

**Voice, Body and Performance in Tori
Amos, Björk and Diamanda Galás:
Towards a Theory of Feminine Vocal
Performance**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the vocal and musical performance of several women artists and undertakes a cultural analysis of some of their works from a gendered perspective. The readings examine primarily the meanings of the voice in performances by Tori Amos, Björk and Diamanda Galás, as well as a few aspects of avant-garde vocal performer Fátima Miranda. The cultural interpretation engages with the artists' musical and visual displays in order to disclose the relationship between the voice and the gaze, and to argue, thereby, that vocality in musical production becomes a means for the woman singer to construct her own (self) representation and affirm her enunciative position as a speaking subject in culture. Within the specific case studies, an element in the discussion focuses on the centrality of the body and the audience figuration of the singing body, given that representations are understood as vehicles for 'hidden' messages about the gendered body. The body-source of the voice is brought into the analysis as a way to enable a set of new meanings associated with the positioning of the female artist vis-à-vis the representation she performs in her artistic display. The study is framed by the individual (albeit, in concrete ways, related) ideas of French feminists Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, bearing in mind that Irigaray emerges as the main theorist who informs the research. By engaging with the thinking of these authors, the research contributes an argument for the relevance of their concepts, language, and aesthetics to the analysis of women's vocal performance. In line with their reconsideration of psychoanalytic and linguistic categories, as well as Irigaray's re-conceptualisation of sexual categories, the study

develops a theoretical approach from which to examine the cultural dimension of feminine vocal performance. The analysis is thus situated between psychoanalysis and postmodern feminist theories, and links the signification of an auditory culture produced by women to the wider context of a gender politics of (self) representation.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A THEORY OF FEMININE VOCAL PERFORMANCE

The heart, warm.
Would love return?
Dancing between the low and the high,
Tender, light,
Shy
In spite of its strength.
Imperceptible
Whatever the passion.
Such a music
Wavering between body and soul,
Between flesh and breath:
A confidence without word.
Only harmony?

(Luce Irigaray, June 19th)¹

Poetic writing speaks a suggestive, dislocating language that stretches beyond our imagination, as if to activate the senses and to fill readers with emotion. Luce Irigaray's poem here evokes sound, a welcoming gesture of listening to a music that inspires warmth and passion, a light melody that is both powerful and elusive and encompasses something beyond harmony. Music in the poem contains no words, but wavers between the flesh and the breath and between the body and the soul, low and high, and would thus seem to allude to a communicative exchange with an other, invoking an other's voice. We may think of it as an embodied (singing) voice that produces a music that touches on something very private and, at the same time, spiritual. For Irigaray, music is a source of energy and inspiration that enables a becoming and performs the function of 'enlivening and making the body subtle'.²

Irigaray's symbolic language seeks to widen our own listening and encourages us to embrace and listen actively to the voice of the other, as well as the voice that dwells in us. The airy rhythm that beats through the poem suggests a transformation of its words and images into what Irigaray terms a 'vital energy', a bonding between us through music, a serene, yet mysterious, intimacy.³

Irigaray explains in the introduction to her collection of poems *Everyday Prayers* that the way to arrive at this intimacy implies reaching 'another subjectivity where friendship with nature prevails over its domination, and being with over being-above or below'.⁴ 'Poetic language' implies for Irigaray a way of speaking 'more appropriate to this work than speculative discourse, where, in part, I talk the other's language', so that new horizons can be opened and the dialogue between the masculine and feminine cultures preserved. This implies the possibility for a woman to speak a language in the feminine, 'letting the other [as man] hear something of the mystery that I represent for him'.⁵ In my search for the cultural meanings of contemporary feminine music and vocal performance, Irigaray's ideas on the development of a culture of two, the masculine and the feminine, and the dialogic relationship between both, will significantly inform my interpretation of the singing voice in women's musical performance; in particular, the images and representations that she generates in order to work towards a culture of the feminine.⁶ In the same way that Irigaray's poem suggests a transformation of its words and images into a bonding between us through music, the musical creativity and vocal production of some women artists suggest a transformation of sounds into poetry and images that let the other (the listener) hear the mystery that feminine vocal performance represents in a culture imbued with a dominant masculine perspective.

Irigaray's philosophy is responsive to the other and incorporates an ethical dimension that can be connected with some women artists and the way their vocal performances generate a response and identifications in their audiences. One of the artists whose musical creativity approximates Irigaray's poetic language is contemporary vocal performer Fátima Miranda. Miranda's unconventional work illustrates how the female voice becomes the focus for the creation of a musical language that is transformed into poetry, and can be read as embodying the mystery of the feminine other. Her work can be seen as opening a dialogue with the other. Miranda's vocal training is wide-ranging and comprises the extended voice and multiphonics, as well as several Eastern and Western vocal techniques, including bel canto. Yet, despite her extensive technical knowledge, the artist is not interested in performing any specific musical tradition; she endeavours to create an individual sound and develop her own musical 'discourse'. Her vocal performances combine a perfected understanding of vocal techniques and an intuitive imagination, which she exploits to compose exceptional melodies articulated solely through the voice. Miranda has developed vocal resources of her own, such as the *Voz de Cristal* (crystalline or glass voice), a term given by the artist to describe a high-pitched searing vocal sound that she employs in some of her more radical work. This distinctive voice appears in 'Hálito' [Breath], a soundtrack that she often includes in her staged performances and was originally featured in her album *Las Voces de la Voz* (The voices of the voice) (1992). The listener is exposed here to a unique listening experience for which a referent is not easily locatable (please refer to DVD songs, chapter 1 'Hálito').

‘Hálito’ is a virtuoso performance that features a solo voice, almost unbroken, which is placed over several of Miranda’s ‘voices’ multi-tracked for the song. None of the voices are artificially manipulated in timbre, although the voices may be ‘manipulated’ in other ways (e.g. rhythmically) since this is not a ‘natural’ live performance. Miranda’s main voice moves sinuously high and low in her register, sketching protracted modulations, and employing the *Voz de Cristal* as she rises to the higher tones. The vocal quality of this sound involves sharpness: it is an ear-piercing voice, and yet the melody overwhelmingly enraptures the listener in what may be described as a mixture of ecstasy and bewilderment. It is perceived as a new listening experience, except for its similarity to the sound of cutting glass, the shrill noise released when plugging in audio equipment, or feedback. The strangeness of this vocal sound presents the listener with a peculiar sensation of listening to a disembodied voice and a therefore difficulty in imagining the body-source of the *Voz de Cristal*. Yet, a complete sense of vocal disembodiment is not achieved in ‘Hálito’ due to the variety of effects of Miranda’s ‘voices’ featured in the song. She also creates for this soundtrack a polyrhythm with breaths the inspiration for which she found in her practice of yoga, which she heard when several people were carrying out their breathing exercises.⁷ Sudden bursts of breathing cut through the continuous vocal emission in the song and become more frequent towards the end of the recording; these outbursts of breathiness are acutely embodied and remind the listener of the close connection between the breath and the flesh, and the centrality of the body for both vocal production and listening.

Many of the vocal effects in ‘Hálito’ summon up comparisons with existing musical styles: mediaeval or oriental (the drone-bass in the first part); bel canto (in the middle

part when the vocal melody descends somewhat from the *Voz de Cristal* register and becomes warmer, suggesting an operatic voice), even electro-acoustic vocal music. The multi-layered voices in the background are in the lower register, some at the bottom of Miranda's range, and provide a contrast, as well as support, to the melody: her 'other' voices throw into relief the stunning effect of the *Voz de Cristal*. The vocal effects allude to 'real' voices of people or animals and thus in both cases one might identify a certain mimetic strategy that seems to intensify the sense that Miranda is conducting a dialogue with the 'other', with numerous 'others'. Miranda's combination of these vocal techniques, her weaving together of different tracks through her range of voices, like a tapestry, creates a musical language that contains no words and yet becomes a kind of 'musical poetry'.⁸ Her music would thus seem to justify the name of *Acciones Poéticas* ['poetic actions'], which she sometimes uses to refer to her vocal and musical performances.

The association of 'Hálito' with a sonorous 'poetry' lays bare the richness of Miranda's vocal production and opens the possibility to find a multiplicity of meanings embedded in her vocal and musical performance. In the same way as poetry speaks a dislocating language that activates the senses and stretches beyond our imagination, the artist's sonorous 'poetry', articulated through the voice, is suggestive of diverse symbolisms that activate the listeners' imagination, widening their senses and inviting them to introspective listening. One of the interests of Miranda's 'Hálito' as an example with which to introduce my research on feminine vocal performance rests on the fact that her music invites her audience to a deeper listening and to reflect upon the meanings of her vocal performance. Depending on the reading, Miranda's *Voz de Cristal* may be interpreted as expression of *jouissance*

and alluring sensuality, a re-creation of a pre-verbal sound, a haunting listening experience, or even the voicing of a traumatic return or (primal) splitting, elicited primarily through the escalating outbursts of breath: they are evocative of a birthing process, and thus connect her performance intensely with women's experience, with the painful pleasure of giving life, which can also be taken as a metaphor for the creative process.

All these interpretations, which may be associated with 'Hálito', will re-emerge in my readings of performances by Tori Amos, Björk and Diamanda Galás. This is not to say that each case study will engage in a multiplicity of themes, even if common threads will surface in the readings. The study is organised under thematic headings that give coherence to the contents and help conceptualise, from a gender-interested perspective, the meanings of the voice in a particular musical performance (a separate introduction is provided for each theme): the autobiographical and the traumatic; the libidinal economy of the feminine; the haunting feminine voice; and the primal cry and the disruption of language. Under a given heading, for example, we may find that the work of two artists is associated with the same theme, although the topic is different and the argument relating to each song is developed from a specific angle or direction. One of the aims, in this sense, is to show that different vocal performances from the same artist can encompass different sets of meanings; and in addition to this versatility, there is resistance to compartmentalising the work of the artist. At the same time, a gendered reading of the songs aims to expose the diversity of interpretive possibilities and interconnections that can be established between each of the singers' works, as well as the continuities within their own work.

Looked at from a gendered perspective, Miranda's vocal performance connects, therefore, with the thematics and meanings displayed in the analyses of my case-studies. Also hinted at in 'Hálito' is another major aspect of my reading of feminine vocal performance – the effects of embodiment or disembodiment generated by the listener's imagination of the singing body. Even if there is a certain detachment or autonomy of the voice from the body once it is emitted from that body, some voices convey an intense bodily presence; thus the body source of the performance is brought back into the interpretive analysis of the voice, particularly because the female body is understood here as a marker of female identity and subjectivity, and self-representation linked to a valorisation of bodily difference helps reclaim the positive meanings of the feminine as a theoretical concept. The 'disembodiment' of the *Voz de Cristal* in 'Hálito' contrasts with Miranda's emphatically embodied vocal effects, such as the breathy outbursts, or the jabbering, chuckles, grunts and other bodily noises that the artist integrates into her performances. There is a sense in which Miranda's vocal performances favour the flesh and the organic, including cases where the *Voz de Cristal* is used to re-create the whalesong or the squawking noises of birds. Also significant is her use of technology for multi-tracking in 'Hálito', seeing that the artist takes advantage of the possibilities of the medium without undermining the natural voice. Similarly, as we shall see, the relationship between the voice and technology that emerges in the case studies will be characterised by a close engagement with the technological without privileging it over the voice.

In line with this last point, the cultural analysis of contemporary feminine musical and vocal performance through a selection of songs by Amos, Björk and Galás reveals a great deal about the figuration of the performing body, as this is linked to the

‘presentation of the self’ and how artists project their embodied voices in musical representation. Vocal and musical performances are framed by a set of meanings and metaphors that give us clues about the value system of the culture in which they are produced, and musical representations (linked to the artist’s vocality and artistic vision) can thus be seen as vehicles for hidden ideological messages about the gendered body. As regards signification, although this project entails an analysis of the music and of the vocal production of women artists, and as such it will involve an engagement with vocal and musical stylistic features, the approach will not be so much from a traditional musicological or music analysis perspective, but from a theoretical and cultural studies approach. Hence a more interdisciplinary line of enquiry is brought into the examination of the cultural signification of the female voice and women’s musical performance, specifically in relation to the thematic content of the songs and the aural/visual representations (i.e. videos, photographs, lyrics) of an auditory culture produced by women.

In this sense, the emphasis of this research lies on how women as subjects of artistic performance generate their own (self) representations through vocal and musical production. The readings concern not only the aesthetics of the artists’ works, but also the creation of their own metaphors, symbols and messages, as well as the relationship between the auditory and the visual – voice and gaze – in communicating their specific artistic visions. Also, crucially, the study is about letting the artists’ voices be heard, and about listening closely to their voices so as to interpret the symbols and the messages from a gendered perspective. As Judith Barry and Sandy Fitterman point out, an adequate representation of women requires awareness or understanding on the part of the audience of the meanings through which the feminine

is constructed.⁹ The readings offered here aim to engage the listener/reader in a process of discovery, that is, in a dialectical play of meaning between the artists' representation and an interpretation that is wide-ranging, but one that does not lose sight of Irigaray's ideas on the development of a culture that involves a re-signification of the feminine and a dialogic relation to the other. Given that women's musical and vocal performance (as well as other artistic production) occurs within a cultural and social context, the study is framed within music and performance studies vis-à-vis wider debates on gender politics of representation.

The Voice and Vocal Performance

The analysis of the voice and vocality in musical performance by women artists will therefore imply an exploration of female identity, subjectivity and (self) representation, with the aim of unfolding the images and strategies employed in their performances that present a challenge to the symbolic economy of dominant masculinity. Richard Middleton, who has looked into the representations of the voice in popular music, indicates that a number of feminist perspectives that question women's subordinate roles within the music industry and the social relations of popular music production have been developed in the discipline; yet, beyond this important contribution remains the question of 'how the stereotypes governing female participation can be countered'.¹⁰ Middleton argues that it is worth persisting with the attempt to put the gender structure at risk, in spite of the fact that women's subordination 'is deeply embedded in the historically constituted structures of socialized subjectivity and will not easily be overturned'.¹¹ One way to challenge stereotypes in the musical sphere is to investigate identity patterns and representations

in women's performances and see how a change at the symbolic level is effected – even if this proves a difficult task (given traditional naturalised ideas about women and the way woman is inscribed in the male imaginary). Taking into account these considerations, this research offers an examination of the female voice in performance that engages with feminist theory that calls into question the patriarchal symbolic order, and contests the phallogocentrism embedded in language and culture, with the aim to thwart the discursive structures that conventionalize women's images and codify their voices into normative ideals.

Middleton outlines the way in which the ideology of voice functions and identifies two tendencies: on the one hand, voice is thought of as a 'vehicle of self-authoring metaphysical presence' and thus 'as the special property of the patriarchal sources of *logos*'; on the other, it is regarded as a hidden organ located inside the body which has been 'persistently coded as female' due to its association with the sexual organs. He indicates that this ideology of voice has to be placed over the binary structure that characterizes language and music, in which music is 'persistently figured as language's Other'.¹² From here Middleton argues that singing within this structure (a structure of 'interlocking binaries') is placed in relation to a search for a 'true' or 'authentic' voice within disciplinary norms and constituted frameworks of vocal production (an example of which is classical *bel canto*). According to Middleton, the manipulation of vocal registers (chest, throat, head) and the way timbres and vocal articulations are deployed help bring a particular type of body through the voice; as a consequence, moreover, he argues that norms and regulatory ideals can be challenged or subverted by other vocal regimes.¹³

Amos, Björk and Galás are creators of music which is not easily or immediately categorised into a specific genre, other than the imprecise labels of pop, punk, alternative, and avant-garde under which it usually appears (a separate discussion will deal with the question of the avant-garde dimension in their work, particularly with reference to Galás and Miranda). Hence the artists display specific vocal articulations and utilize vocal registers in a way unique to their performance styles. Their performances also portray a strong sense of identity through vocality. Even though the influence of various musical traditions may be felt in their songs, each of these artists can be said to have created a style of their own, largely because they generate a remarkable personal sound and step outside the norms and constituted frameworks of vocal production. They specifically challenge or subvert binary structures, for example, by giving prominence to the singing voice over language, as is the case in Miranda's sonorous poetry in 'Hálito'. We can make reference here to the voice used as a way to self-authoring, hence, as a channel to defy the *logos* as site of masculine authority and to install feminine authoriality in vocal and musical creation. Men have tended to emphasise certain modes of creativity that leave a clear trace of their agency in the product they eventually make; the specificity of women's vocal performance can also be said to leave a trace of their agency that can be read in the feminine. In the cases where the artist has not composed what she sings, a certain dispersal of authoriality can be argued for, and yet, in effect, as Middleton suggests, the singers tend to "re-sex" themselves into positions of creative agency'.¹⁴ An artist sometimes chooses to radically transform an existing song and/or offer a distinct interpretation linked to her own aesthetic vision, using specific vocal techniques, and this will still be characterised by the expression of her unique musical idiom.

A core aspect of contemporary vocal performance, especially from the viewpoint of the listener, is that the listener's experience of the voice is more likely to be a recorded rather than a live performance. The recording has become the standard mode of listening, as well as of musical or vocal performance display; although the body source of the voice is not there to be seen, the recording continues to open the possibilities for the listeners' identification with the music and their imagination of the singing body. Since the vocal performances selected for the analysis are primarily audio recordings, and in some cases both the audio and the video or filmed images are examined, it may be useful to recollect the dynamics that are engaged in musical performances that are not live. Any performance act already exposes the performer to the gaze of the spectator who subsequently objectifies the music and the body of the performer, which is on display. Lucy Green argues that performances, including musical performances, cannot exist without the participation of the displayer and the onlooker; both are mutually implicated in a dynamic in which the display functions metaphorically as a mask, which engages the participants in a relationship of desire and power difference.¹⁵ The dynamics of display are in full view in a live situation, and yet the performer's display continues to operate beyond the live setting, as Green indicates, as a delineation of the music (or vocal delivery): display takes place in recorded music therefore via the listening experience, in a way similar to the cases where the performer is concealed or where we listen to music with our eyes closed. The display thus 'not only acts as an extra-musical association', but also enters 'into the delineations involved in the listening experience itself'.¹⁶

From this vantage point, the central aspect of representation in vocal performance by women artists is closely associated with the musical display as an element of the

listening experience and extra-musical associations. The interactions between looking and hearing in the audio and visual materials will therefore be underpinned by the performer's display and representation. In musical performances where the woman artist is the displayer of music and object of the gaze, the interplay of voice and gaze becomes, as Middleton suggests, 'a site of intense ideological tension', more specifically because displays embed an explicit or implicit sexual disclosure which results in the displayer being coded as 'feminine' and the spectator as 'masculine'.¹⁷ This leads Green to argue that male and female performers have an asymmetrical relation to the audience, and that women's singing 'largely reproduces and affirms patriarchal definitions of femininity'.¹⁸ Yet, the dynamics of display as a site of ideological tension offer also opportunities for the woman singer to alter symbolic associations, reverse the dynamics of the mask, and/or create new interfaces with the audience. Amos's, Björk's and Galás's deployment of voice in musical performance reveals resistance against the objectification of the female singing body source of the voice. Their musical displays create a different listening experience for the audience and the traditional roles played out between the displayer and the onlooker are challenged in a way that they invite a re-consideration of the feminine other.

One of the strategies that they use in vocal performance is to engage with the dynamics of the mask and mimicry so as to turn round the relationships of power, desire, and imaginary identifications that circulate between the performer and the spectator or listener. The irreducible gap and internal contradictions between 'woman as object/male as subject' (of the gaze) can, at least potentially, be overcome by female performers asserting their position as women and subjects of culture. Thus, the reaffirmation of their female subject position is another important strategy, whilst

they simultaneously exploit the possibilities offered by the performance to enact other subject positions. Their subject position is in a sense unique, and yet it is also articulated in dialogue with other subjects, notably their listeners. They make use of the possibilities of vocal articulacy to perform other ‘voices’ that respond to other subjects’ positioning. These voices can be subversive, disruptive, provocative, demure or dissident: they may enact voices that express trauma, uncanny voices, hysterical, haunting, and/or deliberately mimic a vocal convention in order to expose traditional assumptions about women’s vocal performances.

Ears in Preference to Eyes: Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva

As already intimated, Irigaray’s philosophical ideas in connection with her understanding of cultural difference and representation will constitute the basis for the theoretical frame of the research, together with aspects from French thinkers Hélène Cixous, and particularly Julia Kristeva. These authors have become important ‘voices’ in the fields of cultural and literary theory and criticism, as well as psychoanalytic theory, and it is precisely these ‘voices’ that are sought here for an analysis of feminine vocal and musical performance. The three authors have tended to be misleadingly grouped under the label ‘French feminism’, for although they coincide in certain fundamental assumptions, they use different strategies and formulations in their challenge of the patriarchal system and their critique of psychoanalytic theory – with its emphasis on the Father whereas they reclaim the mother and the return of the maternal. Given that their respective positions have by now been amply discussed, a full description of the differences that characterize their thinking will not be offered, although relevant differences will be noted, specially with regard to the clarification of the concepts behind their theories.¹⁹ Nor is the

intention to provide an in-depth theoretical engagement with the three thinkers to expose their assumptions and philosophical underpinnings. The *oeuvre* of each of the three authors already represents an immense body of work, for which my engagement is limited to relevant aspects or concepts that are put into practice in order to argue for a feminine representation in vocal and musical performance, bearing in mind that Irigaray emerges as the main referent in the research.

Although the readings carry the weight of Irigaray's views and, to a lesser extent Kristeva's, French feminist thinking will not be employed exclusively in the analyses, in particular because there is also an engagement with selected aspects of (Freudian) psychoanalytic theory, which constitutes thereby the backdrop of the theoretical approach. By engaging with the ideas of the French feminists, there is recognition that psychoanalysis does not adequately account for women's imaginary identifications and women's articulation of desire as a result of the oedipal structure and feminine castration. There is specific interest here in the French feminists' articulation of new representations that structure discourse, given that their writings not only explain and interpret the limitations of psychoanalysis for women's psychic development (so as to raise conscious awareness), but they also put in place representations from which women's pleasure and expression of desire can arise. Their starting point is the psychoanalytic frame, in particular Freud and Lacan, who both serve as a basis for some of their argumentation; from then on they engage with the texts of many theorists of Western culture in order to expose their biases and arrive at their own formulations. Another source of inspiration is the work of Jacques Derrida on difference and deconstruction, the influence of which is felt in Cixous's and Irigaray's preoccupation with language, difference and feminine specificity (for

example, the term phallogocentrism used by these two authors combines Derrida's idea of logocentricity and Lacan's 'phallus' as symbol for desire). The influence of Derrida's deconstructive practice is also felt in Kristeva's reconsideration of linguistic and psychoanalytic categories. In sum, the three French feminists influence feminist psychoanalysis and initiate poststructuralist feminist theory, and Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference in particular can be said to bring a more open encounter between the two.

In this sense, the theoretical perspective employed in the research is responsive to the deconstruction of dichotomous thinking and postmodern concerns about de-centering privileged 'centres', whilst at the same time accepting the conception of dual subjectivity formation (female and male) that retains a specific subject position for women. Irigaray's advocacy of the duality of subjectivities entails considerations of identity and the female imaginary, inasmuch as cultural identifications may be distinct for each sex.²⁰ In order for women to develop their creativity, they need a discursive space from which to articulate their voice, a space that is not tainted by dominant discourse. Language typically excludes women from an active subject position and hence the aim of finding a speaking-position for women as subjects becomes a vital tactic for the feminist project of representation in the context of other positions. Irigaray asserts that women's capacity for resisting the patriarchal order stems not from an ability to take up a masculine subject position, but from reaffirming their subject position in language. She promotes a conception of the subject rooted in difference and provides a place for the other as feminine by speaking (as) woman. This is not meant in the sense that woman has access to an immediate experience of femininity prior to symbolization, but in the sense that woman is subject to language;

as such, the expression of women as subjects of culture and language opens the possibility to free up a space that is not conditioned by inherited (masculine) discourses and representations. This discourse must not be subjected to our traditional logic, to *logos*, and should, amongst other things, recuperate a musical quality that has been long subordinated in Western culture.²¹ The theoretical approach thus shapes a gender reading of vocal and musical performance that stands between psychoanalysis and the deconstructive project along with Irigaray's ideas, as well as Cixous's and Kristeva's.

Following Kelly Oliver's discussion of Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva, significant similarities are found amongst the three thinkers that support my engagement with (some of) their proposals. One of the more useful similarities for my purposes is that the three emphasise the need to change the system of representation in order to radically challenge the socio-cultural arena: they believe that representation is directly linked to the imaginary, and the way to change the Symbolic order is by changing the imaginary. All three reject the concept of 'woman' and essentialist assumptions of 'woman's nature', and argue that the notions of 'woman' and 'man' are the products of ideology. Finally, Oliver points out that all of them 'prefer ears to eyes'.²² The three authors put forward arguments that emphasise the importance of music and the voice as a primal language, and a means to reach and communicate with the other:

[..] music is there: poetry is music. Poetry is the music of philosophy, it's the song of philosophy. It's primordial: it begins with the singing of philosophy. [..] It precedes everything. [..] everything I write has a kind of rhythm, a

scansion which is very heterogeneous [...] and this, I know, is a kind of voice that can be woven with a strictly musical voice.²³

[...] the semiotic that “precedes” symbolization is only a *theoretical supposition* justified by the need for description. It exists in practice only within the symbolic and requires the symbolic break to obtain the complex articulation we associate with it in musical and poetic practices.²⁴

Music starts from the living being that produces it and goes back to it. [...] the modulations of a song, independently of any artificially coded meaning, is the best vehicle for a dialogue. [...] Sounds, voices are not divided from bodies and it is possible to touch, or be touched by, the other through the voice. [...] Music allows a becoming but also a return to the self, within the self, because of its ability to express or touch, in everyone and the living universe.²⁵

The three authors thus provide the language, tropes, metaphors and metonyms that connect their articulations with a musical and poetic language that comes back to a maternal origin. This is a music that has been either lost or characterised by its association with an undermined ‘feminine’, dangerously at the borders, or outside, of a dominant masculine system of representation. Their interest in listening to the voice of the female other, the mother and/or the woman, is used here as an interpretative engagement in the reading of the case studies. It can be said that their conceptualisations are articulated from a perspective that brings in the woman author’s subjectivity, and with that a theorisation that explains more adequately women’s articulation of desire, as well as the role of the maternal in relation to the

psychoanalytic frame. Also, in this sense, their writings perform an other's subjectivity, which is associated here with the way women artists inscribe their subjectivity in musical performance and let their voices be heard.

Irigaray, for example, believes that our culture has been constructed without consideration for the duality of subjectivity; it has been erected on the foundations of a lone subject, the masculine, and we have now reached a time in which a cultural transition is underway. Poetry and artistic expression take us back to the beginnings of our Western culture and they are thus underpinned by the principles and values embodied in the representation and misrepresentation of the feminine. Her challenge to cultural representation entails a culture in the feminine, that has been repressed by the masculine subject, and would be able to offer the signs and symbols that avoid misrecognition of feminine subjectivity and, in this way, allows the safeguarding of the two cultures.²⁶ The interpretive reading of the auditory can involve abstract articulations and persuasive language, and hence Irigaray's work, her open narrative and representations of the feminine create the space for the expression of a new auditory culture: her writing theorizes, yet at the same time it would also seem to *perform* the feminine. Her texts and her own poetic writing seem, in some sense, to operate as enactments of feminine expression. In this sense, women's singing can be seen as an elaboration of an Irigarayan aesthetic and as generating complex nexuses of meanings that evoke representations or performances of the feminine analogous to those in Irigaray's writing. The fluidity in musical or vocal articulation and the modulation of the voice can be associated with these Irigarayan representations, which, in turn, may be taken as underlying a culture rendered in the feminine.

The aim is to establish a dialogue or engagement with Irigaray's understanding of cultural difference and representation, and to show its relevance for reading musical and vocal performance by women artists. Similarly, Cixous and Kristeva offer in their writings the language and conjectural articulations that connect with women's singing. Cixous's vision of feminine language remains close to Irigaray's, together with her aim to create an economy of representation that is not founded on the repression of the feminine. Like Irigaray, she understands sexual difference as foundational for thought, and yet her notion of bisexuality differs from Irigaray's model of two sexuate identities irreducible to each other (corresponding to the feminine and masculine subjects).²⁷ Cixous emphasises the relation between feminine libido, writing, and the body, and hence she argues for a libidinal economy of the feminine linked to *l'écriture féminine* and associated also with the voice (an aspect that will be taken up in chapter three).²⁸ Kristeva's position does not sustain a feminine writing and she understands that the difference in writing lies in the subtle workings of language and signification. In *Tales of Love*, however, Kristeva imagines the possibility of a feminine outside of the phallic economy. She does not identify sexual difference on the level of *jouissance* (as is the case in Cixous), but as the result of different relations to the mother – and within the framework of a revised psychoanalytical oedipal structure.²⁹ The emphasis on the mother in Kristeva's writings breaks down the traditional prominence of the Father of the Law; and it is this dimension of her work, together with her model of the signifying process and her concept of abjection that will be relevant in the search for the meanings of women's vocal and musical performance, specifically in Galás. Although the trace of the mother is woven into the analyses, this does not exclude, following Irigaray's arguments, an account for a model of women's desire that is also conceived as a

relation to another woman (not only the mother). The approach is not meant to exhaust interpretations of the singing voice of every female artist, but it tries, in a broader sense, to illustrate the pertinence of Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray's philosophical thinking – of working towards a culture in the feminine – for the reading of auditory artistic production.

Irigaray's Strategies

In view of this, the writings of these three authors lend themselves to being associated with vocal and musical performance. Irigaray's model of speech is particularly appropriate for my readings, as it works towards overcoming the linguistic economy of the Self-Same. By Self-Same Irigaray specifically refers to the male subject who measures his identity against the same idealised standard as every other man. Traditionally God has represented this ideal for man, so she confronts the male self-sameness of philosophers, for example, to unfold how they are constituted in relation to this traditional account of God that eclipses any trace of difference and cannot give women their own identities:

Now, this domination of the philosophic logos stems in large part from its power to *reduce all others to the economy of the Same*. The teleologically constructive project it takes on is always also a project of diversion, deflection, reduction of the other in the Same. And, in its greatest generality perhaps, from its power to *eradicate the difference between the sexes* in systems that are self-representative of a "masculine subject" [emphasis in the original].³⁰

The Self-Same subject's relations leave the feminine other without her own specific representation, and it is thus necessary to ask after the feminine other in order to reverse women's subordination in discourse and bring about a change of paradigm. For Irigaray, it is a question of both exposing and reorganising the economy of the Self-Same, and thus of constructing the fragmentary feminine in a way that is positive for women. My attention to Irigaray's work in Amos's, Björk's and Galás's case studies intends to engage the meanings constructed in the framed performance contexts with Irigaray's vision of a more cohesive feminine that emerges from the fragmentary debris. Irigaray proposes a number of strategies (which will be unfolded in the course of the research) to challenge the authority of male domination over language and over turn the negative representations of women. One of these strategies is *mimesis* or *mimicry*, which Irigaray understands as a process of resubmitting women to stereotypical views of women (within the Self-Same) in order to call those views into question; yet the views are not repeated faithfully. *Mimesis* implies that women should articulate their voices in a playful way from the position assigned to them by the masculine symbolic with the aim to expose the values of a dominant economy that excludes women as the other.³¹

Through the recognition of the duality of subjectivities, Irigaray develops also the strategic position of a subject of enunciation in the feminine: the *parler-femme* that stands for the feminine 'I' of enunciation. The women singers under study seek to perform from their own subject position in discourse and articulate their female 'I' of enunciation through the artistic performance. A singer communicates in the artistic medium and her performance generates encounters and subjective identifications amongst the audience. In this way, Irigaray enables a theoretical and political

opening not only useful for feminist writing, but also for the exploration of the political possibilities of representation in vocal and musical performances. In Irigaray's view, artistic expression needs 'to enter into [...] sexuate relationships [...] to cultivate our sensorial perceptions, and give to us a dynamic global unity, thanks to a creative imagination'.³²

Whilst listening can be understood as an activity of perception and even of consumption, singing – led by the voice – is a productive activity that circulates performatively in our culture. 'Thanks to music', Irigaray tells us, 'listening allows a becoming that is more flowing than looking. The scale of tones, of sounds, arouses an elevation of energy which does not end in a definite configuration'.³³ Meaning remains open; the text, in her own words, is 'always open onto a new sense, and onto a future sense, and I would say also onto a potential 'You' [Tu], a potential interlocutor' (a listener).³⁴ Both the music that wavers 'between the flesh and the breath' in Irigaray's earlier poem of 19th June and Miranda's vocal articulation in 'Hálito' may then be understood diaphorically, rather than metaphorically, because they imply an open meaning and a continuum distinct from the transposition-duplication of meaning conveyed by metaphor. A female voice and song seen from the perspective of a representational and artistic musical 'language' or idiom (as a mode of expression in music) that is enacted from within Irigaray's understanding of a culture in the feminine will involve this open meaning and will also elicit a response from the listener.

Meaning in vocal and musical performance can in this way retain a sense of openness to build up a self-representation that connects with Irigaray's argument that the

function of art is ‘to create another reality, by transforming the real that we are, that we live’.³⁵ Irigaray argues that our Western culture has not yet elaborated a relation with the real that takes into account sexuate identity; we lack a cultivation of our sexuate identity as real. In her view, the real existing is at least three:

[..] a real corresponding to the masculine subject, a real corresponding to the feminine subject, and a real corresponding to their relation. These three reals thus each correspond to a world but these three worlds are in interaction [..], but their relation cannot be founded exclusively upon a relation to the same, to a single Same, to which each part should become appropriate. [..] It is a work of putting into relation – with oneself, with the world, with the other in the respect of their difference, and also with a common universe – that manifests this real and that elaborates it.³⁶

Women’s vocal and musical performance seen from an Irigarayan perspective can therefore entail an involvement with the real that corresponds to the feminine subject, and which implies an ethical dimension to respect sensibility and movement, as well as develop a relation to the other that corresponds to the interactions of the three reals, without the distortion of a constructed reality. Irigaray’s aim is to respect difference by aligning the positions of the masculine and feminine subjects, thus avoiding an economy of the Self-Same, where the same signs are reproduced (and this is why she prefers the open meaning of metonymy to metaphor). Voice and listening share an equivalent place in music and are both located in the invisible channels of communicative exchange between these three worlds in interaction: the masculine and the feminine and the relationship between the two.

Avant-Garde Vocal Performance

Given that the last chapter in this study is dedicated to ‘avant-garde’ performance, it is useful to outline the way in which the term is understood in the context of women’s vocal and musical production. The term ‘avant-garde’ is laden with conceptual complexity derived from the much-studied historical avant-gardes, as well as numerous discussions of the ‘avant-garde’ as aesthetic category and its significance. Susan Rubin Suleiman has investigated the relation between women and the avant-garde, which she understands as an intricate and messy field in which modernism, postmodernism and the historical avant-gardes occupy a place. The connection between postmodernism and the avant-garde already has some history since literary and cultural commentators have been arguing that postmodern aesthetics become an imitation or ‘inauthentic repetition’ of the original avant-garde project – of abandoning institutionalised art and making it part of life (the term ‘neoavant-garde’ is also used to refer to this development).³⁷ The term refers here explicitly to the work of vocal performers such as Galás and Miranda who have at some point described their music as avant-garde. Their performances are characterised by transgression, subversion and rupture; they thus become associated with avant-garde and postmodern aesthetics which, in the case of women, give rise to gender-specific meanings. Without entering into the theoretical complexities of debates on the avant-garde, two aspects relevant for women performers would seem worth mentioning:

1. Hal Foster develops the argument that art’s traditional media have progressively been transformed due to ongoing avant-garde practice, and this has enabled an increased engagement with ‘actual bodies’ and ‘social sites’.

Foster disputes that what happens in postmodern re-enactments of earlier avant-garde artistic modes is merely (inauthentic) repetition. Following a Freudian/Lacanian model, he argues that the repetition does not amount to reproduction, and links postmodern re-enactments of avant-garde to trauma discourse and traumatic repetition, in the sense of a ‘deferred action’ (*nachträglich*).³⁸ Avant-garde in its initial moments is traumatic, a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not ready to take in such a work; later, postmodernism revisits this site as ‘deferred action’, which generates additional questions on difference, deferral, temporality, textuality and narrativity. Foster insists on a ‘strategy of the return’ as fundamental to postmodernist art and poststructuralist theory.³⁹ In this sense, the work of avant-garde women vocal performers can be seen within the framework of a postmodern avant-garde practice as ‘deferred action’ that arises questions of difference, temporality and so on as engagements with ‘actual bodies’ and ‘social sites’. Yet, in the context of avant-garde music produced by women, it can be said that this traumatic repetition continues to encounter or produce holes in the symbolic order as a result of the work not being entirely assimilated.

2. Suleiman proposes an engagement with the avant-garde in relation to the ‘putting into discourse of “woman”’, and finds that the trope of the margin is associated with both women and the avant-gardes. The place of women and of avant-garde movements has been situated ‘on the fringes’, away from the centre, with the difference that whereas the avant-gardes have chosen their marginal position, women have been relegated to the margins.⁴⁰ In her view, the relegation of women to the margins of culture is related to the place given

to ‘woman’ by the cultural imaginary. She highlights the fact that the ‘putting into discourse of “woman”’ in modern French thought has encompassed ‘a revaluation and revalorization of the marginal spaces with which “she” has been traditionally identified’.⁴¹

Avant-garde women singers develop a musical work that combines an individual aesthetic vision with a commitment to nonconformist new ideals (even if this places them in a marginalised position), and yet their performance style does not imply a unified avant-garde aesthetic category. Galás’s and Miranda’s work, for example, can be seen in their own specific fashion to push the boundaries of what has been accepted in vocal/musical performance, establishing in this way new cultural pathways to follow. Although they inherit the legacy of the avant-garde tradition, this inheritance can be looked at closely in the light of feminist critique.

As regards the relation between contemporary avant-garde women artists and writers and their male predecessors, Suleiman suggests a ‘double allegiance’: first, an allegiance ‘to the formal experiments and some of the cultural aspirations of the historical male avant-gardes’; secondly, an allegiance ‘to the feminist critique of dominant sexual ideologies, including the sexual ideology of those same avant-gardes’.⁴² This ‘double allegiance’ is associated in Suleiman with a return to the image, body and voice of the mother both as a trope and enabling myth, as well as a subject. If there is a valorisation of the mother, it can be argued that Foster’s ‘strategy of the return’ can be linked in avant-garde women to a re-enactment of a primal trauma of maternal separation, as well as a reclamation of a mother-daughter relation – in which the mother represents an identification that does not correspond to a

‘castrated woman’. This argument points towards a symbolic return to a matrilinear or female genealogy and a cultural model marked by a reassessment of the feminine.

Suleiman’s return to the mother dovetails with the emphasis accorded to the maternal in the work of the three French feminists that inform my research, and hence with the psychoanalytic frame that underlies the reading of musical and vocal performance. Kristeva’s model of the signifying process in particular articulates the relationship between avant-garde works and the creation of a ‘poetic language’ that results from semiotic and symbolic processes operating in the (speaking) subject; yet this is a ‘poetic language’ which Kristeva considers a manifestation of the semiotic, the domain of the maternal. The role of the maternal emerges, for example, when women’s vocal performances are interpreted as pre-verbal communications with the audience or when vocal excess is read as the trace of the mother’s voice. This will be a significant aspect in my readings of Amos’s, Björk’s and Galás’s case-studies and the discussion may be said, in this sense, to engage in one way or another with avant-garde features that can be traced in the artists’ vocal production.⁴³ Yet, the categorization of ‘avant-garde’ in vocal performance applies specifically to decidedly unconventional music and extreme vocal performances. The artists involved in avant-garde performance usually display a range of vocal techniques that include the extended voice and multiphonics, and they may also be trained in several vocal traditions, sometimes including *bel canto*.⁴⁴ Their aim is to break away from established musical forms and conventions; they seek to construct a musical discourse that utilises the voice as the prime instrument and vehicle of expression, in such a way that their vocal performances can be thought of as comparable to conceptual (musical) art.⁴⁵

Suleiman makes also the point that there is an extent to which the marginality of both the female subject and the avant-garde can be empowering for avant-garde women artists, given that they feel ‘doubly marginal’, but at the same time ‘totally avant-garde’; this offers the female subject a kind of centrality that can potentially undo the ‘whole’ and serve as a source of strength and self-legitimation.⁴⁶ She provides an example of avant-garde feminist writing that embeds this positive value: Cixous’s essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*, a text that will be used in chapter three and which Suleiman considers ‘the closest thing to an avant-garde manifesto written from an explicitly feminist perspective’.⁴⁷ Similar examples could also be found in Irigaray’s writings and we could thus surmise that this form of the avant-garde is in some way pervasive throughout the research.

Kristeva’s Signifying Process and Avant-Garde Vocal Performance

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Julia Kristeva investigates the workings of ‘poetic language’ as a ‘signifying practice’ that involves a speaking subject within a social/historical context.⁴⁸ She identifies a process of alteration or mutation in literary representation in nineteenth-century post-Symbolist avant-garde writing, which leads to her conceptualisation of ‘poetic language’: this embraces the infinite possibilities of language; thus other language acts can be seen as no more than partial fulfilments of the possibilities intrinsic in ‘poetic language’. Prototype texts of avant-garde practice, such as those of Lautréamont and Mallarmé, are considered manifestations of the semiotic, the domain of the pre-verbal and the maternal; the semiotic is also close to the logic of the unconscious, and thus avant-garde language is seen as being dominated by the drives and under the influence of a pre-symbolic space. In this

sense, avant-garde texts communicate regression and *jouissance*, and can be interpreted as ‘revolutionary’, inasmuch as they challenge established norms, values and ideals. Kristeva looks into the signifying process of these texts and conceptualizes literary practice as an activity that breaks up the inertia of language and discovers its multiple possibilities; this activity liberates the subject also from linguistic, psychic and social networks.⁴⁹ Yet, Kristeva’s ‘poetic language’ is understood as emerging not only from the semiotic, but also from the dialectical interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic dispositions or modalities; these two modalities are embedded in the signifying process that constitutes language. The dialectic between the two modalities determines the type of discourse and is also constitutive of the subject: the dynamic process of interactions (‘signifiante’) between the semiotic and symbolic situates the subject in process or on trial.⁵⁰

Although Kristeva’s ‘poetic language’ focuses on literary language and the different modes of articulation of the two modalities, her theory of the semiotic and symbolic and its centrality to the subject in process extends to other artistic signifying systems. In particular, her examination of avant-garde texts as manifestations of the semiotic disposition finds a parallel in the association of avant-garde vocality with pre-verbal articulations prior to the sign and symbolization. Avant-garde voices display a musicality that may be said to emerge from the ‘kinetic energy’ of the semiotic; the extreme vocal articulations of avant-garde women performers (howls and screams) can be seen as ‘primal cries’ that surge from a pre-symbolic maternal space dominated by the drives. Kristeva suggests that although music may be considered a non-verbal signifying system, associated with the mother, and constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic, this exclusivity in music is relative so to speak. In her

view, no signifying system that the subject produces responds to only one modality. The subject is constituted in the necessary dialectic between the semiotic and symbolic and is therefore '*both semiotic and symbolic*'.⁵¹ The power of the semiotic within the subject of avant-garde performance can produce a flow of pre-verbal expression in the form of ubiquitous sounds and rhythms, which bring the listener closer to the (semiotic) musicality of the maternal space. At the same time, the symbolic is in some way altered, its logic inverted, or its effects mitigated as a result of a new (liberating) musical practice that displays pre-symbolic elements and manifests dissident and potentially subversive 'signifiante'.

The semiotic is associated in Kristeva's writings with the maternal and the pre-linguistic, and yet her theorisation does not imply a gender differentiation grounded in embodied subjects, but, rather, it is understood as a pre-gendered space posited nonetheless (and dichotomously) as feminine and maternal. In psychoanalysis, the semiotic is associated with the state of infancy prior to entering the symbolic order or law of the father. Perhaps the best way to understand the dichotomous nature of this 'pre-gendered' space is to think of it from a specifically feminist perspective, which finds in the pre-symbolic a place where the feminine can enter into a kind of free play, unencumbered by the burden of masculine symbolisation. Yet, this pre-gendered space is only construed as feminine after the event, once the advent of language has rendered such (gendered) explanation inescapable. Within the semiotic, Kristeva generates the imagery of the chora, which is neither a sign nor a signifier, and which is theoretically described as 'part of the discourse of representation that offers it as evidence'. The chora is the generating force that enables the subject to attain a signifying position and it thus 'precedes and underlines figuration and [...]

specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm'.⁵² Kristeva clarifies that the mother's body 'becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*' and it also 'mediates the symbolic law organising social relations'.⁵³ 'Positive' and 'negative' drives are implicated in the semiotic functions and energy discharges that connect the body to the mother, and this makes 'the semiotized body a place of permanent scission'.⁵⁴ The *chora* is therefore the place where 'the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases [called 'a negativity'] that produce him'.⁵⁵ The semiotic, generated within a feminine, maternal space, has the potential in women's avant-garde vocal performance to bring in a marginal experience of the subject which would otherwise be inexpressible; it is thus possible within this space to investigate in depth the agency of artistic creativity vis-à-vis the signifying process.

The symbolic is defined in Kristeva's theory as 'a social effect of the relation to the other, established through the objective constraints of biological (including sexual) differences and concrete historical family structures'.⁵⁶ Kristeva describes how the male child must split himself from his mother in order to attain his sexual identity within the symbolic and hence the necessity to abject the mother in order to become autonomous. The child daughter, however, does not split from her mother in order to unify herself and form her sexual identity, but must agree to lose or metaphorically 'kill' the mother through a negation process and thus enter properly into the symbolic (and language).⁵⁷ The relation of women avant-garde artists to the maternal can be explained by Kristeva's theory of the relationship between the semiotic mother and the semiotic negativity of the child (daughter), for whom the primal repression is the semiotic identification with the mother's body. The child daughter encounters the

paradox of not being able to get rid of the semiotic maternal body and carries it locked in her psyche. Within psychoanalysis, the construction of female sexual identity requires the daughter to abandon the mother as a love object for the father. The way to turn the maternal body (or the Thing) into an object of desire is, among other things, through analysis. The mother/daughter separation, in Kristeva's words, is then 'no longer a threat of disintegration but a stepping stone toward some other'.⁵⁸

Feminine Vocal Performance from Irigaray's Stance and its Relation to Gender Performativity

In order to situate the conceptual approach used in my reading of feminine vocal performance in the context of discourses on the 'performative', and in particular of Judith Butler's gender performativity, a quick overview of the points of conflation and departure between these two approaches seems necessary. Since my focus is on the French theorists, notably Irigaray, it is not my intention to fully engage with Butler's concept of performativity, and yet some clarification with regard to how the enactment of gender roles is conceived here in comparison with performativity theory can be illuminating, especially if we also consider that the enactment of the feminine in this research occurs within the scope of artistic performance (see next section for a specific discussion). Butler has extensively influenced Anglo-American feminism, and whilst the French feminists have also been influential, their work has tended to be received with mixed critical response by American feminists, particularly in relation to the concept of difference. For Anglo-Americans, who generally carry the legacy of empirical and materialist traditions, the radical questioning of 'otherness' in French feminism is seen as both attractive and dangerous (given its association with

essentialism).⁵⁹ Another consideration is that Butler and Irigaray work comes from different theoretical traditions, namely, the deconstructive and psychoanalytic frames.

With the aim of focusing on the relation of Irigaray to performativity and sketching my own stance as far as feminine vocal performance, I will engage in this section with some arguments put forward by American scholar Lynne Huffer, who has investigated the influence of Irigaray's ideas in the field of performative theory, highlighting the ethical dimension in Irigaray's thinking in contrast to the disregard for ethical questions shown in theories of the performative. First, Huffer points out that Butler's performativity 'harnesses the well-known Irigarayan concept of mimicry, or mimesis, in order to subvert any notion of a coherent identity'.⁶⁰ She critiques Butler's performativity for eliding ethical questions and failing to account for the concept of response, and thus responsibility, which must be accounted for in any communicative act. Her attention is then drawn to the work of Irigaray, who places relevant ethical considerations at the centre of her model of speech.⁶¹ Irigaray's ethical dimension, which is inscribed in her philosophical stance marks a point of inflection in my conception of feminine vocal performance with respect to Butler's performativity.

In broad terms, Butler's theory of gender performativity rests on her understanding of gender identities as the result of complex iterative processes. She draws from Derrida's writings on speech acts, Foucault, as well as various anthropological and philosophical discourses, mainly phenomenology, to demonstrate that 'what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo'.⁶² Her aim is to establish that gender is not 'a stable identity or locus of

agency from which various acts proceed', but that identity is bound by social temporality, which is 'tenuously constituted in time'.⁶³ Considering that performative speech acts bring into being that which they name, she tries to think of discourse in a specific way, and hence understands performativity as 'that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names'.⁶⁴ Butler thus conceives gender as an 'act' that is repeated through practices of parodic repetition:

The parodic repetition of gender exposes [...] the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance. As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an "act", as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status.⁶⁵

Echoing Butler, Huffer understands that performance exposes as a fabrication the 'naturalized "truth" of gender' and thus the instability of that truth destabilizes identity and deprives 'man' and 'woman' of the 'naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality'.⁶⁶ Yet, Huffer points out that the concept of narrative in Butler's argument ceases to be a viable model for contesting gender oppression, given that this author 'replaces narrative, the possibility of telling stories within discursively coherent frames, with a more disruptive performance'.⁶⁷ For Butler, performance becomes a practice that 'preempt[s] narrative as the scene of gender production'⁶⁸ and has thus the capacity to 'subvert the status quo by repeating the very fictions through which those gendered identities were constructed in the first place'.⁶⁹ The loss of narrative avoids the totalizing tendencies of narrative truth-telling, but at the same

time, Huffer continues, it precludes the possibility of having narratives that would speak the truth of marginal identities and hence of telling 'our' stories. In her view, no performance can 'parodically resignify' the harm inflicted to marginal identities without narrating the harms and speaking the pain, the truth about that experience.⁷⁰

The similarity between Butler's conception of gender as an 'act' repeated through parodic repetition that de-naturalises identities, and Irigaray's strategy of *mimesis* or *mimicry* (as earlier outlined), from which performativity draws its rationale, becomes apparent. Yet, despite the affinities, there are significant differences expounded by Huffer in the form of a staged dialogue with Irigaray. *Mimesis* implies for a woman a way to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse without being reduced to it and 'to make "visible", by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible'.⁷¹ Yet, for Irigaray, women are not simply resorbed in the function of *mimesis*. Irigaray conceives this strategy as a 'stop-gap measure' to keep woman from disappearing altogether by putting her in the spotlight; hysterical miming, for example, 'will be the little girl's or the woman's work to save her sexuality from total repression, [and] disappearance'.⁷² If women cannot have a story, there is then performance. Thus, women continue to perform, and in this sense *mimesis* comes close to performativity. The problem for Irigaray is that the performance still takes place on 'his' stage and the 'props and the story are his'; the stage is there for men's satisfaction and pleasure and women are trapped in male's meanings and words (the Self-Same) with no representations of their own. Irigaray proposes to move 'our' lips in another direction.⁷³

Huffer draws attention to Irigaray's image of the lips that speak together, which she sees moving behind the scene and across the stage towards other listening lips: 'Hear them, to speak our story, here, hear, to laugh with pleasure'.⁷⁴ The lips are here to narrate her truth and we need to hear 'so that she, with another, can perform a different economy of speech, resistance, pleasure, and love'.⁷⁵ The image of the lips encourages women to have a voice of their own, to tell their narratives without continuing to speak sameness. The lips question:

How can we speak so as to escape from their [male] compartments, their schemas, their distinctions and oppositions: virginal/deflowered, pure/impure, innocent/experienced... How can we shake off the chain of these terms, free ourselves from their categories, rid ourselves of their names? Disengage ourselves, *alive*, from their concepts?⁷⁶

The feminine other does not have its own representation within the economy of the Self-Same, only the Self-Same's representations of femininity; hence Irigaray provides images and representations that help us start to speak to each other differently, not the same, like the lips stirring and growing red again when they want to be heard.⁷⁷ Irigaray's representations of the feminine can be thought of as another of her strategies, as well as a woman's writing and performance of the feminine and of being with an other. It is precisely these representations of the feminine, of lips parted to let the voice out, of lips that move across the stage towards other listening lips that I attempt to engage with in my readings of vocal performance from an Irigarayan perspective. Butler's theory of performativity does not bring forward representations of the feminine other (there is no narrative), and thus 'feminine

performativity' in Butler's terms, as I see it, would necessarily refer to any parodic repetition of the feminine (or femininity) amongst many women; these 'enactments', moreover, might be or not ethically motivated. One of the problems in this direction, as Huffer indicates, is that the performative fails to theorise the other and thus performances cannot therefore know their effects.

My 'enactments' of the feminine are framed within an Irigarayan model that enables a wider scope of representational strategies and hence allows for an empowerment of those representations in a way that challenges the Self-Same. The artists' vocal/musical performances construct their own narrative and speak their truth or the truth of others. Their representations are also read within the horizon of an ethically motivated relational model that opens to the other, hence a listener.⁷⁸ *Mimesis* or *mimicry*, whose disruptive power has been less explored in analyses of artistic performances, will be used in some of the case studies as interpretative engagement to read the meanings of vocal/musical displays. In this sense, the 'enactments' of the feminine in the research may be also called 'performative', that is, in the general sense that this term has come to be known. The approach distances itself in several significant respects, however, from Butler's theory of gender performativity.

Huffer's critique focuses on the need – on philosophical grounds – of allowing for the consideration of an 'ethics as a *foundation*' in analyses of performative theory, Butler's in particular. She argues that, without ethics, the agents of performances can remain unquestioned and the other can be annihilated, for 'it is precisely the question of the other that puts "us" into question'.⁷⁹ The formulation of key ethical questions would thus allow consideration of the response of the other – the audience or

interlocutor – crucial to any communicative act, given that, without ethics, the performance relies on the ‘necessary error’ of self-identity and it can potentially be anything it wants to be. In other words, performativity depends on the ‘necessary error’ of identity. As Huffer puts it

A theory that relies on the ‘necessary error’ of self-identity has the potential for violence because, philosophically, it repeats the mimetic logic that reduces difference to a repetition of the same. Because performativity fails to theorize the other, the identity it stages is totalized, however provisionally, as an ontological force that would subsume the other into its self-identity.⁸⁰

Huffer indicates that ‘performance’ within theories of (gender) performativity can become purely self-referential, and its political effect ends up being determined by its success as seduction. Seduction implies a relationship of dependency between a given performative identity and the other, hence, the need to bring in questions about the ethics of that performance.⁸¹ Within the realm of artistic performance, seduction is mediated by aesthetic conventions, and thus, depending on the type of staged performance, its effects can give rise to different sets of ethical questions.⁸² Yet, it can be said that the formulation of ethical questions in any performance enables its agents to check the response of the audience, which includes the effect of that seduction on the listener or viewer.

The women artists under study bring to their musical performances a representation whose meanings can be interpreted in a way that accounts for ethical considerations. There is an element of seduction and of self-referentiality in their vocal and musical

production (as is probably the case in most artistic performances), and yet their musical displays may also be understood to go beyond the effect of seduction and the mere dramatization of a 'locutionary position' or act of self-identity. In ways that will be described in the case studies, they use the self-referential as a way to reach others; they seek to connect with and elicit a response from their audiences and construct themselves as they are constructed by listeners. They create a narrative through their musical performance that speaks the truth about themselves as creators of art, about the messages, the pain and enjoyment, which they write, speak or sing about. The listener, in turn, has the capacity to ethically respond to their performance, listen to the narrative, and bring into being the aesthetic experience.

Artistic Vocal Performance and its Relation to Performativity

This last point links to some debates surrounding the relationship between artistic or theatrical performance and the discursive performative. An outline of some of the arguments can give us an idea of the extent of the controversies, as well as clarify the way in which this connection is understood in this research. As already intimated, the 'enactments' of the feminine as gender performance in vocal and musical production can also be said to be performative, and although artistic or theatrical performances involve specific conventions that separate the artists' performances from the real life enactments of the discursive performative, there is a sense in which artistic performance and performativity may be understood to extend over each other.

To start with, we find that commentators have attempted to make a distinction between the terms 'performance' and 'performativity', especially with the aim of clarifying the concepts behind each. The terminological overlapping between

‘performance’ (as a staged act) and ‘performativity’ (as gender identity as iterative process) has led Andrew Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick to argue that there exists an ‘oblique intersection’ between these terms.⁸³ Parker indicates that performance has normally been used to embrace a cluster of theatrical practices, whereas performativity has moved onto the ‘centre stage’ of theoretical debates on identity and sexual difference due to the work of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler.⁸⁴ Yet, the terms ‘performance’ and ‘performativity’ are both applied to convey the idea of ‘gender performance’ and to describe performance acts in the artistic and cultural fields. He thus problematises this expansion by recognising that although philosophy and the theatre share ‘performative’ as a lexical item, the term does not necessarily mean the same for the two disciplines and thus ‘performativity’ has been ‘marked by cross-purposes’.⁸⁵

Butler herself indicates that it is important to distinguish theatrical performance from performativity, given that performance presumes a pre-existing subject whereas performativity contests the very notion of such a subject.⁸⁶ The link between theatrical performances and gender performances in nontheatrical contexts is not, in Butler’s view, easily drawn. She makes a connection between a theatrical and a social role of embodied selves, which she asserts, do not ‘pre-exist the cultural conventions, which essentially signify bodies’.⁸⁷ However, she makes a clear distinction regarding the conventions that delimit the imaginary character of the act, enabling a theatre performance to be announced as ‘this is just an act’, and thus ‘de-realising’ the act, as it were, whereas in life gender performance there is no presumption that the act is distinct from reality. This distinction produces a disquieting effect in so far as life (gender) performances are not mediated by

theatrical conventions that help to separate acting from reality; in turn, any challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about existing gender arrangements can be met with resistance, since this may imply breaking the convictions that maintain one's sense of reality.⁸⁸

Another way of looking at the argument is turning to social interactionists and ethnomethodologists like Erving Goffman. Goffman understands that human beings present themselves to another according to cultural values, norms and expectations and seek also acceptance from an audience; the audience sees the human actions as performances. Human actions thus depend on the dramatic effect that emerges from the immediate scene being presented. If the 'actor' succeeds, the audience will view the actor as s/he wants to be viewed, and this implies an intimate form of communication.⁸⁹ In this way, he suggests that all social transactions, even the most everyday, are proto-theatrical. Goffman's arguments imply that everyday performativity and theatrical performance may be connected in some way, or that the distinctions between the two can be seen as less clear-cut.

Performativity can be seen moreover very close to the Lacanian concept of 'acting-out'. This refers back in psychoanalytic writing to Freud's use of the German term *Agieren* and to the themes of repeating and remembering: when a past event is repressed from memory, the subject is destined to bring the past into the present by acting it out. Lacan understands that 'acting out' occurs as a failure to recollect the past, but argues that there is also an intersubjective dimension. The remembrance of past events that are expressed in actions involve not only the recollection of something to consciousness, but also communicating this event to an Other by means

of speech. In his view, 'acting out' takes place when the recollection becomes impossible due to the refusal of the Other to listen. The subject is then not able to convey the message in words and he is forced to express it in actions; yet the subject is not conscious of the content of the message, or that the actions contain specific meaning, and it is then the Other who is entrusted to interpret the message.⁹⁰ The field of 'acting out' is broad and includes not only traumatic repetition (which is where Freud's account started), but also fantasy and hysteria. 'Acting out' is connected to performativity in so far as the subject's actions are always intersubjectively addressed to the Other and the individual's speech is therefore subjected to the (appropriate or inappropriate) interpretation of another subject who occupies the position of the order of the symbolic law.

The concept of 'acting out' will emerge in my interpretative readings of women artists, although this will not necessarily be always understood in the Lacanian sense. Irigarayan thinking makes a distinction between 'acting out' – in the psychoanalytic sense of letting out a repressed feeling, doing something without reflection or mediation – and 'performance', which Irigaray understands as an act that is made more consciously. Her premise implies that one considers culture in a conscious manner, in the sense of sexuate subjects aware of the meanings of their acts or actions who enter into a relation to culture as much as to the other. The intersubjective relations with other sexuate subjects is conceived always in 'performance', and involve ethical considerations. In this sense, Irigaray shortens further the distance between 'performance', seen as the sexuate subject's conscious awareness of her acts and messages, and artistic performance. Within the realm of music and vocality, we can say that although performance is mediated by artistic convention that separates

the act from reality and hence is clearly distinct from ‘performativity’, Irigaray’s idea of ‘being with an other’ as performance brings this concept – developed for real life – closer to the more specific location where artistic performance takes place. The dichotomy between artistic performance and the Irigarayan being as ‘performance’ (as performative discursivity) can then be seen from a more productive stance as a relationship that actually *undercuts* any sense of an absolute dichotomy; that is, while vocal performance in this study is a meta-activity with specific conventions, it is also therefore always ‘performative’.

Being with an Other as Performance

Irigaray’s conception of two different subjects and of ‘being in two’ implicates the construction of ‘inter-subjectivity’ in respect of sexual difference. It requires us to go outside of ourselves in order to enter into relation with an other, and then to return within ourselves, in order to keep our own identity without spreading to infinity or merging with the other. Two separate concentric circles graphically represent a way of expressing difference between the two subjects and their worlds; each subject would have to come partly outside one’s world in order to meet the other in a middle space, and then to return to one’s own space so as to enable an economy marked by an ‘infinite’ entering in relation.⁹¹ In other words, a dialectical interchange is created between inside and outside, whereby going outside and returning inside contribute to the cultivation of movement, through a going and letting go, and this movement furnishes an economy of space and time.⁹² Given that one can never be the other, the middle space or possible meeting point in between the two circles – corresponding to the two subjects – is opened by the negative, which limits each of the two subjects,

providing them with borders, with a frame that safeguards their identities and their difference.⁹³

‘Being in two’ involves performing, and returning to oneself also forms part of the performance of ‘being in two’. The dialectical interchange, or the coming and going outside and inside ourselves embedded in the conception of two different subjects and of ‘being in two’, hence becomes a qualitative aspect of the performance; sensory perceptions, voicing and listening can thus join in creating the performance of ‘being in two’. Irigaray’s approach of ‘being in two’ as a dialectical exchange primarily refers to the relation between two different subjects, and should not therefore be theorized into a concept that might be applied outside of the ethics of such a relationship.⁹⁴ But her idea of cultivating oneself in a conscious manner and the ethical dimension of her work can be relevant for the interpretation of women’s vocal performance: this is an intentional and conscious activity that involves, moreover, the expansion of women’s creativity. Feminist cultural theory provides women artists with the tools to redefine their creative process through the concepts of representation, the gaze, and musical displays. Through musical/vocal performance, artists are able to create new symbolizations and challenge the convictions that sustain reality. The artist’s subjectivity and identity as they appear in the performance can, at the same time, reinscribe the relation of the listeners towards women’s vocal and music production. The approach strives to ground an aesthetics specific to vocal performance (that may be applicable to other live arts) that allows for the fact that artistic performance involves a (gendered) musical narrativity and performative discursivity grounded in embodied subjects, which is articulated through the voice and can have an influence in the cultural imaginary. There is in this sense a

significant connection between the meanings constructed in the framed performance contexts discussed in this study and the 'real lives' of women. Instead of understanding this link dichotomously, as in (artistic) 'performance' and 'performativity', we can say that this relationship between the art and women's lives also *undercuts* any sense of absolute dichotomy. The art can therefore help in negotiating the feminine in new, progressive ways.

The Duality of Subjectivity and 'Intra-subjective' Performance

The recognition of the duality of subjectivities expands the interpretive possibilities of women's artistic production, since it is then possible from this stance to articulate the specificity of the woman's creativity; from that specificity, it also becomes valid to look into the 'intra-subjective' relation that flows from within her self and her artistic performance, the singing product, as it were. The artist's vocality can be interpreted as a way to emphasize her own subject position and her singing delivery as a means to explore and enact a diversity of subject positions during the artistic performance. The case of the female singer/songwriter who composes and writes her own songs can draw attention to her subjectivity, the specificity of her own representation, as well as the 'intra-subjective' relation between her self, her voice, her body, and the constructed subject of her artistic performance.

Women vocal performers would seem to stage an interplay that touches upon Irigaray's dialectical strategies. Irigaray offers a definition of the 'I' beyond that of a simple subjectivity which expresses itself: it is not only important to say 'I', but also 'I she' in order to keep a dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity. This allows us to foreground the fact that the subject is two – not a unique neuter subject, but two

sexuate subjects: 'I she' and 'I he' – and that 'I she' can establish a dialogue with 'You she', 'I he', 'You he' and so on, by way of communications between differently sexuated subjects.⁹⁵ Then a woman artist can accede to a different cultural 'I' by constructing a new objectivity that corresponds to an 'I' that is sexed feminine, not an indifferent 'I' or, in fact, a 'he' who dictates the truth. It is thus necessary that a dialectical process between subjectivity and objectivity also remains within the woman as a sexuate, and not unique, subject: 'I she'. The woman's artistic 'product' presents an interesting instance of a constructed subject, whereby she can generate her own representation through this double structure. The 'subject' in her song is enacted with the sole purpose of enabling the artistic musical performance.

Following Irigaray, we can say that the artist would construct her singing performance in accordance to a narrative, and a sensible 'truth' or reality, based notably on her sensorial perceptions, which may change over time, but which would nonetheless enter into a dialectical process with respect to the 'I' sexed feminine. The artist could not revert to a mere 'I' since she could only interpret her own experience *a posteriori*, by recourse to a dialectical process.⁹⁶ Yet she could artistically perform – by means of the subject in her song – a fractional narrative of her own experience as product of her subjective and/or perceptual experience. Given that the dialectical movement between subjectivity and objectivity must remain open within the 'I she', according to Irigaray, it could never be said that hers is always already the experience of a woman, although the artistic 'product' seems to offer the space for the enactment of a more subjective, though partial, personal experience.

Artistic Production as Meta-performance

Artistic performance is understood more accurately as a meta-performance, which is understood in respect of the mediation surrounding contemporary artistic production: the musical ‘product’ contains performative elements ‘frozen’ in a recording, and this is ready to be repeated and consumed. Technologically mediated images and sounds and their repetition generate responsiveness from the listeners through identificatory mechanisms with the musical work, and thus the listeners’ receptiveness of that artistic work can bring the music to life. At the time of interpreting women’s musical and vocal production, Irigaray’s flowing and open representations, which have been recovered to increase sensory perceptions and energy, may be evoked.⁹⁷ Women artists utilize existing music codes and/or create their own, in a way that would seem to reappropriate and transform music into a dissident, even subversive, musical sound that reflects their perceptual experience. They may opt for a vocal performance that mimics suffering or madness, for example, with the purpose of revealing that which ‘was meant to remain hidden’.⁹⁸ In this way, they would appear to retain a sense of openness when they build their (self) representation.

For Irigaray, the ‘musical universe as such’ has ‘to speak [...] the whole body, the whole self’ and it is ‘to the universe of the flesh – my flesh and that of the other – that we have to listen first to compose a work of music’.⁹⁹ Since women’s bodies enter female subjectivity, it is possible that ‘listening to the flesh’ becomes closely connected with women’s musical production. Artistic meta-performance would not correspond *stricto sensu* to the musicality of the relation of ‘being in two’, although it can positively tally with Irigaray’s cultural sexual difference. Women artists’ meta-performance could be associated, in an Irigarayan sense, with the capacity to think

about life and the real perception of our world. This means that women become creative and challenge the signifiers until now connected with the feminine; this requires women to find other gestures, other words to say, and to avow their identity, body and subjectivity. Reading artistic production by women from an Irigarayan perspective can help reclaim the 'musical language' of the other that is, with respect to Western culture, the feminine musical language.

Finally, sexual difference can constitute, in Irigaray's view, the horizon of more fecund worlds than previously allowed for. The fecundity is not only envisaged in a literal sense, but as the 'production of a new age of thought, art, poetry and language: the creation of a new *poetics*'.¹⁰⁰ A first gesture that can bring autonomy for each subject is to move from exteriority to interiority, and to develop interiority through the cultivation of multifaceted sensitivity, which emphasizes the significance of self-affection, breathing, listening and silence.¹⁰¹ Interacting with the world through increased sensorial perceptions can make a dialectical exchange or a dialogue in difference possible without losing oneself. If the interchange is to be positive, this type of performance – understood each time as a performance – is a way of *jouissance*, and the relation to the other, and/or to nature, may also be taken as the discovery of enjoyment. One significant means to preserve ourselves in enjoyment is the musical/vocal artistic process. This can be a major way for women to keep the rhythm of the dialectical interactions of coming and going outside and inside themselves.¹⁰²

Outline of Chapters

Chapter two looks at the autobiographical in vocal and musical performance and examines in particular the connection between traumatic memory and acts of autobiographical self-representation in women's musical displays. Whilst the autobiographical has been amply covered in conventional narratives and literary genres, women's autobiography in the visual arts and performance is a less developed topic area; thus an increasing desire is emerging to understand 'self-representational acts' in diverse media, which includes music. Tori Amos's 'Me and a Gun' based on a personal experience of rape, and Diamanda Galás's 'Artémis and Cris d'Aveugle' on the relationship between personal and collective trauma will illustrate from different angles how to frame the representation of both the self and trauma. Self-referentiality in the artists' performances emerges as 'autobiographical subjectivity' imprinted through vocality in their musical representation. A key aspect will be the understanding of the autobiographical not as a fixed convention, but as a practice that encompasses unstable boundaries and flexible limits. Personal experience, either in a testimonial form or as fragments of memory revisited in the musical performance, does not respond to a univocal experience; the voices of the artists become multivoiced and are articulating with the 'voices' and subjectivities of their listeners. The autobiographical in these readings unveils the relationship between the traumatic voice of the self and the audience vis-à-vis the articulation of the artists' subject position in culture.

Chapter three engages with Irigaray's and Cixous's ideas on feminine speaking and writing as a way to create a specific aesthetic space for women; artists can then position themselves in a cultural location that is not necessarily constrained by

masculine language and culture. The articulation of a specific female libidinal economy connected with women's libidinal energies is put forward by Cixous, and echoes also Irigaray's arguments that the libido has been conceived as only masculine: hence in order for women to express their desire and fantasies, and develop their self-affection, an economy distinct from male discourse is needed. The reading engages with Cixous's essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* and her concept of *l'écriture féminine* for an interpretation of Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium', which provides a flowing image of the woman artist who is able to free her desire and create new desires through creativity; it is an image that revolves around song and women's voices, and the interconnection of singing and writing in constructing a specific feminine discursivity. Irigaray's notion of the *elsewhere* (where the masculine representation fails to provide an adequate image of woman) will be used in the reading of Björk's 'Cocoon'. An important aspect in both case studies is the role of the female voice used as a masquerade following the (Irigarayan) strategy of *mimesis* or *mimicry*, whose purpose is here to thwart traditional conceptions about women's voices and musical displays. The chapter discusses how the pleasure that a woman experiences in language and artistic production is linked to feminine desire, sexuality and the body. It also illustrates how Cixous's and Irigaray's French feminist tropes and language provide the tools useful for a specific feminine perspective, and hence a politics of representation that engages with explicit women's desire and *jouissance* in vocal and musical performance.

Chapter four explores the idea of haunting as listening experience and provides a conceptual frame from which to ground a feminine haunting voice in musical performance. Haunting is associated with a residue or surplus of meaning that is

theorised as ‘uncertainty’ or repressed content, and emerges as uncanny experience. Amos’s ‘Raining Blood’ and Björk’s ‘Storm’ have been selected as examples in which the artists create a mysterious, eerie soundscape, that can be read in terms of a haunting surplus or spectral vocal residue conceptualised here as feminine. Amongst a number of authors, the discussion draws from Freud’s concept of the uncanny, Derrida’s understanding of spectrality and Irigaray’s emphasis on the importance of the mother and a maternal genealogy for a relation with an imaginary or symbolic woman or mother. In the absence of an adequate generic identity that women can identify with, Irigaray brings the ‘maternal-feminine’ into discourse; from there, it is possible to argue for a spectrality that embodies a feminine identity as haunting or ghostly presence, and which is expressed through the artists’ aesthetic vision and representation. The chapter thus argues that the haunting surplus in the artists’ vocal performances can be seen as the trace – and a return - of a spectral repressed feminine other. In Amos’s ‘Raining Blood’, the vocal surplus suggests the trace of a feminine gothicised other, whereas Björk’s ‘Storm’ lends itself to a reading centred on the transgression of boundaries resulting from the subversive power of a cyborgian (feminine) other. Both cultural tropes, the Gothic and the cyborg, are subject to replication of dominant (masculine) gendered patterns and discourse; yet the presence of feminine spectrality in the artists’ haunting vocals subverts embedded cultural conventions and dichotomous boundaries. In specific ways, both artists create a mysterious and ethereal listening experience associated with an uncanny vocal surplus, a feminine residue, or a gendered spectral trace that brings together the idea of the feminine haunting voice.

