and weight control (see Gill 2007, 149; Soloway & Rothblum 2009) are distributed, the sadomasochist finds their body a source of pleasure and sexual games. They can enjoy their sexuality despite not conforming to society's normative beauty standards. They feel pride in their escapades and flaunt them using theatrical paraphernalia, turning their bodies into sexualised space. Lynda Hart (1998, 10) theorises that desire is something that happens between the body, as a discursive, cultural site; and flesh, the disavowed and yet desired corporeal object-site that exists before and even beyond the body. In SM, this site of desire between the discursive and the ontological is negotiated by extending the tension between 'body' (subject) and 'flesh' (object). At the same time, their synthesis becomes impossible, since desire is dependent upon the tension between them. Both body and flesh are in this context ultimately illusions, phantasmic constructions, which serve different functions and are then turned into sexual desire. Something similar

[10] Here, I employ the Bakhtinian term 'carnival', where a space of spectacle and celebration works as a renewing force for the status quo. See Bakhtin 1999, 107–127; 1984, 4–7, 16-17; Dentith 2005, 67–73; see also chapter 5.1.1.

happens when donning fetish attire, which can be seen as redirecting attraction from the engendered body towards the inanimate. In this way, the normativity of the phallocentric order (Steele 1996, 44) is derailed, and the body is obsessed over as inanimate object, through emphasising its fetish value, but also as animate, through empowering agency. In contrast, Anne McClintock (1993, 91) sees the emphasis on the sexualised body in SM as a parodying the 'alienation of the body (…) at the centre of Western reason'. In other words, the sadomasochist rebels against the idea of living according to demands of reason, logic, and the mind only, and hence prioritises bodily pleasures, inscribing pleasure on bodies as an encompassing experience, not merely as a narrowly defined necessity but a cause for fun, pleasure for its own sake.

2. ***The sadomasochist advocates fantasy, not reason.*** SM frames a space where anything is sexually possible, and only the agreed rules border this fantastical space. Inside it, they do not fear judgement from others and do what they wish. They escape the realities of life by fantastical sexual escapades, sometimes experienced as therapeutic (Newmahr 2011, 68; Nichols 2006, 285) as well as sexually satisfying (Califia 1995, 146–147). The theme of fantasy can extend also to fluid gender/power roles within SM scenes (Sisson 2007, 28). It is debatable whether this escapist model of sexuality can ultimately exclude real, everyday life; as Anne McClintock (1993, 113) writes, 'S/M does not escape its paradoxes'. It may also be asked whether an escapist model of sexuality is necessarily uncritical, or whether it is reliant on the performative (camp) fantasy space in order to exhibit criticism towards mainstream sexualities. Perhaps the escapism is geared also towards social repercussions, not only reality and reason.

3. ***The sadomasochist broadens the concept of sex.*** While mainstream media are keen to present a narrow concept of sex, the sadomasochist understands sex as a state of mind as well as body. Sex to a sadomasochist is not penetrative (necessarily), repetitive, or mundane. The whole body is seen as an erogenous zone, and consequently the experience of sexual gratification is more complex than exclusively genital-oriented sex. Sex organs can even go unstimulated during SM sex, and orgasms can still be achieved (see Weinberg 2006, 29). Furthermore, sex is broadened to a state of mind, not an act. The idea of sex as a mindset is by no means entirely novel. Murray S. Davies wrote already in 1983 about 'the erotic reality' (Davies 1983, chapter 1; Kindle location 358) as a pre-cursor to intercourse; in his mind, the erotic reality (I'm tempted to call this 'the erotic frame') excludes past and future time, with the present occupying the central position (ibid. 606). The sadomasochist's frame of mind is similar to this (contrary to Davies's claim; ibid. 1470),[11] but extends beyond sex and/or intercourse; while Davies's erotic

[11] 'Certain extreme forms of sex – especially bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism, transvestitism and fetishism – present unique difficulties in sustaining a sense of erotic reality. They require more cooperation and equipment than commonplace sex, increasing the probability that something will go wrong.' (Davis

frame ends abruptly at the point of climax (ibid. 1491, 1596), the sadomasochist can stay in this frame of mind indefinitely. Hence the idea of just about anything being admissible as a precursor to the sexual act adds to the feeling of society becoming more and more sexualised, and hence discomfort is engendered through the figure of the sadomasochist. (See also McClintock 1993, 91; Sisson 2007, 28; section 3.3.1 of this thesis.)

4. ***The sadomasochist makes sex blatantly visible.*** While heteronormative sex is quite often considered a private matter, the sadomasochist wears their fetishes on their body, even flaunting them. What conventionally happens during sex inside the body (penetration, orgasms) is now represented outside of the body. Sex is commodified and made tangible, something you can hold in your hand or cover your body with. In a sense, people wearing these commodities are turned into commodities as well. Sadomasochism can be said to be the most commodified sexuality (Ehrenreich, Hess & Jacobs 1986, 104), although the SM-specific equipment is limited only by the powers of the imagination.

These four themes work as possible critical strategies for representations of sadomasochistic sex and erotica in fictional media and music. How many of them must be present in order to achieve a truly heteromatrix-critical tool is another question. Ideally, all four aspects should be present, but any of them standing alone or in any combination with a number of others can encourage critical readings; but conversely, even the presence of all four does not guarantee a critical stance, if the general attitude towards sex and sexuality is encoded as something psychopathic or an anomaly in human behaviour.

At this point, it seems indisputable that SM has become more mainstream, and the sadomasochist is becoming a more regularly encountered character in fiction. It is remarkable, however, that SM has become more visible during the past 45 years or so, its most recent peak rising with *Fifty Shades*. Next, I shall present some speculations as to why sadomasochism fascinates audiences of the 2010s to such a great extent.

6.2 PHRASING: The Neoliberal Twist

It can hardly have escaped the attention of any mainstream media scholar that SM imagery has quickly become manifest, almost ubiquitous, in popular media. Some might even claim that it is the most commercialised form of sexuality in the media, not only because of its ubiquity, but also the commercial and commodified qualities so often attached to SM culture and practices. The cost of SM accessories,[12] costumes and toys for the regular

1983, 1470.) Here we can assume that Davies's 'erotic reality' is somewhat akin to abandon and sublimity, rather than flirtation, social communication and re-enactment of sexual fantasies.

[12] Practicing SM can also be done without expensive props, of course. In mainstream media, though, kink eroticism and sexual Otherness is quite often represented visually through the fetishistic depiction of commercially produced (and expensive) SM props.

consumer interested in SM sex can be considerable. Ehrenreich, Hess & Jacobs (1986, 104) observed already in the 1980s that a market had been created particularly for SM-curious women, and that SM-paraphernalia and sex toys were sold to women at home parties in a format reminiscent of Tupperware parties, such as Anne Summers parties in the UK (see especially Storr 2003). Since then, along with the Internet and more liberal social attitudes towards sexuality, the marketability of SM eroticism has only increased (fueled also by SM chic in the media). This is not the first time sexual imagery has noticeably surged in the media. Indeed, the rise of SM can be seen as accompanying the proliferation of sexual imagery in general, and, as with pornography, (fair) depictions of homosexuality, and more recently perhaps also transgender issues, SM sexualities have received increased attention. This has generated disparate reactions, ranging from acceptance and fascination to revulsion and abjectification. How should we theorise what different representations of sadomasochism reveal about society's power structures and (sexual) culture at large?

Gayle Rubin writes in her seminal essay 'Thinking Sex' (2011 [1982], 137) that 'it is precisely at times such as these, when we live with the possibility of unthinkable destruction, that people are likely to become dangerously crazy about sexuality'. Similarly, Elizabeth Freeman (2008, 32) begins her article on SM, temporality and history with the notion that all sexual minorities often represent either the decadent side of the society, or a 'sublime, futuristic escape from nature'. Consequently, queer sexualities are always tied to modernity. It is especially striking, then, that sadomasochistic imagery is again proliferating in the 2010s. The question remains, why precisely now? How is this to be interpreted? Perhaps the fascination towards SM is a form of escapism, resulting from our contemporary economic depression. This implies nostalgia for more clear-cut power relations, than those of this current era of neoliberalism, where systems of power are complicated and multifaceted. Or SM could be seen as a coping mechanism in such a financially unstable time, where a brighter future is embraced by transgressive sexual practices. The rise of SM may also be a symptom of or a backlash to anti- or post-feminism, or a radical escapist gesture towards a non-normative, performative, theatrical and sensual feminist sexuality.

There is a sense, however, in which the question 'why SM now?' is the wrong one to ask. SM has never deliberately left popular culture, nor been non-existent. As such, it cannot easily be said to 'have emerged'. SM never disappears; it thrives in the underground and is only 'rediscovered' periodically by the mainstream (see Anderson-Minshall 2013). Before the 2010s, SM was 'discovered' by Madonna and others in the early 90s; before that, in gay (sub)culture and the film version of *Story of O* in the 70s, and so on, extending back to Marquis de Sade in the early eighteenth century. However when considering why SM is so prolific at this particular moment in time, we could adopt the perspective of Gayle Rubin's (2011, 137) 'possibility of unthinkable destruction'. Through this view, although perhaps not as all encompassing as it was in the 1980s (the AIDS crisis, nuclear concerns, and terrorism being the primary concerns of the time), but more symbolically, we may understand 'possibility of unthinkable destruction' as demarcating the fall of the neoliberal-capitalist system. Neoliberal capitalism has already been seen as vulnerable, with its invisible power relations, seeming to offer but never actualising equality between sexes and genders, races or ages, and indeed, the global financial crisis that is affecting people in all areas of life (certainly, we see this in many of our universities every day). Perhaps the

public obsession and fascination with not only sex, but also with a form of sexuality that is explicit, lewd and determinedly unashamed, is the ultimate symptom of the surrounding and apparently endless insecurity. Simultaneously, it might also be seen as a remedy for such insecurity through self-assertion and perverting the power codes that have been imposed upon us. The only difference with Rubin's prediction is that the 'craziness' about sex is not so much about denying it or hiding it, but arguing for the 'right' ways to present it, ways that are indeed feminist, queer, and transgressive of old norms. Perhaps the humanist ideal of personal freedom and right into self-expression has transitioned to sexuality. (See Duncan 1996, 106.)