Chapter five deals specifically with avant-garde vocal performance and the meanings around a genre that breaks new ground in the innovative use of existing and new vocal and musical forms. Galás's *Schrei 27* is used as single case study to illustrate how extreme vocalisation, even when abstract or incomprehensible, becomes a vehicle and a means to transmit an intended message or emotion. Avant-garde vocal performance often appears to fall outside signification, and yet the performing voice and its body source partake in the signifying system. The interpretation offered here will draw from Kristeva's concept of the abject and her ideas on avant-garde works vis-à-vis her theory of the signifying process; the aim is to link *Schrei 27* to a discourse on feminine abjection. The artist's extreme vocal production in this work is read in terms of a separation from the abject mother; it invokes a mother's voice that produces horror and is seen as a threat, and is therefore abjected. At the same time, Galás stages a hysterical abjection that is interpreted in the Irigarayan sense of *mimesis*, as well as in the sense of reconsidering the meanings of the 'hysterical' for feminine ends in the context of Galás's vocal performance (inscribing the tension between mothers and women). The emphasis accorded to the maternal in French feminism thus reappears in *Schrei 27* in connection with avant-garde vocal performance: as a return to the voice and image of the mother, as well as re-enactment of a primal trauma that reclaims a maternal space as a means of subversion.

Chapter 2

AT THE LIMITS OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL: THE VOICE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE ‘SELF’ AND TRAUMA

Contemporary women artists working in the fields of visual art and performance have for some time now engaged in autobiographical self-reference as a way to challenge masculinist representations of women and to situate themselves within Western cultural practices that have often marginalized them. This chapter explores the autobiographical within the context of women’s self-representation in vocal and musical performance. I am interested in looking at the way personal experience linked to trauma emerges in some musical performances and how women singers/performers engage in a mode of self-representation, which speaks about the relationship between a referential traumatic self and the subject position of women within culture.

Tori Amos’s ‘Me and a Gun’ and Diamanda Galás’s ‘Artemis’ and ‘Cris de’aveugle’ will be considered as case studies. These two artists and their songs are very different in expressive economy and musical delivery, and yet both songs display fragments of the autobiographical linked to memory and trauma at the intersection of the vocal/musical and textual narratives. The songs illustrate two ways or strategies in which to frame the representation of trauma; the singers’ specific (traumatic) experience emerges as ‘autobiographical subjectivity’, a term I borrow from Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith to indicate how the components of subjectivity and

identity – linked here to personal soundscapes – are implicated in artistic self-representation.¹⁰³ This specificity, as we shall see, gives us intimation on how women performers decide to construct and reconstruct their selves in a process of self-representation and cultural formation.

Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith examine women's autobiography in visual art and performance and argue for an expanded understanding of modes of autobiographical self-reference to account for visual, textual, voiced and material 'self-representational acts' that emerge in diverse media. These modes of self-reference are indicative of the proliferation of autobiographical sites, as well as a sign of the broader meanings attached now to the many practices of self-representation. In their view, women can inscribe themselves textually, visually or performatively and hence the autobiographical becomes ubiquitous; it extends beyond the conventional life narrative or storytelling of literary genres.¹⁰⁴ The authors look into women's self-representation at the visual/textual interfaces, and theorise how self-representation becomes a 'performative act', which is never transparent, but 'constitutes subjectivity in the interplay of memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency'.¹⁰⁵ The autobiographical in the context of women's vocal and musical performance comes to illustrate the self-representational possibilities associated with other modes of self-reference, as outlined by Watson and Smith. In the case of musical performance, modes of self-reference may include voiced, musical, textual and visual gestures in which the artists' subjectivity can be traced: it becomes imprinted in the performance.¹⁰⁶ The imprints of subjectivity in Amos's and Galás's songs enable access to identity, and exemplify how autobiographical self-reference actively creates the meaning of past traumatic memory.¹⁰⁷ In this way, a space for the affirmation of

the artist as a woman-as-subject can be claimed through the disclosure of personal experience.

Leigh Gilmore in *The Limits of Autobiography. Trauma and Testimony* specifically addresses the relationship between the autobiographical and the retrieval of traumatic experience. Her study focuses on written testimonies; they are narratives of trauma that draw on a range of discourses and representational practices, but share a non-conventional approach to autobiography. She is also interested in shifting attention from autobiography to embrace questions of representativeness, and specifically looks at cases that display practices recognised as autobiographical, but which veer off autobiography conventions.¹⁰⁸ Gilmour offers another insight into debates on the autobiographical, since she establishes a link between representing the self and representing trauma, and draws attention to specific articulations of trauma in relation to the settings in which they emerge.¹⁰⁹ Questions on how self-representation and the representation of trauma reach into each other and how the traumatic 'self' is construed in performative acts of self-referentiality will be considered in Amos's and Galás's performances.¹¹⁰ 'Me and a Gun' and 'Artemis' and 'Cris de'veugle' can be seen as limit-cases where the autobiographical is structured through what is and is not exposed of the trauma in self-representation.

A traditional mode of self-representation for women artists is 'naming', which draws attention to the identity of the name, the artist, and thus the subject of the work. In literary genres, 'naming' can emerge in the form of testimony and confession, a convention that usually informs the self-referential narration. The autobiographical implies bringing to the work a life history, a personal experience and the body of the

artist/author whose self-representation acquires symbolic material form. Watson and Smith refer to this embodied self-representation as ‘materializations of autobiographical subjectivity’, and indicate that ‘autobiographical acts’ of self-portrayal have traditionally involved a visible likeness of the artist in the work.¹¹¹ This visible likeness may not be there in modern-day acts of autobiographical performance, in particular where the self-representation is fragmented and/or arises in non-conventional forms of autobiography. In this way, self-referential acts in diverse media can now exceed established conceptions of self-portrayal; these acts give way to a wide-range of self-displays, which do not necessarily act as mirrors of the artist, but as engagements with embodied self-representation.¹¹²

In this sense, autobiographical reference as a performative act in musical performances (recordings and videos) is not understood as a mirror image or accurate account of the artist’s experience. Amos’s and Galás’s self-referentiality embeds non-literal renderings of self-representation, which are underpinned by musical aesthetics, and require interpretation within the context of the artists’ mode of expression; consideration must also be given as to the extent to which the trauma is metaphorized and/or conveyed more realistically in the vocal/musical performance. Gilmore looks at questions to do with the separateness between the autobiographical and fiction, inasmuch as narratives do not comply with a literal truth; singers who engage with traumatic experience blur the separation between the name and their artistic representation. Gilmour indicates that authors may engage in self-representation to lose their name and perhaps find another name, whilst ‘my’ (traumatic) experience may also stand unambiguously for others and ‘our’ experience. She interrogates conventional forms of testimony and confession in that the

testimonial and the confessional may not present a univocal story; they can become multivoiced, and hence evidence the unstable boundaries of the autobiographical.¹¹³ In 'Me and a Gun', Amos engages in a highly fragmented testimony of a personal story of sexual violation, which simultaneously exploits and destabilizes the confessional mode; it thus challenges conventional forms of autobiography. Personal experience emerges in the form of a confessional subject whose position is momentarily fixed in the performance as a constructed fiction. The testimony does not comply with a literal truth; there is no story as such, but fragments of memory as remembrance of a real life traumatic event. The performance precludes 'naming' and thus diverts attention away from the identity of the artist in order to relate her experience of rape to a wider, collective identity. The 'fiction' in the musical performance aims at foregrounding the identity of the represented 'self', whilst the audience is also enabled to identify and acknowledge the positioning of Amos as subject. Representativeness can test the limits of what is fictional and real, true and untrue; in this sense, 'Me and a Gun' exceeds conceptions of self-portrayal and expands the meanings attached to the testimonial voice in performance.¹¹⁴

The 'self' in autobiography, according to Liz Stanley, is construed and explored as something much more than individual, for although it refers to 'a "unique mind" in one sense, it is also closely articulating with the lives of others'.¹¹⁵ It would seem that in the cases under study the dynamics of articulating with the listeners' subjectivities make the woman singer's 'autobiographical subjectivity' 'exceed' its individualism and become more heterogeneous, dispersed and contingent vis-à-vis her audience. Indeed, Watson and Smith suggest that in some artistic production 'autobiographical subjectivity' can emerge dispersed or heterogeneous, although the imprint of

subjectivity is still registered in the work.¹¹⁶ This is particularly relevant for works where radical gestures of self-referentiality are performed at an extreme of the avant-garde, as it is the case of Galás's vocal performances. Meaning in Galás's 'Artemis' and 'Cris de'veugle' is not produced on account of the confessional or testimonial, but via the transference of personal traumatic memories that are consciously revisited in the performance at the interface of her intense vocalisation and the auditory. The autobiographical in Galás is encoded in a way that challenges the limits of the representation of personal experience. Whilst her avant-garde performances activate self-disclosure and display the artist's self-referentiality almost univocally, the 'autobiographical subjectivity' imprinted in her work becomes also heterogeneous: it connects with others' subjectivities at the time the listeners re-interpret the meanings of Galás's radical musical gestures. Her performances can be said to embody the trauma itself, given that her often-radical vocal articulations, her sounds, aim to literalize the very emotions involved in trauma. Amos and Galás experiment at the boundaries between different performance forms and ideas about the relationship between the autobiographical self and others. They seem to weave a hazy line between self-referential voice and the voices of others, and between fragments of traumatic experience and aesthetic creation.

The autobiographical in musical performance thus offers a space for the subject to reflect on identity, especially the enacted identity; it also offers a space to negotiate past memory from within a present perspective, which, in turn, is directed to multiple addressees or audiences. Amos and Galás – as subjects of the musical performance – enter into a dialogue with both themselves, as they construe the meanings of their traumatic past, and the listeners, who are invited to produce the meanings of

autobiographical experience. Given the processes within the subject, and between the subject and the multiple identities to which the work is addressed, the subject in autobiographical musical performance is not viewed as sovereign; neither is identity viewed as coherent and stable (in the sense that the musical narrative can be constitutive of personal identity, but the personal in autobiography emerges as enacted ‘self’, which is contingent, and open to the listener’s interpretation).¹¹⁷ In a Foucauldian sense, subjectivity as a response to cultural/social forces produces a positioning of the subject which is contingent and strategic, and the position of Amos and Galás as women subjects who engage with traumatic experience in their songs is not a closed position; there is interaction with other discourses and the positioning of other subjects.¹¹⁸ The autobiographical becomes then a performative site in which ‘the psychic formations of subjectivity and culturally coded identities intersect and “interface” one another’.¹¹⁹ It can be said, more generally, that psychic formations of subjectivity and identity emerge in creative works, and hence subjectivity is always imprinted in cultural production as the trace of the artist’s representativeness. Thus, in this sense, the self-referential is always implicated in artistic creation, although ‘autobiographical subjectivity’, as it is understood here, will emerge specifically in the cases where there is an active engagement of the artist with past personal experience, both as an act of remembering, and as a way to assume agency through a self-referential artistic/discursive practice.¹²⁰ Subjectivity linked to traumatic memory in these case studies is therefore connected with the performer’s agency and her attempts to articulate her ‘self’ through performance; the woman artist can then determine her own embodied self-representation and the way she decides to inscribe herself as subject and represent trauma in her music.

Psychoanalytic propositions on the nature of trauma extend back to the work of Freud, who offers an earlier model of the structure and insistence of trauma. Taking Freud's essay 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through', Linda Belau draws attention to Freud's psychoanalytic technique and his concern with the manifestation of the forgotten past in the traumatic present.¹²¹ There is a connection between the repression of a traumatic event and the manifestation – the acting out – of the forgotten past in the present; in the analytic situation, the analysand does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed; she acts it out, and this indicates therefore the emergence of the signifier.¹²² In order to be remembered, the past event has to be articulated into a chain of knowledge, which means that the process of remembering and memory are caught in a signifying chain. Yet, resistance around the repressed trauma is for the patient not easily overcome, even if it takes the form of knowledge; this led Freud to realise that remembering itself can be a peculiar form of resistance. Belau points out that Freud comes to understand memory in terms of repression; he sees the traumatic memory as the persistence of repetition in recollection, which manifests itself in an action (rather than in the symbolic sphere); the analysand is unaware of the meaning of this repetition because it is repressed, and thus the traumatic past can only be dealt with from within a present scenario.¹²³

Belau explains that trauma is an affect that is felt afterwards; it is not so much related to the event itself, but to the impossibility of integrating the event into a knowledgeable network. If something goes wrong with memory, it means that a signifier has been elided from the chain of signifiers that constitute the symbolic history and memory of the subject. The important aspect for Freud is less to integrate resistance than to mark in the field of knowledge the impossibility of integration.

Memory fails and the past seems too unbearable for it to be integrated or symbolized: it is then transferred to the present in the form of repetitions, which force us to see the impossibility to integrate trauma into remembrance (and hence articulate it in language). Working-through can be seen as a way to recall and understand the devastating effect of the forgotten event, which seems impossible to integrate.¹²⁴

The representation of trauma in the musical narrative will involve looking at the artist's expressive resources in connection with the personal, which is interpreted as the memory of the experience that re-emerges as autobiographical content. Trauma is taken as the unrepresentable, something beyond language, since this fails in the face of trauma; and yet the unconscious language of traumatic repetition may progressively be replaced by conscious language that can realise trauma.¹²⁵ Language marks a space or site from which the victim can articulate her trauma, as a way of working through (especially if there is a listener ready to listen to the trauma). The musical performance can be seen as an effective medium through which to channel that which cannot be spoken of. In the attempt to realise trauma, musical expression can have a liberating and/or subversive role, given that artistic modes do not follow the usual 'logical' analytic methods. The tension between the psychical, marked by trauma, and the representative self can be liberated through the articulation of a performative traumatic self, which begins to be imaginable to others through the conscious language of musical/artistic expression. 'Me and a Gun' and 'Artemis' and 'Cris de'aveugle' can be thought of as the expressions of a traumatic past which cannot be integrated, but which is progressively realised and represented through the song; the trauma comes into the signifying processes that operate within the musical performance.

The representation of trauma in musical performance may therefore be understood as a way to mark, through vocality, the signifying chain in which non-integrated trauma occurs. The traumatic elements that emerge in the performance can be integrated in a chain of knowledge that may be seen as the present scenario. Specific nuances in the vocal and musical delivery may be associated with the transference of trauma in the form of unconscious repetitions (as acting out the trauma), although these are soon integrated within conscious vocal articulations that emerge as the trace of the memory, as a way to signify the trauma. In an Irigarayan sense, the musical performance is understood more accurately as meta-performance, inasmuch as this involves an act that is made consciously and offers a way of producing culture in a conscious manner. The artist does not necessarily stand for the sovereign self of autobiography, and yet self-representation and trauma in performance may question, as Gilmour suggests, how the relations in which we act and live – between the woman artist and her performance – may be reinvented through the self.¹²⁶

The Autobiographical in Tori Amos's 'Me and a Gun': the Singing Voice as a Signifier

Tori Amos's music does not seem to belong to more conventional popular styles and seems to deliberately step beyond musical influences that inform her production so as to generate her own, very personal, expressive modality. In 1991 Amos achieved commercial success as a result of her debut album *Little Earthquakes*, an unconventional record in many ways and full of the kinds of melodic, lyrical song forms that we have come to expect from her. Amos declared she had conceived the album as a way of permitting herself to open up her inner world, which had been buried or silent for many years, and as a way of initiating a process of healing, and of dealing with difficult and traumatic events in her life.¹²⁷ To a large extent, her production may be seen as autobiographical journeys into her inner experiences and emotions; the way she is able to appropriate an outer reality and transform it, through a female lens, into something individual, not experienced before, is a marker of her work throughout. She has on occasions explained the process of song writing as listening to what her inner being is saying to her, as well as 'listening' to the stories the songs are trying to communicate to her: 'And they [the songs] would say "it is time for you to put down my essence and what I'm trying to tell you"'.¹²⁸ Her creative process reveals therefore Amos's interest in communicating her (female) 'individuality' through the power of song writing, an aspect that is consistent with her own description of her music as having a 'kind of female' feeling or 'girl songs'.¹²⁹ It can be said more generally that most of her vocal production works at embodying a strong female subject position. Amos's interiority is also associated with concepts

that may be said to reflect her inner world and spill out in her production: the garden, nature and the honeybee in the *Beekeeper* (2005), a feminine space where each song operates as a metaphor for a garden to be entered into by the listener; the musical travelogue in *Scarlet's Walk* (2002), a personal journey back through her native America or the transformation and appropriation of male themes for female purposes in *Strange Little Girls* (2001).

The desire to locate and express a female subject position can be traced to a tendency in Amos's work to exploit the messy spaces between introspection and confession; this is the expression of Amos's subjective experience, whilst her performances seek at the same time to bridge a gap to the outer world, to reach her audience (inter-subjectively) by way of transmitting feelings of identification through a common shared experience. Indeed, an intimate yet performative mode of sharing is a key aspect of her work, which aims to reach and account for a multiplicity of audience subjectivities.¹³⁰ Although Amos's traumatic inner world seems to define her role as a songwriter, as a way of projecting what is inside herself, her performance is also about Amos's way of perceiving the 'outside', which is then interiorised from the subject position of a woman, to be brought back to the surface in her performance. This duality is at the heart of the instability of the confessional: the 'inner' world thrown outwards into the public arena; expression (literally 'throwing out') as itself a way of rejecting or working through the trauma of selfhood. The dynamics of this process problematize the inside/outside binarism and underline the permeability of the boundary between the autobiographical and the fictitious, between the performer and her audience.¹³¹ The combination of these aspects of Amos's production allows us to study the meanings ascribed to her vocal performance in terms of authorial intent;

looking at the autobiographical in this way enables us to read the songs as open texts, and to consider the reception of her music vis-à-vis the subject positions of her listeners.

‘Me and a Gun’ is an interesting example because of the singularity of the performance, in which Amos exposes the experience of sexual violation in song. It is a powerful example of one of the ways in which the personal and the inter-subjective emerge in Amos’s creativity in such a way as to allow ‘autobiographical subjectivity’ to ‘flow’ through her performance. A first version of the song is performed unaccompanied and included in the album *Little Earthquakes* from 1992. A remix of ‘Me and a Gun’ from 2004 incorporates suggestive music to great effect; it offers some of the elements contained in the original song, although in this later version the listeners’ focus on the lyrics is somehow diminished. My attention will therefore be drawn to the original song from 1992, in which her voice appears bare, ‘naked’, and full of expressivity (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 2 ‘Me and a Gun’). The song articulates a singing verbalization or letting go of the artist’s own experience of being held hostage and sexually and emotionally violated.¹³² This performance is usually regarded as a way of working through feelings of victimisation, and it can also be perceived as an empowering act of leaving behind traumatic life experience. However, the interpretation of ‘Me and a Gun’ as operating simply as a talking cure appears somewhat simplistic, especially if we consider Amos’s engagement with her audience, as well as the multiplicity of significations that underpin her vocal performance. Amos draws from the experience and transforms it into a unique narrative about a woman’s positioning as a subject within culture: the unveiling of a story that emanates from an external painful experience and the conscious process of

assimilation into the internal.¹³³ The re-externalisation and sharing of that painful experience through her performance destabilizes the dynamics between the social and the psychic, as well as the boundary between a real distressing life experience and the fragmented, but insightful narrative of the song. The content of the lyrics draws from autobiographical reference, which is not to be taken on the whole as accurate approximations to life events, but in relation to Amos's way of feeling and speaking out of a woman's voice, which maps/blends onto her singing performance. The fragmentary recollection of the experience of rape in 'Me and a Gun' gradually – and powerfully – becomes the experience of others, thus illustrating the instability of both identity and the confessional as it tests the limits of the sovereign self. Self-reference enables the artist to foreground the dynamics of alterity and hence authorise herself as other. The space created in her singing performance allows Amos to designate and empower herself as an artist, as the author of the song and of her own persona placed at the centre of the narrative, as well as the author/performer of her own music. She becomes both powerfully confessional subject and extraordinarily brutalised object in a singular traumatic moment.

Vocal Performance and the Trace of the Trauma

Amos sings 'Me and a Gun' using a voice that does not deviate much from a single vocal location (head voice with occasional throat articulation). Her vocal production seems stable, but is also slightly inflected at some points, where she randomly articulates a fleeting throaty sound, and quickly moves to head voice: 'it was me and a gun and a man on my back and I sang 'holy holy' as he buttoned down his pants [...]'.¹³⁴ The song is sung in her lower vocal range and her voice becomes almost like a whisper, apparently denoting a certain intensity of feeling. She utilises a number of

simple techniques to emphasise (perform, stage) the intensity of this experience for us: emphasis on the initial phonic sound of the words; stress on sibilants and fricatives; and other nuances of diction and tone that could indicate a kind of laboured, almost strenuous revisiting of the site of trauma: '[...] does it mean I should spread for you, your friends your father, Mr Ed [...]'.¹³⁵ Moreover, the 'overflow' of emotion in the vocal performance is strengthened by the listener's awareness of the presence of autobiographical elements in her narrative. The content takes the listener to the instance of the sexual violation and stages a certain version of what might go through the mind of the victim at that traumatic moment of violation: '[...] These things go through your head when there's a man on your back and you are pushed flat on your stomach [...]'.¹³⁶ Listening to Amos's voice can generate an effect of identification or empathy, but it can also produce a chilling effect of listening to that which is usually concealed and a sudden encounter with oneself as voyeur. The autobiographical here connotes both a disclosure of a personal intimate moment and the concealment of that which is suppressed and traumatic, and hence it can function somewhat like a mask or a screen. Amos's vocal performance becomes the screen that resonates with her life experience: when the spoken words may not find a way of telling, her singing voice becomes the sonic screen that stages something very private.¹³⁷

The voice in song, the singing voice, then, can be seen to underpin and elaborate a certain political focus already evident in the lyrics. Yet it can also be seen to extend those meanings well beyond the singularly verbal: having to face up to or work through the violence inflicted on a woman deprived of her will is perhaps the most difficult process that this song tries to deal with. The experience of rape can produce

serious psychic disturbance and in this sense the woman can find it hard, if not impossible, to envisage an adequate compensation for her victimisation. The concept of 'radical injustice', as posited by Brett Levinson, contends that a wronged individual can be driven to an extreme in which she/he cannot perceive equivalency between the distress endured and a given (or even imagined) punishment for the assault.¹³⁸ Although Levinson's concept of 'radical injustice' entails the impossibility of a crime/punishment exchange or 'transaction', it can be relevant to the case of rape in that the memory of that victimisation may continuously haunt the woman. The victim may, in turn, be burdened by a sense that the wrong is beyond repair or restitution and hence the feeling of 'radical injustice'. As pointed out by Levinson, 'radical injustice' is connected with Kristeva's arguments on melancholy in *Black Sun*, in so far as the traumatic experience may not be converted into a re-presentation or memory of the past event and thus the melancholic fails to mourn and work through the pain.¹³⁹ The lack of re-presentation or memory confines the individual to a recurrent and perpetual living presence of the trauma as a 'raw' repetition. Likewise, 'radical injustice' becomes severe when it cannot be determined, gauged or measured. Amos's lyrics represent an attempt to somehow represent that traumatic moment by way of an account of the painful event, without reducing it to simple narrative, and thus her vocal expression, above and beyond the simply 'verbal' meanings of the lyrics, can be read as the representation or trace of that trauma; the vocal performance functions as an interruption and working through, a breaking down of the continual living presence of the trauma. In her singing performance, Amos's narrative/lyrics (representation) can be construed as the *replacement* for the pain, which can therefore point towards the clearing of that suffering and trauma.¹⁴⁰

The Singing Voice as a Signifier

Words in 'Me and a Gun' are prolonged at some points and cut sharply in dynamic towards the end of each strophe; Amos sometimes finishes a verse in a non-audible sound, almost beyond her register. These silenced, truncated endings remind one of a sigh, a faint break in the linearity of vocal production. This view can be supported also by Amos's intervention in the flow of song with almost spoken fragments, especially at the end of lines. These spoken fragments are necessarily pitched outside the diatonic frame of the song and thereby disturb also the harmonic unity of the song-flow. This aspect combined with the rasping sounds in the throat mentioned above also disrupt the linearity of the song, as well as combining arbitrarily notes of small and larger amplitude and altering the duration of the sonic envelope. The hard timbre in the quality of her voice is perceptible by way of an occasional brusque attack at the beginning of a verse, overemphasising a throat voice followed by a head voice. These occasional harsh articulations in her voice ('[...] tell me what's right [...]; '..do you know CAROLINA [...]; 'And you are push flat [...]) are articulated in a higher register and the sound appears to stage a strong emotion or pain, resembling something like a stylised and fragmented cry at feelings of powerlessness and frustration. The sporadic emotional releases work as ruptures in the continuity of the tone, emphasising the volatile mood of the song, as a device that seems to accentuate the singer's refusal to distance herself from the content of the lyrics. In this way, and although her vocality is carefully controlled, the artist stages in her performance a deliberate and dramatic effect of not having totally mastered her feelings, of not having a hold over her vocal expression.

The overall sound quality is introspective, grave, and characterised by an intense breathiness in the articulation of her voice. These elements contribute to the dramatics of her voice, evident in the elongated notes and the alternation of gentle and hard attacks at the beginning of verses, as well as the truncated endings of words in the lyrics. In Amos's singing, these contrasts become very subtle, but embody feelings of abject distraction. It is a voice that finds it hard to come out of the body, a voice that encounters a resistance, and powerfully stages the singing female subject.

Amos's use of the lower half of her register, the gentle and hard attacks, and the overuse of breath production in her voice seem to accentuate a connection between the musical/vocal elements unique to her singing performance (the signifiers) and the conceptual elements derived from her vocalised music and lyrics (what is signified); the latter would include two related dimensions, aesthetic and social, linked to the trauma of rape. We are assuming here that there are for communication not only verbal language, but also other aspects associated with our sensory apparatus, such as the auditory and the visual. Lacan argues that the relation between signifier and signified is extremely unstable since signifiers in his theory not only have conscious existence but also work in the unconscious and can therefore exist prior to signifieds.¹⁴¹ In psychoanalytic terms, Amos's performance appears at first to draw attention to the *énoncé* or content of her statements (the experience of rape), although a closer listening to her articulations would seem to indicate a focus on the *énonciation*, which refers to the position of the subject in the production of the statement. In Lacanian theory, *énonciation* is located in the unconscious: he affirms that the source of the speech comes from the unconscious and not so much from the ego or consciousness; he goes on then to establish that the subject is split or divided at

the time of uttering 'I', since there is the 'I' of the *énonciation* or unconscious and the 'I' master of the statement.¹⁴² Amos's singing verbalisation, analysed as an individual act that refers to a specific situation – rape – could be interpreted in terms of the Lacanian split subject where the 'I' alluded to in the performance leaves the trace of both the 'I' master of the song and the unconscious 'I' subject of (and submitted to) trauma. If we take singing as a mode of communication, as a form of expressing or staging Amos's interiority, we may assume, in a Lacanian fashion, that the singing comes from the unconscious, which is the site of the 'discourse' of the Other, and it can therefore destabilize the unity of the subject in the performance.¹⁴³ In his theory, Lacan does not make a distinction between male and female subjects, although if we were to make such a gender distinction (as proposed by Irigaray), it could be argued that Amos's unconscious musical language may be understood as coming from the position that the female 'I' takes in discourse and hence it may be viewed as the expression of the feminine.¹⁴⁴ We will come back to Irigaray and the relevance of her arguments to Amos's performance; for the moment, the split subject can be illustrated in 'Me and a Gun' through the uneasiness in the flowing of the song: the unconscious traumatic (female) 'I' that becomes audible through the articulations of the performer, by way of sensing the faltering voice and all those subtle musical elements that evoke trauma. Amos's 'I' operating as a shifter becomes the subject of the narrative in the lyrics and designates the unconscious subject 'I' or subject of the *énonciation*. In this way, Amos would seem to draw attention to the centrality of the subject position from which she is speaking and foreground simultaneously what is signified in her performance. 'Me and a Gun' seems to give voice/expression to the female subject (discursively and performatively) and also relocate the boundaries between the personal and the artistic performance –the purely

performative – and the inside and outside, concepts that normally define and delimit constructions of sexuality and gender.

Amongst the subtle elements in ‘Me and a Gun’, the highly charged intimate vocalisation and the throaty articulations connote pain, an excess of distressing emotion, which can moreover be read as the Lacanian Real cutting through from outside language and resisting symbolisation. One of the intrinsic qualities of the Real is as that which cannot be assimilated to the symbolic order, which renders it essentially traumatic. The Real would seem to emerge in ‘Me and a Gun’ through the articulations of Amos’s voice, unmediated as the object of anxiety, the trauma of rape. By somehow ‘getting to’ the traumatic event in her performance (staging it, repeating it), connecting it with words, the part of the Real that remains unsymbolised – the residual experience – enters a process of productive symbolisation. Language allows the trauma to be related to a wider range of signifiers ([..] but I haven’t seen Barbados so I must get out of this [..]), and this process enables Amos to engage in a dialectic or movement with her own ‘discourse’.¹⁴⁵ Yet, the Real is for Lacan both inside the traumatic experience and outside as an external reality, and the unconscious is not pure interiority, but it is also outside, reflecting the intersubjective construction of the subject. As we have already intimated, Amos problematises the inside/outside binarism by way of projecting outwards those emotions which had previously been internalised, turning interiority, literally, inside out. Lacan understands oppositions such as inside/outside as continuous with each other, and it is therefore possible in his argumentation to cross over from inside to outside or vice versa.¹⁴⁶ Lacan makes this particularly clear (insofar as Lacan is ever clear) in his articulation of the *moebius strip*, where a three-dimensional figure appears to have two distinct sides, but the two

are continuous with each other, that is, there is only one side. It illustrates how binarisms such as inside/outside are often presented in opposition, although they are in fact connected, joined to each other, such that it is therefore possible to cross over from the inside to outside and vice versa.¹⁴⁷ Within the Lacanian reading, it would seem that this dynamic is operating in Amos's 'Me and a Gun', by means of a kind of circularity (internal/external) which seems to offset the separation between these two territories. Irigaray, however, refuses to see the internal and the external in the same horizon in relation to the *moebius strip*. In her reading, she is concerned about mingling the person's inside and outside in the same cycle or orbit, and suggests instead an image of touching where two hands join together, but do not grasp each other. Irigaray's image of the hands, touching lightly like the two lips, illustrates her understanding of the world and the self not as continuous to each other, but joined in unison, without assimilation of one into the other.¹⁴⁸

Amos's Enunciatory Position: Assuming Irigaray's Feminine 'I' as a Speaking Subject

Yet, Amos's performance would seem to require a specific feminist reading in as much as if 'Me and a Gun' is about a sense of victimisation and healing, it is also about trying to find a way of staging a personal narrative and of expressing Amos's interiority without losing that inside's special quality, of letting female identity and subjectivity emerge in her musical language without having to acquiesce to a masculine symbolic. This can be understood as an open-ended searching through language (music and lyrics) for woman's own name and voice, an exploration of her identity. The need to listen to Amos's music as an inscription of the female subject is thus grounded in this project. Irigaray can be usefully applied here to argue for an

explicit feminine position. The subject of *énonciation* in Lacan's theory speaks through language and to take up one's position in language, as Margaret Whitford suggests in her discussion of Irigaray's concept of *parler-femme*, presupposes that one has to take up a place on one side or another of the male/female divide: regardless of the internal split, the speaking subjects are either male or female and thus the unconscious, which makes itself heard through speech, would consequently let gender speak without the conscious awareness of the speaker (in the same way as neurosis or phantasy are assumed within psychoanalysis to speak through the unconscious mind).¹⁴⁹ Unlike the masculine subject, the female subject would encounter, in psychoanalytic terms, a tension between her subjectivity – constituted in language – and female identity, given that the moulding of women's subjectivity takes place within the representations and language of the (male) symbolic; this would necessarily have to leave a mark in the discourse of the female speaker, which can therefore be a sign of the difference between masculine and feminine/female (speaking) subjects.¹⁵⁰ This specific Irigarayan feminist argument is perhaps particularly appropriate for Amos's 'Me and a gun' since *parler-femme*, following Whitford's argument, refers to *énonciation*. Within this perspective, the position one takes up in *énonciation* is always in relation to an interlocutor, subject to an interpretation, which will take place within the (male) symbolic. Whitford understands Irigaray as a thinker of change and identifies a particular concern in her thinking for the conditions of women's subjectivity and for 'how women can assume the 'I' of discourse in their own right and not as a derivative male 'I'.¹⁵¹

In view of this, Amos's enunciatory position in 'Me and a Gun' would be located vis-à-vis the interpretations of an interlocutor/audience and her voice is listened to within

the context of patriarchal norms that have systematically silenced women as speaking subjects. Amos's performance would seem to be assuming Irigaray's feminine 'I' of enunciation in its own right, the *parler-femme* or feminine subject of the woman artist, singer and music performer. Yet, as a subject victim of rape, her traumatic experience adds an uncanny dimension to her (female) subjectivity. Testimonies of victims of rape reveal that the most disturbing element of the experience is the sense of being deprived of self: without consent, the subject feels evacuated from within. One way to mitigate the feeling of selflessness is to displace one's subjectivity and adopt the feeling of not being there, as if the woman witnessed the rape from outside the scene.¹⁵² Either way of experiencing the assault (from 'within' the experience or absent from it) can produce subsequent psychological damage for the victim. The implication for Amos – subject of the artistic performance and victim of rape – seems to have two related dimensions: on the one hand, the musical performance functions as a mediated, but powerful method to either restore the self or re-direct the displacement of subjectivity. On the other hand, Amos seems to attempt through the musical performance to re-affirm and consolidate the feminine 'I', by way of finding her own voice, and by thinking of herself as 'woman-as-subject'. As we have seen, assuming female subjectivity in language by singing the autobiographical (speaking as woman/*parler-femme*) can break the silence of the woman subject in the (male) symbolic, and may produce, as a result, a change in the discourse of dominant cultural values. By giving a voice to the traumatic experience of rape in her performance, Amos authorises and empowers the feminine and undertakes a process of self-representation (please, see figure 1).



Figure 1: Tori Amos 'Me and a Gun' live New York, Jan. 23, 1997

The Voice that Originates in the Wounded Female Body

Even without mention of the name, 'Me and a Gun' refers to the particular and the personal, and it subsequently forestalls the possibility of Amos being seen as an unnamed or unidentified object or victim of sexual violence; the performance thus breaks the silence that may render rape anonymous and general (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 2 'Me and a Gun' live in New York).¹⁵³ Her articulation is also implicitly linked to a sense of loss, in that, within dominant discourses, the wound/pain inflicted on women's bodies is often masked, devalued or erased, and it may therefore be necessary to re-inscribe women's histories time and time again. Amos's voice originates in a body inscribed with violence and disruption, and thus the mediation of the female wounded body in her song suggests a connection or cohesiveness between her whole body and the singing performance. The binarisms of discourse entail a hierarchy that in the case of the subject/object divide results problematical for women as they attempt to affirm their subject position in culture. The devaluation attached to women's bodies as 'object' poses, in this exceptional articulation, the complex relation of the female subject to its culturally objectified

female or feminine body.¹⁵⁴ At the time of using language, a woman is faced with a paradox: entering the patriarchal genealogy in which her position as an object has already been defined, or else remaining outside the signifying system altogether; if she wants to speak her own identity, the subject-object relation does not adequately provide an economy that enables the woman to articulate her subject position.¹⁵⁵ Irigaray proposes an economy not based on a 'subject-object' relation and elaborates therefore an alternative economy of 'between-subjects', based on an inter-subjective relation between different subject, and respecting sexual difference. Whitford points out that Irigaray envisions the Kristevan concept of the subject in process as a subject in dialogue, as always engaged with the other.¹⁵⁶ The body is also brought into the language/subject equation and then nourished by blood, flesh and material elements. The woman is then able to speak her identity using words, images and symbols, and her own body, and engage in a constructive and dialogic relation with the other. In psychoanalytic terms, this would imply bringing into language the maternal-feminine; in other words, the woman enters language as a subject by making a non-objectifying female identification with the mother (a point to which I will return in the next chapter).¹⁵⁷ A similar position could be reached within the terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis (although Lacan himself does not do this). In the 'first time' of the Oedipus Complex, child and mother relate to each other as subjects (or perhaps as babbling proto-subjects): the object – a maternal phallus – circulates between them. Up to now, for Lacan as for Freud, there is no difference between little boys and little girls; only subsequently does the issue of sexual difference arise, and the differential structure of identification is therefore put in place.

From this perspective, Amos's performance of 'Me and a Gun' can be read as reinscribing the relation between woman-as-subject and her objectified victimised body: the body is brought into the musical language in order to speak her own (female and, in this case, traumatised) self and to enter via the performance into a productive communication with the other. In this sense, this process can be viewed as blurring the boundary of the discourse of the subject/object (mind/body), given that the wounded body indispensably extends under Amos's narrative self, metaphorically in blood and flesh and material elements. Her voice originates in her body, which becomes associated with sound and is identified with the feminine subject: 'you have got to be your own song'.¹⁵⁸ Amos's statement summarises the strong presence of her body and its ubiquitousness in her renderings. The wounded female body in 'Me and a Gun' cannot lend itself easily to simple objectification or reductive semantic schemata even if the externalisation of the suffering in the performance works as a substitute for and the clearing of the pain. The wounded body lacks an acceptable or satisfactory referential content for the listener, and although the imagination may turn it into an imaginary object, this object would not be there in any experienceable form susceptible to gratifying sensations.¹⁵⁹ It could be argued that the vestige of the wounded female body may extend beyond the listener's imagination of the singing body and thus the representable instance of imagining the body that is singing may resist/defy the objectification of the pain inflicted on the body. By voicing her pain/trauma, Amos positions herself, in this single performance, as a feminine subject whose body is placed at the centre, at odds within a patriarchal culture that has generated an all too familiar description of the (objectified sexual) female body and has equally prompted silence around the female wounded body (especially as a result of male violence). Amos's body seems in 'Me and a Gun' to move out and away

from the masculine symbolic representation of the female body, and her performance creates a set of new significations linked to rape and violence as visible, audible, traumatically extant.

The Unassuming Vocal Performance and the Reversal of the Dynamics of the Mask

The body in 'Me and a Gun' appears disambiguated, removed from musical instrument or technical assistance, and serves to house the voice, which is marked by the trajectory of a strong bodily presence. Amos's body becomes the instrument and her voice springs from her body without aid. Lucy Green suggests that the singing woman can enact a vocal display that retains an embodied quality, an ability to lure which represents no threat for (and is thus acceptable within) patriarchal culture.¹⁶⁰ Amos's voice in 'Me and a Gun' is framed/contained within an understated performance, stripped of artifice and embellishment. The unassuming vocal delivery suggests detachment from the body, whilst the bodily quality of Amos's voice insinuates proximity to the body. This interplay between detachment and embodiment in the performance would seem to offset the allure of the female singing voice, whilst simultaneously holding onto the body as a site of meaning. If we think of the melody and the music structure of the song, they both seem to have the air of a folk song, especially of a folk ballad, which suggests narrative and yet the song hardly tells a story; rather it assembles a sequence of 'flashbacks', moments of memory, as if frozen in time. These moments of memory draw attention to the body as the site of painful remembrance. The type of tune resembles children's songs, a comparison strengthened by the tone of introspection or 'innocence' conveyed in Amos's performance. In this way, Amos's voice seems to generate the effect of detachment

and closeness: she seems to be singing to herself, but recreates also a sense of intimacy that stages simultaneously both withdrawal from and close proximity to the body. The effect of self-effacement in Amos's voice appears in this song to be connected with a sense of closeness to Amos's body as victim of a sexual crime and the traumatic disturbance thus staged in this song. Her putatively static vocal performance presents, through her motionless body, the specificity of that violation and trauma. Sexual violence in the song adds, furthermore, an unsettling and densely gendered dimension to the relation between the 'real' life experience and the musical performance.



Figure 2: Tori Amos 'Me and a Gun' live New York, 1997

This last aspect can be more overtly expounded by watching a live recorded performance of her song where the camera, invariably fixed on Amos's face, attempts to capture that intimate vocal articulation through the strong physicality of her embodied wounded self (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 2 'Me and a Gun' live in New York). In other words, the interjection of the camera on this particular video is minimised in order to retain the power of the delivery and thus avoids the performer becoming a passive object of the film camera (please, see figure

2). This visual element, as well as the absence of accompaniment (which elsewhere typically serves as an aesthetically pleasurable distraction, thus minimising the power of the singing voice), strengthens the dialectical exchange between the displayer and the spectator. Lucy Green argues that the displayer and the onlooker mutually construct a mask: the displayer is able to play with the mask and is therefore in the active position even if her/his place can be weakened by the necessity to be concealed behind the mask. The onlooker, on the other hand, can become seduced and captivated by the mask, but possesses the disarming power of the gaze.¹⁶¹ Amos's live video of 'Me and a Gun', unmediated either by camera movement or musical instrument, would seem to nullify the objectifying power of the onlooker's gaze, enabling the empowerment of the displayer, who becomes the source, the active female subject with a significant control over her vocality. It was argued earlier that Amos's vocal performance becomes the sonic screen through which to speak of, articulate, stage something very private, which may thus be understood as the implicit suppression of the concealment (and, therefore, the exposure) of the displayer behind the mask. The power of the onlooker's gaze may also thereby become inoperative in this delivery by virtue of the listener's difficulty in objectifying the pain and in experiencing it as *jouissance*. The consequence of this seems to be a reversal of the dynamics of the mask: regardless of the intentionality of the effect, both the displayer and the onlooker *appear* in this moment to let the mask fall in order to give a voice and to listen to a 'real-life' experience about rape and trauma. Amos would seem to be challenging the boundary between autobiographical and fictitious narratives and hence the boundary between the real event and the artistic performance.

Audience Identifications

Finally, the narrative of 'Me and a Gun' allows us to examine Amos's reception and the subject positions of her listeners. The 'frozen' emotions and feelings of powerlessness linked to a real experience of rape enable multiple identifications and dis-identifications within the audience. Her articulation of sexual violence is accessed by women who may have gone through similar experiences and would therefore feel identified with the content of the song, as well as affinity with the personalised delivery of her singing and yet this is always doomed to particularity, always only HER trauma, never fully OURS. The first identification may take place between Amos and her narrative subject (the 'I' of the *énoncé* or master of the statement), which is articulated from the vantage point of her own inter-subjective position, articulating with the lives of others. A second identification can be made between the female subject of the *énonciation* and women that may stand for the notion of a collective 'women' subject. Furthermore, her audience, constituted by both men and women, represent individual subjects who would elaborate their own unique identifications/readings of her singing performance. Thus, Amos, speaking as a woman-as-subject, would seem to enact, through her performance, a multiplicity of 'subjects' without favouring any single position, and mirroring in this way feminists' preoccupations with the notion of the 'human subject', whilst simultaneously dramatising the inevitably split nature of that subject and underlining the value of the position of the feminine in language. On the one hand, her performance implicitly addresses the retention of the theoretical concept of 'class' or gender category (collective subject) advocated by some feminists for political and ideological reasons (the performing of 'Me and a Gun' has generated an overwhelming response from women who have written to the artist to express affinity and sharing their own

experiences); this activism prompted Amos into concrete social action through the co-funding of R. A.I.N.N (the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network). On the other hand, 'Me and a Gun' seems also to problematize the mutability of the subject vis-à-vis collectivity and individuality (difference), as well as the postmodern notion of the 'subject' as constituted simply in discourse. This latter conceptualisation would preclude the alternative of a collective subject, which, as we have seen, it is possible to endorse through Amos's artistic performance: her traumatic interiority overflows the outer world creating a set of new and troubling significations.

Trauma, Memory and Symbolism in Diamanda Galás's 'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle' [Blind Man's Cry]

Diamanda Galás is a remarkably talented singer-songwriter who is known for her highly personal body of work as well as a markedly unconventional approach to her art. Trained as a musician and piano player, Galás's best instrument is her polymorphous voice; she explains that, contrary to the common belief, she is not an opera singer who has decided to move to the avant-garde, but that she specifically trained her voice operatically for years in order to have what she terms a 'gigantic expression'.¹⁶² Galás's songs speak of death, the diseased, the oppressed, the exiled, and the victims of genocides, of madness, trauma and the powerlessness of AIDS sufferers. She has commented 'we must not turn our faces from the doleful wake of History',¹⁶³ and thus her songs are a kind of mourning, compassionate pleas, grave reminders that bear witness to the reality of death and mass extermination. Galás became better known through her album *Plague Mass* (1991), a selection of themes rooted in her three album *Masque of the Red Death* (1989), a trilogy intended as a requiem to those already dead or dying of AIDS, as well as a politicised (and politicising) challenge to the conservatism of right-wing reactionaries who turned away from the disease, looked down on its victims, and sought to silence discourses about its effects. Commentators highlight how, at the heart of her project, lies an unabated moral critique of the negative sociological (and political) effects of the plague mentality surrounding AIDS. Her declared aim was to unmask the hypocrisy and benightedness of 'the man who is spiritually impotent, the homophobe, the wilfully blind, the deserter'.¹⁶⁴

Galás is famous for having a vocal range of three-and-a-half octaves, and her extreme vocal declamation has been described as a voice ‘that can go from a blood-curdling shriek of an animal in a slaughterhouse to a beautiful and gravely melancholy moan’.¹⁶⁵ She exploits the potential of extreme vocal production, operatic and extended vocal techniques that enable her to explore the possibilities she wants to reflect in her work. From the beginning of her singing career, she also became interested in techniques such as real-time electronic manipulation of the voice, by which she expands and utilizes the possibilities of voice amplification: her techniques include incremental change and reverberation, delay processing and multi-tracking, and stereo manipulation on the voice.¹⁶⁶ She is highly skilled in using microphones and has a tendency to use different vocal timbres, some of them with a high noise, given her dynamic range. These techniques, together with Galás’s extended low and upper operatic range (she would be considered a lyric spinto soprano) allow her greater versatility in the use of her voice; Galás considers that her voice is her vocal instrument, which she has developed in order to expand her vocabulary in musical expression, in the same way a painter or a film maker would seek to maximize the expressive resources within their art.¹⁶⁷ Her performances trespass music’s boundaries in that she uses her mastery of vocal techniques to express something beyond the audience’s expectations.¹⁶⁸

Galás’s work does not exclusively deal with the treatment suffered by AIDS victims. Apart from her AIDS trilogy, [*The Divine Punishment* (1986), *Saint of the Pit* (1986) and *You Must Be Certain of the Devil* (1988)], the artist has a wider concern with the themes of separation, death, dementia and persecution of anonymous communities, in

particular those forced into isolation, imposed from the outside or inside. She is also interested in exploring musical fields in which her extreme vocal performance produces a dark, disquieting, intense and almost sinister atmosphere. This is illustrated in her albums *Litanies of Satan* (1982), *Diamanda Galás* (1984), *Vena Cava* (1993) and *Schrei X* (1996). Yet, her repertoire also includes collections that are considered less radical, although they are still a highly discursive work. She has produced more 'conventional' albums in which she draws from blues, jazz, Greek rebetika and gospel spirituals: *The Singer* (1992), *The Sporting Life* (with John Paul Jones, 1994), *Malediction and Prayer* (1998) and *La Serpenta Canta* (2004). In these last two albums, Galás brings together a selection her best live performances from her concerts for piano and voice, *Defixiones* and *La Serpenta Canta* respectively. Here Galás performs adaptations of well-known songs and styles, mainly blues, and reveals not only the influence of the black American musical tradition, but her ongoing interest in a European modernist tradition.¹⁶⁹

Locating the Sites of Trauma

Galás's activism to promote the cause of victims of AIDS and to fight the stigma surrounding the disease started around 1983, two years before her own brother, Philip Dimitri Galás, was diagnosed with HIV. Her involvement in this field responds to a sincere concern for this collective, to whom she has dedicated a substantial part of her music and performances. She has also devoted time to patients abandoned as a result of the disease and has advocated adequate development of research and legislative improvements for its sufferers.¹⁷⁰ Her brother died in 1986, leaving a profound impression on the artist, who assisted him until the last stages of his life. By that time, strong emotional and artistic ties had developed between brother and sister, and

he had also become a major influence on his sister's artistic interests. Philip Dimitri Galás was a talented playwright and actor and introduced Diamanda to the works of Antonin Artaud and symbolist writers Gérard de Nerval, Charles Baudelaire and Lautréamont, amongst others. She has turned to some of these authors in her music; she uses French, Spanish, Greek, Syrian and other poetry, which she sings as song settings to convey the idea of exile, death, defiance and resurrection. Ian Penman has suggested that among the many voices that emerge in Diamanda Galás's music, her songs become a stage in which her brother continues in some way to let his voice be heard.¹⁷¹ In *Vena Cava*, for example, an album that consists of solo vocals and sound effects that deal with the painful and distressing emotions resulting from the mental destruction when dying of AIDS, Diamanda specifically uses texts based on the work of Philip Dimitri Galás. The music reproduces the harrowing and nonsensical sounds that mirror this devastating state of annihilation.¹⁷²

Situations which lead to isolation and death are pervasive themes throughout Galás's musical trajectory, not only in relation to AIDS, but also in connection with oppressed or mistreated people, as well as individuals who are obliged to live a forgotten or deadened existence. Galás denies that the work she has done on mourning and AIDS was simply and only motivated by sympathy for her brother's death.¹⁷³ The artist experienced the loss of her brother as a personal tragedy, but she also lost many friends to the AIDS epidemic. Having to face up in the 1980s to the reality of AIDS as direct experience can be said to mark a site of trauma and loss, which then informs her mourning work. Of course, Galás's musical performances are influenced by many artistic traditions, such as the already mentioned French symbolist poets, German expressionist theatre, religious liturgical chants and the deep sentiments of

blues songs. In this sense, her thematic choice can be considered part of an ongoing artistic/aesthetic project; yet there is also a tendency in her work to engage with the self-referential, significantly in a manner that tests the limits of what is conventionally understood as autobiographical. Autobiographical reference emerges in Galás as a result of the interaction between her personal experience and her artistic/aesthetic views. These two overlapping spaces mark the site of the representation of the traumatic which underwrites Galás's music, and which emerges as autobiographical subjectivity in her depictions of distress, anguish and suffering.

It is not only her oratorio-indictment *Plague Mass* that carries the imprint of autobiographical subjectivity (as reference to her experience with AIDS), but the self-referential becomes ubiquitous in the singer's subsequent work. Self-referentiality informs Galás's performances, for example, when she engages with the disturbing emotions arising from the experience of mental breakdown and confinement, as in her album *Schrei X* and her solo theatre piece *Insekta* (1993); she had already explored the theme of confinement in her composition 'Panoptikon' (*Diamanda Galás* 1984). In 1989, Galás was referred to a mental institution; she has often recalled her sense of despair and helplessness resulting from her estrangement from the outside world, as well as the impossibility of communicating with other human beings. The isolation felt as a consequence of this institutionalisation can be said to mark another site of trauma for the artist, who has experienced first-hand the alienation endured by the powerless, and those with mental disease and illness (she also had first-hand experience of a serious health threat when diagnosed with the hepatitis C virus).

Galás's self-referentiality goes hand in hand with her fascination to express in her vocal performances strong emotions that step beyond aesthetic conventions. Her artistic aim is to stretch the possibilities of her medium so as to transmit a personal vision that projects in the listener an auditory encounter with the sentiments of confinement, desolation and disintegration. With her voice, Galás wants to produce an immediate extroversion of sound, which works as a channel to deliver a focused message that speaks of human limitation.¹⁷⁴ She uses her voice both as a political force and in a quasi-liturgical way, and considers it also a vehicle to transmit occult knowledge or power. Her concept of the voice is connected with her Greek origins, and the fact that the Greek voice contains, according to Galás, a political, shamanistic and homosexual quality characteristic of the male/female power of witches. Galás's background is Turkish-Greek-Anatolian on her father's side and Spartan Greek on her mother's; she inherits a strong sense of identification with the Spartan Greek tradition of *moirologi*, which refers to Maniot lamentations in which women scream and pull their hair out as they mourn for the dead.¹⁷⁵ They were believed to speak directly to, and express the feelings of the dead, and they were also using incantations and inciting revenge against those who were held responsible for the deaths. These women can be said to have been externalising or acting out a shared trauma. Their connection with mysterious powers or knowledge made them dangerous for society and hence they were considered witches and a threat to patriarchal authority.¹⁷⁶ Galás's use of her voice in the way of the *moirologi* reveals a side of her identity linked to the Greek tradition: this vocal engagement is constitutive of personal identity, and yet it surfaces in the performance as enacted 'self'; the *moirologi* voice emerges in Galás as a constructed narrative for a particular identification or naming. Her engagement with this specifically female (albeit gender-indeterminate) voice can

thus be understood as a way to locate Galás's subject positioning. Her voice (like the *moirologi*) displays a collective trauma and becomes a sign of defiance against patriarchy, gender bias, and any society, institution or group, which exerts oppression and discrimination. Her subject position becomes strategic, as well as contingent with the culturally constructed identities of her audience. Through Galás's identification with the *moirologi*, it is possible, as we shall see, to open up a space for artistic self-representation and political situatedness.

Galás's Greek origins and family history inform another of her major works, *Defixiones, Will and Testament* (2003), a project dedicated to the Armenian, Assyrian and Anatolian Greek victims of genocide under the Ottoman Turkish rule between 1914 and 1923. This tragedy continues to be regarded as an almost forgotten cause, as it has not received – so far – appropriate recognition at international or national levels. Galás's idea for this work was to explore the testimonies of persecution and forced exile of her blood ancestry, and unveil the horrors of ethnic 'cleansing', torture and human sacrifice that occurred at this time in Asia Minor. Her voice becomes a conduit through which to speak for these minorities collectively, given that they suffered unimaginable torments (they were forced on death marches into the desert, were burned alive or had no option but to drown in the Aegean Sea when they were denied refuge by Allied warships).¹⁷⁷ The album combines Armenian liturgical music with music set to texts from dissident poets and brings together textual, linguistic and sonic elements so as to express the feelings of people condemned to live as outlaws, in physical or spiritual exile, and those who died under unnatural circumstances (please, see figure 3).¹⁷⁸

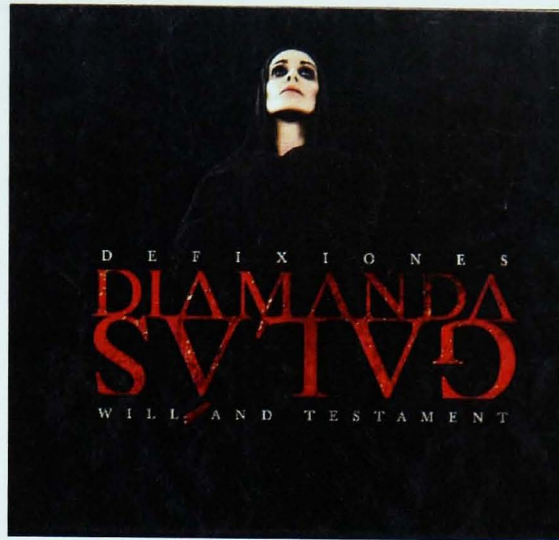


Figure 3: Defixiones, album cover

The artist's engagement with her family's past history illustrates a way in which trauma carries a generational component, for although Galás is a separate subject who did not experience that particular trauma, family narratives can become part of one's own story. A traumatic ancestral event can enter a chain of transmission in which the ancestor's trauma comes alive through the descendants, even if this trauma never belonged to them in any direct experience.¹⁷⁹ The self-referential relies here on the memory of the memory, in which the historical past is not totally closed off from the present. Galás's autobiographical imprint emerges as reference to her family recollection of this originary trauma, which has been passed on and lodged in her own memory: 'You don't hear these stories for 20 years and then forget them, [...] you don't'.¹⁸⁰ The artist becomes the bearer of a traumatic memory, which has been buried alive and has not therefore been properly mourned. *Defixiones, Will and Testament* can be read as mourning and a way to speak openly about – as well as a way to represent – the trauma of extermination and exile. Levinson's concept of 'radical injustice' can again be useful in this instance, since the victims and descendants of the Asia Minor tragedy were not compensated for their pain, nor was

their suffering recognized. In the absence of recognition, the survivors had to face the ‘radical injustice’ of not being able to imagine what could constitute an adequate equivalency between their distress and the lack of *any* punishment for the perpetrators, even if this were only utopian or imaginary.¹⁸¹ They had to live with the impossibility of imagining what could be a potential restitution for their victimization. Galás’s project can be seen as a way to access the memory of the living presence of this collective trauma, and hence a process of remembering and mourning can begin to take form through the artist’s grieving and sombre musical gestures. *Defixiones* draws from a trauma in which the limits between ‘self’ and family become blurred, as well as the limits between the autobiographical and the historical trauma.

Galás’s ‘Artémis’

La Treizième revient . . . C’est encor la première;
Et c’est toujours la Seule,—ou c’est le seul moment:
Car es-tu reine, ô Toi! la première ou dernière?
Es-tu roi, toi le Seul ou le dernier amant? . . .

Aimez qui vous aima du berceau dans la bière;
Celle que j’aimai seul m’aime encor tendrement:
C’est la mort—ou la morte . . . O délice! ô tourment!
La rose qu’elle tient, c’est la *Rose trémière*.

Sainte napolitaine aux mains pleines de feux,
Rose au coeur violet, fleur de sainte Gudule:
As-tu trouvé ta croix dans le désert des cieux?

Roses blanches, tombez! vous insultez nos Dieux,
Tombez, fantômes blancs, de votre ciel qui brûle:
—La sainte de l’abîme est plus sainte à mes yeux!¹⁸²

[The Thirteenth returns... Once more she is the first;
And she is still the only one, or is this the only moment;
For you are surely queen, first and last?
For you are surely king, O first and last lover?...

Love the one who loves you from the cradle to the grave;
The one alone I love loves me dearly still:
She is death - or the dead one... Delight or torment!
And the rose she holds is the hollyhock.

Saint of Naples with your hands full of fire,
Mauve-hearted rose, flower of Saint Gudule:
Have you discovered your cross in the desert of the skies?

White roses, fall! you offend our gods
Fall, pale phantoms, from that burning sky
Holier is the saint who has known the abyss].¹⁸³

‘Artémis’ is Galás’s music set to a poem of the same title by nineteenth-century French writer Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855). Nerval, together with Edgar Allan Poe (another

of Galás's favourites), is considered a precursor of symbolist poetry. The song was first released in her album *The Divine Punishment & Saint of the Pit* (1989) – the latter being the second part of her AIDS trilogy *Masque of the Red Death* (whose title is taken from one of Poe's tales as an allegory for the AIDS epidemic; the trilogy is now more widely known as *Plague Mass*). 'Artémis' was then recast in the context of middle-eastern musics and included in *Defixiones, Will and Testament*.¹⁸⁴ It is noteworthy that 'Artémis' has been selected for two of Galás major works dedicated to the victims of AIDS and genocide, both of which contain a strong traumatic subtext for the artist. 'Artémis' is also played in a musical video that features Galás performing live singing a joint version of both 'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle'.¹⁸⁵ 'Cris d'aveugle' is another of Galás's song settings, this time for a fragment of the poem *Blind Man's Cry* by nineteenth-century French symbolist poet Tristan Corbière (1845-1875). This song was also originally included in *Divine Punishment & Saint of the Pit*, and added later to her 1991 album *Plague Mass*. Not all the versions of one song in Galás's production necessarily sound (exactly) the same. Both the 'Artémis' version from *Defixiones, Will and Testament* and the video version of 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' will be examined in the context of Galás's mourning work and traumatic memory. The artist's attraction to symbolist poets carries forth the legacy of Philip Dimitri Galás; it also responds to the artist's wider interest in the work of poets who experienced internal or external exile. Galás is also interested in singing the songs in the vernacular language in which the poems were written, given that languages for Galás dwell in a part of herself not inhabited by English. Her engagement with the work of poets is present throughout the artist's musical career and constitutes a significant dimension of her work. She refers to these songs as

‘transcendent compositions’, which feature prominently in her albums *Defixiones* and *Maledicion and Prayer*.¹⁸⁶

‘Artémis’s’ musical structure is based on the blues/gospel tradition, although the song has a modernist feel overall (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 2 ‘Artémis’). In this *Defixiones* version, Galás starts by playing a few notes on her piano, and repeats these blues notes in the second verse (there is oscillation round minor and major 3rd, E \flat /E \sharp in a scale starting on C). Her voice, very solemn, emerges in a low range, emitting a string of grave, sombre vocal sound, which produce a gloomy atmosphere. The music underlines a drone in its bass that accentuates this effect. She lengthens some syllables whilst shortening others, especially at the end of words, as if to maximise the dramatic effect of the sonority of the word. Her commitment is to the sound of the French word rather than the meaning; singing in other languages allows Galás the dimension to explore wider possibilities of sound whilst keeping the interplay between the text and vocality. The video version of ‘Artémis and Cris d’aveugle’ is composed on the B minor scale and uses a simple harmonic structure where Galás’s left hand on the piano repeats the tonic note of the scale B as if this were a drone, keeping within the scale (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 2 ‘Artémis and Cris d’aveugle’). She centres on the combination of two chords, I and IV, which give the song the air of the plagal cadence. As a sign of musical punctuation, the plagal cadence tends to suggest something ‘ancient’, marking the insistent rhythms of religious liturgies (perhaps because in Gregorian chant the plagal modes had a range that ran from a point about a fourth below the final to a point along an octave higher, thus hinting at an alternative

‘tonic’; alternating chords of I and IV are also characteristic of blues). Galás’s use of the minor scale and the association with the plagal sonority, which already connotes sorrow or grief, emphasises the profoundness that she wants to give to the song. The connection of the musical structure with the sacred and the spiritual supports Galás’s commitment to mourning, in the manner of a requiem or hymn for the dead (although she transcends this tradition, as we shall see).

Galás starts at a slow tempo to sing Nerval’s verses; she puts careful emphasis on each word, especially when she elongates vowel sounds. Her deep tones and her manipulation of timbres give a transcendent quality to her voice. She moves down to a lower register when she speaks of death (*‘C’est la mort—ou la morte [..]’*, [She is death - or the dead one]), and goes up her register when vocalising *‘la Rose trémière’* [the hollyhock] (please, see figure 4). The throaty quality of her voice and the gradual rise in pitch and lengthening of this last word at the end of the strophe draw attention to the symbolist significance attached to the *Rose trémière*. The flower has obscure mystic meanings that seem to have inspired several poets and nineteen-century French artists.¹⁸⁷ Although native of the Far East, where it symbolizes the passing of time, the hollyhock is associated in Nerval’s poetry with timelessness and a shifting and evasive idea of nature as recurrence or reappearance, perhaps because the many blossoms that the hollyhock bears on a stalk have been interpreted as incarnations of the soul.¹⁸⁸ The flower is also associated in his poetry with grieving and mourning for a fruitless endeavour to come together with a unique and exceptional loved one. The poem evokes one of the women with whom Nerval, unsuccessfully, fell in love with. In his writings, the idealisation of unattainable women is generally interpreted as a projection for an impossible re-encounter with his lost mother, who died when he was

still a child.¹⁸⁹ In *Artémis*, the loved one is dead and holds the hollyhock, which can be seen both as a metaphor for the dead woman and a symbol for a rebirth or re-emergence of the soul. The higher tones in which the *Rose trémière* is articulated in Galás's song draws attention to the symbolist association of the dead loved one with the hollyhock as reincarnation, as a hope for an allegorical resurrection that appears embedded in her musical elegy. Galás seems to encode a symbolic meaning in her vocal articulation of the *Rose trémière*, which would seem inspired by Nerval's idea that although death represents the end of a journey without return, it provides a threshold for a process of dissolution and transformation.¹⁹⁰



Figure 4: Galás using her dynamic range

The connection between Nerval's metaphysical spirituality and the death of the loved one is translated in Galás's 'Artémis' into a search for a musical sound that seeks transcendence and appeals to the powers of transformation after death. Galás's music would seem in this sense to cross the boundaries of time and become a mystical sound that aims to go beyond death. The next strophe in the poem is sung as a fast 'introverted' recitation: '*Sainte napolitaine aux mains pleines de feux, Rose au coeur*

violet, fleur de sainte Gudule [..]' [Saint of Naples with your hands full of fire, Mauve-hearted rose, flower of Saint Gudule]. Saint Gudule is a patron saint of Brussels who lived in the late seventh-early eighth century, and whose church had a fine rose window. A demon endeavoured to extinguish a light that she carried to aid her prayers, but divine power rekindled the fire again. There is also a flower-like fungus known as 'St. Gudule's lantern' (*tremella deliquescens*) because it bears fruit in early January and does not extinguish in winter. The symbolism in these verses underpins the idea of a flowery resurrection, as well as an interest in the interior mystical experience, which links to the ecstatic manner in which Galás articulates the subsequent verses: she slows down the speed and lowers the tone of her recitation; her sounds become spoken words, and nuance every word in slow motion as if each would contain a mysterious meaning. The inwardness with which this passage is articulated brings associations with Nerval's expression of dark, sombre sentiments and transitory sensations, which are associated in his case with inward experience and a desire to discover the depths of the inner self.¹⁹¹ Galás's spoken utterances can also be interpreted as dark, sombre sentiments, which are likewise linked to the transcendence of death. Her meditation functions as a transitory introversion of sound, as if this were a self-revelation or reflective consciousness about either an internal or external (traumatic) experience.

The video version of 'Artémis' follows the same musical structure as the *Defixiones* version, and yet some fragments are articulated or nuanced differently. Structurally, the first part of 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' (they are performed as a pair) is dedicated to Corbière's text, sung in French with some words in Latin, and Nerval's *Artémis* is sung in the second part (4:02-5:30). The final section is dedicated to the

articulation of some striking melismatic passages inspired by middle-eastern musical forms (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 2 ‘Artémis and Cris d’aveugle’). In the video, ‘Artémis’s’ middle verses are uttered at a faster tempo: Nerval’s strophe beginning ‘*Sainte napolitaine* [...]’ is articulated by Galás at a faster speed and the recitation becomes hurried, to a point where the lyrics become unintelligible. The trance-like rendition of the passage here resembles a state of intense excitement or abstract hypnotism; Galás’s voice sounds as if reproducing glossolalia, a phenomenon in which the speaker emits fluent speech-like unintelligible utterances and the tongue moves without conscious control; the vocal organs are affected in such a way that the person would seem to be speaking in tongues. Glossolalia (from the Greek *glossa* [tongue, language] and *lalia* [to talk]) is associated with religious practices and shamanism, in which the speaker enters trance or an altered state of mind, and exhibits intense emotional frenzy, screaming, crying, and speaks gibberish. The deliberate ‘acting out’ of glossolalia in this passage of the poem mirrors Galás’s use of the voice as a conduit to a higher level of consciousness or the supernatural. Her vocal performance becomes cathartic. She seems to be travelling a journey to an interior mystical world that pushes the boundaries of psychic experience. Her vocals operate as a force that liberates the self from the compulsion of trauma, whilst her sounds function as manifestation of this transcendental or occult knowledge that connects with the beyond, with those who have died.

Both versions of ‘Artémis’ include at the end of the song the already mentioned melismatic passages influenced by middle-eastern musical forms; they envelop the listener in an arresting atmosphere evocative of the sound of lamentation and mourning. To articulate the melismas, Galás moves to a higher register holding her

pitch and adorning the notes above and below to convey a spiritual or mystical effect. She lengthens these sequences using extended vocal techniques and enhances the sound texture by playing with vocal timbres. She appears here to be manipulating the harmonic resonances, something that elicits the effect of creating more than one pitch at the same time. This technique is usually known as throat or overtone singing (since apart from a fundamental tone, the specific quality of the voice results from overtones that resonate in the air chambers of the respiratory tract). In the *Defixiones* version, the extended vocal articulations (the melismas) acquire a noticeably nasal quality, whereas her voice becomes throatier in the video: Galás also intensifies here the contrasts in the musical adornments, and gradually denaturalises the sound. Both the video and the *Defixiones* renditions convey a trance-like effect, even if some vocal articulations are different. In the *Defixiones* version, the recitation is slower and much more languishingly delivered; her melismas become invocatory. The final verses turn into a murmur, protracting the sound of words, as if a whisper that fades in the distance. In contrast, there is a faster tempo and added emotionalism in the video version. The melismas increase in tone and intensity until Galás's voice comes to a halt, followed by a sudden and almost inaudible fragment of softly spoken words. The passage ends abruptly with a few bangs on her piano and a dramatic imprecation: *tombez* [Fall!]. The song finishes with a glossolalia-like recitation (her fast gibberish acquires here a harsh, raspy quality) and another, much shorter, melismatic fragment.

The extraordinary articulation of the middle-eastern inspired melismas, the glossolalia-like utterances, as well as other invocatory passages bring associations with religious ecstatic prayers or mantras, in which the singer seeks to reach a state beyond consciousness. The trance-like quality of Galás's rendering is also conveyed

through spoken words in combination with Galás's control of the pace of vocal emission: this enables the artist to play with vibrations and resonances; the effect of her articulations cause frequency changes at different vocal intensities and this creates an extra dimension of vocal complexity. It is as if the vibrations of each vocal sound had a power of interconnection, which brings to mind the correspondences in the cosmos and hence the association with an enigmatic power or occult knowledge. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Nerval's poetry is also associated with the hermetic and occultism. He used his knowledge of tarot and esoterica as a source of inspiration to inscribe encoded meanings to the imagery created in his poems.¹⁹² Indeed, the 'Thirteenth' at the beginning of *Artémis* is the pivotal hour, which returns after the previous twelve have passed as allusion to death. In this sense, Galás's mourning work ties in with cryptic meanings of symbolist poetry, and stages a psychic borderline experience that takes us back to her interest in using the voice like the *moirologi* lamentations or dirges for the dead. Conceptually and musically, her work on mourning is not simply understood in a religious sense, although she reutilises religious musical forms and transcendental symbolism to produce her own artistic vision of grieving. Galás's 'Artémis' steps out of the conventional hymn for the dead or requiem to embrace a sound that crosses a boundary from the material to the mystical or supernatural. She blends the religious with the profane in order to free that which has been repressed or shunned because it was dangerous for the established order.

Galás's 'Artémis' and Nerval's Symbolism

Symbolism is therefore one of the major influences in Galás's music, as evidenced in her interest in musical/vocal experimentation, intensely personal style and avant-

garde expression; the avant-garde has in turn been long influenced by the symbolist movement, bearing in mind that the idea of a single avant-garde is in itself problematical.¹⁹³ Symbolism informs Galás's development of extreme vocal emissions and abstract musical forms, where her aesthetic vision is conjured up and displayed at a higher level of musical abstraction (*Schrei X*, *Vena Cava*, *Litanies of Satan*). Within the context of the representation of traumatic experience, symbolism encompasses in Galás an aesthetic and a political dimension. Symbolist poetry provides a thematic link to the inner traumatic self and internal anguish, which is then to emerge in Galás's mourning work; it also illustrates how her interest to represent despair/trauma as a result of oppression and abandonment emerges in her music as interplay between her artistic interests and the memory of individual or collective trauma.

Galás's choice of *Artémis* links her performance to symbolic meanings in Nerval's poetic language (note here that there is a potential slippage between two uses of 'symbolic': on the one hand the standard Saussurian/Lacanian usage – language as the order of the symbolic; on the other, the work of symbolist writers who aimed to subvert the authority of language – that is, of the symbolic in the first sense by using language in unorthodox ways). Nerval's life and works are characterized by a melancholy mood, largely as a result of a constant and unsuccessful search for a beloved one, whose absence is mournfully evoked; the desire invoked in his work to rejoin with an ideal love is generally linked to loss of his mother and hence his attempts to recover the lost maternal object. His life is also marked by an effort to cope with mental breakdown, which eventually led him to suicide. Julia Kristeva has examined Nerval's language as an example of how a melancholy poet subordinated to

the Thing (the maternal real that cannot be signified) can find a way through writing of overcoming the deprivation of the lost ideal (the lost maternal object or archaic Thing). She sees Nerval's symbolist activity as a possible means to integrate the traces of the lost Thing into discourse, provided the Thing does not 'sweep the speaker along'.¹⁹⁴ His poetic language bears witness to sadness, which takes us to the realm of affects; and all affect, according to Kristeva, entails '*the physic representation of energy displacements* caused by external or internal traumas'.¹⁹⁵ Sadness is the mechanism or displaced energy that emerges in Nerval as reaction to his trauma. He must cease, according to Kristeva, to identify with the lost object and identify with an 'imaginary father', form, or schema to be able to enter the universe of creation and begin to signify through the artifice of signs.¹⁹⁶ It is the identifications and dis-identifications, as well as the enigmatic dark symbolism that operate in Nerval's poetic language, which resonate with Galás's own representation of energy displacements (affect) as a result of trauma. Kristeva argues that affect can be transposed into rhythms, signs and forms in literary creation; by extension, musical creation partakes of an affective reality that will be perceived by the listener in the form of music that conveys sadness, sorrow, grief or excitement.