Margot Weiss (2011, 18–20) argues that neoliberalism is, in fact, a central aspect of SM, 'as a form of governmentality, a contradictory and always local cultural formation that produces and validates subjects with marketised understandings of the relationship between public and private' (ibid. 18). Neoliberalism, in Weiss's view, upholds power imbalances between sexes, races, ages and other social formations as a side product of the ostensibly neutral economic situation. (Rosalind Gill 2007, 163–164, asserts this an affinity between neoliberalism and post-feminism; I shall return to this later.) Since neoliberalism revels in individualism 'by obscuring the relationships between seemingly private identities […] and more public political and socioeconomic configurations', it still upholds power inequalities by deeming them invisible (for example, 'colour blindness', or gender equality, as an already achieved goal). SM, in Weiss's (2011, 19) view, can easily slip into this formation as well. What Weiss overlooks, however,[13] is SM representations' ability to shift frames, to turn the power imbalances on their heads, albeit on a fantastical/utopian scale and through spatial dimensions. Indeed, the prevalence of SM in popular culture reveals neoliberal society's shortcomings, as Melinda Vadas (1995, 160) has already suggested: in a society where true power inequalities are obliterated, there would perhaps be no SM. Consequently, the ubiquitous depictions of SM reveal the neoliberal system to be anything but the assumed egalitarian society. The question remains, whether this 'rebellious' attitude of SM in media representations is a political tool with concrete power strategies to overthrow the neoliberal mindset (economy as an equaliser and outside of constricting moral frames), or whether it remains a 'carnivalesque' space of mocking and critiquing the system, yet not challenging it in any serious way. (See Bakhtin 1999, 107–127; 1984, 4–7, 16–17; Dentith 2005, 67–73.)

Certainly, an easier question to answer is, 'why *Fifty Shades* now'. Born out of fanfiction writing, the plot of *Fifty Shades* adheres to the highly traditional romantic genre traditions of a powerful man, not only financially secure but overindulgent due to his status or obscurely defined business endeavours, who brings his wealth and sexual prowess to the life of an ordinary virginal girl, whisking her away from the banality of ordinary life. Rosalind Gill (2007, 163–164) perceives clear similarities between post-feminist values

[13] In an earlier article, Weiss (2006, 106) analyses the mainstreaming of SM images as 'the growing desire of the public to experience something authentic, unalienated, undisciplined, and noncommodified', and suggests a possible 'nascent political protest'. While the time between 2006 and 2011 is sufficient for Weiss to change her mind over SM's relevance in the contemporary world, it seems possible that SM media representations can indeed hold potential for transgression of norms, as commodified and inauthentic (to SM practitioners, and cultural scholars) they may seem to be.

and neoliberalism. First, the individualism in both is seemingly unproblematised in their ideal forms; a forced optimism surrounds both where no political or social stands affect the liberties at hand. Second, Gill asserts that the neoliberal demand for a psychologically individualistic agent in control of people's lives is much akin to the post-feminist woman fully and completely in control of her choices. Indeed, failing in life according to both stances equals a personal(ity) defect (Gill 2007, 154; see also Halberstam 2011). And thirdly, Gill (2007, 164) sees an affinity between post-feminism's and neoliberalism's treatment of demanding that specifically women self-transform and self-regulate, with the reward of exercising free choice following from the above. This is especially evident in depictions of post-feminism in popular culture. (See also Gill & Scharff 2011, 7.)

Consequently, I understand the craze created around *Fifty Shades* as an escape from the economic depression and the neoliberal dogma of 'austerity' (see Giroux 2014, 4; Mirowski 2013, 2), where 'ordinary life' is one framed by economical depression borne as a consequence of large schemes that the public cannot easily understand, and the dictates of a simpler life under strict socio-cultural codes that influence all of the major or minor decisions made by ordinary people. The same point is made by Rick Altman (1987, 140, 155, 316) of American film musicals made during the great depression. Extending this to post-feminism, the plot of a kind girl choosing a life with a control freak (with hints of the familiar 'fixing the broken man' narrative strongly attached), is a knowingly built juxtaposition with feminist ideals. Simultaneously, it *conforms* to other feminist ideals (free choice and guilt-free sex life). Both sides of these coexisting feminist values and problems have to be recognisable before a cultural phenomenon can a marketable foothold in popular culture in the twenty-first century, especially in reference to this specific target group, emancipated Western women. Following *Fifty Shades*' popularity from 2011 onwards, it is difficult to see the phenomenon as anything but escapist-romantic, not-too-kinky utopian dream of an easier life free of financial, domestic, and even gender-related obligations weighing on the consumer. *Fifty Shades* is the modern-day version of a Harlequin novel or a princess story.

Of course, by extending the austerity escape theory, I would add that perhaps SM and its dual significance discourse, the performative materialist side of SM, can work both to reinforce the financial crisis and to parody the austerity produced by it. Inscribing the insecurity and forced measures dictated by governments onto one's own body makes the burden perhaps more concrete, more manageable. And, of course, reproducing these power imbalances without shaking them in real life is to accept them, both in social as well as sexual life, turning them into altruistic/sexual pleasure, suffering (masochistically?) for the greater good. Then again, parodying these enforcements through irrational SM conventions could also expose the nonsensical nature of the status quo as well. Laying bare the structures of power imbalances, and revealing the phantasmagorical nature of power positions in themselves (and perhaps rendering them ridiculous by sexualising and parodying them) through SM or by any other deconstructive means. This has the potential to reveal these power structures more elaborately in social life, and could assist us to question and criticise them, even to overthrow them. As Anne McClintock (1993, 91) has argued,

> S/M plays social power backward, visibly staging hierarchy, difference and power, the irrational, ecstasy, and the alienation of the body as being at the center of Western reason, thus revealing the imperial logic of individualism, but also irreverently refusing it as fate. S/M manipulates the *signs* of power in order to refuse their legitimacy as *nature*.

Why is this resurgence of SM occurring in current mainstream popular music and visual media, then? Here, the answer could be as simple as *Fifty Shades* and the market that was borne out of it. It seems that SM has become a mainstream topic, perhaps especially in female artists' music. While it can be seen as a final step in feminine sexual liberation or a deliberate challenge to authority by means of 'billingsgate' and carnival, the thought of SM as 'mere' shock value seems to work against the status of female performers as self-empowered artists, and might be considered post-feminist longing for submission to 'proper' masculine power. In my work, however, SM never left popular music, as exemplified by my collection of SM songs (see appendix 1). The so-called emergence of SM aesthetics in the 2010s becomes an easy expansion of codes that have been frequented for the past 40 years or so in popular music. The codes of representing auditive erotica have changed throughout history, and SM fluctuates between underground and mainstream, but the frequency of SM in popular music suggests a rediscovery, not a novel invention.

With this deliberation on SM in popular culture today, I shall now proceed to the conclusion chapter, where I summarise and review the main findings of the audiovisual and musical means and effects of SM representations in my case studies.

7 CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have analysed the role sexual sadomasochism can play in music and audiovisual performance. I have discussed SM erotica through the three themes: interplay between extremes, fantasy and surrealism, and (in)visibility. Each theme was presented through two case studies, further explored with reference to additional themes that were closely related to each case: Firstly, I analysed the two films *Secretary* and *Duke of Burgundy* in connection with the theme of interplay between extremes, but also the notions of empowered/agentic feminine submission, feminine (lesbian) fetishisation and the demand for sexual/personal gratification. Secondly, I discussed the theme of fantasy and surrealism with reference to case studies of two popular songs, Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man' and Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'. These songs additionally allowed me to explore the themes of male Masochianism, erotic fantasy, melancholy and the expansion of heterosexual masculinity. Thirdly, I discussed the (in)visibility of sadomasochistic codes with reference to Rihanna's music video *S&M* and director Claus Guth's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, focusing on the character Zerlina. In my analyses of these audiovisual performances, I also discussed the possibility of Sadeian girliness, the matter of private and public forums, scopophilia, and the blurred line between SM and violence in onstage or onscreen performances of SM eroticism. To conclude, I contextualise the main research results in relation to broader concepts of SM studies as well as cultural studies, and deliberate upon further possibilities for SM research in the field of musicology.