There is an initial identification of Galás with the melancholy poet, whose anguish over loss motivated him to come into contact with the innate and the inherent meanings of the self. As a poet of internal exile, he sought through writing to counteract the annihilation of the internal 'other' that occurs in trauma, an experience to which Galás is drawn by way of associating Nerval's internal exile with her own sense of traumatic loss. Her voice in the song has a cathartic quality that can be seen to function as an antidote to inner annihilation, as well as a means to channel the

affect (sadness, grief); it signifies through encoded symbolism linked to the poem's textuality (as illustrated in the vocal articulation of the *Rose trémière*). On a second level, there is an identification of Galás with her brother. The artist's voice becomes a conduit to retrieve Dimitri Galás's energy displacements and trauma, and thus her voice is transposed onto her brother's voice of 'internal exile'.

Nerval's *Artémis* makes reference to an imaginary beloved figure that ambiguously represents a (real) dead lover, the dead mother or the death-bringing goddess Artemis, of Greek classical mythology (since according to some versions of the myth, her arrows also fall on young maidens and women). Kristeva argues that the undecidability in the concatenation of real and imaginary figures in Nerval's poetry locates him in the position of mourning for the lost object, and hence the archaic Thing. Ambiguity in Nerval's world destabilises his symbolism, and yet it enables the poet to identify with a dead double who is installed or encrypted in himself.¹⁹⁷ Kristeva suggests another Greek reference for the sonnet title *Artémis* in that this is taken from the masculine name version of Artemisia, sister of Mausolus (king of Caria, Asia Minor, fourth century BC – the Carians adopted Greek form of government and culture). It was the custom for rulers to marry their sisters and thus Artemisia embodies a role of wife and mother, and stands for 'an erotic, familiar and domestic Thing' for the dead king. Nerval deliberately makes the name masculine, according to Kristeva, so as to play 'with the two members of the couple as if each were the double of the other – interchangeable but also, consequently, imprecise in their sexuality, nearly androgynous'.¹⁹⁸

This complex web of symbolism can be mapped onto Galás's own identificatory processes, given that the poet's identification with a dead double finds parallelism in the artist's own identification with the dead brother. Following Kristeva, we might suggest that Philip Dimitri Galás symbolically acquires a role of lover, spouse, and becomes for Diamanda 'an erotic, familiar and domestic Thing'.¹⁹⁹ Artémis or Artemisia represents for Galás a sexually ambivalent figure that embodies the interplay between brother and sister, each other's doubles, whereby sexuality becomes imprecise and androgynous (the goddess Artemis is also a preferred myth for Galás as she is a maiden huntress and warrior, and carries therefore masculine attributes).²⁰⁰ Moreover, sexual ambivalence is also conveyed in Galás's vocal performance. The deep tones of her lower vocal range together with the way in which she deploys throat and nasal vocal registers, as well as her skill in using timbres and extended vocal techniques, contribute to a sense that we are listening to an androgynous voice. Within the symbolist movement, the androgyne represented an innocent creature untouched by the corruption of sexuality, inasmuch as it embodied femininity without its traditionally negative discursive aspects. The image of the androgyne has also been used as symbol for both the perfect art object and a specific object of homosexual desire.²⁰¹

Imprecision in gender terms through Galás's vocality evokes the interactions within the androgynous double and its creative possibilities within her music. It symbolizes an ideal voice as 'art object' that can respond to a homosexual desire and resists objectification within a traditional masculinist mode of listening (insofar as the feminine voice has been culturally objectified). Sexual ambivalence thus suggests a gender blurring that undermines patriarchal compulsory heterosexuality. This tactic is

inseparable from Galás's exposure of the bias against the AIDS victims of the homosexual community; there is in this sense a wider scope for the identification of the artist with the trauma of this community, as well as the trauma of other forgotten victims. Richard Middleton has argued that the voice lays out an 'insistently sexuated territory', and hence becomes a key marker of identity that represents a person and carries 'the machinery of (always gendered) subject-positions embedded in language'.²⁰² Galás's vocals are situated in an ambivalent sexual territory that endorses several identificatory processes, in particular with the poet and the brother, as we have seen (although this identification could also be seen as one brother/poet). Whilst her voice is a marker of personal identity, her constructed musical narrative aims to challenge an always-gendered subject-position. Her vocal performance would seem to synthesise multiple energy displacements (linked to sadness and despair) that embrace the interactions of gender-indeterminate traumatic voices. The distinction between personal identity and the enacted 'self' through vocality in Galás's case becomes hazy, something that takes us to the self-referential. The imprint of Galás's 'autobiographical subjectivity' that emerges in her vocal performance helps locate her subject position in a sexually ambivalent territory. In this sense, meanings attached to Galás's singing voice dovetail with her identification with the homosexual quality of the male/female power of the *moirologi*, as well as their capacity to communicate with others beyond life.

Galás's Symbolism and the Creation of a 'Divine Language' in 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle'

As has already been suggested, the influence of symbolism is felt in Galás's highly suggestive sounds and 'rhetorical' articulations: vocal shifts, dynamic use of vocal

timbres and registers, spoken verses, glossolalia, gibberish and extremes of range. In the 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' video, the artist turns to the mystifying power of the singing voice to also explore the musical possibilities of symbolist expression. Her artistic engagement with symbolism draws Galás into the kind of spirituality and transcendent states that attracted both Nerval and Corbière; she aims to create an ecstatic form of performance that focuses on affects through music. Yet, unlike the symbolists, Galás's concern is not purely with moods or art for art's sake; she wants to produce meaningful music that foregrounds the relevance of the concepts embedded in her work.

Nerval's own identification with a dead double in his poetry operates as a metaphor for the death of the self that identifies with the loved one (be it the dead mother or an androgynous other encrypted in himself).²⁰³ According to Kristeva, the tendency to slip back into the position of the Thing (and mourning for the lost maternal object) has a special suicidal attraction for Nerval since the only gratifying end for the tormented subject is to reunite with the beloved in death.²⁰⁴ Mourning in Galás does not carry, however, the phantasmal experience of ridding the anguish and sadness over loss by joining the loved one in death. There is no symbolic return to a lost paradise, nor is there idealisation of an afterlife. For Galás, there is nothing glorious about death. She wants to bring before us the experience of those who suffered for no justified reason and died without a firm belief in heaven and hell. She voices the victims when she states:

[..] There is no martyrdom here. I'm not going to be kissed by the angels. I'm not going to go to heaven. I'm not even going to hell. This is hell. And that's

where it unites with my saying there's nothing glorious about death, and where I say the living, the living dead, or the dying alive is my subject.²⁰⁵

Galás also recalls some verses from Corbière's *Cris d'aveugle* [Blind Man's Cry] to indicate that the worst for the victim is in fact not to believe in God or an afterlife, and that there is no compensation for the suffering after life: 'I wished I believed in angels, I wished I believed in God. The only thing I can believe in is death as the escape from this pain'.²⁰⁶ Neither is there compensation for the sufferer in life, given that the victims (and survivors) will have endured a sense of 'radical injustice' inflicted on them. Her subject is therefore the trauma of the living dead or dying alive.

'Cris d'aveugle' is another example that illustrates Galás's idea of creating transcendent music in her song settings, which centers on the specificity of mourning as a form of memory, a traumatic memory in this case. In a symbolist vein, Galás's 'Cris d'aveugle' aspires to create a 'divine' (musical) language as a means to transcend the physical world, but without Nerval's suicidal undertones. Galás explicitly talks of having the ideal of a 'divine language', which she terms 'intravenous song', although others, she says, call it 'speaking in tongues'.²⁰⁷ The narrative (musical/textual) of 'Artémis' has been associated with hidden mystical meanings, the occult and the supernatural, whereas 'Cris d'aveugle' alludes more explicitly to a religious 'divine' (the two spaces can be said to overlap in Galás's music). In her engagement with Corbière's *Cris d'aveugle*, Galás's song is cast as an invocation or imploration to God – yet God could symbolically be transposed into any divinity. The poem is a cry of desperation from a blind man who brings his plight to God in

prayer; it is an expressionist evocation of a tormented soul that is trapped in an unwholesome or deadening existence.²⁰⁸ Galás resorts to specific singing articulations to call the power of the voice to plead or supplicate with God, and enact, at the same time, something transcendental that connects with the spiritual. The power of the voice is used to access the concrete reality of the trauma of the narrator's distressed existence (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 2 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle').

Galás's 'Cris d' Aveugle' [Blind Man's Cry]²⁰⁹

L'oeil tué n'est-pas mort	[The Murdered eye is not dead
Un coin le fend encor	A spike still splits it
Encloué, je suis sans l'oeil	Nailed up I am coffinless
On m'a planté le clou dans l'oeil	They drove the nail in my eye
L'oeil cloué n'est pas mort	The nailed eye is not dead
Et le coin entre encore.	And the spike still splits it
Deus misericors (4 times)	Deus misericors (4 times)
Les oiseaux croque-morts	The undertaker birds
Ont donc peur a mon corps	Are thus afraid of my body
Mon Golgotha n'est pas fini	My Gologotha is not over
Lamma lamma sabacthani	Lamma lamma sabacthani
Colombes de la Mort	Doves of Death
Soiffez apres mon corps	Be thirsty for my body
Lamma lamma sabacthani	Lamma lamma sabacthani
Rouge, comme un sabord	Red as a gun-port
La plaie est sur le bord	The sore is on the edge
Comme la gencive bavant	Like the drooling gum
D'une vieille qui rit sans dent	Of a toothless laughing old woman
La plaie est sur le bord	The sore is on the edge
Rouge, comme un sabord	Red as a gun-port
Deus (5 times) Misericors	Deus (5 times) Misericors
Miserere de profundis (3 times)	Miserere de profundis (3 times)

Je vois des cercles d'or (glossolalia-like)	I see circles of gold
Le soleil blanc me mord	The white sun bites me
J'ai deux trous percés pas un fer	I've two holes pierced by an iron bar
Rougi dans la forge d'enfer	Reddened in the forge of hell
Je vois un cercle d'or	I see a circle of gold
Le feu d'en haut me mord	The sky's fire bites me] ²¹⁰

Galás's fascination with the theme of God and its relation to a transcendent spirituality is evidenced in her ongoing engagement with Biblical texts and religious Psalms. This is a recurrent subject matter in Galás's music, especially in her trilogy *Plague Mass*. In Corbière's poem, religious references abound in the form of supplicating phrases in Latin and allusions to Christ, the Virgin and the Devil. In the video, Galás's voice emerges mid tempo in her lower range creating an aura of solemnity; she chants her distinctive grave harmonies and elongates notes at the end of words and verses to intensify the seriousness of the music. Her voice moves along her dynamic range and descends to her lower registers when alluding to death: '*L'oeil cloué n'est pas mort*' [The nailed eye is not dead] and '*Colombes de la Mort*' [Doves of Death]. The deep tones of her bottom vocal range recall here the transcendental significance of death. Throughout the song, Galás changes vocal location; she also delivers middle-eastern inspired melismatic passages, adorning the notes below and above, in the same way as in 'Artémis'. There are also discontinuities in the music: glossolalia-like verbalizations and virtually spoken text that bring associations with whispering prayers or intercessions in religious services.

The poem includes some phrases in Latin that are repeated by Galás with a chest voice as supplicating utterances: '*Deus misericors*', '*Deus misericors*' [merciful

God]. There are two instances of these utterances, the second of which is articulated by Galás raising her voice to a higher point in the scale: the gradual increase of tone in this second '*Deus misericors*' emphasises a sense of a louder, more desperate supplication. The effect resembles the implorations that form part of the liturgy chanted to express a communal belief, a similarity that exemplifies the influence of religious music on Galás, in particular gospel music. The supplication is taken to an extreme when Galás articulates another Latin expression: *Miserere de profundis* ['be merciful "out of the depths"', from psalm 130]. Her voice moves to a point beyond her higher vocal range, as if she were able to exceed the continuous vocal sound; the trance-like quality of this rendition has a mesmerizing power that transfixes the listener. A fast muttering of spoken text immediately before the singer starts to sing Nerval's 'Artémis' follows this entrancing passage.

The expressiveness of the words in Latin achieve a directness that supports Galás's aspiration to an ideal 'divine language'; this is done via the appropriation of Corbières's religious symbolist language, though Galás then attaches her own signification linked to her message about AIDS and destitution. Discontinuous/disruptive vocal articulations emerge also in 'Cris d'aveugle': the use of spoken language, glossolalia-like passages, gibberish and extended vocal articulations, some of them specific to Galás's technique. Galás emphasises the contrast between the ecstatic lyricism of her musical narrative and the anti-lyricism of her vocal discontinuities. The discontinuities deconstruct lyricism and install a new freedom of musical/vocal articulation.²¹¹ In a way, the artist musicalizes the poems, but also 'de-musicalizes' the songs by introducing disruptions devoid of musical

lyricism. Her musical idiom, her disjointed, verbally intoxicated fragments carry none the less meaningful thematic content.

Richard Middleton has examined meanings attached to Galás's voice from a Lacanian/Freudian perspective as occupying the place of the phallus. He looks at the artist's extreme vocality and its association with the blues and gospel tradition, and connects her disruptive articulacy with the adoption of an 'unmatrixed' production of vocal sounds, with a lawlessness connected with Galás's '(anti-) theology' (with reference, for example, to voodoo-like descriptions of her voice and the 'unearthly quality of her extreme sounds').²¹² Middleton suggests in this sense a subversion or inversion of the authority of the patriarchal God, and more generally an appropriation of the phallus, which in Galás finds 'a wreckage (a modernistic deconstruction of "natural" male desire)'.²¹³ This reading is relevant to Galás's vocal discontinuities in 'Cris d'aveugle' and her 'divine language', given that her vocals emerge in fact (as in the poem) as expressions of despair, of disbelief, and thus they can be seen as subversion or inversion of the authority of the patriarchal God. Middleton suggests a second level of reading for the artist's occupation of the place of the phallus, in that this is also part of '[...] a right of passage, a passing through; and this movement – a familiar quasi-maternal dispersal of phallic authority around the sonorous body – is mapped by the whirling mobility of vocal placement'.²¹⁴

This maternal dispersal of phallic authority – at work in Galás's execution of the male/female power of the voice, and in her embrace of the homosexual, androgynous ideal voice as 'art object' – is imprecise in gender terms, but carries the creative potential to challenge patriarchal authority. Galás 'appropriates' the symbolist

language of Nerval and Corbière and; hence she occupies a masculine space, but one that is also coloured by the maternal dispersal of phallic authority (Nerval's tendency to slip back to the maternal lost object in his life and works can be seen to illustrate the instability of the law-of-the-father and the 'maternal dispersal of phallic authority'). Galás makes use of symbolist language for her own subversive ends: she installs her own vocal/musical rules, and reutilises the symbols, the spiritual and the mystic, God, the sacred, reincarnation, resurrection and androgyny. Alongside of the *moirologi*, Galás sees the voice as a political force or political instrument, and understands singing as a concentration of energy: 'an attack energy –the transformation of the body into a weapon'.²¹⁵ She wants to conjure up the power of men and women, witches, vampires, lesbians, homosexuals and androgynous beings with whom she identifies –without being labelled with any term.²¹⁶ Galás's voice used as a political tool entails therefore, as Middleton suggests, a 'wreckage', a 'deconstruction of "natural" male desire', which puts the patriarchal gender structure and male universalism at risk.²¹⁷

Galás's aspiration to a 'divine language' may be interpreted from a specific feminist perspective alongside Irigaray's arguments around the importance of the divine for women's subjectivity. Irigaray's philosophical stance critically views the patriarchal system as assuming a single male universal that obliterates sexual difference. She argues that Western logic is based on (a masculine) self-identity, which creates a resistance to live with the different; it is thus necessary to change this logic to include two-sexed universals as categories for philosophical thinking. One of her radical premises is to advocate a model of the divine that does not confine itself to the generalities of a constructed male identity (both personal and collective).²¹⁸ She

favours the cultivation of a 'divine appropriate for women', a feminine divine that involves a becoming; it also requires the woman to remain faithful to herself, as well as

[..] to have exchanges with the outside and then to collect herself, to communicate with the soul of the world, sometimes with the soul of the others, and afterwards to return [...] to the silence of the own soul.²¹⁹

Galás's 'divine language' can be understood in this Irigarayan sense as the language of a woman who, in her performance, welcomes the other in her soul, communicates with the soul of others, with the 'soul of the world', and generates spirituality through her music. In particular, Galás's voice can be associated with Irigaray's idea that the woman must attend to her own breathing as a means of attaining the feminine divine (the breath in Irigaray corresponds to an 'autonomous gesture of a human living' and is related to the cultivation of the divine within oneself). The breath is an important element in singing; according to David Schwarz, it becomes integral to the performance of the *moirologi* or Maniot laments: the sobs and sighs of the *moirologi* are intakes of breath associated with the last breath of the dying person.²²⁰ Galás's voice is thus linked to the breath in a double (related) sense: that of the Greek singer's lament for the last breath of a soul, and in an Irigarayan fashion as singing that expresses an interiority connected with the cosmic life of the universe. The breath can be perceived in Irigaray as uniting 'the subtlest real of the cosmos with the deepest spiritual real of the soul'.²²¹ The association of Galás's music with the crossing of a boundary to articulate a mystical or enigmatic power, as well as the linking of her sounds with occult knowledge and the supernatural, find an echo in

Irigaray's notion of breath as an autonomous gesture of a human living. The feminine divine provides a bridge between the human world and the cosmic world, and between the body and the universe. Galás's 'divine language' could therefore be seen not so much as reproducing a kind of mystical madness from within patriarchal culture, but as an empowering gesture to express the spirituality of a woman who does not have to quit her body, relinquish her own self or renounce what she is: 'her task would be to make divine this world – as body, as cosmos, as relations with the others'.²²² In this sense, Galás's appropriation of 'divine' words in 'Cris d'aveugle', uttered from within a masculine space, should not be viewed as a reification of patriarchal spirituality. Instead, her 'divine language' (as articulated in her musical narrative) can be interpreted as the creation of her own transcendental model where she takes the Biblical words/text to reutilise them for her own ends. Her subversive intent aims to deconstruct the hierarchical, dogmatic 'morality' of a Divine voice of the Father that reproduces patriarchal alterity.²²³ Divine/religious agency would thus not be inscribed in Galás within the generalities of the constructed male identity, but within the particularities of female identity (Irigaray's concept of sexed identity can be applied here as it does not preclude individuality; yet, Galás does not obviously follow Irigaray's *mimetic* strategy of using male definitions of femininity to problematize them and engender thereby new definitions of the 'feminine').²²⁴ Galás thus places her voice at the center of a project to reach a spiritual relation and offer her concept of spirituality, which is not conditioned by the linearity of a traditional masculine divine model.

Galás's 'Autobiographical Subjectivity', Embodied Self-representation and the Sonorous Body

'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle' allow traumatic content to be represented in non-logical, symbolic ways enabled by the artist's musical expression. We have seen how symbolist meanings in Nerval's and Corbière's poems are transposed into Galás's own symbolism, which is informed by the self-referential, and is instrumental to her deconstruction of musical rules. Galás's specific vocal and musical dramatisations channel that which cannot be spoken of, the affects, the trace of the trauma, and bring to the fore a multiplicity of voices. This section looks at how Galás's mourning work unfolds at the intersection of her project to access the trauma of the voiceless, the living dead or dying alive, on the one hand, and autobiographical reference to the memory of trauma, on the other, an intersection which emerges in Galás as a 'performative act' of self-representation.

Self-referentiality in Galás's 'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle' does not emerge in conventional autobiographical terms as testimony, nor is there any immediate recognition of personal experience mirrored in the work: Galás's work exceeds established conceptions of self-display and thus there is not an 'autobiographical act' of self-portrayal as such. Her performances shift to the outer limit of the autobiographical to embrace questions of representativeness (both of the 'self' and trauma). Galás's self-representation takes place at the interface of the auditory/textual/visual modes of self-reference where Galás's 'performative acts' bring an interplay of traumatic memory, personal experience, identity/identifications, embodiment and agency.²²⁵ The autobiographical gives way to questions of how Galás's self-referentiality could be better understood in her performances as: (a)

inscription of ‘autobiographical subjectivity’ and (b) an engagement with embodied self-representation vis-à-vis her sonorous body.

Galás’s voice subverts the musical traditions that inform her work, at the same time that her voice becomes an instrument to challenge dominant models of identity. Her enacted ‘self’ is marked by ‘autobiographical subjectivity’, which is constituted as a process in which the subject, situated in a specific time and place, can question cultural norms and narratives. In this sense, ‘autobiographical subjectivity’ is imprinted in ‘Artémis’ and ‘Cris d’aveugle’ through Galás’s specific vocal techniques and articulations, which aim to create identifications between the listener and the singer’s mourning work. Mobility of vocal placement, repetitions and vocal discontinuities unfurl the rawness of the grief, the affects, and the ‘essence’ of the sounds. Rather than being descriptive of the concepts she engages in her music, Galás’s sounds become the subject and the song itself. The artist endeavours to make music that is in itself meaningful – in the sense of containing a synthesis of a tragic reality that is then transmitted to the audience; through the voice, she aims to be the sound of the suffering, the plague, the despair, the grief, as well as the sadness and melancholia caused by the trauma involved in the tragedy of a situation.²²⁶ Her sounds contain self-references to sorrow, blurring gender identity, and mystic spirituality, aspects that are linked to personal experience and leave the trace of Galás’s ‘autobiographical subjectivity’ in her work.

Yet Galás is primarily concerned with how we become oblivious to stories of marginalisation and suffering through the process of forgetting. Rather than externalising her particular story, she endeavours to give voice to a collective self.

Her commitment to represent the trauma of others is given priority over the possibility of representing the trauma of the 'self'. Autobiographical reference emerges therefore displaced, enacted as the vestige of traumatic experience subjected to a particular form of memory. The association between the victims' experience (as collective identities) and Galás's own experience of loss becomes one of the tenets underlying mourning in the songs. The artist becomes the collective voice of the unnamed and her personal experience of loss to death becomes also part of the collective; her voice articulates with the voices of others, but her 'self' as bearer of trauma remains unnamed ('autobiographical subjectivity' emerges in this sense as dispersed and heterogeneous as her performance connects at various levels with the subjectivities of others). Rather than choosing to stand as the representative 'self' of autobiography, she seeks to install a knowing subject whose traumatic voice can serve as a conduit for the (collective) identity brought on by trauma. Yet, since the singer happens to be the locus of the grief and producer of the distressing sounds/images, her focus on a collective identity may be also interpreted as a turn towards the 'self', wherein self-representation is underpinned by the prospect of simultaneously obliterating and reconstructing the autobiographical.²²⁷

Galás's self-referentiality can also be seen as engagement with embodied self-representation with reference to her 'sonorous body'. Gilmore argues that one of the most common tropes of autobiography is the intertwined figures of book and body; this metaphor entails the assimilation of the words of the female body under the body of the text, and thus 'to recite one's own body, to recite the body of the other, is to recite the words of which the [autobiographical] book is made up'.²²⁸ In Galás, the metaphor can be seen as music and body coming together within her sonorous body,

which subsumes her vocal articulacy and all the sounds and words of the artist and the other embodied in her songs. Following Gilmore's argument, the relationship between Galás's identity and representation raises questions about the presence and absence of the collective voice of the unnamed through which the sonorous body coheres. The body of the other is the absent dead body, the victims of AIDS and genocide, and thus a ghostly presence that is used as a voice-seeking truth to affirm identity – via the presence of the sonorous body. The body coheres around Galás's performative 'I grieve', which, as result of the self-referential, suggests that her body performs similar meanings as embodied materiality and/or as performance, and as sonorous body in her musical performance (which extends to the grieving of others). Galás's sonorous body becomes a performative site where meanings interface between a figuration of the body that *is* its own identity and a number of other (marginalised, traumatised) identities enacted through the voice.²²⁹ Her self-representation incorporates a 'truth-voice' that comes into conflict with hegemonic notions of identity, and is concerned with the ways in which music bears upon the sonorous body, as well as the dead body.

The intersection of identities that Galás enacts through the voice is also visually intimated in the 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' video. The recording starts by showing moving images of a neglected and abandoned building, which could be a theatre or a movie theatre, and suggest decay and disintegration. The images alternate with shots of Galás performing live at her piano in one of her concerts. The shooting of the deteriorated urban area has a hazy quality that contrasts with the clarity of the alternating images of the artist's performance. Galás's intense and clear vocal sounds emphasise the presence of her body, whilst the camera movements and shots of the

outside of the neglected and abandoned building evoke the absence of the bodies that the image cannot locate, enliven or retrieve. The possibility of the building being a theatre directly connects this space with Galás's brother, and the sense of emptiness is thus associated with the absence of the loved one. Laura E. Tanner has looked at the meanings of photographs that capture empty and abandoned domestic spaces as a way to represent the grief for the bodies that once animated those spaces. She suggests that images of neglected empty rooms evoke the embodied form of a missing loved one that can never be found; they uncover the impossibility of finding the deceased, and thus they function as a way to work through mourning –linked to the 'failure' of the visual image to offset the absence.²³⁰

The 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' video evokes the absence of Galás's brother and endeavours to retrieve a dead body, which the images of the empty spaces fail to restitute. Towards the end of the song, when Galás recites the last of the *Artémis* verses, there is a sudden change in speed and register in the music: a quick drop to a whispering sound immediately followed by one of Galás's middle-eastern inspired melismas. The passage stages a protracted lament that gradually turns into a mournful throaty articulation. The camera focuses at this point on a succession of black and white old photographic snaps of Galás's brother, Galás herself, and brother and sister together. The images operate as if to retrieve the dead body and the body of the artist, in a similar vein as the music. Yet, the static, fixed quality of the photographs foregrounds the limitations of the pictures in their attempt to retrieve the deceased. What they retrieve is the fragments of memory that refer us back to Galás's autobiographical reference; the pictures draw attention to the interplay between absence and presence, the visual and the auditory, as well as the superimposition of

Galás's and her brother's identities. They focus on the effect of visually representing grief through the video montage – through the interaction between the photographic stills and Galás grieving sounds.

The 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' visuals foreground the juxtaposition of identities and the tensions between presence and absence of human embodiment that are enacted through the voice; sound and image work to represent the process of mourning and the impossibility of finding the dead body, which emerges in the photographs as a phantom 'presence', rather than the absence evoked in the empty spaces; yet, this is an embodied 'presence' that is only fleetingly restored through the photographic stills to then remain in memory (please, see figure 5).



Figure 5: Galás with her brother. A film still from 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle'

Mourning, Embodied Grief, and the Representation of Trauma

Laura E. Tanner has examined the way in which the ethical significance of mourning seems obsolete in our culture; she observes a denial of the material dimension of loss that has influenced attitudes about the body of grief – insofar as it appears to be

absent from critical discourses and lost from cultural view. According to Tanner, Lacanian psychoanalysis conceptualises mourning in terms of lack, and this implies an assumption of loss, which becomes a defining condition of psychic functioning. The Lacanian premise encompasses a continuous ‘performance’ of loss that is practiced at the synchronic level of the signifying chain. She points out that mourning as a continuous ‘performance’ of loss is situated against the specificity of embodied grief and hence against the acceptance of loss as an irresolvable trauma.²³¹ Tanner proposes a restoration of the specificity of loss, which entails the acknowledgement of the (historically) specific object and the positioning of ‘both subject and object in a dynamic of embodied inter-subjectivity’.²³² Tanner’s embodied dynamics of grief can be invoked in Galás’s performance insofar as the artist positions herself as a subject who enters a process to reconstruct the past traumatic experience, and restores the specificity of loss through the affect channelled via her sonorous body. Mourning in Galás’s music is underpinned by the continuous ‘performance’ of loss at the synchronic level of the signifying chain; yet her work also functions as a way to recognise the irresolvable trauma of loss that seems difficult to accept: the singing voice extends into the material spaces of the body in a way that reproduces the embodied dynamics of the singer’s grief. When Galás’s sounds become the grief itself, the artist’s mourning stages a ‘performance’ of loss that seems not to simply accept the lack, but to embrace the specificity of embodied grief. Her sonorous body ‘embodies’ the subject’s lived experience of grief; through the auditory, her singing voice restores a presence that is always already inaccessible. Re-enacting the traumatic loss as mourning in ‘Artémis and Cris d’aveugle’ reinstitutes the corporeal boundaries between the artist’s lived experience and the performance of the memory depicted in the music and visuals.²³³ Mourning becomes in this way a form of

memory. The representation of the (irresolvable) trauma draws attention to the need to accept the material dimension of loss and the individual and collective lived experience of grief.

Galás's mourning evokes therefore an embodied presence that refers us back to the deceased. Although it is impossible to find the dead, their traumatic, once 'embodied voices' can be made knowable through the externalisation of the affects in Galás's remarkable lamentation. Knowing the 'embodied' lost ones forms part of the process of remembering the trauma, and of generating the representation of both the traumatic memory and the self. In this sense, the process of remembering shows the capacity of trauma to signify representativeness.²³⁴ The autobiographical reaches the trauma, and the trauma of loss is accessed as self-referential content in Galás's songs. If Galás as autobiographical subject is to affirm the memory of the traumatic loss, she needs a *dialectic* that reconstructs the past experience.²³⁵ Rather than having a pure autobiographical 'I' (hardly possible since the experience is only re-enacted *a posteriori*), an inter-subjective interaction between the subject and the (lost) object helps assert the experience of loss. Galás's embodied voice thus retrieves the voice of the missing loved one as consequence of the inter-subjective processes taking place within the self, as well as in relation to others; this helps reconstruct the specificity of loss in the musical performance.

The trauma is represented through the activation of a voice that is present as a comment on a body *in absentia*. Gilmore points out that the figures from the past that emerge in autobiography cannot testify in their own voices, and thus in autobiography and trauma the process of remembrance and transference helps explain how the past

trauma remains present.²³⁶ In order to represent the trauma of the dead for whom a voice is restored, Galás's 'I' must be displaced to become what Gilmore has termed 'its rhetorical surrogate'.²³⁷ The rhetorical surrogate 'I' enables the listener to think that there is an autobiographical self that is singing/speaking in its own voice and articulates the embodied voices of others. This is a trope and an illusion created in the music, but enables the victims to articulate their trauma from within Galás's sonorous body: her body becomes then a ventriloquial vessel of multiple (traumatic) vocal articulations and characterisations.²³⁸

The process of remembrance and transference that explains how the past trauma remains present brings in psychoanalytic considerations on trauma relevant to the meanings attached to Galás's musical performance. Jean Laplanche's psychoanalytic model of trauma takes up Freud's early writings on the subject to emphasise the importance of the dialectics between the internal and external that operate in trauma; the internal/external interplay is also activated in artistic performance. Laplanche draws attention to the temporality of trauma in Freud's theory as it holds that it is not the first act, which is traumatic, but the internal revisiting of the memory of that act which becomes traumatic.²³⁹ Laplanche highlights the significance of the temporal structure, although he also argues for a model that is less temporal and includes a spatial or topographical dimension. According to Laplanche, there are two moments in Freud's theory for the psychic trauma to occur: first, there is the implantation of something from outside; secondly, the re-experience or memory of it is internalised and becomes thereby internal trauma. He is interested in the fact that the reality of trauma originates 'outside' and thus, in his view, the problem lies with the reality of the other and of the strangeness of his message. Laplanche's spatial/topographical

model refers to the constitution of the human being as individual and how he copes with the strangeness that comes from the other. The important aspect in psychic trauma for this author is the relation between the external and internal causalities, rather than the trauma simply coming from outside.²⁴⁰

Within Laplanche's spatial/topographical model, there is an original moment for the strangeness of the message of the other, linked to the external/internal dialectic, which is not a trauma *per se*, but the way the ego builds itself. In a second moment, the message is already implanted but not yet processed and thus the ego has to translate it in order to process it; it is here where the ego opens itself to the possibility of being traumatized again.²⁴¹ Laplanche's model entails the notion of piercing or penetrating, which is linked to the idea of 'effraction' or wounding the unconscious of the other (he explains that the figure of wounding or 'piercing' as a model of trauma is not so much a metaphor of the body, but the invasion of the unconscious of the other).²⁴²

The dialectics between the external cause of trauma and its internalisation operate in Galás's musical performance, given that the specificity of loss as a result of an external traumatic message is implanted and then processed by the artist as an individual. Galás's internalisation of the message that comes from the 'outside' involves processing its 'strangeness': this is where the subject realises the trauma and it is then represented in the musical expression. Galás thus describes the process of mourning and trauma of loss to death as she 'appropriates' a song for her own ends:

I wanted people to understand what happens, instead of just seeing the song as: "Let's discuss it *ex post facto*, let's discuss it in a requiem sense" [...].

[Instead of just standing saying I'm so sorry he suffered] We certainly can be glad that the person is no longer suffering, but we cannot escape the remembrances of all those days of anguish that the person went through. It's an inescapable nightmare. So, what I did with the songs, what I do with all these songs, was to dissect it, the words and melody. You hear a lot of the multiphonic singing that I'm known for and so forth, but it is part and parcel of how I consider the song to be sung [...].²⁴³

The musical/vocal performance therefore enables the listener to imagine the trauma of the self and others as it is represented in Galás's songs. The spatial or topographical dimension of trauma applies to Galás insofar as the external/internal dialectic created in the process of coping with the trauma is reproduced in the musical performance – although music as an artistic mode does not follow the usual analytic methods, it serves to release the psychical traumatic tension. On one level, Galás's mourning work is characterised by a meditated inwardness or introversion observed in 'Artemis' and 'Cris d'aveugle': the rendering is intimate and gravitates towards an inner core, which points to the transformation of the external traumatic event into internal experience. On another level, Galás's vocal performance redirects the grief from the inside to the outside; the artist externalises the affect and performs an extroversion of sound; her voice invokes an enigmatic power of transmutation of things internal into external.

As Galás's mourning brings out the sorrow and distress, the trauma is signified through the act of directing the affect outside the self (which can additionally be seen as a way of clearing the trauma). In this sense, the spatial/topographical model refers

also to how Galás's self-referential traumatic reality as an individual is projected outwards in the performance. Her voice as a conduit for the grief can be seen to be associated with the notion of 'effraction' or wounding the unconscious of the other, inasmuch as Galás's vocals can figuratively 'invade' the listener who receives the grieving, penetrating sounds.²⁴⁴ The artist's way of dealing with the traumatic message is to transform the piercing or wounding of the 'self' into an outward incitement or provocation. She therefore turns her sonorous body into a weapon, which 'pierces' the other with the voice: she is then able to 'wound' the unconscious of the listener, in the same way that the 'self' has been pierced and wounded by the reality of AIDS victims and their message. Galás's voice as a weapon responds to her aim of taking the listener to a higher level of awareness, at the same time as the artist seeks incitement or provocation to unmask the indifference and benightedness surrounding the reality of the victims of AIDS and genocide. The representation of the traumatic in Galás's 'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle' emerges as a dense, rich and complex soundscape, which has a subversive power to challenge signification. The meanings drawn from the internal/external dialectics in the musical performance emphasise the dynamics between the 'self' and the memory of the trauma that is represented as mourning. It is through the spatial and embodied dimension in which Galás represents the memory of the trauma in these two songs that her mourning work becomes also a form of memory, which performs a political act of remembering.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how the autobiographical in musical performance emerges out of an understanding that it has flexible boundaries. The autobiographical is not narrowly defined as an accurate mirroring of the artist's personal experience in the work, but as a self-referential practice that engages the singer with embodied self-representation. Autobiographical reference enables Amos and Galás to activate their sense of identity and set in motion a process of representation of traumatic experience in musical display –as a 'performative act'- that helps affirm their subject position in culture. The engagement of Amos and Galás with the autobiographical and trauma highlights the significance of a female 'self' in musical performances that aims to connect with the world in which we act and live. The representation of the trauma of rape in 'Me and a Gun' and the trauma of loss in 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' show the capacity of the performances to interact with other discourses and the positioning of other subjects. The autobiographical process assumes a 'unitary self' or 'unique mind', but the mind is also a social product; the musical performance thus stages an individual artistic vision, which is also 'exceeded' to become more heterogeneous and contingent vis-à-vis the listeners. The singing voice is a powerful operator in this project, since it serves as a channel to extrovert the sound and render the trauma in the musical performance (the presence of the trauma was revived in Amos as the memory of the violence of rape and in Galás as the memory of the grief for those who have died in unnatural circumstances). In this sense, Amos's and Galás's vocal/musical performances embed not only an aesthetic and personal dimension, but also, a political one that aims at increasing awareness and eliciting response from the audience.

The analysis has illustrated two ways of approaching the autobiographical in non-conventional terms: Amos chooses a highly fragmented confessional mode, whereas Galás opts for a much more diffuse mode of self-reference linked to memory and mourning. Neither of these approaches involves naming and thus Amos and Galás as unnamed subjects of autobiography stand in for the anonymity of the subjects who have suffered traumas similar to the ones represented in the songs. A process of identification between the artists and their audiences is therefore set in motion, which is underpinned by the voicing of both the trauma of the self and others. Although Amos and Galás differ in the way they approach the autobiographical, the engagement with self-representation and trauma underlines in both cases a coincidence in the dynamics created in their performances. Specific vocal articulations and musical forms, together with the artists' utilization of vocal placement and other vocal techniques, are activated in Amos's 'Me and a Gun' and Galás's 'Artémis and Cris d'aveugle' to signify the trauma. The two artists blur the distinction between inside and outside, and enter into the internal/external dialectics through the articulation of the autobiographical 'I': the internal is associated with inwardness, intimacy and introversion with regard to the vocal/musical delivery, whereas the external is associated with the externalisation of the traumatic interiority, as well as the extroversion of sound.

Amos's and Galás's exteriorization of the traumatic, self-referential 'I' in their musical performances presents a challenge to patriarchal authority. Amos as the subject of the *énonciation* has been identified with Irigaray's concept of *parler-femme*, and thus with the 'feminine' subject who asserts her position within culture

and language in her own right. This position is taken up in relation to an interlocutor and is not derivative of the male 'I'. In 'Me and a Gun', Amos is staging a personal traumatic narrative where her female identity and subjectivity are expressed without having to lose her interiority and to acquiesce to a masculine symbolic. The idea of a woman artist assuming the female 'I' of culture and discourse as product of her subjectivity and identity is applicable to Galás, insofar as the artist is committed to challenging the oppression of patriarchal authority via the artistic deployment of her voice, in particular in connection with her identification with the *moirologi* voice. In this sense, Galás affirms her position as a female subject in culture and discourse that transmits through her music a strong sense of personal identity; yet, Galás also embraces gender ambiguity and/or the gender imprecision of an androgynous identification. For Irigaray, to take up the position of the 'feminine' subject in discourse is not to be simply understood as a way to erase differences amongst women, but rather as a theoretical tool, and a strategy that aims to bring about cultural change. Her purpose is to raise the 'feminine' up to an equitable or right position with regards to the masculine, and for this project one of her strategies is to use *mimesis* or *mimicry*; this refers to a process of resubmitting women to the conventional views and definitions of women in order to undermine those views and thwart dominant language and discourse (an aspect that will be further explored in the next chapter). Galás's position can be identified with a female 'I', subject of discourse, although her strategy differs from Irigaray's *mimetic* process of exposing the oversimplified and negative views of women: Galás occupies a masculine space and appropriates masculine symbols that are then reclaimed for her own ends. The two artists can then be said to use different strategies as product of their subjectivities and identities to challenge patriarchal authority. The 'autobiographical subjectivity'

imprinted in their works thus leaves the traces of each artist's individuality, which emerges as a result of the self-referential in their representation of traumatic experience. The way the autobiographical and traumatic reach into each other in Amos's and Galás's songs effects a self-representation that authorises women artists as subjects and initiates a change of dominant culture and discourse.

Chapter 3

PERFORMING THROUGH THE BODY: VOICE, MASQUERADES AND THE LIBIDINAL ECONOMY OF THE FEMININE

This chapter engages in feminist ideas that argue for the creation of a feminine discursivity from which women artists can generate their own self-representation in vocal performance. Women have been concerned for some time about conventional and stereotypical images and conceptions of women, particularly the way in which their bodies and sexuality are represented within dominant phallo(go)centric culture.²⁴⁵ It would therefore seem that focusing on sexuality, the body and feminine libidinal economy is one of the areas from which women can challenge their historical demotion within the binary system of meaning. Linking women's cultural production with the idea of the body – as a source of artistic creativity – may also be a productive means to interpret the stream of auditory aesthetic activity associated with women's vocal and musical performance. To work from within a feminine space linked to women's libidinal energies can also be useful in order to explore ways in which women artists create their own self images, and re-signify their bodies, their *jouissance* and their vocal and musical performance.

The chapter looks at two songs as case studies that can be read from within a specific feminine discursivity: Tori Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium' from *From The Choirgirl Hotel* (1998) and Björk's 'Cocoon' from *Vespertine* (2001). These songs generate auditory *jouissance* from within the artists' libidinal investments, channelled through

the body; their musical performance produces images that may be specifically associated with their own feminine location, as if the true singing of their flesh flowed through their voices to write new signification: as articulation of their subjective expression of desire and *jouissance*. Both Amos and Björk seem in each song to map their body territories so as to create symbolic representation that does not appear to conform to masculine cultural investments. In their own explicit ways, the artists' rendering suggests an association of their performance with meanings evocative of Cixous's and Irigaray's arguments for the need of a different economy where women express their pleasure and desire.

Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous develop the theorisation of a specific feminine discursivity through the use of language, in particular speaking and writing as a woman, with a degree of intensity. Cixous focuses on writing and is better known for her arguments on *l'écriture féminine* whereas Irigaray's attention to language aims at uncovering the biases in male discourse, as well as retrieving a place for the 'other' as feminine. Irigaray's project includes speaking (as) a woman (*parler-femme*) – linked to the possibility of writing (as) a woman – as a way of positioning the female subject in the symbolic order, together with extended arguments around the cultivation of, or working towards, a culture in the feminine. The affinity in some of Irigaray's and Cixous's postulates has led to a linkage between these two authors, especially in connexion with their ideas on the affirmation of female sexuality, pleasure, and the body: the mobility/non-fixity of women's subjectivity and identity, and how the corporeal constitutes a materiality that flows through speech in the written text.²⁴⁶ In this sense, my analysis will engage with some of the ideas put forward by both Irigaray and Cixous, although the discussion will be specific about which author and

theories are in use each time. The idea of the female libidinal economy arises in both authors even if it has been generally associated with Cixous. Cixous talks of women experiencing a multiplicity of libidinal energies different from the male libidinal economy; Irigaray refers to the libido as only masculine and explains that in order for women to articulate their needs, desires and fantasies a 'feminine syntax', different from men's, would be required: this would enable woman's 'self-affection' within an economy other than the dominant male discourse.²⁴⁷

Understood as a way for women to access discursivity, ideas around feminine speaking and writing can help reading musical performances, whereby women artists affirm their subject position and create their specific aesthetic space, linked to (musical) writing and auditory and visual production. Women artists may position themselves in a cultural location in which they might not necessarily be constrained by masculine language and culture. Irigaray suggests in *This Sex Which is not One* that speaking (as) woman implies a different mode of articulation between masculine and feminine desire and language, that the pleasure a woman experiences in language may be linked to her pleasure in sexuality; hence it can be suggested that the pleasure a woman experiences in singing is also linked to feminine desire and sexuality. Irigaray believes that the feminine cannot signify itself in any proper meaning, name or concept, and in a similar way to Cixous, she understands feminine sexuality as multiple and plural, and not referable to the masculine economy (the two lips illustrate Irigaray's image of women's experience of diffuse sexuality).²⁴⁸

Cixous speaks in 'The laugh of the Medusa' of the infinite richness of women's individuality, of their inexhaustible imaginary, and the stream of aesthetic activity that

flows through their bodies so as to inscribe their vision and create something beautiful. She encourages women to free their desire inside to dare to sing, to write, to speak and bring something new, which is not inhibited by the logic of phallogentrism, but which is driven by ‘torrents that outpour in beautiful forms’; a desire that invents new desires; a feeling that floods from within a body that recognizes songs never heard before. She invites women to return and listen to their bodies, as this gesture will release the immense resources of the unconscious, and will give them back their goods, pleasures, organs and body territories through which they can access their native energy, their creative strength.²⁴⁹

Cixous’s thinking centres on writing as a way for women to create a space that enables the possibility of subversive thought, but she also refers to voice and speaking, since they are inseparable from writing. Derrida’s influence is felt on this point, in so far as he argues against a separation of speech and writing and understands that there is always already writing. For him, writing and speech share many of the characteristics usually associated with writing, in particular the inscription of the sign; he creates the term *archi-écriture* to refer to this aspect of signification:

It does not mean writing in the narrow sense but rather connotes those aspects of writing shared with speech which are denied and repressed in theories that have an investment in maintaining the natural and unmediated nature of the spoken word.²⁵⁰

For Cixous, feminine writing never stops reverberating from the woman's acquisition of speech and speaking out loud. The feminine is discerned in writing through the close interconnection or interweaving of voice and writing, and yet the voice is given a special position, for the reason that women do not build up so many defenses against instinctual drives and the fact that 'woman is never far from the "mother"' (and in this way she brings this interconnection to feminist ends).²⁵¹ Musical creativity can involve writing, the voice and the body, and thus women's musical art may be associated with the infinitude of women's sexuality and libidinal energies. The refusal of the body/mind separation embedded in a 'discursivity in the feminine', and the prominence of voice and writing resonates in Amos's and Björk's musical performances: they bring in their vocal display self-references to their own bodies, the flesh, or something more earthy, a connectivity between their music and their subjectivity. Their music involves self-referentiality as expression of their flowing sensuality. The listener is encouraged to identify the music with the body of the artist: an image of the body source of the voice that is supported by the visual images accompanying the music.²⁵² In the case of 'Pandora's Aquarium' and 'Cocoon', the filmed and photographed depictions focus strongly on the body of the artists and suggest a connection between the auditory and the visuals.

My interpretation of 'Pandora's Aquarium' will engage with Cixous's concept of *l'écriture féminine*, inasmuch as elements from Amos's (musical) writing seem to be intertwined with song and vocality to suggest Cixous's flowing images of women daring to sing in beautiful forms and free their desire to create new desires through creativity. My interpretation of 'Cocoon' will engage with Irigaray's notion of the *elsewhere* in an attempt to locate the meanings of Björk's performance at the sites

where masculine representation fails to provide an adequate image of woman. On the whole, Irigaray's arguments will prove more pervasive in the discussion of the two songs, in particular her understanding of women's identities – in touch with their own bodies, words and gestures – which establishes a direct link to women's subjectivity and their position in culture. Irigaray articulates sexual difference and a model of subjectivity and speech as point of reference for a different ethics of sexual and cultural relations; her arguments indicate also the locations where the feminine may find its expression.

Irigaray's starting point (like Cixous's) is the psychoanalytic framework, primarily to uncover the phallogocentric bias embedded in its theories of women's lack and their misrepresentation in male discourse.²⁵³ Indeed, Butler has recognised in Irigaray's thinking the value of broadening the scope for feminist critique in confronting psychoanalytic conceptualisations of women as 'lack'. The female sex and its relation to the masculine in phallogocentric psychoanalysis eludes representation; hence the temptation to radically curtail a 'signifying economy in which the masculine constitutes the closed circle of signifier and signified'.²⁵⁴ Since identity in psychoanalysis is a product of the cultural imaginary, and subjectivity is constituted in language, Irigaray's arguments on the possibility of 'speaking (as) a woman' owe much to the understanding of how unconscious elements may undergo a change that can be registered linguistically, and the extent to which one can 'intervene' or make interpretations of the unconscious (consideration is also given to variations in language and how these come about in relation to different interlocutory situations).²⁵⁵

Commentators have often identified *l'écriture féminine* and *parler-femme* with chaos and disorder, in particular if it is understood that the language used comes from outside discourse.²⁵⁶ It may be worth remembering here that for Irigaray 'speaking-as-a-woman' refers to *language* (the corpus of language as used by a particular person or group), and not *langue* (the corpus of the language available to the speaker).²⁵⁷ In this sense, one can interpret the 'feminine language' not as a language entirely relegated outside the symbolic, but as the interpretation or translation that can be made of unconscious elements registered linguistically.²⁵⁸ Identifying a feminine (discursive and artistic) space in 'Pandora's Aquarium' and 'Cocoon' will be linked to the way women artists use creative language, musical writing and song singing, and the possibility that the meanings attached to their performances intervene or interfere in some way in the symbolic unconscious.

Irigaray's and Cixous's fluid images of women's sexuality and identity and women's bodily experience through which to access creative energy and knowledge provide the basis for the representation of women's consciousness; their theories attempt to achieve distance from dichotomous thinking and the binary system of signification entrenched in Western culture. Yet these arguments and images in favour of a 'feminine language' have generated controversy regarding the extent to which these concepts may be caught up in a system of masculine representation. Ann Rosalind Jones, for example, questions whether the body can be a source of self-knowledge and whether women can experience their bodies 'essentially' outside the acculturation of Western thinking.²⁵⁹ The advocacy for a 'feminine language' (through the body or otherwise, but especially through a body already laden with signification) could be interpreted as either women speaking as masculine subjects or women returning to an

essentialist position (which traditionally confines women to a secondary status). Cixous and Irigaray, as well as other French feminists, have been associated with *essentialism*, which has led to viewing their thinking, or at least some of their conceptualisations, as unhelpful or damaging for feminist political action.²⁶⁰ At one level, an engagement with *essentialism* will inevitably refer us back to Western dichotomous thinking; at another level, we will, in either of these interpretations, be caught up in a signifying economy of masculine representation.

Irigaray argues that within the masculine symbolic the ‘sexualised being of women’ is not channelled through the body, but from ‘what results from a logical requirement in speech’.²⁶¹ Sexualization is then understood as an effect of the existence of a language that is transcendent with respect to bodies. Women’s bodies are not sufficiently signifying or substantial within the masculine libidinal economy (except only from the place where man sees woman), and thus in order for a woman’s body to enjoy itself, it would have to be corporealized in a signifying manner: ‘it must be rearticulated with the “body” of the speaking subject’.²⁶² This highlights Irigaray’s interest in situating the female subject on equal terms as the masculine, as well as her departure from, or abandonment of, the ‘logical’ operations of masculine language, given that these operations embed the body/mind split and assign women a degrading *essentialist* position in a binarism (which ascribes meanings to the ‘sexualised being of women’ only from the place man sees woman).

Irigaray is more concerned with female subjectivity and the gradual positioning of women as subjects in culture, and this will therefore be a central aspect of my engagement with Irigaray to read Amos’s and Björk’s musical performances. The

question of *essentialism* is worth mentioning, however, in so far as my engagement with feminine discursivity and feminine creative spaces attempts to avoid slippage into the *essentialist* feminine. If unquestioned, the *essentialist* assumption can arise when dealing with authors like Cixous and Irigaray (despite their critique of dichotomous thinking). There is recognition in Irigaray's thought that acculturation through language is difficult to overcome, and it is in this line of reasoning that she says that to thwart discourse is not a simple undertaking. She explicitly rejects the term 'essentialism' as a masculine concept, and does not therefore think of women in terms of possessing *essentialist* attributes; this would be at odds, somehow, with her aim to change discourse and culture.²⁶³ She considers that women have the option of challenging their subordination in discourse directly by means of speaking as a masculine 'subject', although this option would imply that 'sexual indifference' is maintained.²⁶⁴ Her option is to argue for a new culture of 'sexual difference' and of the relationships within this culture, which would be necessary to thwart dominant discourse.

The idea of 'sexual difference' may then again lend itself, or slide into, an *essentialist* interpretation; and Irigaray's strategy of *mimesis/mimicry* does not clarify matters in this direction. Irigaray's *mimesis/mimicry* introduces the feminine into the scene of what she calls the 'tightly-woven systematicity' of discourse, so as to begin a process of thwarting it; but the strategy relies on a deliberate mimetic assumption of male metaphors and images of the feminine, for which her approach has been seen as being caught in the road 'back through essentialism'.²⁶⁵ Some feminist readings suggest interpreting as a strategy the possibility to access certain women's 'essence' through Irigaray's (and Cixous's) 'feminine language'. I take the interpretation of this

‘essence’ not in the sense of understanding identity as a fixed and contained category – which characterises the *essentialist* approach – but in the Irigarayan sense of accessing certain ‘individuality’ or ‘particularized interiority’, viewed as the workings of women’s (flowing) imaginary and subjectivity: as a strategy linked to the possibility of women inscribing new symbolic meanings. Irigaray indicates that ‘individuality’ implies for women a return ‘within themselves’, which she understands in the sense of ‘*within the intimacy of that silent, multiple, diffuse touch*’.²⁶⁶ Whitford reaffirms moreover that Irigaray’s *mimesis/mimicry* should not be interpreted as a reification of the ‘essential feminine’, common to all women, but as a strategy to produce difference (and hence effect an eventual change in discourse).²⁶⁷ *Mimesis/mimicry* can therefore be seen as a ‘kind of radical mime’ – in Butler’s terms – which exposes the persistent inadequacy and exclusion of women from the linguistic.²⁶⁸ It may also be seen as a way of re-signifying the male metaphors and images of the feminine.

Taking these considerations into account, my discussion of ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’ and ‘Cocoon’ will engage in *mimesis/mimicry* as a way to read a certain ‘individuality’ through the artists’ vocal performances, and as a means to challenge or ‘thwart’ the value system embedded in artistic representation. The masculine discursive system referred to by Irigaray could be extrapolated to the value system displayed in visual/auditory representation, which can be said to construct an image of woman according to certain expectations within masculine logic (within a ‘representational systematicity’). What Amos and Björk would seem to be mimicking in these songs through vocality is a *masquerade of femininity* that assigns meanings to women’s voices; but with the effect of disrupting and re-signifying those meanings. Musical

performance, according to Lucy Green, already involves a display that can be seen as something akin to wearing a mask: there is interplay between the displayer, who is doubled into 'self' and 'mask' and the onlooker, who sees the displayer as 'other' and 'mask'.²⁶⁹ We could say that Amos and Björk play with the mask of *femininity* as a way for the onlooker to access the artist's 'particularized interiority' and subjectivity.

The *masquerade of femininity* needs however some clarification, since for Irigaray it implies what women have to do in order to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own. She takes *femininity* here in Freud's sense, given that women have to enter and circulate in a system of values enveloped in the needs and desires of men.²⁷⁰ Incidentally, this indicates that Irigaray's use of the term 'feminine' has been radically re-signified in her theory so as to give symbolic form, as it were, to the representation and cultural positioning of 'female specificity', in a way markedly different from psychoanalysis.²⁷¹ Mask and masking allow moreover further interpretation, depending on whether the mask is viewed as a disguise for an authentic identity or as manifestation for a multiplicity of 'discursively' constructed identities. Efrat Tseëlon, who discusses masquerade in women's voices as critique for identity construction, approaches these issues, and hence my reading of Amos and Björk mimicking a vocal masquerade will draw from two of her models of the female voice.

Tseëlon offers interesting insights on whether the mask serves to hide or liberate the real self or whether there is an essence to cover by the mask; she takes masking as an 'embodied rhetorical strategy [...] embedded in power relations' and does not make assumptions about the ontological status of the 'unmasked identity',²⁷² but her idea of

masking as dialectical, and as a means of self-definition provides the ground for the meanings ascribed to the musical performance in the two songs, particularly in 'Cocoon'. Green argues that mask and music become entwined in the display of musical performance; both the displayer and the onlooker can play with the mask: the displayer has the power of the lure whereas the onlooker has the 'panoptical' power of the gaze. It would seem as if Amos and Björk play in these songs with *mimesis* so as to enable the mask to activate its dialectical power, as well as generate interplay between the auditory and the visual, voice and gaze, displayer and onlooker. The parallels between the auditory and visual images in Amos's and Björk's musical performances will also form an important component of the discussion.

Finally, Amos's and Björk's musical performances read from the perspective of a feminine discursivity foreground their subject position. The subject is conceived for Irigaray as always in dialogue, engaged with the other; and so the artistic performance may involve this dialectical interplay: through the *intra-subjective* relationship between the artist and her performance and the possibility of *inter-subjective* relations with the listeners. The listener can bring the music to life through the aesthetic response and the identificatory mechanisms with the *jouissance* generated in listening. We may recall here Lawrence Kramer's arguments that subjectivity as 'culturally constructed' seeks 'to install a credible value-laden human agency where the irreducibly multiple and heterogeneous determinants of this becoming-constructed engage in their fullest interplay'.²⁷³ According to Kramer, music can participate actively in the cultural construction of subjectivity and hence the pleasure in listening 'becomes a vehicle of acculturation: musical pleasure, like all pleasure invites legitimation both of its sources and of the subject position its sources address'.²⁷⁴

The Interweaving of the Singing Voice and Writing in Tori Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium'.

Amos's fifth album *From the Choirgirl Hotel* (1998) is generally acclaimed for opening and widening the range of sounds and bringing in an immediacy that captures the versatility of the artist's musical performances. Most themes in the album show an experimental side, given that Amos works here live with a full band and broadens the musical arrangements to interact with rock & roll, one of her musical influences. Except for a few themes, the artist tends to de-emphasise on this occasion the centrality of her keyboards interacting with her vocals, although her voice and lyrics prove to be powerfully delivered accompanied by either her piano or the rock band, or both. One of these exceptions in the album is 'Pandora's Aquarium', where sections of exuberant vocalisation and piano playing are emphasised; these are also combined with a light band accompaniment to display a high articulacy in her musical delivery.

'Pandora's Aquarium' provides another example where the externalisation or staging of Amos's 'particularized interiority' suggests the presence of a strong female subject position. The meanings ascribed to this performance are not linked to trauma as was the case in 'Me and a Gun', but are readable in terms of the representation of a certain feminine specificity. A significant aspect to consider here is the relationship established in our conscious/unconscious when listening to Amos's voice, which in 'Pandora's Aquarium' evokes playfulness and enjoyment, an expression of *jouissance*, instead of pain; the song exemplifies the diversity of feminist interpretive

engagements or significations that can be associated with Amos's vocal production (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 3 'Pandora's Aquarium').

'Pandora's Aquarium' starts with a brief piano solo followed almost immediately by a vocal gesture, starting right at the bottom of her lower register; she performs a glissando into her upper register and then down to the middle of her register. The performance of these glissandi recurs throughout the song, and they mark a shift to the extremes of her register. Some passages in the song sit comfortably in the middle of her register, but when she shifts every now and then into a different register (via glissandi or leaps), her voice changes quality, moving to the falsetto, or to a lower throaty voice or to a mixture of the two (this last articulation is particularly striking). This rapid and constant shifting of register forms part of a particular emotional vocabulary in this song. The song closes with a section of dramatic and more sustained sequence of glissandi, this time interspersed by extended single tones, which come to an end in a swift drop onto a very low tone, beyond the putative limits of her lower register, and which fade into a whisper, without any clear articulation of pitch (thus, again, falling outside the diatonic tonal frame of the song, as we also saw in 'Me and a Gun').

The use of the extremes of register in 'Pandora's Aquarium' – unlike 'Me and a Gun' where the delivery is very focused and introspective – suggests a different expressive economy: indeed, where 'Me and a Gun' sought to articulate a soft but traumatic steady core, deviations here signify excess; the dynamism, vitality and fluidity of this song represent something much closer to a kind of exuberance, an overdetermined expressive economy, more explicitly 'performative' or virtuosic. The performance, I

suggest, constitutes a significantly distinct use of voice since this time the mood is passionate, intense and yet pleasurably playful at the same time. It would seem that Amos intends to ‘play’ with her voice and she uses her voice with generosity, apparently without restraint and exploits its full potential in order, perhaps, to deliver a vocal performance that could well be described as deliberately hyperbolic.

Over-determination and Excess as *Mimicry/Mimesis*

This over-determination, supported as we have seen by the use of the extremes of Amos’s register to the point of crossing the putative limits of her range, produces *jouissance* transmitted to the listener via the aestheticizing process of the artistic production.²⁷⁵ Amos’s vocal articulations are likely to release a series of unusual, yet recognizable pleasurable associations in the audience linked to ‘strong *femininity*’ vis-à-vis women’s singing within dominant culture: within this reading, the vocal excess could be viewed as a kind of fetishization of the female voice. The female voice as fetish traditionally reproduces and affirms patriarchal definitions of *femininity*,²⁷⁶ like the female body, it functions as a representation of lack within the male libidinal economy. Efrat Tseëlon indicates that the voice functioning as a fetish helps to maintain a ‘phantasmic unity’ in the face of sexual difference, and thus it operates as a ‘vocal masquerade of “proper” femininity’ that shrouds the fantasy of a ‘strong (phallic) femininity’.²⁷⁷

In Amos’s ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’, the emotionally charged delivery through the use of the extremes of her range may be seen as a seduction, a mask to mimic an extreme excitement that has a critical purchase on the patriarchal figuration of the feminine. Amos’s playful repetition of glissandi and daring articulations emerge as if to mimic

an erotic and sensual form of feminine expression; as such, her voice here seems in line with what Tseëlon terms 'the provocative voice', one of her three models of cultural representations of *femininity* through vocality, which operates like vocal masquerade as figured in relation to masculine logic; the other two being the 'proper' and the 'mute' female voices.²⁷⁸ The 'provocative voice' represents a daring speech noticeable in erotic and sensual forms of feminine expression; it functions for Tseëlon like fetishism as it plays with the fantasy of the phallic mother and dispels castration anxieties, but exposes the double bind in which women can be trapped: disciplined to avoid certain forms and speech, yet encouraged to use them to satisfy male desire.²⁷⁹

The suggestion that Amos may be mimicking an intensified sensual feeling, an excessive excitement in 'Pandora's Aquarium' can be examined by recourse to Irigaray's articulation and appropriation of the strategy of *mimicry* or *mimesis*. Irigaray's *mimesis* purports that women can assume the feminine role *deliberately* in order to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation and hence start a process by which they can prevent women's exploitation in discourse, as well as celebrate the feminine without reference to that exploitation.²⁸⁰ Even though Irigaray refers to language, we may perhaps see Amos's vocal exuberance here as the utilization of a *deliberate* expressivity, which *mimics* the 'provocative voice' as masquerade of a feminine seductive, alluring sensuality. The 'provocative voice' would not be seen as fetishist incitement to fulfil erotic attraction for male desire; it can be interpreted as a way to celebrate vocal *excess* and affirm feminine sensuality within a specific feminine libidinal economy that does not refer invariably to dominant culture, that is, it does not function for the benefit of the male. Since the strategy of *mimesis* entails the mimicking of the way in which the feminine, within the symbolic, has been

objectified and defined as a negative image of the (male) subject, Irigaray's residue (woman) produces an *excess* possible on the feminine side, which has the potential to disrupt.²⁸¹

It would thus seem that this feminine *excess* is at work in Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium'. The intensity of Amos's vocal delivery draws the critical attention of the listener to the gendered construction of *femininity* by making visible certain 'essential' elements associated with feminine *excess*, which surface through the rapid and extreme constant remodulations of her voice. By using the extremes of her register, the *excess* is made manifest, audible, and it represents for the listener what Lawrence Kramer has termed a 'hermeneutic window', an over-determination that opens a way into interpretation.²⁸² Amos's glissandi can be thought of as having the effect of validating or authorising the *excess* as a feminine quality, as an element that we hear in the hermeneutic window and that, as Kramer suggests, becomes a 'site of engagement' which resists 'normalization' of the symbolic.²⁸³ The *excess* is thus re-signified for the listener as result of a culturally constructed subjectivity. It is in this case a deliberate approach to offer an explicitly virtuosic delivery, which foregrounds the artist's expressive resources linked to specific female identifications and the retrieval of a possible action of the feminine.

Within this Irigarayan reading, 'Pandora's Aquarium' would intimate a projection of the female voice whose fluid articulatory initiates a change at the level of the listener's unconscious: indeed, through the re-interpretation of repressed material entrenched in symbolization (i.e. masculinist metaphors and fantasies of the 'essential' feminine). It is conceivable that this change is the condition by which we are able to gain access to

the listener's consciousness (through a psychoanalytic process) and ideally bring about a desired change in the phallogentric system of the representation of women's singing.²⁸⁴ It may therefore be argued that although women's singing is caught up in historically-contingent patriarchal reifications of the feminine, the use of extraordinary vocal articulations as feminine *excess* in 'Pandora's Aquarium' challenge or resist adherence to the ongoing symbolisation of gender in women's singing. Amos seems to activate the *intra-subjective* experience of a 'provocative voice' deliberately through her vocal performance, and hence encourages a radical feminist engagement that may enlarge the scope for, and thinking about meaning, female subjectivity and vocal performance.

Music and Song as the Source of Woman's Voice in *L'écriture féminine*

L'écriture féminine, according to Cixous, would be located somewhere other than in the silence in which the woman has been confined by the masculine symbolic; a feminine practice of writing will always go beyond the discourse of phallogentrism, and may only surface in subjects not situated in territories subordinated to theoretical domination: 'it will not let itself think except through subjects that break automatic functions, border runners never subjugated by any authority'.²⁸⁵ Cixous senses femininity in writing by privileging the voice: 'writing and voice are entwined and interwoven and writing's continuity/voice's rhythm take each other's breath away through interchanging'.²⁸⁶ She also suggests that in both feminine speech and writing there is something that, once it has passed through us, and deeply touched us, continues being heard within ourselves, and it has thus 'the power to affect us – song, the first music of the voice of love, which every woman keeps alive'.²⁸⁷

Irigaray indicates that writing remains an instrument both ‘productive of and produced’ within the economy of male discourse, along with male discourse definitions of what is ‘proper meaning’; thus, an *other* writing will have to entail ‘an *other* economy of meaning’.²⁸⁸ This may involve bypassing or reversing the ‘definitions’ of the economy of dominant discourse. In this sense, a woman’s writing may not be understood solely as a strategy to disrupt phallocentrism, but as locating a place where to create an *other* writing. By taking a detour through Plato, Irigaray explains the possibility in which a woman’s writing may take place. She identifies two mimeses embedded in Plato’s thinking: the *mimesis* that is already caught up in discourse, privileged in the history of philosophy as a process of ‘*imitation*’ and ‘*reproduction*’; and ‘*mimesis* as production’, which lies more in the realm of music, and has been repressed, if only ‘because it was constituted as an enclave within a “dominant” discourse’.²⁸⁹ For Irigaray, it is on the basis of the latter *mimesis* that a woman’s writing may come about, perhaps because ‘*mimesis* as production’ may be seen as a means to raise questions, not only about the world exhibited inside the mimetic work or performance, but also about the relationship between language and thought and reality – between the world of the artistic work or performance and the world outside the work.²⁹⁰

Both Irigaray and Cixous seem to locate the source of the woman’s voice within a primal origin, a space from which it is possible to express (represent) the feminine, and which is identified with music and song. It is in this sense that a feminist reading of Amos’s vocal performance from this stance becomes possible, because feminine speech and writing are entwined with voice and song and thus the notion of *l’écriture féminine* seems to offer that space from which to argue in favour of a specific

feminine musical performance. If, as Irigaray suggests, a woman's writing may emerge from within the realm of music, from within a repressed enclave in discourse, from a space to be freed on these accounts, we can see how 'writing' and 'singing' are subsumed within the 'performative'. Music and song (which emanate from an archaic singing voice) are thus identified with the feminine in relation to origin, as well as with that which has been repressed in the symbolic (the mother/woman). Amos's singing invokes this powerful trope, which serves to distinguish an unconscious female identification not linked to categories defined by the masculine, but linked to the multiplicity and fluidity of women's libidinal energies.

Irigaray's 'Fluids' and the Liquid, Watery Imagery of 'Pandora's Aquarium'

Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium' contains sounds and images evocative of Irigaray's female imaginary, which, unlike the male imaginary, is conceptualised as versatile and flowing, and female identity, as a cultural product of the imaginary, is characterised by mobility, flexibility and fluidity (rather than being marked by rigidity, linearity or strong identification to self – attributes of the male symbolic). The cultural imaginary is aligned with the constructions of the symbolic and in order to bypass these fixed constructions Irigaray adopts, as we have seen, the strategy of *mimicry/mimesis*.

Irigaray argues in 'The Mechanics of Fluids' that women diffuse themselves according to modalities hardly compatible with the ruling symbolic and they must thus be constantly reconfined within the solid walls of principle. She proposes that there are 'certain properties of real fluids' which have been excluded within this logic, and include: '*a physical reality that continues to resist adequate symbolization and/or*

that signifies the powerlessness of logic to incorporate in its writing all the characteristic features of nature'.²⁹¹ Thus, the subject for Irigaray is 'already repeating normative 'judgments' on a nature that is resistant to such a transcription'.²⁹² Women are seen as embodying a 'flowing' individuality that has deprived them of the possibility of self-identity within the dynamics of 'the logic of solids'. Since symbolic meanings within 'the logic of solids' cannot be simply reversed by stepping out of phallogocentric representations of women, Irigaray's concept of the imaginary may not be understood solely in psychoanalytic terms, but as including also a socio-cultural and anatomical/physical dimension.²⁹³

As a way to 'go back through the masculine imaginary', Irigaray returns to the four elements, reminiscent of the pre-Socratic world-view, except that she uses the images of these elements as a vocabulary and a discursive strategy to talk about the material, the origin, passions, life, the flesh, the body and creativity.²⁹⁴ She offers a study of our relations to the four elements earth, air, fire and water, which act as metaphors of the meeting of substances that can bring about new kinds of productivity and unexpected creative modalities. 'Pandora's Aquarium' evokes, of course, water, liquidity; not only do Amos's harmonies and free-flowing lyrics complement the 'properties of real fluids', but the metaphors of fluidity are also underpinned by Amos's visual images depicted in *From the Choirgirl Hotel* album cover.

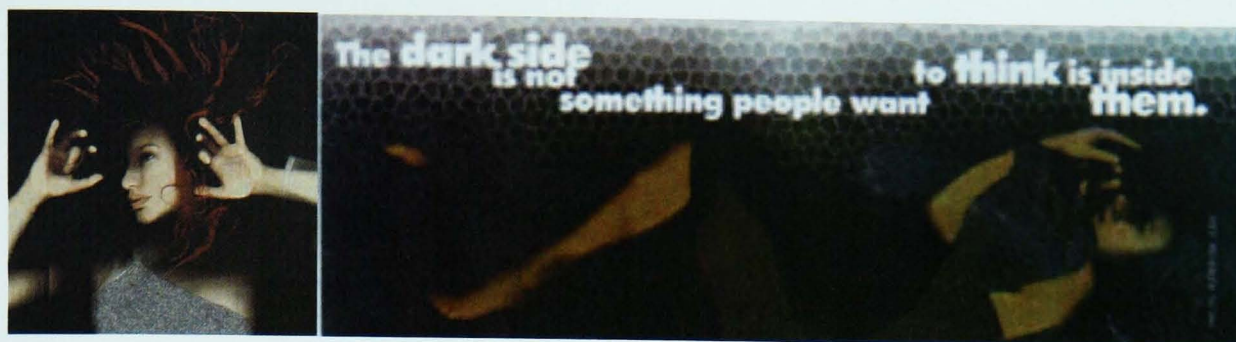


Figure 6: Photomontage, *From the Choirgirl Hotel 1*

The photomontage shows Amos in several pictures as if suspended in a liquid or airy atmosphere, with her body and clothes moving in slow motion, and her red hair floating in the fluid element (please, see figure 6). The photographs have been digitally altered to recreate a virtual space where Amos looks pensive and absorbed in creative thoughts. In some of the photographs of the inside cover she appears with other female figures, part of their bodies shaded off and dispersed in darkness (see figure 7); yet, another illustration shows Amos resting in a foetal position on the top of an apparently ancient stone, suggestive of a connection with origin and the maternal-feminine (see figure 8). We are initially drawn to the enigmatic attraction of Amos's body; yet, since the pictures are mediated by the aesthetics of the photographic work, conscious and unconscious elements can be said to be at play in its composition; we may, along this line, be encouraged to look at the work in ways not fixed by the photomontage's mystifying narrative. Kaja Silverman has shown the importance of 'productive looking' at the time we confront the visual landscape that surrounds us. Using a psychoanalytic approach, she indicates that 'productive looking' entails a conscious reworking of the terms in which we unconsciously look at the objects around; in addition, 'productive looking' entails the opening up of the unconscious to otherness.²⁹⁵ In order for our look to become productive, Silverman considers it important to incorporate into our psychic operations the 'mnemic

elements' or memory trace which reside outside the 'given-to-be-seen'. Thus, the 'mnemic elements', which act as vehicles for our unconscious wishes, help validate meaningful content that would otherwise be neglected. In order to open up to otherness, it is also necessary to experience a displacement from oneself: a denial or exclusion of certain elements in our selves in conjunction with the introduction of the 'not me' into one's memory reserve.²⁹⁶



Figure 7: Photomontage, *From the Choirgirl Hotel 2*

A 'productive looking' at Amos's photographs may require us to consciously consider the meaningfulness of a versatile and mobile female identity beyond or outside Amos's portrayed image. It may also require us to deny fixed and contained ideas about *essentialist* identity categories, whilst discursively introducing or implanting into our 'mnemic reserve' the fluid properties of the female 'other'. The contours of Amos's body in the photographs appear diffused against the faint surroundings, as well as encompassed with other bodies; this may indicate the subject's flexible limits,

and the dissolution of rigid borders between one and the other. *From the Choirgirl Hotel* photomontage seems to capture the impression or ‘air’ (to borrow Barthes’s term) of a female subject who seems to have dropped a façade of undifferentiation: Amos’s images would seem to produce difference, wherein the meta-performative subject enacts a feminine persona complemented by the workings of the fluid female imaginary and identity. The ‘air’ seems thus to encapsulate these aspects: fluidity, mobility and openness, as if forming, metaphorically, an aura or ‘shadow which accompanies the body’ at the heart of Amos’s representation.²⁹⁷

Female Symbolism: ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’s’ Lyrics and Myths within the Space of *L’écriture Féminine*

Silverman’s arguments on ‘productive looking’ applied to Amos’s images illustrate how a certain displacement has to take place within the psyche of the viewer so as to participate in the artist’s libidinal investments; this occurs in a way that redounds on the artist’s self-representation, rather than crediting primacy to our own viewpoint or recollections.²⁹⁸ Silverman’s argument may be borrowed in a similar way to examine ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’s’ lyrics, and reflect on how a ‘productive listening’ to the lyrics may also draw us into Amos’s libidinal world. The artist does not sing the words as written and performs unexpected intonation breaks in the middle of a verse line. There is prominence of the sensory over the ‘logical’ in Amos’s musical writing: meaning is estranged from the signifying process in ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’ lyrics, to the point that the reader/listener is unable to discern a clear, ‘logical’ sense in Amos’s narrative; hers are associations with love, rejection, the senses, water and the ocean:

[..] Pandora's aquarium
she dives for shells
with her nautical nuns
and thoughts you thought
you'd never tell I am not asking you to believe in me [..]
I'm not Persephone foam can be dangerous [..]
Things you do I never asked you [..]
[..] you are still alive below the waste ripples come and
ripples go
and ripple back to me Pandora Pandora's aquarium²⁹⁹

A 'productive listening' to the lyrics may thus require us to discursively implant in our memories 'mnemic elements' that reside outside the given-to-be-listened ('libidinally saturated associative clusters', in Silverman's words), as well as a process of opening up to the fluidity of the other's (musical) writing. The meaning of the words may therefore be interpreted evocatively rather than literally: the senses' imbrication in memory enhances the free association of emotions and metonymies, which intensifies the fluidity of the narrative.

'Pandora's Aquarium' lyrics may also be read as located somewhere in the space of *l'écriture féminine*. Examples of feminine writing attempt to challenge the discourse of the phallus by altering the pervasive logic of the order of the symbolic and are therefore characterised by flexible and fluid narratives with multiple points of departure and closure. Cixous believes that it is through the true speaking of the flesh

that women's thoughts signify; the woman is allowed to inscribe what she is saying, implicitly through her voice, sustained by her body. In her view, there is no scission between the logic of the oral speech and the logic of the text; the masculine has tended to separate writing and speaking and has marked cultural spaces by a typically masculine libidinal economy, which has exaggerated the signs of sexual opposition.³⁰⁰ 'Pandora's Aquarium's' lyrics encourage multiple significations spread in every direction, evocative of a refusal to split the oral and singing from writing, as well as the infinitude of the feminine libidinal economy; they encourage a plurality of listeners' interpretations and inspire multiple sensations through liquid images of water. Amos's singing, the rapid change of register using the extremes of her vocal range, high and low, and beyond her limits, is entwined with the fluid narrative of the lyrics so as to suggest a creative 'feminine musical language' that can challenge the logic of the value system of representation of the symbolic order.

The lyrics allude to the names of two powerful Greek female myths, Pandora and Persephone; their names appear in the song somewhat removed from their mythical context, working perhaps as a way of avoiding association with the already well-established images which already adhere to them in the cultural imaginary. Amos's use of Pandora and Persephone may be seen as a way of dislocating the symbolic associations attached to the myths.³⁰¹ Pandora's myth entails the loss of the knowledge of the gifts to be passed on from mother to daughter, whereas Persephone's myth stands for the lost of the mother-daughter relation: the names would seem to stir up those repressed elements of nature – archaic mother – that symbolization has been unable to fully incorporate in its writing. The mother-daughter relationship, which remains unsymbolized, is given an important status in

Irigaray's thinking, since women have a need to an identity distinct from the maternal function.³⁰² The familiarity of Pandora's and Persephone's myths and the subsequent re-contextualisation of their names in 'Pandora's Aquarium' suggest a deflection from, rather than direct association, with the Greek stories. Instead, they seem to operate here as a re-appropriation of the mother-daughter relationship, so as to dislocate the usual narratives and relocate their meaning within Amos's own language and narrative. The names may thus be read metonymically, as an oblique reference that would seem to operate in the representational terms under which the listener unconsciously activates her 'mnemic' reserve, and consciously reworks their cultural signification.

The Metaphorization of the Maternal: the 'Nourishing' Liquid Element and Amos's Feminine Territory

All this imagery alludes usefully to the framework employed above to argue for a return to water and a primal archaic moment before symbolisation: the water imagery here can be seen as a symptom of a repressed nourishing element (i.e. the womb) and of female identity viewed as open-ended and constituted through the inter-subjective relation to the archaic mother. Irigaray maintains that 'it is necessary for a woman to be able to speak her identity in words, in images and in symbols within this inter-subjective relation with her mother, then with other women, in order to enter into a relation to men that is not destructive'.³⁰³ Amos seems to 'speak' her identity through her voice, music, lyrics and liquid images that bring back that associative link to the maternal-feminine. Indeed, the reference to the mother can be taken as an implicit autobiographical allusion to Amos's real life miscarriage around the time of

composing the album. After the experience, Amos's first song to come was 'Pandora's Aquarium'; the artist describes her creative process in terms that allude to fluidity, as well as the search for a repressed feminine:

When you lose a baby there's a line that's been crossed by the deities. I started to question the universe. And since I live on the river, I started to watch the rhythm of the water. After I miscarried I was trying to find something to identify with as a woman [...]. I had to find some primal feminine place inside myself to really understand that the Earth has both birth and loss every day. As I felt all the different rhythms that the Earth produces, I started to see rhythm in a way I really hadn't before. As I went to the piano, I knew now that it had to be written and built into the structure. It wasn't something to be put on top of the songs later.³⁰⁴

'Pandora's Aquarium' would thus seem to symbolize through music the 'mother-matter-nature' connection referred to by Irigaray as women's link to matter, the corporeal and capability of 'reproducing' from nature. The overflow of free-associative and emotional content in Amos's statement echoes the 'properties of fluids' in that there may be features of nature (i.e. the rhythms of the Earth, Earth's birth and loss) that have been negated and excluded from symbolization. Amos would seem to validate those negated features and bring in her creative process the repressed maternal-feminine: first, through the metonymic association of both her lyrics and remodulations of her voice with the economy of the fluids; secondly, through self-images of immersion in the 'nourishing' liquid element, her body

floating, moving slowly in a musing or meditative state, abstracted, foetal and encompassed with other women.

The trace of the mother appears in two other songs from *From the Choirgirl Hotel*, ‘Spark’ and ‘Playboy Mommy’, in which there is also reference to a lost child and the mother’s distress in relation to this child. ‘Playboy Mommy’, for example, includes lyrics such as: ‘fell face down. didn’t help my brain out. then the baby came [...] I can’t find those church bells. that played when you died [...] don’t judge me so harsh little girl’.³⁰⁵ Meaning in these songs, as in ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’, has been displaced in their narratives, but they illustrate the pervasiveness of Amos’s own personal story emerging by way of her musical creativeness. The possibility of a ‘mother-lost child’ relationship in Amos’s artistic performance foregrounds the body: Amos’s own ‘flesh’ becomes the vessel through which meaning is conveyed.³⁰⁶ The artist would thus not appear to deny those unconscious elements that slip out from under her voice. The link to the body takes us back to the discursivity of *l’écriture féminine* and Cixous’s point that women still have everything to write about femininity, since until very recently, women have not started to use their own language to write about the feminine experience:

Woman’s body with a thousand and one fiery hearths, when – shattering censorship and yokes – she lets it articulate the proliferation of meanings that runs through it in every direction. It is going to take much more than language for him to make the ancient maternal tongue sound in only one groove.³⁰⁷

Cixous understands the attempt of women to win back their bodies as a way of breaking out from the silence of women's voices, as a kind of outburst and transgression of the Law through language. She insists that the first nameless love within each woman is singing and this is always a vestige from 'the mother', which resists being cut off: it is the element that pushes the woman to inscribe her style in language;³⁰⁸ and hence it would also seem to push the woman artist to inscribe her style in musical performance.

Amos's challenge may be directed at symbolizing more adequately those repressed unconscious elements of male thought and at revealing the imaginary's susceptibility to change.³⁰⁹ Her identity-to-self, as we have seen, is not fixed, but fluid, and powerfully linked to the feminine: it is non-linear, diffuse, dispersed, mobile, and disruptive of the symbolic. Thus, through singing performance, Amos could be said to attempt to metaphoricise the representation of her own (primal, maternal) desire and to deploy the female imaginary that attributes identity to the female. The need for an alternative imaginary topography is linked for Irigaray to the categories that map the territory of Western thought.³¹⁰ Amos seems to take the metaphor of remapping the territory literally, since she has drawn a fictitious map in the inside album cover of *From the Choirgirl Hotel*, which can be interpreted as the mapping out of her own maternal-feminine space – in connexion with the child – (please, see figure 8). The meaning of the names and topography that appear in the map are child-like, exclusively her own. Sometimes the name of a place has been substituted by a personal statement so as to strengthen, figuratively, the location and expression of herself, as both mother and child in a two-way relationship.³¹¹ What we see here is a

Björk's 'Cocoon': Masquerade, the Body and the Vocal 'Aestheticisation' of the Flesh

Björk's fourth solo album released in 2001, *Vespertine*, draws its name from 'vespers' or 'evening prayers'; the name is already significant for an intimate and emotional work that it is supposed to be inspired by chamber music; it transmits feelings of peacefulness and inner calm, and encourages a listening in solitude, as if the listener were drawn to an inward meditation in a close and private space. The experiments with electronic sound in the album are perhaps less innovative than in *Homogenic* (1997); yet the artist creates an enveloping soundscape, replete with richly textured melodies and exceptional arrangements and orchestration. Björk typically combines the use of studio software with vocal rawness to create an ethereal quality that evokes open spaces; yet she also intimates reflective thinking and suggests tranquillity. She incorporates in this work an Inuit chorus as accompaniment for some of her themes, which furnishes a wintry, yet invitingly warm, atmosphere; the chorus highlights the importance given by the artist to the human voice, an aspect that she would further explore in *Medúlla*, her all-vocals album from 2004.

The third single from the album, 'Cocoon', released in 2002, is exemplary of *Vespertine*'s intimate, delicate sound. Björk's single voice flows softly like a breath of air throughout the performance, and creates a fragile and tenuous effect, which is supported by her understated vocals and embodied sounds. The song appears to disclose a very intimate and private moment that the singer links emotionally to sexual feelings of plenitude and tenderness (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 3

‘Cocoon’). Her voice sings of a lover and the physicality of the relationship in a manner that draws the listener to Björk’s inner passionate world; there is no sense of banal romanticism in her musical delivery, but an experience of intense introspection, whereby her vocality acquires almost a spiritual dimension. This ethereal quality is sustained by the digitally produced musical sound, which reproduces a very light scratchy or grainy texture; it is also sustained by Björk’s delicate vocal nuances, processed so that each of them is perfectly audible: ‘Who would have known, that a boy like him, would have entered me lightly, restoring my blisses [*sic*]’.³¹² The singer creates an airy effect of musical delicacy with subtle vocal articulations linked to a sensual space that can be understood as located within the feminine libidinal economy.

The song starts with deep, gentle, organ chords (or organ-like synthsounds) that repeat throughout the song mid-tempo in a minimalist style. Björk’s voice emerges like a murmur at the middle of her range, and lightly moves through the song without deviating too much from this vocal location; her singing is delicate, delivered at some points almost like a spoken whisper, and it continues to express intimate emotions of plenitude, resembling the kind of verbal vocalisations of someone who is revealing a stream of *jouissance* from within a very private space. At times, her vocality is characterised by throaty articulations that are located at the base of her mouth; this strengthens the sense of secrecy, and of unfolding a desire inside that is then shared with the listener. The singing reaches towards the end a climax point, when Björk’s voice arrives at a blissful moment when her song voice transforms itself into a moan. This is followed by a fleeting vocal iteration that fades distantly, which resembles an ephemeral quivering or vibration; this moment brings to mind the orgasmic pleasure

recalled in the lyrics: ‘When I wake up, the second time in his arms, gorgeousness, he’s still inside of me, who would have known, who ahhh, who would have known [...]’,³¹³

Björk’s subtle vocality therefore marks the song as this moment of confidentiality, of revealing a privacy through the vocal/musical performance that is not usually exposed, but which is none the less conveyed to the listener. The understated singing evokes a sense of closeness, given that the unveiling of intimacy enables the listener access into the artist’s desire inside. Yet the intimacy suggested as the expression of a loving relationship linked to sexuality could also be interpreted as the relationship between the artist and her own music.³¹⁴ The music would in this sense be felt inside like a lover, and hence Björk could be bringing a personal vision of an intimate relationship between herself and the creative powers of her music. The performance would seem to suggest the fluidity and infinitude of women’s sexuality argued by Cixous, through which women can invent new desires by daring to sing and free the feelings that flood within their bodies.³¹⁵ Björk’s performance would not seem inhibited by a logic (phallogentric) that suppresses the articulation of her *jouissance*, but she invents a new desire connected with her music.

The artist uses an underdetermined expressive economy and hence minimises vocal and musical deviations to articulate a soft steady delivery; this forms part of the emotional vocabulary of the song to convey this intimate relation with her music or lover. Vocality in ‘Cocoon’ seems to delineate a specific feminine space evocatively connected with the body, as well as a libidinal energy that is open, and hence, in some sense, vulnerable; the vulnerability creates a sense of intimacy, and this, in turn,

enables the listener to experience the work in its bare intensity. In this way, 'Cocoon' prompts a response from the listener in terms of its aesthetic simplicity, whereby Björk's embodied voice is impressed with nakedness on the soundscape. Her singing articulations come through the body metaphorically 'aestheticizing' its flesh, naked, as will be seen more explicitly in the meanings attached to this particular work from a gender perspective.

Under-determination and Whisper as *Mimicry/Mimesis*

The under-determination that underpins musical performance in 'Cocoon' draws the critical attention of the listener to a gendered construction of *femininity* in a way similar to the over-determination discussed in the case of Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium'. Whilst Amos was mimicking a strong *femininity* by using the extremes of her register to convey *excess*, Björk's seems to be mimicking in 'Cocoon' a fragile form of *femininity* by using a whispery voice that conveys gentleness and emotional nuance. A way for women's voices to conform to cultural stereotypes and make themselves 'feminine' is to whisper, a prototype of *femininity* that appears as a prominent feature for the genteel, demure ideal of womanhood in Western culture. Tseëlon identifies the 'proper voice' as vocal masquerade for polite, non-challenging speech, which characterises socially powerless women who learn to speak and modulate their voices according to masculine cultural expectations. In Tseëlon's view, the way the female voice has been restricted or 'tight-laced' is not only attributable to the carnal, material qualities of the female voice, but it also mirrors the power differential in the phallogentric system; hence the masquerade of the 'proper voice' functions as a form of submission or deference towards the powerful.³¹⁶

However, 'Cocoon's' mimicking of the masquerade of the 'proper voice' should not be understood in terms of a form of submission that yields to the claims that result from the power differential inherent in phallocentrism. Björk's whispery, understated musical performance may be seen as strategic *mimesis/mimicry*, which (Whitford remind us) for Irigaray aims at producing difference, rather than reifying the *essentialist* feminine behind the masquerade.³¹⁷ The mimicking of the 'proper voice' in this case seems to mark an aesthetic moment of reflexivity that defies established assumptions about the significance of the masquerade at the time the listener engages in the embodied – fleshy – vocal qualities of Björk's introspective singing. The artist's soft, vulnerable core suggests reservedness, whilst it also draws attention to anxieties about the exposure of intimacy and eroticism within a masculine world. This last aspect becomes more evident when Björk's singing reaches the ecstatic moment of orgasmic pleasure, given that it involves the vocal display of a musical 'climax' as expression of feminine libidinal energy. The vocal masquerade at this point is not simply suppressing, but revealing and giving licence to an intimacy that can be seen to match the enactment of a desired identity (an artistically enacted identity). The 'proper voice' as masquerade in 'Cocoon' can be said to function ambiguously as both concealment and disclosure, thus showing the potential of the masquerade to also become liberating. Björk's mimicking a 'masked other' through vocality suggests an empowered 'different other' that can challenge established assumptions and cultural expectations.

The artist's *mimicry* of the 'proper voice' in 'Cocoon' may therefore be seen as a strategy of differentiation, in particular by way of making possible access to the artist's 'individuality' or 'particularised interiority' through vocality in the form of a

deliberate minimalist delivery. In an Irigarayan sense, this implies a return within the artist herself, and an opportunity to experience herself not in relation to masculine subject investments, but in relation to her positioning as a subject in culture. Irigaray's model of the irreducibility of the subject, conceived as always engaged with the other, allows for a space (both for the artist and the listener) where the feminine is not regarded as a subservient secondary term in a binarism. Björk's underdetermined expressive economy may thus be read as affirmation and validation of the feminine qualities associated with the 'proper voice' (whispery, gentle breathing, unassuming, soft delivery, etc.) that are re-utilized or recovered – mimicked – by the artist, not as intrinsic *essentialist* values, but as investments of her subject position in culture.³¹⁸

The masquerade thus raises questions about the 'feminine', since it can ambiguously convey concealment and disclosure, and it serves as a means of inquiring into the boundaries or divisions that traditionally defined categories of *essentialist* identity. Tseëlon indicates that masquerade provides a paradigmatic challenge to dualistic differences between essence and appearance, inasmuch as it unsettles the relationship of a supposed stable identity and its outward manifestation.³¹⁹ Her notion of identity is understood as emerging from 'the interplay between our subjective experience and the cultural historical setting in which it is formed', and this perspective alerts us therefore to the 'inevitability of difference'.³²⁰ Identity gives us a sense of coherence, whilst it also sets us apart; yet *essentialist* approaches to fixed identity categories are based on the cultivation of 'fictive differences' or ideal constructions that imply closure and containment. The masquerade for Tseëlon is fundamentally dialectical, and comes to replace identity constructions that are thought as contained and stable with constructions that are more ambiguous and diverse. In this way, masking can

serve to destabilise or deconstruct *essentialist* identity categories, as well as being a tool for the self-definition inherent in masquerade (i.e. the ‘proper voice’ can be a form of hiding which allows the enactment of a desired identity, and which may elude the rigid roles women inhabit).³²¹

‘Cocoon’s’ Visual Images and the Disruptive Masquerade

‘Cocoon’s’ visual images would seem to encompass the minimalism of the musical delivery. The video presents Björk featured in a narrative removed from reality, which aesthetically suggests an intersection of Japanese and avant-garde styles. The acclaimed visual artist producer of the video, Eiko Ishioka, offers a captivating and intimate vision that ties in with ‘Cocoon’s’ introspective music, as well as some of the meanings that have been associated with Björk’s vocals (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 3 ‘Cocoon’). The video starts as a dark space that gradually fills with a faint and diffuse light, where a number of female silhouettes begins to be discerned; they are all seemingly naked, and display extremely pale skins, as if covered in thick white pancake make-up; their only adornment is the hairstyle, arranged like the glossy coiffure of a geisha wig. Björk is singled out and slowly moves away towards the middle of an empty spotlighted space from where she starts singing. At this point, two red ribbons or arteries emerge from her breast, extending around her body as she performs the song. Björk’s fingers draw lines in the air to play with the ribbons, which resemble streams of blood that come out of her body, guided by the soft movements of her arms and hands; it is a display of playful enjoyment and pleasure; the blood ribbons finally encircle the artist’s whole body as in a chrysalis, which slowly rises up and disappears off the screen frame (please, see figure 9).



Figure 9: Björk's 'Cocoon' detail 1

One of the most noticeable parallelisms of the visual images in relation to the meaning of the vocal display is the use of masking. The mask in the video hints at the delicate style of the geisha, which generally enacts a submissive, dramatized form of femininity; this can be linked to the meanings of the 'proper voice' as masquerade. To the extent that the geisha uses the masquerade as a disguise to advance some of her interests within a world of male power, it also illustrates the experience of women in a wider context. Yet, in 'Cocoon', the masked femininity of the geisha has been radically reworked; the video shows the fragile and delicate manners of the geisha, but the image is reprocessed as an aesthetic device that disrupts and re-signifies that same masked femininity. Unlike the geisha, the female body in the video appears unconventionally undressed, yet not totally naked; it looks coated in white covering, like the face, and projects a vision reminiscent of the ambiguous function of the masquerade. The white mask would seem to offer detachment (so as to deflect male sexual fantasy), whilst it also provides a place to enact the fragile, genteel form of female identity that complements the 'proper voice'. The masquerade here disrupts

the fictitious ideal of ‘proper’ womanliness by way of images that free the woman’s pleasure through her body. As with the meanings of the ‘proper voice’, the mimicking of the geisha style can be seen to problematize the idea of the ‘essential feminine’, of what is there behind the masquerade. Masking in the video thus plays with concealment and disclosure, whilst *mimesis* can be disruptive of a fixed construction of femininity.

Tseëlon’s approach to subjectivity (in the sense of contrasting essence with appearance) gives preference to what she terms ‘surface models’ of subjectivity, which share a preoccupation with social aspects of visible phenomenon (such as the discursive and the performative). Unlike ‘depth models’ of subjectivity, which assume a psychic or intentional dimension, ‘surface models’ do not assume a deeper structure or a more substantial dimension inside the subject.³²² She considers masking an extension of the notion of performance, since in her view they both evoke an idea of authentic identity, which is then dismantled as illusory without assuming a deeper or psychic dimension. Tseëlon looks, moreover, at the discursive and the performative, and connects the mask with these two models: like the former, masking is ‘ambivalent and contextual’ and ‘it signals transformation not fixity’, like the latter.³²³

Whilst the masquerade in ‘Cocoon’ may be seen as a rhetorical strategy that serves to enact ambiguous and diverse identity constructions (submissive or disruptive), ‘surface models’ such as the discursive or the performative locate identity either in discourse or as the result of naturalized repetitive (performative) signifying practice. Rivière, who first introduced psychoanalytic discussion of masquerade in 1929,

indicated that there is no difference between genuine womanliness and the ‘masquerade’, although the capacity for womanliness is there in all women. Yet, in the cases where there are internal conflicts this capacity for womanliness does not represent the woman’s main development.³²⁴ The masquerade for Rivière is used more as a device to avert anxiety than as a primary mode of sexual enjoyment; thus her notion of womanliness seems to imply that there is a deeper dimension or something else behind the masquerade.³²⁵ ‘Cocoon’ draws on an identity construction that may initially be seen as a reproduction or replica of a common, and non-authentic, ‘femininity’, a disguise within the bounds of a masculine discursive space.³²⁶ The mimicking of this masqueraded identity destabilises or deconstructs *essentialist* categories and suggests, at a deeper dimension, the possibility of an operation of the feminine through artistic production, in which female ‘individuality’ and subjectivity is expressed: in an Irigarayan sense, this feminine action has the potential to disrupt the phallic order, as well as generate its own (feminine) representation or discursive space.

Irigaray’s ‘Elsewhere of “Matter”’ and ‘Elsewhere of Female Pleasure’ and the Mapping of Björk’s Territories

Irigaray alludes to Plato’s economy to explain that the concept of *mimesis/mimicry* implies a playful operation by which women resubmit themselves to ‘ideas’. She refers to women’s ideas about themselves that are ‘elaborated in/by a masculine logic’, and which, as has already been intimated, aim to make visible through playful repetition ‘the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language’.³²⁷ It is thus here where the prospect of a reversal within the phallic order is possible. Irigaray is interested in unveiling the fact that women are good mimics precisely

because they are not simply absorbed in this function: they also *remain* ‘*elsewhere*’.³²⁸

Butler understands Irigaray’s mimetic function as the ‘metonymic excess’ involved in every metaphorical substitution that is able to ‘disrupt the seamless repetition of the phallogocentric norm’.³²⁹ Butler interprets the operation of metonymy as the linguistic residue of the ‘initial proximity of mother and infant’, and hence the ‘insurgent feminine’ consolidates the feminine as the ‘disruptive chora’, as well as that which is non-figurable and remains always as the ‘outside’.³³⁰ Butler understands Irigaray’s ‘*elsewhere*’ as the linguistic residue, the ‘outside’ appropriated as the feminine; but ‘the feminine’, in Butler’s view, is not ‘the only or primary kind of being that is excluded from the economy of masculinist reason’.³³¹ Yet, Irigaray indicates two specific locations for the ‘*elsewhere*’: the ‘*elsewhere of “matter”*’ in the sense of the persistence of the materiality of the body, and the ‘*elsewhere of female pleasure*’, which is not simply situated in a process of *mimesis*, but implies a series of crossings and ruptures that would allow woman to ‘rediscover the place of her “self-affection”’.³³² Irigaray’s ‘*elsewhere*’ refers to women (as subjects) and how they can locate/rediscover their bodies and (sexual) pleasure without the underpinnings of masculine language/culture. There is recognition in her argument of the limits to all attempts to produce an image of woman that does not support, in one way or another, masculine projections; the ‘*elsewhere*’ appears to refer to those limits of masculine representation referred to by Elizabeth Berg as ‘blank spaces’. As Berg suggests, Irigaray unfolds these locations to enable women to create their own image whilst still keeping the ‘blank spaces’ open. Irigaray focuses on the disruptive power of the ‘blank spaces’; yet to appropriate the ‘blank space’ (or the ‘outside’ – Butler’s

understanding of the ‘*elsewhere*’) for women would imply a refusal of representation, and this refusal would only serve ‘to provide a backdrop or support for masculine projections’.³³³ In this sense, the ‘*elsewhere*’ is understood as the places or spaces that a woman has yet to rediscover and articulate for herself, whereas *mimesis* is a playful operation within the linguistic for a woman to reverse her exploitation in discourse, but ‘without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it’.³³⁴

‘Cocoon’s’ mimicking of masquerade makes ‘visible’ certain operations of the feminine, which can be thought of not simply as recovering a fantasy that has been inhibited within the masculine logic, but in the Irigarayan sense of creating another kind of home and of transforming one’s cultural energy into a free energy (not already determined).³³⁵ The locations of the ‘*elsewhere of “matter”*’ and ‘*elsewhere of female pleasure*’ may be invoked to read Björk’s musical performance, given that the artist seems to reverse phallic representation and create a place or space for the expression of female subjectivity beyond the mimetic masquerade. The ‘*elsewhere of “matter”*’, according to Irigaray, refers to women’s capability of reproducing from nature, thus they make available this original resource of *mimesis* for men.³³⁶ It refers to the ‘mother-matter-nature’ connection that is cast outside in the symbolic; in the case of the (symbolic) ‘nourishing phallic mother’, her sexual pleasure is left aside; hence women are confined to being the support or screen for the projection of male fantasy.³³⁷ It is recognised that the ‘intelligible’ – the order of representation – cannot do without the ‘perceptible’, without ‘matter’ – the materiality of the body and nature – and thus this order has brought a separation between the flesh and the logos, and the subsequent downgrading of the body.³³⁸ In this regard, Irigaray elaborates the

concept of *sang rouge* (red blood) to re-inscribe female genealogy, as well as a possible relation of women 'to their mothers and to/for themselves'.³³⁹

These aspects are figuratively suggested in 'Cocoon' where embodiment occupies the central stage of a performance that is all evocative of the 'perceptible', of a primary music of the voice lodged in the flesh. The mother-matter-nature is evoked through the musical blood ribbons that form the cocoon as symbol of the woman's flesh, as tangible, maternal, and libidinal matter that cannot do without the material body; and the body is understood as elementary 'home': 'being is always "being (in the flesh)"'.³⁴⁰ *Sang rouge* is linked to 'natural contiguity' (of the child in the womb), as well as 'proximity without distinction', a way for women to represent who they are for themselves, as well as their loss of origin.³⁴¹ The blood ribbons can be said to symbolize the body's flesh, which becomes 'aestheticized' metaphorically through its association with sound: the ribbons seem to operate as musical melodic threads that emerge from the body, spiralling in several directions to encircle the sound-source of the voice. Hence the musical threads enfolding Björk's body to become a cocoon would seem to visually evoke the association of *sang rouge* with original proximity, as allusion to the relation of women to themselves and their own flesh, as well as their potential to generate 'natural contiguity' within a 'homely' envelope. 'Cocoon's' music includes digital and vocal sounds that would seem to have been rehabilitated as the sounds of Björk's 'homely' envelope; both the voice and the electronics produce an intimate, almost tangible soundscape. The sense of tactility is supported by some of her processed samples, which originated from real life or everyday sounds, such as shuffling papers and scratching on a vinyl record (in *Vespertine* she also uses click noises or feet trudging through snow).³⁴² The tactile quality of both the digital sound

and the vocals in 'Cocoon' strengthens the sense of immediacy, as if the listener were enveloped in contiguity, as in 'natural proximity' to Björk's music (please, see figure 10).

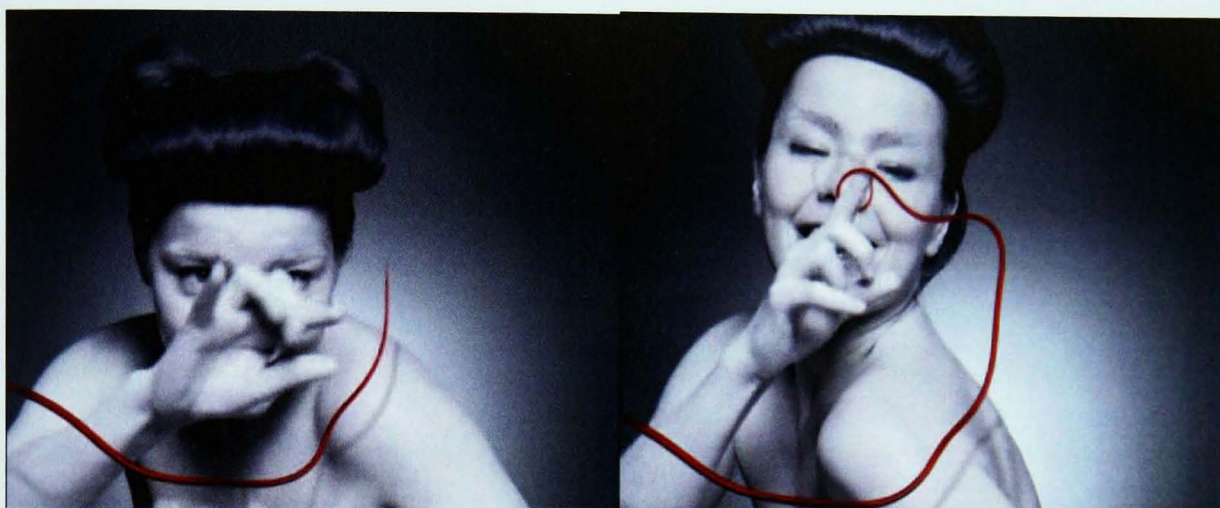


Figure 10: Björk's 'Cocoon' details 2

The '*elsewhere of female pleasure*' might be sought, according to Irigaray, in the place where 'it sustains ek-stasy in the transcendental'.³⁴³ The transcendental subject for Irigaray is gendered male (in contrast with the belief that it is non-gendered), and it thus reflects the symbolic division resulting from allocating the material, corporeal and sensible to the feminine and the spiritual and intelligible – the transcendental – to the masculine.³⁴⁴ Irigaray's notion of the 'sensible transcendental' refers to a perpetual journey of the subject, a perpetual transvaluation, and a permanent becoming that must be acknowledged to construct an ethics of sexual difference. It refers to the human condition of incarnating the divine, of our being as the locus in which the transcendent finds its presence; it implies the possibility of finding the spiritual in the carnal, for both men and women, but respecting sexual difference, without allowing women to fall back into the phallocratic economy (i.e. enabling

women to love themselves, be for themselves and find their spirituality in their carnal without merely having to represent the carnal for men).³⁴⁵

The possibility of women finding the spiritual in the carnal, which underpins Irigaray's notion of the transcendental, is suggested in 'Cocoon' through the association of the music with the *jouissance* generated from within Björk's private libidinal space: '[..] After sharing my core, [..] A beauty this immense, [..] A saintly trance, [..] Miraculous breath'.³⁴⁶ The ethereal quality and introspection of Björk's vocality almost acquires a spiritual dimension, which seems to mediate, like a breath of air, between the corporeal and the transcendental. The ecstatic moment of orgasmic pleasure in the song could be seen as this instance of 'saintly trance': there is a suspension of emotion, a rapture, which is marked by deep breaths, as if the singing became momentarily arrested by breathlessness. This is an example where Björk's breathy vocal style specifically connects the spiritual with female pleasure. At this moment, the music video shows the blood ribbons coming out of Björk's mouth, as if the melodic threads became a symbol for the breath and singing: a breathing associated with the flesh, channelled through the voice (please, see figure 11). According to Irigaray, the spiritual is related to the breath, and to cultivate breathing implies for a woman 'to remain faithful to herself, to turn back to herself, within herself, to be born again free, animated by her own breath, her own words, her own gestures'.³⁴⁷



Figure 11: Björk's ecstatic moment. 'Cocoon' detail 3

The '*elsewhere of female pleasure*' could subsequently be found in a series of ruptures that lead back to self-representation and the rediscovering of the place of woman's 'self-affection'.³⁴⁸ 'Self-affection' for Irigaray is analogous with 'self-touching', for touch and being touched form part of the sensible experiences of the senses, which entail the basis for knowledge of the self and of the world. Within the phallocratic economy, the articulation of feminine pleasure must remain inarticulate because it can threaten the underpinnings of the logical operations of language.³⁴⁹ Given that the spaces where women's desire might come into being have been taken away, women need to develop a relation to language (and sex organs) that enables them to territorialize those spaces.³⁵⁰ Language can be seen for Irigaray as a house or a home that women need to construct for themselves; similarly, artistic production can be seen as a territory or home that women have to create for themselves. In 'Cocoon', the artist seems to regain her body territory through music and voice, an aspect of Björk's aesthetics that lies at the heart of *Vespertine* (particularly striking in songs like 'Pagan Poetry' or 'Hidden Place'). Björk creates a territory, a home, in which the

artist is able to articulate feminine pleasure through the self-caressing movements of her voice and hands: she is auto-erotically in touch with herself.³⁵¹ Björk's singing insinuates an economy of breath, which joins the flesh with the spiritual and is connected with an interior, as well as exterior life. 'Cocoon' would seem to allegorically 'spiritualise' the human-corporeal world of the artist, whilst the light touch of Björk's musical sound would seem to reach out and connect with the exterior corporeal world of the listeners.³⁵²

The Sensation of Delicacy and the Lightness of Touch

The soft, gentle and understated singing performance in 'Cocoon' draws attention to the sensation of delicacy, which informs an aesthetics underpinned by the work of the sensible experience, in particular 'the lightness of touch'. Irigaray gives prominence to the epistemological value of the senses, which she grounds on the body: this implies the condition of possibility of being, as well as the material substratum of thinking and knowledge. Anne-Claire Mulder comments that the starting point of all sense-making for Irigaray is mediated by the experience of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, but especially by the experience of touching and being touched, which induces a movement of the senses; this movement travels through the flesh, which becomes mobile, sensible, tangible libidinal matter, instead of fixed and solid matter.³⁵³ Knowledge of the self and of the world is then mediated by the senses, but it is also generated through dialogue between bodies that form a network of different positions; these positions are constructed positively or negatively, depending on cultural values, and hence the recognition of the need for a reinterpretation of the body that accommodates respect for difference in the construction of knowledge. It is through Irigaray's positive reinterpretation of the female body that Björk's image of

her body, subtly in touch with itself, enables the 'light touch' of her singing voice to stimulate energy that travels through the tangible, libidinal flesh.³⁵⁴ The subtlety and lightness of Björk's 'touch of sound' transmits a sensation of delicacy, which is perceived as tactile: transmitted through her voice and digital sounds, it stimulates for the listener the sensible experience and generates interplay between the auditory and the visible (please, see figure 12).

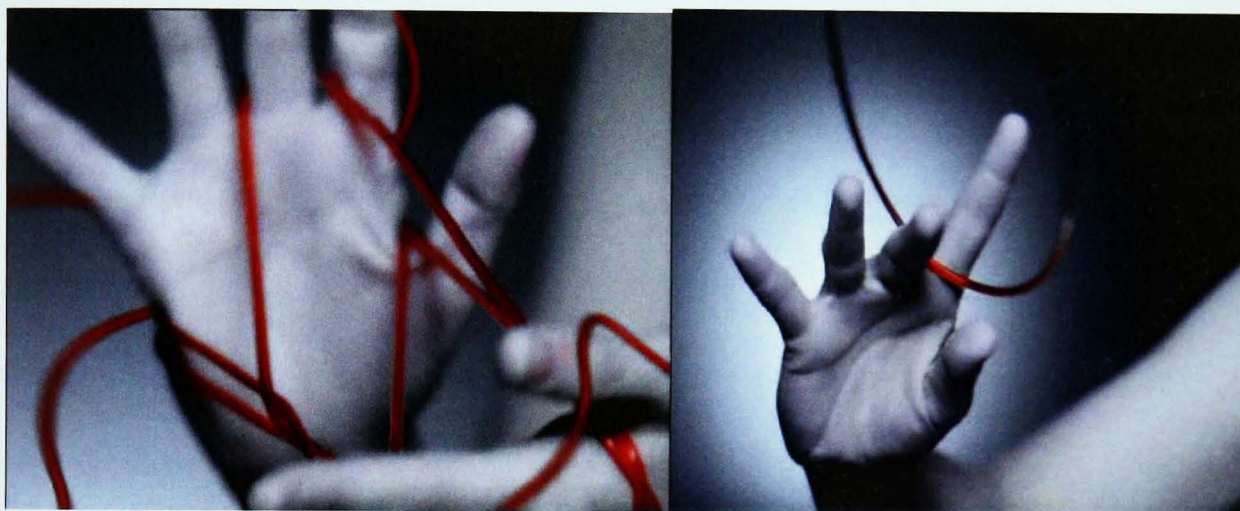


Figure 12: Björk's hands 'Cocoon' details 4

Irigaray's arguments around the touch engage in Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology, specifically because he redefines the body as a form of access to the world and builds on the significance of the senses, in particular the visible and the tangible. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray enters in conversation with Merleau-Ponty and agrees on the relation he establishes between the visible and the tangible: 'there is a situating of the visible in the tangible and the tangible in the visible', but the two maps do not overlap, according to Irigaray, because '*the tangible is, and remains, primary in its opening*'.³⁵⁵ The senses should not be enclosed in a map, but remain open, and hence they are not completely situated one in the other.

The tangible remains the ground available for all the senses – their matter and memory – and constitutes the flesh of all things sculpted, sketched, painted, felt and so on.³⁵⁶ The tangible seems then to constitute also the flesh of music played and performed, and thus ‘Cocoon’s delicate music can be perceived as a ‘touch of sound’, which envelopes the body, and remains thereafter as memory of the sensible experience.

Steven Connor considers Irigaray’s ideas on the tangible one of the most powerful and influential attempts to form a philosophy around the ‘lightness of touch’. He links the ‘light touch’ and the ‘sensation of delicacy’ to ideas and conceptions of the skin, although his interest extends also to the way sensations work in cultural forms.³⁵⁷ In his view, delicacy is a feature of phenomenological and post-phenomenological appropriations of the sense of touch and is generally associated with the protection or preservation of the other.³⁵⁸ Connor argues that ‘delicacy’ is often used as a synonym for ‘sensitivity’ and this evidences the tendency to see touch as the ‘substrate or share medium’ of the other senses:

The sensation of delicacy is perhaps the most pervasive of the ways in which touch informs and inflects thinking, values, ideals and attitudes. The values of tact, ‘touch’, subtlety, refinement and so on, all depend upon and ramify from the thought of the sensation of its particular kind of lightness of touch.³⁵⁹

Connor refers to a ‘sensation of delicacy’ that is so fine and intangible that it interposes itself between contact and non-contact: it involves a certain touch which does not take hold, but which holds back; he refers to a lightness of touch which is

only intuitively identified with touch as such. It is not possible, in his view, to distinguish the actuality of the touch from its aura, nor can the image of the touch impressed in our thought be detached from the touch itself. The quality of this touch is like breath; it needs a minimal level of tremor to ensure sensation and texture.³⁶⁰ Ultimately, Connor brings forward Irigaray's tactile figure of 'the hands joined, palms together, fingers outstretched' (instead of the of hands clasped together), a gesture that evokes for Irigaray the touching of the lips, but which can be seen here as the image of the touch that does not quite take hold, but which holds back: it never assimilates the one thing in the other.³⁶¹

The touch that informs and inflects values such as 'delicacy', subtlety and refinement can be used to see how the tangible operates as the 'substrate or shared medium' of the auditory and the visible. The thought of the sensation of the lightness of touch can be felt through listening and seeing as a kind of delicate touch that holds back. Connor's idea implies an absence of exactitude in the holding back/touch interface and thus the value of subtlety and 'delicacy', as sensed in seeing and listening, may also show this inexactitude in the holding back/touch interface. This interface is visually illustrated in Portuguese artist Helena Almeida's photograph series *Ouve me* [hark/listen to me]. Using her own body both as performance and subject matter, she captures herself in a number of photographs behind a translucent screen (paper or cloth) with her hands barely touching the screen or membrane, and her mouth open as if using the full power of her voice (please, see figures 13 and 14). In some of the photographs the words *Ouve me* are written on the screen (in another photograph series she writes the words in her mouth). By writing *Ouve me* she would seem to strengthen the presence of the auditory transmitted to the viewer through her

(imagined) vocal articulations. The light touch of Almeida's hands and mouth at the membrane, as exemplified in one of her photographs, suggests a tactile sensation of 'delicacy' that precedes and remains as substrate of what we see or hear. What is perceived by the senses appears as a comment on an absence; yet Almeida's body addressing the viewer behind the screen insinuates an intangible sensation of aural, visual and tactile 'delicacy', which seems to hold back. The absence of exactitude in the hold back interface with the senses becomes visible by the presence of the screen, which acts as a metaphor for skin; and yet the impression of Almeida's mouth in the screen draws full attention to the female voice (see figure 14).

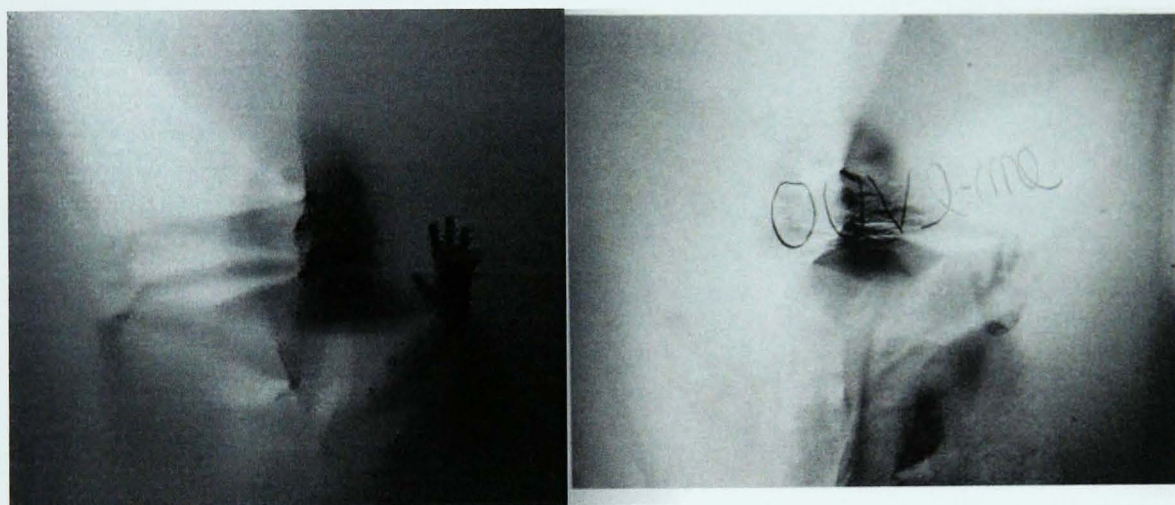


Figure 13: Helena Almeida from the series *Ouve me* [hark/listen to me] 1

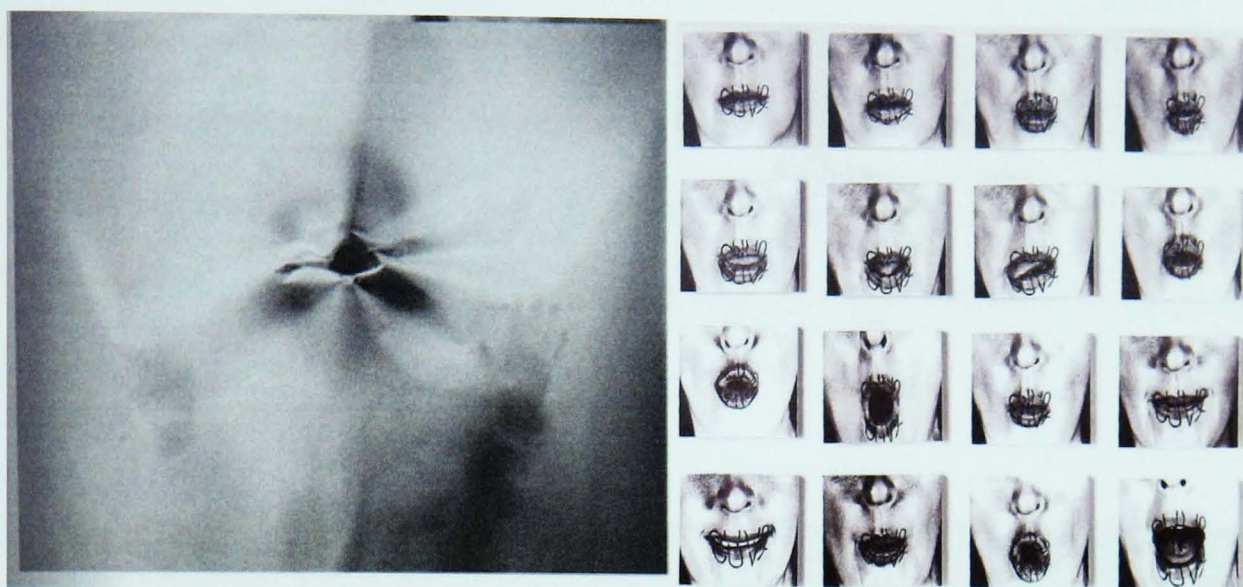


Figure 14: Helena Almeida from the series *Ouve me* [hark/listen to me] 2

The sensation of ‘delicacy’ as interaction of the senses in Almeida’s communicative economy relies on the visual work of the photograph. Björk’s communicative economy relies on her music to transmit to the listener – in ‘Cocoon’ – the values of subtlety, ‘delicacy’, refinement, and especially the ‘touch’ as substrate of the auditory and the visual. Björk’s breathy vocals are sensed like a murmur; her whispery singing is felt like air, as if a ‘breeze’ of sound has just softly passed like breath; it is not a rounded voice that grips you, but a light sound that seems to hold back; it conveys presence, as well as a delicacy of subtle vibrations and caresses, which renders the singing with tangible sensation and texture. The absence of clear exactitude in the touch/holding back interface is also visually suggested in some of Björk’s film stills from the video. The filmed images exemplify the interaction of the senses, inasmuch as Björk’s hands steering the air in soft movements never quite seem to take hold of the body’s flesh; the movement leaves an aura of the touch impressed in our thought, as a way of situating the tangible in the visible (please, see figure 15). Another still shows Björk behind a screen, eyes closed and looking reserved, as if she were caught in the moment before a return within herself (of becoming a cocoon) (see figure 15).

This gesture evokes Irigaray's return 'within the intimacy' of a silent, 'diffuse touch', necessary if women are to remain faithful to themselves, animated by their own breath and words. The screen would seem to indicate the preservation of oneself and the other through the sensation of delicacy and the values informed by touch (see figure 15).



Figure 15: Björk's 'Cocoon' details 5

Irigaray's figure of touching, hands joined, and palms together indicate how the preservation and protection of the other is embedded in her thinking. Touching involves the respect of internal difference in the other, but also the recognition of internal difference in one's own body and mind; according to Irigaray, this corresponds to a human becoming that requires available energy for self-preservation. The respect for difference in both the other and oneself is not simply understood as a moral gesture, but requires the cultivation and transformation of one's vital energy and one's cultural energy into a 'free' available energy.³⁶² Energy for self-preservation echoes Connor's gesture of the touch that holds back: one that protects the other without ruining ourselves. Perhaps the idea of the 'free' available energy

may also be connected with Kramer's point that one must learn to inhabit the symbolic with 'disseminal energy' as a means to eventually transform it: by way of resisting or deferring the recuperation of certain elements for the symbolic order – he is referring to what we see or hear in the hermeneutic windows. Björk's self-caressing movements embrace the sound, which envelops the naked body, as if in recognition of the internal vulnerability in one's own body and mind; her singing would seem to transform vital energy into free available energy for the listener. In the end, the image of the cocoon seems to evoke the transformation of this musical energy into energy that we receive from something 'natural', as a kind of return to a certain rawness, and an interior silent space, which is filled with the music that has just been performed.³⁶³

Conclusion

To sum up some of the points raised in the chapter, Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium' and Björk's 'Cocoon' can be seen as examples of two performances where the artists express their 'individuality' and 'particularized interiority', aestheticized through the singing voice and the style and technique of their delivery. The intrinsic features of their expressivity have been associated here with a particularly (for men) problematic manifestation of the feminine, discernible in terms of female imaginary, subjectivity and identity. The artists' musical performance may be said to engage with the discursivity of women's writing and speaking argued by Irigaray and Cixous, which encourages women's creative spaces and the development of an aesthetic activity channelled through their bodies and libidinal energies. Cixous's and Irigaray's

thinking is thus relevant given that they challenge bodily experience as understood within symbolic patterns of Western culture, they advocate the manifestation of the feminine and hence they assert women's specificity with reference to questions of representation.

Amos and Björk seem to create artistic spaces associated with the feminine libidinal economy; the self-references in their music evoke the stream of auditory aesthetic activity that flows through their bodies, whereby female sexuality through vocal expressivity spreads in multiple directions; they would seem to re-signify the meanings attached to female vocality and the auditory for the listener. In this sense, we have seen how Irigaray's strategy of *mimesis/mimicry*, read as the mimicking of a feminine vocal masquerade through musical performance, helps to disrupt symbolic meanings and values embedded in the masculine system of representation. The artists would also seem to give symbolic form to the repressed feminine at the sites or spaces where masculine symbolization fails to provide an adequate representation of woman: they create a 'home', and map their territories from where they generate their own self-image.

Irigaray's and Cixous's arguments open also the possibility of interpreting vocal and musical performance as unconscious interpretations that can be registered by the listener. The unconscious elements can relate to self-generated auditory and visual images of proximity to the body that the listener registers through unconscious identifications with the female singing and her imagined body. 'Pandora's Aquarium' evokes images of water, liquidity linked to fluid vocal articulations that retrieve a repressed maternal-feminine. The metaphorization of the maternal can be seen to

represent the relationship of the performer to origin, to the mother, and as a way to re-signify that relationship in the performance. ‘Cocoon’s delicate singing evokes a tactile quality associated with the lightness of air and the breath, and suggests the idea of increased perception through the interaction of the senses through vocal and musical aesthetics. The idea of the body as support of a ‘feminine language’ through the voice, speaking and writing, as the true voice of the flesh, can be seen in both Amos’s and Björk’s singing as the recuperation of a lost connection with women’s orality – the maternal-feminine – linked to women’s experience. The re-signification of meanings attached to women’s singing voices and musical performance helps the artists to locate and affirm their subject position in culture.

Chapter 4

UNCANNY REPRESENTATIONS: THE FEMININE HAUNTING VOICE

This chapter explores the listening experience of a haunting aural world in the vocal performances of Tori Amos's 'Raining Blood' (*Strange Little Girls*, 2001) and Björk's 'Storm' (*Drawing Restraint 9*, 2005). The perception of a feminine haunting voice is, in broad terms, suggested in the songs through unique vocal articulations, sometimes using the contrast of sharp changes of registers and stretching almost to a limit the artists' vocal range. In specific ways each artist creates an eerie soundscape of unfathomable immensity, emphasised by the use of minimalist rhythms, reverb, slow tempos and minor chords merged with electronic sounds. The effect is an ethereal and unearthly sound that lingers in a suspended space, and which is marked by aural uncanniness and a subtle corporeality in imagining the singing body. As we shall see, Amos and Björk project an aesthetic vision that seems to cast the inner voices of a 'cosmic' universe, a metaphor that hinges on their musical performance relying on a kind of vocal spectrality, an aural mysteriousness that reflects back onto the idea of haunting. Rather than stirring up what is fearful, the haunting voice will be associated here with a listening experience that evokes a captivating or 'enchanted' sound linked to the manifestation of an aural 'spirit' (conceptualised as feminine). The haunting vocals in these performances suggest spectrality as a fantasy for a presence that bears the trace of the other (a spectre that haunts our thinking and hearing) and brings about an ethical response to a feminine (repressed) other. The

response will be connected with an aesthetics that generates images of sublimity and an all-embracing sound associated with a pleasure that is also painful. In this sense, and attending to artistic signification, Amos's and Björk's uncanny soundscapes are reminiscent of the all-around sound that David Schwarz has discussed in music as 'oceanic' representations of the 'sonorous envelope as a fantasy space'.³⁶⁴

The notion of a 'haunting' experience is associated with a residue or surplus of meaning that cannot be for sure stated as occurring. It manifests itself as a residue of uncertainty and incompleteness that remains, and surreptitiously returns, as evidence of hidden or unconscious repressed content. Haunting is in this sense connected with the uncanny, which Freud theorised as a sentiment of unknown nature that excites fear in general. The uncanny is designated by Freud as the *Unheimliche*, a concept that stands for what is concealed and ought to remain hidden, out of sight, and yet it comes to light, and is thus 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'.³⁶⁵ Freud famously characterized the uncanny as 'nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.³⁶⁶ He points out that *unheimlich* is also rendered in English as 'haunted' or 'haunting', a translation that strengthens its sense of being something persistent and disturbingly present. Freud suggests that the realm of fantasy offers more opportunities for the emergence of the uncanny than real life, given that its content is not submitted to reality testing.³⁶⁷

Both Amos and Björk produce an enigmatic sound that stems from the vocal qualities and musical resources employed in their performances, and hence they guide our

emotions towards a fantasy, which is at first perceived as unusual or unfamiliar. The uncanniness in these musical examples will be understood to be conceptually fluid: a manifestation which calls for the female artist's imagination to create a musical work that instils a sense of darkness and mysteriousness, one which welcomes the unknown, but highlights, specifically, what is known and familiar that has been alienated through repression. In 'Raining Blood', Amos transforms a classic heavy metal musical track from Slayer's 1986 album *Reign in Blood* into a different musical experience: her tempo is slow, the instrumentation and song arrangement are radically reworked and she turns a high-energy and violent sound into something ethereal, highly atmospheric. Björk's 'Storm' relies on the production of high-powered screams that pierce a digitally generated soundscape. Whilst her eerie screams can be thought of as characteristic of the artist's style of vocal delivery, the listener also encounters a singular musical sound that seems otherworldly, even if strangely familiar. Meanings attached to the voice in the songs emerge as a fascination with spectrality, inscribed as an other's sensibility – a feminine spirit (or disposition) that returns – and is displayed as non-frightening haunting experience. Since this aural spectrality belongs to the realm of perception, the feminine haunting voice in these examples may not appear overtly supernatural; it operates as a spectral trope, and a metaphor for a liminal space that can be renegotiated in gender terms.

In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida takes up the idea of haunting and develops a discourse on 'hauntology' that specifically engages with the 'spectral' or 'spectrality', which he understands as something or someone, or rather 'neither someone nor something', but 'a "one" that does not act' and yet haunts the present.³⁶⁸ Derrida's aim is to engage with the ghosts, spectres and spirits that abound in Marx's writings

to argue that they come back as anticipated return and haunting experience. The spectres or ghosts presuppose a memory of the past, which although has never taken the form of the present, returns in a kind of 'apprehensive movement' that welcomes the stranger (the German idiom *es spukt* is used here in the sense of 'haunting' or 'ghostly return'). Yet, for Derrida, 'this' is a stranger that is already found within: echoing Freud, 'this' illustrates the *Heimliche/Unheimliche*, since it refers to a stranger that is more intimate than we are with ourselves, and whose identity 'invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it'.³⁶⁹ The stranger is in absolute proximity and its power is singular and anonymous, neutral and undecidable, neither active nor passive, and represents therefore a strong example of uncanniness.³⁷⁰

The undecidability in the nature of the stranger makes it impossible to fully determine the haunting experience, which is figured as a recurrent operation or continual process. The *Unheimliche* is associated with the death drives and a compulsion or repetition that, according to Derrida, is confused with the terrible or the frightful in an undecidable fashion.³⁷¹ One of Derrida's aims is to intersect this reading with other texts, other discourses, in particular with Heidegger's *Being and Time* so as to destabilise conceptual distinctions and allow the ghosts or spectres the right to come back. Derrida tries to displace the question of 'Being', which is traditionally interpreted as a presence of the present (linked to a desire for the present), to a different terrain, whereby in order to access the present as such, there must be an experience of the 'trace'.³⁷² Within Derrida's deconstructionist operations, the 'trace' is a function in the process of *différance*, a supplement. *Différance* is, in turn, the better-known term set aside for the 'undecidables' (*indécidables*), or terms which

cannot be said to be one or the other of the two terms that constitute a philosophical opposition. The ‘undecidables’ refer to a mechanism that attempts to prevent the hierarchies of oppositional thought processes; in order to prevent fixing meaning onto a single term; he uses several names for the processes of *différance* so as to continually displace oppositions (such as ‘trace’, ‘supplement’, ‘arche-writing’, ‘arch-ghost’, ‘spectre’, ‘woman’).³⁷³

Close in meaning to spectrality, the ‘trace’ is understood as a rapport with something else, to the other, the other past, the other future, or the other – to an other that does not appear as the present or presence. Derrida challenges the authority of the question of ‘Being’ as present or presence, which privileges the present as modality of time. He understands that in order to question ‘Being’, one must address someone. One must presuppose an ‘anterior’ or primary affirmation or acquiescence (an ‘otherness’) that precedes the question of ‘Being’ with regard to the order of thought. For Derrida, there is in everything a ‘trace’ that is not a question of time: it is ‘the experience of a return to something else, of being returned to another past, present, future, to a different type of temporality that is even older than the past and that is beyond the future’.³⁷⁴ Derrida’s ghostly haunting implies that one could not ‘*address oneself in general* if already some ghost or spectre did not come back’, and hence one should learn how to let the spectres speak, how to talk to them, and give them back a voice, even if the spectre ‘is in oneself, in the other, or in the other in oneself’.³⁷⁵

Rather than an internalisation of past voices (in line with a psychoanalytic view of mourning), spectrality entails therefore for Derrida an idea of presence that presupposes a rapport with otherness. Derrida’s economy of haunting helps us think

of new ways of experiencing a relation to the other, of enabling the spectres to let their voices be heard. It also embeds a deconstruction of the spectre's identity: its power is undecidable and uncertain, whilst it occupies a place that neither belongs to us nor to it. The ghostly haunting carries a difficulty for linguistic expression: it is undecidable and seems meaningless; yet the possibility of seeing the spectral voices from a gendered perspective may be argued if a notion of male/female identity is retained. The theoretical deconstruction of identity in Derrida's work, and of the spectre's identity in particular, appears to be aimed at preventing the hierarchies of (among other categories) oppositional gender constructs; it is in this sense that the calling up of (gender-undifferentiated) voices that 'return' are understood to emerge as a 'trace' of an 'other' that promotes a different experience with regard to the past or the future. Whilst Derrida's deconstruction devices lead to a post-gendered vision of sexual undifferentiation, there is still asymmetry when exposing 'man' and 'woman' as theoretical constructs. From a feminist perspective, the negation of 'woman' (as a theoretical construct) effaces or obliterates the historical location of women. Similarly, one of the effects of Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysical identity is that of disconnecting the deconstructor from embodiment.³⁷⁶ The concept of identity linked to the female voice and the female body may still be regarded as indispensable for women, in particular for a politics of self-representation. This is an issue that Luce Irigaray does not lose sight of in her work, given that one of her main preoccupations is to create a place from which women can speak *as women*. As pointed out by Margaret Whitford, both Derrida and Irigaray agree that the transcendental subject, traditionally thought to be non-gendered, is in fact gendered male; yet, for Irigaray, 'undecidability' still belongs to an economy in which women's discourse appears to be incorporated into men's discourse (on this point, she argues

that Derrida's claim of writing like a woman does not amount to writing *as a woman*).³⁷⁷ In this sense, it is important to understand the meanings of the haunting voice in Amos and Björk as a tactical move to locate their subject position as 'speaking' subjects of culture, as well as generators of their own musical 'discourse', their own images and representations.

Whitford indicates that, from Irigaray's perspective, the imaginary of Derrida's discourse is still enslaved in a particular economy of the death drive, in which women still occupy the same position. Woman is still the 'other of the same' and hence woman still signifies 'as she is for-men', rather than 'as she is for-herself'.³⁷⁸ The difficulty for Irigaray is the creation of a symbolic home for women, as well as the introduction of sexual difference into the symbolic economy. Irigaray's advocacy of two interrelated economies, in which women are given an individual imaginary and identity aims to avoid falling back into an identity of sameness (what she refers to as the 'double syntax').³⁷⁹ For Irigaray, it is not just a question of deconstructing, but of reorganizing the economy of the death drives. If one is to avoid identity to be exactly a repetition of the same, each sex must have its own economy of the death drives (which will also enable women to have a collective access to subjectivity).³⁸⁰ She explains in *Speculum* how woman suppresses her drives and makes them passive so as to 'service' the work of the death instincts of man. Men build up their ego and construct their narcissistic desires whereas women become a channel for, and representation of, men's drives: women merely become the 'mirror', the specular image, of the 'same'.³⁸¹ In her view, psychoanalysis neither accounts for woman's desire nor for 'her' castration, and any conceptualisation in this direction is narrowly derived from the history of male sexuality (this may not be the case in all instances,

since the later Lacan, for example, has some place for women's *jouissance*; for our purposes, however, the aspect to consider is that generally within psychoanalysis the concept of woman becomes fragmentary or incomplete). Within the process by which consciousness comes into being, woman will still remain 'the place for the inscription of repressions' and thus she will be deprived of 'valuable images of her sex/organs, her body'.³⁸² A way for women to deal with this deprivation is by creating their own images and bringing the repressions to consciousness. Vocal/musical performance offers the space for women to represent themselves; the knowledge of a spectral repressed other (figured as a feminine residue) can generate a rapport with the other and oneself, and thus new signification can be ascribed to vocal production. The spectral voice in vocal/musical performance is inseparable from aesthetic concerns; it emerges as haunting surplus, an intangible excess that carries the 'trace' of women's repressed desire, their *jouissance* and/or their repressed maternal.

Irigaray provides a framework to ascribe value to the daughter's relation to the father and, particularly, to the mother. She looks for the trace of the mother, the 'maternal' genealogy, and for any evidence of a relation with an imaginary or symbolic woman or a mother. In the absence of an adequate generic identity that women can identify with, Irigaray brings the 'maternal-feminine' into discourse with the aim of creating the conditions to distinguish between mother and woman: 'if the mother were separable from the woman, then the daughter could identify with a woman instead'.³⁸³ With the 'maternal-feminine' in mind, the ghostly haunting can be seen as embodying a feminine identity as spectral presence expressed through the artists' individual imaginary and subjectivity. It is then possible to think of a feminine spectral other that assumes an 'anterior' otherness which comes back as a trace of the mother or

another woman. The spectral voices are given a right to 'return' and to speak, and they will thus involve a rapport with a repressed voice of a feminine other that may be in oneself, in the other, or in the other in oneself.

The spectre could in this way carry the 'trace' of gender. The question of 'Being' could be thought of as 'being a woman' in the same sense of an experience of being returned to a different type of temporality, another past, present or future. To my understanding, Derrida aims to displace the question of 'ontology' with that of 'hauntology', and since for Irigaray sexual difference is ontological, 'spectrality' may be considered from the perspective of the feminine gendered other. The spectre reflects upon 'gender difference', rather than repeating the phallogocentric gesture (as may be implied in Derrida). In a reorganization of the economy of the death drives, the surplus or residue represented in Amos's and Björk's songs can be seen as the 'trace' of the mother or an imaginary woman: this will be intimately connected to the body source of the voice, as contrasted with being autonomous from it. Their haunting voices reconstruct in their performances the partial and fragmentary feminine, casting into relief the distress, trauma and injury inflicted upon the woman through the suppression of drives and castration.

The association of Amos's and Björk's performances with a haunting vocal experience cast as feminine can be seen firstly as transgression against phallocentrism and male unitary standards and values. This is the case in Amos's 'Raining Blood' by way of her reworking of a violent, aggressive male musical sound; her radical refashioning of Slayer's heavy metal song contains properties sustained by a suggestive, haunting voice that carries a trace of a gothicised feminine other. In the

case of Björk's 'Storm', the departure from phallogentrism comes through her connection with nature (viewed as society's Other) and the way she conjures up a cyborgian feminine other that challenges dichotomous dualisms such as nature/culture: by recreating an almighty storm, Björk calls into existence the unsettling, yet uncannily familiar, sonic equivalent of the forces of nature through a symbolic fusion of digital sound and the human voice.

Secondly, the feminine haunting voice is understood as emerging from the artists' own stylistic creation, from the articulation of an individual aesthetic vision that is linked to the presence of a 'feminine-maternal' spectre that finds its way back, and lets her voice be heard. The songs incorporate a subtext that radiates an unsettling sense of spirituality, as well as an ethereal, 'suspended' quality that immerses the listener in an enigmatic darkness. This feminine residue or surplus seen as a trace of an other, and whose sensibility is imprinted in the musical display, is experienced as an auditory pleasure that welcomes an all-around sound as representation of the sonorous envelope. Schwarz describes the sonorous envelope as a fantasy of a '*thing*' viewed as representation of 'having been at one with the touch, smell, and voice of the mother to which we do not have direct access'.³⁸⁴ He indicates that the sonorous envelope is produced in a variety of contexts and is thus always retrospective; it is an immanent experience linked to an understanding of listening as *space*. One of its components is the experience of the *threshold crossing*, a notion in which the listener crosses a threshold between a clearly delimited body (of the listener) and a fantasy of a familiar archaic body less distinctly demarcated from the external world. The archaic body refers back to the earliest voice of the mother, which constitutes for the infant a primary pleasure that surrounds and cherishes him. Music as the sonorous

envelope finds its roots in this first model of auditory pleasure, in a nostalgia (in its original meaning, a 'return home') that is reactivated when there is direct correspondence between the music and an 'archaic oceanic fantasy'.³⁸⁵

Amos's and Björk's haunting vocals evoke the 'archaic oceanic fantasy' in the twofold sense of a primal experience of listening to the mother's voice, and a feminine surplus or (unconscious) residue as the trace of the mother or an imaginary woman. The musical representation of the sonorous envelope as a fantasy *thing* in the songs produces 'feminine-maternal' *jouissance*, an auditory pleasure linked to an economy of women's desire. The *jouissance* of the sonorous envelope in the song is thus conceived as a feminine space, a new experience of the home. Schwarz argues that new minimal music offers a good example for the representation of the sonorous envelope, both as a fantasy thing and fantasy space (this is illustrated in minimal rhythmic patterns, very repetitive and metrically regular fragments and irregular entrances of sustained pitches).³⁸⁶ 'Raining Blood' and 'Storm' display stylistic features of minimalist sound that can be interpreted both as expression of *threshold crossing* and opening of listening spaces (which emerge via the association between the attributes of the sonorous fantasy *thing* and the registers/conventions already known to the audience).³⁸⁷ Schwarz also argues that *threshold crossing* can involve a dynamic of listening that is interrelated to the dynamics of the *gaze*. Syllabic shifts and repetition in songs can generate in the listener the fantasy of having been seen or heard, in a manner similar to the power of the gaze to represent the introjection of another's look. He compares this to the uncanny experience in film of a portrait gazing at a vulnerable subject from the cutout spaces through which 'real' eyes peer.³⁸⁸ In the dynamics of listening, it is the haunting/spectral properties of the voice

that disturb the listener through the ‘cutout spaces’ created in *threshold crossing*. Since the haunting sound in Amos and Björk evokes women’s experience, the listener is persuaded to create the fantasy of an introjection of another’s voice, which is encountered as feminine.

More generally, the source of the gaze in cultural representation is the ‘object’ that motivates the spectator’s desire. Women have conventionally functioned as objects for the collective male gaze and the projection of men’s desires. Irigaray provides a number of images and metaphors that create a space for the ‘de-objectification’ of women and the articulation of their feminine *jouissance*. One of these images, relevant to the argument of the feminine haunting voice, emerges in her reinterpretation of the myth of Plato’s cavern. She views the cavern as a shadowy and dark space, a symbol for darkness, which she recognises as the womb or the maternal. There is in the myth a complex figurative order of vision in which the cavern is abstracted into a screen: the cavity of the cavern limits human seeing in a process by which the individual moves away from the cavern, and hence the mother, and abandons corporeal support (body) in search for the light (language).³⁸⁹ In other words, the role of the mother as co-engenderer is progressively stripped away; the place of becoming, the mother, is non-represented or eclipsed, and hence the inadequacy evidenced in the representation of women. The pre-eminence of the father (the ‘illumination’ in the myth) implies, in turn, the refusal to admit embodiment (belonging to one sex or another).³⁹⁰ In Irigaray’s words:

But if I cannot affect myself in that sparkling night of my *jouissance*, you imprison me in the closure of your gaze. I am an object for your desire. I no longer desire. If I am deprived of that invisible touching again and again, nothing moves me any longer. Drown out of myself. Exiled from my intuition. At best, turned inwards to some inner gaze. Making it ever more penetrating?³⁹¹

From an Irigarayan perspective, this takes us to the question of how a woman can send unconscious messages to the Other and how, through her creativity and performance, she can be the subject (of culture) and producer of cultural dialogue and discourse, not its object (for this to be possible, there is an underlying need to bring to the fore the enquiry about the collective transformation of the symbolic). As it has been intimated (in previous chapters), Irigaray places her concept of the female imaginary in the symbolic structure and links it to the way women are symbolized within patriarchy; she aims to find those unconscious elements in the system (in the imaginary) that may bring about a change in the symbolic and vice versa.³⁹² The unconscious for Irigaray is a realm where the categories of the symbolic do not apply, which links to her point that there will always be a residue (conceptualised as feminine) that exceeds the laws of the symbolic.³⁹³

This feminine residue associated here with the haunting surplus takes us back to Irigaray's point of recovering the 'maternal' and women's genealogy. The spectre figuratively inhabits the cavern and returns from within this dark location as the feminine residue in Amos's and Björk's songs. It is as if the artists would want to explore the interior space of the cavern as a sign of refusal to strip away the maternal

and give expression to its feminine *jouissance*. The feminine-maternal suggests a recovery of the corporeal and embodiment, albeit not in a way enclosed and objectified by the male gaze. The listener's perception of the ethereal, mysterious 'spirit' invoked by the spectral voices in the songs is figured as embodied feminine. The spectral other is linked to the embodiment and it is thus imagined in terms of the body-source of the voice. This is an aesthetic effect generated through the haunting surplus, given that despite the eerie qualities of Amos's and Björk's musical performances, their voices convey a sense of embodiment linked to a disturbingly 'familiar' uncanny trace. Both Amos and Björk would seem to bring into existence the manifestation of a (feminine) sublime spectre that represents sexual difference, and emphasises a side of listening that tests the emotional limits of the listener's experience. Sublimity has traditionally been described as a phenomenon with 'hidden meanings', which is recognized by its effects on the addressee: sublime feelings emerge when a powerful object strikes the soul with admiration and astonishment. Artistic production provides a pleasure of relief and delight that distances the soul from the threat of this seizure, and restores it to the usual agitation that characterises feelings of anxiety with respect to life and death.³⁹⁴ Jean-François Lyotard indicates that in contemporary artwork, specifically avant-garde types, the role of identification that the sublime previously played in relation to the addressee has been displaced. He links the sublime to 'presence', to the fact that the work 'is happening', and locates the sublime feeling in the power of the work to challenge the mind in its will to affirm its hegemony over time.³⁹⁵ There is sublimity of 'presence' in Amos and Björk is linked to the spectre's return to another temporality and the presence of the 'trace' as rapport with an other (with the spirit through a sense of closeness and intimate vocal delivery). The 'feminine' sublime lies in the balance between what is surprising and

what is familiar or ‘well-known’, an aspect that takes us back to both the uncanny and Schwarz’s *threshold crossing*.