7.1 HARMONY: SM in music

The case studies I selected for this study are admittedly diverse, and it has been unclear to me whether these various cases could yield any generalizable results, or whether their value lies primarily in the in-depth, multifaceted insights they offer with regard to these specific instances. Listening to SM erotica in the audiovisual contexts of films, music videos and stage performances, as well as musically, in songs, my research migrates through many areas of music research. Some common themes can, however, be identified, which warrant further research. With reference to these common themes, a general overview of how the music and sounds of musical and audiovisual works create representations of SM

sexualities and eroticism emerges. I divide my findings according to four interrelated yet distinct themes:

1. **Heightened performativity and camp humour**
   Performativity is always present in SM games as they are based on mutually defined power switching and are, therefore, always/already encoded as theatrical (Kleinplatz & Moser 2006, 6; Newmahr 2011, 60). Often, in mainstream films and music videos especially, camp humour is expressed through depictions of SM erotica. As a term, camp always/already includes exaggerated performativity (Välimäki 2007, 184). Hence, camp humour holds the potential to overturn the heteronormative aspects of sex and sexuality with regard to SM sexualities. Sometimes, camp humour can even work as a critical (feminist, queer) perspective, a distancing effect to the subject matter itself. Camp can also be a form of nostalgia, where outdated codes, knowingly, and with a touch of irony, are celebrated in a new time frame (Robertson 1999, 267). Combining these with SM, adding overarticulation, outdated musical codes, and/or camp performativity (see Jarman-Ivens 2009) to any music cue and contextualising it within an SM scene or lyrics, can produce a critical, yet affirmative atmosphere in SM erotica.

2. **The Uncanny**
   Often the presence of something unsettling is present in SM representations. I have earlier referred to this as the Uncanny, a term derived from Freudian scholarship that pays homage to, but also keeps a critical distance from, Freud's (2003) original writings and (mis)understandings of SM sexualities. It is because of the Uncanny feeling in SM representations that the eroticism is markedly different from non-kink depictions of erotica. Something disturbing is always present and mixed with explicit eroticism to create an intricate circuit in the atmosphere of the works in question. In music, this could be through the use of sublime aesthetics, mixing surprising genres or instruments together, or constructing a counterpoint between the affective realities of music and image (for example, scary music with sexual images). Often, a sense of the Uncanny is achieved through neosurreal means of audiovisual aesthetics that tamper with, or rather, encode the sexual fantasy from the joys of the imagination to something darker and more unsettling. The blurring of boundaries between SM codes and violence also relates to this Uncanny strategy of depicting SM.

3. **Extending the erotic from the audiovisual to the multisensory**
   Often, when musicians and composers vie for erotic representation, they turn to embodied sounds that connote eroticism or invoke sensual reception. Techniques including breathy vocal delivery; rhythmic or musical delirium; dance-like rhythmic patterns ranging from Baroque dances to disco; haptic instrumental performance techniques; and expanding the audiovisual to the multisensory, are all employed as means to embody musical sound, and stirring a sense of desire. In addition to this, sounds relating to, or tied to the body, can be added to musical

scores or soundtracks. John Corbett and Terry Kapsalis (1994, 103) call this the eroticisation, or rather, sexualisation of the auditive the 'frenzy of the audible', paraphrasing the term 'frenzy of the visible' from Linda Williams's (1999, 36) porn studies.[1] Emphasising the body, movement, and other senses at the fringes of the term 'audiovisual' (smell, touch, taste) in music, highlights the bodies, hands and throats of the performers, creating an intimate relationship with the audience, enhancing notions of closeness and eroticism. In some cases, this feeling of intimacy is experienced as unwanted and generates discomfort or anxiety; in others, the corporeality of the music creates a feeling of erotic closeness.

4. Extending the erotic temporally and spatially

There are no strict limits to sex in the representations of SM. It is difficult to discern the 'beginning' or 'end' of SM scenes, as the performative temporal span of such scenes is fluid. This probably has to do with the idea of framing the SM situation as a state of mind rather than a sexual/physical encounter. This state of mind, and the often wordless communication attached to it, is a heightened sense of sensuality and sexuality that the SM characters enter, in which mundane everyday life is turned into erotic life or fantasy. This extends also to wider temporal dimensions: concepts of the past, the present, and the future, which in some cases can be heard as coexisting within musical depictions of SM.[2] Similarly, the spaces of sex and sexuality are extended from private, closed rooms to public forums: workplaces, public social situations, popular media, and, of particular interest here, music. There are few limits as to where sexual play is wholly inappropriate or unwanted: the undercurrent of even mundane situations can be eroticised, if only in the minds of the SM characters. SM eroticism may hence be understood as being ubiquitous. Musically, the shifting of frames from normal to sexual is enhanced through many strategies, but mainly, by adding music to them in the first place. Using slightly pornographic or camp musical codes, extending temporal-spatial perception through repetitive or linear music, or simply updating historical music to modern, sexual contexts all work to frame the state of what is both a mental and a physical sexual game.

These four themes may be understood as the results of this study, and each may form the bases for future research and inquiry. Each of these themes can be recognised in many

[1] This is originally from Jean-Louise Comolli (Williams 1999, 36). Williams explains the concept through Michel Foucault's theories of knowledge and pleasure where sexuality is concerned, and how the pornographic image is met with both fascination and repulsion. The effect is similar with music.

[2] Comparing contemporary sadomasochists to those of the past, such as de Sade or Sacher-Masoch, can be a somewhat dubious undertaking. As John Gill (1995, 10–11) notes, the social experiences between historically differentiated sexualities may not be the same or even identifiable as the same preferences. Certainly, neither of the Mr. Greys of *Fifty Shades or Secretary* are exactly de Sade, and neither Cohen nor Costello equates with Sacher-Masoch. I suggest here a cross-temporal affinity that surpasses cultural and societal differences. Most sadomasochists live in a 'kink closet' of some sort. By concentrating on the aesthetic common ground, and not societal-historical specifities, a bridge can be built between SM representations of today and those of two to three hundred years ago.

ways, as I have summarised in table 7 (below), relating themes to each of the case studies I have analysed. This table presents an approximation of what, specifically, sadomasochistic forms of erotic atmosphere sound like in different music genres.

Table 7. Summarised findings of case studies.

	Secretary, Duke of Burgundy	***Leonard Cohen's 'I'm Your Man', Elvis Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'***	***Rihanna's S&M, Zerlina in Guth's version***
Heightened performativity, camp humour	Auditive overstatements in instrumentation and voice use; comedic and camp musical codes in sexual situations; theatricality and rituals in SM situations; female vocal fetishisation.	Camp submission; historicity through retro sounds and song quotations; Nostalgia.	Camp performance and vocal strategies; lush colour patterns; playful interaction, musical codes for laughter; recoding innocence as sexual prowess; spectacular visuals and music production.
The Uncanny	Presence of neosurreal aesthetics; Brechtian distancing effect; fairytale, horror/ gothic conventions in storytelling and music; liminality.	Presence of neosurreal aesthetics; melancholy; sublimity; repetitive music as death drive; ghostly presence of female vocals.	Tension between SM codes and violence; seeming cruelty in performance; use of hyperreality; recoding cuteness in music as monstrous.
Extending eroticism to bodies and the senses	Multisensory audiovisual technique; fetishisation of voices and bodies; danceable patterns in music.	Fetishisation of voices and bodies; multisensory lyrics; danceable swaying rhythmic patterns; breathy or throaty voice use.	Mixing the themes of public and private with sexuality; fetishisation of powerful female voices, music and moving bodies; dance and danceable rhythms.
Extending the eroticism temporally and spatially	Heavy reverb and echo in music; strict rhythmic codes vs. freer forms; liminal temporality and spatiality; nostalgic/ quasi-historical settings and musical codes.	Unstable home key; use of organ point; repetitive music as death drive; Masochian/queer temporality, age and sexuality; free historical quotations.	Temporality and spatiality between codes of violence and SM eroticism; performance as temporally and spatially limited or expanded entity; intertextual references to past musical codes or art; repetitive music and beat.

As can be seen from the table above, the common themes are negotiated in various audiovisual ways in each case study. The common themes identified here exhibit notable similarities between the different case studies, regardless of how different they may sound in performances. As such, these may be understood as the four most prevalent audiovisual techniques through which (specifically) SM erotics are represented in contemporary audiovisual media. It should be noted that, in addition to these themes, each case study has its own distinct strategies of representing SM eroticism, and therefore the four common themes never paint the complete picture of any case study.

7.2 REVERBERATIONS: Further possibilities

My inclusion of different examples from many musical genres and styles demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of SM in the current musical and media field. Most of my examples are audiovisual readings of films, music videos or stage performances; and the case studies presented in chapter four present kink readings of existing songs without visuals attached to them (but, of course, they have lyrics that conjure up strong images in a literary fashion). Through my use of these cases, I have discussed what can be construed as sadomasochistic within them, and how they can be heard as such. Further possibilities based on this research abound.

One of the most obvious research projects extending from this could include a comprehensive account of SM films, with a comparison and contextualisation of the findings reported here to a larger corpus of audiovisual material. While I have made brief observations with regard to other SM films and their sound and music, a more thorough account could well reveal more common themes through which SM aesthetics and eroticism are rendered in film music. Another potential avenue for further research could be a study pinpointing the SM history of popular songs, drawing upon Appendix 1 of this study. Such research could provide an alternate history of popular music to that documented by mainstream cultural readings, or in SM culture. Another project could be to make analogous readings of SM songs that portray SM activities, and look for musical commonalities and differences within, and between them. A similar reading of SM club music would also be possible, and indeed, a soundscape study of a sadomasochism club could provide important insights into non-normative sexual aesthetics in the experienced lives of SM practitioners. (For one case of music-centred observation in a sadomasochism club, see Rubin 2011, 231–232.)

In this thesis, I endeavour to make a significant contribution to the growing fields of cultural musicology and queer musicology by approaching my readings of music through theories of sex, sexual behaviour, sexuality, and sexism, both in critical and reparative (Sedgwick 2003, 128; see chapter 5.1.1) ways. One of the central contributions of my work is to produce knowledge that will increase understanding of the issues surrounding audiovisual SM representations while furthering critical discussions of the social circuits at work within them.