Amos's 'Raining Blood': Transforming Heavy Metal into a Gothicised Feminine Other

Strange Little Girls (2001) is Amos's only album to date in which she does not sing her own songs, but deliberately re-appropriates several songs written by men and delivers their performance from a specifically female or feminine subject position. According to some accounts, Amos asked twelve men in her life to pick twelve songs written by men about women and then she looked into the songs and tried to untie the 'woman' trapped inside each of them. To strengthen this view, the cover of *Strange Little Girls* contains several photographs of Amos representing various female characters, which respond to different women's identities and match the women behind the songs of the album. Amos's pictures and songs aim to represent each of these identities in a way that she occupies an other's position, whilst her own subject position is at the same time emphasised (please, see figure 16). The images make recourse to the mechanisms of the masquerade, a strategy that reflects on Amos's interest to connect with the world outside, by way of giving expression to the feminine other and enabling other voices to be heard. Instead of reproducing a male view of each of these women's identities, she seeks to let their voices speak in the songs.



Figure 16: Tori Amos's identity behind 'Raining Blood', album cover

Most of Amos's songs in the album can be regarded as paired down versions of the originals, even if she keeps the original lyrics and retains, to a certain extent, a degree of musical verisimilitude to the earlier versions. Yet, Amos's melodies and harmonic language are reworked in such a way that the familiar themes appear radically re-conceptualised, as if the new songs had emerged after a refashioning of the male themes. Her songs can thus be said to stand up in their 'own right' and are distinctly recognised as products of her individual creativity. The listener, in turn, is left with enough autonomy to both identify with any meaning derived from the musical performance and construct her/his own narrative for each of the women's identities represented. Out of the twelve songs, 'Raining Blood' constitutes one of the most radical re-workings of the whole album. Amos's transformation of Slayer's heavy metal track embodies something very different indeed, a true feminine 'other', which suggests the presence of the spectre as haunting experience. As we shall see, the haunting voice in Amos's 'Raining Blood', its spectral identity, will be associated with a particularly gothicised feminine other.

Gendered Transformation of a Hard-Core Metal Sound

Slayer's 'Raining Blood' is included in an album (*Reign of Blood*, 1986) that some reviewers have described as one of the most brutal evil-sounding recordings ever made.³⁹⁶ The song combines typically excessive barks and shrieks with the repetition of bursts of (musical) aggression (power chords, overdrive, distortion and so on), and death, anger and resentment form the core of the song's thematic make up. As such, the song is characteristically short in length and is clearly influenced by some of the more extreme vernacular musics from its period, including hard-core punk and thrash metal, and it can, for this reason, be claimed as representative of Slayer's classic metal sound. The track evokes violence through a number of strategic articulations: the shouting and wailing voices, as well as its break-neck speed, the repetitive pounding and rapid, almost maniacal, guitar playing.

In clear contradistinction, Amos's 'Raining Blood' stands for a radical and gendered transformation of this hardcore sound. Although she uses the same pitches as Slayer, the transformation which is perhaps most obvious is the manner in which Amos significantly reduces the speed of the music and deliberately lengthens the tones at the end of verses; the mood is exceptionally atmospheric, the rhythm minimalist, the tempo slow, and Amos's voice sounds intimate, close up and introspective (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 4 'Raining Blood'). The music recreates a homogeneous effect drawing on the usual uses of reverb to confer what has recently (since Brian Eno's 'ambient' music at least) been termed ambience – a musical projection of an open-ended and fluid space. The reverberation is in evidence throughout the song, and it is this aspect, together with Amos's voice, strongly marked by an almost continuous breathiness, that lends the song an unearthly atmosphere. It is as if the

music were being performed either inside some kind of large hollow or open infinite space; perhaps, figuratively, from within the spiritual confines of a church (and in addition to this effect we might also note here the gentle chimes of the piano, functioning no doubt as metaphoric church bells). Amos thus deliberately turns a decidedly declamatory style of performance into a celestial, airy and highly ethereal rendering.

The declamatory style and almost excessive masculinity of Slayer's original track is critiqued and replaced with Amos's own articulation, which is interpreted here as the presence of a feminine aural spectrality, product of the artist's individual aesthetic vision. The expressive strategies that Amos employs in order to fashion out of Slayer's disturbing masculine imagery (as a 'by-product' of their male imaginary) a feminine subject position may be understood as twofold: inasmuch as Amos is the source of the vocal and musical creativity, as well as the performer, she is reaffirming her own specific subject position (as woman artist); at the same time, she draws the attention of the listener towards a spectre that may be said to be in oneself or in the other and emerges as haunting residue in her vocal delivery. The rapport with the feminine spectre (an other's identity) emerges in the vocal/musical performance as haunting surplus. In the context of this radical reworking of a metal track, Amos emphasises the possibility of telling a different story, and of discovering what might have been hidden or denied in the music, which was already there, but has remained unheard. The meanings ascribed to Amos's haunting voice in 'Raining Blood' will therefore focus on examining feminine spectrality vis-à-vis a male-to-female transformation and re-appropriation of male violence (literal and symbolic) to clear feminist ends.

Amos's 'Raining Blood' and the Gothicised Feminine Other

Heavy metal style emerges as a radicalisation of certain hard-core musical sounds associated with the tastes and musical preferences of certain subcultures (punk, thrash, metal, industrial). Although these musical tendencies have their own particularities, they share common elements and are often classified under the umbrella term of Gothic; yet many discrepancies arise from attempts to categorise Gothic musical styles. Gothic has its origins in the British subcultures of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a style of dark and disquieting music began to emerge. Music has specifically offered a particularly fertile ground for the emergence of a diversity of styles and their identification with Gothic subcultures: indeed, music and its performers seem to have played a decisive role in shaping the stylistic characteristics of undercurrents referred to as Goth, at least within the British-based sounds and images of the post-punk era.³⁹⁷ By the 1990s, however, the music had progressively become influenced by other musical styles. Current attempts to categorise Gothic styles and to construct Gothic as a unified musical genre have proved difficult, and hence under the label Gothic we find a number of subgenres that stretch its boundaries to include a wide array of sounds including, for example, minimalist punk, Gothic rock, 'darkwave' or ethereal Goth.³⁹⁸ More recently, it is interesting to note that the term 'hauntology' has also started to circulate in music writing at a middle distance between a buzzword and a full-on musical genre (described in terms of using analog synths, unorthodox electronic registers and echoes of early 1990s rave and techno).³⁹⁹ Given the difficulty in classing Gothic as a unified musical genre, some commentators argue that metal sound is one of the subgenres of Gothic, a view that will be adopted here, even if other classifications

place it separately, distinct from Goth songs and Gothic styles that display a more introspective side.⁴⁰⁰

Amos's 'Raining Blood' falls outside any categorisation along these lines, and yet her rendition captures in some way the eerie atmospherics and darkness of the minimalist, 'darkwave' or ethereal styles of Gothic. To illustrate this suggestion, Amos's piano texture is very resonant with a constant low pitch bass that produces a cavern-like figuration; the chords are repetitive and the bass never changes, acting as a drone, and creating a highly ethereal harmonic space. Amos's spectral textures and airy performance contribute to a sense in the listener of encountering a gothic vestige, a spectral or gothicised 'presence', a residue, which can be traced in her musical transformation of Slayer's metal sound. This gothic 'presence' (a haunting surplus) will be understood to be the spectral voice of a gothicised feminine other. The link to the more ethereal types of Gothic music (characterised by a tendency to utilise diminished 7ths, chromatic oscillations between distant harmonic areas, unclear diatonic structures and an emphasis on texture to the detriment of melody) places Amos's 'Raining Blood' on the terrain of the Gothic imagery and hence an aesthetic, which relies for its effects on the uncanny, the unusual, the dislocated and the repressed feminine (please, see figure 17).

Thus, Amos's re-construction works by engaging with a 'feminine' strand within the existing 'gothic' style spectrum in contradistinction to Slayer's more 'masculine' strand. Whilst her performance may not at first be seen as doing something new, but rather shifting Slayer's song to a different creation within the existing range of Gothic images, the artist re-sexes herself in this song into a position of creative agency.⁴⁰¹

This is an important aspect in Amos's transformation of 'Raining Blood'; it is her creativity and aesthetic vision that opens to an spectral interpretation, whereas the cultural interpretation – as it will become clear – points towards a transformation of the pathological into feminine *jouissance*, and hence a neutralisation of the fear that accompanies the genre's collapse of the boundary between the normal and irrational. Both the aesthetic and cultural interpretation converge in Amos's 'Raining Blood' in order to offer a new narrative that accounts for the identity of the 'other' that challenges dichotomous gender roles within the Gothic convention.



Figure 17: Tori Amos gothicised image 1

The Normal/Irrational Boundary

Attempts have also been made to bring together the Gothic tradition (literary, filmic) with Gothic subcultures and their musics, although the degree of success has been relative. One of the arguments for this connection relates to the study of Gothic as a metaphor for the expression of social and political anxieties, and the fact that Gothic subcultures provide a means of expressing dissent within Western capitalist societies.⁴⁰² Although Gothic may be perceived as having taken the place of youth

rebelliousness as cultural paradigm, one of the difficulties in sustaining this view is that Gothic subcultures seem to serve only a sense of collective distinctiveness: the common motif tends to be fashion and style, rather than Goths making a coherent social or political statement.⁴⁰³ In addition, Gothic music has filtered into the mainstream and has become high profile, commercialised, and has lost its counter-culture strength. The link between the Gothic tradition and Gothic music which is perhaps more relevant for our purpose concerns the reading of some musical production (certain Gothic musical videos, as example) in terms of a narrative where boundaries collapse: the 'normal' and the 'pathologized' other disintegrate, giving way to a systematic discourse of the irrational.⁴⁰⁴ The Gothic is then seen as a socio-cultural symptom, a 'pathologized' other that threatens 'normality', which results in fear of the dissolution of boundaries. This argument is supported by an additional connection between the Gothic and psychoanalysis, given that the former's discourse of the irrational is analogous to Freud's conception of the unconscious. The Gothic mirrors in this sense the critical tenet of psychoanalysis that in order to understand individual and cultural expression, careful consideration must be given to the repressed, the hinted-at and the denied.⁴⁰⁵

From a gender perspective, the haunting surplus or residue in Amos's 'Raining Blood' emerges as the spectral voice of a gothicised feminine identity that has been denied, repressed, and associated with irrationality (within a patriarchal worldview). The repressed feminine in Amos is allied with the uncanny and thus familiar unconscious elements, which come to light in a musical fantasy whose content is not juxtaposed to reality, but measured in terms of cultural signification and aesthetic interpretation. Amos's haunting voice is heard from a place where the gothicised

feminine other is allowed to make a return and afforded a voice; the artist's transformation of Slayer's 'Raining Blood' metamorphoses the 'pathologized' other into feminine *jouissance*, and she appears in this way to be neutralising the fear associated with the collapsing of the boundary normal/pathological. The return of a spectral feminine other challenges also normative masculinity and the hierarchical boundary of the masculine/feminine. The dissolution of boundaries extends to the opposites self/other, given that there is in Amos's performance an intra-subjective relation (a rapport) between Amos's putative 'self' and the spectral voice, as well as a relation between the performer and the listener. By acknowledging the identity of a gothicised feminine other, a statement can be made about a revaluation of the feminine in Amos's 'Raining Blood', as well as the association of its *jouissance* with an all-around sound as sonorous 'archaic oceanic fantasy'. Amos's haunting voice serves to channel this *jouissance* and its meanings are therefore closely connected with the artist's creative process and subjective experience.

Gothic Imagery, Music and Gender Differentiations

Gothic music has tended to emerge when the thematic materials at hand suggest a fascination with the dark and the macabre and reference to the monstrous, death and evil. Gothic subcultures position themselves as privileged witnesses to and narrators of the horrific. For example, Gothic rock and Gothic metal display a fascination with horror images, and heavy metal manifests a devotion to belligerent and violent sound. Cultural figurations of darkness and horror within Gothic have become productive archetypes for exploring our fear of death, madness and irrational violence. One explanation for the attractiveness of these dark tendencies relates to human feelings of alienation, suffering, anger and the fear of death, which are channelled productively

and safely through the reproduction of the horrible as a kind of *jouissance* experienced in transgression. In this sense, Goths' reinvention of themselves as 'monsters' and 'deviants' serves to reinforce this notion that the intended conversion of frightful feelings into archetypal and fearsome sounds and images, a message which surfaces in the music (together with their own fashion statements), has useful and for them cathartic value.⁴⁰⁶ The archetypal operates here as a way of preventing a direct personal identification of the group with the horrific events that are represented in Gothic cultural production.

Yet, as mentioned earlier, Gothic musical production involves now a much more diverse range of musical strategies and thus present-day attitudes towards the horrific and macabre within Gothic subcultures and their musics are more ambiguous than those represented in heavy metal.⁴⁰⁷ A differentiation along gender lines has been established between hard-core Gothic styles, which are viewed as masculine, and the softer, ethereal styles, which are identified as feminine. Indeed, a conspicuous masculinist character marks the high-powered intensity of Gothic music in its hard-core punk, rock and metal versions. Punk music itself is associated with transgression of social norms or codes of morality (the Sex Pistols as classic example), and whilst this masculine Gothic music may be interested in challenging oppressive ideology and institutions, ethereal or 'darkwave' styles may invoke images of the Gothic literary tradition (dark landscapes, gloomy skies, castles, vampires, etc.) that have a softer, more 'feminine' cast. Heavy metal fans have tended to branch out along gender lines: they became aggressive, violent, warlike, and in an important sense overtly 'masculine'.⁴⁰⁸

In spite of the fact that Gothic musical production aims to depersonalise the horrific events that they describe, heavy metal's violent and declamatory style attempts to reproduce an extreme form of hegemonic masculinity that can be said in some sense to be 'simply' sexist (the scene also attracts a large number of very vocal and committed female fans, which confirms the need in some women to adopt – perhaps uncritically – masculine cultural forms to be on equal ground to men or even to acquiesce in sub-servience). Generally speaking, women artists that engage with a Gothic aesthetic may focus (directly or indirectly) on their own representation and position within the musical tradition. This is not to imply that female artists within Goth undercurrents may not also search for ways of transgressing the patriarchal system, in particular if they affix their own artistic imprint and inscribe new signification. But it can perhaps be said that women artists have tended to follow, rather than break away from, established ('masculine') aesthetic forms of punk, rock or metal styles. From a feminist perspective, the violence and 'sexism' of hard-core Gothic styles is a symptom of a more general cultural anxiety about the female 'other', in particular the patriarchal investment in preventing a female 'intrusion' into male dominated modes of cultural production. For this, the dislocation and obliteration of the feminine within the heavy metal narrative (this amongst other representational strategies to undermine the feminine) is deemed to be a necessity. A common feminist critique of the Gothic narrative is that it is infused with patriarchal standards.⁴⁰⁹ Certain Gothic figurations fix women into obscure and devious symbols of dangerous female archetypes, alongside everything else that is deeply frightful and feared – the 'monstrous femininity' – which reproduces the dangers associated with the patriarchal misogynistic fear of being engulfed by the feminine.

The Structure of a Gendered Other within a Gothic Environment

The patriarchal anxiety of being swallowed up by a 'dangerous femininity' may be explained from within psychoanalysis as the fear of a phallic mother imago that both affirms and negates the threat of castration (in order to ward off the castration anxiety that arises from primal fantasies about the mother, the child substitutes the phallus for the organ that the female is lacking). In broad terms, the fantasy of the phallic mother must not only be understood in terms of the child's development, but also as retroactively inserted into adult 'language', which can translate as fear of a dangerously perceived femininity that symbolically stands for the castrating mother.⁴¹⁰ Castration anxiety can be said to be one of the elements behind heavy metal's sexism and its investment in specific cultural figurations, such as aggression and violence, which incarnate hegemonic masculinity and produce what we might call a 'phallic sound'. Heavy metal mirrors a masculine 'identity' that foregrounds the fear and horror of merging with a mother imago who threatens the subject with collapsing the boundary between self and other and losing his identity (another way to view this horror is as the first 'voice' of the mother – heard through the senseless elements of infantile cry).⁴¹¹ Hence the dislocation and absence of the female 'other' observed in the heavy metal narrative.

Whilst the Gothic dissolves the boundary 'normal'/irrational, the genre convention has tended to reproduce traditional gender boundaries. Michelle A. Massé indicates that new structures and binarisms (male/female, mother/daughter, gay/straight) already figure now in the Gothic narrative and this favours a move to an interpretative frame of the genre that accounts for 'others'. An inversion of the binarism might possibly lead to new perspectives, although this move specifically suggests a

reversion of the power relation in the subject/object binary, which is simply turned upside down. Gothic convention thus tends to draw the attention of the reader or listener to the surface in detriment of depth; however, as pointed out by Massé, the Gothic now informs also a multiplicity of cultural and textual practices, which are defined in terms of an 'identity' that is multifaceted and not merely determined by identification with a single narrative or discursive practice. This multifaceted 'identity' becomes an analogy for the Gothic and has an effect on material bodies in the real world through their engagement in a diversity of cultural production.⁴¹²

The structure of a gendered other in music informed by the Gothic can then be seen as emerging from the subject positioning of both the artist and the listener and their acknowledgment of an 'identity' that foregrounds the dissolution of boundaries. In this sense, the exploration of gender within a Gothic environment does not merely attend to surface, that is, the Gothic archetypical sounds and images, but pays attention to the 'intertextual' meanings and cultural issues evidenced in the musical representation. Amos's 'Raining Blood' breaks away from the metal aesthetics and hence from an 'identity' that fixes the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. Her musical transformation implies a radical individuation of a Gothic style enacted from Amos's specific subject position. Her reworking can be said to dismantle the more belligerently (and perhaps least effective) side of male metal gothic imagery and to cast out aggression and violence in order to let the gothicised feminine other emerge; this is a spectral voice that takes us back to the mother/daughter relation, along with an implicit recognition of the mother's own curtailment (derived from the negative effects of castration on women).⁴¹³ Amos's musical figuration within a Gothic environment can be said to function as dissolving boundaries in a double sense. First,

by bringing out the repressed 'maternal-feminine', she casts out the fear of the mother and reclaims her voice, which marks the place of feminine *jouissance*. Secondly, by initiating a rapport with a feminine (gothicised) spectre that is given a voice, she brings about an ethical relation with the spectral other in oneself and the listeners. The trace of the gothicised feminine represented in Amos's 'Raining Blood' has identificatory effects on the listeners via their engagement with her performance.

'Acting Out' Violence / Casting Out Aggression

Both Amos's gothicised feminine and Slayer's male metal gothic can be subjectively interpreted from psychoanalysis, in the sense that male/female imaginaries and subjectivities can produce different meanings within the frame of a culturally located Gothic style. One of the running themes in psychoanalysis and Freud's work is that past events, which are repressed from memory, may return and express themselves in actions; if the past is not remembered, the subject may be destined to repeat it by acting it out. Repeating and remembering are connected with the concept of 'acting out', which refers to a failure to recollect the past and hence the subject displays an impulsive and unconscious action whose content or motives are hard to explain for the individual (in the case of traumatic memory, as we saw in Amos's 'Me and a Gun', it was the repetition of the memory of a past act which became traumatic). Let us remember that for Lacan, remembrance involves an additional intersubjective dimension, in that the recollection not only implies bringing something to consciousness, but communicating the message also to the Other; when the Other does not listen, the subject is then forced to act it out, to express the message in actions.⁴¹⁴

It may be argued that 'Raining Blood' encloses an unconscious message addressed to the Other and when the song is performed as heavy metal, Slayer are 'acting out' violence linked to a portrayal of fear of the castrating mother, but also linked to repressed fears of the feminine (another interpretation connects the fear with the abjection of the mother). The implications of heavy metal's 'action' suggests patriarchal anxiety about the cultural 'female principle' and women's singing and song writing. When performed by Amos, her unconscious message to the Other could be viewed as an 'acting out': yet her gothicised figuration is constituted through the feminine 'other' that has been repressed in patriarchal culture and must thus inevitably find a radically different expressive modality resulting from the artist's individuality and subjective experience. Her transformation of the masculine metal sound is constituted in inner calm, introspection, spirituality, mysteriousness and a pleasuring in material. In this sense, Amos is giving a chance to the listener to liberate himself/herself from the putative patriarchal implications of heavy metal and to enable the possibility of identification with the repressed feminine.

Amos herself declared that she had conceived the song after learning of women's oppression and of misogynist attitudes in parts of the world, and she was therefore interested in presenting female empowerment, as well as reclaiming that which had been lost in patriarchy.⁴¹⁵ Bearing this in mind, Amos's song takes an extremely 'male' experience and finds a way of experiencing it from a woman's perspective. The listener is confronted with a radical transformation such that the song is no longer recognised as 'metal' in any sense, but as one that employs Amos's own expressive resourcefulness: she moves from declamation (speech) to song, from the aggressive to the ethereal, from intensely fast rhythmic beats to an introspective floating melody,

from a strenuous percussive ‘thrash’ to a reverberating piano sound and from the representation of radically teleological action to the representation of ‘waiting’. This representation of ‘waiting’ is evoked through reverberation, which has the effect of retarding the sound, of holding it back. In addition, she also prolongs notes at the end of verses (‘a lifeless object alive’, ‘awaiting reprisal’, ‘the sky is turning red’, ‘your time slips away’). This evocation of ‘waiting’ can be understood as the deliberate transformation of violent action and of all that which for the male metal gothic meant transgression (high speed, intense pounding).

The Uncanny and the Sublime

Amos’s gothicised feminine seems to be conjured up in an expectation of or fixation on some as yet unknown outcome, a perpetually held off closure; it would seem as if the listener were suspended in some ‘in-between’, floating without direction or purpose. The listener encounters Amos’s sounds through an uncanny fixation. The uncanniness evoked in Amos’s introspective and floating melody produces sublimity through her representation of ‘waiting’ and ‘suspension’ of feeling. Lyotard suggests that ‘waiting’ can be associated with feelings of anxiety, inasmuch as it carries the possibility of nothing happening or refers to something that has stopped happening; ‘waiting’ entails then a negative value (illustrated in the song as a sense of floating without direction or purpose). At the same time, the suspense linked to ‘waiting’ can be accompanied by a pleasure in welcoming the unknown, both as a joy derived from an intensification of the expectant mood and the actual experience of a gratifying event.⁴¹⁶ This type of contradictory feeling (anxiety/pleasure) is at the heart of the concept of the sublime, which describes an emotional state in which usually good, positive feelings, such as the experience of extreme beauty, are suspended in

astonishment or numbness; yet, this core experience of pleasure, joy and exaltation is also ambiguously associated with pain, anxiety and gloom. The extreme experience of the sublime may thus turn into fear, dread and terror linked to a sense of privation (of light, others, language, life).⁴¹⁷

Amos's representation of 'waiting' alludes perhaps to a privation of light or others and an embrace of darkness and solitude; and yet, more specifically, 'waiting' suggests the sublime in so far as it evokes a 'terrifying' suspense, a terror which is held back, and involves something that has stopped happening (the hard pounding of metal?). Her use of reverberation and the effect of holding back the sound reinforce this expectant mood in the music. Moreover, the sublime in Amos's representation of 'waiting' significantly draws the attention of the listener towards certain simplicity of rendition characterised by a vocal articulacy that kindles pleasure in welcoming the unknown. Yet, her performance appears also to stir up a hidden meaning that is known or familiar associated with the uncanny trace of the gothicised feminine other. As already intimated, the uncanny emerges when a repressed emotional impulse, something alienated but long since established in the mind (and thus familiar), may be transformed into anxiety and recurs through the process of unconscious compulsive repetition.⁴¹⁸ Sublimity is allied with the uncanny in the sense that both can generate feelings of anxiety and of welcoming the unknown (*das Unheimliche/Heimliche*); both these categories are represented in 'Raining Blood' through the 'waiting' effect of retarding sound and the presence of feminine spectrality. Within the realm of aesthetic production, it can be said, following Freud, that the uncanny describes certain qualities of feeling that are directed and controlled by the performer and are intended to produce a variety of disquieting effects on the listener.⁴¹⁹ Amos's

haunting vocal surplus thus generates in the listener a disquieting feeling of sublimity linked to something unidentified, albeit familiar.

Several elements in Amos's employment of vocal articulations contribute to an opening up of the interpretive possibilities of her work. Amos's use of very low tones, and especially the substantial use of the bottom of her register, which characterises a number of passages of 'Raining Blood', creates a heavy or laden vocalisation that may be read as redolent of uncanny or spectral voices that reside within, evoking darkness, gloom and obscurity ('death will be their acquisition', 'souls of my treacherous past', 'awaiting the hour of reprisals'); to strengthen this perception, the use of reverb and the static harmonic ambiguity of the music play a part in the uncanny quality of Amos's delivery. The use of reverb is often interpreted in Gothic music as a figuration of emptiness, whereas in Amos it evokes the sense of 'suspense', 'waiting' and of holding back fear.

Feminine spectrality is evoked in Amos's 'Raining Blood' not only through the unknown, but, also, through the recurrence of unconsciously repressed (and thus horrifically familiar) unsettling emotions (an encounter with one's intimate fears) that produce the disturbing 'suspense'. This type of anxiety is linked to disquieting feelings of coming upon an *unheimlich* place, the site of the mother, which carries a fear of regression, but which is also the 'home' of all human beings (das *Heimliche*). Amos casts out the fear of the maternal by generating emotions that produce a positive aesthetic association with the expression of 'feminine-maternal' *jouissance*.⁴²⁰ In both these senses, Amos's representation of 'waiting', her fixation on the unknown, would seem to generate in the listener a disturbing effect which, on

the one hand, unsettles or perturbs (paradoxically) that very same fixation or suspension of feeling; on the other hand, it can be understood as positive by recalling what is pleasing – an arresting musical/vocal sound – which is connected with the aesthetics of the sublime.

Amos displays yet again in this song an extraordinary articulacy in her vocal expression by means of the change of registers, a feature that characterised ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’. Whilst modulations of Amos’s vocality in ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’ produced ornamented glissandi which reached to the edges of her register, and were marked by fluidity, ‘Raining Blood’ prompts unexpected and more radical changes of register near the edges of Amos’s range; on this occasion, the changes are even more extreme: from a very high tone she may drop to a very low and vice versa (‘fall into me [low], the sky’s crimson tears [high]’ ‘return to power draw near’ [sharp drop], ‘betrayed by many, now [..]’ [sharp drop], ‘abolish the rules made on stone’ [sharp high]). As in ‘Pandora’s Aquarium’, the rapid changes of register may be associated with extreme excitement, but the expectant and uncanny mood, as well as the sublime suspension of articulate feelings in ‘Raining Blood’, leads to a further association of Amos’s vocal performance with the *threshold crossing* that characterized the sonorous envelope as fantasy space. Whilst Amos’s minimalist style recreates a primary pleasure, that is, the fantasy of the archaic body that refers to the earliest voice of the mother, the rapid changes of register create the illusion that our listening is being simultaneously enclosed and split from the music. This can be exemplified in the registral leaps, which produce a sense of sublimity or a sense of beguiling discontinuity within the sonorous fantasy space.⁴²¹

***Jouissance* of Violence versus *Jouissance* of ‘Expectation’**

Amos's holding of notes in ecstatic suspension together with the whispering throaty articulations and the changes of register suggest an aesthetic associated with *jouissance*. This interpretation may be sustained by Amos's almost exclusive use of head voice (which helps to convey an ethereal, airy effect), except for the instances when she drops to the throat voice producing an effect which resembles something like a sexual moan ('awaiting reprisals [throaty articulation] death will be [...]'), 'awaiting the hour of reprisals [throaty articulation] your time slips away'). Amos's stylised lament, her throaty articulation, which in 'Me and a Gun' meant traumatic pain, seems to do a radically different kind of semantic work in 'Raining Blood': it may be linked here to sexual excitement, eroticism, *jouissance* – a sublime pleasure that is also painful. Indeed, the song finishes with Amos holding a very long tone, which is marked by intense breathiness and fades into a whisper beyond Amos's comfortable vocal range. The sensation of crossing a boundary in this last articulation confers a rapturous quality, which may be translated as ecstasy, or perhaps, agony, although either of these emotions could be aesthetically connected with *jouissance*.

Amos's versatile vocal articulacy in 'Raining Blood' and her musical evocation of a gothicised feminine through uncanny vocal effects and *jouissance* implies a radical transformation, a full and radical re-conceptualisation of the gender norms specific to the heavy metal subculture, but it also brings feminine-specific signification into a broadly understood ethereal gothic aesthetic. The excessive masculinist aggressivity and violence of heavy metal is transformed into sexual spirituality, pleasure and eroticism, aspects close to the feminine, laden with meaning, and which have been repressed in patriarchal culture. As already outlined, the Gothic narrative was

preoccupied with the representation of that which produced horror, disgust and repulsion, and for that it aimed to cut off the identificatory mechanisms between the group (listeners/viewers) and the music representation/image, to de-personalise the horrific.⁴²² Contrary to this preoccupation, Amos attempts to reconstruct the bond between the listener and a gothicised other through a haunting vocal surplus, which is not fixated on the feared, grotesque or monstrous femininity; it is centred on a pleasurable aesthetic sentiment that persuades the listener to identify with the feminine spectre as a site of pleasure; it is linked, figuratively, to sublime uncanny feelings of immensity and of being cast adrift amidst infinitely open spaces (please, see figure 18).



Figure 18: Tori Amos gothicised image 2

Female artists dealing with the Gothic have been particularly concerned to dismantle traditional women's identity roles by appropriating Gothic topoi as a means of

cultural critique (crisis of coherent selfhood, de-centralisation of identity, intervention into the process of creation, and so on). It could be said that Amos's journey into a gothicised feminine sensibility, her flight to eroticism and *jouissance*, may be interpreted as a kind of 'cultural re-assessment' in order to empower and de- and re-codify the identity of the feminine sexual 'other'. Her spectral vision seems to be placed at the intersection of the Gothic as cultural resistance and the expression of the feminine, functioning as a sort of intermediary between herself and her listeners. As we have previously outlined, Amos's interest in connecting with the world outside allows her work to be viewed as initiating a dialogue between herself as performer and her listeners. In an Irigarayan sense, Amos's female imaginary may be interpreted as creating the *espacement* or 'space between' for listeners to exchange the meanings of the spectral feminine voice (and thus Amos's performance) among themselves; for women, the meanings of her musical/vocal performance may additionally imply the necessary third party in a symbolic relationship which would not be just a dual imaginary relationship between women (listeners) and the male cultural imaginary, but would create the space for a feminine imaginary to intermediate (women/feminine/male cultural imaginary, or men/feminine/male cultural imaginary).⁴²³

The identificatory mechanisms that take place between the listener and the musical representation of Amos's gothicised feminine other are activated when listening to the rich symbolism of the 'Raining Blood' lyrics. The imagery evoked in the lyrics, like the vocal articulations, suggests divergent gothic symbolic associations in the listener when performed by Amos and Slayer respectively. The gothic aesthetic places the listener in a situation of uncertainty inasmuch as Amos's song gives rise to anxieties

about musical production that transgresses contemporary cultural norms and questions moreover the stability of the categories of 'good' and 'evil'.⁴²⁴ Slayer's 'evil sound' is redolent of a wider social tendency to a certain spiritual impoverishment and an obsession with bizarre depictions of death, doom and horror in the search for an ever more gratifying and thrilling experience; the presentation of violence and aggression in their metal gothic can be viewed as crossing the boundary between *jouissance* and *Affekt*.⁴²⁵

One way of understanding the male gothic in Slayer's 'Raining Blood' is to relate it to the representation of a *jouissance* of violence (linked to death and reprisal), whilst Amos's performance is better articulated as engaging in a representation of the *jouissance* of expectation (linked to regeneration and rebirth). Reference to the last judgement, death, purgatory, reprisal, blood, the sky, betrayal and tears in the lyrics of 'Raining Blood' reflect heavy metal's preoccupation with apocalyptic landscapes of fate and with apocalyptic damnation. Indeed, one explanation of today's gothic sublime, as indicated by Grunenberg, is that it reflects 'a hesitant and apprehensive state of mind obscured by a deep fear of the unfamiliar future: it is the threat of the apocalypse that is the spectacle of the sublime; it is the threat of self-extinction and 'self-dissolution'.⁴²⁶ The apocalyptic downfall and the threat of punitive self-extinction and destruction in the lyrics of 'Raining Blood' can nonetheless be read more constructively when Amos interprets the song (by virtue of the *jouissance* of expectation and pleasurable emotions intimated in her haunting vocals and musical performance).

Positive Reading of Gothic Symbols

When Amos first heard Slayer's 'Raining Blood' she envisioned a 'huge juicy vagina coming out of the sky' that was 'raining blood' all over misogynist men.⁴²⁷ Amos's hyperbolic illustration recreates a 'vulvic space' where raining is metaphorized into menstrual blood; its location is the sky, which stands for infinity, eternity, immortality and transcendence, all symbolic aspects that have been associated with Amos's vocal/musical spectrality and her gothicised feminine. Amos's mental image of the vagina take us to a feminine process (literal and symbolic) from the core of the female body, and the metaphor thus operates as a way to demythologise the notion of the female body as a place of unfathomable and uncanny obscurity; it also reverses psychoanalytic designations of female genitalia as lack (of the phallus).⁴²⁸

Blood is an element of life within the human body and it is present when a new life is born. Rain here may thus serve either as life-giving or as life-destroying. When the lyrics refer to death (as in 'Death will be their acquisition') Amos's voice descends into her lower register to produce the haunting vocals of the repressed spectral other, linked we may surmise to the death drive. The passage from death to life can thus mean both reintegration and the change from one mode of being to another, better mode of being (as a way of casting out the inner voices); it can also mean the reunion of the body with the earth and the soul with the spirit, and it can thus connote in Amos's song a spiritual rebirth. Finally, allusions to the colour red and tears ('the sky is turning red', 'the sky's crimson tears' – in a high register) hint also at suggestive symbolism. Red is usually associated with sacrifice, rage, murder, and killing, but it can also mean vibrant life, active emotion, passion, *eros*, and desire.

These last associations harmonize with Amos's re-articulation of feminine *jouissance*. Tears carry creative power and can be used as a balm, as a binding to secure elements, unite ideas and join souls. When tears are poured onto the body, they heal lacerations and restore sight. The use of the word 'lacerated', which appears in the song as a 'throaty' articulation ('From a lacerated sky'), is noteworthy. 'Laceration' means 'an open wound', 'injury', 'torn apart flesh' or, figuratively, 'distraught'; yet, Amos's image of a 'lacerated sky' inhabited with female genitalia lends itself to a figuration of an intangible and cosmic gothicised feminine body, since the 'open wound' is associated with the 'vulvic space' and hence with a specifically located, but highly ethereal feminine space. Amos's throaty articulation still retains the sexual overtones, and can be understood as an aesthetically pleasurable strategy, returning to a body image of woman that does not signify static object or passive spirit, but vibrant (an infinite) emotion and desire. 'Laceration' may thus be associated here with healing and regeneration – after tears of blood from a 'lacerated' feminine (sky) have been poured on the soul; 'laceration' can also bring back the trace of the (repressed) 'wounded feminine' that returns in an empowered and highly metaphorical gothicised figuration.

From the Darkness of the Cavern

The positive re-reading of these Gothic symbols opens the possibilities for alternative feminist engagements associated with Amos's 'Raining Blood'; in this sense, Irigaray's comments on Plato's cavern are relevant for further interpretation of Amos's gothicised feminine figuration. As we have seen, Amos's haunting vocals and her use in this musical track of reverb confers on the song a cavern-like, supernatural/ethereal quality and hence the sensation of the song being performed

inside (or outside) an enigmatic large and empty space; the hollowness or empty space evoked can be taken, figuratively, as the cavern of Plato's myth. The figure of the gothicised feminine is metaphorically 'engendered' in the cavern and her ethereal 'body' fills this unlimited space; the reverberating sounds and haunting voice produce an uncanniness that can potentially transform the cavern into a dangerous place; it can bring to mind associations with an ominous presence, which refers back to the castrating (and castrated) mother, the repressed feminine 'other' that in psychoanalytic terms threatens the boundary between self and other and yet returns in disguised and uncanny form.

According to Whitford, the cavern, the womb and the inside of the mother's body can be recognised as dangerous locations, since the (male) subject cannot oversee and dominate from that specific space or perspective; he can therefore feel threatened with castration (for women, this is not so much so since they must identify with the 'castrated' mother's body, which imposes an unsatisfactory restriction in their articulation of desire).⁴²⁹ The cavern becomes then a dangerous place (mirrored in the fantasy of the *vagina dentata*), but this reinterpretation of the myth also reveals, interestingly, the tyranny of the gaze over the other senses. In accordance with our feminist engagement, Amos's evocation of a gothicised feminine in her vocal/musical performance would seem to dispel the ominousness, the threat of the cavern and the *vagina dentata* in two ways. First, castration fantasies are associated with the symbolic split in which women are assigned to the carnal and excluded from the spiritual.⁴³⁰ Amos's gendered transformation of 'Raining Blood' challenges the threat of castration and the symbolic split, and dissipates women's pointed association with

the carnal, by means of assigning a fully-fledged spiritual and regenerative character to (the haunting vocals of) her gothicised feminine other.

Secondly, the metaphor of the gothicised feminine inhabiting the cavern (and thus imagining a 'spiritual' maternal-feminine) can additionally challenge the tyranny of the gaze. The cavern-like effect of Amos's song prioritises listening over the other senses: her musical/vocal performance reverses the prominence of the gaze, of overseeing, in favour of 'hearing/listening'. By way of abstract associations, Amos's 'Raining Blood' can be said to challenge male domination and control and to articulate desire and *jouissance* as linked to the haunting voice as a kind of 'sublime listening' (by shifting the centrality of the gaze – insofar as it marks male narcissism and male desire – and transforming the auditory *jouissance* of aggression and violence into a *jouissance* of space, of waiting). The aesthetically generated effects can be associated for the listener with pleasure, *jouissance* and female sexuality: this may, in turn, be explained in terms of Irigaray's notion of the *retouche* (touching again). For Irigaray, the 'two lips' symbolize *retouche*, which involve her attempt to symbolize women's desire and auto-affection, and demonstrate that women are not passive objects, but that they 'know how to turn upon themselves'.⁴³¹ Although Amos's gothicised feminine is placed amidst the anxiety about the hidden forces within the female body, her representation would seem to turn fear of excess into celebration of pleasurable emotion and thus her haunting voice works as the conduit through which female desire is represented in musical performance.

Björk's 'Storm': The Cyborgian Feminine Other, Nature and the Transgression of Boundaries

Björk's collaborative work with visual artist and real life partner Matthew Barney materialised in the project called *Drawing Restraint 9*, a film directed by Barney that features a soundtrack composed by the Icelandic artist to fit the cinematic images and contents of the film. In an interview with both artists at a press conference in the *Mostra di Venezia* 2005, Björk declared she had not been consciously influenced by Matthew Barney when she wrote the music, although she gained access to the visuals, and hence her work could be viewed as the result of an interactive process between her concepts and Barney's. Björk's album of the same title, released in 2005, endorses this reciprocal exploration of ideas to the degree that the enigmatic atmosphere and the use of computer generated aspects in Barney's work look as if they are echoed in the music; hence this seems to sustain Björk's claim to have adapted on this occasion to her partner's artistic universe. Björk's *Drawing Restraint 9* album shows, moreover, the innovative potential of the new aural landscapes, which create a contrasting, vivid and intriguing sonic equivalent to the fantasy world of the film, as well as to the Japanese culture from which the film draws its thematics. The album can be said to continue the line opened with the vocal investigations of *Medúlla*, which was created almost exclusively with human voices; yet in this album Björk picks up musical accompaniment again, mostly to engage with the traditional musical forms of Japan and to resume her interest in experimenting with the flatness of synthesised musical sounds.

The film forms part of a larger *Drawing Restraint* series conceived by Barney in the late 1980s. The core proposal of the series revolves around a rather unusual idea: the restraint or self-resistance that the artist encounters, and holds him back, in the realisation of the creative process. There is a recurrent symbol in the series, an oval bisected by a bar, that symbolizes completeness (the oval) and restraint (as the oval is split down in the middle by a bar), which functions as a metaphor for the realisation of the creative process and the removal of restraint.⁴³² The bisected oval appears in the film in the form of an enormous sculpture made of petroleum jelly that is named *The Field*. *Drawing Restraint 9* is supposed to pay homage to Japanese culture, and for this purpose the story develops in a Japanese whaling ship where two Westerners (played by Barney and Björk) go on board and are introduced to traditional Japanese customs and rituals. During the travel, the Westerners undergo a process of transformation whereby they are ceremonially shaved and bathed and dressed up in traditional skin and fur Shinto wedding costumes; in a ritualised manner, they then perform a long-sequenced tea ceremony, during which an old host informs them of the history of the vessel (the only instance of spoken dialogue in the film). Meanwhile on the deck of the ship *The field* is cut into pieces, remodelled, and transformed in the course of the voyage. A rough storm breaks at sea with the effect of melting the *The field's* viscose jelly into a running liquid that starts inundating the tatami⁴³³ room where the couple aim to come together, and erotically embrace in a symbolic attempt at mutual growth. The liquid is progressively filling up their breathing space. The horrific element of the story unfolds at this precise moment, when the lovers, half submerged, start to slice each other's bodies with flensing knives, used for the ritual dissection of whale carcasses (please, see figure 19). From the sharp wounds and the streams of blood mixed with the liquid, two cetacean tails

emerge from their broken skins, the lovers metamorphosing in sinister fashion into whales. In the final scene, two whales can be seen swimming not far from the vessel, which cruises the gelid waters of Antarctica.



Figure 19: Film still, *Drawing Restraint 9*

Amongst the deep-layered strata of meanings, a general interpretation of the images alludes to a birthing process and/or organic transformation detached from man-made or artificial obstacles (*restraint*), which serves as an allegory for the creation of art. The imagery also makes reference to Shinto religious rites and cycles of mammalian evolution. Since the idea of physical, yet unnatural, obstacles that stand in the way of artistic production forms part of Barney's conceptual universe, we infer that the trauma of the whales' birthing process operates as a metaphor for Björk's and Barney's creative processes. It has also been suggested that the notion of artificial 'obstacles' resonates with Björk's 'only vocals' compositions (i.e. *Medúlla*, 2004) in so far as the human voices, freed from man-made 'obstacles', take the place of musical instrumentation.⁴³⁴ Yet, Björk's tendency to combine the human voice with

digitally produced sounds in her compositions does not generally seem to endorse the idea that man-made ‘obstacles’ or the technological stand in the way of her musical creativeness. Björk’s soundtrack for the film includes some themes directly inspired by Japanese musical tradition, and composed for the *sho*, one of Japan’s oldest musical instruments.⁴³⁵ Other songs in the album are more in line with the artist’s standard releases; she incorporates in this work vocal and technical elements that help recreate the sensation of a ‘listening voyage’ through musical materials. The music evokes both the film’s sea spaces and the Japanese ritualistic time and space.

A Spectral Soundscape

The breaking of a violent storm at sea in the film is matched up with Björk’s creation of ‘Storm’, a musical track which virtually reproduces the sonic equivalent of strong wind and waves and dripping water in a dreadfully rain-drenched storm scene (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 4 ‘Storm’). The digitally produced sounds replicate the rain beating against the vessel and the creaky noise of its wood frame as it rocks in the storm (though in the film this is a modern-looking ship). The song also reproduces the sound of waves rising to a crest and breaking in a ‘realistic’ musical narrative that mirrors the inexorable forces of nature; in addition, the malfunctioning radio equipment and the lost radar bleeps are emulated with the help of electronic sound effects. The song has a strong filmic quality in so far as it aurally captures the moment when the radio signal stops working and the storm follows its course. The music is accompanied by matching visuals, since ‘Storm’ comes in the film at the time of the sea storm when the lovers ritualistically embrace each other as prelude to the flensing. It fulfils the crucial narrative role of accounting for the stormy sea

environment and flooded compartment while recreating an atmospheric mood marked by the tension of the unfolding events in the scene.

Overlaid on the synthesised sounds, Björk's sampled vocals pierce into the soundscape: an almost constant howling that increases in intensity inundates the circling sounds so as to produce an esoteric combination (voice and digital sound) of aural uncanniness. Her voice starts off in her middle range and resumes the emission of repeated howls that progressively increase in intensity until the singer reaches a high-pitch tone near the edge of her range; half way through the song she drops to her bottom range and then her voice starts to rise again, returning to disturbing wailing cries. There is a non-human quality attached to Björk cries; they are reminiscent of animal howls that cut through an imagined stormy sky in the night. The mapping of the above elements over the recurrent low reverberating chords in the background, as well as the ecstatic moments of extreme emotion displayed by Björk's dramatic voice conveys a haunting listening experience. Spectrality resides in the evocation of a disturbing nocturnal aural space made up of digital sound and 'organic' voice. Björk's haunting vocals suggest a spectral presence that emerges as a hybrid otherness in her musical representation. As we shall see, this spectrality will be associated with a cyborgian otherness whose signification speaks of breaking several dichotomous boundaries; it will carry a left over or residual trace that is conceptualised here as feminine and emerges as haunting or uncanny surplus in Björk's vocal performance.

Björk and the Cyborg Imagery

Björk is a multifaceted composer interested in a variety of musical traditions and instrumentation. She is known for her fondness for electronic/digital sounds, which she usually produces as collaborative work. Sometimes these sounds have their origin in the real world (i.e. *Vespertine*): they are taken in particular acoustic environments and then processed and incorporated in her musical compositions. Björk is also known for her remarkable vocals, which she exploits in conjunction with technology to generate evocative melodies and create the sensation of experiencing unique soundscapes, usually connected with the natural world. The artist has thus developed a distinctive musical approach characterised by the aural interface of voice and synthesised sounds (an example of which is 'Storm'). Even her all-vocal album *Medúlla* necessitated a considerable amount of vocal processing, layering and studio work to get the right sonic textures and effects.⁴³⁶ Technology constitutes therefore a significant aspect in Björk's creative process, which is directly informed by her artistic vision and the way she has found her identity as a singer; and yet the role of the technological in her work is not intended to build up a grand sound, but to produce very emotional and intimate aural worlds. Perhaps because of a sense of harmonious intimacy (of a kind of 'perfect' match or tuning) between her earthly voice and the strangeness in the processed sounds, a connection between her work and cyborg imagery has been made. The cyborg is conceptualised as a hybrid creature at the intersection of science fiction and social reality, which transgresses the boundaries between the human, animal and machine, the physical and non-physical, and between nature and culture, aspects linked to Björk's work.

This link is further reinforced by the appearance in some of her musical videos of cyborgian or cyborg-like images and impersonations, sometimes digitally generated (e.g. 'All is Full of Love', 'Hunter', *Homogenic*, 1997; 'Who is it', *Médulla*; 'Hyperballad', *Post*, 1995), as well as the fact that Björk's interest in nature is echoed in the cyborg's aims to blur the boundary between nature and culture. Nature and the natural world are recurrent themes in Björk's songs, featuring prominently in her visuals and lyrics, and evoked in the music through her use of minimalist textures, repetition, and the creation of an aura of infinitude and immensity (e.g. 'Jòga', *Homogenic*; 'Oceania', *Medúlla*; 'Nature is Ancient', *Greatest Hits: Volumen* 1999; 'Wanderlust', *Volta* 2007). Björk has declared that technology and nature overlap since understandings of the boundary between them vary historically. In her view, there is an underlying fear of the technological insofar as it represents the unknown, while, in fact, technology has been part of human development ever since primitive times; hence her idea of technology as something organic, inseparable from nature.⁴³⁷

More recently, Björk has been campaigning in Iceland for alternative ways to utilize natural and human resources in self-sustainable ways; to this purpose, she has released a single 'Náttúra' (2008) to encourage active support for her campaign to respect nature, develop new ideas on sustainability and emphasise that technological advances can work together with nature without the need to sacrifice the latter.⁴³⁸ Her embrace of the technological vis-à-vis her worshipping of nature, together with the cyborgian images displayed in her musical representations, suggest a cultural linkage with the meanings ascribed to the cyborg, in particular the above mentioned breakdown of traditional boundaries and the dismantling of the dichotomous association of men with the technological and women with nature.

The Cyborg: a Feminist Reading

The cyborg was conceived by Donna Haraway in her 1985 'Cyborg Manifesto' as a metaphor to challenge the fragmentation of female identity experienced by being female in a world informed by postmodern thinking. Her cyborg project is seen as an effort to construct a political myth useful for feminism, socialism and materialism within the framework of a postindustrial society. In the late twentieth century, as machines have increasingly blurred the distinction between natural and artificial, mind and body and the self-developing and externally-designed, Haraway suggests that this entails a re-conception of machine and organism as 'coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world'.⁴³⁹ Within her image of the informatics of domination, almost every ideological premise has come under scrutiny, including such dichotomies as mind/body, animal/human, organism/machine, public/private, nature/culture or man/woman; these dualisms are challenged by high-tech culture, primarily because the relation between human and machine is not clear, but it is not apparent either 'what is mind and what is body in machines that resolve into coding practices'.⁴⁴⁰ Her cyborg myth is in this way located within a postmodernist strategy, which aims to subvert a myriad of organic wholes and considers multiple readings through textualisation. She considers that identity has been fractured, becoming contradictory and strategic, and this has eventually made the concept of woman, of 'being' female, elusive.⁴⁴¹ She views 'women's cyborg' identities as situational, enmeshed in the spaces that form the 'integrated circuit', a network of power and social life in which women interact, but do not have a place: their 'task is survive in the diaspora'.⁴⁴² The cyborg is therefore 'a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self', a

way out of the dualistic thinking in which we have explained our bodies to ourselves.⁴⁴³

In spite of the cyborg's ability to challenge dualisms and open up productive ways of thinking about subjectivity, gender, and the materiality of the physical body, there are shortcomings attached to the way the cyborg has already been fashioned in our cultural imagination. Anne Balsamo, for example, indicates that the cyborg as a cultural figure is entrenched in contemporary cultural iconography that reproduces familiar stereotypes, in particular the replication of traditional gendered roles within the male/female divide.⁴⁴⁴ Jenny Wolmark has also examined the relevance of the cyborg metaphor for feminist theory and analysed its potential as a strategic tool for feminist purposes. She notices that the male cyborgs inevitably reproduce the link between rationality, technology and masculinity, whereas the female cyborgs can be potentially more disruptive as they 'embody cultural contradictions which strain the technological imagination'.⁴⁴⁵ There is concern therefore about the ongoing meaning of this metaphor, since the cyborg is not 'inherently radical or utopian in its meanings' and it can be used to reaffirm dominant ideology.⁴⁴⁶

Another upshot resulting from cyborg imagery is the devaluation of organic bodies alongside traditional cultural assumptions of the mind/body split. Donna Haraway engages with the body from a feminist perspective and stresses that difference can no longer be adequately constructed according to conventional binaries or humanist paradigms. Shildrick and Price dispute the idea that the dispersal of the normative body is taken for granted and the blurring between human and machine, male and

female, actual and virtual, and so on automatically leads to new and uncategorisable forms in cyberspace. But it is not clear in their view to what extent this 'neutrality' in cyberspace may be aiming to replay the ideals of transcendence, something which remains controversial due to former associations with the mind/body split; the implicit devaluation of the body in the cyborg image is thus regarded with suspicion by feminist theory.⁴⁴⁷ If the female (organic) body is undermined in the context of a post-modern (and genderless) cyborgian world there is a risk of erasing feminine specificity attached to a female embodied identity, which has implications if women want to create their own images and self-representation.

According to Haraway, moreover, the cyborg's identity is non-unitary; by skipping the step of an original unity, the cyborg promises a decentring of traditional hierarchical categories (of gender, class, race) as it embraces strategic subjectivities. But the cyborg's dependence on postmodern networks makes it also susceptible to a continual proliferation of difference in a way that it becomes unrepresentable. This can lead to subjective disintegration, with the effect of erasing difference, and of making the cyborg stand as a metaphor for universal subjectivity. Thus, although the cyborg shows power to challenge deep-seated gendered dualisms that have justified male dominance over women and nature (the long association of women with nature and the flesh), this transgressive power can be seen as double-edged for women. If dualisms such as male/female and mind/body are not called into question and dissolve into 'neutrality' in cyberspace, 'women cyborgs' might be able to establish their own networks, but their 'identities' can be diluted within dominant ideology, without being able to find a place in the webs of power and social life. In contrast, Irigaray proposes an embodied subjectivity that accounts for sexual difference, which is irreducible to

the other, explicitly rejecting a holistic unity that denies duality in the gender sphere and neutralizes the specificity of the body. If 'women cyborgs' simply adopt male standards in order to be in the networks, their position in the integrated circuit can in effect become weaker. After all, as Haraway points out, the main trouble with cyborgs is that 'they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism'.⁴⁴⁸ She concedes that the illegitimate offspring are often extremely unfaithful to their origins, that is, their fathers, and perhaps in connection to this observation she also raises the question of the meaning of being embodied in a high-tech world.⁴⁴⁹

Vocal Spectrality and Björk's Cyborgian Other

The cyborg as a cultural figure is therefore subjected to the mores and dualisms of dominant ideology, in a way comparable to the Gothic's reproduction of dichotomous stereotypes within the cultural conventions of the genre. In order to read the cyborgian metaphor in a way productive from a feminist perspective, a reconsideration of the cyborg's ability to dissolve boundaries, the effect of this on women, and the meanings of women's cyborg-embodied selves and their representation is necessary. Björk's 'Storm' conjures up the subversive power of the cyborgian metaphor in so far as her performance questions the boundaries of traditional dichotomies without privileging the technological over the organic, and suggests a redefinition of female embodiment within a high-tech world. 'Storm' creates a cybernetic soundscape, a technologically generated 'topography' of the sound of a storm that does not undermine Björk's 'organic'⁴⁵⁰ voice superimposed on the synthesised 'landscape'. Within the dissolution of the human/machine boundary, there is resistance to any privileging of the technological over the organic in such a

way that Björk's eerie screams call the attention of the listener towards the natural, both through the earthy, embodied properties of her voice and the digitally generated fantasy of a natural phenomenon. At the same time, the human/animal boundary is traversed via the association of the artist's screams with animal howls, a fantasy that endorses also the organic over the technological. The listener is not prevented from imagining the body source of the voice in terms of the (organic) female body producer of the sounds. The effect of crossing over from human to animal is generated by the spectral trace of a cyborgian otherness that produces uncanniness and is experienced as a haunting surplus in Björk's vocals. Yet, vocality is grounded in the artist's 'cyborgian' embodied self whose female body, source of the voice, is not negated or undermined within a technological environment. The cyborg metaphor in Björk's performance suggests therefore a redefinition of the embodiment, inasmuch as the cyborgian otherness lends itself to being associated with a feminine spectral other read in terms of the breakdown of several boundaries. The haunting surplus can be interpreted as occupying the liminal spaces on both sides of the boundaries where the cyborgian feminine other is located. The cyborgian representation generated in Björk's vocal/musical performance is in this way viewed as open-ended, much more flowing than the human/machine hybrids that we are accustomed to in conventional depictions of the cyborg.

The cyborgian feminine other thus emerges as spectral trace, imaged as bodily disturbance with the potential to blur the human/animal boundary and create a fantasy of a hybrid otherness that does not favour technology, but is none the less placed within the 'cybernetic' soundscape; hence Björk ascribes new meanings to her singular way of refashioning the cyborg metaphor, challenging at the same time

dominant cultural signification. Björk generates an image of a transgressive cyborgian other that references the artist's embodied identity and is represented through vocal spectrality within a high-tech world. The redefinition of female embodiment by way of the artist's cyborgian figuration endorses recognition of the organic body instead of its rejection, which challenges the mind/body dualism implied in conventional representations of the cyborg.

Embodiment links also to feminist approaches that write the female body and ascribe meanings to the body in line with women's subjectivity and experience. Irigaray generates an imagery of embodiment that aims to bring an end to the deprivation of valuable images of women's bodies, which has prevented them from expressing their desire. In this sense, our reading of Björk's vocal/musical performance embeds a specific image of the cyborg's embodiment associated with the feminine, and through which the artist constructs her own metaphor and seeks (self) representation. The presence of the spectral voice as haunting surplus in 'Storm' carries a subversive trace of another woman or the maternal, whose *jouissance* is derived from a revalorisation of the mother's body, as well as the transgression of boundaries. Spectrality is thus suggested as 'return' of a repressed feminine voice that speaks of new alliances with nature, the organic and the technological. Since the spectral other may be in oneself, in the other or in the other in oneself, it surfaces in Björk's vocal performance as an uncanny presence that self-references the artist and evokes a familiar other rather than unfamiliarity.

‘Storm’ and the Dichotomous *Topos* of Science/Nature

The interweaving of voice and synthesized sound into the musical narrative in ‘Storm’ thus produces the effect of the all-powerful stormy landscape; the compelling, awe-inspiring listening experience is associated with the trace of a cyborgian otherness that ‘returns’ as haunting surplus or residue. Spectrality retains a ‘suspended’, ‘in-between’ quality suggested in the aural uncanniness of the workings of nature. The digital soundscape aims to reproduce nature’s sublime rule through images of an uncontrollable natural phenomenon. The dichotomous topos of science/nature recalls the scientific quest to dominate nature, which is ultimately reduced to an object of technological mastery. This dualism, which is destructive of the organic order, would seem to be activated and re-fashioned in Björk’s ‘Storm’ by way of invoking the cyborgian power to break down boundaries, as well as associations intimated within the music’s cultural meanings (and more generally in the unfolding of the cinematic story). Conventional narratives that engage with the science/nature dualism already expose the gendered instability between, on the one hand, the seeking of knowledge that aims to empower man in mastering the natural world and, on the other, the feminine ‘other’, which has been cross-culturally associated with the maternal and a closer relation to the natural and the organic.

Although the dichotomy science/nature is based on an essentialist conceptualisation of the masculine and the feminine, hence on a regressively reductive representation of women, the idea serves here to challenge the long association of men with the technological and women with nature, as well as men’s subsequent domination of nature. The force of the storm in the song embodies the ambivalent positioning of the masculine in that the technologically generated storm’s strength evocatively suggests

male power, but simultaneously unveils man's limited powers to control the threat of nature through artificial devices and technology. Hence, although associated with the masculine, Björk's stormy 'landscape' can figuratively become, through its uncontrollability, estranging and alienating for man since he stands symbolically at odds with nature's sublime rule. This aspect is unmasked in the musical fantasy at the very beginning of the song, given that it starts off with what seems an unsuccessful radio message placed over the plunge of the mighty sea; the radio attempt becomes almost immediately swamped by the effects of reverb and intense scratching that totally saturate the sound, as if transmission would be lost. The malfunctioning, and ultimate failure of, the radio equipment point to the irreducibility of nature to technology and thus a neutralization of male power, which becomes overwhelmed by the immeasurability of the natural forces recreated in the music.

Moreover, Björk's haunting vocals piercing the digital soundscape draw the listener's attention to a vocal surplus, figured as cyborgian 'feminine other' that brings a subversive power to blur the boundary between the organic and the technological and to form a new alliance between women, nature and technology (without privileging the technological). In contrast to a traditional identification of masculine qualities with aspects of culture that are reasoned or 'manmade', the archetypal association of woman with nature is conceived traditionally as irrational and unmediated. Suzaan Boettger suggests that if an artist establishes a strong relationship with nature in her work, she can be seen as connecting with society's Other; but female artists are already part of society's Other and thus women's artistic attention to nature can entail 'a parallelism between their own historically secondary status and that of nature's'.⁴⁵¹ Yet, Boettger's argument implies also that embracing nature may be understood as an

interest on the part of female artist in changing consciousness regarding this archaic dualism, which has been based on the domination of the masculine over its inferior 'others'.⁴⁵² Björk's use of technological/digital aural landscapes re-conceptualises and overrides the essentialism and binarism (as well as the humanism) that characterized previous accounts of women and technology.⁴⁵³ Her musical creativity brings together, and thus invalidates, the gendered male/female dichotomy of technology and nature, both in a semantic sense and in so far as her digitally generated fantasy of a 'natural' environment provides the backdrop to, precisely, emphasise nature. Björk's performance departs from archetypical dichotomous associations of women with nature and men with rationality; it calls for a different consciousness, a way out of the dualistic modes of thinking of dominant ideology.

The Separation between Nature and Culture

Irigaray calls into question the conceptual separation between nature and culture, as well as the patriarchal tradition of discussing the body and the environment in isolation – as if individual and collective life were able to organise itself outside of the natural world. Karen I. Burke has examined Irigaray's approach to nature and indicates that her work addresses the interdependence between the body and the environment and the need for a commitment to treat them together. Irigaray draws attention to the fact that society depends on natural living bodies, that is, on the natural and bodily life of individuals, and could not otherwise exist without its constituent bodies.⁴⁵⁴ She seriously adheres to the idea that culture is not separate from nature and adduces that the reason why there has been a division between living bodies and the natural lies within the male subjective economy:

[..] his entire subjective economy – constantly oscillates between the *yes* and the *no* that he says to all forms of mothers in establishing his identity. [...] Man needs these yesses and noes to maintain a distance between himself and the matter that produced him. More often than not, he seeks to remain in denial of this primary mother or matrix. His denial of reality is an attempt, by various means, including very subtle reasoning, to impose *a second nature* that eventually destroys the first or causes it to be forgotten.⁴⁵⁵

The technological domination of nature is thus explained by Irigaray in terms of man's denial of our reliance on nature for survival and hence an imposition of *a second nature*, which refers to a new reality that replaces natural reality. In her view, living matter is essentially sexed and machines that mediate our life processes do not have a sex: 'Sexualization, which is one of the essential characteristics of living matter, has not been cultivated in our societies for centuries, and our age of technology is attempting to eliminate it'.⁴⁵⁶ The cyborgian feminine other can also be interpreted in tandem with Irigaray's assertion that individuals should not be in denial of the primary mother or matrix and distance themselves from the matter that we are all made of: nature should not therefore be separate from culture, given that this conceptual separation comes as a result of the masculine subject denying his natural origins.⁴⁵⁷

The cyborgian feminine other that recalls the trace of another woman or the maternal can be seen in Björk as an allegory for a primary mother or matrix, a Mother Nature action or gesture whose *jouissance* has been suppressed (Mother Nature as an embodied representation of nature in the form of a mother that encompasses all her

life-giving and nurturing features). The spectral voice enables a rapport with a symbolic Mother Nature (viewed as society's Other), which comes back as haunting surplus and listening experience in the song. The listener, in turn, is able to partake in a relation with that 'which gives and renews life', in an Irigarayan sense the 'maternal-natural-material'.⁴⁵⁸ This cyborgian feminine speaks of sexualisation in nature and new alliances across the human/animal/technology boundaries, and it also redefines the hierarchical association of women with nature and men with the technological. The vocal trace of this cyborgian spectrality is conveyed in 'Storm' through mysteriousness, a sensation of incommensurability, and an enigmatic spirituality connected with the organic and the natural world (and to strengthen this effect the haunting voice is placed over the digitally generated fantasy of a 'natural' soundscape). Björk's cyborgian spectre proposes therefore a rapport or relationship with a different other, cast as natural-maternal-feminine, that evokes the trace of a Mother Nature action whose power has been suppressed by culture. In Haraway's theory, the cyborg myth does not depend on a unitary origin and claims to draw its power from the idea of strategic subjectivities which, as we have seen, assembles sexual undifferentiated bodies that dissolve into neutrality, as a kind of liberation from embodiment (which can potentially have the opposite effect and reinstate binary oppositions). Conversely, my reading of the haunting surplus in Björk's performance highlights the 'difference' of the cyborgian feminine other that returns as embodied transgression, as well as the 'difference' of a Mother Nature as the trace of the Other. Rather than proposing here to revisit the idea of a hierarchical opposition and to perpetuate women's pointed association with nature, Björk's performance suggests a reconceptualisation of the cyborgian otherness, in a way that the metaphor continues to break dichotomous boundaries, but promotes also a different relation with nature

and encourages a dialectical and more ethical relationship – a rapport – with the feminine other and the natural-maternal.

The feminine and its relationship with nature and the organic in Björk's 'Storm' can then be seen under a different prism: linked to a more fluid feminist understanding of the representation of nature, less dichotomous and hence shifting away from androcentricism; it can be seen as a challenge to men's *second nature* and the hierarchical male perspective of gender identity vis-à-vis nature.⁴⁵⁹ In this way, what technology and male power metaphorically aim to 'dominate' in the song is destabilized by the presence of the cyborgian feminine other and thence Björk's haunting voice breaking through the 'storm' and drenching the natural space with her singing, in a similar way to how the seawater and rain inundate the aural world of the musical soundscape. Björk envisions the storm as something unfathomable, be it feminine or natural, yet something familiar, albeit unknown; it is something which may be revealed to have its own agency, potentially able to rebel against human systems of control. The artist's vocals piercing the soundscape contain this familiar uncanniness; the voice is measured by its responsiveness to nature and the external surroundings that encompass the natural elements and produce the haunting experience. The unrestrained force of the storm in the song never seems fully detached from Björk's voice and thus the trace of the spectral other – the vocal surplus – emerges as if to inscribe new meanings into the soundscape.

Privileging the Organic over the Technological

Björk's articulation of her energetic howls with the use of head voice suggests expansiveness, reaching beyond, given that her voice is projected and lingers across

the stormy spaces of ocean immensity. To enhance this effect, her wails are subtly echoed with the help of reverb digital sound; occasional saturations interspersing the cries add realism to an unsettling combination of voice singing against a tempestuous digital environment; the saturations additionally serve as markers for the re-emergence of the artist's voice. Her powerful howls (no lyrics are discernible) produce the effect of coming from animal life, especially when she lets out a – characteristically Björk-esque – harsh loud throaty articulation. Despite the oceanic setting, the long-drawn cries would seem to resemble the doleful howls of land creatures rather than sea mammals. 'Storm' comes in the film at the climactic moment that heralds the film's traumatic 'birthing process' and thus Björk's angst-ridden moans emerge as if to presage and express this transformation: whales resulting from the metamorphosis of human bodies into cetaceans elicit reference to the feminine, women's natural cycles, and childbirth screams associated with female bodies (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 4 'Storm'). The cyborgian feminine other comes into focus as an intensely cultural experience from Björk's embodied vocals, as well as the listener's association of the sounds with bodily disturbance (organic transformation), and to this effect the film's narrative depicts the birthing fantasy as a blood gushing flensing, even if in a highly stylised sequence. Björk's wails evoke both the pain and the pleasure resulting from 'natural' processes and suggest an uncanny (musical) sublimity that may figuratively be linked to nature's sublime rules.

Björk's vocals in 'Storm' retrieve in this sense a primal or instinctual link to nature, located figuratively as the anticipation of a horrific metamorphosis, but also functioning as a metaphor for the rebirth of that same nature. The organic is

privileged over the technological both through the listening experience and the visuals. Within the film's symbolic economy, Björk's haunting voice emerges as if to construct the 'script' for some of the images; the voice figures intensely (despite and because of the metamorphosis), and is seen to function as a kind of catalyst for the film's denouement. The actual sequence of the flensing resembles Noh theatre, the traditional Japanese drama that evolves from Shinto rites, and involves dance and song (please, refer to DVD musical videos, chapter 4 'Storm'). The lovers engage in a ritualistic dance while slicing the skin of each other's lower limbs; the scene is accompanied by the Noh score and vocal performance of Shiro Nomura ('Holographic Entrypoint' from the *Drawing Restraint 9* album). The shooting captures images of straight incisions and streams of blood floating in liquid that bear associations with female genitalia and childbirth (Björk's canticle in 'Cetacea', the song that follows the flensing, avows the rebirth: 'From the moment of commitment, nature conspires to help you') (see figure 20). Thus, the cyborgian metaphor hints at the human/animal bodily transgression projected in the metamorphosis together with the technological set-up of electronic synthesized music and voice arranged in songs like 'Storm' (which does not undermine the centrality of the organic).

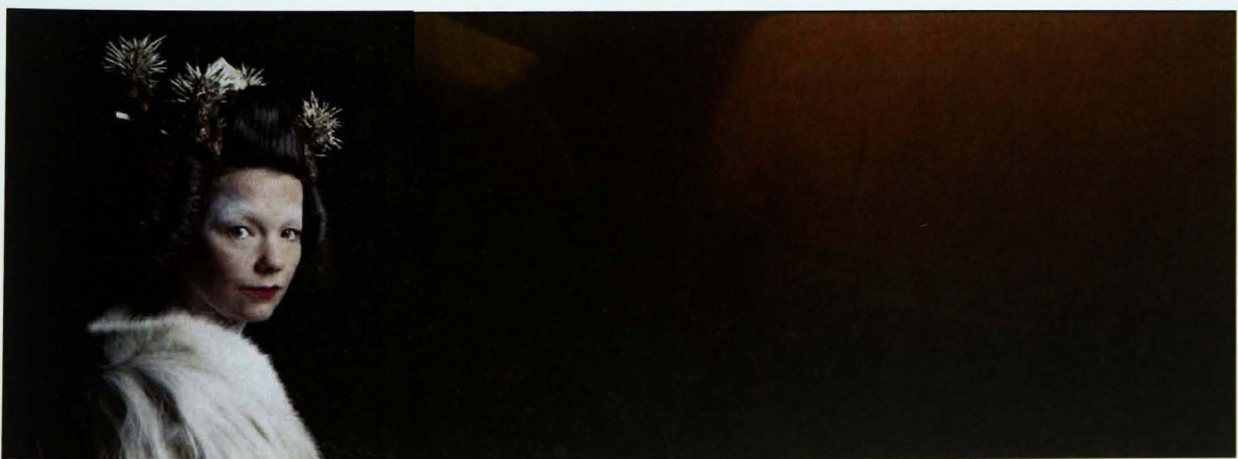


Figure 20: Björk in Shinto costume and incisions, film still. *Drawing Restraint 9*

Merged with electronica, the haunting surplus in 'Storm' as cyborgian feminine other, blurring the distinction between human and animal howl on the one hand, and that between human and technological sound, on the other, can thus be read as situated at the liminal space between the organic and inorganic. Björk's haunting voice appears to operate in 'Storm' as a signifier for a narrative thread that unites opposites and heals the rupture between technology and nature, the human and the animal, and electronics and voice. To visualize this new alliance, the closing of 'Storm' follows the final attempt at radio connection; after an intense saturation that turns into a grainy or gritty texture – like seawater filtering through a pebbly shore – the song finishes in a calm and serene mood, with the clear, smooth sound of big ocean waves breaking.

The Sublime and the Threshold Crossing as Fantasy Space

Björk's *Drawing Restraint 9* music appears in some sense to provide the dialogue for the film's visuals; yet the meanings ascribed to 'Storm' are being explored primarily beyond the cinematic images. The song's atmospheric mood and the replication of 'realistic' sounds of nature lend themselves to an independent reactivation of the gaze.⁴⁶⁰ We may refer here to the aesthetics of mimesis, still active within modern artistic representation. Broadly speaking, the theorising of mimesis embraces the idea of a 'correspondence between mimetic works, activities, or performances and their putative real-world equivalents': the equivalents may be externally given or fabricated projections stemming from the works themselves.⁴⁶¹ Mimesis can therefore be thought of as the necessity to explore and come to terms with the world through

various means of depictive and expressive representation, and implies 'the artistic construction of, and gazing toward imaginary horizons'.⁴⁶²

Björk's artistic project to explore the natural world and engage with nature through musical/vocal performance in works like 'Storm', as well as other songs such as 'Oceania' or 'Jòga', can be thought of in terms of the aesthetics of mimesis; her musical representation may be understood as the construction of her own aural world and gaze toward an imaginary horizon, not so much in terms of its resemblance to nature, but as a hypothetical, fabricated equivalent. With regard to the listening experience, 'Storm's' depicting of a 'real storm' is understood as a mere projection of the world of nature and implies therefore an artistic construction, a gaze towards an imaginary nature. This gaze aims to replicate a large and sublime object, product of the imagination, with the effect of shortening the distance between what can be conceived and what can be represented. Since the imagination figures here a natural phenomenon difficult to figure in its immensity in terms of reason, the music (in particular the vocal performance) strives to re-create the extreme tension that characterizes the sublime. 'Storm' conveys an extreme emotional intensity, a wildness linked to a strong sense of pain and impending death, as well as a pleasure derived from feelings of fascination. Björk's depiction of a mighty storm pierced by loud wails in the night may be associated at an unconscious level with a painful situation, which affects the body and the soul, and the two influence each other generating feelings of sublimity, of danger mixed with pleasure whereby the listener stands in eager 'suspension', as if experiencing an external anxiety.⁴⁶³

Björk's vocal articulacy and change of registers bestow this uncanny, eerie quality on the listening, which can also be associated with *threshold crossing* structures produced in the sonorous envelope when listening to the music as fantasy space. Her obsessive repetition of wailing cries evokes a different temporality and this reiteration, according to Schwarz, marks a moment of *threshold crossing*. He indicates that the musical narrative represents a sonorous fantasy of crossing and re-crossing the threshold that separates language and pre-linguistic sound.⁴⁶⁴ In 'Storm', since no language is discernible, threshold crossing alludes to the fantasies of pre-symbolic vocal sounds traversing digital sound (especially where the saturations mark the re-emergence of the voice). This takes us to the first voice of the mother as archaic oceanic fantasy vis-à-vis an aesthetics of haunting within the music.

The haunting (vocal) surplus is connected with uncanny feelings of unknown nature that emerge as something familiar (das *Heimliche*): the natural-maternal that surfaces as spectral cyborgian feminine other. The spectre is conjured up in Björk's striking howls and experienced as a return that recurs at intervals, suggesting a replay trapped within the sonorous envelope. The listener is transported to a different type of temporality, whilst Björk's voice mediates between the organic and digital environments (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 4 'Storm'). At the same time, the sequence of wails evokes a child's (or perhaps cetacean's) cries generated as a result of the traumatic separation from the mother at the time of birth, or figuratively in the film as a trauma from the strange birthing process. Repetition in 'Storm' can be seen as compulsive revisitation of the site of trauma in a way that can never be complete; it may also be interpreted as a continuous return to the touch and sound of the mother in the sonorous envelope.⁴⁶⁵

Maternal *Jouissance* in Terms of Kristeva's Semiotic and Symbolic Threshold Crossing

Instead of the dissection of nature as a prelude to its reconstruction according to masculine ideals of order, what we encounter in 'Storm' is a subversive all-enveloping nature imagined through the body of the female artist. Björk's howls and the imagined body of the singer are uncannily associated with the 'mothering' of animal birth, and thus 'Storm' seems in this sense to allude to the link between the birthing process and feminine artistic creativity (in line also with the core proposal of the film to provide an allegory for the creation of art). Ian Biddle has pointed out that in our (male) culture creativity has been characterised as something tainted by the 'feminine', which has been figured as a 'bodily disturbance' or an acute state of the 'bodily' that threatens to undermine masculine identity.⁴⁶⁶ As we have seen, the cyborgian feminine other in 'Storm' imagined as bodily disturbance is aesthetically associated with a sublime pleasure that is painful and is connected with the symbolic birthing process; it is culturally linked to a bodily transgression through reference to the metamorphosis. It is thus both figured as embodied, a (female) voice that 'articulates' a natural process, and also operates as a metaphor for the creative process. From a contemporary perspective, feminine artistic creativity may enable a shoring up of feminine identity, although it can also problematize claims to stable identities.

Following Julia Kristeva, artistic creativity can be examined vis-à-vis maternal *jouissance*, in a way that allows the artist to identify with the mother and artistic production to generate *jouissance* that traverses the sign and the object.⁴⁶⁷ Depending

on the artistic work and time, the *jouissance* may be said to work its way differently into the social. Kristeva theorises that the maternal body is the place of a splitting insofar it is destined to ensure the reproduction of the species and therefore functions – under the sway of the paternal/symbolic – as a ‘*filter*’, a passage or ‘thoroughfare, a threshold where “nature” confronts “culture”’.⁴⁶⁸ Through the desire to bear a child (of the father), motherhood appears to be driven by a nonsymbolic, nonpaternal causality that evokes the biological destiny of each differentiated sex. This is seen as a kind of impulse, an unrepresentable, prelinguistic memory that belongs to the species, which contain a series of markers with no other significance than the eternal return of the life-death biological cycle. It implies, according to Kristeva, an excursion to the limits of primal regression, which for a woman is possible to experience as ‘the reunion of a woman-mother with the body of *her* mother’ in what she calls ‘*the homosexual-maternal facet*’.⁴⁶⁹ This *facet* is just the feeling, displacement, rhythm, sound, flashes and fantasies that adhere to the maternal body ‘as a screen against the plunge’ (the primal repression). Speaking beings, and henceforth women, attain the practice of ‘art’ through the threshold of language and instinctual drive, and through the split symbolization that marks the threshold of the ‘symbolic’ and the ‘semiotic’, aspects also implicated in the act of giving birth.⁴⁷⁰

For Kristeva the language of art enfolds a form of maternal *jouissance* and takes place at the moment of primal repression, as a sublimation within the mother’s body; it is located at ‘the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic’.⁴⁷¹ Kristeva’s theory suggests that the symbolic is formed through the repression and sublimation of the semiotic; and the semiotic, which precedes and exceeds the symbolic, provides the energetic force, the ‘raw material’,

for the latter to exist, thus overflowing and problematizing the boundaries of the symbolic.⁴⁷² Although Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic are dichotomously formulated from within the framework of masculine discourse (psychoanalysis), her valorisation of the semiotic – defined vis-à-vis the maternal and the unregulated body – provides the site and prop for disrupting meaning and transgressing the conventions of the patriarchal symbolic.

Björk's voice, together with the musical evocations delineated in 'Storm', would take us to a point of semiotic disruption where coherent meaning is destabilized. The association of her singing voice with birth and mothers' labour suggests feeling, bodily disturbance, flashes, disorder and fantasy channelled through the musical sound and Björk's bursting vocal articulations (the filmed images of the metamorphosis could point toward the precarious bodily and identity boundaries that mark out the abject in cultural representation). The haunting surplus emerges at the intersection of the semiotic and symbolic, and it overflows the symbolic as transgression, marking another threshold crossing. The artist's identification with woman-mother lodges into the musical language her own specific *jouissance* (which is then transmitted to the listeners) as evidence of the clashes recorded in her unconscious between the biological and the social.⁴⁷³ Björk would seem to be retrieving an unrepresentable, prelinguistic memory, filled with sound and voice, and a primal, natural rhythm, which is driven by an impulse that signifies the return to the life-death cycle (the pre-symbolic sound in the sonorous envelope). The maternal body is imagined alongside the fantasy of a disturbing symbolic transmutation of life and death, of human demise and animal survival. This uncanny semiotic maternal is

located in Björk's 'Storm' at the limits of symbolic intelligibility: a point imagined as a passage from nature to nature, rather than the 'thoroughfare' from nature to culture.

Björk and the Spiritualization of Nature

Björk's artistic creativity seems thus to involve maternal *jouissance* as sublimation within the mother's body, as well as manifestation of the semiotic as 'feminine/bodily' transgression upon the symbolic. It captures the unarticulated *jouissance* of semiotic impulses and makes explicit the way *jouissance* as a 'mother-nature' action may work its way into the social. Indeed, the relationship between artistic creativity and nature emerges as inspiration in some of Björk's musical themes, illustrated in the subject matter of some of her videos. In 'Jòga', the mother action is shaped through the Icelandic natural landscape, which is literally made flesh, bestowed with heart and veins from the inner workings of nature's volcanic activity; the mother earth's body is equated with the artist's own body ('[...] Every nerve that hurts, You heal, Deep inside of me, [...] I feel'). Björk's music suggests immensity and her voice would seem to metaphorically tremble and break out like the earth in the filmed images, inscribing new meaning into the symbolic.

'Oceania' illustrates a similar figuration inasmuch as Björk's body takes material form as an oceanic enveloping mother, which is featured in the lyrics as first person; all musical accompaniment is generated by a chorus of human voices that performs the 'sons and daughters' – the sea creatures dancing by the side of her sweet salty waters ('[...] Made into flesh, You dance by my side, Children sublime'). The maternal *jouissance* as musical sublimation is channelled through the artist's voice as 'Mother Oceania', as well as her exclusively choral arrangement of 'organic' human

voices. Björk's symbolic 'embodiment of nature' stretches again on this occasion the limits of signification, perhaps to disrupt that same signification, and to imply that all living beings form part of the matrix of nature. Thus, her imagery intimates the centrality of the mother's body and her *jouissance* when crossing the threshold between the semiotic and symbolic and alludes as a result to another transgression in the nature/culture boundary.

Yet, Björk's engagement with nature and culture in her work can be best interpreted from the Irigarayan perspective of the cultivation of nature, which implies leaving behind the idea that culture is a 'creation of humans as disembodied minds or language users'.⁴⁷⁴ Culture corresponds to cultivated nature in the sense of a refinement or perfection of living nature, an endeavour that is only possible because of bodily existence and natural capacities. According to Burke, for Irigaray it is not enough to say that 'culture is part of nature', as this mistakenly implies that nature can be reduced to culture. Irigaray proposes a 'true spiritualization of nature', which is equivalent to the cultivation of nature: a spiritualization of living nature and the natural during life, whose starting point begins with the natural and then 'moves to transform, modify, cultivate and spiritualize it. Spirit does not have to leave the body to be spirit; spirit is a spiritualization of the body'.⁴⁷⁵ Björk would seem to call on this spirit in her musical performances; her haunting vocals in 'Storm' act as the vehicle to begin a cultivation of the natural and to spiritualize it. The listener experiences something akin to a *preternatural* spectre: a voice that exceeds what is natural – an unearthly *excess* – that is nonetheless intimately tied to nature through the connection of the voice to its female body-source.

Conclusion

The invocation of spectrality as intimated in both Amos's 'Raining Blood' and Björk's 'Storm' has enabled an interpretation of their songs which connects feminine identity, embodiment and vocal and musical performance with cultural signification. We have seen how the Derridean idea of haunting and spectrality can be used for feminine ends if the notion of sexual identity is maintained and attached to the spectral other, a conceptualisation possible by turning to Irigaray's model of sexual difference and her articulation of a culture in the feminine. The gothicised feminine other in Amos suggested a sense of dark sensibility and uncanniness which emerged in the artist's transformation of a explicitly masculine hard-core bewildering musical sound, whereas Björk invoked a cyborgian feminine other that has the power to transgress a number of dichotomous boundaries. The way both the Gothic and the Cyborg have been fashioned in the (dominant, masculine) cultural imagination reproduces traditional gender stereotypes and binarisms of dichotomous thinking. Thus our engagement with these cultural figurations in Amos's and Björk's songs has aimed to conceptualise both the gothicised and cyborgian otherness in gender terms and expose their radical imagery, refashioned as cultural representation in the artists' vocal and musical performances.

Although each example embeds a set of meanings specific to Amos's and Björk's individual aesthetic vision, a cultural and aesthetic link between the songs has been established by way of connecting their haunting voices with the trace of a spectral feminine other that returns in the musical performance: this figuration has also been

associated with a 'dialogue' or rapport with a natural-maternal-feminine in an Irigarayan sense. The ethereal, 'suspended' and eerie qualities of spectrality depicted in their engagement with an aesthetics of haunting in the songs have been interpreted in terms of theories of the uncanny, the sublime and the sonorous envelope as fantasy space. Vocal uncanniness evoked familiarity, rather than unfamiliarity, inasmuch as the listener's imagination of the body source of the haunting surplus was intimately connected with the artist's embodied voices. Cultural signification attached to the performances relates to the breakdown of boundaries and a challenge to traditional hierarchical thinking and to male stereotypical representations of the feminine; the performances suggest increased connectivity in relation to the feminine, as well as nature and the maternal.

Each artist creates her own intimate aural worlds, rich in symbolism, suggested through the use of reverb and haunting vocals that create a sonorous envelope evoking an archaic fantasy of listening as space. In both examples, rain gives way to a new beginning and an association with rebirth. Rain turned into blood signalled in Amos a spiritual or transcendental rebirth linked to an intangible and cosmic gothicised feminine body. Her radical reworking of a hard core metal song can be seen as an example in which the artist re-sexes herself into a position of creative agency: as a strategy to return to a musical (self) representation that expresses the woman artist's subtle eroticism and desire. Rain as natural element in Björk's 'Storm' indicated the regeneration of nature as manifestation of the cycles of life and death. We can see that in both songs the passage from death to life can mean reintegration of one mode of being with another better mode, since 'rebirth' was in 'Storm' associated with the interrelation amongst living beings, envisioned as a sense of cultivating or

spiritualizing nature in a conscious manner, while in Amos's 'Raining Blood' feminine spirit dissipated any association of women with the carnal. Björk's cyborgian feminine other acted as a catalyst for the dissolution of boundaries between the organic, nature and the technological, and for a symbolic transformation and regeneration of the carnal. The feminine in 'Storm' was seen as closer to nature, yet not in a reductive *essentialist* sense, but as a way to challenge hierarchies and raise consciousness regarding the archaic binarism of women and their association with nature. By ascribing a regenerative character to the spectral other, both artists reclaim embodiment and invalidate at the same time women's pointed association with the carnal.

Finally, through the symbolic association with some of Irigaray's images, Amos and Björk find therefore a space to become the subjects of culture and producers of their own representation; they give symbolic expression to the feminine, in spite of the difficulty for the woman to move (figuratively) beyond 'the cavern' without being deprived of herself. Feminine spectrality fills the darkness of the cavern, a location from which a 'return' is possible, expressed in a way that may have not yet been dazzled by the illumination outside the cavern, that is, by the 'light' of the symbolic world. Regardless of whether the haunting voice is visualized in the music as a dark interior or exterior space, the voices of Amos and Björk reverberate in a 'suspended' infinitude across imagined rainy and stormy soundscapes. A shift of focus to spectrality in these examples enables the articulation of auditory (maternal) *jouissance*. The vocal/musical strategies used by Amos and Björk to let the spectre be heard point to the recovery of a more relational, ethical model, in which the feminine haunting voice as trace of the other comes into view as a 'presence' and her voice is

allowed to be heard. The feminine *jouissance* is conveyed to the audience as ‘sublime listening’ and it thus generates a response to the other, or others that haunt our thinking and listening experiences.

Chapter 5

AVANT-GARDE VOCAL PERFORMANCE: THE PRIMAL CRY AND THE DISRUPTION OF LANGUAGE

This chapter aims to explore some of the meanings attached to the voice in avant-garde performance looking as a case study at Diamanda Galás's *Schrei 27* from her album *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* (1996). The work is an interesting example where Galás's versatile voice is used in combination with audio technology to generate complex hybrid vocal emissions at an extreme of the avant-garde. Avant-garde performance is a lesser known genre and also considerably less popular, inasmuch as practitioners attempt to break new ground in their innovative use of established musical forms, as well as in the creation of new ones. The unusual and unconventional deployment of the voice in avant-garde performance implies that there is not an immediate or easily recognisable musical referent for the listener; hence the meanings of avant-garde vocalisations can be perceived as too abstract, or incomprehensible to the point of falling outside of signification. The voice has a leading role in these performances, as it becomes the means of expression and the vehicle to transmit an intended message or emotion. Avant-garde artists are usually trained in several vocal techniques and possess a store of vocal resources at their disposal to create new languages and construct their own musical discourse. I am especially interested here in the vocalisation, language and musical discourse of women artists who have chosen to step into the avant-garde as a way to express their artistic and aesthetic ideas. My attention is also drawn to the fact that, rather than 'entertain' an audience, artists who

engage in avant-garde performance aim to enlarge the level of perception of the listener and to encourage more plural types of listening. Galás's *Schrei 27* is an example of a performance that does not rely on an aesthetically pleasurable emotion vis-à-vis the likes and dislikes of the listener. It incites the listener to a deeper level of reflection upon a particular concept or message through which the artist constructs a different musical discourse. As we shall see, my reading of Galás's *Schrei 27* will associate her performance with a discourse on feminine abjection.

Artists such as Meredith Monk, Joan La Barbara, Fátima Miranda and Diamanda Galás, amongst others, are considered to be 'avant-garde' performers. Although the term in itself is problematical – as is the idea of a single avant-garde – the rubric is adopted here as an umbrella term to contextualise Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* within a group of performances and artists who share certain interrelated aspects and meanings. The term should not therefore be seen to homogenise and dissolve the differences in individual style and performance that emerge in each artist's work. Depending on the artists' trajectory and creativity, certain vocal forms and techniques will be favoured in their compositions and performances, and yet a shared feature in their work is the stretching of the possibilities of the voice as a prime instrument. Some of the vocal techniques employed in these performances are product of the artists' own creativity, whilst others are learned from specific traditions. Avant-garde artists specialise in the 'extended voice' or extended vocal techniques, as well as multiphonics, ululation, glottal clicks, and are also often trained in bel canto; yet the aim is not to designate bel canto as more important than other forms of singing. Bel canto training in this context responds to an interest in expanding the possibilities that

the voice offers as a medium and as a vector, in order to synthesise the artists' vocal resources and transmit an individual aesthetic vision.

Galás's operatic training, for example, is used as an extra resource to develop an artistic concept of the voice that is quasi-liturgical and political; she also uses microphone technology to extend the power of her screams; her idea was to train the vocal chords to create an '*übertechnik*', a superhuman instrument, which serves as a medium for the soul and a channel to speak of human limitation.⁴⁷⁶ Miranda's vocal resources include bel canto and she specialises in many other voices, among which are Indian *Dhrupad* singing, Iranian *Tahrir*, Eastern and Western yodels and Tibetan throat singing. Miranda combines these and other vocal techniques to produce a unique sound, which, as already mentioned, she identifies as *poesía sonora* [sonorous poetry] or *poesía fonética* [phonetic poetry].⁴⁷⁷ Her interest lies in recuperating the concept of singing as an activity she deems older than music, and sees her work closely connecting the ancestral with the contemporaneous and the popular with the cultured. Meredith Monk and Joan La Barbara are on the whole considered to have led the way in the creation and opening out of extended vocal techniques, in particular through their involvement in the performance art and experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s. Their work has also influenced artists like Björk, who was specifically inspired by Meredith Monk's composition *Dolmen Music* (1979), a piece composed for a vocal ensemble and intended to expand the forms and textures of music and the voice.⁴⁷⁸

Avant-garde women artists, therefore, already have a well-developed and structured body of work in which vocal techniques are not used randomly; their vocal

performance is carefully composed and rehearsed so as to generate a committed response, and to encourage the audience to engage with other modes of singing. In this sense, their work cannot be labelled as improvisation, nor can it be considered experimental (even if this forms the basis of extended vocal techniques). Avant-garde vocal performance rises above improvisation and experimentation because the artists succeed in constructing a broader language that does not narrowly remain in experimentation.⁴⁷⁹

The mastery of vocal techniques constitutes the basis for the creation of a wide-ranging type of unconventional vocal articulation, which can go from animal-like sounds, disturbing verbal utterances and speech disruption to cutting-edge melodies and vocal deliveries where carefully crafted sounds – stripped of lyrics or text – are given pre-eminence. To give a comprehensive account of the richness and complexity surrounding these performances is beyond the scope of this introduction. Neither is it possible to begin to sketch the multiplicity of meanings attached to some of the musical languages developed by avant-garde artists. I would like however to look at two aspects embedded in a number of avant-garde works pertinent to my reading of Galás's *Schrei* 27. First, a connection can be found or argued for between the unorthodox, yet impressive, vocal sounds of some avant-garde performances and a pre-syntactical function of language by way of the semiotic/psychoanalytic theory on 'the primal cry'. This pertains to unconventional powerful vocal sounds that contain no text and can be seen as autonomous from other known musical forms; the listener encounters the bare nakedness of a wail, howl, scream or moan. The sound is experienced as something that brings associations to some imagined origin or pre-verbal stage when the voice still had the status of non-meaning. The association of

avant-garde voices with a primal cry is tenable precisely in the absence of an immediate referent that inscribes the voice with signification; in principle, the listener is drawn to an experience where the voice surges in its pure 'phonic materiality', in an analogous way to the cry prior to entering the signifying order.

There is in this sense an interest on the part of avant-garde performers in communicating with the audience on a pre-verbal level, whereby the voice is used as vocal instrument to connect emotionally without words on a deeper level.⁴⁸⁰ There is also an interest in reclaiming orality, and returning to some original moment or oral tradition when songs purportedly fulfilled an organic, unrestrained and uninhibited function, which, Miranda suggests, was then to be lost when music was appropriated for certain purposes or elites.⁴⁸¹ At the same time as a link to origins and the pre-verbal can be established, avant-garde vocal sounds (as well as other sounds in musical performances) are nonetheless already inserted in a signifying system, given that they cannot be detached from the cultural traces already inscribed in the listener; thus, new signification will also be constructed as a result of the listener's reception of the work. Avant-garde sound cannot possibly cease to assume its status of signifier, and it is for this reason that the kind of nothingness, or rather musicality, that precedes the signifying function of language and symbol is only evocatively captured in these performances.

This leads to the second (related) aspect central to my reading of avant-garde performance with a focus on Galás's *Schrei 27*: the need to look at extreme vocalisation as staged primal music and a pre-verbal language not only from the dynamics of signification, but, also, from a gendered perspective, since avant-garde

vocal performance is generated within a masculine culture that marginalises this type of cultural production, as well as women. There is therefore a need to examine the meanings of avant-garde performances in connection with the position of the female artist as subject of culture. At the time of producing a highly individual sound, the subject will encounter a tension that stems from the interactions between her subjective experience on the one hand and established values and ideals, and hence the norm (or the logic of systematization), on the other. We have seen in chapter one how the location of avant-garde women at the margins of culture was intimately connected with the place given to woman in the cultural imaginary. The exclusion of women from the symbolic order has prevented them from becoming 'a subject' in their own right; the way to enter the symbolic is then as a male, but this implies that their representation and voices are subjected to the masculine symbolic. Women vocal performers who engage with the avant-garde are placed in the doubly marginal position of being women and avant-garde, and yet this space offers a potential ground for subversion, as well as a basis of empowerment and legitimation of their female subject position. Their double location on the fringes enables them to challenge the centre by articulating and authorising their subject 'I' of enunciation, whilst staging a performance that aims to disrupt privileged structures of power. This allows them a subject position in discourse and culture from which to let their voices be heard, and counteract the restrictions of the masculine symbolic.⁴⁸²

Schrei X/ Schrei 27 represents an example in which Galás as subject of avant-garde performance occupies this double marginal position, which she uses to challenge atomistic values and de-centre the patriarchal system; her position as 'totally avant-garde' gives the artist an avenue for self-legitimation. As we shall see, Galás's

unorthodox vocality becomes a means of subversion: her voice in the performance turns into a vehicle through which to disrupt the masculine symbolic and transmit a specific artistic vision and message. In order to explore the gendered meanings of *Schrei 27*, the chapter engages primarily with Kristeva's model of the signifying practice and her concept of abjection, which will be employed for the reading of Galás's extreme vocal emissions. Irigaray's critique of the psychoanalytic account of women's primary identifications and expression of desire will provide relevant insights to understand the meanings ascribed to Galás's extreme vocalisation vis-à-vis her position as a subject of avant-garde performance. The concept of sexual difference will be implicit throughout the reading, even if Kristeva, unlike Irigaray, does not assume the notion of embodied sexuate subjects, and understands sexual difference as stemming from the subject's relation to the mother. Irigaray's model of speech has been instrumental in arguing for a specific female subject position in women vocal performers and thus this also applies to *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*, an album where Galás assumes a feminine 'I' of enunciation (a *parler-femme* of the performance), whose vocal work will be associated with the manifestation of feminine abjection.

On the one hand, and as intimated in chapter one, Kristeva's model of signifying practice sees avant-garde writing as an example of language that contains multiple semiotic maternal and pre-verbal manifestations. She develops the concept of the 'subject in process', which is not grounded in embodied sexual subjects, but implies that the subject is involved in a dynamic process between the semiotic, associated with the pre-verbal and the maternal, and the symbolic, associated with systematization.⁴⁸³ Irigaray, on the other hand, assumes a female imaginary and

subjectivity, and proposes the development of distinct feminine and masculine cultures and a relationship between the two; her model can be seen to aim at transforming the symbolic order and to clear the tensions that result from the interactions of women with the logic of systematization in the masculine symbolic.

Semiotics of Voice: the Primal Cry

The voice is located within psychoanalytic theory at the site of primary divisions or 'splittings' of the subject when it enters the symbolic order.⁴⁸⁴ Kaja Silverman discusses in Lacanian terms the importance of these 'splittings': they represent necessary processes by which the subject forms its identity, and they are essential stages in subject formation, standing for the traumatic moment at which the child begins to perceive a distance between the self and (m)Other. They occupy an important role in the structuring of the subject, since from the earlier stages of development the child will need to expel or leave behind objects associated with the maternal, prior to his/her realisation as a separated symbolically-articulated being. The separation from the objects is experienced as castration, and can be traumatic when their suppression exposes the subject's lack. Within Lacanian theory, the objects (*objets petits autres*) are introjected or absorbed into the subject and thus retain their 'aura' of presence even after they have been expelled from the body, which means that the object (*objet a* or *objet petit a*) serves as a symbol of the lack and acquires the value of 'that without which the subject can never be whole or complete, and for which it consequently yearns'.⁴⁸⁵ Lacanian psychoanalysis's emphasis on the inter-subjective function of language bears similarities with object-relations theory, although Lacan is expressly opposed to this theory: Lacan considers that object-relations theory confuses the object of psychoanalysis and the object of

biology, and presents the possibility of a perfectly satisfying relation between the subject and the object in which the dimension of desire – yearning for the object – is neglected. He also believes that the theory shifts the emphasis away from the centrality of the Oedipal triangle (and hence the importance of the father) onto a symmetrical and reciprocal relation between the mother and child.⁴⁸⁶

The voice is considered one of these lost objects in the psychoanalytic model, and it has also been discussed in relation to an additional number of properties attached to it. Michel Poizat indicates that the way the voice is elaborated as an object (vocal object) ‘dialecticizes an entire relationship with the Other, with the desire of the Other’.⁴⁸⁷ This is explicated by the way the child’s whole relationship with the (m)Other, as well as language, is set up around the following axioms: the child in a presumed ‘original’ situation emits a ‘first’ or primal cry which is linked to some sort of internal displeasure or need which is answered by the (m)Other (mother). This ‘first’ hypothetical cry does not carry specific meaning, as it is the mother that attributes an interpretation of the baby’s hunger, thirst or discomfort and therefore it is inscribed into the mother’s own desire. The child will later associate this object (the vocal object or object voice) to its first *jouissance* either from its own voice or that of the mother. Yet, in a second phase, Poizat continues, the cry emitted by the child is no longer a simple vocalisation since it has now been inserted into a network of meanings marked by the dialectic of the Other’s desire (it raises it to the status of a demand, i.e., What does my baby want?). The cry as pure ‘phonic materiality’ is lost when the Other inscribes the cry in the signifying order and hence stops considering it as a pure, gratuitous vocal emission. Thus, from the point of view of its signification, the cry for Poizat has a divisive effect since ‘the sound assumes the status of

signifier', leaving behind something useless, meaningless ('the skeletal remains of the phonic materiality' of the voice); in other words, it leaves behind the lost object which Lacan designated as a residue, the *objet petit a*, given its lack of meaning.⁴⁸⁸

Since the voice is established as a (lost) object, it is easier to understand how the 'phonic materiality' of the voice becomes lost behind signification; that is to say, the phonic aspect disappears behind the utterance once this has been emitted. This seems to be concomitant with what Madlen Dolar has referred to as phonology's murdering of the voice, even though Dolar also notes how the lost phonic voice can disturbingly reappear as the signifier in Lacan's graph of desire, despite having supposedly been 'killed'.⁴⁸⁹ Basing his analysis on Lacanian theory, Dolar argues that the voice is the remnant of the phonological operation, which could be neither reduced nor entirely dissolved; nor could it even be viewed as an attractive sonic quality that would escape the phonological operation. The voice would be the object in the Lacanian sense (*objet a*) and its reduction to all its 'positivity' is what produces the voice as object or object voice (what Poizat calls the 'vocal object'). Dolar maintains that the voice is not a function of the signifier, since 'it presents precisely a non-signifying remainder, something resistant to signifying operations', which corresponds to a heterogeneous leftover, a remnant, which has nothing to do with 'some irreducible individuality of the voice'.⁴⁹⁰ This might seem to support a further reading that the voice could be something more like a lumpen signified, the 'meaning' that does not mean – as a theory of how non-meaning affects meaning processes. For Dolar, however, the object voice is a residue, a remnant (or what Slavoj Žižek has termed an 'indivisible remainder'⁴⁹¹) that has an uncanny quality and which, since it cannot be assimilated, one can never fully grasp, even if it can temporarily be 'glimpsed' or gestured at by

theory, or evoked somehow by pushing the voice to its semantic limits (as in the extreme vocalisations of Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*).

The Return to the Maternal in Avant-Garde Vocal Performance

We have seen how avant-garde women artists can be seen to form a double allegiance with both the cultural aspirations of historical avant-gardes and the feminist critique of dominant sexual ideology. First, the allegiance with the historical avant-gardes is felt in the inverted logic that operates in the dynamics of signification in avant-garde vocal performance. Extreme performances display pre-linguistic vocalisations and archaic features of language, whilst still remaining a system that partakes of the signifying process. Sometimes, word-like sounds or words used as pure objects, divorced from syntax, emerge in avant-garde performances, as in the case of Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*. Other times, a 'phonetic poem' that dislocates speech is created by means of a well-crafted and precise polyrhythm, as in the case of Miranda's deconstruction of wives' talk in 'RePercusiones' (*ArteSonado*, 2000) and 'In Principio' (*Las Voces de la Voz*, 1992).⁴⁹²

In these performances, language is disrupted to the status of non-meaning; it emerges as nonsensical utterances or gibberish, stripped of music, in such a way that it escapes the logic of systematization of the symbolic. Since avant-garde performance directly mobilises the emotions and passions of a primal music, and a primal cry, the sounds and rhythms, rather than language, dominate meaning. Thus, the deconstruction of language within these works bears witness to an inverted logic in the dynamics of signification. This does not in principle depart from what the historical avant-gardes were after, in particular the Symbolists, and hence the disruption of language within

these performances endorses the allegiance of avant-garde women with the proposals put forward by their male predecessors; yet, the significant aspect here is that the avant-garde gestures emerge in women artists that strive to foreground and authorise their subject position in a male dominated culture that has consistently marginalised them in the past. Another example of avant-garde performance that illustrates the inversion in the logic of signification is La Barbara's opera-in-progress 'WoolfSong' (inspired by the life and work of Virginia Woolf). La Barbara tries to find the music that initially inspired Woolf in her use of words and then transforms the words into music. Her strategy forms part of the artist's language process; she works over sentences and words in different ways: she seizes the sound and repeats the words as musical gestures, thus laying emphasis on the meaning of the sound over the meaning of language.⁴⁹³ The performance shows a reversed logic in which the sound precedes the written words in importance, an inversion which challenges the culturally accepted superiority of language over sound/music.

Secondly, an allegiance with the feminist critique of dominant sexual ideology is felt in the interest on the part of avant-garde women performers in creating their own musical discourse and representations, which can thus be read as articulation of a non-patriarchal feminine, in spite of being situated at the margins outside of the patriarchal symbolic. To this purpose, they evoke in their performances a pre-verbal language and a primal cry that is associated with the maternal space and the role of the mother's voice in early development. In psychoanalysis, the pre-linguistic moment of the primal music is located in the pre-oedipal phase when the child still has unsteady boundaries. A significant aspect in this phase is the maternal dependency and relation of the child to the mother. The association of women's avant-garde vocalisation with

pre-verbal origins can be seen to point towards reclamation of the maternal, as a way of affirming female subjective experience and as a means of re-symbolizing women's connection with their beginnings and the specificity of their relationship to origin. This interpretation of avant-garde vocalisation brings a gendered dimension to the historical (male) avant-garde project.

We have seen how the work of Kristeva and Irigaray emphasised the role of the Mother over the Father in psychoanalytic accounts of early psychic development, especially for the girl child. The association of avant-garde songs with a return to the image and voice of the mother can be seen as a revisitation of a maternal space, which is staged as re-enactment of an original trauma of (maternal) separation. The reading of *Schrei 27* will engage with Kristeva's concept of the abject and will therefore focus on the maternal as evocation of a pre-symbolic stage where primary splittings from (pre-) objects associated with the maternal body occur. This will be interpreted as separation from the abject mother, a separation required by the prohibition against the maternal body. Kristeva argues in *Stabat Mother* that because women's access to the symbolic order is via the Father, the repression of the *jouissance* of the maternal body becomes necessary; this has implications for the feminine, as it needs to find another way to access the symbolic, which is free from the masculine model of femininity. For Irigaray, the maternal feminine represents a potential source for resistance to and change of patriarchal definitions of women and, although repressed, it continues therefore to play a role in women's lives. Both Kristeva and Irigaray draw attention to the mother-daughter relationship, since there is a need from a gender perspective to alter the way mothers are represented to their daughters so that they both become subjects in their own right. For Kristeva, the mother-daughter relation is exceptional

inasmuch as the girl introjectively installs the mother in her body as an internal representation that is locked up in her psyche, whereas Irigaray argues for a maternal-feminine that would enable women to realize difference (by rethinking the symbolic order in non-patriarchal terms and focusing on the body of the mother and the woman's psycho-sexual development).⁴⁹⁴

The maternal can therefore be understood as a feminine space that functions metaphorically in avant-garde performance as a way to restore women artists' psychic territory. It is also a space from which to investigate the agency of women's artistic creativity vis-à-vis the signifying process. We have seen in chapter one how Kristeva eloquently established the connection between poetic language and a pre-linguistic musicality that is manifested in certain vocalisations and expression in avant-garde language (through the power of the semiotic). Following Kristeva, we can suggest that the subject of avant-garde performance produces a flow of pre-verbal expression (sounds and rhythms) that brings the listener closer to the semiotic musicality of the maternal space. Apart from Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*, other works that can be read in terms of semiotic musicality are Miranda's *Artesonado*, Meredith Monk's *Dolmen Music* or La Barbara's *Voice is the Original Instrument* (2003).

Meaning in signifying systems is not always pre-given, and this is why Kristeva has chosen the term 'signifiance' to indicate that meaning is the result of a dynamic process between two modalities, the semiotic and the symbolic.⁴⁹⁵ The logic of signification is already operating in the material body, given that in her theory bodily drives represent discharges, which are associated with the semiotic and the maternal body (the first source of rhythms and sounds for every human being). The subject in

process is thus involved in this dynamic process between the semiotic and the symbolic: referential meaning is possible thanks to the symbolic structure of language, but the semiotic makes signification important for our lives. The relevance of the subject in process from a gender perspective is that this is always negotiating the return of the repressed and highlights a need to keep a 'dialogue' with the other within; in other words, we are never the subjects of our own experience, and thus the understanding of the maternal function becomes a key for the development of subjectivity.⁴⁹⁶

Geno-song and Pheno-song Reconceptualised

Within her theory of signifying practice, Kristeva examines how texts function, and develops the concepts of the 'genotext' and the 'phenotext'. The genotext is associated with semiotic processes (which also influence the symbolic), and is described therefore as 'the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic'.⁴⁹⁷ The genotext is not linguistic, but a *process* that articulates structures threatened by drive charges; it is understood as 'language's underlying foundation'.⁴⁹⁸

The phenotext refers to 'language that serves to communicate, which in terms of linguistics is described as "competence" and "performance"'.⁴⁹⁹ According to Kristeva, the phenotext is a structure that adheres to the rules of communication and requires a subject of enunciation and an addressee. The phenotext is continually divided, and is 'irreducible to the semiotic process that works through the genotext'.⁵⁰⁰

Roland Barthes has borrowed Kristeva's concepts of the genotext and phenotext to ground his theoretical model of the 'geno-song' and 'pheno-song', which he applies to the singing voice and music. For Barthes, the geno-song refers to 'the volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate "from within language and in its very materiality"', and it is also where the melody works at the language, at the 'voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers'.⁵⁰¹ The pheno-song includes for Barthes 'all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of the language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melismas, the composer's idiolect, [and] the style of interpretation'.⁵⁰² Barthes confers a special significance on the geno-song from which he goes to develop his concept of 'the grain of the voice'.⁵⁰³ On this point, it is worth remembering that in Dolar's argument described earlier, the non-signifying remainder of the voice as object had nothing to do with some irreducible individual flavour or timbre of the voice and was therefore, in this sense, not reducible to what Barthes theorises as the 'grain of the voice'. According to Dolar, endowing the voice with materiality may entail obstacles and, ultimately, it may imply an attempt to domesticate the object. He indicates that music is in fact an attempt to domesticate the object and turn it into an object of aesthetic pleasure: music making and listening to music has the tendency of silencing what is called the voice as the *objet a* (although perhaps not always successfully).⁵⁰⁴

In Barthes's argument, the pheno-song and the geno-song are posited as opposed to each other and he therefore understands these concepts as a twofold opposition. If we were to adopt these concepts, but to follow Kristeva's reasoning that the signifying process includes both the genotext and the phenotext, rather than Barthes's theorisation, we would then have a reconceptualised 'geno-song' and 'pheno-song'

that would suit better my interpretation – from a Kristevan perspective – of the signifying process in avant-garde performance. The exploration of the signifying operations in avant-garde performances may include in this way the inscription of the reconceptualised ‘geno-song’ within the ‘pheno-song’ (as if giving the voice materiality by attaching it to the body and turning the object voice into an object of aesthetic pleasure). A performance will reference musical structure, rules of the genre and competence in vocal techniques, as well as the female subject of the performance and the listeners (‘pheno-song’). At the same time, it will also carry the imprint of the heterogeneous semiotic processes of signification that encompass the flow of the drives, the primal sounds and the discontinuities that occur from musical and language disruption (‘geno-song’).⁵⁰⁵ As has been intimated, avant-garde vocal performance can be said to be closer to the semiotic and hence from a Kristevan angle, to the ‘geno-song’; and yet the ‘pheno-song’ (command of vocal techniques, musical competency and so on) is indispensable to avant-garde vocality, since the ‘pheno-song’ makes possible the expression of the musical language of the ‘geno-song’.⁵⁰⁶

In this sense, avant-garde artists consider the mastery of vocal techniques (the ‘pheno-song’) fundamental to the achievement of a high level of precision in the performance and to producing music that is intense and poetic; this music releases the affects and the drive energies (the ‘geno-song’). It is interesting that artists feel the need to call on technical mastery in order to produce an effect designed to summon geno-song and to subvert pheno-song. This can perhaps be explained in terms of a process that undercuts in some sense the dichotomy geno-song/pheno-song. Galás acknowledges that without the mastery of techniques ‘you can’t express or *be* yourself’, and if one

intends to sing to the gods, as in the Greek tragic theatre, ‘you must have a superlative technique to extrovert the ride’.⁵⁰⁷ Miranda sees also a need to go deeper into the essence of the vocal technique so that the ear and the body understand the technique:

In singing, when you go to the heart of a technique and then to another and so on, you are not replicating, you go deeper into the essence of the technique so that your ear and your body understand the technique; you repeat and repeat until you develop a discipline; in the end, this is so powerful that it overwhelms you, in the best sense of the word. It is as if your body processed and synthesised the raw essence of a vocal technique so as to create poetry.⁵⁰⁸

We can see in this statement how, in some way, the ‘pheno-song’ becomes intertwined with the body, bringing it closer to the ‘geno-song’, or at least enabling the emergence of the ‘geno-song’ through musical ‘poetry’. The explicit emphasis on vocal techniques professed by Galás and Miranda, as well as other artists, strives for a sound *beyond* musical traditions or conventions, almost framed outside the physical limits, where the body is wholly implicated: avant-garde sounds become the ‘outmost’ in vocal delivery. Miranda’s innovative *Voz de Cristal* stands as a singular example of how the ‘geno-song’ is inscribed in the ‘pheno-song’ (‘Hálito’, ‘Las Ballenas’ [Whales] – *Las Voces de la Voz*, and ‘Alankara Skin’ – *Concierto en Canto* 1997). We have already seen how, in ‘Hálito’, Miranda multi-tracked her own voices to produce the *Voz de Cristal* as if she were making a tapestry of interwoven textures.⁵⁰⁹ The threads that arise from her technique constitute the ‘pheno-song’ and those ‘woven’ by the drives produce a unique and exceptional melody, a ‘phonetic poem’ that may be thought of as an almost unblended ‘geno-song’. Although avant-

garde vocal techniques are carefully controlled, the voice in artists like Miranda and Galás flows unrestrained, uninhibited, even hysterical. The singing voice becomes the basis for a signifying system that aims to challenge social/gender control and produces a visceral and primal sound, which can be both disturbing and extremely liberating.

Diamanda Galás's *Schrei 27*: the Voice and the Discourse of Feminine Abjection

BLACK? I cannot see them sleeping
 In my bed –spider of flesh don't
 know me, turn that pig over, I can't
 see them –have I a minute before
 the sun goes down who's that standing,
 standing standing over?

Oh God, do you smell that? It's the
 Smell of Death⁵¹⁰

In 2007 an exhibition held in Victoria-Gastéiz (Spain) entitled 'Switch on the Power! Noise and Musical Policies' featured the installation of *Schrei 27*, a series of short and exceptionally high-powered vocal performances by Diamanda Galás. The exhibition aimed at bringing together the work of artists who have explored the interactions between music and art, and whose performative and aesthetic strategies involve alternative values and/or political critique. Galás's installation consisted of a room-size rectangular cube and a single door through which to enter a space in complete darkness. For twenty-seven minutes, the listener was exposed to a sequence of high-energy vocal performances in the form of shrieks and screeches that alternated with moments of utter silence. Galás's voice flowed with great versatility, purposely used as a tool, as an instrument geared to achieve a horrifying effect. The bewildering sounds were not easily comprehensible or assimilable for the few listeners who had ventured into the installation. Inside the cubical room, a fleeting shaft of light from

the door opening would occasionally break the pitch-black darkness, as perplexed visitors entered and left the room after a few minutes into the recording. Explanatory information on the performance outlined that the sounds of *Schrei 27* illustrate Galás's extensive research into high-density speechsound over time, which combines atypical rapid speech with vocal signal processing.

Drawing from earlier work, *Schrei 27* was a commission by the 1994 New American Radio series and developed by Galás for national broadcast with New Radio and Performing Arts.⁵¹¹ A year later, she completed *Schrei X*, a complementary vocal performance that shared the same theme and aesthetic concept, and the works were released as an album in 1996 under the title *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* (*Schrei X* being the title given to the first thirteen vocal tracks in the album, whereas *Schrei 27* corresponds to the remaining eleven). Since the two works contain paired versions of the same themes, the examples discussed in the analysis will be taken from *Schrei 27* (which shares the same title names as *Schrei X*, except for two extra tracks, 'Abasement' and 'Coitum'). The album presents a complex body of work difficult to classify, other than extreme avant-garde: Galás's vocal performance steps beyond what is considered 'musical' to embrace the idea of the conceptual artwork expressed through the voice. Indeed, Galás has claimed that she does not respect the boundaries of any art form, in particular music's boundaries, and rejects for this reason any circumscription of her work.⁵¹² *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* is generally introduced as 'a chapter of a confession, which might have been induced through a chemical or mechanical manipulation of the brain'.⁵¹³ The purpose of the loud shrieks is illuminated by discussion in Galás's book from 1988, *The Shit of God*, where she explains that the 'SHRIEK' is a 'sound beneath the skin, traveling beneath the skin at

the pace of blood: intravenous song. Brain steam level [*sic*]'. She also refers to the 'SHRIEK: as in rape, torture and other human experiments, the SHRIEKS of an animal, which is repeatedly attacked within a contained space'.⁵¹⁴ The depiction of states of torture, trauma and isolation are not unusual themes in Galás's discography, and have emerged, amongst others, in 'Wild Women with Steak Knives' (*The Litanies of Satan*, 1982), 'Panoptikon' (*Diamanda Galás*, 1984), *Vena Cava* (1993) and her solo performance *Insekta* (1993).

Schrei 27 opens with a high-energy vocalisation in the form of virtuosic, overly expressive vocal articulations drawing on operatic techniques (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 5 'Do Room'). Her dazzling extended falsetto screams rely on sustaining notes at high pitch, occasionally pushing the dynamic envelope to its extreme and closing abruptly thereafter. This opening gesture is followed by subsequent cries, which appear at a lower register, but which seem to have been routed through a pitch changer. The 'scratchy and squeaky' qualities of the cries are shrill, almost saturated (in the sense that the sound seems to be at the limits of the amplitude that the recording medium can accommodate), in order to create a strange effect of reproducing the shrieks of an animal and/or moans of someone in pain. The singularity of Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* lies in her elaboration of a set of complex vocal materials which include repetitive shrill elements, additional sound effects such as the insertion of uncanny speaking voices interspersed with moments of complete silence, and an intensification of high-pitched screams, suggestive of the Freudian figuration of feminine 'anguish', 'madness', hysteria, also interspersed with frenetic laughter and gibberish. *Schrei 27* shrieks display a unique quality which bear

resemblance to a banshee wail or a bestial growling and which seem carefully devised with stunning precision in order to *disturb*.

Galás's carefully executed performance displays a mastery of audio technology and amplification techniques, which are used to implement through her voice a strange and unsettling fantasy physicality. This aspect is present in most of her work and is a dominant feature of *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*, an album influenced by diverse artistic tendencies and laden with complex signification. We have seen in chapter two how Galás's adoption of the 'language' of symbolism in her musical compositions was influential in her articulation of discontinuous and intense vocal emissions. *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* conjures up an avant-garde artistic vision that moves to a higher level of musical abstraction. The artist uses both words as sounds and non-linguistic expression and manipulates the sound into a quadraphonic sound system, whereby the sound travels in different vectors; her set up for this type of extreme performances is to have the speakers in different locations of a room so that the audience feels as if in a 'cage'.⁵¹⁵ The artist is interested in the concept of a person or woman 'being caged, treated like an animal and escaping through insanity', which finds a parallel in her utilization of audio technology, given that the vocal performance aims to produce a similar effect on the listener.⁵¹⁶ Galás herself has referred to *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* as 'a pretty extreme record',⁵¹⁷ which is in line with her purpose to deliver an incisive and subversive message. The performance casts upon the listener an auditory encounter with the sentiments of confinement, anguish and desolation, which recalls Galás's own experience of being institutionalised, as well as her interest in enacting the trauma of others through the engagement with personal trauma. In this sense, *Schrei*

X/ Schrei 27 underscores the two spaces that overlap in her work: the self-referential and a markedly individual vision informed by avant-garde tendencies.

The unconventional aspects displayed in *Schrei 27*, in particular the way in which Galás extends her voice using audio technology, her use of a combination of sonic effects and the exploration of body resonances, produce a powerful staged sonorous narrative that has been compared to monodramas (an example could be Schönberg's *Erwartung*, which points moreover to a concrete linkage between Galás's performance and an earlier avant-garde). Galás herself has described her performances as 'electroacoustic theatre whose nucleus is the voice of the actor'.⁵¹⁸ Her stylized symbolic performances have also been associated with avant-garde German expressionism.⁵¹⁹ Indeed, the scream (Galás's SHRIEK) is a core feature of the artistic movement of expressionism, which is used in *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* following a similar symbolism: the scream encapsulates 'angst' and a call for the spirit, and it is associated with the trauma of the self and the primal scream in psychoanalysis. An obvious reference here is Munch's celebrated painting *The Scream*, which is often used by Žižek as an example of 'object-voice' – the 'silent scream', the scream stuck in the throat, the voice we cannot normally hear. For Galás, the scream has the capacity to move the listener to strong emotions, usually related to death, anguish, fate and suffering. Moreover, the scream represents a starting point from which to stretch the craft of one's art, which Galás defines as the soul and the blood: after working on technique, the artist thus becomes the medium through which, in her view, 'beauty is revealed'.⁵²⁰ Under the influence of expressionism, *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* emphasises the dark side of life through distortions, brutality, and it thus presents an aesthetic encounter with a troubling

reality. The vocal performance relies on bringing together the disturbing/intolerable sound and the work's conceptual meanings: it relies on the extent to which Galás manages both to confront the listener with a (primal) traumatic reality and convey a specific message.

Amongst Galás's major influences for this work is the figure of Antonin Artaud, worth mentioning here because of the connections that can be established between Galás's heightened dramaticism in *Schrei 27* and Artaud's aesthetic ideas, which he employed in his conception of the theatre of cruelty. By cruelty Artaud meant a physical determination to strip away the false reality that shrouds the audience's perceptions. He wanted people to connect with something more primal, honest and truthful to themselves, and in order to achieve this he transported the audience to an instinctive level and made them participate in something violent that they did not want to see. He thought this to be a cruel, albeit necessary way to awaken the spectators' awareness and to encourage them to move closer to something more metaphysical and transcendental. In this sense, Artaud's work resonates with Galás's idea of the artist bringing back a 'primal reality' that is connected more with the body and the soul, as well as the capacity of the artist to become a medium to generate specific affects. Artaud employed a number of theatrical techniques and devices, which included percussive elements, strident and dissonant sound effects, audible frenzy, cries, grunts, screams, onomatopoeia, glossolalia and strange speech effects, all aspects that strongly resonate with Galás's extreme performances.⁵²¹ Like Artaud, Galás's extreme work aims at disturbing the principles of life, as well as raising questions on death; she wants to confront the audience with repressed and primordial forces so that people exorcise their own repressions and traumas. *Schrei 27* shares

many of Artaud's aesthetic traits, especially the stretching (almost to a limit) of the possibilities of sound and voice so as to present the audience with a merciless and dangerous reality. This reality trespasses conventions, including those of music, and leads the listener back into the unsettling primal world of sound and emotions that lends itself to several interpretations.

***Schrei 27* and the Primal Cry**

Schrei 27 contains a variety of auditory elements not clearly distinguishable as 'pure' song, noise, text enunciation or emotional and delusional speech, leading to a vocal performance that is *hybrid*, characterised by a combination of all of these (please, refer to DVD songs, chapter 5 track listing). Following Galás's opening high-energy vocal work in the form of strident cries in track one, 'Do Room,' track two, 'I I', opens with a disturbing reverberating 'groan' of anguish, which is subsequently broken up by a piercing shrill screech. The sequence repeats until the initial sounds become lost, and an almost inaudible female speaking voice enters. Although the speech is intelligible, it nonetheless sounds like vanishing whines of pain and/or distress. Track three, 'M Dis I', consists of an incessantly screechy throaty, bizarre 'non-human' sound that goes on for over a minute. Track four, 'O.P.M.', opens with a falsetto scream, projected through a number of effects units so that the initial source sounds simultaneously at different pitches and delays such that the voice becomes shrill and breaks apart into a number of vocalised fragments. The screeching voice(s) gain(s) intensity to develop eventually into a very throaty sound resembling bird calls (more like the cawing of crows, ravens or seagulls, perhaps). In track eight, 'Vein,' we hear an extremely deep voice, Galás's own voice, manipulated through some kind of pitch-changing effect box in order to drop her voice into the 'masculine' zone: the

effect is disturbing, heightened by the close-miking of the source voice which gives the feeling that the voice is claustrophobically 'close'. The manipulated deep voice, ambiguously gendered, also reappears in some other tracks, often combined with the already familiar loud frenzied shrieks, shrill cries, ominous howls, screams of madness, disturbing hysterical laughter and so on. In sum, what we seem to be experiencing here is an exploration of the multiple possibilities of the voice when used as an instrument, close to a theatrical execution of auditory sensations which seem in principle meaningless, unrecognisable and difficult to 'absorb' or make sense of.

The high-energy vocal work of *Schrei* 27 as described above invariably has a powerfully disturbing or distressing effect on the listener, to a great extent because the work was composed with the purpose of investigating rape, torture and other human experiments in personal circumstances.⁵²² The disturbing high-pitched cries become a sign of this production, embodied by the German term of the title of the album *Schrei* meaning 'cry', 'shout,' 'yell,' 'wail,' 'scream,' 'shriek,' or 'roar' and which invokes the articulation of a primal cry, a kind of traumatic sonic material expelled at the site of separation, of a splitting into a self and an Other (the (m)Other). Galás's wide-range high-energy cries and shrieks can initially be read as a kind of primal trauma transformed into a higher register scream.

The high-pitched shrieks can therefore be read alongside psychoanalytic theory in terms of Poizat's and Lacan's first or primal cry. We initially find a naked voice with no music and lyrics, a vocal object deprived of signification, which seems to have abandoned its dialectic relation to the Other, to the Other's desire. Galás's voice

seems to elude being inscribed within a network of meanings, and it is raised to a status where its meanings collapse and where her shrieks and screams emerge as something close to a pure vocal or 'phonic materiality', in Poizat's terms. The screams surface as a way of re-staging a 'first' or primal cry, but for which the listener will not have a representation of this voice as an object linked to pleasure; on the contrary, the screams may likely be associated with initial states of displeasure or trauma.⁵²³

The trace of the lost vocal object in Galás's voice, its phonic materiality, poses a challenge to the question of *jouissance*: if, as Poizat affirms, any relation to 'phonic materiality' will involve *jouissance*, and the voice as object is constructed as the first object of *jouissance*, setting in motion the quest for the lost object, the trace of the lost vocal object here would be purportedly evocative of a yearning for this object that would bring us back to the primary dyad between mother and child, as a form of *jouissance*, either from the site of the child's own voice or that of the mother's. Yet, for Lacan as well as for Poizat and Dolar, *jouissance* is not necessarily a good thing (nor is it necessarily pleasant); it stems back to Freud's theory of the 'pleasure principle' [*der Lustprinzip*] in which, as Freud puts it, 'going beyond the pleasure principle' can cause 'suffering'.⁵²⁴ In other words, there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear, and too much pleasure [*jouissance*] becomes a kind of suffering. The yearning for the vocal object as excess of *jouissance* that produces suffering is illustrated in the continuous screechy vocal emission in tracks three and nine, 'M Dis I' and 'M Dis II', where Galás's use of operatic and extended vocal technique sustain a long doleful scream for the duration of the track (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5).

It is important for my argument that this theory of the vocal object and the *jouissance* associated with its manifestations, are subjected to a gender-sensitive critique. Lawrence Kramer, who maintains that to hear music made can sometimes be dangerous for the subject, has examined the implication of transgressive pleasure; the listener is taken beyond a limit, as a kind of quest for the lost vocal object, which must nonetheless be cast out. Music becomes then pain and suffering and produces what he identifies as ‘masochistic self-surrender’ linked to ‘the rhetoric of musical abjection’:

The music that encroaches on the self is cast as an object of visceral blockage or disgust, sometimes mixed with pleasure that the listener must reject or expel. Music thus becomes what Julia Kristeva calls an abject, something within the subject that belongs to the sphere of fusion with the mother and must thus be cast violently out in order to maintain the subject’s intactness.⁵²⁵

Kramer refers here to the male subject for whom music produces a danger of maternal fusion and yet this danger is not ‘insuperably dangerous to the wholeness, detachment, self-possession or normative masculinity of that subject’; music becomes a ‘confirmation of the transcendental polarization of masculine and feminine principles. [...] in stark, psychoanalytic terms: in music the self appropriates the phallus by risking castration’.⁵²⁶

The polarization of masculine and feminine principles noted in music when experienced as transgressive pleasure or *jouissance* is also seen in vocal performance,

especially at the time of unravelling the meanings attached to the female voice. The accounts of the voice-object *jouissance* thus far assume a specifically male subject. In *The Acoustic Mirror*, Silverman critiques this assumption and looks at how male/female subject positions can influence gendered responses to the maternal vocal object vis-à-vis the subject's attempts to cast it out. She analyses from a psychoanalytic perspective the cinematic role of the female voice, which she links to drama, excess and a sense of extravagant investment; she suggests that the vocal position that the female subject has been forced to assume in film is analogous to the position of the 'fantasmatic infant' (the noise, babble and cry of the newborn).⁵²⁷ In her view, the function that the female voice has to perform for the male subject within a traditional familial paradigm is akin to the 'acoustic mirror': a function in which the maternal voice introduces the child to its mirror reflection and the child imitates the sounds made by the mother, modelling its voice after the mother's voice. For the male subject, however, the 'acoustic mirror' can function as a mechanism in which he 'hears the maternal voice through himself' as well as 'all the repudiated elements of his infantile babble'.⁵²⁸ Silverman contends that the maternal voice embraces both positive utopian and negative dystopian accounts of the maternal voice fantasy and it is therefore laden with conflicting interpretations of the effects of the primordial listening experience on the subject.⁵²⁹

On the one hand, the maternal voice has been argued for as the prototype for all subsequent auditory pleasure, especially the pleasure derived from listening to music, enfolding the child in a comforting protective envelope. We have seen how Schwarz talks of a variety of "oceanic" representations associated with "the sonorous envelope" in which the maternal voice generates for the infant its first auditory

pleasure: music finds its roots in this original atmosphere, which the subject will later experience as 'being embraced by the all-around sound of music'.⁵³⁰ On the other hand, Silverman indicates that the maternal voice has also been described as a 'horrifying matrix' or 'cobweb', an imaginary 'uterine night' in which the subject is inserted into panic and anxiety at being engulfed into an 'umbilical net' of non-meaning. According to Silverman, the maternal voice oscillates between two poles: it can either be cherished as an *objet a*, as what can make good all lacks, or it can be 'despised and jettisoned as what is most abject, most culturally intolerable'.⁵³¹ The trace of the lost vocal object in Galás's *Schrei 27* hints at the latter, at the vocal object as jettisoned, abject. It would seem that Galás's voice is *reminiscent of* the primal cry as a staged manifestation of the panic and anxiety of the terrifying 'abject inside the maternal body'.⁵³² Yet, a specific female subject position in the case of Galás will reveal a set of new meanings for herself as performer and for her listeners associated with female sexual identity and her voice as feminine abjection.

Feminine *Jouissance* and Feminine Abjection

Galás's shrieks and screams embody the 'castrating' danger that comes as a result of separating the subject from the maternal object, a moment which marks the loss of imaginary plenitude as well as the projection of a primal scream as trauma. Her performance can thus be seen as re-staging the trauma of separation from the vocal object or object voice, a separation which is experienced as relinquishment (or 'castration') of a primal auditory pleasure, and which will carry a refusal of *jouissance* (as enjoyment). Yet, within psychoanalysis, the pre-oedipal and oedipal *jouissance* gives prominence to the man and male libido rather than the woman, an aspect of the theory that has not been acceptable for feminism, in particular for

Irigaray and Kristeva. Working from a revised oedipal structure, Kristeva argues that the girl accepts her loss of *jouissance* (as result of castration), although the woman becomes more aware of the loss owing to not being compensated with the phallic power. For the woman, the consequences of castration are much more devastating since she is left with no substitute to make up for the maternal separation. In Kristeva's view, feminine *jouissance* cannot be articulated within the oedipal matrix, where woman is imprisoned; she assigns *jouissance* to a part of woman that exceeds the bounds of oedipal laws, specifically the law of language.⁵³³ In other words, the child girl must agree to lose the mother through a process of negation, not of the mother, but of the 'loss' of the mother, so that she can find her again in signs and recover her in language.⁵³⁴ Kristeva argues that, in the course of becoming, the pre-subject is enfolded on the psychological level in the power of semiotic rhythms, and exists in a body continuum that is merged with the pre-object, which is distinct from, and precedes, the object, and refers to the maternal body or Thing (the maternal real that does not lend itself to signification, but constitutes the seat of sexuality from which the object of desire becomes separated).⁵³⁵ The girl needs to metaphorically 'kill' the mother and this can only be successful if the child eroticizes the loss 'either by taking a mother substitute as love object or by eroticizing the *other* and finding substitutes'.⁵³⁶

Kristeva thus views feminine *jouissance* as bound up with the maternal, and hence the *chora* (the space associated with the maternal, the feminine, the 'law before the law'), and sees artistic expression as a flow of *jouissance* into language. In this sense, women artists are able from this semiotic space – the *chora* – to integrate the loss of the maternal body or the Thing, and embrace the primal affections and pleasures

associated with the maternal. Avant-garde vocal performance understood in terms of pre-verbal vocal kinetic rhythms has the potential of integrating the maternal body as a pre-object of desire (communicating regression and *jouissance*). Yet, this type of performance can be entrancing or extremely vigorous, and sounds associated with the semiotic may display elements of the two contradictory structures of the drives, positive and negative. In the case of Galás's *Schrei 27*, the primal screams function as abjection of the maternal body, and yet, at the same time, Galás's discursive engagement with disruptive, extreme vocality enables her performance to also be read alongside the semiotic *chora*, where the feminine enters into a free play. With its mediation in the symbolic law, the *chora* dispels the threat of disintegration – of the subject being engulfed into non-meaning. We could say that Galás's voice, pushed to the extremes of its semantic meanings, enacts an intense experience at the boundaries of non-meaning, which nonetheless affects meaning.

Schrei 27 can thus be said to invoke the maternal in signs through musical expression and re-enact the struggle of separation from the abjected mother. In Kristeva's argument, however, the abjection of the mother becomes for the girl child complicated by the fact that if she splits the mother, she splits herself; within feminine sexual identity the mother need only be abject, but the woman makes herself abject too. This has to do with the difficulty that the girl has to separate from the mother, to the point that the girl/woman never completely gets rid of her, and either carries the mother in her psyche, or forms a defense against the mother by devoting herself to the symbolic order.⁵³⁷ The importance of feminine sexuality in the relation between the woman and the abject mother takes us back to Galás's female subject position, and the fact that the subject in process is constantly negotiating the return of the repressed

(the maternal). This negotiation with the other within becomes a key in the development of female subjectivity, and enables an understanding of Galás's voice in *Schrei 27* as specific feminine abjection. Her vocal display stages an abject voice that is embraced in such a way that it is as if the artist became an abject body; her voice becomes almost perverse, and stages a threat of castration as if this were a threat against the woman's psyche.⁵³⁸ The abject body is illustrated in the loud squeaking noises and creaky wails of agony or wretchedness displayed in track four, 'O.P.M.', and track five, 'Headbox', where the squeaks become very throaty and deranged, as if released from an almost non-human, abject body beseeched by madness or psychotic disturbance (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). In the flow of Galás's *Schrei 27* performance, the voice would seem to emphasize a fierce struggle that alludes to women's psychic threat when attempting to turn the maternal body into desire, as well as the restrictions imposed on feminine *jouissance* within the patriarchal structure.

Irigaray, who articulates a feminine *jouissance* that is more in line with the preservation of the sexed female body, has investigated at length the inadequacy of the (Freudian) psychoanalytic narrative as regards woman's relation to her origin – to the mother – and women's castration; she argues that within psychoanalysis woman is denied a substitute to defer or mitigate the break with the mother (unlike men who have the recompense of the phallus, which stands for man's lack of *jouissance*). For Irigaray, some of the consequences of feminine castration are the girl's fall in self-esteem and a sense of inferiority due to the wound in her narcissism. As a consequence, woman's autoeroticism is weakened and her sexuality – the 'dark continent' – is marked by lack, having been denied a signifying economy; she functions as a 'hole' in the elaboration of imaginary and symbolic processes.⁵³⁹ The

woman eventually finds herself in a vicious circle in which she has to repress her desire to fulfil the desire of man and live up to the 'femininity' expected of her within a masculine libidinal economy. For Irigaray, this deficiency or 'hole' in which woman finds herself prevents her from forming images or representations through which to represent herself; because her sexual instincts have been castrated and her representation of desire forbidden, she is driven to the scenario of hysteria, where she is condemned to a dramatization of feminine sexuality. In her view, the hysteric subject is exposed to 'ludic mimicry' and all kinds of disbelief and oppression, and is controlled by the master-signifier (the Phallus), not so much as interplay between the sexes, but as an emblem of power, which masters and appropriates women's relationship to origin and desire.⁵⁴⁰

In this scenario, following Irigaray, the initial trauma of separation from the mother is for the woman understood as erasure or repression of the symbolization of her beginnings, her libido, and any specificity of her relation to origin, and this inevitably leads to constant regressions. *Schrei 27*'s SHRIEKS stage a separation from the vocal object as 'castration', although not only as a re-enactment of the initial trauma, but also arguably as regression into a maniacal or paranoiac state due to the 'castration' of woman's sexual instincts and desire. Because woman's specific relation to the mother is experienced as castration, as well as repression, and in the absence of an appropriate substitutive symbol(s) (i.e. the penis for men), Irigaray talks of another type of feminine *jouissance* that is 'hysterical': she indicates that it would not be 'paternal' in character, albeit it would be unrepresentable.⁵⁴¹

In the absence of women having adequate images and representations, Galás's voice from this perspective symbolizes that 'hole' in which woman finds herself driven to hysteria, and her vocal display would give the listener a glimpse of this type of 'hysterical' feminine *jouissance*. In the performance, this is a *mimetic* hysteria that aims to expose the repression and the deficient symbolization of women in relation to their origin, mothers and libidinal representation. Hers is not an imposed *mimesis*, neither is this in my reading an 'acting out' in the Lacanian sense, but a conscious artistic representation or meta-performance; it is a *mimesis* in the Irigarayan sense of strategic device. The aim is to reproduce hysteria in order to unmask this scenario as a place of suffering and stigmatization and as reflection of male views on women and femininity. Some examples of hysterical voices can be found, for example, in *Schrei* 27 tracks one and two, 'Do Room' and 'II', where Galás's vocal emission appears as a continuous throaty articulation whose quality is extremely raspy or coarse; she produces a harsh and screechy scream not unlike an acute cry of pain and agony, which evokes a site of suffering, distress and stigmatization (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). In Irigaray's terms, Galás's voice reproduces the hysteric's fragmentation 'as a place where fantasies, ghosts, and shadows fester and must be unmasked, interpreted, brought back to the reality of a repetition, a reproduction, a representation that is congruent to, consistent with, the original'.⁵⁴²

In her account of the voice as a terrifying abject inside the maternal body (as repudiated element of infantile cry and babble), Silverman points out that the rupture of auditory pleasure or original plenitude also introduces difference. In her view, since the maternal voice is the first voice that describes and names the world for the infant subject, it also 'provides the first axis of Otherness'.⁵⁴³ *Schrei* 27, seen in terms

of Kristeva's semiotic *chora* and pre-verbal vocal rhythms, led us to a repressed maternal that has a transgressive potential to challenge the established borders of the symbolic. The extreme vocalizations generate an altered effect in the relation to the other by bringing about an encounter with an abjected otherness that defies the fear of (radical) difference. This otherness in the case of *Schrei 27* recalls, in Kristevan terms, women's struggle to negotiate the other within and to ward off the castration threat against their psyche; in Irigaray's terms, it evokes the distress of the hysteric and her feminine *jouissance*. From this perspective, *Schrei 27* highlights the important role of Galás's female subject position (as 'totally avant-garde') in her encounter with the other and her transgression of boundaries, aspects that challenge the fear of difference in patriarchal capitalist society.⁵⁴⁴

Richard Middleton suggests that the idea of a 'terrifying' *jouissance* as invocation of the object voice (articulated in Kristeva's theory of the pre-symbolic where objects can be abjects) is usually linked to subversion of the patriarchal law: 'this *jouissance* can appear only through breaks and slippages in the order of knowledge, only as a fantasy projection'.⁵⁴⁵ Galás's externalisation of this primal fantasy creates a disturbing moment for the listener, in which the unassimilated remnants of the object voice disturb the integrity of the subject and disrupts the patriarchal law. Her voice evokes the separation from the maternal vocal object, and yet her performance simultaneously produces an *excess* or fascination with this primal vocal object.

Middleton also suggests that the symbolic power of the abjected "phantasy" of the maternal body' in Galás's work is 'opened up at the same time as its messy sustenance is subjected to, imprisoned within, the force of dispassionate moral

outrage'.⁵⁴⁶ Galás's attempts to bring before us the marginal experience of the voiceless (victims of rape, torture, madness) endorse the force of the 'moral outrage' by retrieving a radical otherness whose subversive power is invoked; in the process, her enactment of the maternal voice fantasy seeks to subvert the normative operations of the symbolic law. Middleton indicates that the 'madness' of Galás's voice contains many of the conventional codings of hysteria as it passes through the phallic site (the Law of the Father), and refers to Galás's extreme performances as '*hystericised* abjection' (a concept that will be revisited), in the sense that they endorse 'neither the integrity seemingly promised in the bodily ego-image nor that associated with the memory of the matriarchal acoustic mirror' for neither is 'proof against the pressures accompanying a re-imagined anatomy'.⁵⁴⁷ Galás constructs a counter-hegemonic performance by working on the expression of abjection to produce a 'hysterical' sound that appropriates a language of madness. Her extreme and yet disjointed vocal production seems to be located outside the frame of representation, suggesting a departure (in terms of cultural expectations) from how the singing body may be imagined. The psychic territory that Galás's voice phantasy demarcates in *Schrei X/Schrei 27* carries the marks of bodily dissolution or misplacement, distress, abjection, gender indeterminacy and loss of control, which are none the less already imprinted in the listeners' imagination (and for whom Galás's radical sound will still hold its status of signifier).

Kristeva's Abject and Galás's Feminine Abjection

As we have seen, an examination of Galás's voice in terms of the primal cry and the trope of the maternal voice as sonorous envelope and its effects on the subject led us

to that pole of the binarism of pleasure/horror described by Silverman that jettisons the vocal object as abject, and hence to Kristeva's account of abjection. Galás's vocal production is suggestive of a departure from cultural expectations, given that her shrill hybrid shrieks not only blur gender distinctions but create also a proximity of human corporeality to an animality that problematises the meanings of the female voice at the limits of feminine vocal performance. Starting from Kristeva's notion of the abject in *Powers of Horror*, this section will investigate this quality of Galás's vocal production, with the aim of showing how the rich interplay of vocal elements situates her voice close to the borders of the abject, appearing as if it were somehow 'outside' the frame of symbolic culture. The transgression of boundaries in *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* can be seen as a strategy that marks Galás's voice as the voice of feminine abjection, which is situated at the intersection of multiple binarisms, along that border zone where the abject resides.

Galás's voice in *Schrei 27* produces a horrifying effect which is intensified by her utilization of her full vocal register, deliberately engaging a level of interplay between highly controlled sounds using a soprano range with a combination of 'dissident' or 'transcendent' noises, through which she achieves a terrifying dramatic and disturbing intensity. This is illustrated in track seven, 'Hepar', where several seemingly crazy voices intermingle as in a state of paranoia; there are also angry bursts and extremely throaty sounds with a terrifying result. The voice here recalls the standard vocalizing techniques that are attached to the horror idiom in cinema (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). Her spine-chilling declamations seem to pierce the body of both the listener and the artist, causing it to contract, to invoke a state of anguish, to effect a spasm or a shudder that almost overwhelms the body, trying to cast out these voices

of abjection. This is a core effect of Galás's extreme vocalizations – the body seeks to 'expel' the horror that her voice invokes, an effect that she deliberately engages in for expressive and ideological ends.

These traits of Galás's voice strongly resonate with Kristeva's notion of the abject and her theorisation of abjection as something improper, unclean, uncanny, a kind of spasm which beseeches the subject and falls outside of signification; it is something at the limits of the primal repression, which is within oneself, but cannot be assimilated, something that does not respect borders, positions, rules, something which disturbs identification, system and order.⁵⁴⁸ Galás's manner of generating an overwhelming intense sonoric envelope, which fills and overflows a space, suggests a controlled and deliberately executed *excess*, and the production of an unexpectedly 'unnatural' and uncanny voice.

Kristeva's concept of the abject refers to the 'object' of primal repression, which confronts the subject in its attempts to release the hold of the maternal, as it engages in a struggle of repelling, rejecting, separating and ab-jecting itself.⁵⁴⁹ It is therefore something at the limits, at the border of a primal repression, something that disturbs identity, which is within the self but with which one does not identify. The uncanny trace in Galás's voice works as a *metaphor* for the maternal splitting and entails ambiguity.⁵⁵⁰ Many theories of voice, such as the Lacanian *objet petit a*, discussed by Poizat and Dolar, seem to embody a much more abstract analysis of the vocal object or object voice as a residue, a remnant with an uncanny quality, a trace which cannot be fully assimilated.⁵⁵¹ Yet, in Kristeva's theory, the 'jettisoned object' appears to be connected theoretically more to what it does to the structure of the subject, to the

internal negotiations with the world of the ego and the superego, both of which seem to be disturbed by the abject. The vocal object would thus be concomitant in Kristeva to the object '[..] as inoperative. As jettisoned. Parachuted by the Other'.⁵⁵² A jettisoned object, which is leading the listener to where meaning collapses, to the abject.