7.3 CODA

The central undertaking of this thesis had been to study sadomasochistic erotica in musical and audiovisual performances through three themes and six case studies. The case studies were paired up on the bases of similar audiovisual and musical codes: *Secretary* and *Duke of Burgundy* because they are both films about SM experiences, Leonard Cohen and Elvis Costello because they are both individual songs written and performed from a male perspective, and Rihanna's *SM* with Zerlina (undoubtedly the odd couple of the bunch) because of their mediated performances and depictions of powerful SM women. When pairing my case studies in this way, additional themes not reflected in the main headlines of the chapters arose, mainly in chapters 4 and 5: male Masochianism and girly Sadeianism respectively. I paired the three overall themes (interplay between extremes, fantasy and surrealism, and [in]visibility) with specific case studies because of the special affinity between the cases and themes, but they were not set in stone. All three of the main themes appeared at least briefly in all of the examples, as the themes are not mutually exclusive, but exist in relation to each other.

Furthermore, I could have paired up different themes with different case studies, in which case the readings would have become slightly different. I briefly demonstrate in table 8 the directions the case studies might have taken had I situated them under different themes in this thesis. However, as may become apparent, changing the overall themes of the case studies would not perhaps have changed their interpretation too greatly.

Table 8. Parallel universe: Different possibilities for case study readings.

	Secretary, Duke of Burgundy	**'I'm Your Man', 'When I Was Cruel No. 2'**	***S&M*, Zerlina**
Interplay between extremes		Interplay between genders, interplay between extreme emotions, romanticism and nihilism.	Interplay between public and private, SM codes vs. violence, cuteness and girliness vs. sexual prowess
Fantasy, surrealism	Sexual submission as fantasy, its relation to reality. Surreal aspects of both film and music, ambiguous audiovisual representations of sexual fantasies. Liminal spaces.		Revenge as sexual fantasy, fantasy as sexual revenge. Sexualisation of non-sexual elements. Gender politics in fantasy and surrealism.
(In)visibility	Parading sexuality in euphemistic phrases of lyrics (film lines) and music. Private sexuality vs. public image and gender power differences. Fetishising nostalgic feminine attires.	Parading sexuality in euphemistic phrases of lyrics and music. Public sexual titillation. Sadeian pleasures of billingsgate, cynicism and voyeurism.	

Through these case studies, I have also discussed the prevalence of SM representations in popular media, commenting on what is considered normal and normative, and what goes beyond these concepts in SM sexualities in general, but also in music, performance, films and audiovisuality. This 'kink listening' has proven to be a state of flow between music, cultural theories, sexual theories, and audiovisual theories. Margot Weiss's (2011, 7) term 'circuit' is not far removed from this flow, it mainly technologises it: from fluid, watery 'flow' to a more electric, technological and systematic 'circuit'.

While my readings of various SM occurrences within the sphere of popular music performances are not meant to be generalisations or essentialising readings of sex and sexuality in music, they open up new pathways of thinking about these issues within the context of cultural musicology and critical theory. Mainly, bringing the critical stance of performative materialism to kink listening and musicology is a fascinating new way to provide close readings/listenings that are multifaceted and new. Also, thinking outside the dualisms of in power/without power, hetero/queer, sexual/nonsexual, or indeed, music as part of/outside the body, contributes to cultural musicology's most fundamental debates

as well as exploring new territories where performative materialism could be deemed a useful methodological tool.

The concepts of close reading and framing have been key elements in my work throughout the thesis. While much work has been dedicated to the new understanding of close reading 'that more closely matches lived experiences of the phenomena we study' (Richardson 2016a, 157), my readings reinforce some suggestions that these 'ecological close readings' (ibid.) could be particularly useful for musicology and cultural interpretation in general. Firstly, by linking music and popular culture with theories of sex and sexuality, the capacity of close reading and analytical framing strategies to address the multimodal nature of experience has become more than evident in my work. By combining audiovisual interpretation with multimodal cinema theories (McCormack's 'cinesexuality,' 2008; Marks's 'haptic visuality,' 2002; see chapter 3) or embodied experiences that can be conveyed through music, dance, visuals, embodiment, and erotic titillation, the multimodal experience brought to light through multimodal analysis has proven to be particularly useful when close reading situated cultural objects. (See Richardson 2016a, 158.) Secondly, the idea of the open-endedness of close reading, based on the very notion that its is possible to 'zoom' between different frames of reference (Richardson 2016a, 157–158), thereby producing layered results, is in this work particularly addressed in my use of Weiss's 'performative materialism' (2011), which shifts the frames of reference within the case study in question to bring to the fore different approaches to the analysis and outcomes regarding SM sexualities and popular culture.

Thirdly, the particular uses of frames and framing in my work has proven their usefulness in connecting theory to practice. I am naturally suspicious of any theory that has no practical application. Hence, my work is firmly situated in the case studies and the themes that arise out of them; but at the same time, frames create new angles that form the premises of theories that are brought to bear on the materials presented in the case studies, keeping the relationship between them firmly dialogical. John Richardson (2016a, 158) calls this the 'codependency of approach and argument.' (See also Bal 2009, 15). While I have often described my framed close readings as articulating a 'a state of flow', which Margot Weiss (2011, 7) calls 'circuits', Mieke Bal (2002, 135) sees the very act of framing as producing an event. Therefore framing produces its results, becoming an organic process rather than a fixed idea, or a fixed result. The flow or circuit between different states, modalities or theories is the very act of framing.

As a final note, I would like to address the nature of queer, phenomenological and cultural readings, and how they change with reading variables (or, when they are differently framed). Another researcher would perhaps have focused on different aspects than I have here. Furthermore, queer readings often incite criticism of both over- and underanalysing their subjects (Edwards 2009, 81–82). This criticism is familiar to queer musicologists, too. While I stand by my readings, I still subscribe to the view of cultural readings encapsulated in Barthes's figure of the dead author: while the work itself will remain, the reader ultimately decides what it is 'about', and readings are inevitably subject to individual and cultural recodings. Or, as John Gill (1995, 12) puts it, '[e]vents retain their integrity but what happens between the event and our interpretation of the event is a post-modern theme park with the latest white-knuckle rides'. I feel confident, however, in maintaining

that my thesis actively participates in and adds to the recent discussions of queerness, sex, sexuality, and gender in music, media, and popular culture at large, and as such is a worthwhile contribution to the field of cultural and queer musicology.

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APPENDIX 1. Popular music songs about SM

Note: This is a list of songs that have come across my path during the 4-year period of writing this thesis. This is by no means an all-inclusive or all-encompassing list

Artist/Band	Year	Song	Lyric example
Andrews Sisters	1940	Beat Me Daddy (Eight to the Bar)	But when he plays with the bass and guitar They holler out, 'Beat me Daddy, eight to the bar'
Tom Lehrer	1959	Masochism Tango	I ache for the touch of your lips, dear, But much more for the touch of your whips, dear. You can raise welts Like nobody else, As we dance to the masochism tango.
Joanie Summers	1962	Johnny Get Angry	Oh, Johnny get angry, Johnny get mad Give me the biggest lecture I ever had I want a brave man, I want a cave man Johnny, show me that you care, really care for me
The Crystals	1962	He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss)	He hit me, and it felt like a kiss. He hit me, but it didn't hurt me. He couldn't stand to hear me say that I had been with someone new.
Velvet Underground	1967	Venus in Furs	Comes in bells, your servant, don't forsake him, Strike, dear mistress, and cure his heart
Katie Love and the Four Shades of Black (Millie Jackson)	1971 (1973)	(It) Hurt(s) so good	Cos baby these things you're doing believe They hurt so bad But it's worth all the misery Don't you know that it's hurts so good
Shel Silverstein	1972	Masochistic Baby	Oh ever since my masocistic baby went and left me (she had left you a kiss) I got nothin' nothin' to hit but the wall (poor wall) She loved me when I beat her (oh they do love that) But then I started actin' sweeter (oh mistake) Oh and that ain't no way to treat her at all
Blue Öyster Cult	1974	Dominance and Submission	It's Susy's turn to ride, while Charles, the one they call her brother, covers on his eyes murmurs in the background

David Bowie	1974	Sweet Thing	And isn't it me, putting pain in a stranger? Like a portrait in flesh, trails on a leash Will you see that I'm scared and I'm lonely?
Lou Reed	1976	Kicks	When the blood comma' down his neck ...Don't you know it was better than sex, now, now, now
Sex Pistols	1977	Submission	Submission going down down Dragging me down submission I can't tell ya what I've found
Adam and the Ants	1978	Beat my Guest	Well, tie me up And hit me with a stick Beat me, beat me
Adam and the Ants	1978	Whip in my Valise	Your sadistic suits my masochistic, There's a whip in my valise, oh yeah
Ian Dury	1978	Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick	Hit me with your rhythm stick Hit me, hit me Je t'adore, ich liebe dich Hit me, hit me, hit me Hit me with your rhythm stick
Bonnie Pointer	1978	Free Me From My Freedom (Tie Me To A Tree/ Handcuff Me)	Now I'm begging and I'm pleading Just to be tied down To the love I thought was shackles You mean more than all I've found Come and wrap your arms around me
Thin Lizzy	1979	S&M	This fetish could be foolish, it could lead to something dangerously wreckless
Jimmy "Bo" Horne	1979	Spank	When you're lovin' me lady, spank That's how I want it to be baby, spank Spank, woo, woo, woo, woo Spank, do it, do it, do it, do it
Devo	1980	Whip it	Crack that whip Give the past a slip Step on a crack Break your momma's back
The Pretenders	1981	Bad Boys Get Spanked	You deliberately defy the rules 'Cause the law's upheld by fools Shit on that Bad boys get spanked
Red Cross	1981	S&M Party	I've had enough of those whips and chains those s&m parties are going to my brain mind-less torture
You've Got Foetus On Your Breath	1981	Wash It All Off	You gotta wash it Supercalifragilisticsadomasochism
Berlin	1982	Pleasure Victim	You're the passion in me You've broken down the system You're the vision I see A pleasure victim