The titles of *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* make reference to various internal and external zones of the body or bodily functions, which are figured as feminine ('Vein', 'Hepar', 'Coitum', 'Cunt', 'Smell'), and could also function as metaphors for the incorporated/expelled objects and the feminine abjection involved in refusing the 'defiling materiality of the subject's embodied existence'.⁵⁵³ This defiling materiality specifically connected with female identity emerges in Galás's performance as if to problematize these feminine abject objects from within her doubly marginal position of female subject and avant-garde artist. According to Elizabeth Grosz, these various zones of the body become for Lacan 'erotogenic zones' (mouth, anus, eyes, ears, genitals) structured as a *rim* or space amid two surfaces or boundaries between the body's inside and outside; the incorporated objects must cross this space although they do not remain entirely within or without the *rim*, surfacing ambiguously at the boundary.⁵⁵⁴ Abjection occurs when a gap emerges in the space, when the object does not fill the *rim* and the subject is pushed closer to the edge, closer to its relation to death, corporeality, animality and materiality, elements which the symbolic must reject, cover over or contain.⁵⁵⁵ *Schrei 27*'s track six, 'Cunt', consists of an intense, but momentary throaty scream that exemplifies the incorporated object that surfaces ambiguously at the boundary; this is a extremely fleeting vocal emission, which seems to leave a gap (associated with the symbolic meaning of the track title) that

gives way to abjection (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). In addition to the vocal object, Galás's allusion to both inside and outside zones of the female body, the proper and the improper, is indicative of the role of 'female dirt' (blood, stink and so on) as objects situated on the female boundary space or *rim*: linked to the feminine, these objects highlight the impossibility of a clear boundary or demarcation between order and disorder as required by the symbolic. Indeed, Kristeva suggests that abjection is a frontier, a border and above all ambiguity:

What is abject, [...] the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. A certain "ego" that merged with its master, a superego, has flatly driven it away. It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him) beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out.⁵⁵⁶

Kristeva asserts that it is precisely in *jouissance* where the object of desire (the *objet petit a* in the Lacanian sense) 'bursts in the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other', in which the Other has become alter ego and the abject becomes a frontier, a border where the subject is swallowed up in *jouissance*, that is, in a pleasurable *excess*, which is also dangerous.⁵⁵⁷ Within this logic, in return, the Other 'keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant'.⁵⁵⁸ Thus, the uncanny trace of Galás's voice would appear to be enmeshed in a 'dangerous' *jouissance*, which contains also elements of perversion since, according to Kristeva, the sense of abjection is anchored in the superego, and the abject, in this way, 'neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law'.⁵⁵⁹

Feminine Abjection and the Super-ego

Kristeva argues that the abject is not an object that corresponds to an ego, but it has its basis in the superego; it is also 'perverse' because, amongst its transgressive functions, the abject turns rules and values upside down, and misleads and takes advantage of any prohibitions.⁵⁶⁰ According to Oliver, the abject threat comes from what has been prohibited by the Symbolic order, and the founding prohibition that supports the Symbolic is the prohibition against the maternal body: either the Freudian oedipal prohibition, the Lacanian prohibition against the mother's desire or *jouissance*, or the prohibition against the Kristevan semiotic *chora*. Both the subject and society, which are bound to the Symbolic, depend on the repression of this maternal authority that entails a threat from beyond the borders of the Symbolic.⁵⁶¹ Galás's performance is evocative of a form of feminine *jouissance*, which requires an abjection for which the listener may not have a way to identification; it suggests a threat from the outer limits of the Symbolic, something culturally intolerable, a transgression that takes advantage of the Symbolic prohibition of the mother's body and thus turns aside rules and values. This *jouissance* would also be concurrent with Kristeva's comments on the 'the erotization of abjection', suggestive of perversion, as a kind of erotic cult or fascination with the abject, which ultimately seeks to elude castration (the consequences of which are much more devastating for the woman, as we have seen). Within this reading, Galás's voice as feminine abjection of the maternal voice fantasy emerges as an attempt to stop the 'wound' or 'hemorrhage' that results from the splitting/severance from the maternal vocal object, as a kind of 'threshold before death, a halt or a respite'.⁵⁶²

The abject elements of Galás's voice are therefore anchored in her superego and the internal values and tensions that arise from identifying oneself as the subject of the law and assuming one's place in the symbolic order.⁵⁶³ The artist appears to be stirring up a pleasure in the darkness, the perverse, exerting a distressing and unsettling effect on the listener. The harnessing of these elements is suggestive of a cultural collision, a breaking down of the patriarchal superstructure and the Law linked to feminine *excess*. The disquieting effect is felt at two levels:

1. At the level of her vocal production, the way she holds her pitch and vibrato in the shrieks and screams, together with her extremely controlled and technical vocal production in the harsh cries, moans and howls, hints at a highly studied sound that neatly fits within an intended vocal effect, what Kramer calls the 'hermeneutic window'⁵⁶⁴ – in Galás's case, the 'hermeneutic window' would be marked by over-determination since her shrieks and screams are purposeful, contained, highly calculated and neatly produced; they are, we might say, more lawful than Law itself. Paradoxically, however, this excess of control results in a drastic disjunction of voice, which becomes a cry or a wail rather than 'music'.
2. Secondly, and on the other hand, Galás's perfected technique and highly determined and precise extended vocal production, seem to be testing the limits of the Law: in line with Lacan and Freud's theorisation of *plaisir* [*Lust*], the artist moves beyond pleasure (*jouissance*) in order to give us an *excess* of anguish, pain or suffering. This *excess* overflows the soundscape with emotions of anguish that saturate the symbolic space (suggesting under-determination).

With regard to these two perspectives, the ambivalence of the abject is located in the also ambivalent role of the super-ego: at once outside – voice of moral imperative – and inside, in that it harnesses the power of the unconscious drives to render obedience to that voice perversely, obscenely pleasurable. The idea that Galás's voice is both over-determined and under-determined, that is, there is excess in both drives (too much Law and at the same time breaking the Law), explains why she can be regarded as both disruptive, transgressing the Symbolic, and opening up to Kristeva's semiotic by rejecting the Father in favour of the Mother; and technically precise, skilled, controlled, maintaining the signifier and communicating transgression as meaning. This aspect takes us back to the superego's role, which explains these two sides in her work. It also explains why she can be both perverse and moralistic (precisely the combination that Žižek discusses with regard to the operations of the superego).⁵⁶⁵

From a specific gendered perspective, however, the building of the super-ego within the psychoanalytical frame is rather problematical for the woman. Irigaray discusses how the effects of 'castration' on the girl prevent her from a *primary metaphorization* of her desire, which can be interpreted 'as a prohibition that enjoins woman' against her own economy of desire.⁵⁶⁶ As a result, the super-ego 'cannot attain the *strength* and *independence* which give it its cultural significance'.⁵⁶⁷ The super-ego arises from the identification with the father as a model and retains therefore the character of the father; the implication for women is that if they have a super-ego, it is only by having a masculine attitude, an aspect questioned by Irigaray. At the same time, she looks also at the ego ideal and understands it as the 'individual's first and most

important identification', which, in Freudian terms, could be an identification with the father or a (phallic) 'mother'.⁵⁶⁸ Yet, the girl's discovery of the castration of the mother may lead her to the rejection of the mother as primary identification. The ego ideal is in this way filled with ambivalence in so far as this must 'retain the character of the father' or 'derive its "strength" from him'.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, for Irigaray, the super-ego and the ego ideal are heirs of the Oedipus complex and the little girl's super-ego will primarily be determined 'by a "childhood helplessness and dependence" vis-à-vis the bearer of the penis'.⁵⁷⁰

According to Irigaray, women's super-ego must be looked for in 'an infantile submission to, or revolt against, the father or his substitute, that ensures for women that the ego ideal's function can never really be "interiorized" in the psyche'.⁵⁷¹ The role of the super-ego comes into focus in women that experience acute conflicts resulting from the development of a sense of *guilt* that cannot justify itself to the ego. Here the ego rebels against the imputation of *guilt* and struggles against "objectionable" tendencies that are outside it and against a super-ego that is too cruel and demanding'.⁵⁷² Irigaray indicates that the *guilt* remains beyond words, unutterable, unvoiced, but still active, and only the body would express it. The *guilt* is accompanied in the woman by overwhelming feelings of inferiority, mutilation and castration that never go away since the process of identification is unconscious, and the girl's identification with the 'castrated mother' ensues the perpetuation of this economy. The fathers supply women with a super-ego that gets hold upon consciousness and against which women's ego has no terms to defend itself; men-fathers' conscience functions as women's super-egos.⁵⁷³

In this strange economy, as Irigaray describes it, there is yet hysteria that needs to be considered, for this is a case in which the hysterical ego, instead of carrying out repressions in the service of the super-ego, turns against its 'stern task-master'.⁵⁷⁴ Despite its fragility, the hysterical ego represses the super-ego, together with the *guilt*, into the unconscious. The law-making fathers keep control on consciousness and use rules to appease the conflicts of which they are the cause, but all the same women's super-ego continues to be built up out of anxiety. Irigaray mentions several reasons why the hysterical woman's super-ego is cruel and mortifying: 'its primitive character, the prohibition laid upon aggression in woman [...]; the relationship of women to the "mirror", to narcissism; [...] their relationship to language, discourse, [and] laws'.⁵⁷⁵ Within an Irigarayan reading, Galás's vocal display understood as expression of hysterical *jouissance* draws attention to the hysteric's mortifying and repressed super-ego built up out of anxiety and an imputation of *guilt*. Galás would seem in *Schrei 27* to appropriate or *mimic* the hysteric's identity and her ego ideal in order to rebel against a 'stern task-master' and hence the law. She brings the hysteric's super-ego and *guilt* into consciousness so as to challenge the monopoly of the father on consciousness. Through her SHRIEKS, she would seem to express dissatisfaction about a prohibition against woman that is too cruel and demanding; the artist turns the same weapon against the laws that silence the *guilt* and shun woman's castration and mutilation. The *guilt* that has been made unutterable and ineffable is given a voice and expressed through the abjection of part objects (body parts) – including the voice – that need to be jettisoned, expelled out of the body, given that the prohibition of the mother has threatened the hysteric woman with abjection. Feminine abjection turns in *Schrei 27* into '*hystericised* abjection', where the fascination with the abject as perversion seems intensified due to the hysteric's

mortifying and cruel super-ego. The body parts (abjects) illustrate the fragmented identity of the hysteric as expression of *guilt* (it is interesting in relation to the role of *guilt* in Galás's work to note that she has taken up this term/concept in her 2008 album *Guilty Guilty Guilty*).

'Hystericised Abjection'

Hysteria is traditionally associated with feminine disturbance of the uterus (Greek *hystera*), neurosis, and a range of physical symptoms and ailments typically suffered by women.⁵⁷⁶ It was thought to be produced by the womb wandering through the body, oppressing the victim in the chest, and causing a disease linked to sexual dissatisfaction in women. The woman hysteric constitutes a problem of gender identification since she does not know whether to identify her body with that of a man or a woman. Her *jouissance*, according to Lacan, has been negated to such an extent that her body is unsymbolized in the world, and thus her sexual body comes into conflict with the normative gender identity and cultural stereotypes contained within the patriarchal system. In his view, the hysteric's language speaks through the lack and the gaps in knowledge, and reveals the incapacity of human subjects to satisfy the ideals of Symbolic identifications.⁵⁷⁷

Some feminist approaches to this (in particular those by Cixous and Catherine Clément) view the hysteric as a borderline figure for women's emancipation, as well as a form of resistance to patriarchy: the hysteric's language cannot assume its own discourse and constantly demands proofs of validation from the dominant male subject.⁵⁷⁸ One of the strategies Galás uses to revisit hysteria in her performance is through the rendering of male/female voices: the hysteric is unsure whether to

identify with a woman or a man, and thus Galás's vocal versatility, used to step into the masculine zone, would seem to mirror the hysteric's dilemma of bodily identification. In *Schrei 27*'s track eight, 'Vein', we hear Galás's own voice manipulated in such a way that moves it to the masculine zone (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). This 'male' voice is occasionally interspersed by a reverberating incomprehensible gibberish, which seems to 'crack' or 'break' (a feature of a good number of tracks). The gibberish increases in intensity to become angry language and shouting, as if a feminine hysterical voice were counter-replying in defiance or demanding something from the 'male' voice (which acquires a role of *logos*). By doing this, Galás is voicing dissatisfaction at the absence of an adequate dialogue between the male subject and the other, and exposes the difficulty a woman encounters in locating herself as 'woman-as-subject' within the Symbolic order (a point that Irigaray has stressed in her work).⁵⁷⁹

In the context of hysteria, Clément also develops the concept of the 'hideous voice', which she associates with treatments for hysteria and 'cures' for witchcraft – of exorcising the demon inside the possessed woman who lets out a curse 'in a hideous voice'.⁵⁸⁰ Clément suggests that the 'hideous voice' seeks to liberate an emotional discharge and releases a traumatic event or 'original, guilty act'.⁵⁸¹ She examines from a psychoanalytical perspective the figures of the sorcerer and the hysteric in order to unveil entrenched unconscious assumptions of hidden and repressed female representations in culture, and argues that the 'original, guilty act' has precisely inscribed its pathogenic trace on the woman's body.⁵⁸² The 'guilty act' will come out of the 'voice-body' of Galás and will be associated with cathartic expulsion, with the trauma liberated through the staged, disembodied voices of *Schrei 27*. The 'hideous

voice' comes out in anger, frenzy and laughter, at the heart of suffering, whose contortions and contractions become unbearable to the listener.

The 'hideous voice' is exemplified in *Schrei 27* via the repetition of senseless utterances and fragmented speech interspersed with raucous laughter and screams of madness in track eleven 'Hee shock die' (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). Galás's voice re-enacts here the abjection of the self out of the breaking up of language, as well as the abjection of a prohibited other (mother), an abject desire, which in madness (psychosis), according to Kristeva, would only be a substitute for adaptation to a social norm. Laughter can normally break out as a form of *pleasure*, except that in this case, laughter is partnered with madness and thus it might be more appropriately co-joined with the horrific (an unpleasant *jouissance*), with something barred, threatening, like a form of Freudian expulsion of the 'impure' (a return of the repressed), which, Kristeva asserts, can never be fully eradicated and hovers at the margins of our existence.⁵⁸³ Hence the 'hideous voice' implies an image of the body beyond cultural demarcation, excluded, and located at the moment of crossing the dangerous line: ab-jected.⁵⁸⁴

Galás's vocality in *Schrei 27* thus produces deliberate hysteric symptoms open to interpretation within patriarchal culture as *problematically feminine*, and therefore calling for restraint, discipline. The term *hystera* alludes to women's body parts (uterus, placenta) and these become abject marks of female (non-)identity, problematised in Galás's performance as locations of body-ambivalence. Galás works over abjection; she traverses representations of abjection and then sideslips over the boundaries to release repressed emotional content; hence Galás's cathartic

expulsion as a 'guilty act' expressed via a liberating sound. Catharsis, derived from the Greek *kathairein* ('to purify', 'to purge') and *katharos* ('pure', 'clean'), points towards a function for Galás's sounds linked to 'cleaning' and 'purging' (in the sense of experiencing a strong emotion that brings about restoration and renewal). Yet, the original meaning of 'catharsis' referred to the evacuation of menstrual fluid or reproductive material (*katamenia*) and hence a connection in meaning between *katamenia* and *hysteria* can be established; this links the hysteric with catharsis, which dovetails with Galás's mimicking hysteria to produce feminine abjection (a 'hysterized abjection'), as a means of purging; this associates also the cathartic sounds (the primal cries) with the woman's abjected body parts. The etymology is useful here in order to understand Galás's performance as a way of stretching across feminine abjection and of crossing over boundaries, such as the body's inside and outside, that normally hold together the symbolic order. The breaking of boundaries can be applied in *Schrei 27* to the blurring of gender and vocality, as well as the divisions between the theatrical and musical, and between human and non-human. Her performance externalizes psychic disturbance, and yet by releasing strong emotions, it has also the potential to clear the danger of disintegration (and for the woman to restore her psychic space). By forcing the listener to confront anguish, madness and hysteria, Galás's cathartic sound generates a healing experience that prompts a re-evaluation of the female subject, her body and its relation to masculine figurations of the feminine.

Hysteria can thus be seen in a recuperative light and in this sense Irigaray argues that the hysteric can be thought of as a source of *energy* that has not been coded, and it must therefore be preserved (exemplified in Galás's extroversion of *energy*). In

Irigaray's view, hysteria stands as a tension between women and mothers and it must not be destroyed but allowed access to imagination and to creativeness.⁵⁸⁵ Clément has suggested that the hysteric makes the partial object circulate, at times even when it seems blocked. In her argument on hysteria, she refers to Freud and notes that for him the hysteric retains a great amount of excitation and thus 'keeps the secretion of *jouissance* for herself'.⁵⁸⁶ Galás's *Schrei 27* would seem to serve as a metaphor for this secretion of *jouissance*; the troubling hysteric's *jouissance* is turned inwards and then directed outwards to the listener in a two way process which illustrates the potential of Galás's performances to come into conflict with the patriarchal system (by crossing boundaries and ambiguously situating her voice in the space amid two surfaces or spaces that blur the body's inside and outside).

Galás's and Artaud's Dissident Artistic Expression

We have outlined how in Kristeva's conception of the signifying process the language of post-symbolist writers illustrated a process of alteration or mutation in literary representation, which gave rise to a 'poetic language' that was closer to the semiotic disposition. One of Kristeva's preoccupations is also the role of the language of madness as a form of dissidence and as antidote against the (bourgeois) norm. In 'The Subject in Process', Kristeva demonstrates how the poetic language that stems from borderline experiences close to psychosis can function as a way to find *jouissance* in dissident representation. Kristeva takes Artaud as an example of a marginalized writer who was troubled by the threat of madness and destruction, and yet was able to convey pleasure through unorthodox and nonconformist theatrical representation. Artaud's way of understanding drama involved taking risks and articulating the scream, a clamour that exhibits pathological states, hallucinations,

fatefulness, and untamed passions that come directly from his experience of psychosis, as well as the values that he held. According to Kristeva, his work produces an experience of *excess* that carries a music that can be extremely violent, and yet his language also has the potential to challenge the dynamics of signification.⁵⁸⁷

The parallelism between Artaud's ideas and Galás's appropriation of a voice of 'madness' articulated in *Schrei* 27 is illustrated in the SHRIEK – as it emerges as a raging movement whose effect is intensified by Galás's utilization of her vocal register. In Galás's position of abjection, the impossible demand of the rejected object, and the disgust that this failed rejection provokes is pushed to such an extreme that it suggests a state analogous to psychosis, where the object, in all its ambivalence, fills the psychic (sonorous) space and becomes 'reality'. The artist's vocalizations display a psychotic 'language' that deconstructs music and produces an overload of emotion and distress, as well as a vocal performance that can also be described as extremely violent. Galás's vocality becomes an experience that reveals a relationship with the 'other', which is overtly embraced, as shown in the phenomenon of *excess* (manifested as an act or gesture that mobilizes the urges/drives/passions). The externalization of this vocal 'madness' seeks to transmit to the listener the anguish and despair of an individual 'other' pushed to the edge in an extreme situation.

There is also similarity between the meanings that Kristeva ascribes to Artaud's texts and Galás's work, insofar as her vocal performance challenges the dynamics of signification. Kristeva argues that many features in Artaud's poetic expression can be interpreted as coming from the semiotic *chora*, the space ordered by the maternal

body, which is marked by (pulsional) movements/drives and is thus in perpetual renewal in the signifying process (it is also a structure that mediates between the semiotic and the symbolic). She reads Artaud's texts as emerging from an economy other than the unitary law of psychoanalysis, whereby the 'subject in process' replaces the 'unitary' subject: his psychotic language emerges from the tension between subjective experience and the norm that operates within the 'subject in process'. This tension in Artaud produces an experience that seems without logic, that is unintelligible, indicating that the subject here rejects the linear division between signifier and signified (the semiotic *chora* being a rhythmic space that has infinite potential to create signifying movements).⁵⁸⁸

Galás's 'psychotic' voice and disruptive language emerge from an appropriation of the aesthetics that generates images of *excess*, madness and horror, and thus her work, in this sense, mirrors the tensions within the subject in process from the position of female subjective experience vis-à-vis the norm (tensions which surface in the representation of a harrowing environment). Galás's incomprehensible howls and wails drastically alter the linear division between signifier and signified, which indicates that her vocal expression flows from the constant renewal and ex-pulsions of the semiotic *chora*, the maternal space where the feminine enters into a free play, creating new signifying movements. Her visceral sounds emerge as 'transfers of drive energies' that are incorporated in the semiotic processes (Kriteva's genotext could be equated here to a 'geno-song' that would evoke the rhythms and musicality of the semiotic).⁵⁸⁹ The energies in *Schrei 27* flow as accumulation of shrill repetitions, disjointed rhythm, reverberations, desementization and discordant noise. This type of 'geno-song' could be seen as the underlying foundation of Galás's

musical language, as a '*process*' that articulates non-signifying structures and moves through ephemeral borders; in this way, the artist deconstructs music and language and generates disturbing emotions that respond to an inverted logic of signification.⁵⁹⁰

Fragmentation of the Self and Language Disruption

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva briefly refers to Artaud as someone who actively works over abjection, given that his visceral language becomes a sign of inhumanity, horror, death, disgust and madness; she interprets this language as abject poetry.⁵⁹¹ She also talks of superego positions as a 'perverse interspace of abjection' and comments on the way contemporary literature takes advantage of the Prohibition and the Law whilst maintaining a distance where the abject is concerned.⁵⁹² She explains that artistic expression, literature in particular, seems 'to be written out of the untenable aspects of perverse or superego positions', inasmuch as the writer who is fascinated by the abject is able to pervert language, style and content by imagining its logic and projecting herself into it.⁵⁹³ Following this premise, we recognize Galás as an artist who is fascinated by the abject, 'perverts' musical and vocal forms and turns rules upside down; she uses the 'perverse interspace of abjection' to both get round the law and represent the feminine abject; she assumes and affirms her female subject position in the symbolic order and exploits that space to let the voice of '*hysterized abjection*' be heard. In *Schrei 27*, Galás makes use of a repressed voice of madness, anguish, trauma and hysteria, and adheres to her own law to let these voices express themselves.

The internalisation of repressed voices can be illustrated in a number of tracks from *Schrei 27*. In most examples, we find that Galás is performing a multiplicity of

voices, which could be taken to work as a metaphor for a fragmented singing body, and which may equally be linked to ideas attached to psychoanalytical understandings of notions of the self as fragmented, as well as postmodern ideas of the dissolution of the self (please, refer to DVD songs chapter 5). We have seen that track two, 'I I', is unusually marked by an initial 'screechy' or 'croaky' howl (residing in the throat) which turns into a higher register scream interspersed with 'other voices' howling with pain in the distance. Similarly, track eight, 'Vein,' contains a deep 'male' voice periodically interrupted by sudden higher register (female) shrieks. This recalls the gender undifferentiation that characterises Galás's work. Track seven, 'Hepar,' starts with raucous, fractured, moans interspersed with whispering voices that increase in intensity and rage until they become loud shrieks. Track eleven, 'Hee shock die', contains a disturbing (hysterical) sequence of types of vocalisations which verbalise delusive utterances and raucous laughter by way of fragmented speech and high-pitched wails in increasing intensity, reaching a climax of hard voices (in technical terms, the recording medium is 'saturated'), and nonsensical, distressing screams.

Galás's internalisation of these repressed voices draws attention to the appropriation of the other's pain and suffering, but, more significantly, her voice seems also to reify the aforementioned ambivalence between pain and *jouissance*, since the voice can be considered both a highly stylized vocal performance, very precise in its technical aspects and delivery, and an unsettling and disturbing 'incursion' on the audience's auditory awareness; her voice appears to cut through the line that separates the conscious and unconscious. The relocation of her voice at the border of this dualism is emphasised by Galás's reproduction of a combination of high-pitched shrieks, mad laughter and delusive speech. The fact that the work is meant to be performed in

darkness can be viewed as a way of defusing our vision and intensifying the sense of multiple presences through her voice. These effects strengthen the unsettling auditory impact on the listener, as well as being indicative of a departure from how the performing body is imagined (fragmented/dispersed). For Galás, this auditory impact is linked to the idea of ‘extroversion of energy’ and the diffraction of the self – as if a liberating catharsis:

[..] the way I sing embodies the concept that diffraction of the personality provides essential liberation from the *self*, thus extroverting the insanity. And when you extrovert the *insanity*, you can live most of the time as a real person, yet be able to change your self and commit actions that your real self would not be capable of.⁵⁹⁴

The performance thus provides a space for the externalisation of repressed content and ‘cleansing’ the self, whilst simultaneously exploring the possibilities of the voice used as a device to its overriding performative potential. Her ability to generate a multiplicity of ‘singing bodies’, an ‘other’s sound’, as Galás explains, can be achieved by ‘taking one pitch and using it almost as a fundamental’ and then reverberating it and giving it a kind of vibrato in order to develop ‘a melody over the fundamental of one of the other pitches’.⁵⁹⁵

Galás’s virtuoso performance technique is therefore used to allow her greater flexibility with the voice. Her extensive knowledge in using multiple microphones, mixing consoles, graphic equalizers, reverberation devices, tape decks, and multiple speaker sound systems are employed as part of the technology that characterises

Galás's style of interpretation.⁵⁹⁶ These technical features are used to enhance the possibilities of the voice, and thus hint at a 'pheno-song' (understood in Kristevan terms), inasmuch as the artist uses a carefully crafted sound framed in a highly structured and controlled vocal performance. Galás's use of several microphones in her extreme performances confers the impression of reproducing, for example, several voices simultaneously, as well as intensifying strange 'bustling' effects. This technique accentuates or decreases emotional expression and exerts a sort of effacement of the human voice, giving it almost non-human attributes.⁵⁹⁷

The aim, we might surmise, is to build on complex psychic structures and reach the 'essence' of sounds – the sounds of other voices – which become oppressive for the listener: the sound is condensed and abstracted to such an extent that it becomes archetypal, stripped of musical adornment. The sound is also stripped of lyrics, except on a few tracks where highly unconventional text is incorporated: the words appear in a contrived relation between sound and language. They function as verbal displacements where the text is subjected to the sound to the point that it is virtually unintelligible, an aspect that points towards the pre-eminence of vocality over language. The disruption of language is seen in words divorced from syntax, existing almost in isolation from context; they are iconic, without graspable meaning and ripped from sentences and coherent meaning. Galás's language corresponds to the abject vocabulary of the experience of the (female) borderline subject faced by the 'ambiguous opposition' between I/Other, Inside/Outside, as seen in this excerpt from *Schrei X* track two, 'I', printed in *the Shit of God*.

I I I I I AM NOT I I I I AM
 NOT I I I I AM NOT I I
 I I AM NOT I I AM NOT I I
 AM NOT AND READY FOR
 I I AM NOT AND READY
 FOR AND I I I WHAT CAN
 I I AM NOT WHAT
 CAN I I DO NOT WHAT
 CAN I I DO NOT I I I AM
 NOT AND I AM NOT THAT
 WHAT WHAT WHAT I CAN
 NOT WHAT I AM NOT I I I
 THEY CALL ME I I I WHAT
 CALL ME I I I WHAT⁵⁹⁸

In addition to this text, *the Shit of God* includes also for this track an iconic representation of a knife that can be taken as appropriation of a phallic symbol as a sign of defiance. The lyrics become here a pictogram that illustrates the artist's abject language and operates as a metaphor for some of the codings of hysteria as it passes through the phallic site. The phallic pictogram goes hand in hand with some of Galás's photographs, also featured in *the Shit of God*, where the artist is depicted with a knife in various poses; the images can be interpreted as a way of visually traversing the abject. In the example below, she is depicted in disarray holding a knife, and with an absent gaze fixed on a point slightly away from the onlooker, epitomizing both derangement and defiance (see figure 21):

“I”

III
III
III
III
III III
III
III
I I
I I
I I
I I
II I
II I
II
599



Figure 21: Diamanda Galás with knife

Galás’s distortion of sound/phonology is achieved through audio technology: through the alteration of sounds and textures and pushing the sonic envelope to the edge. She performs an abjection that results in anxiety about the vocal object, and a rejection on the part of the listener of the stark embodied ‘voices’ enacted in *Schrei* 27. Moreover, the vocal object summons up the pre-verbal state ungoverned by codification; the voice as primal is conjured up through the production of non-lexicalised phonology, bold sounds, disruption of language, aversion to harmony, and the display of intense emotions and physical distress. In an expressionist vein, Galás seeks the deformation of both text and vocal sound to produce a warped scream, a SHRIEK (*Schrei*) that conveys the drama and horror involved in abjection, and produces a distortion in the listener’s immediate perception.

Musical Desemantization

Kristeva indicates that foreclosure of the Name of the Father has repercussions for language in the form of an obsessional discourse insofar as the signifier 'keeps breaking up to the point of desemantization, to the point of reverberating only as notes, music, 'pure signifier' to be reparcelled out and resemanticized anew'.⁶⁰⁰ Galás tears meaning from sound in *Schrei X/Schrei* 27, a point that Schwarz has discussed in relation to Galás's work, arguing that she often 'articulates crossing the threshold between pitch and noise through too much pressure/too little air'.⁶⁰¹ Schwarz has examined noise in relation to acoustic registers in Galás's voice and identified clearly separated thin lines that reflect 'sounds' and thick lines that reflect 'noise'.⁶⁰² Taking on Kristeva, he distinguishes 'primary abjections', produced when boundaries are drawn, and 'secondary abjections' when boundaries are erased, and maintains that each stage produces 'abject residues'.⁶⁰³ Consequently, separations such as pitch/sound, language/pure sound are associated with the regressive trajectory back across the threshold leading to the noise that lies at the heart of the 'acoustic mirror' which, in turn, suggests a fantasy of a crucial site of secondary abjection: the body of the mother.⁶⁰⁴ In this way, Schwarz observes that Galás crosses the threshold between language and pure sound by subtracting vowels from consonants in some of her screams and also through the mutilation of notes at the top of her soprano's range, which reveal the pure noise that resides within the human voice.⁶⁰⁵ Overall, it would seem that Galás's free interplay of vocal elements through high-density dislocations of pitch, language, and sound, as well as verbal displacements in the form of obsessional (hysteric) and repetitive speech-sound over time are not simply geared towards the creation of particular sound effects, but, also, towards the production of a *meta-vocalisation* discernible in the very same performative processes. Her voice

would in this sense become a metaphor for the 'abject residues' left behind when the boundaries are drawn after separation of the subject's voice from the mother and when boundaries are erased by way of an imaginary return back across the threshold.

Ventriloquial Delusions

Galás's performative screams of 'madness' and verbal displacements by means of appropriating the voice of Others and positioning herself vis-à-vis the abject pose a difficulty for the listener at the moment of imagining the bodily source of the abjection. Steven Connor's idea of the 'vocalic body', which he presents as a powerfully embedded conception within the phenomenon of ventriloquism is helpful here. Connor explains the principle of the 'vocalic body' from the viewpoint that bodies produce voices, but voices can themselves, in turn, produce bodies; thus, the idea of the 'vocalic body' can take the form of a surrogate or secondary body which would function as 'a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice'.⁶⁰⁶ Connor suggests that the perception of the voice as being subordinated to the body is misleading; in fact, the opposite seems to be the case, given that the experience of a sourceless voice usually appears to the listener as uncomfortable and intolerable.⁶⁰⁷ Connor indicates that the voice has the capacity to function as an object of perception, which has gathered to itself the powers of a subject. Galás's inner voices and vocal displacements can therefore be linked to Connor's idea of the 'vocalic body' in two ways. On the one hand, her voice possesses a strong embodying power as a result of replicating the voices of others in a way that seems to separate from the obvious source, that is, Galás's own body: the other voices are marked by dislocations that seem also excessive to that source, conjuring up a different kind of body, an imaginary body of

the artist which may contradict, replace or reshape the actual performing body. On the other hand, the voices of others would be channelled through the impossible, imaginary 'voice-body' of Galás, which would not only be characterised by the range of actions of the voice, but also by the particular ways in which 'the voice seems to precipitate itself as an object, in which it can then itself give the illusion of acting'.⁶⁰⁸

From this vantage point, Galás's vocal performance resembles a ventriloquist theatre where her body may be imagined at the centre of a multiplicity of staged, disembodied voices of the other. The earlier comparison of Galás's screams with the 'hideous voice' can serve as example of a ventriloquist theatre where several hysterical voices are enacted. The 'hideous voice' also often seems too 'close', both in the audio-literal sense (close miking etc.) and in a more figurative sense, as being in danger of somehow 'getting inside' us, as somehow *contagious*. This is illustrated in *Schrei 27* track ten, 'Smell', in which we find a series of whispering and very 'breathy' articulations. The feeling of closeness is attained through Galás's highly studied use of microphone technology since the amplification through the microphone confers the voice with an imaginary sense of physicality and proximity to the singing body and this closeness thereby takes on a figurative meaning as *contagious*. The playful manner in which she manipulates the sonic textures through volume with the mixture of delays intensifies the proximity effect of the microphone (for example, in tracks one and two, 'Do Room' and 'I I'), whilst her skilled use of multiphonics enables her voice to produce several pitches simultaneously (track nine, 'M Dis II'). Galás effectively stretches the possibilities of her dynamic range and vocal timbres with a lot of loud noise in order to produce a dissociated voice, enacting a variety of other-hideous-voices. Galás's use of audio technology in *Schrei X/Schrei 27* would

appear to be aimed at disseminating an already dissociated voice, but, also, as Connor suggests, 'to revive some of the powers of the uncanny and the excessive with which the dissociated voice had long been associated'.⁶⁰⁹

Conclusion

Galás's *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* stands as an example of how avant-garde vocal production has the potential to break new ground in the creation of innovative modes of expression in music and artistic performance. The unusual deployment of Galás's voice, used in combination with audio technology, is employed in unconventional ways to step beyond the 'musical' and embrace the idea of the artwork expressed through the voice. By doing this, Galás generates a new language linked to the themes that she engages in her music (anguish, suffering, madness) and the artistic influences that inform her work. The expressionist image of the scream (the SHRIEK, wail or howl) has specifically inspired Galás in *Schrei 27* to convey disturbing emotions to the listener. She aims at constructing her own musical discourse, a feature shared with avant-garde musical/vocal artists who are interested in stretching the possibilities of the voice and constructing new musical languages. The pre-eminence given to vocal production and the use of the voice as prime instrument are also aspects that characterise much avant-garde performance, and which the artists emphasise in their utilization of vocal resources and techniques. Galás's training in operatic techniques, multiphonics, manipulation of microphones, sound systems and so on are used in *Schrei 27* to extrovert the sound and discharge an *energy*, which emerges as a highly subversive 'noise'.

As a way to associate avant-garde works by women vocal performers, in particular Galás's *Schrei 27*, with the gender critique of dominant sexual ideology, a return to the mother and the maternal space has been argued. The Kristevan semiotic musicality and the Irigarayan feminine-maternal applied to avant-garde performance provide significant arguments to restore women artists' psychic territory. The doubly marginal position of being woman and avant-garde creates also an opportunity to challenge the centre and transgress boundaries from the margins, as well as affirm their specific subject position (as 'totally avant-garde').

The reading of *Schrei 27* has engaged with Kristeva's theories of the signifying process and the abject in order to associate the performance with a discourse of feminine abjection. With the aim to read Galás's abjected position from a specific gender perspective, Irigaray's critique of the psychoanalytic model of women's subjectivity formation and representation of their desire has also proved useful to understand Galás's invocation of a hysterical voice and her *jouissance*. Galás's extreme vocalisations, emitted sometimes as pure noise and sound, display an obsessional discourse that has been linked to feminine hysteria, anguish and madness. The subversive power of this radical other is expressed in *Schrei 27* through disruptive language that voices a dissatisfaction with the relations normatively circulated between the male subject of the symbolic and the marginalised female subject as other. Galás's disruptive language and her mimicking of hysteria, together with her enactment of the abject (a '*hysterised* abjection') create a resistance, a revolt – in Kristeva's words – against the normative operations of the symbolic law. Similarly, Galás's enactment of the maternal voice fantasy whose uncanny trace

works as a metaphor of the maternal splitting generates an ‘unpleasant’ or ‘terrifying’ *jouissance* that ultimately seeks to subvert the patriarchal law.

Finally, it has been argued that Galás’s SHRIEKS display features of language in the form of pre-linguistic vocalisations, which have been connected with the abjection of the mother’s body and psychoanalytic theory of the ‘primal cry’. The artist’s interest in communicating at a deeper level responds to the aim of reaching through vocality to more complex psychic structures. The voice is used as vocal instrument to connect emotionally without words and to generate disturbing emotions in the listener. The reading of *Schrei X/ Schrei 27* as representation of the abject – enacted in the interplay of vocal elements, high-density dislocations of pitch and desemantization of language and sound – associates Galás’s vocal performance with an inverted logic in the process of signification, as well as a place at the borderline of multiple binarisms which are transgressed (music/noise, theatre/sound installation, human/non-human, conscious/unconscious, voice/technology). Her voice is in this way also situated in the space amid two surfaces that blur the body’s inside and outside where the abject resides. Galás’s performing body becomes a ‘vocalic body’ which functions as a ventriloquial vessel to externalise hysteria and represent the ‘abject’. The extroversion of energy, symbolically associated with a hysterical ‘hideous voice’, shows yet again the potential of Galás’s voice to go beyond cultural demarcations and challenge the symbolic order through performance.

CONCLUSION

We have seen over the course of the study how Amos's, Björk's and Galás's vocal and musical performances succeed in challenging the manner in which the feminine is symbolized, despite the deeply embedded structures of socialised subjectivity. The chapters' thematic discussion of vocality from a gender perspective has aimed at unravelling the meanings of the voice in musical and visual displays of an auditory culture produced by women. Irigaray's theories, together with those of Cixous's and Kristeva's, have been crucial to build the conceptual frame of the research, in which the 'voices' of these authors, their tropes and metonyms, have been used to argue for specific female imaginary processes and subjectivity, and to assert the artists' subject positions in culture. More specifically, the research has engaged with Irigaray's thinking, her concept of sexual difference and the representational strategies that she puts in place to work towards a culture in the feminine, which have been applied in the readings; in this way, this author emerges as the main referent in the research. Her concepts and representation of the feminine other have been linked to the artists' own representations as an elaboration of an Irigarayan aesthetics, whereby an interconnection was found between the complex sets of meanings in Irigaray's writing and the meanings discussed in the framed performance contexts under analysis. One of the interests in this sense is the question of representation embedded in Irigaray's work, which makes her ideas particularly relevant to the 'enactments' of the feminine in women's vocal and musical performances. A key aspect in this sense has been the analysis of the strategies used by the artists to construct their own (self)

representations, and, in this way, situate their musical creativity within the wider context of women's cultural production and a politics of gender representation.

An important assumption in the research has been the understanding that embodied vocal performance from an Irigarayan stance involves a musical narrativity and a 'performance' in the sense of considering culture in a conscious manner and of communicating an artistic vision and message to the listeners. Irigaray's relational model of speech incorporates moreover an ethical dimension that is implicated in her idea of 'being with an other' as performance; although this has been exclusively developed for real-life sexuate subjects, the dichotomy between being as 'performance' (as performative discursivity) and artistic vocal performance as a communicative activity that addresses others is destabilized in Amos, Björk and Galás. Vocal and musical performance is understood as meta-performance, clearly mediated by aesthetic convention, and yet despite being distinct from any theorisation of the discursive performative, it can be said that this relationship in my case analyses is brought closer together, undercutting any sense of absolute dichotomy. In this sense, the enactment of gender identity from an Irigarayan stance can be located among debates on the politics of performativity, although the term 'performativity' has been re-contextualised in the light of Irigaray's philosophical underpinnings.

From an Irigarayan perspective, it can be said then that Amos, Björk and Galás invoke a feminine other in their musical and vocal performances that can be read and listened to at the level of the unconscious or imaginary, beyond the logic of consciousness. Their utilisation of vocal techniques and unique vocal/musical aesthetic vision is understood alongside of a 'particularised individuality' product of

their identity and subjectivity, which, at the same time, foregrounds a feminine subject position in culture. The artists' subject position was seen not to be modelled on the dominant (male) cultural imaginary. The male imaginary, according to Irigaray, seeks 'closure' whereas 'the woman's imaginary corresponds to something more open, something *in-fini*, both infinite and unfinished'.⁶¹⁰ By enacting a feminine other in their performances, the artists try to identify the repressed element in the binaries of the cultural imaginary in order to challenge dichotomies and bring about symbolic change. In this way, Irigaray's notion of the female imaginary strongly resonates with Amos's, Björk's and Galás's 'insubordinate' vocal displays as expression of some other that is infinite, uncanny, subversive, unlimited, and transcendental, and which is then transformed through the creative process into *jouissance*. On the one hand, the artists appear to be sending an unconscious message to the (masculine) symbolic order through creativity, voice and musical display. On the other, the artists transmit an aesthetic experience and conscious message to their listeners from a position of creative agency, so as to outwardly reach their audiences and elicit their response.

The ideas, concepts and tropes of Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva have therefore provided important insights, as well as the language, for an interpretation of Amos's, Björk's and Galás's voices and musical displays in terms of a connection between their art and women's lives more generally, as a way of negotiating the feminine that emerges in their musical/vocal performances in more progressive ways. Irigaray's and Cixous's critique of phallo(go)centrism implies that women have not been able to become subjects of language and culture, unless they adopt a male position within the stable meanings guaranteed by the Phallus, which excludes female bodies. Their

concepts of *parler femme* and *l'écriture féminine* respectively are aimed at articulating the position of women (as) speaking and writing subjects. It has been intimated that the artists take up an active subject position from which to speak and write their musical language as women; they do not only show a strong sense of identity as singers, but they also aim to engage the listener in a deeper and more reflective way of listening. To this purpose, they develop their own vocal/musical discursivity, construct their own narrative and strive to communicate with listeners through their meta-performative vocal displays, considering culture in a conscious manner. The affirmation of their subject position and the generation of their own images and (self) representations is articulated with the subjectivities of others.

Another aspect covered in the analyses is that voice and (musical) writing become entwined in musical displays and are closely associated with the female body. The generation of new signification in the artists' performances and their musical styles has been connected with the embodiment of voice and meanings that are not born out of men's words and models, or at least not in the way these currently exist; this was a dimension particularly noticeable in the case of avant-garde vocal performers. Women's musical creativity appears in some cases to embody an aspiration to explore an internal world that is then communicated outwardly; in some cases, the vocal sound expresses pleasure, or uncanniness, or it takes us back to a pre-verbal stage with regard to Western language, a simile for the recuperation of a primal source or power of women's creativity. These aspects can be read in the work of Amos, Björk, Galás and Miranda, since they are able to create, or recreate, unique sounds, words and melodies through the development of certain vocal techniques, their music, performance artwork and/or their use of technology. Each case study has involved

the explanation of vocal techniques and articulations that characterise the artists' mode of musical delivery, as well as the exploration of metaphors, symbols and messages displayed in the aural and visual materials as expression of auditory feminine representation.

Each artist has adopted a different approach or strategy to engage with the themes they want to explore in their music, and yet common threads can be traced in the readings of their musical performances and across the thematic content. Following Irigaray's and Cixous's words and metaphors, one of these threads locates the source of the woman's voice within a primal (maternal) origin, a space from which is possible to express (represent) the feminine, and which is identified with music and song. According to Irigaray, Western culture's dichotomies result from the male's necessity 'to differentiate himself from mother and/as nature, and to master them by means of techniques, beginning with the one which organizes language itself'.⁶¹¹ She writes that 'in the masculine Western tradition [...] a set of logical rules claims to control the whole of culture. Then art, including musical art, becomes a secondary domain with regard to logical requirements', and too often 'art itself has become a technique at the service [...] of man'.⁶¹² Irigaray advocates the recuperation of music that, in our culture, 'loses its function of enlivening and making the whole body subtle', as it 'abandons its role of mediation between nature and humans, between humans themselves and between humans and gods – a mediation in love and in the access to the divine'.⁶¹³ Her thought therefore encourages the cultivation of a poetic language, which has been associated with the artists' 'musical poetry' as a form of expression that is committed to our maternal-natural-material belonging, and not yet encumbered by traditional masculine logic.

In explicit ways, the artists' vocal performances have been associated with words, tropes and metaphors that retrieve a maternal voice, a feminine-maternal action that is connected with the manifestation of women's libidinal energies and/or a return to a repressed maternal origin. Irigaray's maternal-natural-material encourages women to recover the relationship with the mother, whilst Kristeva's takes women to an originary moment of separation or splitting from the body of the mother; the return to the mother in women's vocality evokes the complex identificatory processes that take place as a result of an inadequate primary metaphorisation of the mother, an aspect that has an effect on women's psychic development. The mother action, which has been culturally repressed, is retrieved in vocal performance as the vestige or trace of the mother's voice that is either sublimated into musical creativity (as a pleasant *jouissance* reminiscent of an oceanic sonorous envelope), or re-enacted as the abjected voice/body of the mother within the patriarchal system; this exposes the complex dilemmas for women of having to identify with the image of the castrated mother (as a painful or mortifying *jouissance*).

Although the writings of the French feminists significantly draw on a recuperation of the maternal as a gesture that replaces paternal authority, and as important founding account for the articulation of women's desire, it has not been the intention here to imply that the sole focus of the readings of vocal performance rests on the retrieval of the myth of a mother-as-origin, even though this continues to be an important paradigm in feminist critical theory. The role of the mother as a way to interpret the work of women vocal performers has none the less provided important insights into the meanings of their performances from a gendered perspective. As we have seen,

Irigaray's idea of the feminine-maternal provides a framework to ascribe value to the daughter's relation to the father and the mother, and in this sense she searches for a 'maternal' genealogy that accounts for imaginary or symbolic identifications with a woman who may not be the mother. Moreover, as Huffer points out, Irigaray's ethical model of relation with respect to gender construction 'forces us to consider a concept of community that is politically effective, but does not homogenise the differences within we'.⁶¹⁴ My interpretative engagement with the primal voice of the mother as a source of *jouissance* (both positive and negative) shows that the return to the maternal voice is not necessarily structured in terms of a 'nostalgic' return to origin, but rather as a way to create spaces. Thus, the powerful image that the mother invokes for the cultural interpretation of women's vocal production seems worth retaining, whilst being considered at the same time in new productive ways.

The trace of the maternal as return of the repressed emerged in chapter two as allusion to the sense of (original) trauma that remains present through the external/internal dialectic operating within the individual, and the way she copes with the strangeness that comes from the other. The chapter dealt, more generally, with the representation of the autobiographical and trauma in performances by Amos and Galás, and looked into the metaphorization of trauma through vocality. The representation of trauma as inscription of 'autobiographical subjectivity' in the artists' musical displays enabled the listener to imagine the trauma of the self and others, and in this way the performances exposed how the communication and response from the audience can be reinvented through the self. Chapter three on the voice and the feminine libidinal economy engaged with Cixous's and Irigaray's language that identifies with women's libidinal energies and points to the articulation of women's desire. Through the

examination of Amos's and Björk's performances, the chapter focused on the centrality of the maternal-feminine as a symbolization (mother/daughter) that has not fully incorporated in its writing the repressed elements of nature, that is, the relation to origin and the archaic mother. This process created the space for the artists to mark their territory as feminine: they then participated in a *mimetic* engagement with a vocal masquerade of femininity that was used in the vocal displays to reverse traditional assumptions about women's voices, as well as to express a specific 'individuality', product of the artists' feminine desire and *jouissance*.

The repressed feminine-maternal surfaced also in chapter four as the vocal trace or supplement of Amos's and Björk's eerie and mysterious renderings; their haunting voices were conceptualised as carrying the surplus of a feminine spectral other that is heard as uncanny. Whilst the artists' vocal displays suggested a haunting listening experience linked to a (repressed) maternal or feminine spectre, the analysis engaged, from a gendered perspective, with the cultural tropes of the Gothic and the cyborg: this was to argue that the feminine-maternal-natural trace in the artists' voices could be figured as the presence of a transgressive gothicised and cyborgian feminine other. Finally, the central role of the mother re-emerged in chapter five as a significant facet of women vocal performers' engagement with the avant-garde. The return to the mother was at the heart of avant-garde artists' interest in recuperating a primal voice and the archaic vocal object as a way to invert the logic of signification; the subversive power of their cutting-edge vocal work reflected back on the artists' location in a doubly marginal position. Kristeva's concept of the semiotic, associated with the maternal, and her theory on abjection were instrumental to argue for a discourse on feminine abjection in *Schrei 27* Galás case study (her extreme vocal

display was interpreted as way to bring in the abject elements associated with the mother's body that are outside of signification).

Linked to the retrieval of the maternal, another common thread in the artists' vocal performances is the idea of the feminine becoming audible as vocal *excess*. *Excess* was present in chapter three in the way the artists aimed through *mimesis* to thwart conventional conceptions of women's voices and find gestural expressions of desire that were their own. Disruptive *excess* was a predominant feature in Galás's *Schrei* 27 as a way to stage abjection and *mimic* the fragmented voice and language of the hysteric. The feminine surplus of the haunting voice in chapter four was also understood as *excess* or residue. The trace of the spectral other was drawn from Derrida's concept of spectrality and argued for in the analysis as a feminine spectre. For Derrida, 'woman' is a name for 'undecidability', which indicates a 'more' rather than an 'absence' or 'lack', that is, it is something already more than any categorization can identify: it is a mark of *excess*, a function of a respect for irrepressibility.⁶¹⁵ For Irigaray, woman may be seen as either a 'hole' or absence within discourse or an unsymbolized residue or *excess*, which overflows determinate male categorizations; women's sexuality, for example, is seen as in *excess* of phallic sexuality because the woman's sexual pleasure is multiple and diffuse, and not centred on the genitals.⁶¹⁶ Vocal *excess* in the women artists is therefore interpreted as a way of symbolizing the *excess* as feminine pleasure and *jouissance*, as well as a way of generating through the voice a particularised, individual representation; their musical displays seek to locate and keep open the 'blank spaces' of masculine representation.

Within the context of cultural signification, the association of the artists' vocal performances with the maternal voice points towards a way to symbolize the archaic relationship to origin and to find a space, a home, from which to create their (self) representation. Equally important from an Irigarayan perspective is that women develop a transcendental relation that corresponds to their female specificity and encourages a becoming by developing their creativity and poetic language. These aspects, together with the association of the vocal *excess* with the symbolization of an unrepresented feminine *jouissance*, indicates that the feminine voice emerges as an important signifier in the reading of women's musical production. Irigaray's thinking becomes particularly appropriate, because the artists can be said to sing the words of the 'other's musical language', that is, the feminine, and articulate a musical/vocal production that can be seen from within the perspective of Irigaray's culture in the feminine. Their cultural production can be viewed in this way as embodying open meanings that subvert or destabilize the cultural hegemonic values and ideals of our world.

In this sense, I hope that the research has contributed an argument for an engagement between women's musical performance and Irigaray's thinking and aesthetics. Irigaray suggests a less linear and more flowing, fluctuating and perceptive mode of expression associated with the feminine. Attached to this understanding is the establishment of a dialogic and open-ended relational model with the 'other' and his/her 'others'. We have seen how women artists' 'singing', and more generally the 'voice', can be articulated both around the duality of subjectivity and 'intra-subjective' performance, as well as an understanding of artistic production as meta-performance. The discussion of these aspects vis-à-vis feminine artistic performance

takes into account difference and the experience of woman with respect to her own subjectivity and her perceptual experience, particularly at the time of articulating women's musical creativity and singing performance. This suggests that women's musical work can be read as the production of an aesthetic activity which is more open and challenges the boundaries of the masculine. It then enables the development of another culture with respect to Western tradition, a culture which challenges the dichotomies of Western thinking and is at the same time more multiple and inclusive at the level of subjectivities.

The sensations that are generated when the performer sings and the audience listens to the voice suggests a way for women to develop their culture, as well as feelings of (pleasant or unpleasant) *jouissance* transmitted from the performer to the listener. Live and recorded performances not only offer a collective identification of the audience with *jouissance*; a response from audiences to the female artist's work takes place via the dynamics of musical display. The exchange between the performer and the listeners operate both ways, since the *jouissance* generated in the process of listening to a singing voice also happens through the reactivation of identificatory mechanisms in the audience. Thus, women's production, worked on again through a feminine lens, still brings about artistic cultural transformation. What is important is that the production of women's vocal performances becomes audible and visible; their work becomes relevant to both women and men, given that they will be able to reach out to many subjectivities and thus their creative expression can be felt to inspire their listeners.

The voice of the artist, originating in her body, becomes a major creative resource, but her artistic power can also flow through the expressiveness of music and lyrics: through the textual, auditory and visual communications that can all act as cultural signs. Some women's artistic performance and creativity, their voice and singing, seem therefore to be close to Irigaray's perspective with respect to a culture of perceptions, as is the modulation of songs according to the body, the heart, the breath, the touch and silence. Poetry and music as expressions of creativity should emerge from the whole of the living world, as 'from a silent background', and invite everyone to communicate, starting from their whole being, and from the breath and the energy of the universe.⁶¹⁷ For a 'transformation of energy' to take place, it is necessary to listen to music in a way 'both active and passive', in the sense that one has to 'welcome what is perceived and to let it act'.⁶¹⁸ Women's musical and vocal performances could be viewed and listened to in an Irigarayan fashion, as if they would arise from a whole, where music connects with the living universe and allows a becoming through breathing, silence, touching and expressivity.

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ENDNOTES

Chapter 1. Introduction: Towards a Theory of Feminine Vocal Performance

¹ Luce Irigaray, 'June 19th', *Everyday Prayers*. Maisonneuve & Larose: University of Nottingham, 2004. 140.

² Luce Irigaray, *Key Writings*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004. 136.

³ See Irigaray, *Everyday Prayers*. 35.

⁴ Irigaray, *Everyday Prayers*. 35.

⁵ These statements in Irigaray, *Everyday Prayers*. 47.

⁶ Since the term 'feminine' is highly contested, it is worth mentioning that it will be primarily employed in the research in an Irigarayan sense and it will be explained in due course the way in which the term is used.

⁷ Fátima Miranda interviewed by Esther Zaplana [unpublished interview, 07/06/2006].

⁸ Miranda herself describes 'Hálito' as a weaving of tracks as if she were creating an intricate piece of textile fabric. See Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

⁹ Judith Barry and Sandy Fitterman, 'Textual Strategies: the Politics of Art Making', in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Framing Feminism. Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985*. London: Pandora Press, 1987. 313-321 (320).

¹⁰ Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. 91.

¹¹ These points in Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 92.

¹² Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 93.

¹³ See Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 93-94.

¹⁴ Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 95. On this point, Middleton draws from Carolyn Abbate.

¹⁵ Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 21-22.

¹⁶ These points in Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. 24.

¹⁷ On the role of voice and gaze in musical performance see also Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 96.

¹⁸ These points in Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. 25, 27.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of feminist thought in France see, for example, Toril Moi, *French Feminist Thought: a Reader*. New York: WileyBlackwell, 1987; Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987; Dani Cavallaro, *Beyond the Big Three: French Feminist Theory Today*. London and New York: Continuum, 2003.

²⁰ This is not only according to Irigaray's way of thinking, but it is possible to conceive of female identity as a product of specific feminine symbolizations, which substantiate the notions of a female imaginary and a female subjectivity. Irigaray's elaboration of the existence of female subjectivity takes account of further considerations, which are covered in her earlier works. One of them is the entry of the sexed body into the definition of subjectivity and culture [see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985]. Margaret Whitford also examines and clarifies some of the complexities of female subjectivity and the female imaginary in Irigaray's work [see Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991].

²¹ Luce Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond Any Word' in *Key Writings*. 136-137.

²² See Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. 179.

²³ Hélène Cixous interviewed, 'Cixous Live' in Ian Blyth with Susan Sellers, *Hélène Cixous: Live Theory*. New York and London: Continuum, 2004. 99-112 (99, 100-101).

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1984. 68. In Kristeva's work, the semiotic is associated with the maternal and characterized by pulsions, music and kinetic rhythms.

²⁵ Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond Any Word'. 137, 138, 139.

²⁶ Irigaray, *Everyday Prayers*. 46. Irigaray understands that men have tried to go outside the relation with the maternal-natural-material belonging by forgetting that which gives and renews life, that which they have received with the body. This goes with their staying in sameness among men, which implies a production by assimilation, and though the mediation of the female or females [see Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. London: Continuum, 2004. 85-86]. According to Irigaray 'the human

species is made up of two different beings and Beings which each enter into relation with the real in a specific way' [Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*. London: Continuum, 2002. 110].

²⁷ Cixous's notion of bisexuality is indebted to both Derrida and psychoanalysis (Lacan and Freud); it employs the deconstruction of binaries with a feminist analysis of sexual difference. Within a poststructuralist framework, the oppositions of language reproduce a patriarchal order that places the feminine in a position subordinate to the masculine; hence her critique of concepts such as logocentrism and phallogocentrism. Bisexuality goes beyond dual modes of thinking to imagine a multiple subject: the notion differs from androgyny in that it does not combine sexualities, but displaces the terms 'masculinity' and femininity' to argue that different forms of gender subjectivity are possible for women and men, but particularly for women [see Susan E. Dunn, 'The Place that Writes: Locating Hélène Cixous in Feminist Theory', <<http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/cixous/dunn.html>> (10/04/2009)]. Irigaray's sexuate identity is connected with the setting up of her parameter of dual subjectivity and sexual difference: it refers to the formation of the feminine and masculine subjects and the development of their respective body-psychic identity. Both are irreducible to each other and this forms the basis for a sexuate culture and the relation between sexuate subjects.

²⁸ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 174.

²⁹ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 176-178.

³⁰ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University press, 1985. 74.

³¹ The concept of *mimesis* or *mimicry* is explained in Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76.

³² Luce Irigaray, 'Introduction' to part III, Art in *Key Writings*. 99.

³³ Luce Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond Any Word'. 135.

³⁴ Elizabeth Hirsh and Gary A. Olson, 1996. 'Je-Luce Irigaray: A meeting with Luce Irigaray', trans. by E. Hirsh and G. Brulotte, <<http://www.cas.usf.edu/JAC/163/irigaray.html>> (08/10/2005).

³⁵ Irigaray, 'Introduction' to part III, Art in *Key Writings*. 98.

³⁶ Irigaray, *The Way of Love*. 111. According to Irigaray, the feminine human subject has historically been prevented 'from attaining its own Being [...]. The return of the masculine subject to himself as well as the constitution of the world realized by him are from then on perverted – they do not get to the

bottom of the reality of the real and carry out a becoming of oneself and of the world upon incomplete and unreal bases' [Irigaray, *The Way of Love*. 110].

³⁷ These points in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent. Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990. 11-12.

³⁸ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 1996. 29-32.

³⁹ These points in Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 29.

⁴⁰ See Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*. 14.

⁴¹ These points in Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*. 14.

⁴² These statements in Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*. xvii.

⁴³ Some of Björk's songs in particular can be seen overtly as an avant-garde, an aspect illustrated in her vocals-only compositions and her innovative utilization of digital sounds.

⁴⁴ Note here that the work of Joan La Barbara and Meredith Monk with extended vocal techniques in the 1960s and 1970s paved the way for later artists to engage in unconventional and cutting-edge vocal performances.

⁴⁵ I am establishing here an analogy between 'conceptual art' (in which the concept or idea behind the work takes precedence over traditional aesthetic concerns) and avant-garde musical performances that radically challenge traditional musical forms to foreground the concepts or ideas (aesthetic or ideological) involved in the vocal/musical compositions.

⁴⁶ Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*. 16.

⁴⁷ Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*. 17.

⁴⁸ Introduction by Leon S. Roudiez to Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1984. 1-10 (1).

⁴⁹ I draw these points from Leon S. Roudiez, 'Introduction' to Kristeva, *Revolution*. 1-3.

⁵⁰ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 22. Roudiez finds also analogies between the semiotic/symbolic and binarisms such as the unconscious/conscious, id/superego and nature/culture. See Kristeva, *Revolution*. 4.

⁵¹ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 24.

⁵² These statements in Kristeva, *Revolution*. 26. Kristeva describes the chora as follows: 'Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated' [Kristeva, *Revolution*. 25].

⁵³ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 27.

⁵⁴ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 27.

⁵⁵ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 28. See also Michael Payne, *Reading Theory. An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida, and Kristeva*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell publishers, 1993. 167-169.

⁵⁶ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 29.

⁵⁷ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 61-62.

⁵⁸ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 63.

⁵⁹ The question of essentialism is taken up and discussed in chapter three. Irigaray explicitly rejects the concept as a masculine construct, and yet her ideas around sexual difference have been labeled as essentialist, especially since she also accounts for the body in analyses of identity. Yet, critical opinion nowadays generally understands the implications of Irigaray's sexual difference as strategic essentialism.

⁶⁰ Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 25.

⁶¹ Lynne Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*: Toward an Ethics of Performance' in *Yale French Studies*, No. 87, *Another Look, Another Woman: Retranslations of French Feminism*, 1995. 20-41 (21-22).

⁶² Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution. An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury, eds., *Writing on the Body. Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1997. 401-417 (402).

⁶³ Butler, 'Performative Acts'. 401-402.

⁶⁴ This point in Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal, 'Gender as a Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler'. London 1993. <<http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>> (07/04/2009). For Butler, the performative reiteration of the norm constitutes the subject, as well as the meaning of the symbolic law. For a further discussion of Butler's performativity see also Ewa Ziarek Plonowska, 'From Euthanasia to the Other of Reason: Performativity and the Deconstruction of Sexual Difference' in Feder, Ellen K., Rawlinson, Mary C. and Zakin, Emily, eds. *Derrida and Feminism. Recasting the Question of Woman*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997.

⁶⁵ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. 146-147.

⁶⁶ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 24-25. Huffer quotes Butler on this point.

⁶⁷ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 25. Huffer indicates that this move from narrative to performance corresponds to the epistemological shift of postmodernism in which narratives are critiqued and put into quotations.

⁶⁸ Butler quoted in Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 25-26.

⁶⁹ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 26.

⁷⁰ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 27-28. Huffer rethinks here the terms of the opposition between performance and narrative.

⁷¹ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76.

⁷² Irigaray quoted in Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 37.

⁷³ See Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 37-39.

⁷⁴ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 38-39.

⁷⁵ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 36.

⁷⁶ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 212.

⁷⁷ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 212.

⁷⁸ As already intimated, Irigaray's model of speech, enacts a strong subject position, the feminine subject 'I' of enunciation that addresses a 'Thou', a listener or interlocutor. Her model is intersubjective in so far as she develops (and *performs*) a relational model of subjectivity that allows for the irreducible difference of the other.

⁷⁹ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 23.

⁸⁰ Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 33. Huffer draws from Austin's theory of speech acts for her point on the 'necessary error'.

⁸¹ See Huffer, 'Luce *et Veritas*'. 22-24.

⁸² For example, smashing a guitar at the end of a rock concert will not generate the same ethical judgement as smashing a guitar at home in front of the family.

⁸³ This is suggested by Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in their introduction to *Performativity and Performance*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995. 1-18. Parker also points out that one of the consequences of this link has been a remarkable willingness to credit a performative dimension to a variety of conducts such as rituals, ceremonies or scripted behaviours, whilst the field of performance studies has simultaneously expanded to embrace a myriad of performance practices such as film, photography, television, music, performance art, and so on.

⁸⁴ Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity*. 1-18.

⁸⁵ Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity*. 2.

⁸⁶ This point in Osborne and Segal, 'Gender as a Performance'.

⁸⁷ Butler, 'Performative Acts'. 410.

⁸⁸ Butler, 'Performative Acts'. 411.

⁸⁹ For further information on Goffman's ideas, see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre: Anchor Books, 1959.

⁹⁰ These point in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. 2-3.

⁹¹ Irigaray's later works focus on the existence of two different subjects and on how to establish an ethical, political and, fundamentally, philosophical relationship between them, without one being subjugated to the other. She is interested in constructing a dialogue between two different subjects that respects difference between sexuate identities and permits the interpretation and, further, the construction, of the world from two gender perspectives. See Luce Irigaray *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996 and Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

⁹² According to Irigaray, in our tradition, 'the feminine is experienced as space, but often with connotations of the abyss and night [...], while the masculine is experienced as time' [Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. 7]. For her the relation between space and time must remain dialectic: space must be turned into time and time into space, and thus the interchange expands the scope elaborated by Western culture's reductionist model of consistently turning space into time [Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. 7-9]. Temporal and spatial representations of the female voice and body by women artists are significant for the interpretation of musical performance.

⁹³ Note here that 'negativity' as providing borders for each one implies a meeting space between the two subjects, that is opened by their difference. This negative involves that a person is never a mere subjectivity, but is objectively limited by belonging to a gender. It establishes the irreducibility between both subjects. Since one can never become the other, a necessary return to oneself occurs. Irigaray explains that, 'contrary to Hegel, the negative at work here does not serve to integrate the outside in a unique subjectivity – thus, in a way, the "you" in the "I" – in the search for a unique Absolute. I depart from Hegel and use the dialectical process in a different manner: now it is in the service of inter-subjectivity. The task and the finality are no longer to reach a unique Absolute, that is, to succeed in projecting, to the infinite, the aspirations or the intentions of a unique subject – and of those who are the same as him – onto a supposedly objective totality. Rather the negative is used to maintain the duality of subjectivities, and a space between them, which belongs neither to the one nor to the other, and which allows them to meet together'. The negative for Hegel serves 'to reduce the all to a one – a One', whereas for Irigaray 'it is used to maintain the two' [Irigaray, Part I, Philosophy, 'Introduction', in *Key Writings*. 3].

⁹⁴ Irigaray's reflections on performance speak of presence and the relational quality of 'being in two', which, in her opinion, always requires performing, and turning back to oneself as being also part of the performance of being in two. She points out that a discussion on artistic performance could be a question of meta-performance [notes, seminar held by Luce Irigaray at the University of Nottingham, May 2005].

⁹⁵ Irigaray maintains that the '*I* is another [...]' sometimes attributed to the unconscious, can be understood in a different way. *I* is never simply *mine* in that it belongs to a gender. Therefore, I am not

the whole: I am man or woman. And I am not simply a subject, I belong to a gender. I am objectively limited by this belonging' [Irigaray, *I Love to You*. 106]. She also writes that 'women and men must therefore be recognized as representatives or as incarnations of human gender. They have to be valorized for the sake of the becoming of their sexed I, for the relations between them and for the constitution of a spiritual dialectic of these relations' [Irigaray, *I Love to You*. 108].

⁹⁶ On this point, Irigaray believes that 'the purely narrative, autobiographical "I" or the "I" that expresses only affect, risks being an "I" that collapses back into a role traditionally granted to woman: an "I" of pathos, that the woman also uses in her place, the home'. Thus, she cannot affirm her own experience alone since 'this is something I know only after the fact, by means of discussion, and so on. I can't affirm that this is always already the experience of a woman. It must be a dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity' [in Hirsh and Olson, 'Je-Luce Irigaray'].

⁹⁷ Note here that 'flowing' is meant as smooth, continuous, not rigid or abrupt. 'Fluid' may perhaps be used in the sense of 'flowing', although the important point in Irigaray's work is that textual meaning is open, not closed off. The feminine is not meant as spreading and losing women's energy, given that the borders, the limits are kept and thus energy cannot leak out.

⁹⁸ Luce Irigaray, *je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*. New York and London: Routledge. 1993. 108.

⁹⁹ Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond Any Word'. 136.

¹⁰⁰ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. 7.

¹⁰¹ Irigaray, *Key Writings*. 137-139.

¹⁰² For reference, note that some parts of my engagement with artistic vocal performance and Irigaray's ideas are published in Esther Zaplana, 'Music and the Voice of the Other: An Engagement with Irigaray's Thinking and Feminine Artistic Musical Performance' in Luce Irigaray, ed., with Mary Green, *Luce Irigaray: Teaching*. London: Continuum, 2008. 39-49.

Chapter 2. At the Limits of the Autobiographical: The Voice and the Representation of the 'Self' and Trauma

¹⁰³ See Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds., *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 5-8.

¹⁰⁵ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 5.

¹⁰⁷ See Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography. Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001. 1-15.

¹⁰⁹ Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 7.

¹¹⁰ Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 9.

¹¹¹ See Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 5.

¹¹² See Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 7.

¹¹³ See Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 2, 5.

¹¹⁴ See Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 5.

¹¹⁵ Liz Stanley, *The Auto/biographical I. The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992. 14.

¹¹⁶ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 5.

¹¹⁷ I am drawing my argument from Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 9,11.

¹¹⁸ Foucault argues that subjectivity is constituted through various forces and hence the individual emerges as a result of complex power-knowledge relations. He considers problematical the idea of a fully knowing and autonomous agent, or sovereign transcendental subject, as a foundation of power or knowledge. He rejects unity and sovereignty of subjectivity given that, in his view, this is formed through particular discontinuities in the history of thought. For a detailed account on his ideas around power-knowledge see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980; see also Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

¹¹⁹ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 11.

¹²⁰ It is worth noting here that in psychoanalytic accounts of the subject, particularly in Lacan, the 'subject' is equivalent to both a conscious and unconscious sense of agency. The 'subject' is the subject of the unconscious, and thus agency is not simply the product of a conscious process –in turn an illusion derived from the ego (Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.195). In this sense, autobiographical self-reference offers the artist a space in which an unconscious process linked to trauma and a conscious attempt of recovery are activated to enable the woman artist to assume her sense of agency.

¹²¹ Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic, eds., *Topologies of Trauma. Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory*. New York: Other Press, 2002. xiii-xxvii.

¹²² Note that in psychoanalysis 'acting out' implies letting out a repressed feeling, doing something without reflection or mediation and a failure to recollect the past. Lacan emphasises that the recollection involves bringing something to consciousness and communicating it to an Other by means of language. Hence for Lacan 'acting out' results when recollection is not possible due to the refusal of the Other to listen. The 'acting out' is for him a ciphered message handed over to the Other to be deciphered. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 2-3.

¹²³ Belau and Ramadanovic, eds., *Topologies of Trauma*. xiv-xvi.

¹²⁴ Belau recalls here the work of Žižek. See Belau and Ramadanovic, eds., *Topologies of Trauma*. xvi-xvii.

¹²⁵ This point is made in Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 7.

¹²⁶ Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 148.

Chapter 2. The Autobiographical in Tori Amos's 'Me and a Gun': The Singing Voice as a Signifier

¹²⁷ Tori Amos interviewed by Bill DeMain, 'The inner world of Tori Amos', March/April 1994, <http://www.stuff.to/include.php?include=/taart/InnerWorld_0394.txt> (26/08/2003).

¹²⁸ Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹²⁹ Amos maintains the idea of ‘girls’ songs even if some her music may also contain ‘heavy male energy’ sounds. See Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹³⁰ Amos’s view is that even if nobody wanted to listen to her work, she would still continue to do it: she would share it with herself, although sharing with other people makes one feel much better. Sharing is therefore an important dimension for the artist, albeit not central to her song writing and creativity. See Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹³¹ Amos describes the process of music writing as coming from a stream of consciousness, whereas song writing emerges from her inner world, and she then submits it to a process of re-elaboration. When the song is about the outer world, she goes through a process of interiorisation that enables her to see the outer world from an interesting perspective. See Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹³² Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹³³ It must be recognised, however, that many post-Freudians, including Lacan and Žižek have eschewed the notion that psychoanalysis is about narrative [see Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso, 1997]. Clearly, this is another way in which Irigaray (and, by implication Amos) might be seen to depart from psychoanalytic convention.

¹³⁴ The underlined words indicate the throaty articulations.

¹³⁵ The underlined sibilants and fricatives indicate emphasis on these articulations.

¹³⁶ Tori Amos Lyrics at <<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/toriamos/meandagun.html>> (17/07/2008).

¹³⁷ I take the idea of biography in performance as being akin to a screen from Bonnie Marranca & Gautam Dasgupta, *Conversations on Art and Performance*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University, 1999. 490.

¹³⁸ Brett Levinson ‘Obstinate Forgetting in Chile: Radical Injustice and the Possibility of Community’ in Belau and Ramadanovic, eds. *Topologies of Trauma*. 211-232 (215, 216).

¹³⁹ Levinson, ‘Obstinate Forgetting’. 215.

¹⁴⁰ Levinson questions what it means to fail to represent pain; he links this failure to the inability to speak about the pain in a way that the representation of the painful event is not submitted to arbitrary conventions, which erase the specificity of the experience. He argues that pain is beyond representation, but sometimes narratives (representations) stand in for pain and they mark ‘in some

way or another the avoiding or voiding of that pain'. See Levinson 'Obstinate Forgetting'. 216. For the view of pain as unrepresentable see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. 161-164.

¹⁴¹ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 183.

¹⁴² For Lacan, the 'I' operates as a shifter in that it is simultaneously a signifier acting as a subject of the statement and an index that 'designates, but does not signify, the subject of the énonciation'. In other words, the 'I' of the énonciation is not the same as the 'I' of the statement. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 55, 182.

¹⁴³ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 55.

¹⁴⁴ Note that the 'feminine' in an Irigarayan sense is given new or different value: a position is 'feminine' where its terms have been submitted to the tactics of *mimesis* in her theory (or 're-signified', although Irigaray does not prescribe any definition –a new definition will have to emerge collectively) to account for the representation and cultural positioning of a 'female specificity' –product of feminine symbolizations that substantiate the notions of female identity and female subjectivity. Note also that in Irigaray's work, the words 'female' and 'feminine' as adjectives to accompany nouns like 'subject' and 'subjectivity' are sometimes used almost indistinguishably. It seems that this imprecision comes as a result of the French translation of *féminin* (the adjective for woman, that is, 'womanly') that is rendered into English as 'female' or 'feminine'. Whilst in French there is no distinction in meaning between the two adjectives, in English 'female' is normally used for 'subject', 'subjectivity' and 'identity', and 'feminine' is used more explicitly when referring to Irigaray's argument that a new culture needs to emerge –and one of the strategies is the *mimetic* engagement with masculine definitions and stereotypical representations of women. For an extended account on the role of *mimesis* in Irigaray's work see next chapter; see also Whitford, *Luce Irigaray. Philosophy in the feminine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 70-71, and Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University press, 1985. 76.

¹⁴⁵ See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject. Between Language and Jouissance*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995. 26.

¹⁴⁶ See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 116-117.

¹⁴⁷ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 116.

¹⁴⁸ This point is made in Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004. 276. Irigaray's image of 'touching' and 'self-touching' will be revisited in chapter three.

¹⁴⁹ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 41.

¹⁵⁰ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 41.

¹⁵¹ When discussing Irigaray's question of female subjectivity in language, it is worth remembering Irigaray's distinction between *langue* and *langage*. When she talks of 'a different language' she has in mind *langage*; thus it does not entail 'a radically new language', but a different utilization of the resources available. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 42.

¹⁵² See Mieke Bal, 'Rape: Problems of Intention' in Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1992. 367-370.

¹⁵³ I take this idea from an interpretation of Ana Mendieta's work on rape; she is a performance artist who in the 1970s carried out several actions on the subject. In her performance, she identified with a specific victim of rape and represented her body as if violated in several surroundings; one of the aims was to break the anonymity and silence around rape [Helena Reckitt, ed., (survey by Peggy Phelan) *Art and Feminism*. London and New York: Phaidon, 2001. 98].

¹⁵⁴ This point in Linda Anderson, *Women and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century*. London: Prentice Hall, 1997, 113.

¹⁵⁵ Within psychoanalysis, men can relate to their phantasied mothers as to an object –as illustrated by the *fort-da*- but if women learn identity in the same way, this would imply that women must also reduce the mother's body to an object: the woman would identify with her mother and simultaneously be forced to take herself as an object [Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 44-45].

¹⁵⁶ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 48.

¹⁵⁷ Irigaray conceives the identificatory process as not restricted to the mother, and she opens the alternative for this identification to be with another woman (the body that enfolds language thus becomes the phantasied body of the mother or possibly another woman). See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 45.

¹⁵⁸ Amos interviewed by DeMain.

¹⁵⁹ I am inspired here by Elaine Scarry's argument that pain is located at the limit of representation, since it can never be objectified. The objectlessness of pain prevents it from being rendered in language and it cannot easily be objectified in a material or verbal form. Scarry argues that 'while pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects. There is in imagining no activity, no "state", no experienceable condition or felt-occurrence separate from objects' [Scarry, *The Body in Pain*. 162].

¹⁶⁰ Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. 28.

¹⁶¹ I am following here arguments by Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. 21-22.

Chapter 2. Trauma, Memory and Symbolism in Diamanda Galás's 'Artémis' and 'Cris d'aveugle' [Blind Man's Cry]

¹⁶² Diamanda Galás's biography, Harmony Ridge Music

<<http://www.hrmusic.com/discos/fafram70.html>>(07/03/2007).

¹⁶³ Diamanda Galás, interviewed by Ian Penman, 'Matters of Life and Death: Mourning Becomes Diamanda Galas'. *The Wire*, issue 190/191 New Year 2000. 59-65.

¹⁶⁴ Galás's biography, Harmony.

¹⁶⁵ Benjamin Fasching-Gray, 'Diamanda Galás: Dying To Tell You', *Shout Magazine*. December 1999. 28-29, <http://www.diamandagalas.com/press/live/defixiones/shout_1299.htm> (23/04/2008).

¹⁶⁶ Diamanda Galás, interviewed by Jane Wilcock, <<http://www.obsolete.com/convulsion/interviews/convulse/4.16.html>> (02/04/2007).

¹⁶⁷ Galás interviewed by Wilcock.

¹⁶⁸ See Diamanda Galás, interviewed by A. Juno & V. Vale, *Angry Women*. New York: Re/search Publications and Juno Books, 1999. 17.

¹⁶⁹ Galás, interviewed by Ian Penman. 59-65.

¹⁷⁰ See Emma Dors, 'Diamanda Galás: the Dark Side of the New Musics', <<http://www.amazings.com/articles/article0022.html>> (13/01/2008).

¹⁷¹ See Galás interviewed by Ian Penman. 59-65.

¹⁷² Michael Barclay, 'Diamanda Galás: Diva of the Dispossessed', May 2004, <<http://www.exclaim.ca/articles/multiarticlesub.aspx?csid1=56&csid2=9&fid1=1797>> (13/01/2008).

¹⁷³ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 8.

¹⁷⁵ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 11. For an extended account of the role of Greek women laments in Diamanda Galás's music see David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects. Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997. 134-138. See also Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Lament and Greek Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

¹⁷⁷ See Richard Morrison, 'Defixiones, Will and Testament. Created and Performed by Diamanda Galás', June 2003. Diamanda Galás's homepage, <http://www.diamandagalas.com/defixiones/the_concept.htm> (19/01/2008).

¹⁷⁸ See Barclay, 'Diamanda Galás: Diva' and Morrison, 'Defixiones'.

¹⁷⁹ For an expanded account on the generational transmission of trauma see Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Transcriptum' in *Topologies of Trauma*. 254-255. See also Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 93.

¹⁸⁰ Galás quoted in Edward Batchelder, 'Slouching toward Anatolia', <<http://www.edwardbatchelder.com/anatolia.htm>> (13/04/2008).

¹⁸¹ See Levinson 'Obstinate Forgetting'. 211-232 (217-216).

¹⁸² Gérard de Nerval, *Artémis*, in 'Avant-Garde Hollyhocks', <<http://www.idiocentrism.com/hollyhock.htm>> (20/09/2007).

¹⁸³ Gérard de Nerval, *Artémis*, translated by Diamanda Galás, <<http://www.behindthelyrics.com/155141/Artemis.html>> (20/09/2007).

¹⁸⁴ See Morrison, 'Defixiones'.

¹⁸⁵ These two themes are also track-listed together in Galás's 1993 VHS collection *Judgement Day*.

¹⁸⁶ Diamanda Galás homepage, <http://www.diamandagalas.com/songs_of_exile.htm> (14/02/2008). Galás has used texts from poets in various works; amongst the texts she uses in *Defixiones* and *Maledicion and Prayer* are Peruvian César Vallejo, Armenian Siamanto, Syrian Adonis, Belgium

Henri Michaux, French Charles Baudelaire, Italian Pier Paolo Pasolini and Salvadorian Miguel Huevo Mixco.

¹⁸⁷ Amongst the artists who deal with the hollyhock as symbolic flower are Paul Verlaine, Rimbaud, Berthe Morisot and Jean Giono. See 'Avant-Garde Hollyhocks'.

¹⁸⁸ See Daniel Mark Epstein, 'Introduction to Gerard de Nerval's "Chimeras"', December 2000, <<http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/19/dec00/nerval4.htm>> (13/03/2008). Commentators on the symbolist meanings of Nerval's work coincide in his association of flowers with reincarnation or resurrection.

¹⁸⁹ Nerval's loss of his mother in early childhood opened a wound that did not seem to heal during his lifetime. He built a myth around the absence of the loved mother, which he transposed into an idealised and unsuccessful love for several women; amongst them were the actress Jenny Colom and Sophie Dawes; the latter incarnates the feminine figure in the poem *Artémis*. Both of them died not long after Nerval had failed to secure their love. In Nerval's *oeuvre*, the love for the mother, the desire for the ideal woman and the admiration for the goddess join together in a symbiosis that stands for the archetype of the eternal mother. See Fátima Gutierrez's introduction to Gérard de Nerval, *Las hijas del fuego*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1990. 28-29. See also *Encyclopédie sur la mort*, 'Gérard de Nerval', <http://agora.qc.ca/thematiques/mort.nsf/Dossiers/Gerard_de_Nerval> (29/02/2008).

¹⁹⁰ Nerval believed that death formed part of the cycle of life; his idea of death as decadence and transformation responds to the Romantic view of death as transcendence [see Gutierrez, Introduction to *Las hijas del fuego*. 9-63].

¹⁹¹ Nerval's life and works are marked by circumstances that led him to introspection and conflict with his inner self. Towards the end of his life he suffered several mental breakdowns and finally committed suicide on a winter night, 1855, by hanging himself from a window grating in a Paris alley. See Gutierrez's Introduction to Gérard de Nerval. 9-63.

¹⁹² For Nerval's connection with the hermetic and occult see Albert Beguin, 'Poetry and Occultism'. *Yale French Studies*, No 4, Literature and Ideas, 1949. 12-25. <[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0044-0078\(1949\)4%3C12%3APAO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0044-0078(1949)4%3C12%3APAO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0)> (28/01/2008).

¹⁹³ See chapter 5 for an extended discussion on vocal performance by women artists and the avant-garde.

¹⁹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. 145-146.

¹⁹⁵ Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 21-22.

¹⁹⁶ In order to reach the realm of signs, and in addition to ceasing to identify with the lost object, Kristeva mentions the ability of the self to identify with a third party, with a truly 'imaginary father', form or schema. This 'imaginary father' refers to the Freudian father in individual prehistory who, according to Kristeva, must 'be capable of playing his part as oedipal father in symbolic Law, for it is on the basis of that harmonious blending of the two facets of fatherhood that the abstract and arbitrary signs of communication may be fortunate enough to be tied to the affective meaning of prehistorical identifications, and the dead language of the potentially depressive person can arrive at a live meaning in the bond with others' [Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 23-24].

¹⁹⁷ See Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 152.

¹⁹⁸ Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 148.

¹⁹⁹ Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 148

²⁰⁰ Galás expresses her preference for the myth of Artemis in the context of procreation. Since Artemis is a childless goddess, Galás feels more affinity with the independence and qualities attached to this Greek story. See Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 13.

²⁰¹ See Symbolism-Symbolism, Gender, and Sexuality, <<http://science.jrank.org/pages/11383/Symbolism-Symbolism-Gender-Sexuality.html>> (13/04/2008).

²⁰² Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 92.

²⁰³ Kristeva makes the point that in Nerval's symbolist world the 'Black Sun' (her analysis centers on Nerval's poem *El Desdichado*) functions as a metaphor for melancholia; this is in her view an excruciating affect that 'asserts the inevitability of death, which is the death of the loved one and of the self that identifies with the former' [Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 151].

²⁰⁴ See Kristeva, *Black Sun*. 151-153.

²⁰⁵ Edward Batchelder, 'The Politics of Disquiet: Diamanda Galás in Conversation with Edward Batchelder'. *NewMusicBox*, November 1, 2003.

<<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=2311>> (03/04/2008).

²⁰⁶ Galás quotes here Corbière's verses from memory. Batchelder, 'The Politics of Disquiet'.

²⁰⁷ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 9. Note here the direct link between 'speaking in tongues' and glossolalia.

²⁰⁸ The outpouring of internal pain in Corbière's poem can additionally be associated with the poet's life experience of chronic illness and suffering.

²⁰⁹ Fragment from Tristan Corbière's *Cris d'aveugle*. See full poem in

<<http://web.inter.nl.net/users/stepcla/music/lyrics/galas.htm>> (14/02/2008).

²¹⁰ 'Cris d'aveugle's' translation by Kenneth Koch & Georges Guy,

<<http://www.lyricsdownload.com/galas-diamanda-blind-man-s-cry-lyrics.html>> (14/02/2008).

²¹¹ There is a parallelism between Galás's anti-lyricism in music and Corbière's idea of anti-lyrical poetry, inasmuch as he developed a technique of prosaic understatement to destroy the lyric themes and depoeitize the text. His use of spoken language draws a contrast between the poetic and anti-poetic, establishing a new freedom of poetic craftsmanship. His disjointed verses have been described as lacking coherent thematic content. Galás's avant-gardism (musical discontinuities, extreme vocalisation) could also be perceived as lacking meaning, and yet her compositions carry signification vis-à-vis Galás's specific artistic aims –and the same may be argued for Corbière anti-poetic language. For an extended account of Corbière's aesthetics see Albert Sonnenfeld, 'The Yellow Laugh of Tristan Corbière'. *Yale French Studies*, No. 23, Humor, 1959. 39-46.

²¹² Middleton, 'Appropriating the Phallus? Female Voices and the Law-of-the-Father' in Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 124. For Galás's employment of an 'unmatrixed' production of vocal sound see also Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 134; and Diamanda Galás, 'Intravenous Song'. *Perspectives of New Musics*, Vol. 20, No. 1/2 Autumn 1981- Summer 1982. 59-65.

²¹³ Note here that Middleton finds also 'a madness' in Galás's occupation of the place of the phallus [Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 125]. I will return to this point in chapter five in my analysis of Galás's *Schrei* 27 extreme vocal performance.

²¹⁴ Middleton authenticates this reading of Galás's work in relation to the 'African-American references in the vocal style' and the influence of the *moirologi* who pose a challenge to the patriarchal authority of the state [Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 125].

²¹⁵ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 9-11.

²¹⁶ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 11.

²¹⁷ See Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 94.

²¹⁸ Irigaray argues that the divine gravitates to the 'object-entity God', inscribed within 'one subject's absolute': the Father that remains subject through his parental role in paternity; an 'Absolute' who remains linked to the gender of the subject, historically the male in our culture. Patriarchal spirituality assumes a religious conscience around a 'moral law' (the Divine Voice, Logos or Word) that is the same for all, but whose perfect application depends on 'the proximity of the believer to the divine model.' Since men resemble more closely the unique God inscribed within their male tradition, they are assumed to be more capable of transcendence: they have achieved a universal model that 'confines itself to the generalities' of a constructed male identity (both personal and collective). This unique Absolute, in Irigaray's view, has prevented us from developing a universal morality inscribed within each of us, as well as an ethics that takes into account particularities, differences and contingencies. The points on the divine are drawn from Irigaray, 'Spiritual Tasks for Our Age' in *Key Writings*. London: Continuum, 2004. 171-185 (174-178).

²¹⁹ Luce Irigaray, 'The Age of Breath' in *Key Writings*. 165-170 (165-167).

²²⁰ Schwarz points out that the soul and the breath are synonymous in Greek culture as shown in the use of the same word *-xepshismenos-* to express 'being out of breath', 'dying' and 'losing one's soul' [Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 137].

²²¹ Irigaray, 'The Age of Breath'. 166.

²²² Irigaray, 'The Age of Breath'. 167.

²²³ Irigaray argues that the hierarchical relationship with the Divine Father prevents 'a spiritual relationship between the sexes [that] would allow us to reunite human and divine elements that have been artificially separated by the domination of one sex over the other' [Irigaray, 'Spiritual Tasks of Our Age'. 174].

²²⁴ Male and female identity in Irigaray's theory are not reduced to physical differences that are 'more or less visible in their forms and effects'. For Irigaray, sexed identity 'implies a way of constituting subjectivity in relation to the world, to the self, and to the other, that is specific to each sex. This specificity is determined in part by corporeal characteristics as implying a *different relational attitude*'. Sexed identity goes back to a different construction of subjectivity for boys and girls, which, in Irigaray's view, corresponds to a '*specific relational identity*' that creates 'a different bridge, or different bridges, according to the sex of the subject, between nature and culture'. Irigaray clarifies that this dimension of subjectivity must be taken into consideration and we must 'refuse obedience to an abstract culture that destroys singularity and diversity' [Irigaray, 'Spiritual Tasks of Our Age'. 177-178].

²²⁵ See Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*. 4-5.

²²⁶ Galás makes this point about her music in Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 12-14.

²²⁷ I engage here with Gilmore's assertion that 'the turn toward the other via memory is a turn toward the self as the producer of counter-images and also as the locus of grief' [Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 135, 143].

²²⁸ Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 122. Gilmore quotes here Monique Wittig.

²²⁹ I am inspired here by Gilmore's argument around competing systems of meaning in representations of the body as both 'materiality' and 'performance' (of gender, race, sexuality). When the body is situated in a realm of material consequences, meanings turn out to be surprisingly similar in both representations; in Gilmore's view, it is central to look at how the positions converge in a representation of the body that '*is its identity*' [Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 124-125].

²³⁰ Laura E. Tanner, *Lost Bodies. Inhabiting the Borders of Life and Death*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006. 153-155. Tanner specifically looks at the photographs of American photographer Shellburne Thurber.

²³¹ Tanner, *Lost Bodies*. 152-153. Tanner draws her argument here from Alessia Ricciardi's genealogy of mourning from Freud to Lacan.

²³² Tanner, *Lost Bodies*. 152.

²³³ I loosely draw my argument here from Tanner, *Lost Bodies*. 153-155.

²³⁴ See Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 19.

²³⁵ On this point, see Luce Irigaray interview by Hirsh and A. Olson, “Je-Luce Irigaray”, <<http://www.cas.usf.edu/JAC/163/irigaray.html>> (08/10/2005).

²³⁶ See Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 90.

²³⁷ I am following here Gilmour’s argument on the ‘rhetorical surrogate’ [Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*. 88-90].

²³⁸ Galás’s ventriloquial dimension and vocal characterisation will be further explored in chapter five.

²³⁹ Cathy Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’ in Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic, eds., *Topologies of Trauma*. 102-103.

²⁴⁰ Laplanche’s model of trauma comes back to Freud’s seduction theory so as to assert its importance within the context of the external and internal reality that operates in trauma. He focuses on the complex play between the external and internal causalities, insofar as the trauma never simply comes from outside; there is first something coming from outside and then the experience or memory of it is reinvested in a second moment; the internal reviviscence of the memory becomes therefore traumatic. According to Laplanche, the subject builds himself as an individual in relation to the seduction theory. For an extended account on Laplanche’s model of trauma see Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’. 101-125.

²⁴¹ Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’. 107-108.

²⁴² Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’. 106 -107.

²⁴³ Batchelder, ‘The Politics of Disquiet’.

²⁴⁴ Caruth, ‘An Interview with Jean Laplanche’, 107-108

Chapter 3. Performing through the Body: Voice, Masquerades and the Libidinal Economy of the Feminine

²⁴⁵ Phallogocentric indicates that the structure of language is centred by the phallus; the term is used by Cixous and Irigaray to describe Western cultural systems and structures; these are based on the primacy of certain terms in binary oppositions: male/female, language/silence, speech/writing, order/chaos, whereby the valued term in the opposition provides the basic structures of Western

thought. They take up Derrida's idea that the structure of language relies on privileging spoken words over written words to describe Western cultural thinking as 'logocentric'; they therefore use this idea for their gender critique.

²⁴⁶ Whitford observes that Irigaray does not specifically use the term *l'écriture féminine*: she mobilizes the expression of the feminine and builds up her argument primarily around 'speaking (as) woman' (*parler-femme*), not *l'écriture féminine* [see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray. Philosophy in the Feminine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 38]. Still, she also argues the possibility of writing (as) a woman [see Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985. 131].

²⁴⁷ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 132-134.

²⁴⁸ See Irigaray, *This Sex*. 136, 156. See also Luce Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One' in Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, eds., *Feminisms: an Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991. 350-356 (351, 353-354).

²⁴⁹ These statements as per Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' in Warhol and Price Herndl, *Feminisms: an Anthology*. 334-349 (334-6).

²⁵⁰ Christina Howells, *Derrida. Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1999. 49.

²⁵¹ Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays' in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 92-94. Cixous clarifies here that she does not mean the role of the mother, but the "mother" as no-name and as source of goods' [Cixous, 'Sorties'. 93-94].

²⁵² With reference to Björk's music, Middleton also highlights the self-referential element in her work. See Richard Middleton, 'Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: Avians, Cyborgs and Siren Bodies in the Era of Phonographic Technology', *Radical Musicology*, Vol. 1, 2006, <<http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk>> (17 May), 31 pars.

²⁵³ Irigaray's subsequent *oeuvre* focuses on the development of her philosophical thinking. For an overview of Irigaray's work see Irigaray, *Key Writings*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

²⁵⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. 11. Butler questions the discursive power of *l'écriture féminine* on the grounds of 'its globalizing reach'. She maintains, for example, that 'universalistic claims are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint, understood as the articulated consciousness [...] or in the ostensibly transcultural structures of femininity, maternity, sexuality and/or *l'écriture féminine*'. Understood transculturally, *l'écriture féminine* can be perceived as having a globalizing reach, applicable to all women [see Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 13-14]. My engagement here with *l'écriture féminine* will view it as a discursive space that enables the interpretation of specific cultural production by women, rather than in Butler's sense of a common standpoint or consciousness for women.

²⁵⁵ I am following here Whitford's reading of Irigaray. Whitford points out that 'speaking (as) a woman' is a psycholinguistic description as much as it is also the name for something which does not yet exist. It is in this sense that Irigaray argues for the cultivation or working towards a culture in the feminine, in recognition of the impossibility of 'speaking (as) a woman' within patriarchal culture, although possible if there were a change in the symbolic order, a goal towards which one should orient oneself [see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 42].

²⁵⁶ Kaja Silverman, for example, interprets Irigaray's feminine language as coming from outside discourse [Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror. The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. 141-151]. Elizabeth Guild also queries whether it is possible through *l'écriture féminine* to 'write the not-yet-thought-or-said' [Elizabeth Guild, 'Écriture Féminine' in Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis. A Critical Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 76].

²⁵⁷ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 42.

²⁵⁸ For extended discussion on these points see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 41-42.

²⁵⁹ Ann Rosalind Jones raises these questions in her discussion of French feminism and its implications for American feminism. See Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of *l'Écriture Féminine*' in Warhol and Price Herndl, *Feminisms: an Anthology*. 357-370.

²⁶⁰ Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva have been associated with *essentialism* for different reasons, in particular Cixous and Irigaray for their engagement with women's bodily experience. Irigaray and

Cixous encourage women to begin to express themselves starting from their bodies, their sexuality and argue for a specific libidinal economy for women. Kristeva doubts whether there should be a feminist discourse in the way suggested by Irigaray and Cixous, but her concept of the semiotic *chora* has also been linked to *essentialism*. See Jones, 'Writing the Body'. 361; see also Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. 48.

²⁶¹ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 88-89.

²⁶² Irigaray, *This Sex*. 92, 97.

²⁶³ Let us remember on this point that Irigaray's aim is to change or resignify masculine concepts that dichotomously define women. She believes that essentialism in this sense is one of the concepts entrenched in Western metaphysics.

²⁶⁴ See Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76.

²⁶⁵ This point is suggested in Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 71. Whitford recalls here Rosi Braidotti's point that for Irigaray the route *back through* essentialism cannot be avoided; yet Whitford points out that the *mimesis* is tactical and aims at *producing* difference.

²⁶⁶ Irigaray, 'This Sex'. 350-356 (354).

²⁶⁷ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 70-71. See also Irigaray, *This Sex*. 137.

²⁶⁸ Butler asks whether Irigaray's idea of *mimesis* might involve a return to *essentialism* in the notion of a 'feminine language' [Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993. 38-49]. For further discussion on Irigaray's 'feminine language', understood as a rhetorical strategy, see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 70-71; see also Jane Gallop, *Thinking through the Body*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

²⁶⁹ Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education*. 21.

²⁷⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 133-134.

²⁷¹ Note here that Whitford emphasises the difficulty in the manifestation of the 'feminine'. She recalls Irigaray's argument that this would not be possible until there is a primary metaphorization of female desire (that is when women are able to represent the relation to the mother and to origin). The point seems to be that neutral/universal/single sex models will always be implicitly male; thus Whitford

interprets female desire and female specificity as statements about representation. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 85-86.

²⁷² Efrat Tseëlon, ed., *Masquerade and Identities. Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 9-12.

²⁷³ Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. 21.

²⁷⁴ Kramer, *Classical Music*. 22.

Chapter 3. The Interweaving of the Singing Voice and Writing in Tori Amos's 'Pandora's Aquarium'

²⁷⁵ Note here that over-determination is used here to mean *excess* (an excess that is validated and re-signified as a result of female subjectivity). Normally the term is derived from a Freudian/Marxists discourse (i.e. Althusser) and signifies the operation of multiple determinations (hence, as a rule, contradictions) in the causality of a phenomenon.

²⁷⁶ See Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education*, 27.

²⁷⁷ Efrat Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 157. The voice as fetish is exemplified in the diva, a female archetype powerfully connected with the male fantasy of strong *femininity*; the diva's voice becomes a fetish in the masculine libidinal economy, but, as Clément shows, she stages her demise in the opera narrative, which results in her undoing. See Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*. London: Virago, 1989.

²⁷⁸ The 'proper' female voice, according to Tseëlon, is the easiest to use as a guise since it embodies the polite, gentle and non-challenging voice expected from a woman. The 'mute' voice represents for women silence and dumbness, an example of the woman who surrenders her voice. See Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 163-166.

²⁷⁹ This point in Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 165.

²⁸⁰ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 70-71.

²⁸¹ On this point, there is reference to the language of the hysteric, which Irigaray understands as not being its own, but masculine (this masculine language is, at the same time, torn apart by the hysteric; it

is situated between mime and muteness). In this sense, the *mimesis* could also be seen directed to produce a kind of deliberate hysteria. In the reading offered here the *disruptive excess* in Amos is seen as a way to find that gestural expression of desire that is her own. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 67; see also Luce Irigaray, *This Sex*. 137.

²⁸² Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice 1800-1900*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1990.

²⁸³ See Kramer, *Classical Music*. 21.

²⁸⁴ I draw this point from Whitford's account of Irigaray's *mimesis*, in so far it entails a psychoanalytic interpretation: the unconscious fantasy (pre-Lacanian psychoanalysis' description of the imaginary) can achieve access to consciousness through language, which can then enable a shift or change in the fantasy. This change at the level of the unconscious (or imaginary) is possible via the psychoanalytic process and is referred to by Irigaray as "the symbolization or 'the operations of sublimation'" [Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 72].

²⁸⁵ Cixous, 'Sorties'. 92. For Cixous, feminine writing cannot be theorised, enclosed or coded, but this does not mean it does not exist; it only means that it is not possible at present to define or circumscribe it.

²⁸⁶ Cixous, 'Sorties'. 92.

²⁸⁷ Cixous, 'Sorties', 93.

²⁸⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 131-132.

²⁸⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 131.

²⁹⁰ Halliwell explains Plato's concept of *mimesis*; one of the functions of *mimesis* in Plato is to allow him to construct a framework for the consideration of the arts, including musicopoetic and visual arts. *Mimesis* permits 'issues of artistic representation to be framed both in their own terms and in terms of a larger scheme of truth and value'. In this sense, Plato uses *mimesis* to formulate philosophical questions about 'the relationship between human understanding (language and thought) and reality' [Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. 43-44].

²⁹¹ Irigaray, 'The "Mechanics" of Fluids' in *This Sex*. 106-107. In this text, Irigaray attempts to displace the privilege of masculine metaphors and structures in the writing of Lacan (a tactic that she has used with other philosophers). She uses a double mimetic strategy in which she takes the place of the other (the feminine) to project a distorted image of the universal 'subject' assumed in a particular philosophical text.

²⁹² Irigaray, 'The "Mechanics" of Fluids'. 107.

²⁹³ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 70.

²⁹⁴ I am following here Whitford's interpretation of Irigaray's concept of the imaginary. Whitford points out that Irigaray's use of the term imaginary in this sense is linked to the products of the imagination –art, mythology, poetry, writing- and the coincidence between the conceptualisation of the imaginary and the ontological categories of the pre-Socratics was not accidental in her thinking: it forms 'part of her attempt to 'go back through the masculine imaginary'" [see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 61].

²⁹⁵ Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. 184.

²⁹⁶ Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*. 185.

²⁹⁷ I am inspired here by Barthes description of the 'air' in the photograph. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage, 2000. 110.

²⁹⁸ This last point drawn from Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*. 185.

²⁹⁹ 'Pandora's Aquarium's' lyrics from *From the Choirgirl Hotel* cover album, 1998.

³⁰⁰ Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 337-339.

³⁰¹ Pandora stands as a symbol of the first woman who misused the gifts given to her by the gods, which deprived her and her female descendants of the knowledge of the gifts, and the power and authority to make good use of them. As a result, she was reproached and 'literally' reconfined to the 'solid walls' of patriarchy. Persephone is the lost daughter of Demeter (Mother Nature) who is constantly searching for her sibling; Persephone represents the reawakening of Nature for although she was abducted and confined to Hades, she was allowed to return to earth every six months.

³⁰² Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 77.

³⁰³ Irigaray quoted in Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 45. Whitford alludes here to Irigaray's 'Sexes et Parentés' (1987). A key assumption in Irigaray's thinking is her understanding that women engage in a constructive and dialogic relation with the other and enter language as a subject by making a non-objectifying female identification with the mother.

³⁰⁴ Tori Amos interviewed by John Patrick Gatta, *Magical Blend Magazine*, issue #63, December 23, 1998, <www.thedent.com/mblend.html> (01/02/2007).

³⁰⁵ Similarly, 'Spark' includes lyrics that allude to the distress for a lost child: 'she's convinced she could hold back a glacier. but she couldn't keep Baby alive doubting if there's a woman in there somewhere you say you don't want it again. and again but you don't really mean it'. See lyrics from *From the Choirgirl Hotel* cover album, 1998.

³⁰⁶ The strong sense of the body in Amos's live performances, video and photographs has often been noted, in so far as she normally appears playing her piano (to which she refers to as 'she') her legs opened and turned half way to the audience. She usually sings also close to a microphone, which increases the sense of intimacy and bodily closeness with the listeners.

³⁰⁷ Cixous, 'Sorties', 94.

³⁰⁸ Cixous thinks that the voice sings from an archaic time, far before the Symbolic Law re-appropriated the voice into language 'under its authority of separation' [Cixous, 'Sorties', 93].

³⁰⁹ I take here Irigaray's argument of the female imaginary.

³¹⁰ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 104.

³¹¹ As examples of these imaginary locations, Amos's map include: 'abbey (always snowing)'; 'Buttercup Bone Orchard'; 'Standing Stone, I'm wrecked'; 'Not good for launching balloons' and 'Ballerinas that just wander around endlessly shoeless'.

Chapter 3. Björk's 'Cocoon': Masquerade, the Body and the Vocal 'Aestheticisation' of the Flesh

³¹² Björk's 'Cocoon' Lyrics. Always on the Run Net, <<http://www.alwaysontherun.net/bjork.htm>> (3/02/2006).

³¹³ Björk's 'Cocoon' Lyrics, Always on the Run Net.

³¹⁴ Björk explains that *Vespertine* is very much about being alone in one's home and creating a mood in your own house; it is about being 'in a very quiet sort of introvert mood and you whisper, you sort of improvise. Which is between me and myself' [Michael Paoletta, 'Björk Paints from New Palette', <http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/search/google/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=964260> (27/09/06)].

³¹⁵ See Cixous, 'The laugh of the Medusa'. 334-349 (334-6).

³¹⁶ Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 162-4.

³¹⁷ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 70-71.

³¹⁸ On this point, in Irigaray's strategy of *mimesis* the stereotypical conventional views do not necessarily have to be repeated faithfully.

³¹⁹ Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 2-3.

³²⁰ Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 3.

³²¹ These points in Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 3, 11-12.

³²² Tseëlon mentions two 'surface models': (1) elaborations on the discursive Wittgensteinian thesis, which argue that social and psychic parameters do not represent 'real' structures inside us, but that the 'structures' are produced through discourse; (2) the semiotic thesis, fundamental to Lacan's 'object' of desire, which 'marks not a more substantial order of things but emptiness or void: a fantasy construction' [Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 8-9].

³²³ Within the performative model, Tseëlon mentions the work of Austin as origin of the performative thesis and Buttler's development of the relationship between the performance and subjectivity. See Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 9.

³²⁴ Joan Rivière, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', first published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1929. See

<http://www.ncf.edu/hassold/WomenArtists/riviere_womanliness_as_masquerade.htm> (19/05/2006).

39.

³²⁵ In her discussion of the masquerade, Tseëlon mentions also this aspect of Rivière's work. See Tseëlon, *Masquerade and Identities*. 11.

³²⁶ The masquerades of the geisha and the 'proper voice' might have in the past stood for genuine womanliness; according to Rivière, womanliness did not represent the woman's main development.

³²⁷ Alluding to Plato, Irigaray maintains that to the extent that women are on the side of the 'perceptible', and of 'matter' (as opposed to men on the side on the 'intelligible'), to play with *mimesis* implies that women resubmit themselves to 'ideas' [Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76].

³²⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76.

³²⁹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*. 48.

³³⁰ Butler understands that this initiative positions the feminine as the unthematizable, although identifying the feminine with that position 'thematizes and figures'; then there is an use of the phallogocentric exercise to produce an identity which is 'non-identical'. Still, Butler argues against the notion of 'the feminine' insofar monopolizes the sphere of the excluded other [Butler, *Bodies That Matter*. 48-49]. The 'outside' is understood by Butler as a 'constitutive outside' that does not correspond to the production of the Real, but refers to the exclusion of 'those possibilities of signification that threaten the purity and permanence of the law instituting sexual difference' (which are foreclosed from the symbolic). Butler proposes also to rethink the 'constitutive outside' as a 'social abject' [see Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, 'From Euthanasia to the Other of Reason: Performativity and the Deconstruction of Sexual Difference' in Ellen K. Feder, Mary C. Rawlinson and Emily Zakin, eds., *Derrida and Feminism. Recasting the Question of Woman*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997. 115-140 (129-130)].

³³¹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*. 49.

³³² Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76-77.

³³³ Elizabeth Berg quoted in Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 71. Whitford indicates that Berg offers an insightful interpretation of the 'blank spaces' in connection with Irigaray's argument and women's representation.

³³⁴ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 76. Irigaray's strategy of *mimesis*, and her formulation of the 'elsewhere', appear to embrace a dimension of the female subject/ subjectivity within and at the limits of discourse; her aim is to identify the places where women can be symbolized differently and to position women as subjects in discourse: her understanding of sexual difference is ontological, not only as a discursive operation of

the linguistic. Although *mimesis* and the 'elsewhere' refer to women, Irigaray's strategy *per se* does not necessarily seem to monopolize –as Butler suggests– the 'sphere of the excluded' [Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 48]. It would seem that other 'excluded' subjects could potentially locate and focus on the 'blank spaces' of masculine discourse with the aim of generating their own self-representation.

³³⁵ Luce Irigaray, 'Being Two, How Many Eyes have We?' in Luce Irigaray, ed., 'Dialogues' in *Paragraph* (special issue), vol. 25, num. 3, Edinburgh University Press, November 2002. 148.

³³⁶ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 77.

³³⁷ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 119.

³³⁸ See Anne-Claire Mulder, 'Incarnation: the Flesh becomes Word' in Irigaray, 'Dialogues', 173-186 (175). Mulder discusses the split between the flesh and the (divine) Word in connection with Irigaray's thinking. The downgrading of the body takes effect in the split between the ideal and the material, the sensible and the intelligible, immanence and transcendence, and the flesh and the Word; and this split can be interpreted as the result of the 'murder' of the mother-matter-nature in phallogocentrism. The split can be seen as a gesture of displacement of origin, whereby the origin of knowledge –truth– is located in the meta-physical rather than in the physical, the material.

³³⁹ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 118-119.

³⁴⁰ This last point suggested in Mulder, 'Incarnation: the Flesh becomes Word'. 175.

³⁴¹ According to Irigaray, women cannot symbolize their loss of original proximity in the categories available to them; the loss of origin remains unsymbolized for both men and women, but whilst men experience nostalgia for original proximity, women are prevented from emerging as subjects (through their support of castration anxiety). This is a case of non-acknowledgement of the continuing debt to women and the maternal-feminine [see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 118-119].

³⁴² Björk uses in *Vespertine* the work of Matmos, a duo that produces digital/electronic sound from various sources that include real life sounds.

³⁴³ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 77.

³⁴⁴ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 149-150.

³⁴⁵ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 150. On this point, see also Simone Roberts, 'Burn the Panopticon: Irigaray's Ethics, Difference, Poetics (Sensible Transcendental)' in *Reconstruction: Studies in*

Contemporary Culture. Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 2005),

<<http://www.reconstruction.ws/051/robertssensible.shtml>> (03/06/2005).

³⁴⁶ Björk's Lyrics, <<http://www.alwaysonthetrun.net/bjork.htm>> (3/02/2006).

³⁴⁷ Irigaray, 'The Age of Breath' in *Key Writings*. 165-170 (166).

³⁴⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 77.

³⁴⁹ Irigaray argues that after the girl's frustration of her Oedipal desires, the fear of complete disappearance of sexual pleasure (aphanisis) induces 'the girl to renounce her femininity in order to identify herself with the sex that eludes her pleasure' [Irigaray, *This Sex*. 56].

³⁵⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex*. 141.

³⁵¹ 'Pagan Poetry' illustrates, for example, both through the auditory and the visual, ways in which Björk's vocal performance emerges as if with certain rawness, where her sounds may also be re-signified as the music of a private libidinal space.

³⁵² Irigaray's feminine economy of breath presupposes a divine appropriate to women -the feminine divine- linked to the interior life, as well as the life of the universe. The feminine divine assures 'a bridge between the human world and the cosmic world, between micro- and macrocosmic nature, the body and the universe'. The task of woman would not be to renounce to what she is here and now, but 'to make divine this world -as body, as cosmos, as relations with the others' [Irigaray, 'The Age of Breath' in *Key Writings*, 166-167].

³⁵³ Mulder, 'Incarnation: the Flesh becomes Word'. 175. Irigaray emphasises also the idea of 'movements' in the world of the senses, which can only be perceived by an attentiveness that is not rigid and constrained by formal frameworks. See Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*. London: The Atholone Press, 1992. 89-94.

³⁵⁴ The evocation of the 'light touch' and libidinal flesh remind us also of Cixous's ideas on feminine sensuality and the stream of aesthetic creativity that flows through women's bodies. See Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 334-6.

³⁵⁵ Luce Irigaray, 'The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, "The Intertwining -The Chiasm"', *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. London: Continuum, 2004, 127-153 (135-136).

³⁵⁶ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 137.

³⁵⁷ Steven Connor, 'The Light Touch', *The Book of Skin*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004. 257-282.

³⁵⁸ Connor mentions several philosophers that have evoked the sense of touch: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Irigaray and Derrida [Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 274].

³⁵⁹ Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 259.

³⁶⁰ Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 260-61.

³⁶¹ See Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 276.

³⁶² Irigaray, 'Being Two, How Many Eyes Have We?' 143-151 (147-148).

³⁶³ Irigaray suggests that looking at nature generates energy as it continuously creates space, whereas a man-made object takes energy from us because it needs our energy to re-create space for itself. She concedes that is possible for a work of art to give us some energy, even if this is not the same as the energy we receive from nature [Irigaray, 'Being Two, How Many Eyes Have We?', 144-145].

Chapter 4. Uncanny Representations: The Feminine Haunting Voice

³⁶⁴ David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects. Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997. 7-9.

³⁶⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works), Volume XVII (1917-1919)*. London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press, 2001. 220.

³⁶⁶ Freud, 'The Uncanny', 241.

³⁶⁷ Towards the end of his essay on the Uncanny Freud refers specifically to the scope and relevance of the uncanny in fictional works. He maintains that fiction presents more opportunities for uncanny feelings than real life since the story teller has a particular power to influence or direct the reader towards the uncanny: '[...] by means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the currents of our emotions, to dam it up in one direction and make it flow in another, and he often obtains a great variety of effects from the same material' [Freud, 'The Uncanny'. 251].

³⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, 'Apparition of the Inapparent: the Phenomenological "Conjuring Trick"' in *Specters of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994. 125-176 (172). See also 'What is Ideology?' <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/derrida2.htm>> (02/12/2008). [Extract from *Specters of Marx*. 147-176].

³⁶⁹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. 172.

³⁷⁰ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. 172.

³⁷¹ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. 173.

³⁷² 'Trace' is a key concept of Derridian Deconstruction. Derrida specifically uses the term in *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*; broadly speaking, 'trace' is used to indicate the 'transcendental signified' or contradictions always-already hidden inside language. I draw my point here from an interview with Jacques Derrida on the question of 'Being' and his notion of the 'trace': 'What Comes Before the Question?' [Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2bPTs8fspk>> (10/12/2008)].

³⁷³ I am taking this point from Whitford's interpretation of Derrida's concept of *différance*. See Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 126-127.

³⁷⁴ These points from an interview with Jacques Derrida, 'What Comes Before the Question?'.

³⁷⁵ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. 176.

³⁷⁶ These two feminist perspectives suggested in Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 129.

³⁷⁷ I am drawing my arguments in this section from Whitford's discussion of Irigaray's work vis-à-vis Derrida. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 124-132.

³⁷⁸ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 133.

³⁷⁹ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 137.

³⁸⁰ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 136-137.

³⁸¹ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985. 54.

³⁸² Irigaray, *Speculum*. 53-55.

³⁸³ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 134,139.

³⁸⁴ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 8.

³⁸⁵ See Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 8.

³⁸⁶ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 9.

³⁸⁷ See Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 8.

³⁸⁸ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 17.

³⁸⁹ In her reading of Irigaray's interpretation of the myth of the cavern, Whitford points out that: 'What has been abstracted from the scene of the cavern is the cavern as a screen, which becomes first the 'ocular *membrane-screen*' of the body, and then the '*specular screen*' of the soul. The cavity of the cavern becomes first the eye socket –that which limits any human gaze– and then disappears altogether'. Whitford is referring here to Irigaray's *Speculum*. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 108-109.

³⁹⁰ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 109.

³⁹¹ Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*. London: The Athlone Press, 1992, 44.

³⁹² It is worth noting here that Irigaray's concept of the female imaginary does not entail a description of the essential feminine. Irigaray explains that the imaginary is associated with the morphology of the body and different kinds of thought processes; the logic of identity is male, phallomorphic. There is thus the need to find unconscious elements in the cultural imaginary, which may bring about a change in the symbolic. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 60, 76.

³⁹³ Irigaray describes women as resembling the unconscious in the sense that certain properties attributed to the unconscious may be partly ascribed to the female sex. The residue or disruptive *excess* challenges the logic of identity that defines women as lack and as a negative image of the (male) subject. I am following here Whitford's reading of Irigaray. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 67.

³⁹⁴ See Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' in Cazeaux, Clive, ed., *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 453-464 (459). On this point, Lyotard engages with Edmund Burke's ideas on the sublime.

³⁹⁵ Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'. 463-464.

Chapter 4. Amos's 'Raining Blood': Transforming Heavy Metal into a Gothicised Feminine Other

³⁹⁶ The theme and musical aspects of Slayer's 'Raining Blood' are highlighted in various reviews of the album: see KickedintheFace.Com, <http://www.kickedintheface.com/reviews/Slayer-Reign_In_Blood.htm> (16/03/05); Guy's Music Review Site, <<http://www.guypetersreviews.com/slayer.php#reigninblood>> (16/03/05); Knac.Com: Pure Rock <<http://www.knac.com/article.asp?ArticleID=3321>> (16/03/05).

³⁹⁷ Paul Hodkinson, *Goth. Identity, Style and Subculture*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002. 35.

³⁹⁸ See David Punter and Glennis Byron, 'Goths and Gothic Subcultures' in *The Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 59-64 (59-60).

³⁹⁹ See Andrew Stout, 'Nostalgia Now: Hauntology's Specter', <<http://www.flakmag.com/features/hauntology.html>> (18/01/2009).

⁴⁰⁰ Punter and Glennis, *The Gothic*. 60.

⁴⁰¹ This point suggested in Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006, 95. The possibility of the artist 're-sexing' herself was suggested in chapter one in the cases where the artist has not composed the song that she sings; yet the specificity of her vocal performance leaves a trace of her agency, which is read here as the gothicised feminine other.

⁴⁰² For an extended overview on the connection between Gothic subcultures and the (literary) Gothic tradition see Punter and Glennis, *The Gothic*. 61-64.

⁴⁰³ See Hodkinson, *Goth. Identity*. 62-63.

⁴⁰⁴ Punter and Glennis, *The Gothic*. 61-62. On this point, Punter and Glennis specifically refer to the work of Csaba Toth's work on Industrial Gothic videos released by Nine Inch Nails, Psychic TV and Test Department.

⁴⁰⁵ This point in Michelle A. Massé, 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic' in David Punter, *A Companion to the Gothic*. Blackwell Publishers, 2000. 230.

⁴⁰⁶ I draw these points from James Hannaham's overview of sub-cultural groups like Goths, post-punks and heavy metal. See James Hannaham, 'Bela Lugosi's Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Either. Goth and the Glorification of Suffering in Rock Music' in Christoph Grunenberg, ed., *Gothic*

Transmutations of Horror in Late 20th Century Art. Boston Institute of Contemporary Art: MIT Press, 1997. 119-090 (110) (reversed pagination).

⁴⁰⁷ In a comprehensive analysis of Goth as subculture, Paul Hodkinson indicates that music associated with Goth as a subcultural group continued in the late 1990s to be connected with the themes of gloom and darkness, but the musical scene was characterised by a diversity of styles, as well as a more ambiguous attitude towards the macabre and horrific. Most bands still retained a style of vocal articulacy marked by 'sombre metaphorical lyrics' and 'powerful atmospheric chords', although these features could be applied to a variety of musics within Gothic. See Paul Hodkinson, *Goth. Identity*. 47.

⁴⁰⁸ Hannaham points out that young rebels playing rock music and determined to dismantle the system ended up being swallowed by it. This led to counterculture being overridden by what he terms 'style-over-substance'. Goths, post-punk and heavy metal derive from this branch of subculture and share stylistic similarities, although Goths and post-punks are difficult to distinguish (Goth remains more a fashion statement than a coherent musical style) while heavy metal markedly divided along gender lines. See Hannaham, 'Bela Lugosi's Dead'. 116-114 (reversed pagination).

⁴⁰⁹ Anne Williams, 'Edifying Narratives. The Gothic Novel, 1764-1997' in *Gothic Transmutations*. 123.

⁴¹⁰ The role of the maternal phallic imago and its relation to fetishism was also an ongoing question in Freud's work from 1905 to 1927. In order to feel protection from an excessive castration anxiety, the fetishist chooses an object that serves as equivalent for the maternal phallus.

⁴¹¹ See chapter 5 for an extended account of the role and meanings of the primal voice (the archaic mother's voice).

⁴¹² I am following here A. Massé, 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic'. 238-239. Massé observes that identity within the Lacanian interpretation is fragmented and chimerical on the subject's part, and it thus differs from other psychoanalytic frames. Yet, this author points out that Lacanian models provide interesting readings that direct our attention to both a 'genealogy' of the Gothic and the 'intertextual' character of Gothic writing.

⁴¹³ Feminists have highlighted the shortcomings (for women) of the structure of castration as theorised in Freudian psychoanalysis generally. Amongst the negative consequences for women that emerge

from the Oedipus complex are the mother's castration, which leaves the daughter with an inadequate model for identity formation, women's *denarcissization*, and the fact that women's desire is not allowed articulation (see chapter 5 for a further account of this issue).

⁴¹⁴ Lacan makes a distinction between 'acting out' and 'passage to the act' (*passage à l'acte*). In the latter, the individual does not only carry out an unconscious act, but experiences for a moment a dissolution of the subject; in other words, the subject becomes pure object and the message of the act is not addressed to anyone; symbolisation becomes impossible. I am following for this account Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. 2-3.

⁴¹⁵ <<http://echoes.devin.com/slg.html>> (22/03/05).

⁴¹⁶ See Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'. 454-455.

⁴¹⁷ Lyotard provides a comprehensive discussion of various theories of the sublime from the time the concept first appeared and moves to examine the sublime in contemporary avant-garde works. I am only taking here some general defining features of the category of the sublime. See Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'. 459. For further insights on the sublime vis-à-vis the Gothic see also Grunenberg, 'Unsolved Mysteries. Gothic Tales from Frankenstein to the Hair Eating Doll' in *Gothic Transmutations*. 213-158 (194-193) (reversed pagination).

⁴¹⁸ See Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny'. 218-252.

⁴¹⁹ Freud, 'The Uncanny', 251.

⁴²⁰ The unsettling emotions evoked in Amos's song may not exclusively be linked to the feminine, even if this association is being productively developed here for a feminist reading of Amos's performance. Allusions to blood and death, as well as the ethereal musical effect, have prompted commentators to associate the song with loss of life and fatality; more specifically, and since the album *Strange Little Girls* was released on 17th of Sept. 2001, the song has been connected with the ill-fated events of September 11th. *Strange Little Girls* has thus been viewed as Amos's reinterpretation from a woman's perspective of male songs about death and violence. See John Murphy, 'Tori Amos – Strange Little Girls (EastWest), <<http://www.musicomh.com/albums/tori-amos.htm>> (24/05/2006).

⁴²¹ See Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 13-14.

⁴²² I take here Grunenberg's point that abjection in art produces rejection and disgust and severs 'the identificatory bonds between the viewer and the image'. See Grunenberg, 'Unsolved Mysteries'. 162.

⁴²³ For a detailed account of Irigaray's idea of *espacement* or 'space between' see Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 51-52.

⁴²⁴ I am taking on board here some arguments on the contemporary gothic put forward by Grunenberg, 'Unsolved Mysteries'. 202, 168 (reversed pagination).

⁴²⁵ Grunenberg suggests this point in relation to Gothic art today. See Grunenberg, 'Unsolved Mysteries', 169-168 (reversed pagination). *Affekt* refers to the experience of feeling or emotion. It indicates an instinctual reaction to stimuli that occurs before the activation of the cognitive processes necessary for the formation of more complex emotions.

⁴²⁶ Grunenberg, 'Unsolved Mysteries'. 160.

⁴²⁷ <http://echoes.devin.com/slg.html> (22/03/05).

⁴²⁸ These points have been suggested by commentators on women's use of female genitalia in artistic representations. See Helena Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism*. London and New York: Phaidon, 65,82.

⁴²⁹ See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 151.

⁴³⁰ This interpretation is drawn, very schematically, from feminist critiques of (general) psychoanalytic concepts. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 151.

⁴³¹ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 153.

Chapter 4. Björk's 'Storm': The Cyborgian Feminine Other, Nature and the Transgression of Boundaries

⁴³² See Jeremy Heilman, Drawing Restraint 9 (Mathew Barney 2005). MovieMartyr.com, 20th Sept., 2005, <<http://www.moviemartyr.com/2005/drawingrestraint9.htm>> (08/02/2006).

⁴³³ A rush-covered straw mat forming a traditional Japanese floor covering.

⁴³⁴ This association is suggested in Heilman, Drawing Restraint 9 (Mathew Barney 2005). MovieMartyr.com.

⁴³⁵ The sho is performed in the film by world leading sho player Mayumi Miyata. The album thus contains instrumental parts, including others for harp and celeste, as well as the collaboration of singers Will Oldham and Japanese Tagag, who accompany Björk's own singing.

⁴³⁶ See filmed documentary *The Inner or Deep Part of an Animal or Plant Structure* (the Making of Medulla). <<http://www.atlanticrecords.com/bjork/music?id=atlrelease2600002>> (27/01/2009).

⁴³⁷ The artist is recalled as saying: 'for me, techno and nature is the same thing' [...] It's just a question of the future and the past. You take a log cabin in the mountains. Ten thousand years ago, monkey-humans would have thought, That's fucking techno. Now in 1997 you see a log cabin and go, Oh, that's nature. There is fear of techno because it's the unknown. I think it is a very organic thing, like electricity. But then, my father is an electrician—and my grandfather as well'. Björk quoted in Paul Elliot, 'Who the hell does Björk think she is?', November 1, 1997 <<http://www.bjork.fr/Q-1997.html#>> (16/02/2009). In his discussion of Björk's *Medulla*, Richard Middleton also highlights that for the artist 'nature' and 'technology' are not distinct. He indicates that it is not possible from listening to the album to discern the 'body' that the voices originate in, or where they belong, given that 'synthetic sounds or processed vocal samples or "real" voices aren't always clearly distinguishable'; hence the artist 'tends to put received notions of the voice/instrument distinction at risk'. Middleton points out, following Haraway, that 'for a woman to pursue the implications of this belief can only cast the gendering of phonographic technology in a new light'. Thus, regardless of the nature of the vocal bodies heard on *Medulla*, these could justifiably be named *Cybjörk*. See Richard Middleton, 'Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: Avians, Cyborgs and Siren Bodies in the Era of Phonographic Technology' in *Radical Musicology*, Vol. 1 (17 May) 31 pars, 2006, <<http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk/2006/Middleton.htm>> (16/02/2009).

⁴³⁸ See Björk, homepage. Náttúra.Info <<http://bjork.com/news/?id=866;year=2008#news>> (18/02/2009).

⁴³⁹ Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-181 (162).

⁴⁴⁰ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 162.

⁴⁴¹ Haraway points out that the tendency to produce taxonomies within the women's movement has tended to divide feminisms into those that are incorporated into an explicit ontology or epistemology and those that are excluded. At odds with Marxist and socialist feminist discourse on the social construction of women as a category, she also stresses the painful fragmentation of feminists as the result of historical experience and the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 153.

⁴⁴² Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 168.

⁴⁴³ The cyborg is in Haraway's words the 'self feminists must code': through her model of the cyborg imagery, Haraway's wide-ranging purpose is to expose the shortcomings of universal, totalising theory, and to reconstruct socialist-feminist politics through theory and practice addressed to the social relations of science and technology, restructuring the boundaries of daily life. See Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 163.

⁴⁴⁴ Anne Balsamo, 'Reading Cyborgs, Writing Feminism' in Jenny Wolmark, ed., *Cybersexualities: a Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1999. 145-156.

⁴⁴⁵ Wolmark in the introduction to part two. Wolmark, *Cybersexualities*. 140.

⁴⁴⁶ Wolmark, *Cybersexualities*. 140.

⁴⁴⁷ Margrit Shildrick with Janet Price, 'Openings on the Body: a Critical Introduction' in Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, eds., *Feminist Theory and the Body. A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999. 10-11.

⁴⁴⁸ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 151.

⁴⁴⁹ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto'. 171.

⁴⁵⁰ Note here that Björk's voice sounds 'organic' relative to the other sounds, that is, it is not literally 'organic' given that it comes to us as a recorded voice.

⁴⁵¹ Suzaan Boettger, 'In the Missionary Position. Recent Feminist Ecological Art' in Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer & Arlene Raven, eds., *New Feminist Criticism. Art. Identity. Action*. New York: Icon Editions, 1993, 248-263 (253-255).

⁴⁵² Although it has proved difficult to move away from certain Western dichotomous conceptualisations and assumptions, the interpretation offered here engages with contemporary feminist thinking, in so far as feminism has largely revised and/or reformulated many of the assumptions inherent within male (patriarchal) culture.

⁴⁵³ I draw this point from Sarah Chaplin, 'Cyberfeminism' in Fiona Carson and Claire Pajaczkowska, eds., *Feminist Visual Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, 265-280 (266).

⁴⁵⁴ See Karen I. Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature' in Luce Irigaray with Mary Green (eds.), *Luce Irigaray: Teaching*. London: Continuum, 2008. 189-200 (195, 190).

⁴⁵⁵ Irigaray quoted in Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature'. 190.

⁴⁵⁶ Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature'. 191.

⁴⁵⁷ See Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature'. 191.

⁴⁵⁸ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. London: Continuum, 2004. 86.

⁴⁵⁹ On this point, see also Boettger. 'In the Missionary Position'. 254-255.

⁴⁶⁰ The filmic quality of Björk's compositions can be appreciated by the way the filmed narrative is matched to the music and lyrics in musical videos such as 'Bachelorette', 'It's Oh So Quiet', 'Isobel' or 'Alarm Call', and more specifically in her filmed musical 'Dancer in the Dark' (2000).

⁴⁶¹ See Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002. 14-15. According to Halliwell, the practice of mimesis should not be understood in terms of the standard modern meaning of 'imitation', which would narrow and impoverish the otherwise complex issues regarding artistic representation and expression involved in the concept of mimesis.

⁴⁶² Halliwell explains that mimetic theory encapsulates the differences between the world-reflecting and world-creating conceptions of artistic representation or paradigms of art. See Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*. 379-380.

⁴⁶³ See Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'. 458-459.

⁴⁶⁴ See Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 18-19.

⁴⁶⁵ See Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 19-21.

⁴⁶⁶ Ian Biddle, 'Policing Masculinity: Schumann, Berlioz and the Gendering of the Music-Critical Idiom'. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. 124(2), 1999. 196-220 (200, 202).

⁴⁶⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. 242. See also Julia Kristeva, 'The Maternal Body (1975), from Motherhood According to Bellini' reprinted in Kelly Oliver ed., *The Portable Kristeva*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 303-309 (308).

⁴⁶⁸ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. 238.

⁴⁶⁹ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. 239. Kristeva also talks of *the symbolic paternal facet*, which 'relieves feminine aphasia present within the desire to bear the father's child'. She understands the bearing of the child as 'an appeasement that turns into melancholy as soon as the child becomes an object'. Melancholy readjusts the paranoia that drives the feminine to discourse, which is described as a "'verbal scarcity" that prevails in our culture'.

⁴⁷⁰ These points in Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. 239-240.

⁴⁷¹ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. 242.

⁴⁷² Elizabeth Wright, ed., 'Julia Kristeva' in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis. A Critical Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 195.

⁴⁷³ I am following here Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. 242.

⁴⁷⁴ Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature'. 199.

⁴⁷⁵ I am drawing here from Burke's engagement with Irigaray's thinking. See Burke, 'Masculine and Feminine Approaches to Nature'. 194, 199.

Chapter 5. Avant-Garde Vocal Performance: The Primal Cry and the Disruption of Language

⁴⁷⁶ Galás interviewed by Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. New York: Re/search Publications and Juno Books, 1999. 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Miranda interviewed by Zaplana [unpublished interview (07/06/2006)].

⁴⁷⁸ See Counterstream Radio onDemand: Meredith Monk and Björk, <http://www.counterstreamradio.org/specialprograms/monk_bjork/> (20/07/08).

⁴⁷⁹ I am grateful to Fátima Miranda for her insights into avant-garde vocal performance, from which I am drawing these points. Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

⁴⁸⁰ Joan La Barbara in conversation with Molly Sheridam, *NewMusicBox*, January 30, 2006. <http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4536> (10/07/08).

⁴⁸¹ Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

⁴⁸² See Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent. Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990. 16-17.

⁴⁸³ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1984. 21-24.

⁴⁸⁴ The first of these divisions in Lacanian theory refers to the Mirror Stage; then the subject enters into language and a second division occurs in the Oedipal matrix. See Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror. The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. 7.

⁴⁸⁵ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*. 7.

⁴⁸⁶ See Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. 123-4.

⁴⁸⁷ Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992. 99.

⁴⁸⁸ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*. 99-102.

⁴⁸⁹ The allusion here refers to Dolar's contestation of the reductive function of the voice within phonology to the mere substance of language. Phonology, Dolar argues, was about killing the voice, a true reflection of apocryphal etymology of the Greek origin *phonē*, voice, and *phonos*, murder. See Mladen Dolar, 'The Object Voice' in Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996. 9-10.

⁴⁹⁰ Dolar suggests that the voice as object presents a non-signifying remainder, a remnant resistant to signifying operations that 'has nothing to do with some irreducible individuality of the voice or individual flavour or timbre that makes each voice instantly recognisable' [Dolar, 'The Object Voice'. 10].

⁴⁹¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters*. London: Verso, 2007.

⁴⁹² Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

⁴⁹³ See Joan La Barbara in conversation with Molly Sheridan, *NewMusicBox*, <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/page.nmbx?id=4537>> (10/07/08) and Joan La Barbara, 'WoolSong. An Opera in Progress', <http://www.emfproductions.org/old_site/year0405/labarbara.html> (10/07/08).

⁴⁹⁴ Kristeva's hypothesis emphasises that the female position is formed during what she terms the *primary oedipal phase* (the earliest period, from birth to what it is called the phallic phase starting between three and six years of age) characterised by internal space and symbiotic relationships: this constitutes the basis of sexual psychic formation, much more than castration anxiety (the phallic phase represses these significations and masks them by reactional femininity). For a further account on the girl's earliest sexual development according to Kristeva, see Irène Matthis, ed., *Dialogues on Sexuality, Gender, and Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books, 2004. 5. See especially Julia Kristeva, 'Some Observations on Female Sexuality'. *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, 32. 59-68. <<http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=AOP.032.0059A>> (27/05/09).

⁴⁹⁵ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 21-24.

⁴⁹⁶ See Kelly Oliver, 'Kristeva and Feminism', 1998, <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/kristeva.html>> (26/04/2009).

⁴⁹⁷ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 86.

⁴⁹⁸ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 86-87.

⁴⁹⁹ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 87.

⁵⁰⁰ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 87.

⁵⁰¹ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 182.

⁵⁰² Kristeva, *Revolution*. 182.

⁵⁰³ According to Barthes, the grain of the voice is 'the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs'; it is 'the friction between the music and something else, which something else is the particular language' (rather than the message). For Barthes, the song must speak and write since it is finally a 'sung writing of language' what is produced at the level of the geno-song. [Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977. 185,188].

⁵⁰⁴ These points in Dolar, 'The Object Voice', 10.

⁵⁰⁵ See Kristeva, *Revolution*. 87-88.

⁵⁰⁶ On this point, Kristeva clarifies that all signifying operations are realised in language, even if linguistic material is not used: 'it is on the basis of language that a theoretical approach may attempt to perceive that operation' [Kristeva, *Revolution*. 88].

⁵⁰⁷ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 17.

⁵⁰⁸ Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

⁵⁰⁹ Miranda interviewed by Zaplana.

Chapter 5. Diamanda Galás's Schrei 27: The Voice and the Discourse of Feminine Abjection

⁵¹⁰ Excerpt from 'Smell' (track twelve), *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*, printed in Diamanda Galás, *The Shit of God*. New York and London: High Risk books, 1996. 105.

⁵¹¹ Mute Liberation Technologies, 'Diamanda Galás. Schrei X/Schrei 27' <<http://195.173.130.227/mute/galas/schreix.htm>> (11/07/08).

⁵¹² Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 17.

⁵¹³ New American Radio, 'Diamanda Galás: Schrei 27 (1994)', <http://www.somewhere.org/NAR/work_excerpts/galas/main.htm> (11/07/08). See also 'Diamanda Galás'. Harmony Ridge Music, <<http://www.hrmusic.com/discos/fadisc70.html>> (11/07/08).

⁵¹⁴ Diamanda Galás, *The Shit of God*. 97.

⁵¹⁵ See Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 10.

⁵¹⁶ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 8.

⁵¹⁷ Galás quoted in Keith Potter, 'Things can only get blacker', The Wednesday Review, *The Independent*, 8 December 1999. 12. < <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/arts-things-can-only-get-blacker-1131045.html>> (23/06/2002).

⁵¹⁸ Galás quoted in Dors, 'Diamanda Galás', <<http://www.amazings.com/articles/article0022.html>> (10/09/2008).

⁵¹⁹ Dors, 'Diamanda Galás'.

⁵²⁰ Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 17.

⁵²¹ For a more detailed account on Artaud's ideas and his theatre of cruelty see Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*. New York: Grove Press, 1994.

⁵²² Galás, *The Shit of God*. 97.

⁵²³ Note here that this is not an interpretation of Galás's *Schrei 27* in terms of a 'therapy' in which the idea is to strip away all the apparatus of repression and get down to the site of original trauma: once this is achieved, everything is let out via screaming. My earlier discussion of inter-penetration of semiotic and symbolic and 'pheno-song' and 'geno-song' points towards a 'revolution' conceived as a process of going through, a sort of journey, a retroactive 'as if', precisely a performance.

⁵²⁴ See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter. London: Routledge, 1992. The Lacanian concept of *jouissance* is also close to Freud's concept of 'libido': Lacan follows Freud in that there is only one (masculine) 'libido', and hence his assertion that *jouissance* is sexual and phallic. Yet, Lacan admitted in 1973 that there is also a feminine *jouissance* which is supplementary, which is beyond the phallus and is a *jouissance* of the Other: women experience it but they know nothing about it. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*. 91-92.

⁵²⁵ Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*. Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995. 58.

⁵²⁶ Kramer, *Classical Music*. 59.

⁵²⁷ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*. 78-79.

⁵²⁸ Silverman draws her notion of the 'acoustic mirror' from Guy Rosolato's *La voix: entre corps et langage*. According to Silverman, Rosolato suggests that 'since the voice is capable of being internalized at the same time as it is externalized, it can spill over from subject to object and object to subject, violating the bodily limits upon which classic subjectivity depends, and so smoothing the way for projection and introjection' [Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*. 79-81 (80)].

⁵²⁹ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*. 73-88.

⁵³⁰ David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects. Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997. 7-8. Schwarz draws this point from Guy Rosolato.

⁵³¹ In her discussion of the fantasy of the maternal voice, Silverman draws her understanding of the two poles – positive and negative, utopian or dystopian – from Rosolato on the one hand, Chion on the other. Rosolato argues that the maternal voice as a ‘lost object’ comes to represent what can alone make good the subject’s lack, associating the sonorous envelope with an enclosing space of plenitude and bliss. Conversely, for Chion, the theoretical narrative of the maternal voice revolves around three images of enclosure: the images of a woven enclosure, an umbilical net, and a cobweb. Silverman underlines that all three images figure enclosure as an entrapment and/or danger for the subject, who would feel engulfed, resembling a prisoner within the ‘suffocating confinement’ of the mother’s voice. See Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 86.

⁵³² Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. 54.

⁵³³ Juliet Flower Maccannell, ‘Jouissance’ in Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis. A Critical Dictionary*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996. 186-187.

⁵³⁴ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 62.

⁵³⁵ I am following here Oliver’s reading of Kristeva. See Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 62-63.

⁵³⁶ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 63.

⁵³⁷ These points in Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 62.

⁵³⁸ Kristeva suggests that the castration threat is a threat against the woman’s psyche. See Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*. 63.

⁵³⁹ See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985. 42-43, 71.

⁵⁴⁰ These points in Irigaray, *Speculum*. 59-60.

⁵⁴¹ Maccannell, ‘Jouissance’ in Wright, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. 186.

⁵⁴² Irigaray, *Speculum*. 60.

⁵⁴³ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*. 86.

⁵⁴⁴ See Miranda interviewed by Zaplana; see also Juno & Vale, *Angry Women*. 17.

⁵⁴⁵ Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. 103. Middleton makes here a connection between the *jouissance* that invokes the object-voice and the Lacanian postulation of the possibility for a specifically feminine *jouissance*.

⁵⁴⁶ Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 126.

⁵⁴⁷ These points in Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*. 125-126.

⁵⁴⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 4.

⁵⁴⁹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 12-13.

⁵⁵⁰ The object voice is fluid, ambiguous in that it is both the *cause* of desire and the object that *is desired*: this duality causes a fundamental slipperiness to the object voice that is neither thing nor desire, neither object nor process. See Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9-10.

⁵⁵¹ Dolar, 'The Object Voice'. 10.

⁵⁵² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 9.

⁵⁵³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1989. 72.

Note here that although Kristeva does not make a gender distinction in her theory grounded on male/female embodied subjects, Galás's discourse on abjection is constructed nonetheless (and dichotomously) from the position of the female subject. Hence the allusion to female parts of the body, together with female 'madness' enacted through the voice endorses Galás's feminine abjection. Her abjected voice in *Schrei X/ Schrei 27*, however, suggests gender undifferentiation. The listener's imagination of the body source produces indeterminacy (cyborg, human, animal) insofar as there is a multiplicity of border crossings and meanings attached to this particular work.

⁵⁵⁴ Lacan's analysis of 'sexual zones' discussed in Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 72-3.

⁵⁵⁵ I am drawing this point from Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 73.

⁵⁵⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 2.

⁵⁵⁷ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 9.

⁵⁵⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 9.

⁵⁵⁹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 15.

⁵⁶⁰ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 15. Note here that Kristeva's (and Lacan's) picture of the superego is significantly different from Freud's. In Freud's structural model of the psyche, the superego is one of the functions of the mind (together with the id and the ego) and refers to a higher nature in man that represents the relation to our parents and society. It thus upholds the internal moral values and ideals

acquired from the patriarchal system and symbolic law. See Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, Volume XIX (1923-1925). London: Vintage, 2001. 36.

⁵⁶¹ These points in Oliver, Reading Kristeva. 56-58. Oliver clarifies that since abjection emerges as the struggle to separate from the maternal body in a pre-Symbolic stage –where the mother’s body is still immediate–, the child cannot say if the object is itself or its other; thus, the other dwells in the object as the child’s alter-ego; the object is thus in between the self and the other.

⁵⁶² See Kristeva, ‘Confronting the Maternal’ in *Powers of Horror*. 54-55.

⁵⁶³ On this point, see also Slavoj Žižek’s writings on the concept of the ‘obscene superego underside’, in which the call of the Other is the act of identifying oneself as a subject of the public Law; simultaneously, this impenetrable call prevents the subject from identification. This paradox arises from the fact that the ‘obscene superego underside’ is at the same time the ‘necessary support of the public symbolic Law’ and ‘the impasse that the subject endeavours to avoid by way of taking refuge in public Law’ [Slavoj Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*. London and New York: Verso, 2001. 61]. It is worth remembering also that Kristeva does not make a gender differentiation grounded on male/female bodies with regard to the subject at the time of assuming his/her place in the symbolic order. This differs from Irigaray’s conceptualisation of the ‘woman-as-subject’ where she makes a gender differentiation and conceives women not so much identifying with the law (of the Father), but building on a feminine culture, which is in a process of construction.

⁵⁶⁴ Kramer’s concept of the hermeneutic window refers to the way meaning is conveyed in musical performance and analysis. He speaks of over-determination when there is something identified in a piece of music, which does not quite fit, whereas under-determination refers to things that do not appear. See Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*. 21.

⁵⁶⁵ See Žižek, *Metastases*, 61. I am grateful to Richard Middleton for suggesting this point on the role of the super-ego in Galás.

⁵⁶⁶ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 83.

⁵⁶⁷ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 84.

⁵⁶⁸ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 84.

⁵⁶⁹ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 85.

⁵⁷⁰ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 87.

⁵⁷¹ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 88.

⁵⁷² Irigaray, *Speculum*. 88.

⁵⁷³ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 89.

⁵⁷⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 89.

⁵⁷⁵ Irigaray, *Speculum*. 89.

⁵⁷⁶ Note here that in the early history and immediate 'pre-history' of psychoanalysis (Charcot and Freud in the late nineteenth century) hysteria was presented as 'universal' and many male hysterics were diagnosed. In the subsequent history of psychoanalysis, hysteria 'had to be' re-feminised. For further information see also Juliet Mitchell, *On Siblings*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2003.

⁵⁷⁷ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Hysteria' in Wright, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. 163-165 (164).

⁵⁷⁸ See Catherine Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric' in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, 3-39.

⁵⁷⁹ I am following here an argument put forward by Margaret Whitford when discussing Irigaray's understanding of the role of the hysteric. Irigaray suggests that this pathology is transferred from the individual to the Symbolic and it is therefore the Symbolic, which is sick. See Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*. 44.

⁵⁸⁰ Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric'. 15.

⁵⁸¹ Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric'. 16.

⁵⁸² Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric'. 16.

⁵⁸³ In discussing Kristeva's concept of abjection, Grosz suggests that Kristeva's analyses of the ways in which subjectivity and sociality require the expulsion of the improper, unclean and disorderly is a variation of Freud's position in *Totem and Taboo* (1930) where he claims that civilisation itself is founded on the expulsion of 'impure' incestual attachments. Grosz maintains that Kristeva's new insight is her assertion that what is excluded can never be totally obliterated. See Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminist*. 71.

⁵⁸⁴ I am drawing this point from Clément's description of 'accursed laughter' as it is linked to the madwoman and other feminine representations. It is the feminine body, the woman, who exposes a

mad laughter and crosses the dangerous line beyond which she will find herself excluded. See Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric'. 33.

⁵⁸⁵ Irigaray, *Key Writings*. 121.

⁵⁸⁶ Clément, 'The Sorceress and Hysteric'. 36.

⁵⁸⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'The Subject in Process' in Patrick ffrench and Roland-François Lack, eds., *The Tel Quel Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 133-178.

⁵⁸⁸ I am drawing these points from Kristeva, 'The Subject in Process'. 133-178.

⁵⁸⁹ Kristeva, *Revolution*. 86.

⁵⁹⁰ See Kristeva, *Revolution*. 86-87.

⁵⁹¹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 137.

⁵⁹² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 16

⁵⁹³ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 16.

⁵⁹⁴ Galás interviewed by Juno & V. Vale, *Angry Women*. 8.

⁵⁹⁵ Galás interviewed by Ian Penman, 'Matters of Life & Death' in *The Wire*, issue 190/191, 2000.

<http://Matters life&death_files/wire1299.htm>(23/06/2002).

⁵⁹⁶ Galás's use of these electronic devices listed in Michael Flanagan's introduction to 'Diamanda Galás' in Jo Bonney, ed., *Extreme Exposure: an Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2000. 126-134.

⁵⁹⁷ Note here that the non-human attributes and boundary breakdowns exhibited in Galás's avant-garde vocal work, in particular the blurring of the boundary between natural voice/technology and human/animal, can also be read in terms of Donna Haraway's cyborg theory: the artist's vocality can be figured as a human/technological hybrid that incarnates women's experience, which is conceived neither as fiction nor as social reality, and in this way embodies a cyborgian figuration that can shape our imagination –the technologically manipulated voice can be imagined as a sound coming back to retell the postmodern indeterminacy of the collective and personal self. See Donna Haraway 'A Cyborg Manifesto. Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York and London: Routledge, 1991. 149-181.

⁵⁹⁸ *Schrei X/ Schrei* 27 lyrics printed in Galás, *The Shit of God*. 99.

⁵⁹⁹ Schrei X/ Schrei 27 lyrics, *The Shit of God*. 98.

⁶⁰⁰ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*. 49.

⁶⁰¹ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 150.

⁶⁰² Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 146-7.

⁶⁰³ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 150.

⁶⁰⁴ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 150.

⁶⁰⁵ Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*. 151-152.

⁶⁰⁶ Steven Connor, *A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 35.

⁶⁰⁷ Connor, *Ventriloquism*. 35.

⁶⁰⁸ Connor, *Ventriloquism*. 36.

⁶⁰⁹ Connor, *Ventriloquism*. 40.

Conclusion

⁶¹⁰ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray. Philosophy in the Feminine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 153.

⁶¹¹ Luce Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond Any Word' in *Key Writings*. London: Continuum, 2004. 134-144 (136).

⁶¹² Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond'. 136-137.

⁶¹³ Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond'. 137.

⁶¹⁴ Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 14. Huffer investigates in this work the recurrent role of the mother as a nostalgic myth of origin in feminist critical theory and tries to move away from this paradigm. By looking at nostalgia as a structure that works to perpetuate patriarchal oppression, she argues that this nostalgic return to a mythical mother also operates in oppressed groups as an embedded system of thought [Huffer, *Maternal Pasts*. 16].

⁶¹⁵ John D. Caputo, 'Dreaming of the Innumerable: Derrida, Drucilla Cornell, and the Dance of Gender' in Ellen K. Feder, Mary C. Rawlinson and Emily Zakin, eds., *Derrida and Feminism. Recasting the Question of Woman*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 141-160 (144).

⁶¹⁶ Rosalind Minsky, 'Luce Irigaray: "Two Lips Touching and Re-touching"' in *Psychoanalysis and Gender: an Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. 192-199 (194).

⁶¹⁷ Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond'. 140-141.

⁶¹⁸ Irigaray, 'Before and Beyond'. 135.