Dazz Band	1982	Let It Whip	We both are here to have the fun So let it whip
Killer Pussy	1982	Teenage Enema Nurses in Bondage	Must have left a chapter out In school and nursing classes. They never taught me all about Those tubes and lubes and asses. Teenage enema nurse
Siouxsie and the Banshees	1982	Melt	You are the melting men and as you melt You are beheaded, handcuffed in lace, blood and sperm
Ray Parker Jr. & Raydio	1982	Bad Boy	Spank me, whip me Let me come back home Break out the leather, baby, go `head Spank me, whip me Let me come back home Where I belong
John Cougar (John Mellencamp)	1982	Hurts so good	Come on, girl, now, it's you Sink your teeth right through my bones, baby Let's see what we can do Come on and make it hurt
Mikko Alatalo	1982	Virkasheikki	Kun mä pääsen hutsukkani makuu-huoneeseen, hän sitoo minut kettingillä sängynpylvääseen, hän saa himon huumaan minut ruoskallansa piestä, liituraidan alta löytyy yllättäen machomies
Berlin	1983	Torture	Torture, torture, twisted love kiss me, kick me, feel my blood
Frankie Goes to Hollywood	1983	Relax	Live those dreams Scheme those schemes Got to hit me Hit me Hit me with your laser beams
Eurythmics [Marilyn Manson]	1983 [1995]	Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)	Some people abuse you, some people get used by you
Olivia Newton-John	1983	Tied Up	Here's the opportunity Come and take it to the nth degree Don't be nervous, I don't have to be Tied up in promises Ooh, tied up in words that cut too deep Tied up in promises we could never keep
Depeche Mode	1984	Master and Slave	You treat me like a dog Get me down on my knees We call it master and servant
Frank Zappa	1984	Carolina Hardcore Extasy	Now darling stomp all over me! Carolina Hardcore Extasy

Hüsker Dü	1984	Masochism World	Can you tell me What it is? Does it hurt you When I do this?
Leonard Cohen	1984	Hallelujah	She tied you to her kitchen chair, she broke your throne and she cut your hair, and from your lips she drew the "hallelujah"
Grace Jones	1985	Slave to the Rhythm	Build on up, don't break the chain, Sparks will fly, when the whistle blows, Never stop the action, Keep it up, keep it up,
2 Live Crew	1986	S and M	Your love is your pain, and pain is your gain
Depeche Mode	1987	Strangelove	Will you give it to me Will you take the pain I will give to you Again and again And will you return it
George Michael	1987	I Want Your Sex	What's your definition of dirty, baby? What do you consider pornography? Don't you know I love it 'til it hurts me baby? Don't you think it's time you had sex with me?
Joan Armatrading	1987	I Love It When You Call Me Names	She's wearing heavy leather with lace He dresses up in cowboy taste They punish then they think up a crime It's their way of loving not mine
Faster Pussycat	1989	Where There's a Whip There's a Way	I ain't no boy of bondage, you can use it, you can use it I'm a loose lip talkin jockey with a whip & track to prove it I'm the dehumanizing master You better start your talking, cause I get what I go after
Madonna	1990	Justify My Love	My name is Dita, I'll be your mistress tonight
Madonna	1990	Hanky Panky	Treat me like I'm a bad girl, even when I'm being good to you I don't want you to thank me, you can just spank me, mmm
Nine Inch Nails	1990	Sin	Your need for me has been replaced. And if I can't have everything well then just give me a taste.
Redd Kross	1990	Love Is Not Love	(Love is not love) Give me something I can feel (Love is not love) Give me love that's so surreal Tie your chains around me 'Cuz I am sick of being free

Guns N Roses	1991	Pretty Tied Up	I know this chick she lives down on Melrose She ain't satisfied without some pain Friday night is goin' up inside her...again Well crack the whip 'Cause that bitch is just insane
Samantha Fox	1991	Hurt Me Hurt Me (But the Pants Stay On)	Hurt me, hurt me You can work my body all night long But the pants stay on
X-Ray Spex	1991	Oh Bondage! Up Yours!	Bind me tie me Chain me to the wall I wanna be a slave To you all
Madonna	1992	Erotica	I don't think you know what pain is
Green Day	1992	Dominated Love Slave	You can spank me when I do not behave, smack me in the forehead with a chain
Depeche Mode	1993	In Your Room	Your favourite innocence, your favourite prize, your favourite smile, your favourite slave
Marc Almond / Soft Cell [Marilyn Manson]	1993 [2001]	Tainted Love	Don't touch me please - I cannot stand the way you tease. I love you though you hurt me so
Nine Inch Nails	1994	Closer	You let me violate you, you let me desecrate you
Jeff Buckley	1994	Mojo Pin	The welts of your scorn, my love, give me more Send whips of opinion down my back, give me more
Dave Matthews Band	1996	Crash Into Me	You've got your ball You've got your chain Tied to me tight tie me up again
Don Huonot	1997	Ruoski minua	Häpeän, häpeän, häpeän Ruoski minusta esiin se mies joka oon Joka oon, joka oon Mutta joka en ole ollut
Apulanta [Jenni Vartiainen]	1997 [2014]	Anna mulle piiskaa	Piiskaa! Hei beibi anna mulle piiskaa, hei beibi teethän mulle niin
Britney Spears	1999	Hit me baby one more time	When I'm not with you I lose my mind Give me a sign Hit me, baby, one more time
Joan Jett	1999	Fetish	Oh, look good in latex Get off having rough sex Surprise, round and round the bed Restrained while I fuck your head
Unknown Hinson	1999	Baby Let's Play Rough	Baby let's quit the small talk and get those hands tied

Green Day	2000	Blood, Sex and Booze	Waiting in a room, all dressed up and bound and gagged to a chair, it's so unfair
Puddle of Mud	2001	Control	I like it when you chain me to the bed but then your secrets never shone
Nickelback	2003	Figured You Out	And I like the way you still say please While you're looking up at me You're like my favourite damn disease
Nedra Johnson	2005	Alligator Food	Yes anything you want baby, 'cause I love serving you, Alligator food
Jace Everett	2005	Bad Things	I don't know what you've done to me but I know this much is true, I wanna do bad things with you
Teräsbetoni	2005	Orjatar	Orjatar! Toteuta tahtoni, niin saat palkinnon, jumalaisen nautinnon
Trent Willmon	2006	Surprise	When I saw the leather an' spikes around her neck, An' he was handcuffed to my bed, An' I thought he was my friend. Guess it was all lies: yeah, surprise!
Duffy	2008	Mercy	You got me begging you for mercy, why won't you release me
Lady Gaga	2009	Bad Romance	I want your love and I want your revenge, you and me could write a bad romance
Lady Gaga	2009	Teeth	Take a bite of my bad girl meat, show me your teeth
Adam Lambert	2009	For Your Entertainment	Do you know what you got into? Can you handle what I'm about to do? 'Cause it's gonna get rough for you, I'm here for your entertainment.
Rammstein	2009	Ich tu' dir weh	Ich tu' dich weh. Tut mir nicht Leid! Das tut dir gut. Hör wie es schreit!
Verden Allen	2009	My Masochistic Side	I love when you come to me, I love when you talk to me, I love the way my back's against the wall
Rihanna	2010	S&M	Sticks and stones may break my bones but chains and whips excite me
Lady Gaga	2011	Government Hooker	As long as I'm your hooker (Back up and turn around)

Nicki Minaj	2012	Whip It	Hey stranger over there I'm really liking that way You whip it whip it Yeah, I want you everyday
Spooncurve	2012	Hurt Me I'm Yours	At your whim and pleasure, your delight, I better wash my hands so the nails shine bright
Stone Sour	2013	Sadist	I don't need much to show you Only enough to control you Bury your head inside this And gather the darkness that finds it
Eini	2014	Vähän kipeää	On keinot dominalla olla korkojeni alla voit Kun kosken sua nahalla sinä huomennakin vielä soit On niin tyhmää piilottaa, sen mitä haluaa
Miniature Tigers	2014	Sadistic Kisses	I'm a glutton for your punishment Slave tied up in the basement Tied up so tight I can't get away
Lana del Ray	2014	Ultraviolence	With his ultraviolence I can hear sirens, sirens He hit me and it felt like a kiss I can hear violins, violins Give me all of that ultraviolence
Beyoncé	2014	Haunted	You want me? I walk down the hallway You're lucky The bedroom's my runway Slap me! I'm pinned to the doorway Kiss, bite, fuck me

[brackets: cover versions]

APPENDIX 2: SM films

Note: This is a list of films that have come across my path during the 4-year period of writing this thesis. By no means does this list entertain the idea of being an all-inclusive or all-encompassing list. I welcome all additions to it, even after publication.

Film name	Year	Director	Plot	SM character (if specific/ identifiable)	Interesting facts
The Sadistic Baron von Klaus / Mano de un hombre muerto	1962	Jésus Franco	A murder mystery makes the little town wonder if the sadistic baron from 500 years ago has risen again to take vengeance. His living progeny lives in a castle nearby the village, and likes to whip and torture women.	Ludwig von Klaus	The only elaborate whipping scene is usually censored.
La frusta e il corpo / The whip and the body	1963	Mario Bava	A nobleman's son starts a SM relationship with his brother's wife, which continues even after his death	Kurt, Nevenka	
Trans-Europ Express	1966	Alain-Robbe Grillet	A film group start to film a SM film aboard a train.	Elias, Eva	
Belle du Jour	1967	Luis Buñuel	A housewife fantasizing about public sexual humiliation becomes a day-time prostitute. She gets noticed by a gangster who starts to invade her private life.	Séverine Serizy	
Succubus / Necronomicon - Geträumte Sünden	1968	Jesús Franco (as Jess Franco)	A stripper is followed through the film, and she encounters many forms of deviant sexualities.		
Venus in Furs	1969	Jesús Franco	A girl wakens from the dead and hunts down the sadistic men who killed her.		

Deadly Sanctuary / Marquis de Sade: Justine	1969	Jesús Franco (as Jess Franco)	Filmatisation of de Sade's *Justine*.	Cour-de-Fer, other libertines	De Sade appears as a character in film.
Lifespan	1974	Klaus Kinski	Industrialist Nicolas Ulrich tries to find the elixir of life, and convinces a young American scientist, Dr. Ben Lang, to assist him.	Ben Land, Tina Aumont	Soundtrack by Terry Riley.
Hana to Hebi / Flower and Snake	1974	Masaru Konuma	A husband tries to persuade his wife into SM but, failing, forces his maid to exercise SM with him.	Makoto Katagiri	
Il Portiere di Notte / The Night Porter	1974	Liliana Cavani	A concentration camp survivor develops a complex SM relationship with her torturer.	Theo, Lucia	
Maîtresse	1975	Barbet Schroeder	Olivier falls in love with Ariane, a professional dominatrix. While struggling over her profession, he finally settles into his natural submissive state.	Ariane	
Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma	1975	Paolo Pasolini	Filmatisation of de Sade's *120 days of Sodom*.	libertines	
The Image / The Punishment of Anne	1975	Radley Metzger	Anne loves submitting to her mistress Claire, but learns to submit to Claire's boyfriend, Jean, as well.	Jean, Claire, Anne	Based on the novel *L'Image* by Catherine Robbe-Grillet
The Story of O / Histoire d'O	1975	Justin Jaeckin	O is taken to a house where she is educated to be a sexual slave; she later gets handed over from her boyfriend to another lover, sir Stephen	O, Rene, Sir Stephen, others	Based on Réage's *Story of O.*

Ai no korida / L'Empire de sens/ In the Realm of the Senses	1976	Nagisa Oshima	A former prostitute starts an affair with a married man and starts to control him in her jealousy.	Sada Abe, Kichi-san	Based on true events.
Salon Kitty	1976	Tinto Brass	The Nazi Sicherheitsdienst takes over a brother in Berlin, and switches all prostitutes for spies. The women perform sexual favours, also SM ones, for guests while spying on their political opinions.		Based on the novel of the same name by Peter Norden, which is based on true events
Cruel Passion	1977	Chris Boger	Filmatisation of de Sade's *Justine*.		A more viewer-friendly version of de Sade's *Justine*.
Cruising	1980	William Friedkin	A serial killer slays and dismembers several gay men in New York's SM and leather districts. A police officer is sent undercover onto the streets to find the murderer.	SM club goers	The killer is a musicologist.
A Woman in Flames (Die Flamberte Frau)	1983	Robert van Ackeren	Eva, after leaving her husband and becoming a call girl, and becomes introduced to SM. She falls for Chris, who tries to persuade her towards normative life, but she refuses.	Eva	
Blue Velvet	1986	David Lynch	A youngster returns to his hometown and gets tangled up in a criminal extortion situation, where a woman is being sexually abused	Dorothy Vallens	

9 ½ weeks	1986	Adrian Lyne	A divorced art gallery owner begins a short but sexually explosive relationship with a Wall Street arbitrageur. His controlling urges first excite her, then push her to emotional breakdown.	John Gray, Elizabeth McGraw	Based on Elizabeth McNeill's semi-autobiographical book of the same name
Atame! / Tie me up, tie me down!	1990	Pedro Almodóvar	Ricky kidnaps Marina, a porn actress, promising to marry her. She struggles but afterwards falls in love with him, and their kidnap situation becomes vaguely sadomasochistic.		
Las edades de Lulú / The Ages of Lulu	1990	Bigas Luna	Lulu becomes infatuated by her brother's dominating friend and marries him. When their marriage and sexual escapades crosses a line, she tries to find thrills of her own.	Lulu, Pablo, SM clubbers	
Bitter Moon	1992	Roman Polanski	A sexually repressed couple take a cruise and bump into a sexually destructive couple.	Nigel, Mimi	
Tokyo Decadence	1992	Ryu Murakami	A submissive prostitute is handled by yakuza members.	Ai, customers	
Akvaariorakkaus	1993	Claes Olsson	Saara struggles with her sadomasochistic fantasies and tries to explore her sexuality with her boyfriend, Jouni.	Saara	Based on Anna-Leena Härkönen's SM-themed book, *Akvaariorakkautta.*
Female Perversions	1996	Susan Streitfeld	A young female lawyer is becoming a judge but constantly doubts herself; her relationship with a PhD cleptomaniac sister is put to a test	Eve	Based on Louise Kaplan's book of the same name.

Crash	1996	David Cronenberg	James and Helen find new sexual excitement outside their marriages by arranging car crashes, which excites both sexually.	James, Helen	Based on J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel of the same name.
Preaching to the Perverted	1997	Stuart Urban	A politician hires a computer technologist, Peter, to infiltrate a SM club owned by Tanya Cheex to drive it out of business. He falls for Tanya and the SM lifestyle.	Tanya, Peter	Includes SM scenes with professional SM performance artists
J'aimerais pas crever un dimanche / Don't Let Me Die On A Sunday	1998	Didier Le Pêcheur	After revitalising Theresa at a morgue, Ben shows his sexually alternate tastes for her.	Ben, Boris, Marie, SM clubbers	
Quills	2000	Philip Kaufman	Fictional account of Marquis de Sade's last days in a madhouse.	Marquis de Sade	
I am a S&M writer /Futei no kisetsu	2000	Ryuichi Hiroki	A failed writer Kurosaki starts to write S&M fiction for money and hires models to enact scenes for him. Meanwhile, his wife, upset, gets to adventures of her own.	Shizuko, Kurosaki	
The Piano Teacher / La Pianiste	2001	Michael Haneke	A piano teacher asks her student to enter into a sadomasochistic relationship. He takes it as an invitation to sexual violence.	Erika Kohut	The film features a lot of Schubert's music
Ichi the killer / Koroshiya 1	2001	Takashi Miike	A SM-sexual yakuza member Kakihara comes across a killer, Ichi, who can inflict the level of pain that he (thought he) was missing.	Kakihara	
Story of O: Untold Pleasures	2002	Phil Leirness	A modern version of *Story of O*.	O, Rene, Sir Stephen	

Secretary	2002	Steven Sodenberg	A secretary and her boss start out a SM play in the workplace, and eventually fall in love	Lee, Mr. Grey	
Young Gods / Hymypoika	2003	Jukka-Pekka Siili	A group of guys start out a game of filming their sexual experiences that turns into an obsession. One of the boys is exploited in a SM film. Other one finds out his parents' deaths were because of erotic asphyxiation gone wrong, and it causing suicide.	couple in the house, Markus's parents	
The Notorious Bettie Page	2005	Mary Harron	A biographical film about a pin-up and bondage model.		No simulated SM sex.
Psychopathia Sexualis	2006	Bret Wood	Professor Krafft-Ebing researches sexual deviant behaviour.	patients	Adaptation of Krafft-Ebing's books, includes K-E as a character
Shortbus	2006	Josh Cameron Mitchell	A sexual therapist suffers from vaginismus and goes out to seek physical pleasures from a sex club called Shortbus.	Severin (dominatrix)	Unsimulated sex scenes
Antichrist	2009	Lars von Trier	Having lost their son, a couple moves into a remote cabin in the woods, where they slowly start to channel their sorrow into sexual obsessions.	She (to some extent, He)	
My Normal	2009	Irving Schwartz	A lesbian dominatrix changes careers into film making, and learns to utilize her dominatrix skills in her new life.	Natalie, clients	
Año Bisiesto / Leap Year	2010	Michael Rowe	Laura and Arturo enter a passionate SM-sex relationship that escalates to violence and obsession	Laura, Arturo	

A Dangerous Method	2011	David Cronenberg	Dr. Karl Jung gets a female patient who is severely masochistic; later on she becomes one of the first female psychoanalysts.	Sabrina Spielrein, Karl Jung	
Not a Love Story	2011	Ram Gopal Varma	An aspiring movie actress and her boyfriend are accused of homicide.		Based on true events.
Nymphomaniac vol. II	2013	Lars von Trier	The self-proclaimed nymphomaniac Joe seeks out the services of a male dominant, K, to overcome the numbness in her sexual organs.	Joe, K	Unsimulated SM sex
Une histoire d'amour / Tied	2013	Hélène Fillières	A banker strikes up a relationship with a dominating mistress. She ends up killing him.	Banker, mistress	None of the characters have names.
Venus in Fur	2013	Roman Polanski	A director/adaptor of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* auditions a mysterious Wanda for the role of Wanda in a theatre production.	Wanda, Thomas	Based on the novel by Sacher-Masoch
The Duke of Burgundy	2014	Peter Strickland		Cynthia, Evelyn	
50 Shades of Grey	2015	Sam Taylor-Johnson	Anastasia meets Christian Grey, they start a SM relationship and fall in love	Christian Grey	Based on E. L. James's book.

APPENDIX 3: Angelo Badalamenti: Secretary soundtrack

I'm Your Man (Leonard Cohen)
Main Title
Feelin' Free
Snow Dome Dreams
Bathing Blossom
Seeing Scars
Loving to Obey
Office Obligations
The Loving Tree
Orchids
Secretary's Secrets
Chariots Rise

APPENDIX 4. Leonard Cohen: I'm Your Man

Verse:
If you want a lover I'll do anything you ask me to
And if you want another kind of love I'll wear a mask for you
If you want a partner Take my hand
Or if you want to strike me down in anger
Here I stand I'm your man
If you want a boxer I will step into the ring for you
And if you want a doctor I'll examine every inch of you
If you want a driver Climb inside
Or if you want to take me for a ride
You know you can I'm your man

Chorus:
Ah, the moon's too bright The chain's too tight
The beast won't go to sleep
I've been running through these promises to you
That I made and I could not keep
Ah but a man never got a woman back
Not by begging on his knees
Or I'd crawl to you baby And I'd fall at your feet
And I'd howl at your beauty Like a dog in heat
And I'd claw at your heart And I'd tear at your sheet
I'd say please, please I'm your man

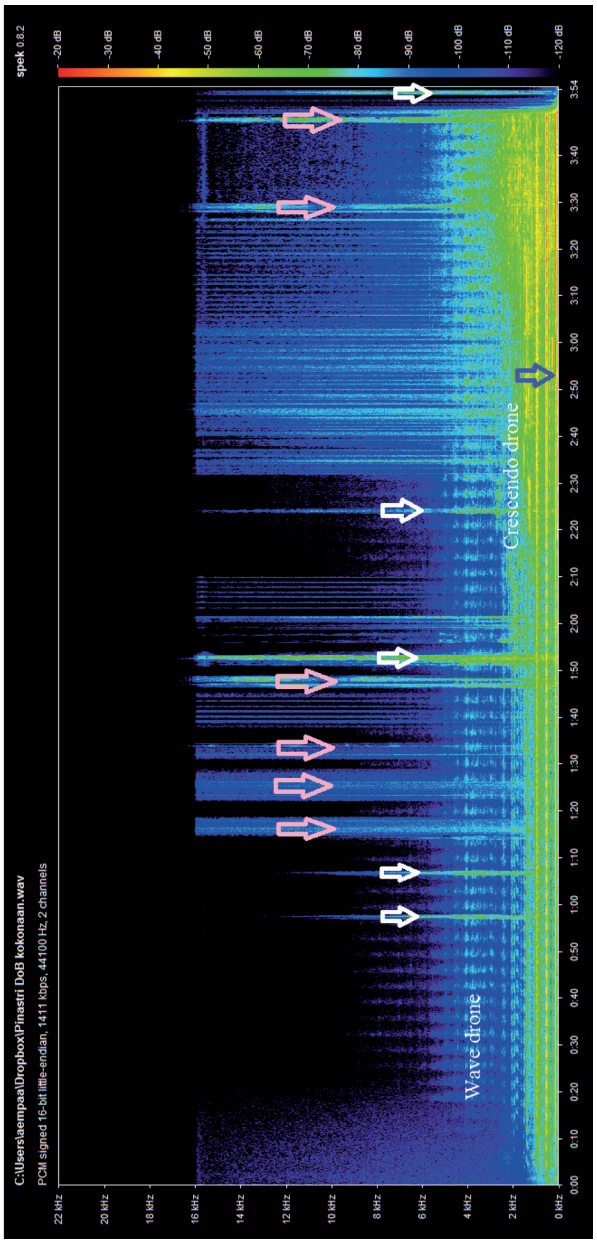
Verse:
And if you've got to sleep A moment on the road I will steer for you
And if you want to work the street alone I'll disappear for you
If you want a father for your child Or only want to walk with me a while
Across the sand I'm your man

Outro:
If you want a lover I'll do anything you ask me to

APPENDIX 5. Cat's Eyes: Duke of Burgundy soundtrack, track list

1. Forest Intro
2. The Duke Of Burgundy
3. Moth
4. Door No. 1
5. Pavane
6. Dr. Schuller
7. Lamplight
8. Door No. 2
9. Carpenter Arrival
10. Reflection
11. Door No. 3
12. Black Madonna
13. Silkworm
14. Evelyn's Birthday
15. Evelyn's Birthday (Flute Version)
16. Black Madonna (Cor Anglais Version)
17. Night Crickets
18. Requiem For The Duke Of Burgundy
19. Hautbois
20. Coat Of Arms

APPENDIX 6. Spectrum analysis image of Cynthia's nightmare scene
2 drones intermingling



White arrows: Evelyn whispering 'Pinastri'
Pink arrows: Sound effects (clothes rustling, doors closing etc.)
Blue arrow: Cello drone mixed with the crescendo drone

APPENDIX 7: Elvis Costello: When I Was Cruel No. 2 (Lyrics and chart)

I exit through the spotlight glare
I stepped out into thin air
Into a perfume so rarefied
"Here comes the bride"

Not quite aside, they snide "She's number four"
"There's number three just by the door"
Those in the know, don't even flatter her,
They go one better
"She was selling speedboats in a tradeshow when he met her"

Look at her now
She's starting to yawn
She looks like she was born to it
But it was so much easier
When I was cruel

She reaches out her arms to me
Imploring: "Another melody?"
So she can dance her husband out on the floor
The captains of industry just lie there where they fall

In eau-de-nil and pale carnation creation
A satin sash and velvet elevation
She straightens the tipsy head-dress of her spouse
While her recalls a honey house

There'll be no sorrows left to drown
Early in the morning in your evening gown
But it was so much easier
When I was cruel

The entrance hall was arranged with hostesses and ushers
Who turned out to be the younger wives nursing schoolgirl crushes

Parting the waves of those few feint friends
Fingers once offered are now too heavy to extend

The ghostly first wife glides up stage whispering to raucous talkers
Spilling family secrets out to flunkeys and castrato walkers
See that girl
Watch that scene
Digging the "Dancing Queen"

Two newspaper editors like playground sneaks
Running the book on which of them is going to last the week
One of them calls to me
And he says, "I know you"
"You gave me this tattoo back in '82"
"You were a spoilt child then with a record to plug"
"And I was a shaven headed seaside thug"
"Things haven't really changed that much"
"One of us is still getting paid too much"

There are some things I can't report
The memory of his last retort
But it was so much easier
When I was cruel

Look at me now
She's starting to yawn
She looks like she was born to it
Ah, but it was so much easier
When I was cruel

Appendix 7b. Costello's 'When I Was Cruel No. 2' in chart form; every paragraph represents 2 loops of Mina's song.

Time, song section	0:00	Intro 0:08	0:20		A 0:43	Wag-ner quote						B 01:30			
Vibraphone															
Costello															
Guitar (red, solo)															
Loop															
Bass															

Time, song section	A 01:52								B 02:39				Intro 03:02			
Costello, doubled																
Satie piano																
Vibraphone																
Costello																
Guitar (red, solo)																
Loop																

Time, song section	A 03:25				B 03:48		Abba quote		Intro 04:12				
?													
Satie piano													
Vibraphone													
Costello													
Guitar (red, solo)													
Loop													

Time, song section	A 04:40				B 05:03				05:27			
?												
Satie piano												
Vibraphone												
Costello												
Guitar (red, solo)												
Loop												

Time, song section	Intro 05:50				B 06:13				Outro 06:38			(fade out)
?												
Satie piano												
Vibraphone												
Costello												
Guitar (red, solo)												
Loop												

Appendix 8. Mina: 'Un bacio é troppo poco' lyrics (translation mine)

Un bacio è troppo poco per sapere se ti amo
un bacio è troppo poco per capire veramente
se mi piaci, se mi piaci o invece è solamente simpatia
sia da parte tua che da parte mia.

Un bacio è troppo poco per sapere se ti amo
vorrei provare ancora perchè credo di capire
che mi piaci, che mi piaci
ti prego di baciarmi un'altra volta
magari con un poco più d'amore e così verrà l'amore
l'amore, l'amore l'amore quello vero per noi due.

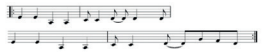
A kiss is too little to know if I love you
A kiss is too little to truly understand
If I love you, if I love you, or is it only sympathy
On your part, and on my part

A kiss is too little to know if I love you
I'd like to try again because I believe I can understand
If I love you, if I love you,
I beg you, kiss me again
But with a little more love, and so love arrives
Love, love, love that is true only for us two.

APPENDIX 9. Elvis Costello: When I Was Cruel (no.1) lyrics

Did you talk your way out of this
Did someone flip your switch?
Now there is only right or wrong
Can you tell which is which?
But it was so much easier when I was cruel
Why did you leave? You had a home
Why did you travel far abroad so you could sleep with strangers?
You must have heard just how absurd
The words poured out of you, you fraud
I guess you don't know what pain is
So don't pretend you're innocent
Do I look like a fool?
I guess you have forgotten when I was cruel
Oh, when I was cruel and I could make you so unhappy
Lonely cowards followed me like ghouls
And you liked me too when I was cruel
Oh, you know you did
But if you should feel anything, a signal from within
Go back in your laboratory and try to dial it in
But if you should feel anything, a signal from without
Abandon your dreams of vengeance
So don't protest your innocence
The truth is hard to judge
Perhaps you have forgotten when I held a grudge
Oh, when I was cruel and I could make you very sorry
Lonely cowards followed me like ghouls
And you liked me too when I was cruel
Oh, you know you did when I was cruel

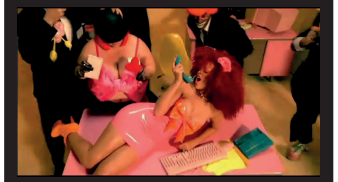
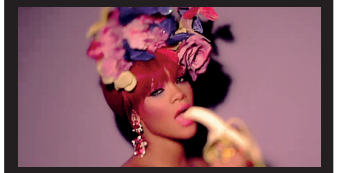
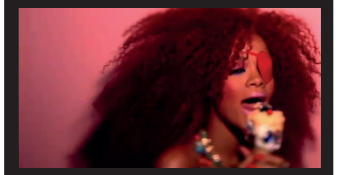
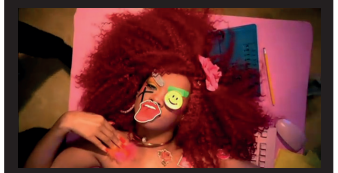
APPENDIX 10. Rihanna's *S&M*, cue sheet

Structure (time)	Stills	Lyrics (natural font: chest voice; *italics : soft voice production ;* **bold : belting voice production ;** ***Bold & italics : nasal voice production;*** <u>underlined: emphasized word</u>) (brackets : background singing)	Key musical cues	Audiovisual relations
Intro 0:00	  	***Na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, come on*** ***Come on, come on,*** ***Na, na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, na, na, come on*** ***Na, na, na, come on,*** ***Come on, come on,*** ***Na, na, na, na***	 Double-tracked vocals. Synthesiser riff opening in E flat minor after first 'na na na, come on', establishing the bass line into E flat, A flat, C, and D flat. Rhythm starts out on beat but syncopates soon. Synthetic drum beat rhythm added on the second repeat, 2nd and 4th beats accentuated.	First Na, Na, Na shot in accelerated motion film of Rihanna in a psychedelic pink room, through a fish-eye lens. Quick successive shots of Evita-dressed Rihanna, in slow-motion, being dragged to a stylised mock-Fox (Cox) News press interview, wearing a dress of newspaper clips. The press members are all gagged. Rihanna is taped to the wall with cellophane and black tape. Cuts to fish eye lens shots of Rihanna, wearing a crown and furs (Venus in Furs), at a 90s themed party with friends and props, hanging out, performing to camera. She is rolling her eyes at 'na, na, na, come on.'

Verse 00:31	  	Feels so good being bad (Oh oh oh oh oh) There's no way I'm turning back (Oh oh oh oh oh) *Now the pain is my pleasure* *'cause nothing could measure* (Oh oh oh oh oh) Love is great, love is fine (Oh oh oh oh oh) Out the box, outta line (Oh oh oh oh oh) **The affliction of the feeling leaves me wanting more** (Oh oh oh oh oh)	Added chord synthesizer sounds of E flat minor and D flat major in the background, synth riff out. Synthetic drum beat continues, foregrounded with Rihanna's voice. Back-up singing voices soft and double-tracked. 'Now the pain is my pleasure 'cause nothing can measure' double-tracked.	Rihanna lipsynching from behind the cellophane, while the press members perform a nodding choreography with 'oh oh oh's. Shots are somewhat longer than in the intro, creating a more peaceful atmosphere. Close ups of press members' notes and headlines read words like 'Slut', 'Daddy Issues?' and 'Princess of Illuminati'.
Chorus 01:00	 	**'Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it** **Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it** **Sticks and stones may break my bones** **But chains and whips excite me** **'Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it** **Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it** **Sticks and stones may break my bones** **But chains and whips excite me**	Synth riff from intro returns to foreground, synthetized drum beat and synth chords out. Rihanna's voice competes with synth riff. From 'sticks and stones', an acoustic drum beat added, which accentuates hi-hat sound but is left in the background. Synth beat returns on second repeat, accentuating the synth riff.	Rihanna in a mock-suburban surrounding, wearing a round hat, is on the lawn walking a man on a leash, wearing a pink cap and trousers. Perez Hilton pretends to urinate against a water post. Rihanna smokes a long cigar, pats Hilton on the belly, and gives him a few crop lashes, teaching him how to beg. Quicker shot cuts, added with crazy zoom-in-and-out effects. Second verse cuts to and between the party scene and the press conference scene. Rihanna faces the camera as 90s princess and press conference object, lipsynching at the camera.

Intro B 01:30		***Na na na*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it (Na na na)*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it***	Drum fill cymbal marks the beginning of the intro. Synth riff and beat continue, foregrounded with Rihanna's voice.	Alternating shots between press conference scene and left-to-right swinging shots of the party scene. Close-up of Rihanna with her finger on her lips, fade-out during the last 'I like it-like it'.
Verse 01:46		Love is great, love is fine (Oh oh oh oh oh) Out the box, outta line (Oh oh oh oh oh) The affliction of the feeling leaves me **wanting more** (Oh oh oh oh oh)	Synth riff out, soft synth chords of E flat minor and D flat major in the background. Synthetic beat continues, foregrounded. Added vocals on the word 'more'.	Rihanna rotates in a futuristic chair, singing to the camera, wearing a swimming cap and white latex garments. The camera focus shifts between blurry and sharp. She is eating pink popcorn. On the word 'more', shots of the journalists, tied up in the cellar room, taped to the wall and floor.
Chorus 02:01		**'Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it** **Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it** **Sticks and stones may break my bones** **But chains and whips excite me**	Synth riff and acoustic drum set beat return. Rihanna's voice in the foreground.	White latex-wearing Rihanna throws popcorn at the camera, stands up and walks to the journalists, waving a whip. She throws the popcorns on a male journalist lying on a mattress on the floor. Rihanna winks at the camera and dances with the whip. Close-ups to singing Rihanna alternate in between.

Intro C 02:15	  	***Na na na*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it (Na na na)*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M***	Synth riff continues, synthetic beat returns. Doubled vocals on 'come on' parts. On 'S-S-S', second synth riff with a softer sound is heard in the background. Vocals slightly in the background, beat taking forefront. Doubled and harmonized vocals on 'M-M-M'-parts.	Rihanna tied up in shibari-like style, laying on her front, her behind tied up to stick out. Rihanna pulling the strings and struggling against them, clawing the carpet with her long red nails, biting down on the ropes binding her wrists and beating them to her knees. Cut to latex-wearing Rihanna whipping the journalists on the third 'come on, come on'. Whip lashes have added sound effects. During 'S-S-S-&-M-M-M', Rihanna tapes a female journalist's mouth shut and places a kiss on top of it.
Bridge 02:32		**Oh, I love the feeling you bring to me, oh, you turn me on** **It's <u>exactly</u> what I've been yearning for, give it to me <u>strong</u>** *And meet me in my boudoir, make my body say <u>ah ah ah</u>* ***I like it-like it***	Synth chords (B major, D flat major, E flat minor) and synth beat continue. Added acoustic drums on 'It's exactly what I've been yearning for, give it to me strong'. From 'meet me in my boudoir', long organ point synth notes of E flat and E natural. Mock-girly voice from 'and meet me in my boudoir'.	Rihanna shot in front of a projected newspaper clip wall, wearing bunny ears and white top and shorts. Rihanna posing sadly in classic pin-up poses, close-ups of her singing lips. Shot transitions change through dissolve only, creating a dream-like flow. From 'and meet me in my boudoir', switch to shibari-Rihanna, singing and smiling while tied up and struggling, hitting the floor repeatedly with her hands on 'ah, ah, ah'. Transitions change back to cuts.

Chorus 03:01	 	**'Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it** **<u>Sex</u> in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it** **Sticks and stones may break my bones** **But chains and <u>whips</u> excite me** **'Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it** **<u>Sex</u> in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it** **Sticks and stones may break my <u>bones</u>** **But chains and whips excite me**	Synth riff along with Rihanna's vocals. Acoustic drums added on 'sticks and stones'. First 'chains and whips excite me': the word 'me' sampled to quick repetition. Synth beat returns on second repeat, foregrounded with Rihanna's vocals.	Dissolve to Rihanna at the office, surrounded by surreal clown journalists, shouting to the phone on 'I don't care, I love the' and hanging up on 'smell of it', and again 'excite me' to the phone. Journalists surround her, taking photos. Second chorus cuts to press conference, Rihanna singing behind the cellophane. Quick cuts between office scene, press conference and Rihanna in a bunny suit. On the sampled word 'me', quick succession of images.
Intro C 03:30	  	***Na na na*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it (Na na na)*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***Come on, come on, come on*** ***I like it-like it*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M*** ***S-S-S & M-M-M*** **(<u>ah</u>)**	Synth riff and synth beat foregrounded. Alternate synth riff with softer sound on 'S-S-S'; 'M-M-M' with doubled, harmonised vocals. A loud vocal moan after the last 'M-M-M'.	Pop-art scenes of Rihanna pealing a banana (repeated action) and eating it suggestively. Quick shots between office, 90s party, and bunny scenes, Rihanna both commanding the press and tortured by it. Close-ups of Rihanna eating a strawberry with whipped cream, wearing cherries on her head, and again eating ice-cream with diamond rings in it, with a heart-shaped eye patch on her left eye. Cuts between all scenes except the press conference, ending up on the office scene (final S-S-S-&-M-M-M), where the journalists reveal Rihanna on a table with a Rolling Stones-logo on her mouth, a smiley-face on her left eye and cloths for eye brows, only her right eye visible.

INDEX OF NAMES